



PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT IS THE ISSUE

*Daniel A. Janssen explores the ins and outs of
personal growth and development for our
individual and collective salvations.*

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by Daniel A. Janssen

Revised Edition, 2016

PREFACE

“Oh God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference. Living one day at a time, enjoying one moment at a time.”

- The Serenity Prayer, by Reinhold Niebuhr

This book grew from a recognized need that I found in my life and in almost everyone around me. Most of us seem to be struggling to find, to be, or to do something more in life, to get ahead of something, or to make life more significant.

Embracing change

Our religions, philosophies, and sciences fall short of any real answers, constantly changing with new ideas and discoveries, leaving us humans fewer reference points to build our lives. We struggle to solve our problems and understand ourselves and each other as we evolve to higher levels of awareness and consciousness. Our search and struggle is very real and normal. Driven by instinct and the genetic code, the goose flies south for winter, the bear finds a cave to hibernate, and fish journey thousands of miles to fresh water streams to lay eggs, whereas humans strive to create and be the most that they can be, one way or another, while finding purpose and meaning along the way.

Pope John Paul wrote, in a 1998 encyclical letter, to his Bishops addressing some of the issues of our age:

“Driven by the desire to discover the ultimate truth of existence, human beings seek to acquire those universal elements of knowledge which enable them to understand themselves better and to advance in their own self-realization. These fundamental elements of knowledge spring from the wonder awakened in them by the contemplation of creation: Human beings are astonished to discover themselves as part of the world, in a relationship with others like them, all sharing a common destiny. Here begins, then, the journey which will lead them to discover ever new frontiers of knowledge. Without wonder, men and

women would lapse into deadening routine and, little by little, would become incapable of a life which is genuinely personal.”¹

Human beings have always struggled for survival, and the struggle must have been quite intense fifty or one-hundred thousand years ago. During the formative days of Canada, the struggle for survival was still apparent and many, many people suffered immensely and even died trying to make their way in that new land. In this day and age, very few struggle for survival but to find purpose and meaning in life. Our decades of prosperity have provided great comfort, but have not made us any more fulfilled.

There is a great awakening at new levels of our hearts and minds, and we are all faced with new problems. The advancement of science and technology is causing radical changes on every front, major shifts in thinking within all disciplines and bodies of knowledge, leaving us fewer reference points to anchor our beliefs. It seems almost impossible to get a grasp of meaning amidst so many different views, ideas, theories, facts, and statistics. You could spend your whole life pondering and studying and not come up with any suitable answers.

The deep questions of life have been the aim of all philosophy and religion for the six-and-a-half thousand years of recorded human history. Now, we have hundreds of religions and millions of views. In Christianity alone, there are some 34,000 independent churches. The largest religious system in the world has gone through some major shifts in its fundamental doctrines. The Catholic Church has shifted from exclusivism to inclusivism, from Heaven and Hell being places to states of mind or being, and to the acceptance of some evolution theories. Everything we once believed is being rethought and is likely going to change, and they should, as this is our human evolution. We used to think the Earth was flat and the center of the universe but, as we evolved, we realized these ideas were not the case.

Change in core beliefs is frustrating and leaves us with a similar sense of insecurity that the struggle for survival left our ancestors. But this kind of change is a positive and wonderful thing if we can understand it, embrace it, and look

¹ John Paul II. *Encyclical Letter Fides et Ratio of the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Relationship between Faith and Reason*.
<http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_14091998_fides-et-ratio.html>

forward to new growth, new understanding, and new experiences. Change is what every living creature experiences physically, mentally, and emotionally.

Every one of our billions or trillions of cells completely change, making us a completely new human being every seven years. Our belief systems change with every new experience and piece of information we take in. Change at this level is not noticeable to the human eye and, in fact, we sometimes don't even recognize it at all. Nevertheless, the fact is that we *do* change. It is the human condition to grow and change, and that is all that life really asks of us.

Choosing a belief system

One of the areas in which we resist change the most is that of our belief systems. We feel the need to believe that the way we see and experience life is correct, but the truth is that we all see through the glass dimly and with a certain amount of flaw. Our belief systems are simply formed by the information and experiences we have taken in through our different senses, mostly our ears and eyes. You can change your belief as simply as changing the information and experiences you take in. If you grew up in the West and experienced the loving believers of the right-wing Baptist Church – truly caring human beings – and learned all about the doctrines they teach, you would come to believe that system to be the truth. If you then moved to the East and spent time with a Jewish family and lived among the wonderful, caring community of believers there, you would soon come to believe their faith. You will have experiences that prove one or the other to be either true or false in your mind.

The point here is that our belief systems are based on whatever information and experiences we have been exposed to. God, to use the term loosely, is not going to fault you because you may misunderstand or misinterpret the data that has entered your mind. She could not possibly be that small.

As much as you believe your faith is the truth, it is rather more a matter of *choice*: A 'choice' to accept a religious belief system that was formed by the institutions and organizations that fed your mind, combined with the experiences you have had. Don't confuse 'believing' with 'knowing': They are not the same. People's faiths are their 'beliefs', not the conscious knowledge of knowing. Faith cannot be proven: That's why it's called 'faith'. If you think you know, then what your faith is producing is the fruit of arrogance instead of humility, which means you are most likely off-track.

This kind of faith leads many to coerce others into believing what they themselves believe, thus narrowing faith and limiting growth while putting God into a nice little box of their own understanding. As Mahatma Gandhi says:

"Truth resides in every human heart, and one has to search for it there and be guided by truth as one sees it. But no one has a right to coerce others to act according to his own view of truth."

Most think they 'know' because they've heard or experienced, but that's all it is. Hearing and experiencing are not necessarily fact or truth. The truth is that nobody really knows anything: We are merely scratching the surface of the complexities of the human body, let alone the depth of mind. It is our goal to personally and collectively develop as we learn more about ourselves, our past, and the vastness of the universe. As Pope John Paul II says in the same encyclical letter from above:

"Humanity has been led down the centuries to meet and engage truth more and more deeply. It is a journey which has unfolded, as it must, within the horizon of personal self-consciousness: The more human beings know reality and the world, the more they know themselves in their uniqueness."

The fact is that we all need to grow and change, become more aware, and continue to seek truth and our potential. This book is not trying to start a new religion or state a particular theological perspective. I am not trying to undermine your faith or lend to the skepticism, pluralism, or relativism of the day – I will leave that to the theologians to debate.

The answers lie in growth, not faith

My intention is to present a practical book illustrating the need for personal development, which is what I find lacking in most churches, organizations, and individuals. People tend to buy into and accept what they hear as being 'fact'. They become programmed, and growth is more often *limited* than it is *expanded*, which is one of the true violations of humanity.

I began to see clearly how the answers to many of our problems weren't in some faith or belief system that we could adopt, but rather in our ability to grow to new levels of awareness. It was clear that where there were low levels of awareness, there were higher levels of struggle and failure, but where there were high levels of awareness, there was success and purpose. The quality of results seemed to be in the amount of personal development that the institution,

organization, or individual engaged in, which would determine its level of success and fulfillment regardless of how it was defined.

As I studied and recorded the principles and practices that lead to success in a variety of areas in life, it became clear that from success to salvation, personal development was the issue. The answers to our problems lie in our growth, not in our belief systems. Albert Einstein put it so well in this simple, but utterly profound, quote:

"Problems cannot be solved at the same level of awareness that created them."

In this life of extreme complexity, constant change, and development as a species, it is crucial that we personally engage in not just formal education, but personal development, as well: Raising our level of awareness in all areas of life if we are to succeed and have a promising future for ourselves and our children.

One of the greatest reasons for mistake and failure in life is to base beliefs and actions on wrong assumptions. Assuming that we understand something in its full leads to all kinds of arrogance and wrongs, as it has been said that more wrongs and evil in this world have been committed by people who knew exactly what they were doing. Our arrogance and insecurity lead to all kinds of problems and limit growth. We humans are evolving, and what we used to believe is simply not so anymore. What we used to believe about our faith, medicine, science, planet, and our bodies changes with every new advancement in technology or turn of the archeologists' shovels. No one body of knowledge or even religion has the answer for mankind – we only have the opportunity to grow to new levels of understanding and seek out our true human potential, which comes from our personal and collective growth and development.

Perhaps the greatest philosophical personality in history was Socrates. Born in 469 BC, Socrates believed the philosopher's task was to provoke people into thinking for themselves, and he stressed the need for analytical examination of one's beliefs. In this day and age, it is crucial that we examine our beliefs and learn to fully think for ourselves. This is the true goal of mankind and personal development.

We can, as individuals and organizations, lead lives full of purpose and meaning, truth, and value as we continue to evolve into ever more conscious beings. We can become much more alive seekers, creating lives full of experience, passion, and the abundance of all the world and beyond has to offer.

For many of us, this journey is just beginning, and I hope that this book can be a positive contribution: To provide some practical steps on how to create fundamental change and passion that will result in a positive impact in life and the world we live in. I believe this subject to be at the forefront of the problems we all face: The need for higher levels of consciousness and personal responsibility.

There is no 'one' to blame, there is only opportunity to grow and become more responsible in what we believe, how we act, and who we become. As Confucius says:

"To put the world in right order, we must first put the nation in order; to put the nation in order, we must put the family in order; to put the family in order, we must first cultivate our personal life – we must first set our hearts right."

Setting our hearts right

I am going to claim a certain level of expertise in the field of personal development because of what I have learned and gained in real life experiences, personal transformations, and the vision I now have. Few people have engaged, studied, applied themselves, and overcome as much as I have, and because of this – coupled with my strong desire and passion to create positive change – I have dedicated better than two years to the writing of this book.

It takes courage to write ones thoughts down and submit them to public scrutiny, but I feel I have the obligation to make this contribution in the hope that it will open up dialogue, challenge thinking, and simply add to our need to grow and change. As the saying goes:

"As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another."²

I believe all of us have a valuable contribution to make because of our particular experience and perspective on this world, especially the younger people. I recall a Rabbi once saying that our children can see much further standing on our shoulders: The wise elders must give way to the vision of their children as the youth strive for a world of splendor that I believe we can have.

² Proverbs 27:17, NIV

Truthfully, I don't even know what makes an expert, anyway. Is it due to how much you have studied? Does the education you received from a prestigious university make you an expert? Does your personal journey, your triumphs or transformations, make you an expert? Webster's dictionary defines an 'expert' as "one who has special skill or knowledge". That being the case, then I qualify.

In regards to personal development, and even success, we know that formal education will not do it alone. Degrees and PhDs do not mean that you have grown personally, for there are many PhDs who still behave like young children who have little to no understanding of themselves, let alone their neighbors. A degree from school may get you a good job, but it does not necessarily contribute to a good life. Education is part of the process, but is often misunderstood. The Dalai Lama says:

*"One problem with our current society is that we have an attitude towards education as if it is there to make you more clever, make you more ingenious. Sometimes, it seems as if those who are not highly educated, those who are less sophisticated in terms of educational training, are more innocent and more honest. Even though our society does not emphasize this, the most important use of our knowledge and education is to help us understand the importance of engaging in more wholesome actions and bringing about discipline within our minds. The proper utilization of our intelligence and knowledge is to effect changes from within to develop a good heart."*³

It is also a well-known fact that where there are low levels of education, there are high levels of crime, abuse, drugs, alcohol, and worse. Spend some time in the poor districts and ghettos of any major city and try to understand the mindsets of the people: It's not that these people are not intelligent – in fact, many of them are extremely brilliant, creative, and talented. I know, because I have been there and done that.

What I found are low levels of awareness and a lot of misdirection. I grew up in a broken home with an average family that argued a lot. I found myself influenced by all the wrong people, and had an early life full of poor choices which lead me to jail by 16 years-old and a continuing spiral down the wrong path until my early 30s. Fortunately, I kept questioning life and then engaged in

³ Cutler, Howard C. *The Art of Happiness*. 2013.

personal development, which has lead me through tremendous personal transformation in all areas of life. I have read and applied principles and practices from over 500 of the best books, tapes, and seminars on personal development, which is what we will discuss in the following chapters.

“The only limit to our realization of tomorrow will be our doubts of today.”

- Franklin D. Roosevelt

INTRODUCTION

“Some people are more talented than others. Some are more educationally-privileged than others. But we all have the capacity to be great. Greatness comes with recognizing that your potential is limited only by how you choose, how you use your freedom, how resolute you are, in short, by your attitude. And we are all free to choose our attitude.”

- Peter Koestenbaum

We all want the same things: We all want to be happy, to have security at various levels, health, wealth, and to live without much struggle and pain. We simply all want to be successful and to have become something in the end, to have made our lives count.

Becoming problem-solvers

We need to become problem-solvers. From the minute we are born until the day we die, we all face problem after problem. As infants, we are totally dependent on our parents for food, shelter, love, and all the rest of life's needs. Consciousness of self continues to develop throughout childhood, adolescence, and *hopefully* adulthood. I say ‘hopefully’ because this is not always the case. Most parents desire their children to enjoy the unblemished childhood that they never had – but this dream rarely comes true.

Sadly, the unresolved problems of the parents continue as they are passed on to their offspring, generation after generation. Low levels of awareness cause all kinds of unnecessary suffering, but we survive and become unique individuals: We plot our way in this world to make life significant for ourselves, and hopefully for others, until we become old and return back to a state of total dependence. Throughout this entire process of growth, it is our level of awareness that enables us to overcome destructive beliefs, bad habits, and anything that prevents us from fulfilling our human potential. Our awareness is a direct result of our personal development. Our level of personal growth will make all the difference in our world regarding the quality of life we enjoy, the level of success we achieve, the love we experience, the purpose and meaning we find, and even our salvation. The need for personal development has never been greater for our success, no matter how you define it.

The three core characteristics that separate humans from the rest of creation are *consciousness*, *creativity*, and *choice*.

Consciousness – This means believing that you, and only you, know your true wants, needs, and desires, and that only you can make the right choice; that you have a ‘conscience’. Through engaging in the process of seeking, searching, defining, and answering life’s questions, you can gain tremendous clarity, confidence, and the ability to be extremely effective as a human being.

Creativity – This is the ability to create, design, and change. By engaging in The *Life Goals Planner’s*⁴ processes and personal development, one can create new habits and bring about almost anything that they desire, and achieve their goals.

Choice – This is humans’ amazing ability to make new choices to bring about different results. In other words, that we are not a product of our past but a product of our choices, that past experiences many have an effect, and that while we can not necessarily control our emotions, we can control our responses to them, and that we make new decisions to move us rapidly toward our goals.

Human beings are blessed with this wonderful gift of *free will*. The ability to choose separates us from all other creatures and gives us the incredible opportunity to change any, or all, aspects of our lives. It is simply a matter of choice: Simple, but not always easy, especially if you are not even aware of a specific problem, belief, or attitude that needs to be changed. All most of us know is that we want something more, different, or better – the basic drives of the human being.

Developing on the inside

In Freud’s view, our drive is for *pleasure*, while Alder says our drive is for *power*, and Frankl that our drive is for *purpose*. In the developed nations, it seems the drive for purpose is leading the way. David K. Reynolds, in his book *Water Bears no Scars*, points out that:

“We live in an era of leisure, that technologically-advanced countries or developed nations live with a freedom from life-

⁴ The *Life Goals Planner* is another book by the author. The *Life Goals Planner* helps people identify and prioritize the important goals and values in their lives.

threatening insecurity like never before in human history. Without the purpose of the struggle for everyday survival, we find an increasing number of people drifting into lethargy, drugs, and suicide.”⁵

We have become highly developed on the outside, and now it’s time to become highly developed on the inside: Personally, professionally, and throughout all of our relationships, growing to new levels of awareness is the key to resolving our problems and achieving success. I believe it is key for our personal health and the health of our organizations, and the world, itself.

It is my belief that the sole purpose of mankind is to simply grow, develop, and fulfill our human potential: To be a little better at life tomorrow than you were yesterday because now you have learned and gained experience that can point you in new directions. The key is to consciously act toward goals that will cause you to *grow*. From the day you are born to the day you die, all this universe asks of you is that you grow. We start off growing physically, maturing and growing emotionally, and then we develop mentally and possibly end growing spiritually. It is not important that you live up to anyone's definition of success or what you ought to be or should do, but to grow from one stage to another, consciously becoming more aware, healthy, and whole, all while trying to become the most that you can be. To “become the most that you can be” is our ultimate purpose, which is best achieved through our personal development.

M. Scott Peck has a wonderful understanding of this phrase “become the most you can be”. In his book, *A World Waiting to be Born*, he describes physical health as a *process*:

“Some part of us is always in the process of healing. Consequently, the condition of health is not a static state of perfect wellness, it is among other things a condition of ongoing healing. Physicians are increasingly coming to think that most disease may best be defined as a failure of the healing process.”

He says this is crucial because the principle applies not only to our physical health, but also to our mental health, the health of our institutions, and that of our organizations. He continues:

“Health is an ongoing process of becoming the most that we can be. The words ‘health’ and ‘healing’ come from the same

⁵ Reynolds, David K. *Water Bares no Scars: Japanese Lifeways for Personal Growth*. 1987.

*Anglo-Saxon root, to be 'whole' or 'holy'. Becoming the most that we can be is also the definition of 'salvation'. The term literally means healing as we apply a salve to the skin to heal it, just as we learn to apply the principles of mental health to our lives to heal, to make us whole, to save our souls."*⁶

The need for heightened awareness, growth, and development are crucial for your health physically, mentally, and emotionally through your success as an individual and our collective salvation as a species. To become the most that you can be – or to fulfill your human potential – is a definition of personal development.

Defining personal development

Since I have never really come across a definition of 'personal development', I would like create one to describe the perspective I am coming from.

I recall a friend asking me once what personal development was. Without too much thought, I recall summarizing what it meant to me after reading hundreds of books and thousands of dollars spent on seminars and workshops. I concluded that personal development was the study of one's self, becoming aware of one's strengths, weaknesses, insecurities, and false beliefs, to ultimately growing to new levels of awareness and understanding.

I remember saying, "Life rewards you for the problems you solve," a quote I had on my fridge to remind me of what I needed to do when things weren't working out quite right. At that time, I believed solving the issues in my life would reward me with the health, happiness, and income I desired – and it was true. Personal development means all of that, and more. Because the words together – 'personal development' – don't have a formal definition, let's start by combining some definitions to see what we come up with. I will use Webster's New Illustrated Dictionary for the following:

Develop: to expand or bring out the potentialities or capabilities; to cause to come to completeness or perfection

Development: gradual evolution or completion; the result of gradual evolution or completion

Personal: pertaining to or characteristic of a particular person

⁶ Peck, M Scott. *A World Waiting to be Born*. Bantam, 1993.

Person: a human being including body and mind

Conscious: immediately aware of; mentally recognizing, to some degree and extent, one's own inner feeling or thought, or their objective reference

Consciousness: the state of being conscious, sensation, knowledge; the power of self-knowledge, internal perception

Conscience: moral consciousness in general: the activity or faculty by which distinctions are made between right and wrong

Aware: possessing knowledge of some fact or action; conscious; cognizant

Combining some of the key parts of these definitions, we may get something like this:

The gradual evolution or growth of a particular individual or organization to bring out their potentialities or capabilities, making them more aware of their own inner feelings or thoughts.

Personal development is definitely the gradual process of expanding one's potential and capabilities. It is also the process of becoming a more fully-aware and -conscious human being. This is certainly a good definition, but personal development is still more than that...

Personal development is about being sensitive, attentive, and aware of your own feelings, attitudes, behaviors, and *working on them*: Working through them to grow to new levels of awareness and understanding. It's about becoming more conscious and being able to relate better to one's self and others. It's about being proactive and overcoming faults, weaknesses, and insecurities, which is the second point in the definition of 'develop'.

Personal development is noticing the subtleties that make life work well and those that don't. It's about fulfilling our human potential, creating new realities from our mind, and experiencing new experiences with all our senses. Personal development is not something that you gain from formal education, though the process of gathering knowledge is fundamental to growth. Personal development is about the maturing and development of our *mind*. The Dalai Lama clearly expresses in the book, *The Art of Happiness*, that training and development of the mind is crucial to happiness. Add all of this up and *personal development* may finally be defined as:

The deliberate growth or development of a particular individual or organization to bring out their potential and capabilities, making them more aware of their inner feelings and belief systems to become a more conscious, whole, or healthy human being.

What personal development looks like

We will begin with that definition for now and see what we end up with as we look at how personal development applies to various areas of life.

So what does one do for personal development? What does it look like?

I have often wondered what it really means to engage in personal development. I ask people if they are into personal development, of which almost all respond, “Yes.” I then ask what they are doing, of which some look at me with a blank stare, while some will tell me of books they are reading, or classes or workshops they attended. But what I have found most interesting is that most people – a very high percent – do not seem to be making much progress with their lives, at all. Year after year, they struggle with the same issues, get beat up by the same problems, and carry the same burdens and dissatisfactions.

Now, allow me to ask you a few questions:

1. How much have you really grown over the last year or two?
2. How would you know, or how can you check, if you have grown?
3. Are you fulfilling your potential in your job, in your relationships, and in your life?
4. Is it important to you to become the best you can be?

Or how about some straight-forward questions? These are questions that are answered with numbers – things you can actually record and quantify:

1. How many classes have you taken in the last year or two?
2. How many books have you read? (Some fiction is very valuable, but I mostly mean non-fiction.)
3. What does your résumé look like? What can you actually write down that could count as personal or professional development?

Now, to ask questions that cannot be quantified but answered with an honest ‘yes’ or ‘no’:

1. Are you more successful in your job?
2. Are you more successful as a parent, spouse, daughter, son, or friend?
3. Do you have the same personal problems you had 1, 3, or 5 years ago?
4. Are you more successful in your ability to relate to others?
5. Do you find yourself reacting to someone's words or actions like you did when you were a child?
6. Do you find yourself held back by some fear or false belief, or prevented from moving forward in life?

