***Tao of Positive Psychology***

***Personal Journal & Academic Treatise***

***(January, 2017)***

***by***

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# Dedication

To the family of pronghorn antelope appearing on page 16.

I have always loved both ethology and pronghorn antelope, and

this family provided me with some wonderful photographs.

It was one of the highlights of my sabbatical leave.

# Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the Sabbatical Leave Committee and the Board of Trustees at Lansing Community College (LCC) for approving this sabbatical, without which this project either would not have been undertaken or would have taken so long that it likely would never have been completed.

Regina Gong, a librarian at LCC and our open educational resource (OER) project manager, has been very helpful introducing me to the formal world of OERs. I thank her for involving me directly in LCC’s ongoing efforts to develop and adopt OERs here at our college.

Melissa Matteson graciously allowed me to use two of the images from her master’s thesis portfolio for the collage used on the cover of this book (which also pictures her with our family dog shortly after his arrival). She has provided numerous wonderful illustrations for me over the years.

I would also like to thank Mu Soeng, resident scholar at the Barre Center for Buddhist Studies for an excellent class while I was there, and for then helping me to gain a better understanding of the Buddhist concept of happiness and joy. Neti, neti.

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# The Journal

**February 21, 2016**

Many people may not be familiar with the nature of a sabbatical leave for a college professor. Basically, it is an opportunity for a professor to undertake a major project that either would be too time consuming to complete while performing their routine duties or to gain skills/expertise that one cannot learn in a quick and easy way. It is also considered an opportunity for a professor to refresh their career and, indeed, their motivation by allowing them to focus their scholarly interests (thus immersing and exercising their mind as it pertains to their chosen field of study) without the interruption of teaching and committee assignments. In other words, it affords a professor the opportunity to do what they would really like to do for a semester, or two if they can afford it, as opposed to doing what they are required to do.

However, it’s not as if they don’t have to do anything – it is *not* a vacation! When I first took a sabbatical, after 12 years at Lansing Community College, I studied the psychological and spiritual factors involved in martial arts training for people with physical disabilities. Despite having my 2nd hip replacement in six months immediately preceding my sabbatical, I managed do quite a lot. I published both a peer-reviewed article and a book, I earned two black-belts in martial arts for people with disabilities (The American Cane System and Defense-Ability), I earned certification in the C.R.I.T.I.C.A.L. Approach™ to Teaching Martial Arts to People with Physical Challenges. I visited schools/programs teaching martial arts for the disabled in Maine, Ontario (Canada), North Carolina, Nevada, and Illinois, and I created a business that got involved in teaching martial arts for the disabled (which became mostly volunteer work).

The work I did on my first sabbatical was intended to provide material for my personality courses (and also Introductory Psychology), as well as providing for my own continuing professional development (a valid aspect of a sabbatical). This has worked out well. Since then, however, I have also started teaching Positive Psychology, which brings us to this project. I have not been able to find a really good positive psychology textbook, and that makes it difficult to justify the price of the available textbooks.

I have become a staunch advocate of open educational resources (OERs). Some years ago I wrote a personality textbook, and eventually started giving it to our students at Lansing Community College (LCC) for free. Recently I made that textbook available on the OER website OpenStax CNX. After giving the matter serious consideration, and since I was once again eligible to take a sabbatical, I decided to propose a sabbatical leave to develop a teaching manual for my students in positive psychology (and also for anyone, anywhere, via OER websites).

As noted above, part of a sabbatical can be the continuing personal/professional development of the professor. So I have envisioned this project as a combination of two parts: a personal journal and an academic resource for teaching positive psychology. The personal journal will focus on my ongoing efforts to incorporate positive psychology into my own life (life is a journey).

So, where are we?

Last semester I submitted my proposal for a sabbatical leave, and it reportedly received the highest score from the committee. I met with the committee member assigned to oversee the project, addressed some concerns and questions they had, and it has now been forwarded to the board of trustees for official approval. I’m not aware of any sabbatical application ever being turned down once it went on the board, so it should be good to go.

If not, you’ll never see this!

**February 22, 2016**

The nice thing about a journal is that there are no rules. I didn’t finish my introductory thoughts last night, so I can pick them up today.

My sabbatical won’t begin until the end of August, six months from now. However, I need to get serious about working hard on preparing for the first thing I’ll be doing on my sabbatical. The World Master Jiu-Jitsu IBJJF Championship will be held on August 25-27 in Las Vegas. I will *not* be defending my 2015 purple belt championship, because I am currently a candidate for promotion to brown belt. There are, however, some challenges.

The biggest challenge is knowing everything that our instructor wants us to know. It’s a lot. The second challenge, perhaps equally difficult for me, is that he wants us to be in great shape. At 57 years old, with two artificial hips, I’m not as athletic as I was when I was young. Late last year I hurt my knee, took a break, and gained some weight. Now I can’t seem to lose it. I hate to diet, but it looks like I’m going to have to. I weight about 215 pounds right now, and I need to be down around 200 to feel really good.

When I began Brazilian Jiu Jitsu I weighed about 235. I set a goal of losing 50 pounds. I did it for one day. I made it down to 185 to compete at medium-heavyweight in the World Masters two years ago. The very next day I was 10 pounds heavier – lots of bacon after the tournament! I spent quite a while hovering around 200 and felt good. So now the pressure is on to lose the weight in order to get my promotion to brown belt.

I have everything else covered nicely. I do know a lot (though there is so much more to remember), I routinely help the other students (especially white belts), I sometimes teach the kids class, I’ve competed a lot (with one age-group world championship to my credit), and I show up to class more than any other student at our school.

**\* \* \***

Since my sabbatical doesn’t start for a while, I may not continue this journal for now. Maybe I will, maybe I won’t. I am working on finishing another book before sabbatical, but then again I’ll most likely make a few entries pertaining to BJJ. After all, BJJ is what helps to keep me healthy and work off stress. So it is an aspect of my own efforts to maintain a positive perspective on life. Thus, it is part of my personal positive psychology.

**April 8, 2016**

OK, it has been over a month, and some interesting things have happened. I was promoted to brown belt in BJJ, and I’ve signed up for the IBJJF tournament in Boston in a week and a half. There is another brown belt my age, but he’s a little smaller. At this point, I’m not sure if I’ll have to drop down to a younger age group or if I want to try to cut weight to get down to his size (which I really should do anyway). If I’m lucky, he’ll move up to my weight. If he’s at all worried about making weight, then that would make his life a lot easier. I’ve met a few of the guys in Boston before, but I don’t know him.

There was also a call for proposals for a grant to develop z-degrees, or zero-cost degrees in terms of textbooks. The director of our OER initiatives decided to apply for the grant, and she needed two faculty advocates (one full-time, and one part-time). I was selected, and agreed, to be the full-time faculty advocate for the grant, and I was able to convince some of my colleagues to agree that our degree in psychology should be one of the z-degrees (with two transfer degrees being the others).

The grant application was just submitted, so it will be a while before we know anything. There was some question whether or not I would be able to start on the grant during the fall semester, since I will be on sabbatical (if, indeed, the board approves my sabbatical). However, as I see it, since my sabbatical is about developing OER materials for positive psychology, I can’t imagine any rational person would have a problem with me being on campus occasionally to work on an OER grant. I plan to incorporate some of the OER grant work into my sabbatical. So… Now I just need both the sabbatical and the grant to be approved.

By the way, I was just elected to the Academic Senate here at LCC. Big man on campus…

**April 21, 2016**

Good news… Bad news…

Today I received word that my sabbatical application has officially been approved! So this project is a go. It doesn’t really start until the beginning of the fall semester, in late August, but I hope to get a lot of preliminary work done over the summer. That way the fall will be as productive as possible, without being too pressured.

I am also in a great deal of pain. My left hip hurts bad, and I’ve had to use my cane for the first time in a year or two. This past Saturday I competed in my first BJJ tournament as a brown belt (at the spring IBJJF Boston tournament). I did fairly well, all things considered. I scored first, and I had the only submission attempt. However, I was unable to finish him, and he gamely fought back. He wore me down, thanks to getting the advantage on me during a scramble in which my artificial hips let me down (I’m just *not* quick), and eventually he won a close fight on points.

But I had done well! That’s what matters most. So I came home full of motivation, and looking forward to keeping my weight down and tightening up my jiu jitsu game.

The day after I got home the weather was beautiful, so I headed to the state park for a hike/run. I can’t actually run, because of my hips, but I hike the flat and uphill sections, and run the downhill sections. It often causes mild pain, but I can deal with that. This time, however, the pain was excruciating, and persistent. It has been several days now, and it still hurts bad. I hardly worked out on Tuesday, mostly just helping to teach jiu jitsu. Tonight may be the same. My hip feels better, but not great. We’ll just see how it goes after class starts. I’m just about to head to the gym now, so…

**May 17, 2016**

LCC held it’s annual graduation two days ago, bringing to an end the formal academic year. Technically, we do still have the summer session, and I am teaching two online classes this summer. However, given the flexibility of teaching online, I am sort of on sabbatical starting now. I hope to get a fair amount of work done over the summer, so that the fall semester (when I’m officially on sabbatical) will be fairly easy. More importantly, that will provide me with more time in the fall to polish what has been written and to incorporate any changes and/or additions to the current plan.

I spent a little time just now setting up the overall structure of this project, i.e., the sections of the book. Although I will write things up in the general structure of a traditional book, which I’m familiar with, I will also endeavor to keep things fairly modular (i.e., in discreet units). This will provide me with flexibility when it comes to making the OER available in potentially different formats later on.

There have also been some interesting things happening lately. It snowed before graduation. That’s right, it snowed in mid-May, something not very common in southern Michigan this time of year. April sure, but not once May rolls around!

During our professional activity days at the end of the year, I was supposed to be a member of a discussion panel on OERs. The presentation was going to be given by Regina Gong, our librarian in charge of the overall OER directive here at LCC. The day after the professional days I was going to do the same thing up north at Central Michigan University for the MI Academic Librarians Association Annual Meeting. However, Regina’s mother was very ill, and Regina left the country to be with her mother. So, one of the adjunct faculty (who was also supposed to be on both discussion panels) and I gave the presentation at LCC. This was easy, as I knew many of the people in the room personally.

However, I did not know anyone in the librarian’s association, and our adjunct faculty member didn’t come to CMU. So there I was, joining up with a librarian and two of her colleagues to help give a talk using someone else’s PowerPoint slides, and being the sole member from our school on the panel. Overall I think it went really well. Better, actually, than the talk at our own school. Some of the colleagues I knew were (are) very negative, and they made that clear at the presentation. I’m not sure why they bothered to come.

The librarians, however, were entirely positive and supportive, despite some realistic concerns about problems we run into dealing with, guess who, those annoying naysayers!

Well, not much more to say, and it’s about time to head to today’s Brazilian Jiu Jitsu class.

**June 1, 2016**

John has been home for a week, but tomorrow he leaves for Ithaca, NY. He’ll be conducting research this summer, and taking a summer class at the same time. I spend too much time worrying about how I’ll be able to help him get through his 4 years at such an expensive school, but he earned the right to be there. In addition, he has done very well. He made the Dean’s List his first year, and at the end of his second year he won the undergraduate research poster award for his work in astronomy. So, I’ll just keep doing everything I can to make sure he is able to fulfill this wonderful opportunity.

I registered for the NY IBJJF tournament in mid-July, so the time is now to get serious about training again. I’ll most likely have to drop down a couple of age groups to have some competition, but if that’s the case I should do it. It’s the practice competing that helps.

I already have one competitor in both my current weight class and the weight class I hope to be well-prepared for by the end of August when the World Masters tournament in Las Vegas rolls around. I am currently registered at super-heavyweight, but I plan to compete at heavyweight. At the moment I weigh 209 lbs., and I need to be 203 to compete as a heavyweight, which is where I feel my best overall. Six pounds is easy, and I should lose more than that just by training hard for the competition.

I would really like to get down to 185 again. I made it there for the Master Worlds two years ago, but it was very difficult to do it. It was a big deal, because it marked having lost 50 lbs. since my hip replacement surgeries. But, I was only there for one day, and it was sooooooo easy to gain a lot of the weight back. I should have worked to stay there, so maybe this time I’ll get back down there and try to stay put. Not for August, at least I don’t think so, but maybe before this sabbatical comes to an end.

Technically my sabbatical doesn’t start until the fall semester, and I do have two classes to teach this summer. However, they are online classes, so my time is flexible. The classes don’t start for another five days, and they are all set up and ready to go. What I have been working on, sabbatical-wise, is setting up the outline of the OERs I’ll be writing. So far it’s pretty slow going, but I think that has a lot to do with the fact that I’m not officially on sabbatical yet. So no hurry…

The plan is to get a lot of the structure set up, and identify the resources I’ll need, and pull together materials I already have, so that I can be most productive this fall. And, hopefully, maybe a little creative as well. I have some interesting ideas, but I’m not yet sure how fruitful they’ll be. However, I have enough experience teaching and writing that I have a good sense of how fruitful something can be… once I get the original idea. That’s the trick, getting the idea itself. Then you can run with it, and if all goes well, have some fun with it.

**June 10, 2016**

I’m going through a strange time right now. I’m broke, but I have a pile of cash at home. I miss my son, and I’m so proud of what he’s doing. My body hurts, and I won’t give up the reason it hurts. Sound strange? Let’s take a closer look.

I have a lot of debt from a terrible divorce settlement in which I put the kids first and my ex-wife used that to take every vicious advantage she could. So, looking ahead to my sabbatical this fall, and knowing I would need some extra money, I’ve been saving up while I was making a little extra money (which will not be the case in the fall). So yeah, I’m paying my bills, but money is tight. And the money I’ve saved will not be touched until I need it for my sabbatical trips.

When I had to sell my house after my ex cut of the child support payments, I moved into a 2-bedroom apartment. When my younger son asked what would happen to his bedroom, I told him about my choice to get a 2-bedroom apartment so he would still have his own room when he came home. He thanked me, and in addition to breaks during the school year at Cornell University, he had his room last summer after his first year ended. It is now the summer after his second year at Cornell, but he is not home. They asked him to stay at Cornell for the summer to continue working on the research project his is involved with. It’s awesome, and I couldn’t be more proud. But not counting his time in the dorms, it is now the first time he has moved out. So now it really feels like I live alone – and I will quite likely live alone for the rest of my life.

I’ve been trying to pick up my BJJ training again, as in working harder and competing harder. It’s tough on an old, disabled body. However, it has also been good for my weight, my blood pressure, my strength, etc. So I’ll keep working hard, especially now that it’s summer. I’m the oldest guy who trains at our gym, but not the only one who’s disabled. We have another disabled student, who is thinking about competing again in a month. Now he’s expressing some doubts about being ready, but we’ll all see what we can do about helping him get ready!

So, yeah, life is somewhat strange right now, but that’s OK. I’m comfortable with why things are the way they are, I understand how we’ve all gotten here, and sometimes that’s just the way life happens.

My online summer classes just started, I was on campus a couple of days ago participating in a meeting to enhance the partnership between LCC and Wayne St. University (where I went to graduate school), and I’ll be having lunch next week with the provost to discuss morale on campus (with special attention to student veterans, but also regarding faculty collegiality), so I’m as busy as I can be. But it’s all good, because the classes are online, so I have flexibility in my schedule.

And… I’m slowly, steadily getting the outline of this project regarding the positive psychology manual/book in place. Life is, generally speaking, good business right now.

**July 7, 2016**

OK, I haven’t checked in for a while, and some interesting things have been happening. I just graded the only set of papers I’ll be getting this summer, so it’s nice to have that behind me. And it was announced this week that we (Lansing Community College) are one of the new institutional partners with OpenStax. They will help us to increase the use of OERs on our campus, and then we will become more of an example for other schools making their way toward greater use of OERs. Remember, this project is an OER project, so I am very committed to this goal.

Indeed, I wrote a letter in support of our OER Project Manager as she applied for this partnership, and I am now listed as the #2 person for the project (i.e., it has been added to my curriculum vitae).

I’ve been training hard lately, and I have a tournament in New York City in just over a week (it is Thursday today, and it’s next Saturday). I have one opponent in my weight division, but neither one of us will actually be in that weight division! I registered at super-heavyweight, but I am just about down to heavyweight. As I train hard over the next week I’ll be down under the limit for heavyweight.

My opponent is smaller than me, but he moved up to my weight class to have an opponent (there aren’t too many of us older guys). I know my opponent, and we’ve fought a couple of times before. He is a multiple Pan-Am and World Champion, but I very nearly beat him in Boston a couple of years ago. So I know two things: he can beat me, and I can beat him! So it will be an interesting warmup for the Master Worlds a little over a month later. He has been a brown belt quite a bit longer than me, but whatever… It’s on! We’ll see who has the better day.

**\* \* \***

Honestly, I’m more excited about the day after the BJJ tournament. I’ll be stopping in Ithaca to visit my son, and to go fishing with a guide on one of the Finger Lakes. This fall my son will be taking a physical education class on fishing, and the guide we’ve hired will be his professor!

I recently bought a new fishing rod/reel combo. I spent a little extra to get one of my favorite brands: Pfleuger. It’s a long, lightweight rod that I had strung with 6 lb. test line. I went out in my kayak and caught some nice bass. I love the action of my new rod. I’ll have to get out again this weekend.

**July 19, 2016**

This past weekend was an interesting one, to say the least. At the tournament in New York I was pleased with my performance. Since there were only two of us in the age group, we fought each other in both the weight class and in the open division. He won both matches on points, but he never really came close to threatening a submission. On the other hand, once I weathered the early attacks I turned the tide in both matches. I had my chances to submit him, so he was the one who had to start playing defense.

Part of my game is to slow things down and breathe a little once things turn around. However, one of the things that makes him so good is that he aggressively attacks as soon as you let down. So when I wanted to rest, he wanted to attack. So he forced me to turn up the pace and fight hard. My recent conditioning paid off!

So in the end, I had two long, tough, technical, back-and-forth matches against a very good opponent. Oh yeah, he’s had his brown belt for nearly two years; I’ve been a brown belt for a couple of months. So, overall, I’m reasonably pleased with my performance. It was very good for me.

After the tournament I drove up to Ithaca (about 4 hours). My son is staying with a friend for a month, so I got one of the couches. It was not comfortable. They live above a bar. It was noisy. We had to get up at 5 am. Suffice it to say I got very little sleep.

At 6 am we met up with John Gaulke, a fishing guide in the Ithaca area, and headed out onto Cayuga Lake for some lake trout fishing. Wow! We had a great day, catching a total of 22 lake trout. We’re not positive, but I think it was 11 for me and 11 for my son John (maybe it was 12-10, but even then we don’t know who might have had more).