Now, let me ask you some questions that I feel are the ultimate result of personal development as we have defined it. These questions can be difficult to answer and may take some careful introspection:

1. Do you have a greater understanding of yourself, your strengths, your weaknesses, and your character issues that affect your overall health and well-being?
2. Do you have a greater understanding of others, more appreciation of their differences, and respect for them as individuals?
3. Do you have more courage to face life's challenges, live by your values, and pursue your goals?
4. Are you a more honest person?
5. Are you a more aware and conscious human being?

Ultimately, having a positive answer to all of the above questions is the result of personal development, according to my definition. Being a healthier human being is what we all strive for, one way or another: Consciously or unconsciously, we are all moving away from pain and toward pleasure.

It is time now for us to be more consciously aware of our growth and strive to become the most that we can be – not better than someone else, but the most that we personally can be by fulfilling our human potential and contributing our uniqueness to making this world a better place.

The following chapters will conclude with an application to help us in this process of growth, which will be summarized in the last chapter to make for a good personal development plan to move us forward with confidence and courage in this journey of life.

CHAPTER 1: PERSONAL SUCCESS

"To laugh often and much; to win the respect of intelligent people, and the affection of children; to earn the appreciation of honest critics and endure the betrayal of false friends; to appreciate beauty, to find the best in others; to leave the world a bit better, whether by a health child, a garden patch, or a redeemed social condition; to know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived. That is to have succeeded."

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

Success itself has as many definitions as there are people on this planet. Here are a few:

- Webster's dictionary defines 'success' as "the achievement of something desired, planned, or attempted or the gaining of fame or prosperity."
- People who have achieved high levels of success may define it as "making measurable progress toward a worthy goal."
- The NFL football coach, Vince Lombardi, says, "The difference between a successful person and others is not a lack of strength, not a lack of knowledge, but rather a lack of will."

All of these definitions have a common foundation to them, and that is that you need to know what it is that you want. To know what you want is to have defined success for yourself.

Define success with good questions

What I find to be the biggest problem for people is simply defining success for themselves. To define success, defining our values and goals is ninety-percent of the process. Only *you* know your heart's desires, your true wants, needs, and what satisfies your soul. Nobody else can answer those questions for you.

In fact, don't even seek answers but rather the clarity of your questions and the processes of searching. In the hugely successful fictional book, *The Celestine Prophecy*, a wise priest says to the young man: "The problem in life isn't finding the right answer but identifying our current questions."

This is the essence of personal development: The process of looking; the process of seeking; the process of finding. It is in the scriptures that promise:

“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you.”

Believing in yourself

Part of this journey is ‘knowing thy self’: Development of the person as a unique individual with unique gifts and skills. It is sad that so many people have low levels of personal awareness, continuously struggling with the same problems year after year without making much progress in life. Here is why:

- They are held back by false beliefs and insecurities developed in their younger years and worse insecurities carried on generation after generation.
- People just aren’t encouraged. It has been said that the average child in North America has heard the word ‘no’ eight times more than the word ‘yes’ entering grade school. Dennis Waitley, who is a leading producer of personal development and motivational books and tapes, and serves as the Director of the National Counsel of Self Esteem and who is deeply involved with the National Counsel of Youth Leadership, found that 80% of children entering kindergarten feel good about themselves, but by the time they reach 5th grade the numbers drop to 20%, and by the time they reach high school they drop to 5%.⁷

It is no wonder that in adult life we tend to go with the flow, being lead more by what we *can’t* do than what we *can* do. Are you ready to believe in yourself?

People who believed in themselves

Henry Ford

It’s impossible! At least that's what the engineers thought when Henry Ford decided to produce the V-8 engine. Ford decided he wanted all 8 cylinders cast in one block. He instructed his engineers to make a design for this idea: The idea was placed on paper, but all the engineers agreed that it was simply impossible to cast an 8-cylinder engine in one piece. Henry Ford said: “Produce it anyway!” So back to the drawing board they went and, sure enough, they found the secret

⁷ Waitley, Dennis. *The New Dynamics of Winning: The Mindset of a Champion*. 1995.

to the V-8 engine and, once again, the ‘what’ that was once thought impossible was now achieved.

Benjamin Franklin

Benjamin Franklin spoke and wrote 5 languages yet only had 2 years of formal schooling. Franklin stands alone as the only person to have signed all four of the documents which helped to create the United States. He was a conversationalist, philosopher, diplomat, economist, writer, publisher, and inventor who knew no limitations.

The Wright Brothers

“Not within a thousand years would man ever fly,” said Wilbur Wright in 1901. That thought, expressed after an especially frustrating series of flight experiments, was shared by many people of the era. Many thought that man would never fly. Ever. It only took two more years of dedicated work for the Wright Brothers to prove that statement wrong. The fact that two brothers in the middle of America, who didn’t even graduate from high school, could achieve what others had failed to do was beyond the comprehension of many.⁸

Roger Bannister

In 1954, a young medical student did what the experts said was impossible: He ran the mile in less than 4 minutes. Doctors said that it was physically impossible for the human body to operate at that kind of running speed. Roger Bannister had a dream, a belief, and did not accept those limitations. Nobody in the history of mankind had done it before, but since Roger Bannister removed this mental barrier, now every world-class runner runs the mile in less than 4 minutes.

Start by mining your own talents

Developing our potential and capabilities is the place to start and key to our personal success and happiness. We need to look inside more deeply instead of outside of ourselves if we want to make a difference: Looking for that right job, business, or person that will do it for us. We need to begin right where we are with what we have and let that lead us where it does. It is the moral of the Russell H. Conwell story, *Acres of Diamonds*:

The gist of the story is of a man who owned a farm in some ancient lands. A priest had visited him and told him of the beauty and wealth of diamonds. This intrigued the man and prompted

⁸ <http://www.inventingflight.com/invention/wright_brothers.php> [no longer available]

him to sell his farm and set out in search of diamonds. He travelled far and wide until he was utterly broke and depressed, finally cast himself hopelessly into the ocean and drowned. Later the priest came to visit the farm and found another tenant. The priest noticed a sparkle on a lump of coal sitting on the mantle and asked the tenant where he got that diamond. The tenant said, "That's not a diamond, but a rock I found on this here property." The priest said, "That's not a rock, but a diamond in the rough," and asked the tenant if he would take him to where he found this rock. Digging around, the priest found rock after rock after rock to realize they were sitting on acres of diamonds.

Few things in life can be as rewarding and satisfying as nurturing your own potential. As Thomas Wolfe once said:

"If a man has a talent and learns how to use the whole of it, he has gloriously succeeded and won a satisfaction and a triumph few men have ever known."

Getting in tune with our natural abilities is crucial, but not always that easy to do. There is also a lot of evidence surfacing that we have different intelligence systems that we could get in tune with, nurture, develop, and grow into something special.

Multiple intelligences

"A person may have the greatest potential to be a chess player but if he grew up in a culture that didn't have chess, the potential would never be found, let alone actualized."

- Howard Gardner

Howard Gardner presents evidence that human beings possess a range of capacities and potentials, coining the term *Multiple Intelligences*. Gardner says:

"Individuals can not only come to understand their intelligences, but also deploy them in maximally-flexible and productive ways within the human roles that various societies have created."⁹

⁹ Gardner, Dr. Howard. *Intelligence Reframed: Multiple Intelligences in the 21st Century*. 2000.

---. *Multiple Intelligences*. 1993.

---. *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*. 1983

In Gardner's book, *Multiple Intelligences*, he lists seven intelligences that he has identified and 3 new candidates of intelligences – the Naturalist, the Spiritual, and the Existential – in his book *Intelligence Reframed: Multiple Intelligence's in the 21st Century*. The seven he identifies in *Multiple Intelligences* are:

1. **Linguistic** intelligence is the kind of ability exhibited in its fullest form perhaps by poets.
2. **Logical** or **Mathematical** intelligence is as the name implies. Logical, mathematical, and scientific intelligence.
3. **Visual-Spatial** intelligence is the ability to form a mental model of the spatial world. Sailors, engineers, surgeons, sculptors, and painters are some examples.
4. **Musical** intelligence is as the name implies. Mozart had lots of it.
5. **Bodily-Kinesthetic** intelligence is the ability to solve problems or fashion problems using parts or the whole body. Dancers, athlete's, and craftsmen all exhibit bodily intelligence.
6. **Interpersonal** intelligence is the ability to understand other people, what motivates them, and how to work with them. Successful sales people, politicians, teachers, and even religious leaders exhibit this form of intelligence.
7. **Intrapersonal** intelligence is the capacity to form an accurate model of oneself and use that model to operate effectively in life.

Gardner also says:

“In my view, the purpose of school should be to develop intelligences and to help people reach vocational and avocational goals that are appropriate to their particular spectrum of intelligences. People who are helped to do so, I believe, feel more engaged and competent, and therefore more inclined to serve society in a constructive way.”¹⁰

I totally agree, and not only do we begin to serve society in a more constructive way and fulfill more of our human potential, this kind of development will make us more confident as a person: It restores lost self-esteem which enables us to become better people.

¹⁰ Gardner, Dr. Howard. The University of Hartford Magnet School.
<<http://www.crec.org/uhms>>

Although this is a step in the right direction for our educational systems, we need to take more personal responsibility and engage in the kind of personal development that leads one to identifying and nurturing these talents.

The fuel of life

“We are gifted human beings with this wonderful human intelligence. On top of that, all human beings have the capacity to be very determined and to direct that strong sense of determination in whatever direction they would like to use it.”

- The 14th Dalai Lama

It has been said that God’s gift to you is your gifts and skills and your gift to God is what you do with them.

Human beings are truly goal-oriented creatures and everything we do is for some purpose, whether we are conscious of it or not: In every way, we are always moving toward some goal. The better we can understand goals, how to set and achieve them, the more effective we will be in becoming the most we can be. Based on timeless principles, some of 20th century’s classic books on success revealed the power of desire and our human gift to harness that and achieve our goals.

In 1948, Claude Bristol wrote *The Magic of Believing* saying:

“Plant the right kind of seed - thought of a pure strain - and habitually feed it with strong affirmative thought always directed toward the same end, and it will grow into a mighty force, finding ways and means of overcoming all obstacles. It will reach forth with its roots to find more food on which to grow and expand its foliage to gather more sunshine. It was desire that brought progress to the world. Without it, we all would still be living in a primitive age. Everything we have is a result of desire. Indeed, desire is the motivating force behind life, itself.”

A decade or so later, inspired by the great steel tycoon Andrew Carnegie, Napoleon Hill wrote the all-time classic success book, *Think and Grow Rich*. Napoleon had studied 500 of the richest men of America to better understand the road to success, through which he concluded there is one quality which one must possess to win, and that is definiteness of *purpose*, the knowledge of what one wants, and a burning desire to possess it.

Around the same time Maxwell Maltz, a world-renowned plastic surgeon, wrote another American success classic that demonstrated the value and power of goals in our life. He helped us to understand that plastic surgery will not change you, but that you had to change the way you think or little would change, and that your goals were the fuel to that change.

The secret of the ages

Our goals, in fact, help bring out all these characteristics of success, but we must first identify what it is that we want. Once we have that direction or goal, we then can be very determined. We do have a strong sense of determination and that can be further strengthened by our desire, and *vice versa*. Robert Collier relates to this point so well that I include it on its own:

“When you consider the question, “Exactly what do I want?” you will first regard it as one quite easy to answer. But after you begin to consider the question in detail and in real earnest, you will discover two very troublesome obstacles in your way on the road to the correct answer. The two obstacles are as follows: 1) The difficulty in ascertaining a clear and full idea of your desires, aspirations, ambitions, and hopes. 2) The difficulty in ascertaining which ones of a number of conflicting desires, aspirations, ambitions, and hopes you want more than you do those opposing them. You will find yourself with the ‘divine discontent’ of a general dissatisfaction with your present condition, circumstances, possessions, and limitations. You will feel perhaps strongly, the ‘raw desire’ of the elemental Desire Power within you, but you will not have clearly outlined in your mind the particular directions in which you wish that elemental force to proceed into manifestation and expression.

“You will often feel that you wish that you were somewhere other than where you are now, that you were doing something different from that you are now doing, that you possess things other and better than you now possess, or that your present limitations were removed, thus giving you a wider and fuller expression and manifestation of the power which you feel to be within you. All these general feelings will be experienced by you, but you will not be able to picture clearly to yourself just what ‘other things’ you really want to take place of those which are now your own. Then, when you attempt to form a clear picture and a definite idea of what you want, you will find you want many

things. Some of them opposing each other, each offering attractive features, each bidding actively for your favor and acceptance, thus rendering a choice and definite decision very difficult. You find yourself suffering from an embarrassment of riches. Or like the psychological donkey who was placed at an equidistant point between two equally tempting haystacks, and who died of hunger because he couldn't make up his mind which one he wanted most, you may remain inactive because of strong conflicting desire motives.

“It is because of one or both of the above mentioned conditions that the great masses of people do not avail themselves of the great elemental urge of Desire Power. So they remain, like vegetables or the lower animals, content to allow nature to work alongside the instinctive lines of self-protection and propagation, without employing initiative or self-direction. Few people who break these barriers, and who strike out for themselves, are found to have known very clearly ‘just what they wanted’, and to have ‘wanted it hard’, and to have been willing to pay the price for attainment. In order to set to work the forces of Desire Power in a special direction, individuals must make clear an ideal path over which they must travel, as well as to arouse the forces so as to cause them to travel over that path.”¹¹

It never fails to amaze me how disconnected people can be from their goals and major definite purpose. If you don't have your goals clearly defined, then you have been suffering from an enormous disadvantage in being able to get what you want and enjoy the journey of life with some sort of balance. Not only will you fail to get what you truly want or make the kind of difference you truly want to make, but life will seem to take everything you have in the process. And that's why creating a plan, a strategy that is consistent with your values and major goals, is so critical to your success.

The need for clarity has never been greater

The sheer vast amount of choices can cause us to stagnate. The flood of information is overwhelming, and everybody is trying to get you to believe this or that, there is a battle for your mind and you had better be clear on what you want because you don't want to lose that battle. Of the hundreds and thousands of messages that bombard us daily and which your mind cannot possibly process,

¹¹ Collier, Robert. *The Secret of the Ages*. 1926.

you unconsciously sort and keep information you think you need and discard the information you feel you don't need. The only way this can be done effectively is by the clarity of your goals - being clear as to what you want. More than ever before in the history of mankind, is it crucial that you are clear on your goals, your values, and the direction you want to travel. If you are clear, then all of these choices and this information will serve you rather than distract you. You will begin to thrive on change and the incredible opportunities that you have to make a difference in the world.

With clear goals, desire, and determination we can begin the process that leads us to becoming the most that we can be and to fulfilling our human potential. I am sure you would agree that if one were to strive toward becoming the most they could be, if they aligned themselves, nurtured, and developed their natural gifts and skills, that they would be a personal success regardless of how we define it or how long it takes. Success is growing to new levels of awareness and fulfilling your potential. One of my personal favorite definitions of success is the Serenity Prayer:

“Oh God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference. Living one day at a time, enjoying one moment at a time.” – Reinhold Niebuhr

As I continue to personally grow, changing myself and not others, I develop more courage and wisdom that helps me fulfill my potential. Life has incredible things to offer with unlimited experiences that can make our world so very special, and it only requires that you grow. Not only will you find purpose, meaning, and fulfillment, but you will find tremendous opportunity to contribute to the world in a positive way. James Rohn, who has some highly recommendable books and tapes on personal development, has said that “the best contribution we can make to our families and our country is to become better than we are.”¹²

And this is the contribution I would like to make to your heart, your mind, and your family: To encourage you to apply the applications at the end of each chapter of this book. Especially this key, crucial, and foundational step of clarifying, prioritizing, and choosing your major life's goals and values.

¹² Rohn, Jim. *Challenge to Succeed: A Philosophy for Successful Living*. 1991.

Your Primary Aim

One thing about goals is that very few people really know how to actually write a set of goals that can help them to be more focused, more efficient, and more effective with anything they desire. The claims are that only 3-5% of people actually write goals and make plans, and everybody seems to work for them! Another is that there are two kinds of goals: There are general goals and motivational or inspirational goals.

General goals are what everybody has. These are the kind of goals people make at New Year's: Their wish lists, like to lose a few pounds or buy some new furniture, or buy a new car or travel to a new country for a holiday. These are great and we all have them because we are goal-oriented creatures, but please don't mistake having these goals in your mind or even written down on paper is what it means to have "set your goals". This is one of the biggest mistakes that people make. They have a couple of lists or a few vague ideas in their head and they think they have "set their goals". These are just the natural actions or developments of our unlimited minds. And please don't stop dreaming either: Dream big dreams and keep on dreaming, just don't mistake them for 'set goals'. If there are no major obstacles between you and your goals, then they are only activities and will not give you the motivation or life experience I am talking about.

What I really want to talk about are *motivational* or *inspirational* goals. These are the kind of goals that cause men and women to risk their lives, the kind of goals that stretch you beyond your present abilities – the kind that change you from the inside out. They are the kind of goals that keep you up at night, dreaming about them, reaching them, living them, and owning them.

More often than not, it is one goal, your primary goal: Your major definite purpose, it is the one you can write a personal mission statement around. It is the one that taps into your Desire Power, and the one that you develop your strongest passion for and use your best talents and skills to achieve. It is here that you will find the meaning and purpose of your life.

People of all kinds are seeking and searching for goals that create purpose, meaning, and direction. It is for this need that I created *The Life Goals Planner*, a tool that helps you identify all your goals, organize them, and then walks you through a unique process to prioritize your goals, leaving you with a clear look

at what is most important to you. It helps you identify your primary aim, your A1 goal and form that into a passionate mission for your life.

I love Michael Gerber's business books, *The E-Myth* and *The E-Myth Manager*, which are some of the best business advice and consulting programs. At the beginning of his books and consulting programs, he drills the entrepreneur and draws out what he calls your Primary Aim: The main reason for your life. He said it is absolutely critical that you identify it because it is what everything else is built around. In fact, he says, he can't even help you if you don't know it.

How else could you be possibly be satisfied without having determined what you want and set out to get it? The answer is that you can't, not without first identifying your goals and clarifying your life's purpose. Who cares if you spend most of your time on a bunch of things that don't matter much to you? I tell you, you will be wasting a tremendous amount of time and resources and still not hitting your Primary Aim. A few years down the road, you will be wondering why you're not that fulfilled or successful.

Chapter 1 Applications

Identify, develop and apply your natural talents to your goals

If you don't already know – which most seem not to – figure out what it is that you love to do. More often than not your greatest passions are your natural gifts. It gets a little trickier the older you get, for one usually has developed many skills but fewer interests. There are many ways to approach this application. If you are not 100% certain, then it will be a process of answering questions and searching your heart and mind until you can say, "That's it!" The *Life Goals Planner* was designed to help a person identify their Primary Aim, their major definite purpose, which I feel is the place to start.

To be a truly effective human being, you must clarify what your goals and values are. How else could you possibly be effective if you didn't have a clear idea of what it is you wanted? How else could you manage your time or activities wisely if you didn't know what is most important? How could you possibly make wise decisions without clear direction as to why you might choose this or that? The answer is that you simply couldn't, at least not effectively enough to fulfill your life's purpose. Of course, it doesn't matter that much if you don't really

care who you become or where you end up, as the Cheshire cat said to Alice in Alice in Wonderland:

“One day Alice came to a fork in the road and saw a Cheshire cat in a tree. ‘Which road do I take?’ she asked. ‘Where do you want to go?’ was his response. ‘I don't know,’ Alice answered. ‘Then,’ said the cat, ‘it doesn't matter.’”

Benefits of goal-setting

It all starts with your values and your life's goals. Goals literally enable us to focus all of our power toward a desired result. When goals are properly understood and applied, the benefits are absolutely incredible. Let's look at what properly set goals can do for you.

1. Clearly identify your targets.
2. They prioritize your values and the important things in your life.
3. They are the most effective time management tool known to man.
4. Goals give purpose, meaning, and direction.
5. They get you focused and encourage discipline.
6. They promote, motivation, excitement, perseverance, and determination.
7. They help build character, accountability, confidence, and self-esteem.
8. They develop passion and burning desire.
9. They help promote good decision-making.

Why doesn't everyone engage in goal-setting?

Goals are almost without question one of the greatest factors for personal and professional success. We all know how important goals are: Our parents tell us, our teachers tell us, and our preachers tell us, but nobody tells us how to go about them to get the full effect. It is a wonder that something so important, such a critical life skill, is not treated with more diligence and professionalism. Brian Tracy, one of the more influential trainers on personal effectiveness, lists seven reasons why people don't apply this skill to its fullest:¹³

1. They are simply not serious about being successful.
2. They have not yet accepted full responsibility for their life.

¹³ Tracy, Brian. *Action Strategies for Personal Achievement*. 1993.

3. Guilt: They have no confidence in themselves to reach goals so they don't set them to avoid the guilt and the shame.
4. They don't realize the importance of goal-setting.
5. They don't know how.
6. Fear of rejection or criticism.
7. Fear of failure, which is considered one of the greatest obstacles to success.

The steps to setting goals

There are generally six steps to setting goals.

1. Clearly identify your goals. Create lists and prioritize them.
2. Write them down with a clear definition.
3. Identify the obstacles between you and your goal.
4. Identify the people, information, and skills you will need to achieve your goal.
5. Set a deadline for achieving the goal.
6. Create an organized plan of action for achieving the goal.

The life-goals planner

If you have not identified, prioritized, and set your goals, then you will be thoroughly amazed at the results you can achieve from simply answering the questions and going through the processes of the *Life Goals Planner*. It is simply incredible the power of clarity you will gain. In the book, I have simplified the whole process of goal-setting into two crucial steps: 1) Identifying and prioritizing; then, 2) goal-setting. Visit <www.lifegoalsplanner.com> for more details on this specific book.

"He who has a 'why' to live can bear almost any 'how'."

- Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche

CHAPTER 2: PERSONAL VS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

“Quality is never an accident. It is always the result of high intention, sincere effort, intelligent direction, and skillful execution. It represents the wise choice of many alternatives.”

– William A. Foster

We live in an age of mind-power, not man-power. At the time of this writing, the Canon Power Shot G2 digital camera sold for about \$999.95 in Canada. In this device, there is about \$20 worth of actual raw material and \$979.95 worth of brain power. Now is the age where mental toughness and creativity make the difference. Malcolm Forbes once explained:

“The microchip has extended the reach of the human brain like machines extended the reach of the human muscle in the last century. Today, software is becoming the slabs of steel, fiber-optics and digital screens are becoming the rail roads, and the highways of transportation.”

The information age is adding new dynamics to the ability to succeed professionally. Working hard has always been the way to get ahead, but now you must not only work hard, but smart. It’s no longer how many hours you put in, but what you put into those hours. Developing your creativity and communication and relationship skills are critical to our success. It’s personal qualities that now make the most difference, and it’s this development that also help us to become the most that we can be, as I described in the last chapter.

Change

Everything in life is being so fine-tuned and developed to an exact science. Progress is shaping the new world and causing high growth which brings out the best of skill and talent in people. Harvard University has 3 predictions for this generation:

1. There will be more *change* in your field of expertise than ever before in history.

2. There will be more *competition* in your field of expertise than ever before in history.
3. There will be more *opportunity* in your field of expertise than ever before in history.

The opportunities of the future will go to those who can rise above the fierce competition, who develop themselves, and who thrive on change and become personal leaders. That's going to require change and change is going to require personal development. Change is what characterizes life and yet so many resist it. Those that resist change have no clear goals and are generally insecure and grow little and experience little. Those that embrace change have clear goals that drive them to change, grow, and become the most that they can be.

I read stories of those who go to therapists to change. They hire their services, spend precious time and money to change, and then as soon as they begin the process, they act as if change was the last thing in the world they wanted to do. Their wounds or weaknesses are beginning to surface and causing pain in their life, forcing them to change but they resist, adding more pain to themselves and everyone around them. People don't resist change, they resist *being* changed and it is my recommendation that when life surfaces something about you that causes discomfort or pain, look at it positively and see it as an opportunity to grow. Change is part of our personal and professional success, so allow me to share eight steps to consider as you continually change.

1. Awareness

As Albert Einstein had said: "Problems in life cannot be solved at the same level of awareness that created them." You need to first start with clarity on what exactly it is that you want to change: Is it your behavior, your income, your weight, an addiction, or a character issue? Whatever it is, get clear on it and get to the root cause and not the symptoms.

2. Attitude

If your attitude is wrong, then the chance of you succeeding is very slim. You don't have to hit rock-bottom before you change, but you certainly have to have a good attitude. Have a willingness to change and be excited about the growth and new experiences you will gain.

3. Goal-Setting

I think this is so critical to change that, if understood properly, you will have all the ammunition you need to overcome any difficulty and become anything that

you desire with the least effort but greatest satisfaction if you set about doing it. This is 'goal-setting'.

Many people get bad advice from personal development seminars, counselors, therapists, and psychological interventions. Although sometimes needed most of the time, the problem is actually just a lack of direction, and what is really needed are well-set goals to help you make decisions for the future, not the need for therapy. All too often, people try to go forward looking in the rear-view mirror. You can't do it that way.

About that only time I would recommend a therapist is when you have a properly set goal, absolute clarity on where you want to be or what you want, and are following a well-constructed plan of activities. If – and only if – you keep running into a wall that you just can't see over, then consider consulting a professional. Most of the time, the problem lies in your decisions for the future, not the garbage of the past. Let me share two examples:

1) One customer of the *Life Goals Planner* found more value in properly-set goals than two years' worth of professional counselling, workshops, and so on. In her own words, she said:

"I am a well-educated professional. My career was challenging, stressful, but it was also rewarding. I was working harder and harder to meet the high demands, but I should have been working smarter and smarter. I paid a big price for this lack of knowledge and found myself on stress leave. I thought I would be over it in a few months, but the reality was, however, that it took two years! I worked hard during that time to understand the situation I was in and how to deal with it properly. I was determined to be healthy again and was making progress, but so slowly. I saw therapists, I took workshops, I read books, and I exercised, all to find myself back at square one: I was not able to return to work. Daniel helped me set my goals, and in just a few months, I was back at work feeling strong, confident, and happy. Now, I am finally on the right track, going up, mostly working smarter, and living a balanced life."

2) Dr. Laura responded to a caller on her popular national radio show: A lady had called in concerned about some rage she was venting toward her children. The lady had explained that she had been through all kinds of therapy and the advice was to get back in touch with the anger or

resentment she developed with her mother and resolve the issues, to get some forgiveness and healing. Dr. Laura asked if she vented her rage at everybody: Did she respond like that to her husband, or co-workers, or friends? The lady responded, “No.” She seemed to only blow up at her children. Dr. Laura pointed out that she did have control in other situations, so it was just a matter of choice where and when to blow up, and that it wouldn’t matter if her mother was dead or alive, but that it were the decisions she made or the lack of decision-making that was the issue.

What I want to stress is that all too often we blame something from the past when the power lies in the present. It is our ability to make different choices, our responsibility – meaning we are response-*able*. Employing your will, powered by your goals and choices, will move you forward faster and easier than anything that has to do with the past.

4. Discipline

Self-discipline is needed to follow the plan of your goals, and if you don't have the discipline, then you may want to get some accountability. Seek one who is mature and not going to rag and nag on you when you make a mistake, but someone who will challenge, encourage, and be truthful while you are on your journey.

5. Humility

You need to be humble and teachable. Let down your guard and open yourself up to learning new things, new ideas, different perspectives, and the other side of the story. You need to be able to accept constructive criticism and seek the opinion of wise counsel. There is merit in the proverb that states, “Listen to advice and accept instruction and in the end you will be wise.”

6. Resourcefulness

We need to become resourceful and be good problem-solvers. Everything you ever wanted to know has been written and someone has been through the same experience. Seek out the people and information that can help you and shed some light on the issue. It is probably only a click away on the Internet or the flick of a page in a book you can borrow from the local library. Learn to be a good researcher.

7. Commitment

You need to make verbal and written commitment to yourself that you will do whatever it takes to make the change you want to make. 'I will' are two of the most powerful words in the human language, so resolve to make the change. Commit to the process and you're certain to succeed.

8. Personal Development

I believe that personal development is the ultimate key to change and I hope you come to the same conclusion by the time you have completed this book. I would like to say that words are often clumsy when you try to express what's in your head and heart. I will do my best with this book, but it pales in comparison to the experience you will have when you commit to the process of change and grow to become the most that you can be. Personal development *is* the issue.

In the spring of 1998, Washington University invited Bill Gates and Warren Buffet to talk to the business department and answer any questions they might have. The first question was, "How did you get where you are?" Buffet commented that he is quite rational: He expressed that he generally always tried to get the most out of himself. He equated it to car engines by saying that it's no good to have a 400 horsepower engine and only get 100 horsepower output. It's best to have 200 horsepower and get 200 horsepower output.

A comment I really enjoyed was when Buffet challenged us to pick out someone we truly admire and aspire to develop those qualities in ourselves, and put into practice the habits that build those qualities. Bill agreed with the idea of forming good habits and added that we should magnify our brain power instead of our muscle. Then someone asked how they would define 'success'. Buffet defined it as happiness: He said success is getting what you want and wanting what you get. He went on to talk about doing what you really love and for a company that you really like.

One of my business advisors used to say, "Sell your strengths and buy your weaknesses." Identify what you are good at and become excellent there, then associate with people that are great where you are weak. Professional and technical skill development is important, but it is now becoming more important to develop 'the person'. For you to be able to win in this fiercely competitive world, you must go beyond professional development and into some serious personal development.

Emotional Intelligence

Daniel Goleman writes about 'emotional intelligence', the new name for character, soft skills, or personality. Goleman stresses personal qualities such as initiative and empathy, adaptability, and persuasiveness. This is the new yardstick, Goleman says.

Business people have told Goleman that emotional intelligence, not technical expertise or book learning, is what matters most for excellence. He defines *emotional intelligence* as:

*"The capacity for recognizing our own feelings and those of others, and for managing emotions well in ourselves as well as in our relationships."*¹⁴

He talks about how most training programs that companies use just waste millions of dollars and hours with an academic model when they really need to be thinking about new ways to boost peoples' emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence is not about letting your feelings all hang out, but about managing them so that they are expressed appropriately and effectively, enabling people to work together toward a common goal.

Some of the training programs that companies should invest in are those that develop the individual to become more fully human. If I hear the business writers of the day correctly, businesses must nurture, develop, and provide purpose and meaning for employees if they expect to win in the overall scheme of things. Pay is not the biggest issue, as a study from Michigan University demonstrated: 1,533 working people were asked to rank various aspects of work in order of importance. The result was that 'good pay' came in fifth place. People desire purpose and meaning, and that should be the company's primary concern.

Scott Peck in his book, *A World Waiting to be Born*, asks the question: "Does a business have an obligation to nurture its employees?" I respond with a very definite 'yes': If the business is going to require its employees to develop personally, then it has to take responsibility on how they turn out. In fact, corporations have to take responsibility on all fronts for the people it develops and the environment it operates within – or, as Gerbers says, for the condition of the world and everything in it. Michael Gerber concludes his book, *Power Point*, with these words:

¹⁴ Goleman, Daniel. *Working with Emotional Intelligence*. Bantam, 1998.

“It is my contention that no business, no matter what it does, can become great if its people wish for nothing less than these things. A power point business is a business which takes personal responsibility for the condition of the world it finds itself in, for the condition of the people with whom it interacts with, for the condition of their children and their children's children, and for the very quality of life itself. A business with a conscious. That is, I believe the only mission worthy of the name: To create a world in which people are present, honest, open, and alive. To create a world in which people make conscious decisions in good conscience. That is what shooting for the moon is all about. And one cannot do it in one's sleep. It requires all we have and it requires it now.”¹⁵

Well-developed people before profit

All evidence points to the fact that, in order for a company to succeed, it is going to have to have very well-developed people, physically, mentally, and emotionally – well-balanced and well-developed people. Michael Gerber recognizes that many companies waste lives: “It is the condition of 99% of the businesses we’ve visited over the past ten years, a condition of rampant confusion and tragically wasted lives.” He believes the entrepreneur must work first on himself before he can possibly be a success with his business:

“Your business is not the first concern about your business, you are! With no clear picture of what you want your life to be, how on Earth could you begin to live it? How would you know what first step to take? How would you measure the progress? How would you know how far you have gone? How would you know how much further you had to go? Without your Primary Aim, you wouldn’t. Indeed you couldn’t. It would be virtually impossible.”¹⁶

Twelve years later, Gerber writes:

“The question every manager must ask, and answer, in order to begin the process the E-Myth manager is committed to – that of true transformation – is not ‘what does my company want?’ It’s not ‘what do my people want?’ But it is first and foremost ‘what

¹⁵ Gerber, Michael E. *The Power Point*. Harper Business, 1991.

¹⁶ ---. *The E-Myth*. Harper Business, 1986.

*do I want', truthfully. Honestly. Openly. Directly. It is my hardone belief that without asking this question, then answering it, no one can be successful at managing anything. The single most important question any manager can ask himself: What do I want? But 'what do I want' is not an organizational-defining question, it is a life-defining question. And one of the first rules for defining your Primary Aim."*¹⁷

I believe that for a human to be truly effective, he or she must identify their values, their major life goals, or as Gerber puts it, their *Primary Aim*. That's precisely what the *Life Goals Planner* is all about. The foundational starting place for human growth, development, efficiency, and effectiveness. I ask a similar set of questions that Gerber asks.

"How can you possibly use your time, your talent, your skills, your resources, and make wise decisions without clearly knowing what it is you want?"

You can't. And this is what the corporations are requesting of their employees, so they had better take responsibility that their training, development, and influences are for the good of the individual – first and foremost – before the profits of the company. In my, Gerber's, Goleman's, and Peck's opinion, the employees first should produce the result the company wants, anyway. This is the trend of the day, and attitudes are changing.

Faith Popcorn recognized these attitude changes from her still relevant 'Popcorn Report'. Trend 5, 'Cashing Out', is to slow down our racing heart beat and revive our soul. Trend 7, 'Staying Alive', is a trend that represents our quest for health: The extended search for a better, longer, healthier, and happier life. Trend 10, 'Save our Society', is the decency trend dedicated to the 3 'E's: environment, education, and ethics. Consumers are pushing corporate responsibility and some companies are putting responsibility above profit as the primary goal.¹⁸ Goleman points out that people don't necessarily work for money, but the larger sense of purpose and meaning: Something that works in them, a passion that aligns with their deepest values.

¹⁷ ---. *The E-Myth Manager: Why Management Doesn't Work - and What to Do About It*. Harper Business, 1998.

¹⁸ Popcorn, Faith. *The Popcorn Report*. Harper Business, 1991.

The mission statement drives personal development

Even though I believe corporations must continue taking more and more responsibility, the same is true about individuals: You as an individual must take personal responsibility to add value to your company, your family, and this world.

Corporations do recognize the need for providing purpose and meaning, which is why so much time, money, and effort is put into developing mission statements. Their mission statements no longer state that they are there to enhance the assets of the owners, but are full of purpose and meaning for the people involved, inside and out. Most are developed for the customer to show how ethical the company is or what values the organizational leaders support, but there is a turn toward purpose and meaning for the employees. People want to work for an organization that is making a difference, that their products and services have meaning and purpose to build a better world and help them fulfill their potential.

It is the leadership of the organization that has to develop a compelling mission and vision for all stake holders. The stake holders are the four most important groups in the organizations universe: The people who work for it, the people who buy from it, the people who supply it, and the people who lend to it. And it's from these groups the leaders should draw its mission. When an organization has a compelling vision and a strong sense of mission, as well as room for everyone to grow, people will be compelled to invest in their personal development. Leadership must facilitate this growth. Much of the leadership talk these days is providing your employees what they need, and get out of their way and let them do it.

A recent article by Henry Mintzberg on the website of the Peter F. Drucker Foundation commented on the 'Quiet Leader', where he suggests that quiet managers don't empower, they inspire: That quiet managers strengthen the cultural bonds between people and care for their organizations. They spend more time preventing problems than fixing them. Mintzberg followed the admired CEO of the Royal Bank, John Cleghorn, around for a day and commented that his role seemed to be more of a coach, where he encouraged and enabled, motivating the teams and organization at large.¹⁹

¹⁹ Mintzberg, Henry. "Managing Quietly." *Leader to Leader*, No. 12, Spring 1999. <<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/ltl.40619991206/epdf>>

The new dynamics of winning

Responsibility and leadership is the name of the game for the 21st century. This applies to the individual as it does the organization, but begins with ourselves and our personal development. A leader is a good listener and a good communicator. He or she pays attention to everything going on around him or her, whether they are leading their family or a Fortune 500 company. Stuart R. Levine commented in an audio program, *The Leader in You*:

“Success in the future will be determined by individuals and organizations that can establish quality human relationships. Success in the future will be determined by leadership. The ability to communicate, develop, and empower teams and listen more effectively.”

We need to invest in ourselves and develop the leader within, along with organizations with a clear vision and a sense of values. Leaders will have to communicate and motivate far more effectively in conditions of near constant change, and these leaders will have to mine every ounce of talent and creativity from the shop floor to the executive suites.²⁰ We all must develop the leader within and take full responsibility.

Beginning with ourselves, take 100% responsibility for your personal development, your finances, your health, and your happiness. This attitude is the place to begin, as Brian Tracy says: “If it’s going to be, it’s up to me.” Start at home and be a leader with your children. Denis Waitley has 20 valuable points for coaching your child to leadership: A list of the *do's* and *don'ts*, which I agree with 100% and wish more parents understood and applied to build characteristics and values in their children from the beginning of their life. The ‘does’ are:

- Do listen often without prejudgment.
- Use frequent and sincere praise.
- Do be firm with them: They do prefer rules, discipline, and boundaries.
- Do plan many activities together: Get involved in the community and recreational and spiritual involvement. Take them to your place of business and show them what you do all day. Let them be a significant part of your life.

²⁰ Levine, Stuart R and Michael A Crom. *The Leader in You*. Simon & Schuster, 1994.

- Do share your joys and problems: Most anxiety in a child comes from mixed messages, and sharing both promotes security and belonging.
- Do discover their unique qualities and develop them. Encourage them to feel good about their unique one-of-a-kind talent.
- Do make good use of teachable moments to instruct values and responsibilities.
- Do encourage them to express their own ideas.
- Do show them your affection with a kiss, a hug, and positive affirmation of your love and care.
- Do expect them to be successful and tell them of your high expectations, and they will rise.

The 'don'ts' are:

- Don't put them off when they ask questions or they will learn to seek information elsewhere.
- Don't correct them in front of others if you can help it – they will be much more receptive to your counsel if you do it privately.
- Don't nag.
- Don't spoil your kids by giving them everything they ever wanted, everything you never had, and things they haven't earned. Delayed gratification: Work toward a goal.
- Don't make rash promises and don't be inconsistent.
- Don't tell them their fears are silly: They are real to them.
- Don't let them form bad habits.
- Don't forget they can't always explain themselves: Their answers shouldn't have to always satisfy you.
- Don't forget they love exploring.
- Don't push them to live up to your expectations and the things you never accomplished.

These points were taken from Denis Waitley's program, *The New Dynamics of Winning: Gaining the Mindset of a Champion*. This audio program points out that for too long the emphasis in sports, business, and education has been on physical or technical skills and not on mental skills. With athletes, as well as business professionals, it is clear that outcome is based on psychological factors. Denis Waitley has coached, counseled, and studied some of the top-performing

athletes on the North American continent. If you want to have the knowledge of what makes a gold medal winner, then you have to hear this program.²¹

Attitude, knowledge, and hard work

It seems quite clear that human beings have unlimited potential. It is easier because there is no lack of information, motivation, and inspiration to get you from where you are to where you want to go mentally, emotionally, physically, or financially.

In my province, British Columbia, Canada, the two top-paid executives earned an annual salary of \$1,343,876 plus bonuses of \$797,184 working for Ballard Power Systems, Inc. The third highest-paid executive earned \$808,429 with a bonus of \$600,000 for one year's work.²² Wages in British Columbia start at \$8.50 per hour, and rise to the salaries of these top-paid executives. That's not even taking into consideration what you could do by owning your own business. More than 90% of the millionaires in North America are small business owners, and survey after survey reveals that the basic principles of knowing what they wanted, along with hard work, is what led them to their success. The name of the game is 'personal development': You must grow beyond your present limitations and awareness if you want to move to new levels in any area of your life – and you're going to have work at it.

I like this humorous example of adding a numeric value to letters. If we give a numerical value to each letter of the alphabet – 1 for A, 2 for B, and so on,

Then, 'hard-work' (8+1+18+4+23+15+18+11) equals 98%;

And, 'knowledge' (11+14+15+23+12+5+4+7+5) equals 96%;

And, 'attitude' (1+20+20+9+20+21+4+5) equals 100%;

But, 'bullshit' (2+21+12+12+19+8+9+20) equals 103%.

So, when someone says they are giving 100%, then they may be well on their way, but when they say they are giving more than 100%, which we know is impossible, then they may just be full of *bull!*

²¹ Waitley, Denis. *The New Dynamics of Winning: Gaining the Mindset of a Champion*. Nightingale Conant, <<http://www.nightingale.com>>.

²² "BC's Top-Paid Company Executives." *The Business in Vancouver Book of Lists 2002*.

Chapter 2 Application: Development the Leader Within

1. Develop the leader within

There is a lot of excellent material written on the subject of leadership, which is readily-available from your public library or personal and professional development organizations, like Nightingale Conant (www.nightingale.com) or Career Track Publications (www.careertrack.com).

A couple of books I found very helpful, because they are full of questions to ask yourself, are from John C. Maxwell:

Developing the Leader within You. Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1993.

Developing the Leaders around You. Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995.

Characteristics of true leaders

Here are some comments and question from Maxwell's book, *Developing the Leaders around You*:

- All leaders think big.
- Leaders think continually.
- Leaders think in terms of other people.
- Leaders think bottom-line.
- Leaders think without lines.
- Leaders think in terms of intangibles.
- Leaders think quickly. It is not what happens to you, it's what happens in you.

Questions on commitment to personal growth

Answer with a 'yes' or a 'no'. Maxwell also comments that a 'no' to any of these questions should cause a leader to examine his plan for personal growth.

1. Do I have a game-plan for personal growth?
2. Am I the leader of that plan?
3. Am I willing to change to keep growing, even if it means giving up on my current position if I am not experiencing growth?
4. Is my life an example for others to follow?
5. Am I willing to pay the price to become a great leader?

Assessment of current leadership qualities:

(0 = Never, 1 = Seldom, 2 = Sometimes, 3 = Usually, 4 = Always)

_____ The person has influence.

- _____ The person has self-discipline.
- _____ The person has a good track record.
- _____ The person has strong people skills.
- _____ The person has the ability to solve problems.
- _____ The person does not accept the status quo.
- _____ The person sees the big picture.
- _____ The person has the ability to handle stress.
- _____ The person displays a positive spirit.
- _____ The person understands people.
- _____ The person is free of personal problems.
- _____ The person is willing to take responsibility.
- _____ The person is free from anger.
- _____ The person is willing to make changes.
- _____ The person has integrity.
- _____ The person is growing closer to God.
- _____ The person has the ability to see what has to be done next.
- _____ The person is accepted as a leader by others.
- _____ The person has the ability and the desire to keep learning.
- _____ The person has a manner that draws people.
- _____ The person has a good self-image.
- _____ The person has the willingness to serve others.
- _____ The person has the ability to bounce back when problems arise.
- _____ The person has the ability to develop other leaders.
- _____ The person takes initiative.