 \* 

*That’s John on the left, and me on the right, with some nice fish!*

My next tournament is the World Master Jiu-Jitsu IBJJF Championship, in Las Vegas, a little over a month away. I’ve been toying with the idea of going to the Chicago tournament in just under a month, but I just checked the age and weight groups. Screw that! I would have to drop down 4 age groups to get an opponent (20 years younger than me). No thanks. Looks like Vegas it is. Now if only I wasn’t a brand new brown belt. Whatever. I do it for fun and to improve. I try to win, but that’s only a secondary goal.

**\* \* \***

Almost forgot something important: we were awarded an institutional partnership with OpenStax to encourage and advance the use of OERs at our school. Technically, the grant went to our OER coordinator Regina Gong, but I am officially the backup person and the “textbook hero” for the grant. So…it’s on the c.v. already. We’ve had our first meeting with OpenStax and the other 10 schools (I think the total is 11) who were awarded one of the partnerships, so it is already underway.

Regina will be unavailable for the next meeting, so I will actually have to do some of the work this summer. But I don’t think there will be anything challenging for me.

Since our last OER grant application was not successful, I was happy for Regina that this one was successful. She has put a lot of effort into our OER efforts at LCC, so she has earned some external kudos. Interestingly, she’s already helped put into place some of what we need to do for the grant, so our success is all but guaranteed. That’s always nice.

**August 8, 2016**

8/8/16 or 8 + 8 = 16; I often look for interesting number combinations, just for fun.

It’s time to get serious. Summer classes are behind me, so in a sense my sabbatical has begun. Technically it doesn’t begin until the fall semester begins, but that’s only 2 weeks from today. And…on that first day I’ll be leaving for the World Master IBJJF tournament in Las Vegas. The plan right now is as follows: 3 days of driving, compete on Thursday (according to the current schedule), then head to Great Basin National Park to hike up Wheeler Peak, then drive across central Utah to the northwest corner of Colorado and finally go to Dinosaur National Monument. Then the long drive home.

Since that first week to a week and a half of traveling, I want to coordinate the preliminary work I’ve done on the OER project before then. Not that I don’t have anything else to do. I have to carefully focus my BJJ training over the next two weeks (I’m nursing two minor injuries in my right leg), I have to attend an OpenStax Partnership meeting this week, and an academic senate meeting next week.

Money is always tight for me, but I’ve done a good job of saving up for the sabbatical trips. I have four trips lined up: the trip to Vegas, a 5 day BJJ camp on Lake Winnipesauke in NH two weeks later, the 13th Annual Open Education Conference in Richmond, VA in early November, and then a week and a half at the Barre Center for Buddhist Studies in late November. It worked out just right that there were two courses I wanted to take at the Barre Center on consecutive weekends, and I’ll stay during the week in between to use their library for research and writing. I did the same thing seven years ago, and it was very relaxing and productive. The first weekend course is being taught by their resident scholar, who I met briefly on that previous trip, so we’ll become reacquainted. If I then have scholarly questions during my week of writing, it will be quite easy to ask him and talk about whatever questions I may have (which tend to be many).

Coming back to the money issue, I estimated that I need about $3,300 more to cover my remaining costs, and I’ve saved almost $3K. So we’re all good to go. However, I am thinking about one more trip – a trip that won’t cost much at all. I haven’t been backpacking in many years (since my hips got too bad). I’m thinking about a kayaking/camping trip this fall. Just somewhere reasonably close, probably here in MI. Better do a little research on what might be a good state park or national forest here in MI.

**August 15, 2016**

Interesting morning. In one week I’ll be on the road, headed for Las Vegas and 2016 IBJJF World Master Championships. After that I am first headed for the Great Basin National Park to hike up Wheeler Peak. However, some of the trails in the area are currently closed due to a big forest fire! Hopefully everything will be under control by the time I get there. A fews years ago I was there with my son and a friend of his, and we went for a nice hike, but not up to the top of Wheeler Peak. It would be crazy if this trip didn’t work out either.

This morning I am supposed to make some updates to the proposal for our partnership with OpenStax. It’s really Regina’s responsibility, but she’s still out of town. No problem, I knew about it and agreed to do it, and it’s not much at all – only a few minutes after the meeting we all had last week (all the other colleges involved). However…no internet this morning. Not at home or at the library. The whole town (or more) is out, so it’s probably a Comcast problem, since I think they are the big service provider for the area.

So I’ll work on some writing until, hopefully soon, the internet is available again. I’m working on the section on tribalism in the military and how communities pull together following a disaster. Not the sort of thing you find in a typical positive psychology class, but positive psychology is still developing as a field of study.

**August 16, 2016**

I just had an interesting honor. The provost had asked me about contributing some guidance/leadership for the Veterans Affairs office by serving on an advisory committee. This has been planned before, and never got off the ground. Nonetheless, I was asked to serve on a committee to review the applications for our veterans’ hall of fame, the awards to be made on Veteran’s Day in November.

So, I just got to read and evaluate this year’s applications. Of course, it’s a dubious honor, since you are expected to judge who gets the award and who does not. Still, I felt it was pretty clear, and I recommended 3 of the 5 applications. Two were quite obvious from my point of view, and the third was of particular interest to me. No details, of course, since I don’t yet know what my colleagues on the committee will think.

**August 23, 2016**

WHEW! I’m sitting in a hotel in Las Vegas, eating Panda Express and drinking a 24 oz. Modelo Especial (I love that they are using the theme song from *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly* in their new commercials).

Yesterday was the official first day of my sabbatical. I got up at 5 am, threw the last few things in the car, said goodbye to my son John who’s heading back to school, and hit the road about 5:30. By midnight I was driving through Denver, CO, about 1,200 miles from home. I finally took a nap for about 3 hours, and then continued driving all the way to Las Vegas!

I considered numerous changes to my plans, but ended up coming here to Vegas and getting a hotel for two nights. I compete on Thursday, late in the day. Not sure what I’ll do tomorrow, maybe just veg out and spend some time hanging out in the pool. I might also go for a hike out in the desert, but just not sure yet. My weight is better than good, I could make the lighter weight class (hence the big dinner tonight, with some chocolate for dessert later). So, unlike the last two years, I don’t need to trim a pound or two.

On Friday I hope to get to Great Basin National Park, but I’m looking at a nighttime drive and just sleeping in the car. I’m not worried about it (I did it last night), especially since I’ll be out in dark, clear skies, and the stargazing should be awesome. Then it’s on to Dinosaur National Monument, either Saturday or Sunday.

I’ll leave the annoying crap out for now… I’ve promised my kids that I was going to do a better job of practicing what I preach with regard to positive psychology and mindfulness!

Oh yeah, I got a fortune cookie with my Panda Express. The fortune said, “You will obtain your goal if you maintain your course.” Umm…what if your course is unconsciously self-destructive? I am a psychology professor after all, so I do think about such things, and I’ve known plenty of people who are self-destructive (I know one well right now, come to think of it). Good thing I don’t believe in fortunes, so no stress for me.

Oh yeah again, on Sunday morning I saw the new movie *Kubo and the Two Strings*. Way cool!

**August 24, 2016**

Interesting. Last night I got a message that my credit card was suspended for suspicious charges. I guess when you get gas in Michigan, Illinois, Iowa, Nebraska, Colorado, Utah, and Nevada, and then check into a hotel in Las Vegas, all within 24 hours, they think that’s strange. Once that was taken care of, it was off to Red Rock Canyon.

My initial plan was to take the scenic drive, and maybe go for a short hike. The hike I chose ended up being longer, higher, and hotter than expected. But it was definitely awesome. Unfortunately the cable to download pictures isn’t in my camera case. Looks like I’ll have to wait until I get home to take a good look at the pictures I took.

My shoulder feels better, but it’s definitely not 100% (or even close). By this time tomorrow the competition will be wrapping up. Can’t come soon enough for me. My training fell apart somewhat, for reasons that don’t need to matter now. All that matters now is to do my best on the mat!

**August 26, 2016**

Yikes! The last two days were crazy. It’s hard to say what was most interesting and/or awesome.

Yesterday I competed in the BJJ tournament. Like many of my tournaments, I accomplished some good things, and went the distance without being tapped out. However, my opponent was very good, and he stymied my usual counterattacks. Before we competed I ran into some BJJ friends and had a good time catching up.

So I got my bronze medal (old man groups are often small), got some new perspective on how my training should progress, and had a good time. Then I hit the road without bothering to compete in the open division, and things got really interesting.

I decided to drive up to Great Basin National Park overnight, planning to hike up Wheeler Peak (NV) in the morning. I took a couple of naps, but also took some time to stargaze. The center of Nevada is quite dark, and I had forgotten how awesome the Milky Way looks when you can actually see it!

At one point I was cruising along the highway at 70+ mph, and suddenly there was a horse right next to the car. I blew by it so fast I hardly saw it, but the bulk of it freaked me out. I turned around and went back, and sure enough there was a small herd of wild mustangs crossing the road. If I’d hit one of them we could have both died!

There were also hundreds of rabbits crossing the road – all night and the next morning. I tried to miss them, but sadly there were just too many, and they ran right in front of me like they were committing suicide! As it turns out, 3 of the crazy little bunnies became roadkill snacks for scavengers.

The real intensity came on Wheeler Peak, however. I was worried about the altitude and the elevation gain for this hike. I haven’t done anything like it in many years, since long before my hips were replaced. However, I did not anticipate the howling wind!

I made good time up to the tree line, and realized the altitude and elevation gain, as well as the 8 ½ mile length, were not going to be a problem. However, as I hiked up over the shoulder between the tree line and the summit ridge the wind was driving straight along the trail head-on at 30 mph or more.

Between the shoulder and the summit ridge proper there is a rise that has a couple of rock shelters at the top. As I surmounted this rise the wind was steadily increasing to something like 40 or 50 mph. It was so strong I had to lean into it to walk, and strong gusts were blowing my ski poles *and my feet* to the side as each one was lifted off the ground!

It was likely that the wind on the summit, and the steep ridge leading up to it, was blowing even harder. It was a very difficult decision, but since my artificial hips cause me to be a little slow with my footwork it was too dangerous to continue. I turned back and headed down to the car.

On the way down I met several people, and several times stopped to talk. Two of these conversations were very pleasant, one with a group of guys which included some older guys like me and another with a couple (married, I believe). Naturally they were interested in the conditions higher up on the mountain, but we also chatted about where we were all from, what brought us up the mountain, and so on. It has always impressed me how nice people are when they meet up in nice places. One’s personality is often at its best when you find yourself enjoying the beauty and majesty of such locations in nature.

Then came a drive all the way across Utah, through some very interesting and scenic mountainous terrain. I got a picture of some free range cattle, and actually saw quite a few along one of the highways.

By this point I was fried. A BJJ tournament yesterday, not much sleep last night, and a very tough hike and then long drive today. So now I’m in a hotel in Roosevelt, Utah, and the first thing I did was jump in the hot tub and chill! It felt great.

Tomorrow: I will finally go to the Dinosaur National Monument. I’ve been close before, when going to fly fish below the Flaming Gorge Dam, and then when my son and I drove through so he could see the dam, but I never went down to see the dino fossils. Tomorrow; finally.

**August 29, 2016**

Dinosaur National Monument is awesome. It’s amazing that they ever found such a place, but that’s one of the things they like to describe, in part because it’s an example of the logical methodology that underlies much of scientific discovery.

What I really like is that there are some fossils that you can touch, both in the display hall and on the trail nearby. Touching a 149 million year old dinosaur fossil, especially one that’s still stuck in the side of a rock cliff, is way cool. I’m so glad I finally got there after being close to the area a couple of times before (at Flaming Gorge).

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*Above left: A Camarasaurus skull with some neck vertebrae.*

*Above right: Cervical vertebrae of a Stegosaurus (I’m pretty sure).*

Google maps suggested going home through Denver, but I didn’t was to bother with that route again, and the easiest way was to head straight north past Flaming Gorge, but I’ve been up there. So, I decide to head east to Craig, CO and then turn north to pick up Interstate 80 in Wyoming. I was hoping that along WY 179 there would be some pronghorn antelope close enough to get some pictures. Pronghorn antelope are one of my favorite animals. Jackpot, there were dozens, and I got some really good pictures.

At some point on the drive home it occurred to me that I was starting to get stressed out, specifically because my mind was beginning to refocus on all the stressful things waiting for me back home. What was most interesting was that I also realized how stress-free my trip had been. It really was a good vacation, even though some of the trip was work related (like keeping this journal).

Applying some of my training in mindfulness, I took a few deep breaths, and worked to put the whole situation in perspective. Even though I was heading home, it wouldn’t be long before my trip to New Hampshire for the 5-day BJJ seminar. Of course, I’m a little worried about how my body will hold up to that much training, but I know it’s my trip – i.e., I can do as much or as little as my body can stand. If things hurt, I can just watch and learn, or go swimming or fishing, or whatever the hell I feel like doing.

I also mindfully reminded myself that I’ll be on sabbatical all semester, so I’ve got plenty of time to relax and do things I like, like writing, while dealing with stressful things. So life isn’t all that bad – at least not anything that’s going to break me.

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*The two young pronghorn antelope became nervous as I walked closer (above left), so they trotted over toward their parents (above right; note how they are all looking at each other). Once feeling safe, the young antelope and the doe looked back toward me (below left),*

*and then they all gathered by the buck and looked at me (below right).*

 \* 

*Below: The buck stood his ground for a minute or two, while the doe*

*led the fawns toward the brush in the background. Once assured I wasn’t*

*pursuing, the buck turned and quickly caught up to his family.*



**September 1, 2016**

So, I’m really on sabbatical now. The semester got into full swing this week, but I’m doing my own thing. I just reorganized things a little, bringing something from the fifth section into a revised version of the second section. Not only do I think it makes more sense, from an academic point of view, but it helps to balance out the amount of material in the two sections, which is valuable from a practical point of view. For example, when the amount of content is balanced, then you can spend the same amount of time on each section (i.e., same number of lectures), and it’s easier to come up with quizzes of the same length.

These are the simple, yet practical matters that you need to think about when preparing educational materials. Of course, you don’t go out of your way to make things all the same, resulting in what might become an awkward presentation of the content. Instead, you just pay some attention to it, and hope it all then falls into place.

**\* \* \***

I’m also starting to really think about next week, since they are also sending us the important information we need to get ready for next week. What is next week? The BJJ Globetrotters camp in New Hampshire. Five days of BJJ training from about 10 am to 8 pm. That’s a whole lot of BJJ for a guy like me – 57 years old, with two artificial hips!

Thankfully, the information they just sent us actually warns not to do too much. I was already planning to take that approach, so it’s nice to know they want to us to be careful as well. I will likely go to every class, but I may just sit and watch, or drill technique just a little bit and then quit until the next class. Hopefully it will all go well, but it sure seems like a laid-back fun atmosphere is what they encourage and have experienced in the past.

Still, I’m not much of a group person. I don’t make friends easily, or much at all really, so living in a cabin with about 10 other people and then going to class with a 100 or so people each day, all day, will be an interesting experience for me. I’ve certainly done it before, say, for example, boot camp. So I know I can survive it. But the goal is to have a rewarding and, hopefully, actually fun time. So I hope I’m as relaxed as I was last week out west.

Although, it can be tough to relax when you spend the whole day training to fight, and then do some actual fighting…

**September 5, 2016**

Wow. The sun has set on Labor Day weekend, and tomorrow morning I leave for the BJJ Globetrotters camp in New Hampshire. It seems like I just got back from my trip to Nevada/Utah/Wyoming.

This should be an interesting week.

**September 6, 2016**

FML! I’m here at the camp, and I should be in a good mood and ready for tomorrow. NO!

On the drive I very nearly got killed, and I’m not exaggerating. A tractor-trailer driver decided to go ahead and change lanes as I was passing him. I hit the horn, slammed on the breaks, veered off the highway into some gravel – all at 70+ miles an hour. The idiot just changed lanes and never looked back. I still don’t know how I managed to avoid his trailer and keep my car under control in the gravel.

Then, just before getting to the camp, John called with an urgent problem with his financial aid. Of course, here I am in NH, rather than at home near my credit union (which may or may not be helpful). Since most of the people reading this will be college students, you probably know how utterly frustrating it is to deal with financial aid people. I certainly hope LCC is doing a better job than a certain Ivy League school I have to deal with. Those people are, for the most part, rude and useless, often providing information that is simply wrong.

So tomorrow morning I will have to try calling them nonetheless, and see if I am lucky enough to get someone who can actually tell me why they say we owe $2,500, when we are supposed to have a surplus of $4,100 to help pay my son’s rent. It will take all of my mindfulness training, and then some, to remain calm. I am not counting on even getting a straight answer from these clowns.

You’d think they would make it easier for us to go deeper and deeper into debt to pay their outrageous tuition rates. But no, they just keep making it harder and harder.

We are not off to a good start… Maybe some good BJJ will help…

**September 7, 2016**

It’s a beautiful morning here on Lake Winnipesaukee. The sun shone directly into our cabin and that was all the alarm clock I needed. Now I’m sitting on a bench on the beach doing this writing. It’s about 7:30 am, so I have a few hours before I can call the school my son attends and see what I can learn about that problem. In the meantime…

Well, after lying in bed worrying for quite a while, I finally cleared my mind and actually got a pretty good night’s sleep. I had two interesting dreams, one rather dark and symbolic, and the other simply fun and pleasant. Let’s look at the dark one, especially since it reminded me of an interesting Buddhist story.

I don’t remember the setup of the dream’s situation, but eventually the plane I was flying on started to go down. We scrambled for the parachutes, and I jumped out first. As I was plummeting down toward the ground the plane appeared to be the home I had to sell last year (now as I write this I vaguely remember some of the dream setup involving doing things in the house).

Someone else was following me down, and they had pulled their chute. I hadn’t. I just kept falling, thinking about opening the chute, but doing nothing. As I continued to fall I was staring at myself as if I was looking into a mirror. Finally I hit the ground. It didn’t really hurt, and I wasn’t really injured much. So then I pulled the ripcord. The chute kind of popped open, but did not blossom much since I was already on the ground. Finally, I got up and walked it off.

After I woke up, the part of the dream that really struck me was the intensity of the sensation of staring into my own face in a mirror. Naturally, I took this as symbolic of the need, or desire, to reflect on my own life. It reminded me of a famous story from Buddhism involving a mirror.

…..the clear mirror poems….(*Note: decided not to come back to this.*)

OK. I doubt I’ll pull my computer out again until after our first sessions of BJJ later today. Perhaps things will be going well by then. If not, I’ll have a challenge to take on. So be it.

**\* \* \***

It’s now about quarter to seven in the evening. I’m sitting in a rocking chair on the beach listening to some gentle waves splashing on the shore.

OK, let’s get back to the positive side of life. The financial aid problem was indeed caused by my ex-wife, and apparently my son has talked to her and she resolved the problem. I’ll need to follow up. One more year of college to go, and then the kids can fend for themselves. Ha!