Total the points:

- 90-100: **Great leader** – should be mentoring and growing other great leaders
- 80-89: **Good leader** – must keep growing and mentoring others
- 70-79: **Emerging leader** – focus on growth and begin mentoring others
- 60-69: **Bursting with potential** – excellent person to be developed
- Below 60: **Needs growth** – may not be ready to be mentored as a leader

As John Maxwell says,

“An organization’s growth potential is directly related to its personnel potential. A company cannot grow without until its leaders grow within. Grow a leader, grow an organization.”²³

This applies the same for all organizations, from the large corporation to the very small, your family. Take charge of your growth and experience all the rewards that life can bring.

“The potential of the average person is like a huge ocean unsailed, a world of possibilities waiting to be released and channeled toward some good.”

– Brian Tracy

²³ Maxwell, John C. *Developing the Leaders Around You*. Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995.

CHAPTER 3: RELATIONSHIP SUCCESS

"It is extremely ironic that the more we care about what people think about us the less we care about people, and the less we care about what people think about us the more we begin to care for others."

- Steven Covey

Relationships have become very complex and challenging for many reasons. A few reasons may be because we are becoming more aware and more conscious beings. Because of our increasing awareness of our own wants and needs, and other's weaknesses or problems, the dynamics of relationships have changed and become more demanding, just as our professions have.

Communication is the key

Insecurity is one of the biggest robbers of life. I was a terribly insecure child – a late bloomer in many ways. My growth was stunted mentally, emotionally, and physically. I was raised by my mother with three siblings in a home that argued and fought all the time. It is very confusing for children who see fighting among a group who are supposed to love each other.

I was also affected by my father's inability to express himself emotionally. I was never really shown how to deal with weakness, fault, failure, or challenge. I never knew what my natural abilities were and developed very little of my true human potential. My mother did the best she could, given the context of our life and the rebellious culture of the 70s and early 80s.

Do you know what it's like growing up totally insecure, afraid, and literally scared of doing anything that might risk emotion or rejection? I tell you that being shy, timid, and insecure will rob from you life's greatest joys and experiences. I missed all kinds of opportunities to learn, try, and do, but more significantly I missed many relationships and the depth of human emotions that one can experience.

I can tell you that insecurity does not come from growing up without material things like a nice house or nice clothes. It comes from confusion around

your understanding of love, your inability to deal with your feelings and emotions, not knowing who you can trust and where you can turn when you're confused and scared. I have a very strong message for fathers and mothers reading this book. Personally develop:

- Grow beyond your insecurities and become a good communicator of human emotions.
- Learn to express your feelings, fears, faults, and failures. This is not a sign of a weakness, but a sign of strength and maturity.
- Learn to express yourself well for it will make the biggest difference in the confidence and future of your kids.
- Learn to admit your mistakes.

Forgiveness is a powerful healer of our hearts and souls. To forgive and to be forgiven is crucial to our mental health, and maybe even our salvation. I have done much personal work in this area – I had to or I probably would not have survived. One way to test or check if we have truly forgiven someone else regarding an issue is if that issue is ever brought up again, that it does not bother us. Sy Rogers, former President of Exodus International, explained it well in this analogy of a wound or sliver under the skin: 'The thorn of offense'.

There was a survey done of hundreds of people on their death bed. Their time was almost up and they were asked if they could do it again, that if they could live life over, what they would do differently. The overwhelming response was that they would risk more emotionally. They would express their feelings better to those they loved.

In this day and age, it is without question that good communication skills are one key to personal success in the 21st century. This is part of the reason why I am writing this book: Putting my thoughts down on paper has been a truly rewarding experience. I never really intended to become an author, but recognizing the value of expressing myself on paper has helped tremendously in articulating what's going on in my head and heart. It is also why I have been a big advocate of and applied myself so diligently in an organization called Toastmasters.²⁴

²⁴ Toastmasters International is a non-profit public speaking, communication and leadership development organization with clubs all around the world. Visit their website at www.toastmasters.org and find a club near you.

Writing my thoughts on paper was one thing, but it was a whole new challenge to orally communicate to others. The ability to express yourself will be key to your personal success and becoming the most that you can be, which can be achieved through training and development. Nothing is beyond our ability through personal development and training. Mark Twain said:

“There is nothing training cannot do, nothing is above its reach. It can turn bad morals into good, it can destroy bad principles and create good ones, it can lift men to angelship.”

And the Dalai Lama said:

“No matter what activity or practice we are pursuing, there isn’t anything that isn’t made easier through constant familiarity and training. Through training we can change; we can transform ourselves.”

Clarifying the relationship’s values

Relationships are almost always claimed to be the most important thing in people’s lives when asked what’s important to them. The amazing thing to me is that almost nobody creates tangible plans for successful relationships. Few people set goals to be the best father or mother, wife or husband, and even fewer are clear as to what they would like their relationship to be.

Many feel that relationship planning is too mechanical, not spontaneous and natural. They feel that love should be easy and natural and that it should just happen all by itself, and it does for about the first 2-4 months until the unconditional expectations dissolve and our needs, wants, faults, and imperfections begin to surface. Then relationships take on a whole new challenge and growth: Clarity and effort is required. This means consciously deciding how you want your relationships to be, writing it all out, clarifying your values, educating your emotions, and raising your level of awareness about yourself and others.

I remember attending a Sunday service of a very large Pentecostal church during the Easter holidays. There was a very well-known theologian attending with his family and the pastor asked if he could share a few words with the congregation on this special Easter Sunday. This New Testament scholar began to talk about relationships and then quoted the verses from the epistle to the

Philippians: “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.”²⁵ He went on to say that you can trace back every conceivable break down in relationships to one of these characteristics: Selfishness, vain conceit, or a lack of respect and understanding. They are at the root of our relationship problems and some simple growth and awareness can overcome them all.

I often used to listen to a couple of radio programs that dealt specifically with relationship problems. Two of which were two of the most popular radio show hosts, both with doctorates in the field of relationship psychology and had a listening audience of millions of North Americans. For two to three hours of the day, caller after caller phoned in with relationship problems and 90% of the problem could be solved with some clarity of their values and more understanding of the other. Selfishness is a major problem, as one of the hosts always commented, “Almost all relationship arguments are about *me*.” She says there is always the conscious and most often unconscious feeling, “What about me?”

A lack of clarity dominates most of the problems on the other radio program, and the following situation clearly demonstrates this.

On February 23, 2001, a lady, who we shall call Jane, called in concerned about some actions of her fiancé. Her fiancé was going to have a stag party before the wedding. At this party, there was going to be heavy drinking and local strippers, who were going to get down and dirty (lots of touching and naked bodies). Jane didn’t want her husband to be getting drunk and fondling naked strippers, who could be carrying who-knows-what kind of sexually-transmitted diseases, so she decided that she was not going to let him go.

His friends started giving her a hard time saying stuff like, “It’s no big deal. Don’t be a controlling wife,” and so on. She got very confused and called the local radio program wanting advice from the listening audience, and she actually asked, “How should I feel about these actions my fiancé is planning to do?” Jane wasn’t sure if it was okay for her fiancé to get drunk at a party with naked women who would be seducing him, where there would be the typical fondling and

²⁵ Phil 2:3-4

groping. That was shocking enough, but what was more shocking is the response from the radio host who said he didn't see anything wrong with it.

This was discussed for a half-hour, and during this time many callers called in voicing their opinion, most of them agreeing with the announcer that it's the fiancé's last moment being single, or that he wasn't marrying the stripper so don't get all worked up about it, and so on. What surprised me is how many people could not see any problems that could stem from this attitude or action. Most could not foresee the problems that are almost certain to develop because of the violations of the key relationship principles and values of trust, respect, commitment, and understanding.

I am going to talk more about these four key principles that, if understood and applied, can transform, strengthen, grow, nurture, and build a truly healthy relationship to give us a real sense of love and security to help us grow into the men and women we can and should be. These principles apply whether the relationship is between a husband and wife, mother and daughter, employer and employee, or worker and coworker. They are the fundamental principles that, if you violate, are sure to cause major problems and more likely destroy the relationship altogether.

From our personal success, business, and relationship success to our emotional and mental health through to our salvation, one of the most fundamental things we can do is be clear on our values, especially in a society where we are bombarded daily with messages, beliefs, poor values, and behaviors. If you don't make conscious effort and choose your goals and values, then the chances of your being sucked in to the general views of society are almost certain. You must think through what it is that you want for yourself, your family, and your country and put these goals and values in print and resolve to their achievement.

This was first and foremost the biggest problem with Jane: She was not clear on her values, or at least did not have values that strengthen and build character and relationships. This lack of clarity led to her confusion as to how she ought to feel. It is also the same problem the announcer had, as well as many of the callers. I do not believe any of them to be bad people, they just did not have clear goals and values on building strong relationships, so they were driven to act and react according to their feelings instead of their choice of values. This

story is a perfect example of why it is so very important for you to think through and consciously choose what you desire, your goals, your values, and who you desire to become, or you will not have the ability to overcome the subtle pressures of society at large.

I really love this analogy Anthony Robbins uses to illustrate the point of choosing. He calls it *The Niagara Syndrome*:

“Life is like a river for many people, they just jump in the river of life without ever deciding where they want to end up, so they quickly get caught up in the current: Current events, current challenges, and current fears. And then they come to the forks in the rivers, they don't consciously decide which way to go, they just go with the flow of the river (the flow of the majority instead of being directed by their own values and goals) and, as a result, they feel out of control but continue to drift down stream; until one day, the sound of the raging water wakes them up and they realize they are 5 feet from the falls and they are in a boat with no oars, and then they say, "Oh shoot!" But it's too late. They are going to take a fall: It may be a financial set-back or the break-up of a relationship, or maybe even a health problem. In almost all of the cases, the fall could have been prevented by making better decisions up-stream.”

This is possibly where Jane's relationship was going: Going with the flow, drifting down the river until it had a major crash. As I refer back to the four key principles of relationships, I do not think anyone would disagree with me that these are essential for healthy relationships. The four keys or principles are:

1. Trust
2. Respect
3. Understanding
4. Commitment

We would probably all agree with these, but few ever take the time to make them part of their goals and mission. Look at the story above. Did the actions of the fiancé violate any of these values? All four, perhaps. Well, I can accept that it may not have directly affected the commitment or even the trust of the relationship, provided that he didn't do something with the strippers that would have violated that, but his attitude and that of his friends was a direct violation of respect and understanding. I can only hope, for the sake of that couple's

relationship, that this experience caused them to sit down with each other to consider what values they would want to base their relationship on. Unfortunately, I do not think this was going to happen.

Most likely, from the flood of phone calls and the announcer's point of view that there is no harm in the action, she was likely going to be influenced in a way that could weaken what values she was not very clear on. My only contention is that you understand these principles and check your own relationship and decide for yourself if you want to abide by them or not. Everything is your choice, I only ask that you consider and apply the application at the end of this chapter and see how your relationship responds.

Now, let's look at these principles and understand how or why your relationship, if either is missing from a relationship or if you consciously or unconsciously violate them, will have constant battles and struggles or begin to deteriorate. If the relationship begins to deteriorate for too long, then it is doomed to fail, or at least take a major fall that could have and should have been prevented.

Principle #1: Trust

There are many ways that trust can be broken or violated in a relationship: Lying, stealing, cheating, and adultery are the obvious, but there are other and more subtle ways of breaking trust that can have the same impact.

Confidence

Sometimes we do the subtle things, like when someone confides in us: They feel there is a level of trust, so they share some of their feelings and struggles and then we go and tell someone else. This is devastating to the other person and breaks trust. This is one reason why lawyers and psychologists have 'confidentiality agreements': It's the trust factor that, when violated, can do a lot of harm. The rule here is simple: Never tell anyone else about what someone has risked to talk to you about.

Belittling

Parents have to be especially careful about this when children try to talk to them about their problems. Don't belittle their problems because, to them, those problems may be huge.

Competence

Trust also comes in the form of competence and character. If someone does not have the competence to do a job, then you likely won't trust them. If you are

admitted to the hospital and have to have surgery but you found out that the doctor who is going to perform the surgery has never done it before, then you are going to have low levels of trust.

Character

The competence factor is obvious, but a character issue is not. A violation of trust in a relationship demonstrates a weakness in character. Character is very hard to change: It takes tremendous effort, courage, honesty, and personal growth. When poor character violates trust in a relationship, it must be addressed if you expect to have any kind of decent relationship with others, and even yourself.

Commitment

Another thing we tend to often do is tell people what we are going to do. We say, "I am going to do this or I am going to do that," but if we don't, then they begin to lose trust in us. This is the "don't cry wolf" scenario. Don't bother telling people about all the things you are going to do, instead just show them by doing it, or if you must say something then say, "This is what I am thinking of doing. What do you think?" Then, we stand a good chance of gaining some valuable insight and build a little more rapport, rather than risk losing some trust.

When you say you are going to do something, then do it. We all understand the heartache of a child when the separated parent says he is going to pick them up on Saturday but doesn't show. It violates the trust in that relationship. The rule is simple: Use the words "I would like to" and save the words "I will" for when you are committed and resolved to do so. Doing this will build more trust in yourself and with others.

Adultery

One of the most harmful violations of trust is adultery. Our dictionaries define adultery as: Voluntary sexual intercourse between a married person and someone other than his/her spouse. Adultery is devastating, and few relationships can survive when this happens.

Some preventive medicine and clarity of your values is the best to help avoid the possible violation or misuse of trust. Most people do not consciously seek to do something so wicked, it just tends to happen when people end up in a situation where they are tempted beyond what they can handle. Clear values – goals for strengthening your relationship – provide conscious accountability

that help you make wise decisions and avoid any situations that could lead to this breaking of trust.

Averting vulnerability

Lois Mowday Rabey wrote an excellent book called *The Snare*. From a Christian perspective, she clearly lays out how weakness plays a big role. This is, when we are down or wounded, how we can easily fall into a trap, and recognizing our vulnerabilities can prevent many troubles. There is a positive and negative definition to the word 'vulnerability'. Here, she mentions some precautions that are worthy of noting:²⁶

- Recognize that your judgment can be impaired if you are in a vulnerable situation. Be clear with yourself and define what a vulnerable situation is.
- Determine to live by your values, no matter how tough the situation gets.
- Look for rationalization in your thinking, don't allow yourself to rationalize (rationalize).
- Enter into a relationship of accountability with a trusted friend.
- Being stressed out and over-worked can make you vulnerable. Eat healthy and get exercise.
- Do not even take a small step toward a relationship that may lead to a tricky situation.
- Be sure to have healthy well-balanced relationships in your life.

I would personally like to add a major point to this list: All too many problems stem from too much idle time. The well-known phrase, "an idle mind is the devil's workshop," is a truth that has led more people into destructive behaviors with sex, drugs, and crime than you would possibly imagine.

Being idle breeds laziness, which makes you feel weak and vulnerable. It contributes to lower self-esteem, which makes you even more weak and vulnerable. One of the best things you can do to change this situation is to identify some goals to be consciously engaged in, keep clear on your values, and consistently act in the direction of your goals. I am not saying that you should try to keep up with Anthony Robbins, but keep yourself from laying around the house wondering what you should do with the day. Avoid the idleness and laziness.

²⁶ Rabey, Lois Mowday. *The Snare: Understanding Emotional and Sexual Entanglements*. Wipf & Stock Pub, 2005.

Rebuilding trust

If you have violated trust in a relationship, there is a way to rebuild that trust. It starts with the same first principle of success and leadership, ‘responsibility’, and taking 100% of it. You have to remove all blame and excuses, accept the weakness and character flaw you have, and commit to moving forth from there. This is a commitment to yourself.

I highly recommend that you do not tell the other person what you are going to do anymore. Don’t make the mistake of explaining how you are going to change – he/she won’t believe you anyway, and shouldn’t. Simply write it out and start working on it. Even if they have thrown you out of the house, ask for nothing from them, and don’t bother to tell them that you are going to change, but show them. Never say, “I am going to do this or that,” but instead show them!

You start by doing the personal work of setting a goal to resolving your character issue and demonstrating to the other, not telling them. Actions always speak louder than words, and this statement has never been as true as in the case of broken trust. Once you have become totally humble (which is a quality all of us should strive for in our character and relationships), have taken full responsibility for yourself regardless of what other people do, and you have prepared a detailed plan of the actions you will need to take to correcting things (first at the source, which is you, and then making things right with the other), then you are well on your way to rebuilding the trust in the eyes of the other.

Here are some clear steps to follow:

1. Clearly define the problem in yourself, not in the other. You must be 100% honest and 100% responsible. If there is any such talk like “I can’t”, “Yeah, but...”, “But they ...” then you are not taking full responsibility and will not make real, lasting progress.
2. Clearly define the goal which you desire to achieve. Define the goal based on what you want to change in yourself and hope that that will be enough for the other person. This can be two separate goals. One for your change and the other to restore the relationship.
3. Create a plan for achieving the goal. Write out all 6 steps that we teach in the *Life Goals Planner*, two of the six steps being absolutely critical: Step 1 is a clearly-defined goal, and step 2 is a detailed plan of action. (The *Life Goals Planner* has an excellent sample plan for being a great husband or father, which has some excellent application steps for you to consider.)

4. Get an *accountability partner*. Whether this be a counselor or a third party, who both of you respect and admire, and who can check you once and a while. This is most helpful for whom you are trying to build the trust with. Let them go to that person to see how you are doing instead of coming to you. This is critical for a trust issue. Always let a third party or your actions and results speak for you.
5. Measure your progress toward your goal and your plan of action on a regular basis to check whether you are on- or off-track.
6. Strengthen your decision- and commitment-making muscles. Be committed to resolving the character issue even if the relationship is never going to be resolved. This is important because you are almost certain to repeat the problem if you don't deal with it now.
7. Get to work: Do not delay. Do something every day toward this goal. Remain humble and let time be the healer. Let the combined effort of all the little things in your plan add up to make the impact, and they will. Trust in yourself and believe that you will succeed, and soon others will trust and believe in you, too.

I promise you that you can rebuild your relationship stronger than ever before, but it is going to take permanent demonstrating to her/him, continued character development, and commitment to becoming the man or woman who all can respect and admire. If you are not willing to do all of this, then you should accept the fact that you are not really serious and just walk away from the relationship. Accept the fact that the relationship is not as important to you as you might have thought or originally believed. This is the kind of effort that is going to be required, and it's okay if you are not willing to put that out. Just be honest with yourself and let the relationship go.

You may not want to put that kind of effort out for that particular relationship, but I encourage you to put out similar effort for the development of your character because you cannot walk away from your relationship with yourself. Do not accept poor or weak character – do not settle for less than you can be. You have the capability to overcome anything that you desire, you just simply need to make that decision and in the process you will figure everything out that you need to become the kind of person you desire to become.

To add a quick tip for the other person who is looking to you as you work on building your character: Believe! Don't be easily fooled by some smooth words or a few actions, but believe in the other person and look at them as they

could be. I came across a quote that sums this thought up nicely: “Look at man the way he is and he only becomes worse; look at him for the way he could be and then he will become what he should be.” Become a man or woman that is trustworthy in everything you do, from the little things that you say you are going to do to the commitments with your family and your business relationships.

Principle #2: Respect

Another key aspect of relationships that is most often overlooked, or just not thought through well enough, is *respect*: Respect for another human being that they are special in their own way. As the Christians say: All of us are created in the image of God, and he loves us all.

The fact is that we are all unique. There is not another person on this planet that has the same fingerprints as you, the exact same voice, eyes, or even the exact same blood as you. Nobody on this planet thinks the way you think. Because of your character, your experiences, and the way you perceive this world, you and everybody else has a perspective that is totally unique. Respect is often most difficult with the ones we love. This is because our expectations are higher and we are aware of their weaknesses and faults, which often stand out stronger in our mind than how special and unique they are.

Respect can make or break our relationships. I have seen more arguments, break-ups, and problems develop because of a lack of respect for someone else and their point of view. Don't let this be the starting place for the arguments in your family and don't let the lack of respect ruin your professional relationships. In selling, we are taught to treat every customer as if they were million-dollar customers. Treat everybody like they were million-dollar people, especially your loved ones: Treat them like they are priceless, because real love is. Gary Smalley – who is a recognized family psychologist, speaker, and author – tells us to have honor for our loved ones. He teaches you to be in awe when you're in the room with your kids. It always embarrasses them but shows a tremendous respect.

One way we continuously show disrespect for another is by 'yeah-butting' them. You know when someone is talking and as soon as they are done, or even just before they are finished, you step in and say, “Yeah, but I....” This comment is a subtle destroyer. It shows that you are not really listening to that other person, or only enough so that you can counter-comment with something wiser. It demonstrates that you think what you have to say is more important than

what the other does, that you have the right understanding but they don't. This shows a total disrespect and ignorance of the value of another's comment. "Seek first to understand before being understood."

Pay attention when others are talking. Forget about who is right and who is wrong. Hear them out, pause after they have spoken, and ponder what they have said, not where you think they are wrong – even if they are – but where they are coming from. Continually ask, "What exactly do you mean by that?" Ask yourself, "Where or from what perspective is this thought or comment coming from?" This will help you build a much stronger and intimate relationship.

I love this definition I came across in the Hebrew language: 'Intimacy' is a deep mutual knowing of another for the purpose of caring involvement. Have respect for someone else's ideas, thoughts, and comments. Don't yeah-but people to death, especially children. Parents, please listen to your kids: Let them express themselves without making them feel like they don't know anything. Teach them to have an opinion and that their opinion *does* matter. Recall some of Denis Waitley's points of leadership with your children from Chapter Two:

- Do listen often without prejudice.
- Don't put them off when they ask questions or they will grow to seek information elsewhere.
- Do discover their unique qualities and develop them, encourage them to feel good about their unique one-of-a-kind talent.
- Don't tell them their fears are silly: They are real to them.
- Do encourage them to express their own ideas.
- Don't forget they can't always explain themselves – their answers shouldn't have to always satisfy you.

Respect is an attitude that can be learned and formed so that you become a person everyone likes to be around.

1. If you respect others, then they will respect you.
2. Eliminate the words 'yeah-but' from your vocabulary, completely. Believe me, you will never miss them.
3. Pay attention when people talk, if it is a one-on-one conversation, then lean a little forward, which helps you be more attentive.
4. Value others comments and don't get caught up if they are right or wrong.

5. Finding the right words to express ourselves is often difficult. Let people finish what they are saying and pause with some reflection before you comment, and seek first to understand before being understood.
6. Be considerate, caring, and respectful.

Principle #3: Understanding

We can easily see how the last principle ties into this one. Seeking to understand shows respect and respecting helps us to understand. To some degree, men *are* from Mars and women *are* from Venus.²⁷

It is true that we are wired very differently, but we are not from different planets. Though we are extremely complex, we are actually very easy creatures to understand and also very predictable. We mostly have the same basic needs for love and affection, to be valued, to make a difference in this world, and to make a contribution. We are creatures of habit and don't change very much. We are the way we are and we must come to terms with that: Our character or personality doesn't change.

This book is really all about change, about growing in awareness and understanding so that we can evolve into ever more conscious and caring beings, but certain things about us will never change.

We all have dominant characteristics that can place us in certain categories. My Zodiac sign is Sagittarius. My Chinese animal is the Tiger. I am an analytical driver on any typical personality profiling test. I have an INTJ score in the Myers Briggs personality typing. These characteristics don't change. It's the way we are wired and something we need to understand about ourselves and about those closest to us. What are you? What are your children, your spouse, boyfriend, or lover? Plato said, "The unexamined life is not worth living," and to a large extent this quote is so very true.

Even a little bit of understanding of how we are wired can help us to be so much more understanding in our relationships and prevent so many unnecessary arguments and problems. Part of the process of growing in understanding may be to go through many of these personality profile tests. Another very valuable process is identifying our natural gifts and skills. It was quite a leap in my own understanding of myself that my greatest strengths are

²⁷ Gray, Dr. John. *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus*. Harper Paperbacks, 1992.

also my greatest weaknesses. Because I am a driver, I often get frustrated when people do not accept or buy into my vision. This is an area I have to keep a close check on as I continue to take on more leadership roles in business and the community. I also found it revealing to understand more about my sensitivity and that what I used to think of as a weakness I now see as a strength, thanks to David K. Reynolds:

“Overly-sensitive people don't often see the positive side of their character. We see the obsession but not the ability to persist. We see the sensitivity to pain but not the ability to be sensitive to others. We see our need for empathy but not our ability to empathize. We see our strong fear of failure but not our ability to succeed. We see our cautious hesitancy to act, but not our imaginative foresight. For each neurotic problem area there is a corresponding positive desire and ability.”²⁸

All of this helps raise our level of awareness of who we are, which contributes to our understanding, but the biggest of all may be just paying attention: Really listening and caring for the other. People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care. Strive to understand and appreciate the unique differences, the personalities, and styles of other people.

When someone else is talking and trying to express themselves, just pay attention. Remember that words are sometimes hard to come by. Most of us have difficulty expressing what is really going on in our heads and hearts. So give people a chance. Often, we need to say things two or three times before it starts coming out like we really want it to. Continually ask questions as suggested in the previous principle. Whenever you find yourself thinking, “That's a bunch of B.S.” or, “This person doesn't know what they are talking about,” then stop that and start asking questions that drive deeper understanding.

I would like to conclude this principle with a supposedly true story told by Chuck Swindoll a few years ago. Chuck had a close friend who knew a young attorney in Texas of a sizable law firm. He worked for a traditional kind of boss who had a thing for Thanksgiving. Every year, the boss would go through a sort of ritual:

²⁸ Reynolds, David K. *Water Bares no Scars: Japanese Lifeways for Personal Growth*. 1987.

At a large walnut table he would place a series of turkeys for each member of the law firm. This was not just a simple pick-a-turkey-if-you-want-one, but a formal setting where your turkey would be placed in front of you; and when the time came for you to receive yours, you would step up to the turkey and express how grateful you were to work for the firm and acknowledge the gift of turkey and the special holiday of Thanksgiving.

Now, the problem was this attorney was single and had no use for a large turkey. First, he didn't know how to fix it and second, even if he did cook it, what would he do with all the meat? However, because it was expected, he took the turkeys every year. What he didn't know is that one year his close friends stole his turkey and in its place put a paper mache turkey, and weighed it down with lead to make it feel like a real one. They put a real neck and tail on it so that it looked just like the real thing, but it was really a bogus bird through and through.

When his turn came, he stepped up and picked up the bird and announced how grateful he was to be with the firm and to receive the turkey on the memorable day of Thanksgiving. Later that day, he got on the bus for home and sat down with the turkey on his lap, wondering what in the world he would do with it. Later down the route, a man got on the bus looking a little worn down and discouraged, and so happened to sit down on the vacant seat next to the attorney. They struck up a conversation talking about Thanksgiving and, by-and-by, the attorney learned that this stranger was out job-hunting but having no luck. The stranger had a large family and was wondering what he would do for Thanksgiving, which was the next day.

The attorney had the idea that this was his day to do a good deed and would give the man his turkey. Then, he had a second thought that this man was not a free-loader, he was not a bum, and it would probably break his pride to give the man the turkey, so he decided he would sell it to him. "How much money do you have?" the attorney asked. The man responded, "I have a couple of dollars and a few cents." "I would like to sell you this turkey," and he placed it in his lap and said, "sold," and proceeded to take the man's last couple of dollars. The

man was moved to tears and thrilled to death that his family would have Thanksgiving at home with a turkey. He got off the bus and waved to the attorney with kind words such as “God bless you” and “have a wonderful Thanksgiving,” and “I will remember you forever.” The bus then drove off.

The stranger got home and announced to the family, “You will never believe the nice man I met today!” He set the turkey down on the table and begun to unwrap it only to find a paper bird weighed down with lead. The next day at the office, the attorney came in and his friends were dying to know about the turkey. You can imagine the look on their faces when they heard the nice story of the stranger on the bus.

Chuck tells us that from what he understands, the attorney and his friends searched the bus lines for the next week for that man who, as far as he knew, still entertains a misunderstanding about a guy who sold him a fake turkey for \$2.00.

We never know where people are coming from, what kind of past they have had, what experiences have shaped the way they are, and how they see things. When we see or hear about someone who we want to judge and say negatives things about, take a second to step back and think of a best-case scenario instead of the worst-case scenario about them. Dig deep and try to understand what they are made of. Seek first to understand before being understood, and watch your relationships flourish.

“Lord, grant that I may not seek so much to be understood as to understand.” – Saint Francis of Assisi

Principle #4: Commitment

Commitment is really the glue that holds everything together. It is the trust, respect, and seeking to understand that makes a relationship run smoothly and prosperously, and it is the commitment to these things that makes it solid.

I think we live in a society of weak commitments: We seem to be taking less responsibility as we want to lean on others or the government to solve our problems. Relationships are truly the best test of our commitments, especially marriage. It is common to hear the stories of long-term relationships in which

the commitment they once had for one another was key to their success. Take the following story, for example:

“Here we stand, arm-in-arm, in our oldest child’s backyard on a beautiful summer evening, surrounded by friends and family. Candles are twinkling, tables are piled high with food, and big band music is playing out of speakers on the patio. It is our 40th wedding anniversary party, and as our daughter toasts our love and our commitment to each other and everyone raises their glasses above their heads, I catch the sight of a tear glimmering in the corner of my wife’s eye.

“We didn’t make it this far because it was easy. We made it through 40 years of marriage because we vowed that we would. We were committed even when it didn’t feel like we were, and that meant never backing out, even when it was hard, or uncomfortable, or painful. We learned to compromise and discovered that difficult situations can make you stronger and more patient. Staying committed to your goals and dreams doesn’t guarantee you’ll have an easy road, but you’ll be working toward something important with every step you take in that direction. Tonight, the smile on my wife’s face is all I need to tell me it has been worth it.”

I like this story because it’s true, for one thing, but also because the couple mention the commitment to their goals. I believe that commitment to your goals and dreams is as equally important as your commitment to your vows. We all know of long-standing marriages in which neither husband or wife is very happy, and what passes between them has generated into almost total ritual. They do the same things to each other, hold the same opinions about each other, and issue the same complaints. Neither one is willing to grow because both have too much invested in making sure the other never changes. Change and growth is crucial to have happy, rich, and nurturing relationships.

Another huge mistake people make is trying to change the other person. This is a major rejection in life. It’s like saying you are not good enough the way you are and that you should be more like the way I want you to be. It just won’t work. As mentioned above, people don’t change and this will only cause stress and strain for absolutely no gain. The key is to focus on your growth together, in taking relationship courses together, in reading books, and discussing points and applications together.

It is very important to understand that change is a source of disruption and challenge, and that's where commitment and understanding is going to have to come in. You have got to be aware and understanding of the fact that when one person grows, everything in a relationship changes. As Scott Peck talks about in *A World Waiting to be Born* where he describes 'system theory': He explains that just as every cell is part of an organ which is part of a body, that same body is part of our eco-system, and so on. So it is that our relationships are interconnected organisms and when one part changes, the whole system changes and needs to be adjusted. Otherwise, the system breaks down.

This is precisely where commitment and understanding are required because it's often hard to identify what's going on. All we know is that things have changed and it is forcing us to adapt. This is change you have to embrace and not resist. Someone once said, "Individuals do not resist change, they resist *being* changed." Do not resist, instead stay committed to your relationship and your goals and dreams, and you can write your own story at your 40th anniversary.

"I believe life is constantly testing us for our level of commitment, and life's greatest rewards are reserved for those who demonstrate a never-ending commitment to act until they achieve. This level of resolve can move mountains, but it must be constant and consistent. As simplistic as this may sound, it is still the common denominator separating those who live their dreams from those who live in regret." - Anthony Robbins

Bringing the four principles together

There you have it. The four key principles of any relationship: T.R.U.C. We can also see how they tie in to each other, as well: Trust is directly tied to commitment, as respect is to understanding. They are principles that apply to all of our relationships: Friends, lovers, children, or our business and professional relationships.

Bring them all together and you have the definition of 'love'. Have you ever taken the time to define love? What does love mean to you? Why don't you take a minute and write out your definition and see if it has these four principles. See, on paper, what it looks like and ask your spouse and children to write a definition, too. Then, compare.

One of my favorite definitions comes from the Bible. The New International Version says:

“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.”²⁹

It’s short, but sweet, and contains all of the principles while providing a framework to build your relationships upon.

The key is to not violate any of the principles you write in your definition. Do not just take the above definition, but write your own and refine it over the weeks, months, and years. Check yourself when you are having any kind of a problem in your relationship, even a little argument, that you know is not healthy and pull out your definition and ask yourself, “Am I violating my own definition? Am I violating any of the four principles?” It doesn’t have to stop the argument, for sometimes arguments can be healthy in helping to talk out your thoughts and feelings with emotion, even strong emotion, but you must not violate these principles.

Advice to parents

I write these words with tremendous passion and heart-felt need to communicate this point to the mothers and fathers of the world. I am not writing this as a father, but as a son expressing some of the great struggles he went through in his heart and mind growing up due to a simple lack of communication. I am directing this thought to fathers but feel it equally applies to mothers.

This simple lack of communication I am talking about is the inability to express ones feelings. I am not talking about venting ones anger, but the ability to share with your children your weaknesses. I believe that a man shows strength when he can express his fears, when he can sit down and tell his sons and daughters that he is scared to do something. I believe it is where teaching honesty starts: It starts with our feelings about who we are and the fears and insecurities we all have. I believe a lack of this kind of communication is a sign of a weak man, or at least a man who has not grown and probably was not given the same by his own father.

²⁹ 1 Cor, 13:4-7

I believe that every parent should learn, grow, and find the words to be able to express all emotions, that of love, courage, strength, and equally important, those of fear, weakness, and insecurity. A crying man feeling sorry for himself is pitiful, but a man who can express the natural, normal emotions with tears demonstrates courage and strength. It has been proven over and over that the best way to raise secure children who can go forth in this sometimes cruel cold world is to verbally express your love for them day in and day out.

The next huge point is to be able to say that you made a mistake. To be able to ask for forgiveness for getting angry or saying something you didn't really mean to say. There is nothing wrong with having a weakness or making a mistake, we all have them and we all make them, the only problem that develops is when we can't admit them, make the corrections, and move forward. Your inability to express your emotions and admit your mistakes is one of the major contributors to raising insecure children.

Insecurity will rob you of life and it will rob your children of a future. You cannot go through life timid and insecure or you will miss the opportunities to experience the greatest joys of relationships and the wonderful feelings that can be expressed and embraced to give your life color, meaning, and purpose. Insecurity will rob your future by making you afraid to step out and risk making a mistake or failing, holding you back from ever trying anything that can bring great rewards.

Insecurity does not come from growing up without material things, a nice house or clothes. It comes from not knowing you are loved and the inability to deal with your emotions. Parents, I can't tell strongly enough how important it is to develop emotionally and grow to be able to share those feelings, those thoughts and struggles with your children. Parents, you have got to be good at expressing your feelings and back them up with actions, because this can make the biggest difference to your children's future.

Advice to couples

I'd like to articulate my observation of couples who are having a difficult time making their relationships work, those that are on the verge of break up or divorce. In all cases, it is their lack of clarity of what they want in their relationship that prevents them from making progress. Over and over, people allow their emotions and feelings to take them on a journey that leads them nowhere. During this undirected journey, all of their baggage, insecurities,

emotional wounds, negative feelings, and negative experiences surface and cause conflict that prevents quality relating. Over and over, they bring up past issues that will never help them go forward. It's the relationship killer of looking into the rear-view mirror when trying to go forward.

This is an interesting analogy because it demonstrates much of the dynamics in a relationship and explains why they don't make progress. Try driving your car sometimes like that: Get on an open stretch of road with nobody on it and try driving forward but while only looking in the rear-view mirror. It's kind of exciting and you can actually move forward: On a good straight-away, you can even pick up some speed, maybe 20 or 30 miles-per-hour, but as soon as you come to some obstacles or a turn in the road, you are going to veer off-road and crash. It is guaranteed to happen because you cannot see, deal with, or avoid what's coming up or what's right in front of you. The deception is that the road continues to look straight through the mirror, the rocks and hills have gone by and you think that you're heading the right way, but the truth is you're not. You're heading for disaster – maybe a cliff – but you're just cruising right along.

This is as true in life as it is in relationships. Nothing is straight-forward: There will always be bumps and curves, rocks and hills, narrow bridges, steep cliffs, and oncoming traffic, all of which will require our attention. All of those obstacles are the insecurities, fears, dysfunctions, and emotional wounds that have not been healed.

Advice on therapy

Sometimes, therapy can be valuable, but I think that most people waste way too much time, money, and the skills and education of a therapist because they are not clear on what they want. The best pre-therapy, by far, is to get absolutely clear on what you would like your relationship to be: Set some goals, identify the obstacles, make some plans, and get to work.

You will find quite quickly that when you are clear on your values and relationship goals, that 90% of the obstacles will disappear, and those few that remain will become very small when your goals, trust, respect, understanding, and commitment are there. Then, and only then, if you cannot get passed certain issues in your plan toward your goal, seek the advice of a counselor. Then, the therapist has something to work with and you will get the best bang for your buck. You will be an informed consumer, and both of you will have something

tangible to work with. My advice is to stay away from therapists who start by digging up junk from the past in order to go forward. Start with your goal and don't stop on that journey until you are blocked or when something is beyond your understanding. Remember that you only see the obstacles when you take your eye off the goal.

Chapter 3 Applications

1. Definition of Love

Write out a clear definition of 'love'. Make it a family project for you and your loved ones.

1. Each of you come up with a definition and then discuss it together.
2. Combine the definition so that you have one clear definition that everybody agrees with.

I suggest two things: 1) Type it on a computer, change the font, add some color, put a border around it, and frame it as a wall plaque; 2) write it on the back of a business card or, better yet, write it on the back of a picture of your family or loved one, then laminate it and keep it in your wallet.

Whenever you are having struggles in your relationship, pull it out and read it once or twice. Do this until you have it memorized and can unconsciously apply it for any and all of your relationships.

2. T.R.U.C.

This simple acronym binds together the four key principles from this chapter:

- Trust
- Respect
- Understanding
- Commitment

Apply the T.R.U.C. principles of relationships. Whenever relationship struggles emerges, when you get frustrated with your kids or loved ones, silently ask yourself:

- Am I violating any of these four principles?
- Identify which one you feel you are violating and then apologize to your loved one.

Say, “[Loved one], I am sorry for not [understanding, respecting, trusting, committing to] you. Forgive me, please.”

“Try not to become a man of success, but rather try to become a man of value.”

- Albert Einstein

CHAPTER 4: PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT IS RESPONSIBILITY

“Man must cease attributing his problems to his environment, and learn again to exercise his will, his personal responsibility.”

- Albert Schweitzer

In the block-buster movie, *Spiderman*, the uncle of Peter Parker was noticing that he was going through some changes, and not knowing he was changing into Spiderman, he tried to advise him. The uncle told Peter he would do great things and that he wanted him to remember that “with great power comes great responsibility.” These are excellent words to consider and quite similar to “with every freedom comes great responsibility.”

Being response-able

Responsibility is the personal characteristic for the 21st Century. It is what we desire of our big corporations, whose manufacturing and production of products and materials is contributing to the destruction of our planet. It is what we desire of our governments and political leaders to guide our countries into the right direction. It is what we desire of our parents and children so that we may live in a home free from worry and uncertainty. If it is what we desire of everyone else, then it must be what we should strive for in ourselves.

Responsibility is the mark of a mature person, the outstanding executive, the high-performing athlete, and the highly effective parent or perfect child. Brian Tracy – who claims to have studied over 3,300 books, articles, and papers on leadership – concludes that responsibility is the ultimate key to peak performance or success at any level. It is when you take 100% responsibility that you begin to make true progress in life.

You cannot make progress and grow as long as you have something else to blame, an excuse for why you are where you are and for who you are. I know the courts are full of cases of people getting off charges because the courts have concluded that they are not responsible. There is the regular occurrence of people who go into bars, get drunk, drive home, crash, and kill someone yet sue

the bar, beer manufacturer, or auto maker and win because of someone else's responsibility.

The law offices around the world are full of cases that contain “exceptions” which shift the responsibility. Right or wrong, you are who you are and where you are because of the decisions you have made, and if you want things to become different in the future then you need to take 100% responsibility. The good news is, if there is any area of your life you are not satisfied with, all you have to do is make different decisions; but first, you must take full responsibility. Your decisions are the one thing you have total control over. You cannot control your emotions: They emerge from things that happen and all you can control is your response. That is being *response*-able.

Courage

Responsibility is not as easy as one might think. It may be simple and might start with the simple act of saying, “From now on, I accept 100% responsibility,” but living it out is another story. It may take a tremendous amount of courage. It will take effort on your part and it will take more personal growth and development to maintain and stay the course.

It is simply not easy, which is why your personal development will be the issue. We must grow and mature in character so that we have the confidence, awareness, and courage to start making new decisions and being more responsible individuals. When all your friends are going a direction you feel is not right, it takes tremendous courage and character to go the other way. Sir Winston Churchill said, “Courage is rightly considered the foremost of the virtues for upon it all others depend.”

I fully agree and hope that this book may be a contribution your courage. I believe the more we develop ourselves, as I have defined in the beginning, the more courageous and responsible we all will become. One thing is for sure: The more responsibility you accept, the more you will like yourself and respect yourself; and the more you respect yourself, the better decisions you will make and the more you will grow in responsibility and courage, in turn. Make a decision today to be 100% responsible in every area of your life.

Excuses

Do not blame and come up with excuses for anything. Sure, there may be legitimate excuses once in a while, but so what? Excuses limit your abilities much more than you might think. They play with your mind and weaken your ability

to respond and be responsible. I remember two incidents that proved this point to myself and which made an incredible difference in how I dealt with the situation. At a very difficult time in my life, possibly a midlife crisis, I recall being convinced that I had clinical depression, or at least a pastor in our church was teaching on this from her experience and I seemed to have all the symptoms.

I pondered how she had dealt with it, accepted the diagnosis, and proceeded to get on the medication and go through all the therapy. She highly recommended that I see a doctor. I acknowledged her concern, my symptoms, and said, "If I accept this diagnosis, it will give me an excuse not to become what I desire." So, I took full responsibility and would not accept the excuse and proceeded toward my goals and never looked back.

The same thing happened a few years later when I started complaining about my ability to focus. It's funny how that works: When you start complaining, you begin to meet all kinds of people that will support your complaints. I met people who had been diagnosed with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD). Again, I had all the symptoms. My mother believed my father had it, my brother had it, and I am certain that if I continued complaining, I would have it, too. Like towards the attitude I took towards depression, I said, "So what?" I was certainly not going to take Ritalin and so decided I would not accept ADD as an excuse. I could not see what good it would do to even begin to pursue whether or not they could diagnose me with this problem. I simply faced the fact that it may take a little more effort on my part to remain focused on activities.

I had found another huge benefit of having clear goals and plans: It is the starting place for focus and concentration. I am sure that most people could get off Ritalin if they clearly identified their goals and focused on them instead of their excuse.

The Advice

Drop your excuses and just say to yourself, "*This or that* excuse is nice, but I am responsible," and then decide what you are going to do about it. I love the advice Brian Tracy gives. He says in his Maximum Achievement program that he was once given 'The Advice' and now gives it to everyone that goes through his course. Here is The Advice:

When people come up to you and whine and complain, when they start talking with 'victim talk' that expresses their helplessness and powerlessness, when they begin to rehash old issues that you know

drags them down, then stop them and simply say, “That’s nice and you are responsible, now what are you going to do about it?” It is the advice we need to say to ourselves every time we catch ourselves blaming and complaining.

It takes a lot of effort to be responsible, whereas it does *not* take effort not to be. Health is an excellent example of effort verses ‘the easy way’. We live in a time where medicine has never been better, doctors have never been better, knowledge about health and equipment is easier to access, gyms are open 24 hours a day, and information is free or readily accessible, yet more people are sick and unhealthy than ever before.