BJJ camp. Wow, totally awesome day. Everybody here is pretty cool, and I’ve made friends with a couple of people. Food is reasonably decent, so that’s nice.

The instruction today was excellent, and I did learn a few new things. I attended two gi classes, one no-gi class, and participated in an open roll (though I only sparred a few times). The no-gi class worked my hips pretty hard, so I decided to skip the wrestling class and evening open roll. Instead I took a shower and I’m here on the beach writing this. Although it won’t be included in this journal, I am also going to write some notes on what we did today, so hopefully I’ll be able to remember a decent amount of it when I get back home (or at least work it out through muscle memory).

It’s a little over an hour until dinner, and I’ve got those notes to write. Then, tomorrow, the long days begin.

**September 9, 2016**

Wow, two full days of BJJ. It has been awesome! I’ve learned some interesting new technique, I’ve met some nice people, I have worked my hips to the max but not too far. It hasn’t been easy to be careful with my hips, but I’ve done only a little rolling, and judiciously skipped certain classes, and went swimming a few times. But I’ve been eating too much.

Tomorrow is another full day, and then Sunday will be just one class and some open rolling. It looks like the answer to one question is quite simple. Can my hips survive a 5-day BJJ camp? Yes, if I’m careful and limit my activity appropriately.

It was definitely a good choice to take this chance!

**September 10, 2016**

Another full day of BJJ, including some easy rolling. I rolled with one of my cabin mates, caught him real quick with a couple of moves, and ended teaching some stuff he hadn’t seen. I’ve really felt like a brown belt here at the camp, which is a good feeling.

After one of the classes, in which we worked something that I have had some trouble with, I went up to thank the instructor for one of my “Aha!” moments of the camp. He was grateful, of course, and asked me if I was the one who had asked Chris Haueter about pulling guard. When I said yes, he replied that he had some thoughts for me and wanted to meet during the open mat.

First, we had to take the official camp photos for their website, but then he covered some ideas he had for me. Some of it was what I actually do, but he also had a couple of ideas I had not tried. So I was quite thankful for his suggestions, and I look forward to working on them once I get home.

It’s an absolutely gorgeous day. It was warm and sunny most of the day, so I went swimming after the morning class and some rolling. Now it’s late afternoon, early evening, and it’s overcast and breezy. I decided to go kayaking for a bit, and found some spots I really would have loved to fish. The breeze had some pretty good waves going, so I got seriously soaked on the kayak. I was ready for a little water, so it was no big deal. Lot’s of fun!

Most of us are hanging around waiting for dinner. A few people have left already. Tomorrow is an easy day. There’s only one class, and I don’t intend to take it. Not that I don’t need to work the techniques (spider guard), but I don’t think my hips are up for it, since I have trouble with it to begin with. One of my bunkmates asked if I would be rolling in the morning, so I’ll hit the first open mat, then pack up, and if it’s nice go for one last swim before heading down to my mom’s house in Massachusetts for dinner.

On Monday I plan to have lunch with my son John in Ithaca, and then I’ll head home for Michigan.

**September 13, 2016**

It has been an eventful few days, mostly positive but also one big nasty punch in the gut. Life is never easy or simple for me. But I’ll ignore the b.s. for the moment, and start with the good stuff.

I was tired and sore, and seriously considered doing nothing the last day of the camp – there wasn’t much to do anyway. There were open mat times, and just one class. Some people had left, some were leaving, but I decided to finish training.

I went to the early open mat, and first I rolled with a very (emphasize *very*) good brown belt. He tapped a bunch of times. But I didn’t let it get to me, because he was younger, technically excellent, and he’d been a brown belt for a long time (his belt was practically in tatters). He was clearly way overdue for promotion to black belt, and we had a good time talking about technique.

After we stopped, a 24-year old blue belt (w one stripe) called me out. He had made it to every class and open mat (as I would have if I were 24), and he also had the goal of rolling with 30 different people, including all ranks. I don’t know if he still needed to roll w a brown belt, but I was number 29 on his list.

We started slow and easy, testing each other’s positions, and when he went to stand I caught him with a quick sit-up guard sweep that totally surprised him. I then set up a guard pass, and as I passed he went for a baseball choke. I recognized it right away, and brought my hand up to block it. However, he had already stopped going slow and easy. He jammed in the choke, and cranked it tight.

I reacted with a block of desperation, and held it there, but I was stuck. So I relaxed and remember my training. He needed to pull his left arm out and up, so I realized I need to use my right arm to collapse his arm structure. I was blocking the choke primarily with my left arm (which was between his hands), so I reached out and up with my right arm, and came down over his left elbow and broke both the structure and his grips. That caused him to suddenly roll to his side, and I moved directly into mount.

In mount I trapped his arm under my chest, and then realized I was in position to go for a wrap-around. This is a move where you reach behind his elbow with your chest and collapse his arm across his chest. Then you reach around his head/neck, take a Gable grip, and squeeze down with your chest – crushing his shoulder. He tried desperately to fight back, by pushing back with the arm collapsed across his chest. So I raised up into a tripod positon, and put my full body weight on his shoulder. He tapped!

I had been a little nervous going with a young, tough blue belt right after being tapped a bunch of times by another brown belt. But very quickly it became apparent that I was a brown belt going against a blue belt. Sure, sometimes blue belts can beat me, but it isn’t ever easy for them.

I then rolled with one of my cabin mates, once again a blue belt. He had come to the camp with one of his friends, whom I had rolled with and showed a few things. The same happened in this “match.” Technique ruled the day, as it is supposed to.

When the class finally started, I was already pretty tired, and my knee was a little sore for the first time all week (it’s an ongoing minor problem). I decided to sit out the class and just watch, unless there were an odd number of people. Sure enough, I saw a young woman looking around, with apparently no one to pair up with. So we trained together, and it turned out to be a great class.

After class, I asked her if she wanted to roll one time, and she said yes. However, she was a very new white belt, so immediately it was clear she was no competition even for an old man like me. So we would start to roll, and then I would coach her. After also giving her a few tips, based on what happened during our easy roll, the camp was finally done!

I hit the showers, said goodbye to some of the people around the camp, and headed out.

**\* \* \***

After a three hour drive I arrived at my mom’s house in Massachusetts for dinner with her, my sister, and my sister’s boyfriend. It was a very nice visit. My sister Missy is the only person in my family I really care to see, other than my mom (and, of course, my kids). She’s an artist and graphic designer (with a Master’s degree), she has done some illustrations for me (and agreed to look for something that would make a good cover for this book!), she served in the U.S. Air Force, and she’s psychologically stable. That latter point cannot be made for very many people in my family.

Eventually I headed for Ithaca, NY, alternating driving and sleeping (in rest stops, not *while* driving), met my son the next day for lunch. It was a quick lunch, since he has a busy class schedule on Monday, but I’m glad I got to see him. But there was more to it than just a nice lunch.

First, he dropped a bomb. Financial Aid. Parental contributions. Lack of parental contributions. What was he to do? Well, it looks like I’m never going to retire, but I’ll be a father and do whatever I have to do for the good of my son. I joked that I wish I’d had a father who cared about me. Maybe that’s why I’ll do anything I possibly can for my boys.

I can’t tell you how many times I’ve heard people talk about the limits of what they would do for their children, and how you need to take care of yourself first (and let the kids take care of themselves). Bullshit! There are no limits to what I would do for my children, as long as it is possible for me to do it, and they will always come first – even ahead of my own best interests. I chose to have children, they are great young men, and it is inconceivable to me that a parent would do anything less than everything possible for their children.

Then he tossed a grenade. He had recently been hit by a car – hit and run! He was fine, but his bike was busted up. It was going to cost him about $100, and he was broke because of buying books and such. I had gotten to camp a night early, and saved the cost of a hotel room (as I had originally planned). So I gave him $100 for his bike. So much for saving that money. Oh well, that’s what I get for being a dad.

Of course, $100 I can handle. Tuition at Cornell, and an apartment for my son in Ithaca, that’s gonna require some loans! They say pride goeth before a fall. I’m proud of being a good father (as best I can), since there has been no history of that in my family in my lifetime. However, in this case, pride goeth before debt.

Perhaps that sums up the modern world. Pride goeth before debt.

And in the midst of all the financial aid and hit and run bike accident discussions, I completely forgot to ask about the new project they want him to work on in the astronomy lab. He did mention, however, that later that afternoon he had his first fishing class with the guide/professor we went lake trout fishing with. So while he was studying fishing, I was driving back to Michigan. I crossed the state line just after sunset, an hour from home.

Oh yeah, on this trip my car’s odometer turned 180,000 miles. When this care hits 200K, I will have driven a million miles in my life!

**September 16, 2016**

I had to make another unexpected trip to Ithaca, NY, because my son needed cash to reserve his apartment for his senior year at Cornell (and it was too much for me to simply put it in his bank account here and then take it out via ATM; and it was needed too quickly for a wire transfer). So I did what I had to do, and he got a nice apartment reserved.

Looking back over the last three weeks, I realized just how much traveling I’ve done. I drove over 7,000 miles covering 16 states, from Las Vegas, NV to Lake Winnipesaukee, NH, I competed in a BJJ tournament and participated in a 5-day BJJ training camp, I hiked in the desert and in the mountains, I photographed pronghorn antelope, and finally visited the Dinosaur National Monument. Throw in Sunday dinner with my mom and sister, and lunch with my son in NY, and I’ve been pretty busy.

Now I don’t have any travel plans until November, when I’ll be going to present at the OpedEd Conference in Richmond, VA. Later in November it’s off to the Barre Center for Buddhist Studies in MA for a week and a half. For now, I’ll focus on writing.

Oh yeah, one other thing, a mixture of good and bad. Today was payday, and I paid off the home improvement loan I took out to fix up my house, which I sold last year. That loan was the last tie to the home where we raised our children. It’s nice to pay off the loan, but I still miss the house. I was forced to sell it due to my divorce, although I didn’t really need a house for just myself.

If not for the real estate crash, I would have made enough money to buy a smaller house. As it was, I actually lost money fixing things up to get it sold and get out from under the mortgage. However, I keep reminding myself that many people lost their jobs, lost their homes to foreclosure, and had few prospects for life going forward. So I’m still better off than many people were. That’s something to be thankful for.

**September 18, 2016**

So now it feels like I’m home for a bit. Yesterday I went to a local BJJ tournament to coach two of our guys who were competing for the first time. It was a rough introduction for them, but that happens to many of us. We all agreed to a plan to increase our conditioning and to lose some weight. Not that I haven’t been doing a lot, and my weight is sitting at 202 pounds, not a bad weight for me. But I’d like to be lighter, since according to the body mass index charts I am 20 pounds overweight.

I saw something amazing this morning. I went for a hike, and a beam of sunlight was shining down and across the trail onto an old, rotten log. There was a swarm of flying ants on the log, and hundreds (perhaps thousands) were taking off and flying toward the sun. So as they flew up and across the trail, following the beam of sunlight, the light was glistening on their wings in the most spectacular way! I’ve never seen anything quite like it.

Another nice thing: I’m not the first person to write in the first person in a textbook. Obviously this journal is in the first person, but I have also started writing the textbook version of this project in the first person. I was reviewing a section in Christopher Peterson’s *A Primer in Positive Psychology* (2006a) and he relates a story in the first person – since he was sharing a personal example of the topic. So I shall continue to write freely!

**September 19, 2016**

Lately I’ve had a lot of interesting dreams, some of them really good. But last night I had one that was so long and so weird that I forgot what I was doing – in the dream!

September 23, 2016

I was at the college today, and ran into a philosophy professor who commented on how I should be having fun on my sabbatical (he was on the sabbatical leave committee for quite a few years). Later in the morning I told him about some fun I had just today, between our conversations.

While working on the play/leisure/recreation section, the topic of sophistry came up. I remembered that I had a book on the *Basic Teachings of the Great Philosophers* (Frost, 1962) that I bought many years ago, I believe at a garage sale. It was something I though a man of letters should have on his shelf, but that is basically where it has sat all this time. But now, I am citing it in this project (not just here, but in the main text as well). Quirky little things like that are what fascinate me about life.

And now, another funny story…

Today is the first day I’m wearing my Dinosaur National Monument t-shirt. When I left the monument I drove through the northwestern corner of Colorado, which took me through the town of Dinosaur, CO. When I was at the BJJ Globetrotters camp in NH, one of the guys in my cabin sent me a Facebook friend request. I noticed that he was from Dinosaur, CO, which happens to be way out in the middle of nowhere. What are the odds?

When I told him that I had been in Dinosaur, CO the week before, he told he is *not* from that town. Turns out he was an absolute freak about the Jurassic Park movies, so his friends thought it would be funny to say he was from the town of Dinosaur. Not very funny, if you ask me, cuz I was pretty bummed out! It would be cool to be from Dinosaur, CO. It would be one of those quirky little things that fascinate me about life.

Hey, the New England Patriots beat the Houston Texans last night by the embarrassing score of 27-0. I’m a big Pats fan, having grown up in Foxborough, MA. Yes, I actually did grow up there! In the 70s I knew several players on the team, since it was a small town and a few members of the team occasionally came into the Rexall drug store where I worked. If I was just a few years older I would have worked the soda fountain there – I would have been a “soda jerk.” That would be a quirky thing!

Want more? One last quirk for the day. I was *almost* born in a cab. According to my mother, I was being born as they took her from the cab into the hospital. For some strange reason I wish I had been born in the cab. Quirky…yeah, you get it.

**September 26, 2016**

Interesting day! After getting some things at Michigan State University’s library I was on campus (at LCC) for some talks on developmental education. I was generally familiar with what they were talking about, since we’ve encountered these issues on the curriculum committee, but there was one new twist. In Tennessee (where the speakers were from) they have begun studying something called the student’s academic mindset. Whether or not a student believes they have the ability to succeed, whether they feel they belong, whether they believe the courses they are taking are valuable, are some of the things that make a significant difference in the student’s success in college.

Helping students to believe in themselves is definitely a positive approach to aiding their education. Of course, if they really aren’t ready for college they need real academic help. New data are suggesting that how most colleges have handled developmental education is not a good approach. Of course, that’s what the K-12 schools are supposed to do. It’s a real shame that students graduate from high school and are *not* capable of college level reading, writing, and/or math.

Seems to me I had more to say, but now I can’t think of anything else. The presidential debate is on soon (about half an hour). Yikes!

**September 29, 2016**

Rain, rain, and more rain. And lots of wind, especially overnight. I love weather like this, so I grabbed some books and my computer and headed to the park. I’m in my favorite parking spot uphill a bit from Teeple Lake, one of my favorite fishing spots (I caught a few bass here just yesterday). In between listening to the rain on the roof of the car, I’m working mostly on the section on mindfulness. At this particular moment there are some Canadian geese swimming across Teeple Lake right out in front of me. Quite a pleasant day, actually.



A random picture on Teeple Lake, taken from

my kayak on a much nicer day than today.

**October 3, 2016**

Important day – I just came up with the cover image for the book, and then chose the cover template (from CreateSpace.com) to go with it. This is always a difficult task, since there are so many options. I always want it to look good, but not too crazy, and that’s a fine balance sometimes.

So, I came across a picture of my little sister Missy with the dog we had growing up, while he was still a puppy. She has done some illustrations for me before, and when I was in Massachusetts recently she said she would send me some options for the cover. She sent the portfolio she used for her master’s degree, but it was pretty weird stuff. I definitely liked her work, but had to consider whether such images would make sense to my students.

Then it hit me, why not combine them? That set the orientation and approximate size of the primary picture. So I looked through the cover templates for one that was relatively simple and used a picture with the necessary size and orientation. Sure enough, once it was found the task was mostly done. I still have a lot of work to do – basically writing a lot of the book – but now I can see the final product in my mind.

Finishing a book is a great feeling. Of course, this one will never really be done, since I’ll use the comments my students give me to make changes and improvements over time. But that’s what a career is all about.

**October 4, 2016**

This morning was interesting. I went to a talk by one of the counselors at our college on the challenges faced by veterans returning home and going to college. Not only veterans suffering from PTSD or TBIs face challenges in a typical college classroom. It is a very different environment than the one they lived in while serving in the armed forces. There is a section on this in the academic portion of this book (in Section V).

Sadly, only a half dozen people came to the talk, and I was the only veteran there at the beginning of the talk (one other veteran came in quite late). Not that the talk was for veterans, if anything it’s non-veterans who really needed to be there.

**October 5, 2016**

Recently the news has been talking about a fascinating new study (a legit research project). Apparently male squirrels live a life of leisure (a topic covered on page 178). They hang out with their buddies, soaking up the sunshine, while the female squirrels care for the nest, tend to the young, and store nuts for the winter.

However, this life of leisure leads to death!

Since the male squirrels are out in the open much more, they are the easier targets for predators like hawks and eagles. This results in the satiation of the predators, leaving the female and young squirrels safe to go about their daily lives. What a fascinating evolutionary development!

**\* \* \***

It’s later in the evening, and I’m tired! I ate too much after a tough workout, so my body just crashed. I’ve been doing some conditioning workouts, trying to get in better shape. I put together a set of 13 exercises that I could do in about 15 minutes. I started with two sets, and then worked up to three sets in 45 minutes, and finally four sets in an hour. That was my standard for a while.

Eventually I started doing the four sets in less time, getting below 50 minutes last week. Once last week and this Monday (two days ago) I was able to do the four sets in 48 minutes. Today I hit it hard, and finished all four sets in 45 ½ minutes – almost as fast as I was doing three sets! It wasn’t easy, and I am seriously tired now.

**October 6, 2016**

Yeah, I slept pretty good last night! However, I don’t remember any dreams. Recently I had a night with really bad dreams, and I spent the next several days wondering why we don’t just have good dreams. All the time we spend sleeping could be wonderful, if it was full of pleasant dreams.

Then I had a night with several great dreams. They were really fun. If only there was a way to control them, and have fun dreams every night, all night. That would be wonderful…

Of course, I would probably still have the occasional dream that others might consider a nightmare. I’ve had some bizarre, intense dreams that fascinate me. They were horrifying at the time, but it’s liking watching a horror movie. We know we aren’t going to “like” it, but we watch anyway. So if I could control my dreams they wouldn’t all be pleasant or fun, but at least it would be my own choice.

**October 13, 2016**

Wow, it’s been a few crazy days. My son John was home for a long weekend, and I drove him back to Ithaca, NY on Tuesday. We had to pick up a financial aid check to help pay his rent and to pay for some repairs to his car. The repairs were a little more than expected, so I stayed in a cheaper hotel than I expected. It’s been a long time since I was slummin’ it, but that’s how this place felt. But it wasn’t really too bad, and it had cable and wi-fi, and it was quiet.

The next day I picked up my son, we went and got his car, paid for everything, and had lunch. Then I headed back to MI.

On the way home I remembered I had an important meeting today. So, after getting my own oil changed, and a quick trip to Michigan State’s library, I came to campus for the meeting. Then I met with Regina to catch up with some OER developments and planning, and in a few minutes I’m off to BJJ. My shoulder has had four days off, so we’ll see how it feels tonight.

While in NY the thought occurred to me that we should go fishing again in November. I’ll be passing through on my way home from the Barre Center for Buddhist Studies in Massachusetts, and saw that John Gaulke had days available that week. Thought about the cost, things are going OK, so we’re gonna do it! But there’s a lot to be done before then.

I need to get prepared for the OpenEd Conference in November!

Oh yeah, I had a nice time with John on Monday, before we went back to NY. In the morning we went to the range with one of my pistols and did a little targeting shooting. In the afternoon we went fishing. It’s amazing how happy you can be with crappy little panfish when you were worried about getting nothing. Fishing was not good, but at least we caught some. It was nice to spend some time with him. I didn’t see him all weekend, but on Monday his girlfriend had gone back to school and his brother was at work. So he had some time to spend with me.

**October 14, 2016**

It’s a beautiful day, so I came to the usual park to do some editing and writing. However, it’s quite cold – only in the 40s, and it was in the 30s overnight. Sitting in the sun makes it hard to see the computer screen, but sitting in the shade is just a bit too cold. So, I’ll be leaving soon.

I went for nice hike first, and while I was up on the hill overlooking Teeple Lake I saw a strange brown mass out in the lake (about 30 feet from shore). It looked quite strange, and for a while I couldn’t figure out what it could possibly be. Then it began to move, and then it began to break up. Turns out it was a small herd of deer. Why they were out in the lake I can’t say, but I’m guessing they decided to get some lily pads for breakfast. The lake is quite shallow there, so it was easy for them to walk out to the lily pads and enjoy their morning snack. Oh how I wish I’d had my big telephoto lens with me!

Well, time to go. Although the day is ever so slowly warming up, the wind is picking up quite a bit and it actually feels much colder than when I got here a couple of hours ago. I might go to a movie, and then I’ll do some writing either at home or at the library. That decision can come later.

**October 16, 2016**

RAIN! I was thinking about going fishing this morning, but looking at the weather report I decided to just go to the park and do some writing in the car. After a little while it started to rain, and it has been pouring on and off for hours. And I do mean pouring. Fishing in my kayak would have been no fun at all.

I do love this kind of weather, on my own terms. So it has been wonderful listening to the rain on the roof of my car. And, I’ve been surprisingly productive. In some ways I haven’t felt productive lately. To be honest, I’ve been enjoying my sabbatical, and not working too hard. It’s strange, when I start to get interested in something I’m studying, I write less. In other words, my focus shifts to learning and thinking (not writing about it).

But this project will be ready for my class next semester, and to satisfy the requirements of my sabbatical. However, it will most definitely not be done. Hopefully, my students will give me some valuable comments on what they think about it next semester (and on into the future). Likewise, I’ll have my own thoughts about it once I’m actually using it to teach classes. So there will be changes and additions and so on going forward.

When I wrote my personality textbook, I had an editor and reviewers. That was good and bad. Obviously, they all helped me to provide a better book. On the other hand, there was a lot of pressure to make it excellent the first time around. And…I had the time to do it. I spent four years working on that book, whereas this sabbatical is just one semester. Not that I don’t expect this book to be good, but I’m reminding myself it doesn’t have to be perfect. It will be improved steadily over time. Unless my students tell me it’s fine, in which case it’s up to me to decide what to improve. History tells me I’ll probably end up busy with some new project!

Yesterday was good and bad at BJJ, and definitely a bit of work. So I decided to get some Thai food for dinner. I always get plenty, so I’ll be having Thai food today, tomorrow, and maybe even on Tuesday. After eating I was pretty full, all that rice does that, so I went for a walk. I was planning to walk over to the old high school track and go around a few times, and maybe sit in the old bleachers and meditate for a while.

However, when I got there, the youth football league was playing games there. Another game was just about to start, so I figured it might be fun to watch. The entrance fee was only $4, so I watched the game. Hartland (where I live) won the game 22-6, so that was cool. A few people I knew were there, but since my kids are in college now it was mostly a different group of younger parents. Still, it was fun, and where else can you go to a football game for only $4? Oh wait, $5, since I did get one can of Mt. Dew. And then it was half price pizza and hot dogs at the end, but I was still pretty stuffed from the Thai food. Hmmm…it’s getting to be lunchtime…

**October 17, 2016**

What a day! I decided to go fishing today, since we had that big storm yesterday. I started out fishing deep water, drifting across the lake a couple of times in the light breeze coming out of the southwest. I had some nice strikes, but didn’t hook anything. So I headed into some more shallow water and switched to jigheads with paddletail soft baits.

After a little while I hooked a medium size pike, and it put up a crazy fight. It didn’t want to give up the lure, and the result was a seriously destroyed jighead. I switched to another lure, and hooked what may have been the biggest largemouth bass I’ve caught at Kent Lake (our local spot for big bass and pike). When I grabbed his jaw and raised him out of the water, he was a beast. I could really feel his weight, and his fat belly. That bass is ready for winter! I wish I’d had a camera with me, but alas, I did not.



*Here are the lures! The one on top caught a 4-pound largemouth bass.*

*The one below it caught a medium size pike who did not want*

*to lose his dark/light green paddletail soft bait.*

Later I went to the gym for some conditioning. I have a set of exercises that I can do in 15 minutes, and I worked my way up to 4 sets in an hour. Then, little by little, I began getting the 4 sets done faster. My record was 46:30, but last week I missed both sessions due to my trip to NY. I hit the workout hard and fast, and was close to setting a new record. I gave it all I had, especially on the last exercise, and checked the time: 46:15!

Good fishing, good workout! Tomorrow I focus on finishing up Section V of the book. I’m close, but still, I think I’ll go for a hike in the morning, and then do some writing.

**October 18, 2016**

OK, decided to be lazy. I wanted to continue yesterday’s fun, so when I saw how breezy it was this morning I did go for a hike (with my weight vest on). Then the thought occurred to me that it might be nice to go to the shooting range and do a little quick draw practice with my cowboy gun (a Ruger New Vaquero .357 magnum). So now I’m finally getting a little work done. Actually, my son Samuel came over to do some homework here since he has to work a little later this afternoon (his work is close to my apartment).

**October 20, 2106**

Rain, rain, rain. But not as thunderstormy as last time. Nonetheless, I am at the park again, listening to the rain on the roof of the car as I write. I was talking with someone yesterday about retirement (which seems so far away) and the possibility of living in a van – no real residence at all. On days like today it seems like a real possibility. I could just have a storage bin as an anchor point, where I could keep things like my books and various types of outdoor gear that perhaps I wouldn’t be using seasonally, and some clothes and other personal items. Who knows?

Had a nice breakfast with my son Samuel this morning, and a killer workout at BJJ yesterday with a guy who is working toward his brown belt. Now back to the academic portion of this project…

**October 21, 2016**

Today I think I’ll try to make an entry that really encompasses what this journal is supposed to be: a reflection on my own pursuit of well-being. I’ve done that from time to time, and I’ve avoided journaling on some bad days, but I want to be sure there are some specifically reflective journals. After all, that’s what I ask my students to do, because reflection is more educationally meaningful than just writing about what’s going on from day to day (though a chronicle of good things is the next best thing).

When most people go on sabbatical, they disappear from the college for the whole semester. I’ve been on campus about once a week, since I live an hour away and LCC is close to Michigan State University’s library. So I’ll drop in to my office on my way to the libraries at LCC and MSU. Inevitably, at least one person asks me if I’m enjoying my sabbatical. The answer is complicated, and difficult to convey to most people.

Yes, my trip to Nevada/Utah/Wyoming was great, and since the timing of it involved the IBJJF Master’s World Championships, I could not have simply gone during the summer and competed in the tournament. In about a month I’ll be spending a week and a half at the Barre Center for Buddhist Studies, with two consecutive weekend classes framing the time I’ll be there. Again, this is when the courses are offered, so if not for the sabbatical I could not spend so much time away (even though the courses themselves are actually on the weekends). About seven years ago I did the same thing, and I know it will be both restful and productive.

As for writing the academic portion of this project, it’s a lot of work! A sabbatical is *not* a vacation, at least not for me. I keep switching back and forth emotionally, feeling good about what I’m doing one day, and feeling like it’s all crap the next day – and I’ll never get it done. There are definitely periods of anxiety. But then I take a deep breath (utilizing mindfulness) and remind myself that my work doesn’t have to be great, it only has to be adequate. I’m not saying that I don’t care about the end result, but I know it will not be done during this sabbatical.

The first thing I’ll do with this project is use it to teach positive psychology next semester. Obviously I’ll hear from my students in class, but then I’ll also read their journals – and I’ll encourage them to comment on these materials. Then I’ll make changes and updates as both I see fit and as my students suggest. So, over time it will get better, especially from the students’ points of view, since their suggestions will be incorporated. One big advantage of doing this as an OER is that changes can be made as often as necessary or convenient – unlike a traditional textbook which must be on the publisher’s two or three year cycle.

Also, experience has taught me that I’ll get the work done, and a few months from now will be able to look at what I’m using in the classroom with pride for a job well done. Nothing is perfect, so the desire/need for changes will be no big deal. Experience has also taught me that most students really appreciate getting a free textbook, and some get a kick out of knowing that their professor wrote the book.

And now, I need to deal with a little of the anxiety and return to working on the academic portion. This would be so easy if all I had to do was write the journal, but the academic portion is what makes me feel like a professional. So, back to the meat of the project. Mmmm…..meat. I think I’ll grill something this weekend, maybe even tonight (it happens to be Friday morning, so the weekend is almost upon us).

**October 24, 2016**

Well, today proved to be quite a day, definitely a positive psychology sabbatical type of day – at least as far as enjoying life is concerned.

I started out this morning going fishing. The fish weren’t biting, except for a few strikes, but the weather was awesome. When I started out the wind was blowing a steady breeze out of the northeast. By the time I got across the lake the wind shifted to blowing hard out of the northwest. The waves started building, and the paddle across the lake was nuts. I was bouncing from wave crest to wave crest, with waves crashing over the bow, and it was cold this morning. Fortunately I had dressed in anticipation of the conditions.

Then the clouds opened up in one spot, and there was an amazing blue patch with sun shining down through it. This picture looks excellent on my computer as the background. I don’t know why I love stormy/windy weather, but I do, and it’s exciting when the wind and waves make the kayaking a little dangerous. It’s more fun that way.



Midday I picked up the two kimonos I’ve been waiting to get new patches sewed onto. They look great, and I can’t wait to wear each of them in training, and the one gi in competition (the other one is not competition legal). It was a little expensive, but totally worth it. The woman who sewed the patches on seems to really enjoy working on BJJ gis. She told me today that her parents, back home in Vietnam, train kickboxing. So I think it helps her to feel a connection to home.

Then came today’s workout. One week ago I set a new record for my standard conditioning workout with a time of 46:15. Today the gym was pretty chilly, since no one was there. I decided to leave it chilly, since I knew I was going to hit the workout pretty hard. The first set went fast, and then I went right into the second set, and the third. I was sweating, but definitely not overheating. The fourth set was tough, but knowing it would be over soon kept me going. The final time: 39:45! Breakthrough!

Tomorrow morning I’m having breakfast with my son Samuel again, since I have some stuff for him. Things feel better than they have in quite a while.

**October 26, 2016**

Came to the park once again, and started out with a nice walk. It’s quite chilly, actually, only about 40o F. I got back to the car and started working on the final piece of the section on positive psychology and disability just before it started to rain. The temperature has dropped one degree, and the car is now being pelted with sleet, which is growing in size somewhat, and making quite a racket! Some of the sleet is closer to hail, and it’s bouncing off the hood. Way cool.

Yesterday I finally started putting together my presentation for the Open Education conference in Virginia, and then I sent a note to my co-presenter (who I had talked to last week). I can’t believe it’s next week, and I present in 7 days. That trip won’t be too long, but then I’m only home for one week. Then it’s off to the Barre Center for Buddhist Studies. That’s going to be a long trip: a weekend class, stay for the week to do research and write, and then another weekend class. After that I kill a day doing I’m not yet sure, then I stop in NY to go fishing with my son again. So it will be a 12-13 day trip, the longest of my sabbatical.

I’m really itching to add one more trip to my sabbatical, and I’d like it be something outdoors. Maybe some snowshoe camping in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula. But my car sucks when it comes to driving in snow. Hmmm… Just not sure what might be possible.

P.S. I just finished one of the major sections of the academic portion of this project (Section V).

**October 30, 2016**

Whew! This morning I put the kayak in the water before sunrise. It was weird paddling out on the lake in the dark. It was raining hard the whole time I was out there, and the temperature was falling (though not too cold when I started). In the end, however, I was soaked, chilly, and caught nothing at all. Meanwhile, my son tried a new place in NY, and caught a trout and a land-locked salmon.

After the failed fishing trip, I figured the highlight of my day would be finishing another section of this project. I sort of did it. I’m done with what I planned to do today, but as I finished up I realized there is another portion I was thinking of adding. The easy thing would be – just don’t add it! But I know I will, maybe this week while I’m out of town.

So for the moment I’m sort of done with Section II (and no one would know if I didn’t add anything, but I’d know). Of course, I may add lots of updates over time, but that doesn’t help me for now. Still, with what I’ve done, and what I’ll do over the next two months, accounting for my time on sabbatical is no problem at all. And teaching next semester will be just fine as well.

Yup, back on the road again in a day and a half. It’s time for the OpenEd 2016 conference in Richmond, VA. I’ve put together some slides in a PowerPoint presentation, but they may need a little updating. Everyone says the conference is very casual, and my presentation is basically about my experience getting into OERs, and working with others to do so as well, so I’ll basically just be telling a story. I’ve plenty of time to think about it and practice while driving, and then I can spruce up the slides when I’m there in the hotel.

I had a nice time on Friday morning (two days ago). Regina was talking about OERs at the academic senate meeting, and Jim was talking about the open learning lab, so I attended the meeting between trips to LCC’s and MSU’s libraries. Both Regina and Jim mentioned me during their presentations, so that was cool. It’s nice to get recognition for the things you’re doing for students.

**November 2, 2016**

So… quite a day at the OpenEd 2016 conference in Richmond, VA. I was really nervous about my presentation, which was this morning. However, it went really well, and my co-presenter Kari did a great job too. I also made a few jokes during the presentation, and got some pretty good laughs.

Then I was able to relax, and there were some really good presentations. One that will go directly into this project was a presentation on inclusion as a design element of open pedagogy. Since Section V includes stigmatized groups, what better topic to include than education designed to be accessible to all students.

At first I wasn’t sure I would go to today’s reception, but decided it was a good idea. It was, and I had the one free drink they provided (my choice was a glass of cabernet sauvignon) and a piece of cake. Afterward I was in no mood for exercising, and decided to keep resting my injured shoulder. The hot tub, however, proved to be a good choice given my hips and having been on my feet much of the day. We’ll see about tomorrow.

I’m a member of the panel for our presentation tomorrow on z-degrees, but that doesn’t require any preparation on my part. All that’s necessary is for me to show up and participate in the discussion as appropriate. Easy as can be.

I just couldn’t decide what I wanted for dinner tonight. Everything is so expensive here, and nothing at the hotel lounge or restaurant looked worth the price (no other places are close by). Tomorrow morning, however, I’ll treat myself to the breakfast buffet. That will be my treat for doing well during the presentation (and getting it done). So just snacks in my hotel, while watching football and occasionally checking game seven of the World Series.

Here’s something weird:



*Guess what room I was in! Apparently the hotel considered it essential to isolate*

*me from everyone else staying there. I’ve never seen anything like this before.*

**November 3, 2016**

Wow! The Chicago Cubs won their first championship in 108 years. The game went into extra innings, and both teams scored in the 10th inning. But the Cubs scored 2, and the Cleveland Indians scored only 1. Such was their fate.

Another good day at the OpenEd 2016 conference. Made some interesting connections and learned a few things. It will be interesting to see what happens in the future with the connections. I may be getting some invitations to talk to psychology faculty at other colleges about adopting and creating OERs.

I also came to the realization that I won’t be doing any academic work here in VA. That’s OK. I’m also not exercising, but I needed the rest anyway. Life goes on.

**November 5, 2016**

What a gorgeous day! Sunny, cool, and breezy; just about perfect. Yesterday I left the conference at lunchtime, which allowed me to drive across western Virgina and West Virginia in daylight. It was a beautifully sunny day yesterday as well. I had forgotten just how beautiful western Virginia is, especially with the leaves changing color in the fall (I used to live in the D.C. area, and went hiking in the Shenandoah National Park area quite often).

I came home yesterday (about midnight) to make sure I could go to the Michigan Open BJJ tournament today. Originally we had several kids planning to compete, but as it turned out only one did. She had her father to coach her (he is also a brown belt), but I wanted to be there for support and in case I was needed to coach from the other side of the mat. Once, she was over on my side of the mat and her back was to her father. I called her name (Anika), she looked at me, and I indicated how to execute a sweep of her opponent. She executed the sweep perfectly!

In the end, Anika won her first match, but lost the championship 5-4. It was an excellent showing for her first tournament, and she had a lot of family there. It was really nice to see them all enjoying her success, and she enjoying the pride her family obviously had in her (and the love). I just wish more of our school had come, especially some of the other kids, so they could have all enjoyed the camaraderie and sportsmanship. Oh well…

I considered hanging around and watching some of the tournament, but it was so nice out I decided to take off. I actually could have made it to class on time, but I headed to Highland Recreation Area for a long hike with my weight vest on. It would have been more relaxing to hike without it, but I figured a little extra exercise was a good idea. Final analysis: yeah, that was a good decision.

Then I realized it has been ages since I got a gyro at the best gyro place in MI. It’s just about 3 miles farther away from my apartment than the park, but that’s nothing given how much I drive. So I went over to Graceland, which is the name of the party shop (the owner is, obviously, a serious Elvis fan), and ordered the combo like usual: a gyro and a Greek salad. A woman there was buying a couple bottles of Malbec, and the owner highly recommended it. Even though I haven’t been there in quite a while, he remembered that I like Malbec, so I got a bottle too.

Right now, as I write this, I’m out on my balcony enjoying the Malbec and some Havarti cheese. I’m kind of listening to a football game on t.v. inside. It’s so nice to be on my balcony, with Mischief (my son’s cat) going in and out. I had some neighbors who chain smoked constantly, and it reeked so f\*cking bad I couldn’t stand to be out there. But they moved out. Hooray! Balcony time in this weather, with a nice Malbec and some good cheese, is totally, f\*cking awesome!