Nobody can do it for you

The report, *The Surgeon General’s Call to Action to Prevent and Decrease Overweight and Obesity*, states: “Being overweight and obesity are among the most pressing new health challenges we face today.” HHS Secretary Tommy G. Thompson said:

“Our modern environment has allowed these conditions to increase at alarming rates and become a growing health problem for our nation. By confronting these conditions, we have tremendous opportunities to prevent the unnecessary disease and disability they portend for our future. Being overweight and obesity may soon cause as much preventable disease and death as cigarette smoking.”

Approximately 300,000 U.S. deaths per year are currently associated with obesity and being overweight (compared to more than 400,000 deaths per year associated with cigarette smoking). The total direct and indirect costs attributed to being overweight and obesity amounted to \$117 billion in the year 2000. In 1999, an estimated 61 percent of U.S. adults were overweight, along with 13 percent of children and adolescents.

Obesity among adults has doubled since 1980, while three-times as many adolescents are now overweight. Only 3 percent of all Americans meet at least four of the five federal Food Guide Pyramid recommendations for the intake of grains, fruits, vegetables, dairy products, and meats; and less than one-third of Americans meet the federal recommendations to engage in at least 30 minutes

of moderate physical activity at least five days a week, while 40 percent of adults engage in no leisure-time physical activity at all.³⁰

Health care costs our governments billions of dollars per year, and most of the health problems come from individuals' bad habits that they actually have full control over. If you want good health and to be free from disease, you must be responsible for your diet and exercise. It's going to take effort on your part to get off the couch and walk, ride, swim, work out, and eat right.

I don't know of anyone who wouldn't like to be free of all illness and disease, to have lots of energy and to be in great shape, but I do know of very few that are willing to develop the discipline and gather the knowledge that will give them the power to do these things in order to have this health freedom.

Become a personal leader

The reason is that the people who comprise the above statistics are just plain lazy. I don't doubt that many are, but I am sure that most of the problem stems from ignorance, which personal development is the answer to. We have to grow beyond our present understanding and awareness. Ignorance is *not* bliss. Ignorance is poverty, ignorance is disease, and ignorance can rob you of life and responsibility. Take control of your outcomes and become a personal leader.

Do not get caught up in the attitudes of blame, complaint, and the negativity of society. People love to complain and blame, and all too often society leads us to accepting these kinds of attitudes. I have found with the dozens of men and women that I have worked with, that those who had lower levels of personal awareness were more easily shaped by the media, culture, friends, society, and their feelings to the point where they seemed out of control of who they had become, falling prey to indecision and a lack of responsibility. Society puts all kinds of pressure on you to conform. Steven Covey said in *Principle Centered Leadership*, "Beware of being drawn into the culture traps that values personal freedom and independence rather than responsibility and interdependence." People are indirectly lead to believe in freedom without being made aware of the incredible costs. With every freedom comes incredible responsibility.

³⁰ US Public Health Service. *The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Prevent and Decrease Overweight and Obesity*. 2001. <<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/pdf/CalltoAction.pdf>>

If you want to be financially free, then you must be responsible with your money. “Take care of the pennies and the dollars will take care of themselves” is a popular saying. If you want a happy family, then you must take responsibility for that outcome and make the necessary changes so that you get that result. If we want a healthy organization, then the leaders must be responsible with what they have been entrusted with. And if we want to live in a healthy country, then we all must take responsibility to play our part as concerned citizens and personal leaders, not blaming and complaining, but men and women of action and maturity.

The price of freedom: Responsibility

Sometimes, the systems we are a part of seem so complex and large that no matter what we do, nothing seems to make a difference. Nevertheless, everything does count and everything you do does make a difference. Just as a drop of water ripples out across the entire pond, so your attitude and actions go a long way. It has been said that for evil to triumph in our society, all we need is for good men and women to do nothing. I do not think that most are aware of the real costs of the freedoms we seek. We want to be free individuals, able to express ourselves without the consideration of how our thinking affects other people.

This is an area where freedom goes to a whole new level of responsibility. It seems these days there are many groups that are more concerned about their individual rights than doing the right thing. They lack moral responsibility, as defined by Webster’s dictionary: Lacking a sense of right and wrong – lacking moral responsibility. It is one thing to be irresponsible with yourself, but the fact is that you always affect someone else and so it is part of your moral responsibility to consider others: Do not act without thinking through your responsibilities. Think through all those who you will affect and be sure you understand the depths of your personal freedoms. Originally published in 1948, an article titled *We hold to these Truths* concludes with these words:

“Your rights are inviolable, and so are mine. Your individual rights are limited as soon as they cross my rights. Every person must recognize that personal rights are restricted by the rights of others.”

This is the essence of individual freedom. Understanding all of this, I can see why many want to ‘escape from freedom’ as suggested by Erich Fromm, in his book bearing that exact title, in which he says:

“Can freedom become a burden too heavy for man to bear, something he tries to escape from? Is there not also, perhaps, besides an innate desire for freedom, an instinctive wish for submission?”³¹

The more freedom you want, the more responsible you must become and the more responsible you must act. It is our actions that prove what we believe, as Dr. Laura comments over and over as the moral voice on North American radio air waves: “Morals don’t have anything to do with feelings, but with actions.” As I commented earlier, which she affirms: Nobody can control their feelings, only control their response to those feelings, and that is your moral responsibility.

Viktor Frankl introduced the term ‘existential analysis’, which interprets human existence as responsibility being the essence of existence, or put in more simple terms, that human beings be response-*able*. I love Frankl’s inversion of the question, “What is the meaning of life?” He contended that it is not man who asks the question, but life itself that asks us and we who have to answer. Man has to respond by being responsible.³²

Actions are louder than words

It does not matter what you say you are like, or what you wish you would be like, it is only what you do that dictates what you believe: Your actions do speak louder than your words. This is why I recommended in the previous chapter, when explaining how to rebuild trust in a relationship, that you do not tell your partner what you are going to do, but instead show them. Let your actions demonstrate how you are changing. We also know that our actions will in turn shape our beliefs. We know that you can act your way into good morals, love, and almost any state of being. We know that a physical action triggers emotions and chemicals that can induce a mental state.

Anthony Robbins is a master at teaching this kind of response with the strategy known as Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP). We often teach those who lack motivation that you don’t wait until you’re motivated and then go do the actions, but that you do the actions and then you will be motivated. Ralph Waldo Emerson said, “Do the thing and you will have the power.” These methods and strategies are all great and I often use them for specific results like

³¹ Fromm, Erich. *Escape from Freedom*. New York: Hot, Rinehart & Winston Publication, 1941.

³² Frankl, Viktor E. *Man's Search for Ultimate Meaning*. 1997.

working out. Often, I don't feel like exercising but I know that as soon as I am 5 to 10 minutes into my work out routine, I will have the full motivation and energy I thought I needed to begin with. Another method is to change the way you think, which will in turn change your actions.

Change your beliefs and that will change your attitude, which in turn will change your actions and give you different results. I believe this to be the meaning of the often-quoted biblical phrase, "be transformed by the renewing of the mind."³³ This is the ultimate process which I call 'personal development', lasting permanent change that comes from a heightened sense of awareness and knowledge. Many are not even aware that they have some barrier to accepting 100% responsibility: Their excuses are strong and hold them back, making personal development the issue. It is the great challenge for human beings to fully exercise their free will to make right choices: The ability to choose, the ability to change regardless of how our past was and how much conditioning we have gone through, all to become who we are now. This is what makes us unique and different from every other living thing.

You can choose to be anything you want. Your genetic code will force you to physically be a certain way, but the way you think, the attitude you have, and ultimately the values you live by and the things you acquire will all come from your choices. If you will take 100% responsibility for those choices, then you can literally become anything you decide to be. You can be as moral as you choose, as rich as you want, as healthy as you desire, as funny, as skilled, and anything that is learned, designed, invented, imagined, and created: All are not beyond your capability.

The biblical phrase, "The truth will set you free," must be taken in context: The whole verse actually goes: To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."³⁴ This implies that you have to take responsibility, learn what he teaches, act accordingly, and then you will experience the truth that sets you free. Remember the story about the man who took a rock pile, and in a couple years, turned it into a beautiful garden:

A few years later, one man toured the garden and thought it was fabulous, but he wanted to make sure the gardener didn't take all the

³³ Romans 12:2, NIV

³⁴ John 8:31-32, NIV

credit. So, when he had a chance to meet him after the tour, he shook his hand and said, "Mister, you and the good Lord, together, have a beautiful garden here." The gardener replied, "I understand your point, sir: If it wasn't for the seed and soil, the miracle of the seasons, the sunshine and the rain, then there certainly wouldn't be any garden here. But," he continued, "you should have seen this place a few years ago when God had it all to himself."

Sooner or later, each individual has to come to terms with the fact that they are responsible. Jesus, Buddha, or Allah won't make that decision for you. We cannot blame the past, society, parents, or the weather, regardless of the impact they have all had. Now is the best time to be responsible and make new decisions.

Chapter 4 Applications

1. Decide that you are 100% responsible.

Just consciously choose to be 100% response-able for everything going on in your life:

1. Whenever you catch yourself giving excuses for something, then quickly rephrase by saying, "That was my excuse, now I am going too..."
2. When you find yourself blaming someone or something, then immediately stop and say nothing or, "That may have been the case, but I am going to..."
3. Catch yourself saying "yeah, but..." and remember that that usually leads to an excuse or, worse, it shows disrespect for the other person. (refer to Chapter 3 on *Relationship Success*)

Ask your family and loved ones to give you The Advice when they hear you complaining, blaming, and giving excuses for what's not working right. Be kind and wise to know the difference between expressing one's feelings, emotions, and unhealthy complaining and blaming. When people complain, whine, and talk 'victim talk', give them The Advice. Nicely say, "That's nice, and you are responsible. Now what are you going to do about it?"

2. Consider an accountability partner or mentor

An accountability partner is a supporter, not a nag. Webster's New Illustrated Dictionary's definition of 'accountability' is:

1. Liable to be called to account; responsible

2. Capable of being accounted for or explained

Being accountable takes a tremendous amount of character, courage, and honesty. It is not an easy thing to do (being accountable) or ask for (accountability). As Webster's defines, accountability has to do with responsibility, and 100% of it. It also has to do with an account, meaning the facts and figures, not excuses and stories. It also has to do with trust and respect.

An accountability partner is someone with whom you can confide your struggles, weaknesses, and insecurities in. You must respect and choose this person wisely. First and foremost, an accountability partner is a friend, not a mother or a nag, and certainly not someone who is going to feel sorry for you and join in any pity parties. He or she is *not* someone with whom you share all your excuses with, about why you didn't do what you said you were going to do. They are not someone you dump on or who will necessarily give you any advice - that's a counselor.

He or she is someone you can be serious with, someone you can trust not to tell others about the things you discuss or the goals you have. They are someone who you have given the right to ask you how you are doing in relation to the goals you are trying to achieve or the struggles you are trying to overcome. You are ask accountability for straight and honest answers. If you cannot be straight and honest, then you are not willing to be accountable, yet.

3) Questions to contemplate

Here are questions I may ask and expect straight answers to, not excuses or beating-around-the-bush:

1. What exactly are your goals? Can you show me them in print or in tangible plans?
2. What exactly are you doing to achieve them, and can you demonstrate that? Can you show me books read, classes took, money spent, connections made, commitments and decisions made, etc.?
3. How do you spent your time? Show me your days or last week's schedule on exactly how you used your time.
4. Why do you have this goal? Why do you think this is valuable to do? Why are you doing this?
5. Who do you model and what do you know about them?

“The price of greatness is responsibility.”

- Sir Winston Churchill

CHAPTER 5: PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT IS LIFE'S PURPOSE

“We make our world significant by the courage of our questions and the depth of our answers.”

- Carl Sagan

A survey published by the American Council of Education concluded that among 171,509 students screened, the highest goal held by 68.1% was developing a meaningful philosophy of life. Another statistical survey conducted by John Hopkins University, and sponsored by The National Institute of Mental Health, found that among 7,948 students at 48 colleges, only 16% said their goal was to make a lot of money whereas 78% wanted to find purpose and meaning.

This search has been with mankind since the beginning of time. It has been the aim of all religions and all philosophies throughout time to provide us with tools, paths, and understanding to give us greater peace of mind, purpose, and meaning.

The new cosmology

The search for meaning and purpose seemed to be at its height entering into this new millennium. For two years in a row, Trinity Western University successfully hosted an international conference on the “search for meaning in the new millennium”, and a simple search on Google for “meaning and purpose” will reveal 70,000 websites addressing the subject.

Yes, even though surveys reveal most believe that we live in better times, there is the continual search for what it’s all about. As Albert Einstein said: “To be religious is to have found an answer to the question, ‘What is the meaning of life?’” For some, this may hold true, but for many this doesn’t seem to cut it anymore, and rightfully so.

The true answer lies in continuous growth and development, not settling on a particular view, faith, or understanding. Paleontologists believe that human beings have inhabited the Earth for at least four millions years (or 4.4 Million, according to the American Anthropologist, Tim White). *Homo erectus* seems to have come onto the scene two million years ago and *Homo sapiens*, similar to

what we are today, about 200,000 years ago, leading us to some new thinking about humans and the new cosmology.

Different from traditional secular or religious perspectives, this new cosmology offers a radically different understanding. Diarmuid O’Murchu describes it as follows:

“The new cosmology claims that creation itself is the primary revelation, that God’s life and love become visible and tangible first and foremost in the unfolding of universal life. In this context, each of the religions is deemed to be a particular crystallization of God’s revelation for a specific time and culture. Spirituality, rather than religion, is the central concern of the new cosmology. It seeks to explore the spiritual meaning of the evolutionary process over the billions of years before humanity ever came to be.”³⁵

But not all hold to this new cosmology in this sense. Dr. Hugh Ross, a respected scientist, claims a very different perspective on the evolution of man. In fact, he claims there is no evolution *what-so-ever*:

“In the late 1980s and early 1990s, a number of studies examined the mitochondria DNA (mtDNA) of women from all over the world. These studies suggested that the last common ancestor of modern man (actually women) appeared within the last 200,000 years, which is much more recent than previously thought. Refinements in the measurements lowered the original estimates to 135,000 years, and finally to 100,000 years (and as discussed below, even possibly 50,000 years).

“Another interesting feature of the hominid fossil record is the apparent disappearance of Homo sapiens between 80,000 and 40,000 years ago. From an evolutionary perspective, it has been proposed that Homo sapiens’ populations plummeted to near extinction and then, for some unknown reason, bounced back in full force about 40,000 years ago. The sudden appearance of modern humans in the fossil record at 40,000 years ago is in complete agreement with the biblical date for the appearance of mankind. Given that the fossil record is so sparse and that the dating is problematic beyond 35,000 years ago, it is uncertain as

³⁵ O’Murchu, Diarmuid. *Reclaiming Spirituality*. The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1998.

to the true identity or true time of appearance of the Omo Kibish and Skhul and Qafzeh finds.

“It is quite conceivable that these specimens may not even be Homo sapiens, given their behavior. If these specimens are not true humans, then the absence of Homo sapiens in the fossil record between 40,000 and 80,000 years ago may actually represent the extinction of those particular species of bipedal primates, or reflect the fact that Homo sapiens did not appear on Earth until about 40,000 years ago. If this is the case, then the sudden appearance of modern man at 40,000 years ago can be attributed to the special creation of man by the Creator.”³⁶

I had the privilege of having dinner with Dr. Ross and his local chapter affiliates prior to a university lecture, at which time I had the opportunity to ask him if I understood his interpretation correctly.

I asked, “Doctor, are you saying that human beings were just instantly created some 40,000 years ago and have no ancestral ties to any of the other life forms?”

“Yes,” he replied.

His belief is that man was formed separate from the rest of creation approximately 35-50,000 year ago by God. To me, this seemed unbelievable and wondered if he was trying to make his science fit his theology, but Dr. Ross is a respected scientist and supports his view with solid academic research. Truthfully, I find it is the only way for much of evangelical theology and the story of salvation and Jesus to make any real sense.

In any case, this is a scientific and theological debate which has been debated throughout the six thousand years of recorded human history, and should be debated. It is in this process of questioning, debating, and challenging that we grow as human beings. Here is where I would like to remind us of two quotes I used at the beginning of this book and the beginning of this chapter, respectively:

³⁶ Ross, Dr. Hugh. “Up from the Apes. Remarkable New Evidence Is Filling in the Story of How We Became Human.” August 23, 1999.
<<http://www.godandscience.org/evolution/timeresponse.html>>

*"As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another." -
Proverbs 27:17, NIV*

And:

*"We make our world significant by the courage of our questions
and the depth of our answers." - Carl Sagan*

I believe that religion will have to go through a radical transformation, as will all bodies of intellect and wisdom, as we grow and understand more about ourselves and the universe we live in. Religion, especially Evangelical Christianity, seems to have tremendous pressure to reconcile its theology with the new story of the universe. I have read dozens of books from priests, pastors, scholars, and believers that are expressing the need to rethink our positions and grow to a deeper level of understanding. It should be obvious that much of our past thinking, being dogmatic on doctrines or view points, has led to much of the problems in our world and has certainly suppressed our opportunity to grow. As the website Religious Tolerance says:

"Religion is a unique force in society. It promotes both good and evil. Historically, it has helped to abolish slavery. It has promoted racial integration, equal rights for women, and equal rights for gays and lesbians. It has motivated individuals to create massive support services for the poor, the sick, the hurting, and the broken. Conversely, it has been used to justify slavery, racial segregation, oppression of women, discrimination against homosexuals, genocide, extermination of minorities, and other horrendous evils.

"Religion drives some to dedicate their lives to help the poor and needy, for example: Gandhi, Albert Schweitzer, and Mother Teresa. It drives others to exterminate as many 'heretics' as they can. Consider the mass murder, as in Bosnia, East Timor, India, Korea, Kosovo, the Middle East, Northern Ireland, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Tibet, and so on. In short, religion has the capability of generating unselfish love in some people, and vicious, unadulterated hatred in others. It has immense energy to motivate individuals to achieve great good and profound evil."³⁷

³⁷ <<http://www.religioustolerance.org>>

For me, it is a relief to hear that many are thinking out of the box and are willing to accept that we don't have it all figured out, but that we need to try to approach life from a different angle. Diarmuid O'Murchu, in his book, *Reclaiming Spirituality*, says his goal for the book is "to retrieve the long-lost subverted tradition of spirituality, and to reestablish its primary significance in the human search for meaning and purpose in life. Religious faith today does not follow a linear progressive process of gradually expanding understanding and progressively deeper commitment."

Changes *are* taking place in the church, like any other organization, and maybe it's time for a radical change in our thinking. As Thomas Berry says:

*"The arrogance continues, even though the consequences are so evident. At this time, the questions arise concerning the role of the traditional religions. My own view is that any effective response to these issues requires a religious context, but that the existing religious traditions are too distant from our new sense of the universe to be adequate to the task that is before us. We cannot do without the traditional religions, but they cannot presently do what needs to be done. We need a new type of religious orientation. This must, in my view, emerge from our new story of the universe. This constitutes, it seems, a new regulatory experience that can be understood as soon as we recognize that the evolutionary process is, from the beginning, a spiritual as well as a physical process."*³⁸

There is a trend away from organized religion. Last year, the Vancouver Sun had a series in the newspaper called the "Decade of God", which communicated that there was a fervent desire in the seeking hearts of people in Vancouver. People were changing churches and religions because of a lack of fulfillment, satisfaction, and results in life, with the fastest growing religion being non-church. This trend away from organized religion is for good reason, and the dissatisfied is understandable as 'the church' or 'religion' itself lacks the ability to encourage growth.

My experience is that the local church or parish is more interested in you to conform to a particular way of thinking than to grow to new levels of understanding. They seem to be more bent on who's right or wrong, hanging on to their doctrine instead of guiding personal and spiritual development, which is

³⁸ Berry, Thomas. *The Dream of the Earth*. 1988.

where I contend we will find true purpose and meaning in our lives. As Matthew Fox says:

“When it comes to religion, many of the most thoughtful young adults are really post denominational. They want spiritual experience and the ethical responsibility it implies, but they are not committed to the ‘us-versus-them’ ideology that has accompanied so much of the history of the institute of religion.”

Better said are the words from the controversial bishop, John Shelby Spong, in his book, *Why Christianity must Change or Die*:

“The task of the church, for example, becomes less that of indoctrinating or relating people to an external divine power and more that of providing opportunities for people to touch the infinite center of all things and grow into what they are destined to be.”³⁹

Another one of the many priests, scholars, and theologians rethinking their faith and recognizing that the traditional patriarchal structure of religion slows – or more accurately, chokes and retards – spiritual growth, Diarmuid O’Murchu, says:

“Orthodox spirituality, of all the religious traditions, suffers from extreme asphyxiation. Within the religious systems, the breadth and depth of God’s creativity has been virtually choked by well-intentioned but largely misguided gurus. Only by the death and destruction of formal religion can we hope to reclaim spirituality where it truly belongs, where it has flourished for billions of years.”

I believe that new cosmology thinking is on the right track: It is for us to “grow into what [we] are destined to be.”

The origin of purpose and meaning

Purpose and meaning in life do not come from a belief system of information and experience you have gathered, as such is purely subjective and more than likely inaccurate. We have got to accept the fact that we ‘know’ very little – we need to be more humble beings seeking to grow and learn, especially from our past, of which we seem to be such terrible students.

³⁹ Spong, John Shelby. *Why Christianity must Change or Die*. HarperOne, 1999.

Human arrogance is at the top of our problems: Thinking we know just because we read, saw, did, or experienced. The fact is we know very little. We used to believe the world was flat and the Earth was the center of the universe, and if you thought any different you would have been burned at the stake. What we know about the universe, and the more we unravel the meaning of life, the more aware we become of how little we actually know. It is currently estimated that we understand a little more than one-percent of the entire evolutionary process. Advances in science, medicine, and all bodies of knowledge continually grow, expanding our awareness and understanding. The worst thing you can do is think that you have it all figured out or that your understanding is 100% correct. This attitude marks one as arrogant or insecure and is precisely what leads to the very destructive side of the human personality.