\* Yeah, I went there again, with the “bad” language. Words are just words, they mean only what you attach to them emotionally. You can be horrendously, viciously cruel without using “bad” words, so I wish uptight people would just get over themselves. By the way, I think most of those people are a fas, or, in the worst cases, a dogo. Don’t know what a fas or a dogo is? No surprise there. I made those words up, so that if I ever get in serious trouble for the language I often use in the classroom I can just switch to those words. Since no one knows what they mean, I can use them with impunity!!! \*

Soon I’ll head back inside to watch some football and enjoy my Greek salad and gyro. But there’s no hurry, since it is so very nice out here on the balcony. By the way, my gear is set up for fishing tomorrow morning. Here’s hoping I get some fish this time (and now I’ll sip a bit of wine). Ahhh…. yes, this is a good Malbec. Now for some cheese. Mmmm…. I do love Havarti, and the wine follows it so nicely. A conference, a tournament, a hike, some good food. My life has its challenges, but also its moments!

Here’s an interesting little note from yesterday: I was in three state capitals: Richmond, VA, then Charleston, WV, and finally Columbus, OH. They were all on the route I drove home from Richmond (where the OpenEd conference was). Curious little fact: Patrick Henry declared “Give me liberty or give me death!” at a church in Richmond. He was actually the first and sixth governor of Virginia. Here’s another weird fact: Virginia is *not* a state! Neither is Massachusetts, where I grew up. They are both actually commonwealths, along with Pennsylvania and Kentucky (which was once part of Virginia). Commonwealth is an old British term, and there is no legal distinction between a state and a commonwealth. It’s just one of those weird facts you learn if you grow up in one of those commonwealths.

**November 7, 2016**

Went to the gym to try my usual conditioning workout after a week with very little exercise. In the past week and half I did a little kayaking and hiking, mostly watched what I ate at the conference, took a couple short trips to the hot tub at the hotel in VA… So my expectations were mediocre today: not good or bad. I started OK, moved quickly through the second set, killed it through the third set, and went all out on the fourth! My previous record was just under 40 minutes – today I finished in 38:00!!

It’s amazing that I took nearly 2 minutes of my previous best time! Just crazy! I’ll work out the best I can this week, and then I’ll try to keep up a reasonable amount of exercise while in MA at the Barre Center for Buddhist Studies over the next couple of weeks.

However, lots of studying and writing to do as well…

**November 8, 2016**

Ugh! I voted in the presidential election this morning. Never have I felt that my vote, indeed my right to vote, was so utterly meaningless. Our government, as a reflection of our society, has become so divided and dysfunctional it’s disgraceful. No politician has my interests or well-being in mind. That’s why the political scientists have declared that we are no longer a democracy, but rather an oligarchy. I didn’t spend 9 years in the US Marine Corps to defend and support an oligarchy.

This was the tenth time I was eligible to vote for president. I have voted nine times. I have voted for Republicans, I have voted for Democrats, I once voted for a 3rd party candidate (Ross Perot), and one time I knowingly and intentionally chose not to vote at all (Clinton v. Dole, 1996). I wasn’t entirely sure I’d vote this time, but in the end dragged myself to the polls. Next time? Ever again? Only time will tell. And guess what section of this book I’m working on right now: love! Following this campaign, if that isn’t irony, what is?

So glad I’m going to a Buddhist retreat center next week. Sure I’ll be taking some classes, doing some studying, and getting some writing done, but regular meditation in a peaceful and supportive environment could not come at a better time! Ommmmmmm…..

**November 11, 2016**

Made it to the Barre Center for Buddhist Studies today. Yesterday, as I was preparing to go, I began to realize just how long the drive would be. Unless I leave crazy early the timing also runs me right into Cleveland rush hour traffic. But I had decided to go to BJJ, and didn’t want to miss it. So I made the crazy decision to leave home after BJJ – and didn’t get on the road until 10 pm.

I drove 100 miles, took a nap, drove another 60 miles and took another short nap, then drove through Cleveland about 2 am, and made my way to a rest stop close to Pennsylvania. There I slept for a couple of hours and woke up at 5 am. That left me with a long but casual drive to Massachusetts.

Normally, students for a weekend class live in the Dharma Hall, in dormitory-like rooms. There are 3 small cabins, but I didn’t expect to get one of them until Sunday night. However, this first class is being taught by Mu Soeng, who is the resident scholar here. So, they gave me the instructor’s cabin (since Mu Soeng lives here on campus). I was able to unpack all my stuff for the whole week.

I will have to pack up and move into the Dharma Hall next Friday, for the second class, but that’s cool. Hopefully, by then I’ll have done all I need to do this week, and I’ll just be taking it easy for the weekend. I’ve had class with Chip Hartranft before, and I know it will be a really good class.

The job I got was washing dishes after dinner tonight and tomorrow, and tomorrow afternoon I ring the big bell outside before the afternoon session. Not a bad gig, and I’ll probably just try for the same deal next week. Might as well do something I’m familiar with.

Our first class with Mu Soeng was about defining the true self, which is something of a koan. As soon as you try to name it, you are talking about a conception – *not* the true self. As one person after another expressed the conception of what the true self was, I sat there thinking about how each idea was wrong (in that I could counter them easily with the same types of cliché terminology they were using in the first place). So it occurred to me that true self is that which *cannot* be countered (or cannot be denied).

In other words, when you can’t argue against it, then you’ve identified true self. But it cannot be done with language, and that led into a lengthy discussion about the problems inherent in the use of language, but also the absolute necessity that we use language to communicate. So, you can’t identify true self to another, but perhaps you can know it within yourself. That was my idea, but I didn’t share it with the group. Not in much of a sharing mood.

Mu Soeng gave us some reading for tomorrow’s discussion, so it’s time to take a look at that. I also picked up some very interesting books for my own collection. One is by Mu Soeng (2015), entitled *Trust in Mind: The Rebellion of Chinese Zen*. It includes some discussion of Tao, so that caught my eye. Another is *Confession of a Buddhist Atheist*, by Stephen Batchelor (2011). I’ve read some of Batchelor’s work before, and he’s an excellent author and scholar. I consider myself to be a Taoist atheist, so it will be very interesting to read his book. Too bad I’m so busy for now with this current project. Maybe I can fit in a little casual reading if I’m productive otherwise. We’ll see; it won’t be easy.

I suppose it’s only fair that I also mention the third book I bought, since it was a nice hardcover and I’m very interested in the content. It’s *Mindfulness: A Practical Guide to Awakening* by the renowned Joseph Goldstein (2013). Once again, I’ve read some of his other work, and it’s wonderful. So this should be as well.

**November 12, 2016**

What a strange dream right before my alarm went off. I was arriving at a park, for some hiking or fishing, and went to park my car. The parking space backed up against the thin beach, and the grass overhung the beach a little. As I backed in, the grass underneath my rear wheels began to give way. I braked, and thought I’d better pull forward – but it was too late.

The ground under the rear wheels gave way, and the rear end of my car dropped down. I pressed the brake hard, but the car quickly slid off the lip, right across the little bit of beach, and into the water. The bottom of the pond quickly dropped off as well, and before I knew it the rear end of the car was plunging deep into the water. The front end rose up, and then stopped just as the rear hit the bottom. Only the hood was still out of the water, and then the front end settled down, with the front bumper barely on the beach.

I tried to drive forward, but the wheels couldn’t get any traction on the soft sand. So I slipped out of the car, and floated around in the deep water (which behind the car was deep enough that I couldn’t touch the bottom). I realized I would have to call a tow truck, and then realized my wallet was in my pocket getting soaked.

Then I woke up. I began thinking of multiple interpretations, from “entering the stream” (a Buddhist term, which is a very good thing) to “What the hell have I gotten myself into?” (which could refer to this weekend/week/weekend or this whole OER project or my whole crazy life). Maybe I’ll have additional thoughts later; maybe I’ll share those thoughts.

**\* \* \***

It’s can be fascinating, in a strange sort of way, how things work out sometimes. During our morning break, Mu Soeng asked me how the course was going. I told him it was going quite well, and that I had come across a passage in the handout he prepared for the course which reflected very nicely the thoughts I’d had last night about true self. I don’t have a formal reference (since it was in a handout), but here is the passage:

You cannot describe it, you cannot picture it,

You cannot admire it, you cannot sense it.

It is your true self, it has nowhere to hide.

When the world is destroyed, it will not be destroyed.

*Wumen Huikai (1183-1260)*

After looking at this particular passage, Mu Soeng said he had written a book about this idea. He thought I might find the book interesting. The name just happened to be *Trust in Mind!* OK, now I’m really looking forward to reading it.

**\* \* \***

It’s evening now. We finished up for the day with a ½ hour sitting meditation, a 10 minute Jongram, and another ½ hour of sitting. We also started the day with a ½ hour sitting meditation. It’s been a long time since I sat for several meditations in one day, and it went reasonable well. My mind was a bit out of control, but it settled down a few times and the meditations passed more quickly.

Then I went out to look at the moon. It’s one night before our best view of the biggest Supermoon since 1948! I took a few pictures with my camera. It’s only a regular camera, but the moon is so bright a couple of them came out OK. There were thin clouds over the moon, so there was a moonbow. That interfered with the picture in the low light, and I’ll wait until tomorrow to see if I can get a better picture. Either way, I will share at least one picture of the Supermoon.

 \* 

*The main farmhouse at the Barre Center for Buddhist Studies in Barre, MA., and*

*a large tree just behind the farmhouse with its late fall leaves hanging on (this tree can actually just be seen over the roof behind the right hand side of the farmhouse).*

**November 13, 2016**

Mu Soeng’s course on True Self wrapped up today with lunch. This morning’s session was mostly question/discussion, and there were some interesting points and some, for me anyway, not so interesting. Some people get caught up in trying to make sure they have the “right” answer or “right” perspective, even after we talked extensively about how poorly language captures the essence of the ideas we are discussing. Oh well, some people.

One very interesting thing Mu Soeng said, yesterday actually, was in reference to a fear among some people who contemplate Buddhism. Buddhism is about letting go, about never clinging to anything. So:

“If I let go of everything I know – will I be left?”

*Mu Soeng, BCBS, 11/13/2016*

So what if you are gone? Let go, of everything! I realize it’s not easy for most people to accept that perspective. For me, it’s no big deal. For whatever reason, it seems quite reasonable to me.

Here come the pictures of the Supermoon! I was heading over to the farmhouse to do some research, just as the sun was setting. I saw the Supermoon rising over the big hill to the south of center. Since there was still some daylight, I was able to get much better pictures than later. Once it was dark, the contrast between the Supermoon and black night sky was so extreme that the moon appears as nothing but a bright spot. In the low-level light of sunset, however, you can actually see the texture of the Supermoon with my camera.

 \* 

*On the left we see the Supermoon rising over the hill to the east of BCBS;*

*on the right we see a closer image of the 2016 Supermoon!*

**November 14, 2016**

It’s a good thing I got some nice pictures of the moon last night, since it is slightly overcast tonight. The moon is still visible, but not very clearly.

Today was interesting. Yes, I managed to do some writing, but spent more time discovering new texts. Sometimes I wish my sabbatical was just about me learning/discovering new things. Then I could really focus on the knowledge, rather than the ever-present need to produce this book for class next semester and to satisfy the sabbatical leave committee. The necessary work will get done, and I suppose I have the rest of my life to learn. It’s just that I’m here now, and I’m not sure when I’ll get back. It’s been 7 ½ years since I was last here, so who knows.

I’m rediscovering my sitting practice. Last night I would have guessed I sat for 10-15 minutes, and it turned out to be half an hour. Tonight I would have guessed about the same, and it turned out to be 55 minutes. This is such a peaceful place, and I had such a pleasant walk after lunch, that my mind is clearer than it has been in a long time. And I’m not suggesting that it’s all that clear when I sit to meditate, but it’s a whole lot closer to where it should be than back home. Note to self: be diligent about a sitting meditation practice.

Here are a few pictures I took today:

 \* 

*This sap shack (r) was not there in 1749, but it’s there now.*

 \* 

*These cows were definitely not there in 1749,*

*but the Buddha has been influencing people for 2,500 years.*

*This is the Buddha statue in the Dharma Hall at BCBS.*

**November 17, 2016**

Two nights ago I went to the Dharma Hall and sat and walked. Yesterday morning I walked and sat. Last night I sat and walked and then sat again. At the end of my walking meditation two nights ago I bowed to the Buddha statue before taking my leave, and the Buddha statue ever so slightly smiled at me. I’m not just saying this, I saw him smile. It’s certainly possible that if anyone else were there they might not have seen anything out of the ordinary. *But I did!*

I also had a wonderful conversation with Mu Soeng yesterday. As we were talking about my work, and the difficulty with conveying a worldly view of happiness (from a decidedly Western perspective – as in most of my students) as opposed to a Buddhist view of happiness, Mu Soeng gave me a copy of an article he had recently published on that very challenge. That’s why I came here!

It seems like I’ve done and learned so much, and yet it seems like I’ve written so little. I’ve been relaxing, reading, thinking, meditating, going for walks, all the things that sabbatical should allow for. Nonetheless, I have to have a book ready for next semester. Somehow I’ll get it done, but there is a lot more to do. And I’m not entirely happy with the direction I’ve gone. Yes, it’s the direction I wanted to go, but it’s so different than what’s out there (of course, that was part of my plan).

It’s too late to change now. It will be what it will be, and nothing else. Neti, neti, sabbe dhamma nalam abhinivesaya!

This morning I’m headed straight over to the library. I’ll try for a good long meditation tonight. Or a long hike this afternoon. The weather has been pretty bad; two days ago we had an horrendous storm. Strange, the weather was gorgeous through the Supermoon, and then took a nasty turn. I wonder…

**\* \* \***

I drove to Petersham for lunch again, and quite a nice lunch it was. Then, since the sun is finally shining again, I went for a nice walk. Now it’s back to work, since the week is rapidly coming to an end.

**\* \* \***

I wasn’t able to meditate well this evening, because for some reason my back was hurting. I sat for a bit, then walked around the room, then sat on a cushion on the floor. Then I decided enough was enough. So instead I went for a little walk outside. It’s so peaceful here. Something that just doesn’t happen at home is that it’s dark and quiet here. Sure there are some essential lights, but it’s easy to avoid them if you want, and the roads are certainly pitch black unless you’re right by somebody’s house.

The night sky was clear, and it was chilly and breezy. I watched the stars for a while, since you can see the Milky Way here. Then I came in for a little dinner and now this writing. It’s amazing how little I eat when I’m in the right situation. Maybe I can take this home and finally lose some weight for real (and save money in the process).

Hard to believe tomorrow is Friday. I haven’t accomplished nearly as much writing as I thought, but I think I’m OK. There is some more I need to do here, so tomorrow will be a little busy. There won’t be much time during the class this weekend, but I’ll take the library books I need to my room or work in the library. Either way, I’ll do what I do, and that will be that. Most likely I’ll be up early.

**November 18, 2016**

Wow, it’s a few minutes before noon on Friday. I can’t believe this week is just about over. I’m not going to do any more work this afternoon. It’s beautifully sunny outside, and this weekend’s course on how the Buddha taught meditation starts with dinner at 6 p.m. I may go for a walk, I may drive into town and get a snack (something sweet), and there’s no reason I can’t do both. There is one book I want to look at, but just for personal reference. I doubt it will make it’s way into this project (it’s a comparison of Theravada vs. Mahayana thought, so it may be rather esoteric).

This morning I woke up about 1 a.m., and couldn’t sleep.

**\* \* \***

OK, took a little break there, went and got lunch, and read the chapter of particular interest in that book. So…

Yeah, woke up at 1 a.m., wide awake! Tried to get back to sleep, finally gave up a little before 2, and went for a walk. It was chilly and breezy, and intermittently the wind howled through the treetops. When I came up to the beginning of the road that heads out toward the main road, a grey ribbon extended through the dark. The sky was crystal clear, and the waning Supermoon was shining bright, lighting up the road. As I began walking along the road, the moon was slightly to my left, and the shadows of the trees were stark upon that moonlit road (shadows like skeletons, since the recent storm pretty much brought down all the remaining leaves). After 45 minutes or so, I went back to bed and slept well.

Instead of meditation this morning I mindfully cleaned up the cabin. I had to check out, since I’ve been in the instructor’s cabin all week, and Chip Hartranft will need it this evening. So I’ll be in one of the dorm rooms in Dharma Hall. Been there before, it’s all good.

Before going into town to pick up lunch, I had another nice conversation with Mu Soeng. I wish I could study with him regularly. Perhaps I’ll try to make it a point to spend some time here next summer, maybe while also updating this project with the comments and suggestions my students make next semester.

The chapter in the book I wanted to read was on the, apparently, mistaken belief that the Theravada ideal is to be an Arhant, whereas the Mahayana ideal is to become a Bodhisattva. Apparently there was never any validity to that distinction, though there are different types of enlightenment possible (though all three exist within both Theravada and Mahayana traditions). The work is rather esoteric, but I’m going to cite it here anyway, for one special reason. If I cite it here, I’ll never lose the citation! I may buy a copy, there are some on Amazon used books, but I’ve spent a lot on books this week already, and I’ll wait to see about spending the money. The book, which is fascinating, is *Zen and the Taming of the Bull* by Walpola Rahula (1978).

Now I have several hours before this weekend’s class starts (while I’m writing this a couple of staff members are moving things around here in the library classroom to get ready – but I’m over in the corner doing this). It’s so nice outside that a long walk seems appropriate. I don’t know whether I’ll take this computer out again this weekend or not. It depends on whether there is some interesting information that calls for immediate recording, or whether I just decide to soak it all in and write about it later.

**\* \* \***

Oops, back already. I remembered something I wanted to write down, and figured why wait. By the way, very nice 3+ mile walk, in only a t-shirt no less. Very nice weather today. Saw some crazy goats being crazy. Too bad goats are totally evil. But these goats were being pretty cute.

Anywho… Yesterday evening I went into the Dharma Hall to meditate. As I entered I glanced at the clock, and I saw the time. It occurred to me that it had been 24 hours since I left there. As I went to sit down, I briefly glanced at the stature of the Buddha, and it occurred to me that it has been 24 centuries, or so, since he began teaching what he had learned.

24 hours, 24 centuries, both my kids are in their 20s, 68 years since the last Supermoon this close, where does the time go? Wow, bizarre! I just noticed that 24 + 24 + 20 = 68! Freaky…!!

**November 19, 2016**

As last night’s class was about to begin, Chip was setting up his computer (for his notes), and he commented that if the computer crashed to the floor the class would be over. I smiled and said there was no computer, and there was no class to be taken. Chip smiled and said I had received a passing grade. Then he looked at everyone else and said they would be graded as well! We were off to a good start.

This morning I had a short but stunning dream. I was back in the house I used to live in, waiting for the kids to come home from school, when I heard a commotion out back. I walked to the sliding glass door on the deck, looked out, and saw a raging black bear charging toward the door. It was roaring, and its mouth was wide open, showing its terrible teeth.

Realizing the kids should be walking home any minute, I ran to the front door to hurry them inside. I saw a form outside the door and, thinking it was one of the kids, I opened the door. But it was a bear cub! Before I could close the door, the cub burst inside. I slammed the door shut, but now I had the sow’s cub in my house.

I quickly went over to the back door, and the cub came with me, eager to find its mother. I slid the door open slightly, and as I hoped the sow simply watch the cub run out. Instantly I slid the door shut and locked it. Knowing that the sow could easily smash down the door, I sincerely hoped she would just leave with her cub. What happened? I woke up.

**\* \* \***

Busy day. Multiple 1 ½ hour sessions of sitting meditation and Yoga, hours of historical/linguistic analysis of sati and the Satiphatthana Sutta, I had to work the recording system during class, wash dishes and pots after dinner, and ring the big bell before afternoon class. Chip Hartranft offers some amazing insight, and teaches a fine Yoga class.

I was planning another evening walk, and took note of how the sky was crystal clear again as I walked over to the Dharma Hall for our evening class. Well, after class it was cloudy and a little misty. The road where I planned to walk was pitch black. Off in the distance I could hear an owl, and he sounded pretty loud. Given the distance he had to be at, and how loud, it must have been one seriously big owl.

When I got back last from my walk last night everyone had gone to their rooms (downstairs), but all the lights were still on. So I turned everything off, and then turned in. Tonight I made sure all the lights were off before my walk, except for one light being used by someone still up reading. I’m going to finish the introduction Mu Soeng’s book *Trust in Mind*, but I’ll just read here in my room. One more meditation/Yoga session, and one more class. Then it’s off to mother’s house for an early Thanksgiving dinner.

**November 24, 2016**

Thanksgiving Day - the only holiday I celebrate, not that I celebrate it with anyone usually. This past Sunday, when I was in Foxborough, I had Thanksgiving dinner with my mom, my sister Missy (who made the cover for the print-version of this book), and Missy’s boyfriend Peter. It was a very nice dinner, and my mom actually made a small turkey. That was nice!

Why does Thanksgiving mean so much to me? I had four direct ancestors on the Mayflower. John Tilley and Joan (Hurst) Tilley were my great12-grandparents. Their daughter Elizabeth married John Howland, and they were my great11-grandparents. Amazingly, John Howland fell overboard during a storm. However, he grabbed hold of some rigging, and the crew was able to pull him back on board. Otherwise, I would never have existed – nor would my children.

Normally I go for an early hike on Thanksgiving, but today John said he wanted to go with me (and go to some fishing site). So I went to the gym for an early, easy workout. When John finally got up, it was a little too late to go fishing. When he and his girlfriend took off, I went for a short hike and then came home to watch the Lions’ game and write this (while having some cheese and crackers and a nice Pinot Noir – Thor’s Well). The Lions won the first half, and the winner of this game is in first place. My son Samuel is a big Lions fan; I’m a diehard Patriots fan. I did grow up in Foxborough, and back in the 1970s I knew several players on the team.

Sunday brought an interesting finish to the second class I took at BCBS. As we finished up our morning meditation/Yoga, the snow hit. When I was driving to NY the next day the weather was terrible in the mountains of western MA. That afternoon John and I went fishing in a river in NY, just below a nice waterfall. It was COLD! And the fish just weren’t biting. I had one strike, and John had one on the line for a bit, but we couldn’t land any. We were supposed to go fishing the next day, but due to the weather the guide suggested we should just cancel. Unfortunately, we just couldn’t figure out how to reschedule.

In a few minutes I’ll grill some chicken breasts for dinner, and cook some rolls. Mischief (John’s cat) will be happy. She’ll chow on some chicken. Had chicken a couple of nights ago, with John, Samuel, and Samuel’s girlfriend. We went to Buffalo Wild Wings. I got my favorite: boneless wings with the Caribbean Jerk hot sauce. Today I have some BBQ sauce from the Montgomery Inn in OH. My grandparents lived in Montgomery, so I’ve loved their BBQ sauce for many years.

**\* \* \***

Wow. The Lions won on the final play of the game, with a field goal. They have taken sole possession of first place in the NFC North, and now have a real shot at the playoffs this year. But it would be nice if they could win big one of these days. They were the first team to go 10 games with every game decided by 7 or fewer points, and then in game 11 they win by 3 on the final play. Wow.

**November 25, 2016**

So… there were 3 movies I wanted to see this weekend. I saw *Moana* yesterday, and it was amazing. Very fun movie! Today John and I went fishing and almost went to see the new pre-Harry Potter movie about amazing beasts, but the timing wasn’t quite right. But then this evening I went to see *Bad Santa 2*. What a messed up movie, but I laughed out loud. It was pretty much what I expected. So, 2 out of 3 so far, and they were both pretty good (*Moana* was certainly more fun). Maybe I’ll get to see the other one tomorrow, but then on Sunday I’ll be taking John back to school. Yippee! Another day in the car…

**November 29, 2016**

Now the pressure is on! The trips planned for my sabbatical are behind me, John is back at Cornell, I went to the libraries at LCC and MSU yesterday, while also dropping in on a seminar at LCC on using blogs/e-portfolios with students in class (related to utilizing open education in addition to merely open textbooks), and picked up an article I needed from my office (our old statistics publication). That leaves one big task before me: the completion (or at least the adequate completion, as it will be) of this positive psychology OER.

In two days it will be December. Technically, my sabbatical ends when the semester ends. That’s about three weeks. However, I can also use the entire holiday break to finish up, and it looks like I’ll need it! Maybe I’ll plan a few days up north for some final reading/editing, snowshoeing, and meditating. It’s been years since I’ve been to the Yoga retreat center I used to go to regularly. Being here in Michigan, it’s much closer than BCBS, and it would just be nice to get up there again.

In the meantime, the writing needs to happen. So much to do…

**December 2, 2016**

One of the reasons I like helping with the kids’ class in BJJ is that occasionally it provides the opportunity to just be silly. Last night we gathered the kids together to teach the next technique, and for some reason one of the smaller kids stayed about 20 feet away. Then he made a weird noise that sounded somewhat like the howl of a wolf. So I yelled over to him, “Hey, what are you doing? Are you a wolf?” Then I told all the kids to howl like wolves, and I led them in a nice long howl. They were all laughing and smiling as I told them all to return their focus to BJJ.

Of course, there are a few occasions to be silly with the adults as well, but just not as often. We were talking about BJJ after a few of the adults got stripes on their white belts. The highest ranking purple belt (who would have gotten his brown belt with me if he hadn’t been injured for a while), reminded them not to get discouraged by comparing themselves to higher ranked students. He said that when new white belts eventually joined, then they would see just how much they’d learned in comparison to the new students.

Then I said that new white belts were like crack. New white belts to beat up on were great, you need new white belts, you just *gotta have* new white belts! Everybody was laughing like crazy, and the head coach commented on how sometimes I say the silliest things.

That was when I reminded everyone that at my age, and with a disability, if BJJ isn’t fun then it’s just too difficult for me to keep going. But as long as I can have some fun, then I’ll be able to withstand the challenging training and competing with my younger and able-bodied teammates.

It’s just fun to laugh. Laughing feels good. Don’t’ forget that.

**December 3, 2016**

What a day. Yesterday I got a message from my BJJ head coach, asking if I would take his place refereeing a tournament today. I’ve judged Taekwondo tournaments, years ago, but wasn’t too sure about BJJ, since it’s so much more complex and, sometimes, fast moving. I agreed to do it, if it was OK with the tournament director. Once it was cleared, off I went early this morning.

There were several things that made this quite challenging. First, this tournament uses rules different than the International Brazilian Jiu Jitsu Federation, where I’ve done most of my competitions (and all of my competitions for several years now). Second, as with most tournaments, there was both gi (traditional BJJ) and no-gi (aka, submission wrestling) competition. Third, the gi and no-gi competitions are scored differently, and have a few different rules. Add to that it was my first time refereeing this type of competition, and it was interesting to say the least.

As far as I know, it went really well. Only once was a coach upset, and it was definitely a close call, so I understood his disappointment. But we had a nice talk about it, and he told the tournament director (who he was friends with) that otherwise he had seen me do a great job. So there’s a good chance I’ll end up going back for the March tournament. That’s what the director said was likely, and I know they have trouble getting people to ref.

On the way home I realized I was going right past my favorite Thai restaurant (Bangkok Kitchen, in Farmington, MI). So I picked up some takeout: Gang Garee being my favorite entrée, and it would definitely be a candidate for my last meal, if I had to make such a choice. Then I picked up a very nice bottle of Cabernet Sauvignon, which I am enjoying right now while watching a college football game and writing this journal entry. And I paid for my Thai food and the wine with the money I was paid at the tournament. This has been a good day!

**December 5, 2016**

I was going to get up early and get right to my writing today. However, it snowed last night, so the first thing on today’s agenda became a hike. It was still overcast, chilly, and bleak, but I like hiking in weather like that. For my efforts, the reward was seeing a pine marten run across the trail (with a brief stop to check me out). Recently my son John and I saw a pine marten up close while we were fishing, so that makes two in less than two weeks. Since I’ve only seen one or two in the past (over many years), it seems that the pine marten population must be doing rather well around here. Note: the one I saw with my son may have been a fisher, but today’s was quite a bit smaller, so it was probably a pine marten.

If only I’d had my camera with me, but he didn’t hang around for long, so it would have been tough to get a picture. Later I came across a picture I took from the balcony of my apartment of a great blue heron. It’s nice having a swamp behind the building, since it attracts lots of water fowl.



*A great blue heron in the swamp behind my apartment.*

**December 6, 2016**

So… Yesterday I was writing about loveless children and lonely adults in the section on love and the capacity to be loved. I would fall into this category, so it was quite interesting to me. There are problems identified by George Vaillant in his work that match my life, but I also have some strengths, particularly play. It has always been fascinating to me as I’ve studied positive psychology, since I fall into both the good and bad categories when looking at the lists of what’s good and what’s bad.

And then last night I had some dreams… In the first dream I remember, I was back at work in security, and we were trying to hunt down someone who had stolen some 300 million dollars in securities. The suspected thief was a guy I used to work with. We went and arrested his parents, planning to hold them as hostages to lure him in. I was quite sure this strategy would fail. Later I had a very disturbing and frustrating dream involving my ex-wife. What a night!

I have a little more work to do on that section, and the larger section in which it’s located, but I’ll be glad to finish it up and leave it behind. Come to think of it, I’ll be glad to finish this project. But there’s a lot more to do. I have mixed feelings about the whole thing. There are parts I like, and parts that I’m not happy with. There’s no doubt I’ll be working on it all through next summer, and by then it should be in good shape.

**December 7, 2016**

Lots of dreams last night, long and detailed dreams. But I can’t seem to remember them right now… Then again: one involved going skiing…but that’s all I can remember. I do remember waking up after a couple of them and thinking, “I need to remember these and write them down in my journal.” But, like usual, they escape me now.

75th Anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor. Very meaningful day for all veterans (and their families), but not one to be happy about.

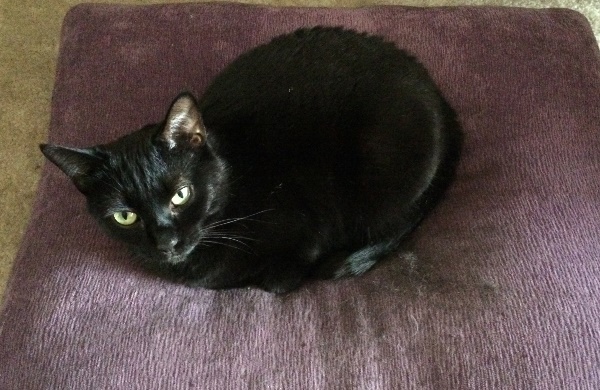
**December 8, 2016**

It was cold this morning (in the 20s), the wind was blowing, and some light snow was falling! So naturally I went for a hike. I climbed one of the highest hills in the park (perhaps the highest, not sure), and the wind started really blowing. So I turned my back to the wind and did a short standing meditation. It was a wonderful morning. I love the combined sound of dried leaves crunching under my feet while the wind howls through the trees above my head. Add the sight of a whitetail deer running through the woods, adding absolutely *nothing* to the sounds, and it’s just amazing. Too bad I couldn’t just do this for my whole sabbatical. Ha!

I had lots of intense dreams last night, and once again I can’t remember them. It’s such a weird thing we’ve evolved. Why? Even when we can’t remember our dreams, we often remember that we had them. I have a vague recollection that one or two of them were really interesting dreams, so why can’t I remember them? It’s quite frustrating sometimes. Imagine if we had wonderful dreams every night, and could always remember them the next day. It could add so much to the enjoyment of our lives.

I’m making reasonable progress lately; that’s good. But there’s still a lot to do. If I count the holiday break, I still have about a month. It’ll do.

When I got home my son’s cat, who lives with me while he’s away at Cornell University, wanted to go out on the balcony. She’s a rescue, and we think she may have been a wild cat for a while (or at least spent a lot of time outdoors). So she loves being on the balcony, looking at the birds and critters living in and around the swamp out back.

 \* 

*After going on the balcony in the snow for a while, Mischief came in an curled up*

*in one of her favorite spots (one of my meditation pillows). After taking*

*this picture I left her alone, since it seems as if I was annoying her!*

By the way, it’s amazing how much I’ve learned on sabbatical. A lot of it has made its way into the book, but much of it doesn’t really apply or is too advanced for this book. Some of those things will be useful when actually teaching, since you can talk about more as you see the interest and level of engagement of students who are actually there in class with you. There’s no way to tell what they will find interesting, given my interest in something. Usually, there are those students who are as interested as you, the professor, but there are also those students who just don’t engage. It is what it is, you just can’t please everyone.

**December 9, 2016**

Out for another hike this morning. As I entered the park, there were three deer on the side of the road. A doe and one young deer were on the left side, and another young deer was on the right side. The young deer on the right wanted to join his family on the other side, by my car worried him. I slowed down enough that he started to cross the road. Then, in the middle of the road, he stopped and stared right at me. I came to a complete stop, since he was right in front of me, and then, for some inexplicable reason, he turned around and ran back to the right side or the road. The doe and her other youngster suddenly turned and stared right at me, like it was my fault that doofus deer ran back the wrong way! They kept their gazes locked on me as I slowly drove past, and then I headed on down to the parking area.

There was still a little snow, and I saw plenty of tracks: coyote, deer, birds, squirrels, and a family of raccoons. I love raccoons, so I wish I had seen that family of them running along the trail together. Then I saw an owl fly by. It’s been a long time since I saw an owl while hiking, since they aren’t usually out in the daytime. Owls are awesome!

Being in something of a critter mood, I figured it might be fun to go see the Magical Beasts movie again. It’s amazing how much I picked up on the 2nd time. I’m glad I went.

More intense dreams last night, and I made a point of remembering one interesting part of one. The dream took place in a number of outdoor locations, and they were connected by trails that had been overgrown with branches and vines. When I went from one spot to another, I had to run fast, which was somewhat challenging with the vines and branches in the way. So the dream involved a lot of intense physical sensation as I crashed along the tangled trails. Still, since I can’t run anymore (due to my artificial hips), dreams in which I run and run with little or no effort are among my favorites.

**December 11, 2016**

No doubt about it, I am currently enjoying one of my longest and most intense stretches of night after night dreaming in my entire life. We are being dumped on today by a significant snowstorm. I was planning to spend the day in my office, getting a lot of writing done. Since it’s Sunday, it would have been peaceful and quiet there. However, there was no way I was attempting that drive today, since it likely would have meant 2-3 hours in each direction! No thanks, especially since the car I have now is the worst vehicle I’ve ever owned when it comes to driving in snow.

Last night I had a dream that I was with a bunch of other people, strangely enough we were at my mom’s house, and there was a big storm brewing outside. I went out back to look at the clouds, and when I looked up at one particularly black, ominous cloud I saw that is was swirling in a circular motion. As I was about to go back in and warn everyone, a funnel cloud surged downward toward the ground. Suddenly it hit the ground and turned into a fully formed tornado! Mayhem ensued, but we managed to survive.

My son Samuel sent me a text a little while ago, asking about watching one of today’s football games. I know he’ll be watching the Lions at 1 pm, but he doesn’t want to venture out into the snow yet. So we’ll get together and watch one of the later games. Not sure yet where we’re going, maybe here at my apartment. But I’ll need to go get some snacks and stuff first, unless he brings stuff with him. I kind of hope it works out that way, so I don’t have to go out in the snow. But if we decide to go to the local place we often go to (nice thin crust pizza!) that’s fine too. We’ll get better food there, since I don’t really want to grill in a snowstorm, and grilling is the best cooking I do these days (the only real cooking I bother with these days).

**December 12, 2016**

Another night of crazy dreams, but this time I did something I often think about but never do – I made a note. After the first dream of the night woke me up I sent myself a text message with a quick note about the dream. Another really interesting dream was the only one I could remember this morning, so later in the afternoon I checked the text message:

“I rented apt like John on weird spring break like Xmas trip”

The dream I did remember was about renting a weird apartment, where they changed the lock on the door and it was entirely inadequate. While fighting with management, I went into my other apartment, which I was aware of being rather strange, since I wouldn’t need two apartments for any reason. Since it was about apartments, there’s no surprise it blocked my recall of the first dream.

So, did the note help? Sorry, no such luck. At best I have the vaguest recollection about renting an apartment like my son’s in Ithaca, NY, from a company like the one he rents from. It will be most interesting if some memory should return at a later time.

I’m about to write the section on courage. Actually, I began the section on courage from a Buddhist perspective when I was at the Barre Center for Buddhist Studies. So what I’m about to start is the western perspective on courage. To prepare myself, this afternoon I went to see the movie *Hacksaw Ridge*. Wow! Almost unbelievable that this is a true story. Since I’ve used movies in class before, usually as the basis for writing papers, there is a good chance I’ll use this one someday. However, it is pretty damn graphic, so it’ll be a tough decision.

Let’s see if I can keep up the dream series tonight. If something is really interesting, I’ll send a text again, just to see if it helps.

**December 16, 2016**

Sort of finished another section (Section II) today. I say sort of, because I haven’t had a chance to proofread anything. That’s not likely to happen at all, since there is so much more to do and time is rapidly coming to an end. Still plenty of time though, but I’ll have to keep some things short on purpose, just to get them done. Later there’ll be time to update and/or add to whatever has been done.

John was supposed to come home today, but he got home yesterday. He wanted to go out to dinner. I had BJJ, and Samuel worked late, but then we went out to B-Dubs (it was boneless wing night – discount on boneless wings). Sometimes I’ll try different sauces, but last night I just got my favorite: Caribbean Jerk. It’s hot enough, and really tastes good! I finished the leftovers tonight, as planned. Now I’m watching football and enjoying some Frangelico.