Purpose and meaning do not come from any external circumstance either, but as difficult times may be part of the process, they at least shape your character. This is what Viktor Frankl learned in the concentration camps of Auschwitz:

“I had to teach despairing men that it did not really matter what we expected from life, but rather what life expected from us. They needed to stop asking what the meaning of life was, but think they were being questioned by life, daily and hourly, and the answer must consist in right action and conduct. Life ultimately means taking the responsibility to find the right answer to its problems and to fulfill the tasks which it constantly sets forth.”⁴⁰

Learning to ask questions, take responsibility, and act in a forward direction may be more meaningful than anything else that Frankl discovered.

Purpose and meaning do not come from your faith or religion, even though they can be powerful sources from which many draw. Frankl concludes his more recent book, *Man's Search for Ultimate Meaning*, with comments that are empirically evidenced by tests and statistics: People who regard themselves as irreligious are no less capable of finding meaning in their lives than those who consider themselves to be religious. We have the Freudian principle which states our 'Will to Pleasure', the Adlerian principle which states our 'Will to Power', and Frankl's logotherapy principle.

⁴⁰ Frankl, Viktor E. *Man's Search for Ultimate Meaning*. 1997.

Dr. Frankl suggests the search for meaning is the primary motivation in life, which is where he derives its name: 'Logos' is a Greek word which denotes 'meaning', giving us 'meaning therapy'. According to logotherapy, we can discover the meaning of life in three different ways, by:

1. creating work or doing a deed;
2. experiencing something or encountering someone, ultimately love;
3. and by the attitude we take regarding unavoidable suffering.

It is clear that our relationships and love for another, even animals, can provide a deep sense of meaning and purpose; but even those require maintenance, commitment, and growth (which we talked about in Chapter 3). Doing good deeds and helping others always builds self-worth, which is why volunteering is highly recommended in the therapy of those who are depressed. Our Federal Government and Corrections Department gathered research regarding recidivism, and concluded that:

"Self-esteem was one of the factors least likely to be changed through programs and learning, they felt an individual's self-worth and esteem would naturally grow when an individual contributed back to society."⁴¹

If you want to build your self-esteem, give of yourself freely without expecting something in return and apply the biblical principle, *it is better to give than it is to receive*. The building of our character, our self-esteem, and our self-image plays a significant role, as well, which is why many people – mostly men – find tremendous satisfaction, purpose, and meaning in work, accomplishments, and making progress.

Franklin D. Roosevelt said, "Happiness lies in the joy of achievement and the thrill of creative effort," and Thomas Wolfe said, "If a man has a talent and learns somehow to use the whole of it, he has gloriously succeeded and won a satisfaction and a triumph few men have ever known." Women on the other hand, tend to find more satisfaction, purpose, and meaning in relationships. Both paths require goals for growth and development, which leads me to the most significant area in which humans find purpose and meaning: Our future!

⁴¹ Andrews, Don A. "Recidivism is Predictable and can be Influenced: Using Risk Assessments to Reduce Recidivism." Laboratory for Research on Assessment and Evaluation in the Human Services Department of Psychology Carleton University.

Our future vision

Our vision for the future is the most compelling, motivating, and meaningful thing we have. Victor Frankl concluded one of his concentration camp experiences with these words:

"It is peculiar that man can only live by looking to the future."

This point is further illustrated by the dramatic demonstration Frankl had with a block warden in a camp. The warden had confided in Victor one day, saying:

"I had a dream last night: A voice told me that I could wish for something, and I should only say what I wanted to know and my questions would be answered."

He asked to know when the war would be over: He wanted to know when the camp would be liberated, and when the sufferings would end! He had this dream in February, 1945, and confided in Viktor at the beginning of March. Frankl then asked what the dream voice had answered, to which the warden replied, "March 30th!"

When the warden told Viktor about his dream, he was still full of hope and confidence that the dream voice would be right, but as the dream date drew near, war news reached the camp that it would be highly unlikely that anything would change by the dream date. By March 29th, the news had not changed and he started to become very ill and ran a fever. On March 30th, the day the prophecy was to be, he became delirious and lost consciousness. On March 31st, he was dead. The loss of hope had dramatically affected the man's ability to fight off typhus, and so his body became victim to the disease.

This is a powerful illustration of how our belief systems affect our life. It was Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche who said:

"He who has a 'why' to live can bear almost any 'how'."

One of the main purposes of this book is to encourage people to set goals, to create and design a compelling future, and to help them overcome much of the fear, insecurity, negativity, emptiness, and any lack of hope. I believe that most of the seeking and 'soul-searching' can be better fulfilled by having goals and a compelling future, as opposed to accepting some faith or religion that is constantly changing. Have a positive, hopeful future as you pursue greater understanding of your faith, yourself, or whatever else you choose to be important. Whatever you get told and accept or choose can only be better

understood by change attained through your personal development: Your growing awareness of yourself, others, and the greater forces acting with us.

I recall my personal experience struggling with my desire for more growth and understanding within my faith at the time, many years ago. It seemed that every time I questioned, my question would be squashed by set doctrines that people bought into, unwilling to explore or challenge.

It was obvious that I was either to conform to the ways of the faith or suppress my need to understand more deeply – but neither was going to happen. Confused as to whether I was doing something wrong or not, I ventured out anyway, exploring the deeper theology of Evangelical Christianity, Catholicism, and Judaism only to find great disagreement and contradiction. Greatly troubled by what I felt in my heart for these differences and divisions, I looked up at my mission statement, reviewed my goals, and said, “It’s okay. I have purpose, meaning, and direction in my life.” It was another time my goals for the future and personal mission statement gave me a deep sense of peace and encouragement to press on.

This vision for a hopeful future gave me strength as I realized that nobody really knows and that mankind has this wonderful gift and ability to grow into ever more conscious and aware beings, and that this gift would be badly abused if we were not to use it and change every aspect of our beings as we evolve into the future. It is the future that holds the greatest opportunity: Look at most of our past as human beings, look at the mistakes we have made, abuses we have performed, and evils we have committed, and look at your own past and tell me how many things you would change. This is the key: Change! Develop and grow into a more conscious being and borrow from the future so you can act differently in the present.

The existential vacuum

We do not lack time, we lack direction that could be filled by our goals and intentions for the future. Time, in fact, is part of the problem; but it is not too little but *too much* time: Leisure time and idleness are the devil’s workshop. David K. Reynolds, who I referred to earlier, begins his book with the view that we live in an era of leisure:

“Technologically-advanced countries or developed nations live with a freedom from life-threatening insecurity like never before in human history. Without the purpose of the struggle for

everyday survival, we find an increasing number of people drifting into lethargy, drugs, and suicide.”⁴²

Frankl seems to agree that the boredom – using the term ‘existential vacuum’ – is showing up to cause more problems than stress: Not knowing what to do with spare time leads many to sexual immorality, depression, aggression, and addiction, and many traces of suicide can be traced back to this phenomenon. Frankl says that today, man’s ‘will to meaning’ is frustrated on a world-wide scale, and feels more and more people are haunted by this existential vacuum, or feeling of emptiness. This feeling manifests itself in boredom and apathy. Boredom indicates a loss of interest in the world, while apathy betrays a lack of the initiative to do something in the world, to change something in the world. Webster’s New Illustrated Dictionary defines ‘apathy’ as a “lack of feeling, emotion, or sensation” or an “indifference, or lack of interest.”

People are simply wanting answers to their problems, but seeking an answer is the wrong approach. The solution is to grow to new levels of awareness and continue questioning. In the fictional book, *The Celestine Prophecy*, a wise priest advised a man by saying:

“The problem in life isn’t finding the right answer but identifying our current questions.”

Engaging yourself in quality questions over and over again is engaging yourself in the miracle of the process of growth: The process of looking, the process of seeking, and the process of finding. Isn’t this what scripture asks and promises?

“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.”⁴³

Scripture also says:

“Make every effort to add to your faith, goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will

⁴² Reynolds, David K. *Water Bares no Scars: Japanese Lifeways for Personal Growth*. 1987.

⁴³ Matthew 7:7-8, NIV

keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord, Jesus Christ. But if anyone does not have them, he is near-sighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins. Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.”⁴⁴

These verses tell me to grow, to increase virtues in life, and to be effective and productive. The process is of continuous improvement and, more importantly, the process of continuous understanding. Knowledge is the path to understanding, to becoming a more aware and conscious human being. The process of discovery never ends, but understand that one can develop, that one can fine-tune the way in which we go about it and become a significantly more alive seeker, experiencing life to its full.

Our society is caught up in instant gratification that never provides lasting fulfillment. I advise people to work on the things they can't measure and they stand a far better chance of success. Things you can't measure are the qualities that personal development produces: The virtues of wisdom, understanding, awareness, emotional intelligence, character, vision, and leadership, to name a few.

Frankl talks about meaning as a whole:

“One must consider to have ultimate meaning: There must be meaning beyond one's self, meaning of the universe or, at the very least, meaning of one's life as a whole.”

He uses the analogy of a film: A movie is made up of many clips which all have meaning, but only upon seeing the whole movie do you get the complete picture. You can create a complete picture for yourself, design a life, and strive to make it a reality. That is the power of the vision of which your goals are the fuel. This is what I have accomplished with the *Life Goals Planner*, a tool with which people can engage in the process of designing a life that provides purpose, meaning, and direction. Establish your goals and strive to be the most that you can be.

⁴⁴ 2 Peter 1:5-11, NIV

Chapter 5 Application

From your prioritized goals and values, create your personal and family mission statements. Read the *Life Goals Planner*, a truly excellent tool for beginning the process of growth based on your chosen values and life's goals.

CHAPTER 6: PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT IS OUR SALVATION

“Our spiritual vision, inherited from the official religion or from the spiritual traditions of the past few thousand years, is not merely inadequate; it may, in fact, be a great delusion based on the inflated, patriarchal instinct of a power-crazy species.”

- Diarmuid O’Murchu

Religions typically hold that human beings have a higher nature that exists in conflict with a lower nature, and that they offer ways to redeem the former from the latter.

Even within a single religious tradition, there may be different versions of this process. Some emphasize the separation of the spiritual part of the self from worldly attachments, while others emphasize living harmoniously in relation to nature, self, and divinity. The concept of religion has helped to expand our minds and thinking on one hand, but on the other it has suppressed and even denied truth and growth.

Freedom of inquiry

At times throughout history, you could have been imprisoned or even burned at the stake for speaking ‘truth’, like the well-recorded events of Galileo, who stands as a symbol of the battle against authority for freedom of inquiry, shows us. Galileo accepted the Copernican theory that the Earth revolves around the Sun, built a telescope with which he discovered that the Milky Way is composed of stars, and discovered the four largest satellites of Jupiter, which he published in March, 1610 in *The Starry Messenger*.

Professors of philosophy scorned Galileo’s discoveries and printed attacks, rejecting his physics. The belief in a moving Earth was heretical. Early in 1616, Copernican books were subjected to censorship by edict, and the Jesuit cardinal, Robert Bellarmine, instructed Galileo that he must no longer hold or defend the

concept that the Earth moves. Galileo was summoned to Rome by the Inquisition to stand trial for ‘grave suspicion of heresy’. This charge was grounded on a report that Galileo had been personally ordered in 1616 not to discuss Copernicanism, either orally or in writing.

Galileo was nevertheless compelled in 1633 to abjure and was sentenced to life imprisonment, then swiftly commuted to permanent house arrest. Galileo’s condemnation has customarily been placed on the Roman Catholic Church. This conceals, however, the role of the philosophy professors who first persuaded theologians to link Galileo’s science with heresy. An investigation into the astronomer’s condemnation, calling for its reversal, was opened in 1979 by Pope John Paul II. In October 1992, a papal commission acknowledged the Vatican’s error.⁴⁵

Resistance to change

One of the greater tragedies in our society, organizations, and even our families today is their ability to suppress good, healthy growth and development. I do not believe that it is intentional, either, but a problem of human insecurity, ignorance, and *resistance* to change. Our arrogance is that our thinking is right, accurate, true, and not to be disagreed with – much less challenged – as well as our inability to support and encourage others to express themselves and their own view.

When people think ‘out of the box’, they are often faced with all kinds of deliberate, conscious, and unconscious opposition which suppresses healthy growth. It is truly sad because this is precisely where we need to continue to be: Pushing our envelope of beliefs and abilities, and stretching ourselves to grow and become the most that we can be. I often quote part of a portion of an address from the former CEO of IBM, Thomas J. Watson, Junior:

“I am not arguing for non-conformity in everything, I'm not urging you, for example, to refuse to be polite, to pay your bills, to stand in line at the supermarket, I'm not even suggesting that you should debate every issue, for if you take a minority position on everything, you won't be a leader, you will be a crank.

“I am calling on you to take a stand on those issues on which you feel disagreement, and differences are not only possible, but necessary. Now, suppose you try to follow this course: What will

⁴⁵ Drake, Stillman. “Galileo.” *Microsoft Encarta 98 Encyclopedia*, 1993-1997.

happen to you? Well, Nicholas Murray Butler, the great president of Columbia University at the beginning of this century, said that the world is made up of three groups of people: A small elite group who make things happen, a somewhat larger group who watch things happen, and the great multitude who don't know what happened."

"This means that the leaders – the makers of opinion in the world – are a very limited group of people, so as you stand and are counted, you will, firstly, run into the group who equate newness with wrongness: If it's a new idea, they won't like it – these are the conventionalists. Secondly, you are sure to meet the cynics: People who believe anyone who sticks his neck out is a fool. I'm sure you've heard of measures which passed the congress in a breeze voice vote and later went down to crash and defeat when some congressmen insisted that every vote be included in the congressional record. Thirdly, you will run into the group of people who believe that there are certain taboo questions that should not be debated: These suppressers of dissent think that once a stand has been taken, it is settled forever. Now, if you buck the power of the conventionalists, the cynics, and the suppressers of dissent, here is what may well happen:

"Sometimes you may look foolish, sometimes you may lose some money or even lose your job. Sometimes you may offend others, and there is no getting around it. Strangely, the expounders of many of the great new ideas in history were frequently considered on the lunatic fringe for some or all of their lives. If you stand up and are counted, from time to time you may get knocked down, but remember this: A man flattened by an opponent can get up again, but a man flattened by conformity stays down for good.

"Therefore, I would like to reverse a traditional piece of advice. You know it well, it goes: "Make no little plans." Instead, I would like to say this: "Make no little enemies, people with whom you differ for some petty insignificant personal reason." Instead, I would urge you to cultivate mighty opposites, people with whom you disagree on big issues and with whom you will fight to the end over fundamental convictions. And that fight, I assure you, will be good for you and your opponent. Follow the path of the

unsafe independent thinker, expose your ideas to the dangers of controversy, speak your mind and fear less the label of ‘crack-pot’ than the stigma of conformity, and on the issues that seem important to you, stand up and be counted at any cost.”

The fear of public speaking – which is continually rated as people’s top fear – is a fear we were not born with but have learned as we grew as a child, fearlessly expressing ourselves until we began to get suppressed, slowly but surely, by our parents, people, and society. This suppression came mostly unconscious, as parents told us not to do this and not to do that.

Studies have revealed that the average child has heard the word ‘no’ 8 times more than the word ‘yes’ before entering grade school. Then, we get into school and the more we express ourselves, the more we begin to hear and experience ridicule, embarrassment, and humiliation, and feel the pressure to conform until we learn not to express ourselves anymore. Along with these experiences, our dreams are squashed and true growth begins to be suppressed. In *Reclaiming Spirituality*, Diarmuid O’Murchu describes a story about Ian, a young adult who was perceived as quite ordinary growing up and without any particular religious belief:

“Ian was blessed with a well-developed capacity to think and reflect. Ian was always a questioner and his parents encouraged him to be one. Fortunately, the education system - which thrives on making people think according to political and cultural expectations – did not succeed in undermining Ian’s searching mind and heart.”

O’Murchu says the inability to think deeply and imaginatively is one of the most serious, social, cultural, and spiritual deprivations of the contemporary world, and so strive to be an Ian.

Encouraging growth

This is one of the great problems with us human beings: We have a huge problem encouraging thoughts and ideas beyond our perceptions and world-views. We squash others’ ambitions, thoughts, and ideas usually before they have even been given the chance to clearly articulate just what it is they are thinking. Often, we need to say something once or twice before it even begins to become clear in our own minds. This is one of the reasons why I emphasize understanding and “seeking first to understand before being understood” as

one of the four key principles to making our relationships work. It is also part of the way we help people grow.

Sometimes, I think that our schools and religions are the greatest hindrances to allowing us to reach our human potential, due to the box that they put us in and the underlying pressures they apply for us to conform. On the other hand, they are needed to engage us in the process of gathering knowledge, learning, and opening our minds to the wealth of knowledge this world has to offer, which is crucial to the process.

Maybe Gardner is on track with his view I quoted earlier:

“The purpose of school should be to develop intelligences and to help people reach vocational and avocation goals that are appropriate to their particular spectrum of intelligence. People who are helped to do so, I believe, feel more engaged and competent, and therefore more inclined to serve society in a constructive way.”

Without a doubt, this is a step in the right direction in helping us to not only begin to serve society in a more constructive way, but to fulfill more of our human potential and build the confidence and self-esteem which enables us to become better people.

I believe this is to be the main role of a parents' job in raising children: To help identify what the child's gifts and skills are and support and encourage growth. It is a difficult thing to do for parents, teachers, and even managers and leaders: To encourage those coming up behind them to learn all that they know and be encouraged to take that knowledge and understanding and rise to greater heights and success. Most, it seems, cannot let go, let alone encourage and support others - and how could they, if they are not even committed to their own growth?

This is one of the greatest sins we can commit – to prevent or block growth – for our entire future depends on us growing to new levels of awareness and understanding. All too many seem to just be trying to get through the day instead of *getting* from the day what can add more value to themselves, their jobs, and their families. We need to be personally committed to deeper levels of understanding for the health and well-being of our individuality and organizations, alike. I believe personal growth to be even more profound than just our health and well-being.

I do not believe that the salvation of our souls has to do with a set of words that we said in front of the altar, or a belief system that we formed by the information we learned from a particular church, nor from the experience we had at a spiritual retreat. In fact, more often than not, the preaching we heard or experiences we had can put us more squarely into a box, limiting growth and awareness. O’Murchu says:

“Religious faith, today, does not follow a linear progressive process of gradually expanding understanding.”

Sadly, the more we follow a limiting set of beliefs, the more we believe them and the more that growth is retarded, all the while believing our thinking is absolutely right, which only leads us into human arrogance. This is our human capacity to be brain-washed, and in some cases, to our deaths, as in many scary stories of the cults of our world.

The ongoing process

The bottom line is that we see through the glass darkly, in which case we need to be careful to support growth instead of limit it. Salvation is not an event but a process, a process of becoming fully human, as M. Scott Peck says:

“Some part of us is always in the process of healing. Consequently, the condition of health is not a static state of perfect wellness, it is among other things a condition of ongoing healing. Physicians are increasingly coming to think that most disease may best be defined as a failure of the healing process.”

Peck said this is crucial because “the principle applies not only to our physical health but also to our mental health, and the health of our institutions and our organizations.” He continues:

“Health is an ongoing process of becoming the most that we can be. The words ‘health’ and ‘healing’ come from the same Anglo-Saxon root: To be ‘whole’ or ‘holy’. Becoming the most that we can be is also the definition of ‘salvation’. The term literally means healing as we apply a salve to the skin to heal it just as we can learn to apply the principles of mental health to our lives to heal, to make us whole, to save our souls.”⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Peck, M Scott. *A World Waiting to be Born*. Bantam, 1993.

These principles are the process of growing in awareness and consciousness, just as we have been for however many thousands or millions of years. It is our human evolution. Peck concludes his chapter, saying:

“We cannot go back to Eden, we cannot – except at the peril of our souls – reverse evolution. We can only evolve for our salvation into ever more conscious beings.”

More and more people are embracing this kind of thought: Not totally rejecting the religions of today, but recognizing their limitations and seeking to grow to new levels. It is a great shame when any organization, group, or even family resists the broadening of their perspective, the growing of their understanding, and the encouragement of its members to reach new heights and fulfill more of their human potential.

I feel the mainstream churches’ biggest shortcoming is their lack of providing and encouraging personal development, along with putting too much focus on the subjective experience and not enough focus on the principles of growth. One thing that is very clear from my experience with various churches and denominations – especially the Evangelical church – is that those individuals that grow personally find greater sense of peace, stronger faith, greater understanding, and greater compassion for others. It is a great shame to see the types of people that cling to a set of doctrines created by their denomination, believing they see things rightly while others do not, that they understand life correctly while other views are wrong. They are in great danger of failing in life, failing to grow because their narrow view blocks them from gaining more wisdom and understanding.

It is here that I hope not to offend anybody, but challenge people to open their minds and seek greater understanding. Grow a little personally and see how that begins to change you and your views, and become a greater human being.

Chapter 6 Application

Start investing in your mind. Engage in personal growth activities, training, books, and tapes that expand your creative abilities, human emotions, and belief systems. Set a personal development goal and create a plan that invests a certain amount of time, energy, talent, and money to become the most that you can be as a person.

POSTFACE: PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT IS THE ISSUE

“So let us reflect on what is truly of value in life, what gives meaning to our lives, and set our priorities on the basis of that. The purpose of our life needs to be positive. Then, our life becomes more meaningful and more peaceful, happier.”

– The 14th Dalai Lama

In adult life, the choice of our values forms the foundation of our character, and the ability to choose our goals employs our incredible human ability to create. When both our values and goals are carefully thought through and chosen, we are equipped to move forward with more confidence and promise. The choosing of our goals also implies responsibility and action, unless a limiting belief holds us back.