I was hoping to spend a day this weekend in my office getting a lot done, but we’re supposed to get hammered with a weekend long snowstorm again. Just like last week. This weather sucks, it’s really messing with my planned schedule for writing – just don’t get as much done at home.

**December 20, 2016**

Two nights ago I had a snippet of a really good dream, but it was all too brief. Last night I had a dream that was definitely symbolic of working on this book. When I awoke, the thought of making a note occurred to me, but I was too sleepy. It took a bit to remember the dream, but fortunately the memory of the dream was not lost.

I was at some spooky old amusement park, and it was haunted. I decided to ride the rollercoaster, in part to find the ghost or evil spirit, whatever it was, so I could do battle with it. The rollercoaster started out, and then went really slow. It was a terrible ride, so I got off and went looking for the spirit. Some other guys were helping me to look, but all we found were dead ends, as the spirit kept moving off invisibly, always just out of sight and out of reach.

So, how does that relate to this book? It’s been a rollercoaster, good stretches and tough stretches. The end product is illusory, and I wonder if it will ever be done (technically, no, since there will always be updates). Each time I read something new, it sends me down another path, and another, and it keeps on going (hence, the people who are helping me but failing, in a sense).

In an unrelated note, the other day I saw a bald-faced wasp nest hanging from a tree. It had a bunch of snow on it. I thought it would make a good picture, but I didn’t have my camera with me (it was too high up for a good picture with my phone). This morning, on my way to the local library (where I am currently writing this), I took some pictures with my big telephoto lens. It wasn’t as sunny as the other day, but it isn’t sunny very often in Michigan in the winter (seriously, we can go a month or more without much sun in the winter).

Come to think of it, it has been pretty cold. I haven’t been out hiking in this weather, even though the cold is just fine with me. Now is the time to start thinking about ice fishing. I’m pretty sure my gear is together in one place and easily accessible. But, since my son has our SUV now, I need to see if I can fit my ice shanty/sled in my small car. It’s a possibility, since the sled is fairly small, I just haven’t checked yet.

Cool, on my way home from the library it was sunny, so I decided to see if I could get a better picture of the wasp nest. To my amazement there was a woodpecker on the nest. They are among my favorite birds, and I’ve never gotten a good picture of one. Unfortunately the sun was behind the nest, creating a lighting problem. But I got a couple of decent pictures.

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*Left: The bald-faced wasp nest on the way to the library.*

*Right: From a different angle in the sun, while a woodpecker was digging out the wasps*

*inside (you can’t really see it here, but the woodpecker has a wasp in its beak).*

**December 21, 2016**

Good news! Last night my son Samuel called to tell me he has been accepted into a physical therapy doctoral program. He’s not sure if he’ll go to that school, but it’s down to that one and one other (which he hasn’t heard from yet). I couldn’t be more proud!

Bad news? I just checked registration for next semester, and positive psychology is in danger of being canceled. If I’ve done all this work for nothing I will be seriously pissed! OK, I’ll find some way to make some use of it, and my own professional development is important, but that just wouldn’t be the same. There’s still some time, maybe I’ll write the section on hope next. Right… I’m not a big believer in hope, since I believe that taking action is more important than just hoping. But there’s nothing I can do about registration. I’ll just have to wait and see if the number picks up.

**December 25, 2016**

Technically, my sabbatical is over, since the semester has come to an end and we’re on break. But this book is not done, so there’s quite a bit more to do. At some point I need to wrap it up, since I have to place something online as an OER to satisfy the sabbatical leave committee, and for those students who want a printed version I need to publish something. What I think I’ll do is finish up by the end of the week – the last day of December. So, between now and then, I’ll just make an outline and some notes in the sections that aren’t finished. That will provide my students with something, and give me a little guidance as I eventually finish those sections during next semester and on into next summer.

However, the registration situation sucks! The number in the class dropped by one student; it’s now down to seven. This is *not* good. Nonetheless, I must force myself to do what’s necessary for the sabbatical, and plan to make good use of the material in the future, and in other classes, if indeed positive psychology is cancelled next semester.

Some interesting things happened in BJJ the last few days. On Thursday I rolled for the first time in a long time with a young guy who comes on an irregular basis. He got his purple belt around the same time I did, but then his erratic schedule held him back. However, he earns his living as a fitness instructor, and is seriously into weight lifting, and he’s about half my age, so physically he’s quite impressive. When we went to roll I’m pretty sure everybody (him, our coach, and me) expected him to crush me.

As we started, I tried to pull guard. He was having none of it, so I worked to at least get half guard. He fought to pass that as well, and defended my attempts to force it, so I switched to turtle guard. He quickly went into the referee’s position, and kept his hand low on my hip, thinking it was safe. But I locked his hand in tight, dropped my inside hip low and under him, and pulled off a nice turtle guard sweep. He quickly tried to replace guard, but I trapped one of his feet and started working to pass his guard. It took a couple of minutes, but eventually I did pass his guard, and at that point we were all pretty surprised.

I had (still have) a chest cold, so I was getting pretty winded, being unable to get a full breath each time due to the cold. My young opponent finally broke free and came up in a neutral position ready to go. So I stopped, shook his hand, and thanked him for the good roll. I know when to quit!

Then yesterday, I woke up feeling exhausted from the cold. I was up for a little while, and then took a nap. I realized it was kinda silly to go to BJJ, but the coach said we would have an open class and I had told one of the white belts that I would go over de la Riva guard with him (since it came up in the regular class and was new to him). So I dragged myself to BJJ, and the coach never showed up. I have a key, so I opened up, got things ready to go (including turning up the heat), and waited to see who would show up.

Three of the white belts came (including the one I promised to work with, and whose son is one of the little kids in the kids’ class), so I taught a class on de la Riva guard and sit-up guard (for those who don’t know, they are very close to one another). We rolled a few times at the end, and despite my cold I was warmed up a bit and managed to use my technique to control all three younger but less experienced students. It turned out to be a nice class.

**December 28, 2016**

So close to being done with as much as I’ll complete while still actually on sabbatical (though it technically ended with the end of the semester – so it’s really over already). Next week is the start of the new semester, and a break from this project will be necessary as I get the new semester up and going. It seems like forever!

Very, very bad news! I checked registration for the positive psychology class again, and it was down to 7. This morning I checked yet again, and it was down to 6! There is little doubt now that the class will be cancelled. It’s bad enough simply regarding the work I’ve done to prepare this OER for it, but when the class gets cancelled my schedule will be messed up. Most likely they won’t let me pick up another online class. I’ll need something face-to-face on Monday/Wednesday morning or afternoon. Those are popular times, so they are most likely staffed with regulars. I’m not sure what the procedures are these days, or what the options will be. This could seriously suck, but I’ll just have to deal with it.

Unfortunately, it may not be as simple as dealing with it. Suppose, for example, the worst possible thing happens: they assign me a class on Tuesday/Thursday night. That’s when we have BJJ classes, for both kids and adults. So it would interfere with my training (health/fitness) and the fun I have working with the kids (enjoyable stress relief). The first task for next week is quite clear – meet with the department coordinator and figure out what options there are, and hope for the best.

Well, perhaps one or two more entries, but I’m not sure about that. We’ll see how I feel over the next few days, but I must wrap things up by the 31st. Then I’ll start the new semester, and get back to this when I can.

By the way, the writing has been sort of discombobulated lately, as I try to rush things a little. It will be quite interesting when I have the time to actually review and edit this work. I know of some things I want to add and/or modify, and I can only imagine how many others there are. I’ve encountered many citation errors in my research, hopefully I’ve done a better job with my own citations. I’m usually pretty good about details.

**December 29, 2016**

Dreams and omens!

Last night I started to have two weird dreams, but Mischief jumped up on the bed and woke me up. Maybe I was making some noise that attracted her, but I’m not sure. In the one dream I can remember a bunch of us were in an industrial complex when we saw an electric blue flaming motorcycle roaring in, and a malevolent alien force (perhaps a demon) began calling out a warning. The evil force declared that four people were going to be executed. I was fourth on the list! I began running around, looking for places to hide or weapons to fight with – but then Mischief woke me up.

Then I had another dream. I was driving through a small city, and my car started making a terrible noise, but still driving OK. But my steering went out, and I could barely steer with all my strength. The city began to grow, the buildings got bigger, construction equipment and road damage were all around, and lots of people. I tried to keep driving, but I just couldn’t do it. Finally the car just died.

Now for the omen. One of the big things I did on this sabbatical was the BJJ Globetrotters camp. I had a great time, and would like to go again. But the camp is in September, and we can’t take a week off during the semester, obviously. Well, a couple of days ago they announced the 2017 camp. New place, and new dates! It’s in Maine during the first week of June. June is fine. Even if I teach summer classes, I only teach them online.

The question now is can I afford it, and/or should I afford it? Well, it would be nice to take a vacation next summer, and why not another camp? As I was trying to make my decision, my kids had plans for last night. They went to see the Harlem Globetrotters. BJJ Globetrotters – Harlem Globetrotters – sounds like an omen to me. I’m gonna do it!

That’s it. Although I’ll write just a little more in this OER over the next couple of days, this is the final entry in this journal. I’m glad and excited to end on the positive note of being able to go to another BJJ Globetrotters camp. I was really nervous about doing it once, but now I know that it’ll be no problem doing it a second time – at the age of 58 by then. Gotta get in great shape before I turn 60! The young folks at BJJ are tough, so I’ve got to stay tough myself. Now…I really hope the positive psychology class runs.

**Sabbatical is over…**

# Introduction to Positive Psychology

Some years ago I wrote a personality textbook. I can’t say how many times I’ve told someone that I would never do it again. It’s not that it was too much work, although it was an incredible amount of work. No, the two main reasons that I intended to avoid even the idea of writing another textbook are as follows: first, I never expected to have a good enough idea in another field of study that writing a textbook would be warranted and second, my experience with the textbook publishing industry was extremely negative!

What has changed? Interestingly, it is the interaction of my past experiences that has me beginning this project. There are some decent books available for teaching positive psychology, but I don’t consider any of them to be great. More importantly, as was the case with the personality textbook I wrote, there was one major section (as I prefer to teach my class) that was being left out of all the available textbooks. Consequently, I wanted a textbook that covered that general area of interest. So, I decided to write my own materials once again.

In recent years I have become familiar with a growing trend in higher education: efforts to curb the outrageous cost of textbooks, particularly through the creation and adoption of open educational resources (OERs). The personality textbook I wrote has been made available as an OER and posted on the OpenStax Connections website. While thinking about how to handle my desire for something new in positive psychology, and knowing that I would soon be eligible for another sabbatical, I decided to apply for a sabbatical leave to provide the time to write an OER textbook for positive psychology. Our college supports OERs, so guess what? My sabbatical application was approved.

Now, here’s the fun part. OERs are meant to be used, re-used, modified, altered, tailored, mixed, etc. A faculty member using an OER, or a portion of an OER, can do whatever they want with it. So, I also feel free to present it however I want. In other words, although it may at times seem quite “academic,” it doesn’t have to be as formal as a typical textbook. It can be whatever I want it to be. Indeed, I can use the word “I” as freely as I choose to. Those of you who are students have it repeatedly drilled into your heads to never, ever, ever use the first-person. But, part of this project is a personal journal. Why would such a thing be written in the third-person?

So, this project will be a blend of personal and academic writing. I will cover research in the field of positive psychology, but I may also comment on that research, maybe even adding some personal anecdotes. In addition, I will include some of the things I use when teaching my own classes. Hopefully that will prove useful for new instructors teaching this, or other, classes for the first time.

## The Structure of this “Textbook”

I can’t decide whether to refer to this as a textbook, a manual, or something else. It doesn’t really matter, since as an OER I don’t necessarily expect anyone to use it in whole. Some may, but that isn’t really relevant.

As noted above, I am preparing this for the way in which I teach my classes. It has become my habit to break my classes into five units, each one with a quiz, and I only count four of the five quizzes as part of the grade. Thus, there are five “chapters” on the following topics:

* Well-Being
* Human Strengths & Virtues
* Positive Emotional & Cognitive States
* Positive Institutions
* Stigmatized Groups and the Need for Positivity

There will also be sections on recommended classroom assignments and the personal journal that I’ll be writing throughout this project. Actually, journaling is an assignment that I use regularly with my students. They often ask me to describe how I want them to write journal entries. Since I give them a great deal of freedom, it’s somewhat difficult for me to describe. I don’t want to inhibit those who are more creative. So in this project I will be giving them examples of a journal I’ve written myself, which they can choose to emulate if that makes it easier for them.

## So, What Exactly is Positive Psychology?

When people first think about positive psychology they assume it’s about being happy. However, it has always been a serious endeavor, devoted to so much more than psychological fluff. In 1998, Martin Seligman, then president of the American Psychological Association, urged psychologists to rediscover their forgotten mission to encourage the growth of human strengths and virtues. Seligman called this new area Positive Psychology (see Peterson, 2006a; Seligman, 2002; Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Snyder & Lopez, 2005).

For Seligman (2002), and I know of no one who disagrees with him, the foundation of positive psychology is supported by three pillars: the study of positive emotion; the study of positive traits (especially strengths and virtues); and finally, the study of positive institutions. The general goal of positive psychology is to find ways in which psychologists can help people be happier and lead more fulfilling lives, and it can serve as a focus for psychologists to become more appreciative of both human nature and the potential for the field of psychology itself to benefit all people (Sheldon and King, 2001).

Positive psychology was by no means, however, a new field. There have always been psychologists and psychiatrists who focused on the positive aspects of human personality growth and development. In particular, individuals such as Alfred Adler, Carl Rogers, and Abraham Maslow are well-known for their positive approaches, and we will discuss them in this book in part for laying the foundation for the positive psychologists of today. In addition, it might surprise some people (it certainly surprised me) that a book entitled *The Structure of Psychological Well-Being* was published 30 years *before* Seligman’s call for the formal and active study of positive psychology (Bradburn, 1969).

Indeed, we can go back to the 1950s and find a call for the study of positive psychology by none other than Abraham Maslow (perhaps the most famous psychologist – since Freud was a psychiatrist and Pavlov was a physiologist). In 1954, Maslow published *Motivation and Personality*, in which he included a final chapter entitled *Toward a Positive Psychology*. However, Maslow shifted away from referring to positive psychology. *Toward a Psychology of Being* (Maslow, 1964/1999) was an extension/continuation of *Motivation and Personality*, and that book begins with a chapter entitled *Toward a Psychology of Health* (a revision of a lecture given in 1954). However, the title of the latter book reveals Maslow true preference:

This is then a chapter in the “positive psychology,” or “orthopsychology,” of the future in that it deals with fully functioning and healthy human beings, and not alone with normally sick ones. It is, therefore, not in contradiction to psychology as a “psychopathology of the average”; it transcends it and can in theory incorporate all its findings in a more inclusive and comprehensive structure which includes both the sick and the healthy, both deficiency, Becoming and Being. I call it Being-psychology… (pg. 85; Maslow, 1964/1999)

Before delving into the primary content of this topic, there is one final note that should be addressed: culture is important. The field of psychology has long been criticized for being focused on white, European perspectives. This criticism is both true and false. Although many of the founding theorists in the field of psychology were white, male, and European, the fact is that a fair number of them were critically interested in cross-cultural validation of their work.

For example, in *Man and His Symbols*, Carl Jung and his colleagues examined cultural images from 42 countries and 6 ancient/extinct cultures (Jung, et al., 1964). Jung also travelled extensively in Africa, India, and amongst native tribes in America. Before Erik Erikson was willing to publish his eight psychosocial stages he made sure to validate them in a variety of different cultures: European, European-American, and two Native American tribes (the Sioux and the Yurok; Coles, 1970, Friedman, 1999). Carl Rogers, early in his college career, travelled extensively throughout the far east, particularly in China, and something seldom discussed is that his roommate on that trip was a black man (not very common in 1922; Kirschenbaum, 1995, Rogers & Russell, 2002; Thorne, 2003). In addition, Karen Horney was personal friends with D.T. Suzuki and became very interested in Zen Buddhism (Rubins, 1972, 1978), Abraham Maslow proposed a Fourth Force in Psychology based on transcendence (Maslow, 1964/1999), and Erich Fromm also became friends with D. T. Suzuki and worked with him for some time in Mexico. The time Fromm and Suzuki spent together resulted in the collaboration entitled *Zen Buddhism & Psychoanalysis* (Suzuki et al., 1960).

So, although much of this book will be based on research done here in America by American psychologists, we will do our best to pay careful attention to cultural differences in what constitutes psychological well-being. This is especially important since the happiest country in the world is *not* the United States. That title usually goes to Denmark, where as many as 40% of the people are flourishing. At first glance, 40% may not seem all that impressive, but the second place country, Switzerland, has only about 30% of its people flourishing (see, e.g., Knoop, 2014)!

Indeed, many people in the United States like to talk about the concept of American exceptionalism, but we are definitely not exceptional when it comes to being happy. The happiest people, overall, are either Scandinavian or from down-under, with the most recent list (according to CNN in March, 2016) being: Denmark, Switzerland, Iceland, Norway, Finland, Canada, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Australia, Sweden, Israel, Austria, and then the U.S. in 13th place. Of course, 13th is a lot better than 156th, where Syria completes the list as the least happy country on earth.

Let me finish this introduction with a simple definition of positive psychology, according to the International Positive Psychology Association. It is “the scientific study of the strengths and virtues that enable individuals and communities to thrive” (cited in Knoop, 2014).

***Caveat Emptor***: Some psychologists have characterized the distinction between positive psychology and the historical approaches which were of a positive nature, and indeed set the stage for positive psychology, as being one of a distinct focus on empirical research in the more modern field of positive psychology. I was trained to conduct biomedical research, and that’s what I did for a number of years (some of my favorite studies are Kelland et al., 1989, 1990, 1991a,b, 1995; Kelland & Chiodo, 1993). So believe me, I appreciate empirical research. As always, however, there are a few problems with such a singular perspective.

One major problem is the *Reproducibility Project: Psychology* led by Brian Nosek, in which a collaboration of scientists attempted to reproduce 100 studies in the field of psychology (published in the distinguished journal Science and reported in numerous media outlets; see Nosek, 2015). Less than 40% of the studies were replicated, casting doubt (perhaps seriously so in the minds of some) on the value of empirical research in psychology. As positive psychology is now coming of age, there are growing challenges to the applicability of the research in this field, including books such as *The Happiness Myth* (Hecht, 2007) and *Understanding Happiness: A Critical Review of Positive Psychology* (which we’ll discuss in Section V; Power, 2016).

Another problem I see is that history in the field of psychology is valuable (and interesting!), and it shouldn’t be dismissed. Personally, I like history, and I appreciate how it can put things in perspective, as well as deepen our appreciation for current research when we know more about how our field of study got where it is today.