We all have some experiences from the past that have wounded us mentally, physically, or emotionally, and which prevent us from moving forward and growing to new levels of success and, more importantly, new levels of awareness. This growth can be painful, as Scott Peck explains:

“Consciousness of self continues to develop throughout childhood, adolescence, and hopefully adulthood, painfully. Consciousness and pain are interwoven. If someone has severe enough physical pain, what do we do? We give him anesthesia to render him unconscious. Similarly, people will anesthetize themselves to deal with their emotional pain, either with drugs or, more commonly, through a variety of psychological tricks we call ‘defense mechanisms’.

“While sometimes necessary, even life-saving, these defense mechanisms are more often employed in an unhealthy fashion, to limit consciousness, to ward off existential legitimate suffering. When used this way, they are the cause of psycho-spiritual disease. As self-imposed limitations of consciousness,

they prevent the person from moving forward through the desert of unease and becoming all that she or he can be.”⁴⁷

It is this next level of awareness which is key to achieving our goals and, more importantly, our mental and emotional states. To fulfilling our human potential and become the most that we can be is the goal of mankind.

Growth is ever-present

It is interesting that we may, in fact, sin if we do not grow. One definition of sin, from the Greek word ‘chatha’, means: “Coming short of our true end”, or “missing the mark”.⁴⁸ Even though it may be painful to grow, it is our purpose on this planet, for now at least. “No pain, no gain,” as the saying goes. Although the challenge has shifted from the struggle to survive and put food on the table to bringing purpose into our lives, a struggle is still present. The shift has gone from a physical challenge for the basic needs to a mental and psychological challenge, and perhaps ‘spiritual’ challenge.

I, for one, see the mental, psychological, and spiritual challenges as one-in-the-same, along the lines of how Scott Peck uses the term ‘psycho-spiritual’. At one point in my life, they were very different, however: My church involvement, study of theology and ministry, and serving others was my spiritual development. My personal development was never really that clearly-defined, possibly even mixed up a bit with professional development of technical skills, much of the formal schooling that equips us to fit into the corporate world, and a bit of the spiritual development that seemed to work purely on the human side. Now, I am a four-square believer in personal development being spiritual and the underlining purpose of our lives. After articulating my perspective on success in business, relationships, and personal success, my perspective on life’s purpose is that it is clear that from success to salvation, personal development is the issue. I take this stand for a couple of reasons:

1. My own thinking has changed and developed.
2. The need for growth and development is ever-present.

Firstly, I have shifted much of my own personal theology to accepting the growing evidence of human evolution, the acceptance of the new cosmology that is surfacing in many of the thinkers of today. I used to accept a typical Evangelical Christian perspective that God created man, magically forming us

⁴⁷ Peck, M Scott. *A World Waiting to be Born*. Bantam, 1993.

⁴⁸ Biblesoft. *Fausset's Bible Dictionary*. 1998.

not all that long ago (which has been a dominate right-wing Christian view, similar to Hugh Ross’s perspective that some 40-50,000 years ago, God formed man separately from all other creatures).

Secondly, in all major religions and fields of knowledge, the underlying principle is to grow in knowledge and understanding. I do not believe that any one religion or body of knowledge has the full grasp of truth or understanding, and that we must all strive to learn more, to be more open, humble, and teachable beings. As the new cosmology thinker, Diarmuid O’Murchu has said:

“A growing consciousness is surfacing in today's world that no one field of wisdom or knowledge - not even a religious one - can point us in life’s true direction. That direction evolves within the course of evolution itself or, more accurately, co-evolves as each interdependent dimension grows to the realization of its full potential.”

That journey of becoming the most that we can be – developing our full potential – is where we will find the answers to our lives and overcome many of the problems us humans have developed in our hearts, minds, and world. All disciplines and fields of knowledge are just beginning to understand, like children growing and becoming more consciously aware of ourselves and our surroundings. Limiting this growth is only to sin – or ‘miss the mark’ – and fail to reach our true end.

Society, organizations, and even our families suppress good, healthy growth and development in an attempt to protect us when, in fact, much of the time this has the opposite affect and even limits us on our journey. We must continue to grow and fulfill our human and individual potential and not be afraid to fail or try new things. We must continually question our paradigms and realize we are only just beginning to understand, and that there is a brave new world to explore, both externally and internally. We have unlimited nature, which is a very positive thing we all can strive for: Strive to be the best that you can be, develop your uniqueness, and contribute to the world in the special way you can. That is part of the purpose of the *Life Goals Planner*: To help us create and design a positive, compelling future in which we see hope and find the desire and courage to strive to build.

There is nothing good about pessimism

I am greatly concerned about how the constant bombardment of negative news is affecting our minds. Many people I know watch the news before they go to bed and read the paper in the morning before they go to work. I can't think of a more negative way to start and finish your day, except if you add coffee and a cigarette to it.

Most of what is broadcast is a negative, manipulated one-sided point of view that promotes a sense of hopelessness. I recall a quote from George Bernard Shaw: "Newspapers are unable, seemingly, to discriminate between a bicycle accident and the collapse of a civilization." I suppose there may be some positive advantages depending on your purpose, like possibly a fear that may motivate you to do something, but I suspect that 99% that read and watch only do so for general information. In this case, I only see a negative impact feeding a pessimistic attitude.

There is nothing good about being pessimistic: It will rob your chances of success, it will steal your hope for the future, negatively impact your relationships, and add to bad health. It will only dig you a hole in the ground and bury you. We have to start to read again, but we need to read with our minds and hearts. I loved this article in the November, 2002 edition of Toastmasters magazine that challenged us to be better readers, more purposefully selective on what we read. The article titled, *What does it mean to be well-read*, talked about reading material that challenges our minds:

"Well-read signifies intelligent, wise, something we all would like. Most of our reading is informational reading. Newspapers, magazines, flyers, etc. which unfortunately does not require us to do much thinking. We read the mass media print like we ingest fast food which gives us little to no nutritional value. If we read with our hearts and minds disconnected, we can become highly uninformed, very ignorant people."

Ignorance is not bliss: It is poverty, racism, misunderstanding, and arrogance. It is part of the problem in this world and something we must strive to overcome as a species, a nation, a family, and as individuals. A lot depends on your attitude and how you have been programmed, as L.P. Jacks has said:

"The pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity, the optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty."

I often wonder what it would be like if negative and bad news never did sell, and for the last 150 years all we ever heard was all the positive things about society, people, progress, and the incredible opportunities we will enjoy in the future. I would think that it would have had a tremendous impact on our overall outlook, our attitudes, and ability to deal with the challenges of the day. I enjoyed Faith Popcorn's book, *The Popcorn Report*, where she describes two scenarios:

"The year is 2010. The great product of the last 10 years has been waste. Now, there is so much of it the real money is being made by the garbage barons. They make the garbage go away and get plenty of money for it and it's not just junk, it's toxic. Not only do we drink bottled water, but our homes are equipped with air purification systems with special filters. You can't just hop in your car and get away from it all, for one thing, where is there to go, and the other is a tank a gas will cost you about \$150. Air is so bad you can only drive 3 days a week, and different colored license plates tell you when it's your turn to drive. The city is no longer a cultural center but a war zone. School buses carry armed guards and home security has become home defense. Everything the media warned us about has come to pass."

And the second:

"The year is 2010, but we have learned from our mistakes and have made good decisions. We don't simply recycle, but we replenish. Corporate America has been transformed to meet our needs in a profound way. The city is no longer a heartless void but a community of neighbors. Most of us work at home and we are closer to our families. Electronic technology has served us well, freeing time and giving us more time for leisure. Government is back to its roots and provides true service. Quality is important, not only in the things we make but in the things we do. The future is bright and people are happy."

Which scenario do you believe to be more likely and which do you wish and hope for? I will bet most find it easier to believe in the first scenario but deep down hope for the second. I am asking you to do much more than hope for, but act upon and begin to create. Create with your human ability to do so, to set goals and make the necessary changes which I will cover in the application at the end of this chapter.

Three powerful reasons for optimism

I am a true optimist for three reasons:

1. We must engage in a positive future.
2. There is more positive than negative, which can be seen more clearly in context.
3. We have a great capacity to solve almost any problem.

Firstly, I believe we must engage in, hope for, and focus on a positive future, a positive scenario like the second, above, for the sake of our children and of all people. Without a future, people have less ability, desire, and motivation to try, to strive for good, to challenge themselves, and do the hard work of learning and discipline that are required.

As I have mentioned about Victor Frankl: He went on to talk about the inner strength one could have by pointing out a future goal and made note, “It is peculiar that man can only live by looking to the future.” And it is Friedrich Nietzsche who said, “He who has a ‘why’ to live can bear almost any ‘how’.” It is for this that we must each personally design not only a positive, but a compelling future that gives us the ability to borrow from it the power to act rightly, now. I am certain that individual and collective feelings, attitudes, and actions will fuel and fulfill the second reason I have.

Secondly, there is as much positive, if not more, than there is negative. We just don’t hear about it and don’t understand how it will eventually benefit us. We are usually caught up in the event, unable to see why or how it may help in our growth and the advancement of society and humanity. More often than not, we misinterpret the information we hear. We are heavily restricted from our personal bias and agendas. This limited information skews our perspective and we fail to see or realize that there is another side of the coin. We need to be careful about our acceptance of so-called ‘facts’, ‘statistics’, ‘studies’, ‘reports’, and the context that this information exists within.

There are always two sides to every story and context is always important, which you don’t get from one, single human being, i.e.: A book, a report, a study, or the media, who seem to be king at taking things out of context. The media always plays a balancing act with ethics. That’s their job, whether you see it as right or wrong: It’s business and a bottom-line. It is up to us to be better informed, expand our perspective, and not so easily accept everything we see or hear, even if it supports our beliefs, wants, or desires. We need to grow in

awareness and challenge our beliefs to gain more understanding and make better decisions.

Now, it is time to elect the world leader, and your vote counts. Here are the 'facts' about the three leading candidates:

Candidate A: He associates with crooked politicians and consults with astrologists. He's had two mistresses. He also chain smokes and drinks 8 to 10 martinis a day.

Candidate B: He was kicked out of office twice, sleeps until noon, used opium in college, and drinks a quart of whiskey every evening.

Candidate C: He is a decorated war hero. He's a vegetarian and doesn't smoke, but drinks an occasional beer and hasn't had any extra-marital affairs.

Which of these candidates would be your choice?

'Candidate A' is *Franklin D. Roosevelt*

'Candidate B' is *Winston Churchill*

'Candidate C' is *Adolph Hitler*

So, you can see the importance of context, and if we put our world in context, we see that things are getting much better, as the wonderful positive book by Sir John Templeton illustrates:

Food: As recently as 1940, one farmer produced enough food for a dozen people. Now, a single worker produces enough for 80 people. This translates into the world's population consuming 20% more than fifty years ago, with developing nations eating an average of 2,600 calories per day.

Health & Life Expectancy: 50% of all medical knowledge has been developed in the past decade. The United States spends \$15.9 billion on medical research, 5,300 times the 1940 level, and the US death rate has dropped 40% in the last 2 decades.

Political Freedom: Of the world's 192 sovereign states, fully 93% (179) of them elect their own legislators. Democracies rarely wage war against one another and political freedom is increasing dramatically around the globe.

Environment: American pollution levels are down to 1/3rd the level they were on the first Earth Day in 1970, and recycling rose from 3% to 22% from 1988 to 1993 (5 years).

Getting along: Military spending decreased \$935 billion between 1987 and 1994, and many countries spend more on health and education than on military.

Spiritual: Religious contribution is at its highest, exceeding \$60 billion in the US alone, and in 1990, overall sports attendance was 388 million while religious services exceeded 5 billion.⁴⁹

The bottom line is that people are better fed, better clothed, better housed, and better educated than ever before in human history. People are becoming more aware and wanting change. Jim Wallis writes about changes at gang levels of society in his book, *The Soul of Politics*:

“These young gang members spoke of their need for the community to reach out to them. ‘Why now?’ he asked. ‘I don’t know, man. We just woke up. We need spiritual power.’ They’re taking responsibility. These gang leaders planned a summit meeting where they were to introduce a national truce and redirect their energies toward personal transformation and economic development.”⁵⁰

Thirdly, and most importantly, I believe that we have the ability and desire to solve any problem that we have created. Sadly, many don’t have the motivation because we don’t have big goals and well-designed futures. Most of us would agree that we can pretty much solve any problem if we take the time, spend the money, and learn the necessary skills. In fact, we humans have demonstrated time and time again, throughout history, that we have an unbelievable ability to create solutions to problems. We are great at creating problems, but we are just as good at creating solutions.

I say all of this because I believe that if we can do it personally, then collectively we can do much, much more. Through our growing pains – our growth and development – we will emerge and fulfill our human destiny. We

⁴⁹ Templeton, John Marks. *Is Progress Speeding Up: Our Multiplying Multitudes of Blessings*. Templeton Foundation Press, 1997.

⁵⁰ Wallis, Jim. *The Soul of Politics*. Harcourt Brace & Company, 1995.

are not running out of food, we are not running out of room on this planet, and we are beginning to wake up and deal with our major issues.

A great waking up

We are waking up to much of the mess we have created. Our awakening is as much a part of our evolving awareness as anything else. Do you think that when we had invented the first machine that we knew it would have soon become a factory, contributing to the pollution problems of our water and air? Do you think that when the first automobile came onto the scene that we had any idea of the effects of carbon dioxide on our Ozone? Of course not. It is only through our purposeful evolution, our growing and creating, and exploring of our full potential that these things happen. Therefore, there is no blame to be given, only responsibility to be taken.

It has only been in the last 30 or 40 years that we have really realized the potential of human extinction. Just the plain fact that we are aware of all the destruction we have caused demonstrates that we care about investing in the talent, time, and resources so that we can deal with these problems. Many feel that we may not be investing enough and that we must question our own contribution. If that is how you feel, then the question is put back on you: “What are you doing to contribute to the solution?”

If we don’t blow ourselves up with nuclear weapons, then extinction is a real possibility of probably 100 different scenarios. Even Diarmuid O’Murchu, after two pages on the negative side, came up with positive possibilities:

“The most optimistic scenario we can envision is one where we will somehow avert a global catastrophe, or if it does happen, somehow survive it. Our hope on averting one is heavily reliant on either our self-understanding as ‘masters of creation’ who will engineer some dramatic solution, or our self-perception of being altruistic, responsible human beings who will make drastic changes in lifestyle and behavior in the face of impending destruction.”

It is my perspective that, of course, we will engineer a dramatic solution. It probably won’t even be that dramatic, but a progressive realization of our abilities, needs, wants, and desires as loving, caring human beings. We have the desire and the ability, and we will see the results. As the Worldwatch Institute says:

“The Institute’s highly-respected interdisciplinary research team argues that past successes – such as the elimination of smallpox and the encouraging drop in birth rates in many countries—prove that humanity is capable of redirecting itself in positive ways. Most encouraging, the world is sitting on the cusp of similar successes that could usher in a sustainable human civilization. And a quickening of religious interest in humanity’s place in the natural environment could awaken a powerful new constituency to the cause of sustainability.”⁵¹

People are awakening, and the growing awareness throughout the world is huge. Millions and millions of people and many corporations, large and small, are making changes. As we gradually break through our personal and organizational limiting beliefs and become more united, people will grow to new levels of awareness and responsibility. This is our human purpose, our potential, and our gift that is sure to be manifested as we continue to evolve into the future. Diarmuid O’Murchu asks some good questions in the conclusion of his book I have been quoting:

“What to do with those awakening feelings, how to talk about them, where and with whom to explore them are among the perennial questions of our time – urgent, not just for a meaningful spirituality of the future, but indeed for the survival of civilization itself.”

He continues:

“All indications are that the wisdom provided by formal religious institutions and those who represent them is of little use in addressing these burning contemporary issues. We need new ways of befriending, supporting, and enlightening each other in this new exploration and, in due course, we’ll need new rituals to acknowledge, negotiate, and celebrate the spiritual revolution.”⁵²

The belief systems in which our religious institutions uphold may in fact be limiting and unable to answer our questions and give us the direction we need in the emerging cosmology, but the people that belong to them do have a

⁵¹ Worldwatch Institute. “State of the World 2003.” <www.worldwatch.org>

⁵² O’Murchu, Diarmuid. *Reclaiming Spirituality*. The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1998.

tremendous amount of power with their prayers and collective consciousness to help move this world in the right direction.

A new Worldwatch study documents how religious and environmental groups are partnering for the planet:

“Washington, D.C. —Religious institutions around the world are going green and providing a push to the environmental movement, says a new report from the Worldwatch Institute, a Washington, D.C.-based research organization. Invoking the Spirit: Religion and Spirituality in the Quest for a Sustainable World documents how these unconventional alliances are growing in frequency and significance.”⁵³

World religion statistics

This chart is pretty close to two other sources recording world religion populations:

Religion	Date Founded	Sacred Texts	Members	% of World
Christianity	30 CE	The Bible	2,015 million	33% dropping
Islam	622 CE	Qur'an & Hadith	1,215 million	20% growing
No religion	No date	None	925 million	15%
Hinduism	1,500 BCE	The Veda	786 million	13%
Buddhism	523 BCE	The Tripitaka	362 million	6%
Atheists	No date	None	211 million	4%
Tribal Religions	Prehistory	Oral tradition	91 million	2%
Judaism	No consensus	Torah, Talmud	18 million	<1%
Sikhism	1500 CE	Guru Granth Sahib	16 million	<1%
Confucianism	520 BCE	Lun Yu	5 million	<1%
Zoroastrianism	No consensus	Avesta	0.2 million	<1%

www.religioustolerance.org/worldrel.htm

Most of the world’s population adheres to one religion or another. Religion is the world’s most debated subject and the least agreed-upon, which is possibly why it is so hard to find real direction.

⁵³ Worldwatch Institute. “A Little Religion gives Environmentalism New Fervor.” December 19, 2002. www.worldwatch.org

I never did understand the battles and differences they seemed to harbor. Shortly before writing this, I took another world religion course to further my understanding and so believe at the core they are much the same, as Huston Smith, a scholar of world religions, has said:

“If we take the world’s enduring religions at their best, we discover the distilled wisdom of the human race.”

What I found is that every religion teaches ethical standards and moral values of behavior. These values and standards form the foundation of their teaching and identity for the individual and community. One of such teachings is The Golden Rule, which most faiths have in common:

- **Christianity:** “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” (Jesus, Luke 6:13)
- **Baha’i:** “Blessed are those who prefer others before themselves.” (Baha’u’ailah, Tablets of Baha’u’ailah)
- **Buddhism:** “Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful.” (Udana, Varqu 5:18)
- **Hinduism:** “This is the sum of all duty: Treat others as you yourself would be treated.” (Mahabharata 5:1517)
- **Jainism:** “In happiness and suffering, in joy and grief, regard all creatures as you would regard your own self.” (Lord Mahavir, 24th Tirthankara)
- **Judaism:** “A certain unbeliever came to Rabbi Shammai and said: ‘Convert me provided that you teach me the entire Torah while I stand on one foot.’ Shammai drove away the inquirer with the builder’s cubit which was in his hand, and then went to Rabbi Hillel who said: ‘What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor. That is the entire Torah, the rest is commentary. Go and learn it.’” (Talmud, Shabbat 31a)
- **Sikhism:** “Be not estranged from another for God dwells in every heart.” (Sri Guru Granth Sahib)
- **Zoroastrianism:** “Human nature is good only when it does not do unto another whatever is not good for its own self.” (Dadistan-i-Dinik, 94:5)

I am not a theologian or a scientist to debate whether humans have been around for millions of years or formed as recent as Dr. Ross suggests. I do not believe that any particular religion has a fuller truth than another or that its participants are more enlightened than anyone else. What I do know is that a fundamental principle applies in all cases: Grow!

Become more aware and conscious creatures, and in that process we will come to our full potential and maybe, just maybe, then we can see things as they really are. It is the process of continuous improvement and, more importantly, it is the process of continual understanding.

Knowledge is the path to understanding, and becoming a more aware and more conscious human being is a process that is never-ending. The process of asking, seeking, and finding never ends, but understand that we can develop and fine-tune the way in which we go about it and become a significantly more alive person, experiencing life to its full along the way.

The Dalai Lama concluded *The Art of Happiness* with his vision of a truly spiritual life, with religious beliefs as one level of spirituality and the second being what he calls 'basic spirituality':

"The basic human qualities are goodness, kindness, compassion, and caring. Whether we are believers or not, this kind of spirituality is essential. I personally consider the second level of spirituality to be more important than the first."

The Dalai Lama is clear that the purpose of mankind is the pursuit of happiness, and the first step to seeking happiness is learning:

"No matter what activity or practice we are pursuing, there isn't anything that isn't made easier through constant familiarity and training. Through training, we can change; we can transform ourselves."

When we act with discipline, our happiness and self-esteem rise. When we fail to act with discipline, we recede and feel worse about ourselves, regardless of what religion we are a part of or what we believe.

The paradox of growth

The 'paradox of growth' is being content with what we have, who we are, and yet at the same time striving continuously to become the most that we can be. The great comfort is that it does not matter how much you grow or if you succeed. As Mother Teresa said:

"God doesn't require us to succeed; he only requires that you try."

Furthermore, we started this book with this definition of personal development:

The deliberate growth or development of a particular individual or organization to bring out their potential and capabilities, making them more aware of their inner feelings and belief systems to become a more conscious, whole, or healthy human being.

We have seen how personal development is really the key to success in all areas of life, no matter how you define it. Personal development is also the key to courage. As you personally grow, you will find more courage: More courage to live your dreams and the courage to live fully as a human being and enjoy the experiences that come from that.

We develop the courage to ask ourselves big questions that impact our attitudes that in turn affect our behaviors. We develop the courage to be okay with who we are and to accept ourselves for the things we cannot change, and this allows us to be more accepting of others and their weaknesses and indifferences. Personal development gives us the courage to choose values to live our life by, to develop character, and be true to ourselves. It gives us the ability to accept the unknown and press on when success is uncertain. I would like to complete this definition by adding the words 'organization' and 'courage':

Personal development is the deliberate growth and development of a particular individual or organization to bring out their potential and capabilities, making them more aware of their inner feelings and belief systems to become a more conscious, courageous, understanding, healthy, and loving human being.