Thus, there is value in examining the historical approaches to and perspectives on positive psychology. Combined with the current research, which tends to confirm historical theorizing, we arrive more confidently at a point where we can discuss the value of positive psychology. So this book takes a different approach than others, which is, of course, it’s primary purpose. Add to that the fact that it’s an open educational resource (i.e., free to everyone), and hopefully it will be useful to many students of psychology.

If what you’re looking for is the perfect positive psychology textbook, all I can say is:

Neti Neti!

# Section I: Well-Being

In this first section we will examine differences between happiness and well-being, the latter term being preferred in the field of positive psychology. Seligman (2002) has used the terms interchangeably at times, for convenience, as do many of us who teach and/or study positive psychology. However, there can be important differences, as we’ll see below.

Both happiness and well-being are the goals of positive psychology, or rather, learning something about how to achieve them. They can refer to feelings or actions, some of which are oriented toward the past (having enjoyed something, like a tasty dessert) and some of which are oriented toward the future (e.g., either optimism or hope). Happiness will contribute to well-being, but not everything that contributes to our well-being makes us happy, and therein lies something of a difference.

## Defining Happiness and Well-Being in the Western World

Some 2,500 years ago, Western civilization began with the ancient Greek city-states. From the beginning, there were profound Greek philosophers who, among other intellectual pursuits, attempted to determine what defined a “good life.” However, they were unable to come to an agreement, and we are still trying to make that determination today.

Roughly speaking, there were two major views on how to actively approach the good life, hedonism and eudaimonia, as well as a third view that seems to oppose any active pursuit, that being stoicism. More recently, Seligman and others (see below) have focused on several different approaches to happiness that ideally will be found in balance, but differences in which (due to one’s personal orientation) help to explain individual differences.

### Hedonism, Eudaimonia, and Stoicism

Many psychology professors will tell you that psychology has its roots in philosophy. I tend to disagree, since those very same professors will point to the beginning of modern psychology as being the establishment of Wilhem Wundt’s psychophysiology laboratory in 1879 in Leipzig, Germany. Sigmund Freud, like many early psychotherapists, was a neurologist first, and believed he was applying solid experimental techniques to his study of psychological disorders (though today we considered his approach not quite scientific in its nature). Consequently, in my humble opinion, the true roots of experimental and clinical psychology are grounded in neurology and biology.

However, there are two areas of psychology that quite clearly have their foundations in philosophy. The first is existential psychology, with its two most notable theorists being Viktor Frankl, author of *Man’s Search for Meaning* (1946/1992), and Rollo May, author of *Man’s Search for Himself* (1953). Both Frankl and May considered the key to psychological health being the challenge to find meaning in one’s life (we’ll address meaning below). The other area is positive psychology, since philosophers have been struggling with what it means to live a good life for thousands of years.

For hedonists and epicureans the way to a good life was simple, it was to be found in sensual pleasures. The founder of hedonism, Aristippus of Cyrene, began with the supposition that all people seek a final goal in life, that the knowledge of that goal is only what is true to each person, and the nature of the goal is individual pleasure (Watson, 1895). Not only does every person seek pleasure, but they cannot really strive for anything else in life, since all pleasure is good and all pain is bad. What is important, of course, is that hedonism recognizes that what is pleasurable must be measured in context: something can only be pleasurable if a person finds pleasure in it. In other words, pleasure is ultimately defined personally. Nonetheless, it is still the highest good to make the most of each moment, and to live intensely in each pleasure as it arises (Feldman, 2004; Watson, 1895).

Generally viewed as being within the hedonistic school, the philosophy of Epicurus continued the focus on seeking pleasure, but with some modifications. For Epicurus, some short-term pleasure can lead to suffering (e.g., overeating can ruin a good meal). In addition, pleasures of the mind are superior to sensual pleasures, so it is best to pursue a pleasurable intellectual life (Frost, 1962).

The Epicureans were measured in their pursuit of pleasure, especially since they considered all forms of pleasure to be of potentially equal pleasure, be it fine wine, music, or a good book. Rather than engage in Bacchanalian revelry, they were known as the “garden philosophers,” combining relaxation, moderate pleasure, the company of good friends, etc. (Compton, 2005; Feldman, 2004; Frost, 1962; Watson, 1895). Among the principal doctrines of Epicurus we find:

II. Death is nothing to us: for that which is dissolved is without

sensation; and that which lacks sensation is nothing to us.

III. The limit of quantity in pleasures is the removal of all that is

painful. Wherever pleasure is present, as long as it is there,

there is neither pain of body nor of mind, nor of both at

once.

V. It is not possible to live pleasantly without living prudently and

honourably and justly, nor again to live a life of prudence,

honour, and justice without living pleasantly…

VIII. No pleasure is a bad thing in itself: but the means which

produce some pleasures bring with them disturbances many

times greater than the pleasures.

XXVII. Of all the things which wisdom acquires to produce the

blessedness of the complete life, far the greatest is the

possession of friendship.

(pg. 35-37; Epicurus, in Oates, 1940)

Epicurus was not the only one to consider friendship of great value. Some 100-200 years earlier, in northeastern India, Gotama Buddha (who many people refer to as *the* Buddha) had this to say (as recorded in the Itivuttaka):

Bhikkhus, in regard to external factors, I do not perceive another single factor so helpful as good friendship for a bhikkhu who is a learner, who has not attained percection but lives aspiring for the supreme security from bondage. Bhikkhus, a bhikkhu who has a good friend abandons what is unwholesome and develops what is wholesome. (pg. 122; Ireland, 1997)

The eudaimonic approach to a good life shifts the focus from sensual pleasure to fulfilling one’s potential. At his trial for being a corrupter of youth and subverter of the Athenian state religion (which led to his conviction and death), Socrates said to his jury:

Best of men, Athenian that you are, member of the city that is greatest and most renowned for wisdom and strength, are you not ashamed to care about maximizing your wealth and fame and status, but not to care or give thought for intelligence and truth and to making your soul as good as possible…All I do is go about persuading you all, young and old, not to care for your bodies or your wealth with the zeal you should devote to making your soul as good as possible, by saying that it is not from wealth that goodness arises, but from goodness wealth and everything else become beneficial for human beings both in private and in public. (pp. 94-95; Socrates, in Long, 2015).

Plato, Socrates’ most noted student, furthered this idea that people who honed their intellectual and rational faculties would approach a divinely favored life, which is what Eudaimonia actually means. In other words, if we turn away from pleasures found outside ourselves (those things which provide sensual pleasure) and focus instead on our divinely given and innate powers of reason then we will approach that most ideal life possible – the life of the divine (Long, 2105). When a person is living a complete life of reason, according to Plato, such a life will be noted by wisdom, courage, and self-control, and such a life will be a happy life (Frost, 1962).

Aristotle, the best known student of Plato, continued in the same philosophical vein, referring to what he called the golden mean. Although reason is the highest pursuit, people also experience feelings and desires. The golden mean refers to a balance between reason and pleasure. When we achieve this balance, and fulfill the potential of our rational faculties, it feels good and we’re happy (Compton, 2005; Feldman, 2004; Frost, 1962).

Finally, we turn our attention briefly to the Stoics. The Stoic philosophers did not trust human emotion, since they believed those emotions were likely to lead to unhappiness. They considered the pursuit of reason above all, with the ultimate goal being the realization that the human mind was one with the divine mind of the gods (see Compton, 2005; Long, 2015, Oates, 1940). This latter perspective is quite similar to Yogic/Buddhist perspectives (which we will return to later).

How shall we describe ‘progress?’ It is the state of him who having learnt from philosophers that man wills to get what is good, and wills to avoid what is evil, and having learnt also that peace and calm come to a man only if he fail not to get what he wills, and if he fall not into that which he avoids, has put away from him altogether the will to get anything and has postponed it to the future, and wills to avoid only such things as are dependent on his will. For if he tries to avoid anything beyond his will, he knows that, for all his avoidance, he will one day come to grief and be unhappy. And if this is the promise that virtue makes to us – the promise to produce happiness and peace and calm, surely progress toward virtue is progress toward each of these. (pg. 230; Epictetus, in Oates, 1940)

One particularly interesting Stoic philosopher was the Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius. He began the first of his twelve books of meditations with a list of important things he had learned from his family, including:

From my grandfather Verus I learned good morals and the

government of my temper.

2. From the reputation and remembrance of my father, modesty and

a manly character.

3. From my mother, piety and beneficence, and abstinence, not only

from evil deeds, but even from evil thoughts; and further,

simplicity in my way of living, far removed from the habits

of the rich.

17. To the gods I am indebted for having good grandfathers, good

parents, a good sister, good teachers, good associates, good

kinsmen and friends, nearly everything good…

(pp. 491-495; Marcus Aurelius, in Oates, 1940)

Marcus Aurelius goes on to say that pleasure deceives us, because it is not in accordance with nature (i.e., that which we *require*). He considers magnanimity, freedom, simplicity, equanimity, and piety to be more agreeable with our nature. After all, “what is more agreeable than wisdom itself, when thou thinkest of the security and the happy course of all things which depend on the faculty of understanding and knowledge?” (pg. 520; Marcus Aurelius in Oates, 1940). Marcus Aurelius believed that we can live a life of happiness if we live our life in the right way, and “think and act in the right way.” But we must understand that what is right is something far beyond mere human existence and sensual pleasures. In his fifth book of meditations he writes:

33. Soon, very soon, thou wilt be ashes, or a skeleton, and either a name or not even a name; but name is sound and echo. And the things which are much valued in life are empty and rotten and trifling, and like little dogs biting one another, and little children quarrelling, laughing, and then straightway weeping. But fidelity and modesty and justice and truth are fled – Up to Olympus from the wide-spread earth. (pg. 524; Marcus Aurelius, in Oates, 1940)

### Approaches to Happiness and Well-Being

As it stands today, we still have not decided that one particular approach to happiness/well-being is the right one for each and every person. As noted above, Seligman (2002) described positive psychology as resting upon three pillars: positive emotion, positive traits, and positive institutions. Do we need all three, or perhaps some balance between them? Adler (1931, 1964) also referred to three factors, his so-called life tasks: work, communal life, and love. Adler said that all three are definitely needed, in a reasonable balance with one another.

Yet not only is the overall approach difficult to define, even what we assume at first to be simple words describing something that makes up happy can get complicated when we try to define it for actual research purposes (what psychologists refer to as an operational definition). For example, most of us would agree, at first, that pleasure and enjoyment are basically the same thing. However, Csikszentmihalyi has distinguished between them. He defines pleasure as the good feelings coming from satisfying needs and meeting expectations, whereas enjoyment encompasses pleasure and then goes beyond it to create something higher. Positive psychology strives to identify both those things which lead to pleasure and then how to incorporate them into truly enjoying life (Compton, 2005; Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

At this point, it would be helpful for you to leave this book for a few minutes and go to Martin Seligman’s Positive Psychology Center website (positivepsychology.org). There are some wonderful online tests you can take, and the following discussion is based on my own results. They may seem confusing at first, but in the end they make perfect sense (thus, validating for me personally that these are good tests).

As long as I can remember, I have had depression. I don’t say that I suffer from depression, usually, because I have worked with it in a variety of ways over the years (psychotherapy, antidepressants, and these days mindfulness). When I take tests that measure happiness (e.g. the Authentic Happiness Inventory [~25th percentile] or the General Happiness Scale [my score barely registers]), the results show what is expected. I score very low because I’ve never been happy, I’m not happy, and I don’t expect to ever be happy. However, when I take the Satisfaction with Life Scale my score is fairly high (~60th percentile).

How can one be satisfied with life while not being happy? There are at least two possibilities. First, it may be that I’m simply satisfied that I’m not dead. Despite a lack of happiness, being alive is in and of itself satisfactory. That would be a reasonable possibility, but a rather bleak one. The second possibility is that being satisfied with one’s life is not dependent on happiness. There is one more test of relevance here: the Approaches to Happiness scale. Before sharing my scores from that test, let’s take a look at these different approaches.

According to Seligman and his colleagues (e.g., see Schueller & Seligman, 2010; Seligman, 2002; Seligman & Royzman, 2003) there are three approaches to happiness: the pleasant life, the good life, and the meaningful life. The pleasant life involves pursuing positive emotions and that which is pleasurable. It is essentially the same as the hedonistic approach to happiness. The good life refers to utilizing one’s strengths in order to achieve gratification in life. In other words, it involves satisfying one’s desires, and can be referred to as engagement (in the activities of one’s life, and the pursuit of a good life). Finally, the meaningful life, which is more subjective than the other approaches, involves using your own personal strengths in service of some goal greater than yourself. More recently, these three approaches are referred to simply as pleasure, engagement, and meaning (Schueller & Seligman, 2010).

Before moving on, let’s take a quick look at Objective List Theory, an important consideration should we happen to ask, “Just what gives meaning to life.” Making lists of what is meaningful may seem like an objective approach, but it has been criticized for easily failing. In other words, if you fulfill someone else’s list, but don’t find yourself happy or satisfied, then what is the true value of the list (Feldman, 2004)? Therefore, some subjective view of what is meaningful in life must remain a consideration in judging an individual’s well-being (also see Seligman & Royzman, 2003).

Nonetheless, there are some classic lists. For example, there are the cardinal virtues (prudence, justice, temperance, and courage) and the theological virtues (faith, hope, and love). Another list of virtues I remember well, even after many years, is the one developed by the Boy Scouts: that a scout is trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean, and reverent. The Stoic philosopher Seneca the Younger emphasized a life marked by wisdom, tranquility, withdrawal from the world, master of the passions (emotions), and ultimately ataraxia (Feldman, 2004). In the field of psychology we have Abraham Maslow’s short list of what it means to be self-actualized: such individuals are aware of their own self, able to concentrate, make growth choices, show good judgment, set aside ego defenses, continue their self-development, enjoy peak experiences, and they are honest (Maslow, 1971; we will examine this concept in more detail in Section II).

When it comes to my own results on the Approaches to Happiness test, my scores are quite revealing. On the pleasant life scale, I score approximately at the 20th percentile, a fairly low score as expected. On the good life scale, however, my score is about average, roughly at the 50th percentile. A better score, but it still doesn’t quite explain my satisfaction with life. Finally we arrive at the scale measuring the meaningful life, where my score is quite high, around the 80th percentile! Thus, as expected, the source of my satisfaction with life are those things which I find meaningful – primarily my children and my career/students.

According to Seligman (2002; see also Seligman & Royzman, 2003), Authentic Happiness results from satisfying all three approaches to happiness. However, is there evidence that any of these approaches may be more important than the others? As it turns out, all three approaches to happiness (pleasure, engagement, and meaning) are related to subjective well-being. However, when examining objective well-being, as measured by education and occupational attainment, engagement and meaning are the two that remain positively correlated, whereas a personal orientation toward seeking happiness through pleasure is actually negatively correlated with objective well-being (Schueller & Seligman, 2010).

It may be that engagement and meaning are related to well-being by virtue of their roles in achieving goals (Schueller & Seligman, 2010). In this context, engagement would be seen as the process (the actions taken), whereas meaning is just that – the value which a given goal holds for the individual.

Carol Ryff and her colleagues have proposed an integrative approach toward human health and well-being, identifying six dimensions of well-being:

* **Self –Acceptance** – possesses a positive attitude toward self, acknowledges and accepts multiple aspects of self
* **Positive Relations with Others** – has warm, satisfying, trusting relationships, is concerned about the welfare of others
* **Autonomy** – is self-determining and independent, is able to resist social pressure, evaluates self by personal standards
* **Environmental Mastery** – has a sense of competence in managing one’s environment, makes effective use of opportunities
* **Purpose in Life** – has goals in life, and feels there is meaning to life
* **Personal Growth** – feeling of continued development, open to new experiences, sense of realizing one’s potential

(pg. 543; Ryff & Singer, 2005)

What Ryff and her colleagues mean by an integrated approach becomes more apparent when examining differences in the important of the above dimensions based on age, gender, and socioeconomic status. Differences exist because “well-being is *contoured* by larger forces,” such as biological processes (e.g., maturation and aging) or social structural influences (e.g., social hierarchies and access to resources or opportunities; Ryff & Singer, 2005). Since the interactions between these three factors across the six dimensions are complex and varied, I’ll just highlight a few that seem noteworthy.

For younger men and women, personal growth scores are highest, and although they drop as people grow older, they remain at or near the top of the list in old age (since they start out so relatively high). Purpose in life is the second highest for younger adults, but for both men and women they drop to the lowest dimension on the list by old age. For women, autonomy and environmental mastery tend to increase over the life span (especially autonomy), whereas for men the same is true for autonomy, and the remaining dimensions are somewhat more complex, with some taking a dip in middle age only to rebound later. For both men and women, higher levels of educational attainment are associated with higher well-being scores on all six dimensions (Ryff & Singer, 2005).

The critical question, of course, is whether or not an understanding of these six dimensions of well-being in adulthood (and at different stages of adulthood) can help to promote well-being. Apparently, with depressed patients undergoing therapy, utilizing an understanding of Ryff’s multidimensional model can help guide these individuals toward positive growth and away from ways in which they might undermine or curtail their positive experiences in life. Consequently, an understanding of the determinants of well-being can, indeed, provide hope among those for whom it may seem most elusive (see Ryff & Singer, 2003, 2005; Snyder et al., 2005).

There is, however, an ultimate irony. Although it may be valuable to utilize health as one measure of well-being during our lifetime, what matters most is the study of how we live our lives, because the outcome is undeniable:

To those who resonate to the ironic in life, we conclude with an amusing, perhaps perverse, twist to these efforts to capture the meaning of and promote human health and well-being: The processes we so earnestly seek to understand culminate in death. Ours is thus, in the final analysis, a doomed enterprise. Despite our status as mere mortals, there is nonetheless much to be learned about differences in how we get to death, and this is ultimately what the positive health agenda is about. (pp. 282-283; Ryff & Singer, 2003)

### Meaning

Viktor Frankl (1905-1997) was an extraordinary man. At the age of 16 he delivered a public lecture “On the Meaning of Life” and his book *Man’s Search for Meaning* (Frankl, 1946/1992) was recognized by the Library of Congress as one of the ten most influential books in America. This book describes several years Frankl spent in Nazi concentration camps during World War II, camps where his parents, brother, wife, and millions of other Jews died (Frankl, 1995/2000).

Frankl developed his own school of psychotherapy, known as logotherapy (the therapy of meaning, as in finding meaning in one’s life). As early as 1929, Frankl had begun to recognize three possible ways to find meaning in life: a deed we do or a work we create; a meaningful human encounter, particularly one involving love; and choosing one’s attitude in the face of unavoidable suffering. Logotherapy eventually became known as the third school of Viennese psychotherapy, after Freud’s psychoanalysis and Adler’s individual psychology (Frankl, 1995/2000).

The word logos is Greek for “meaning,” and this third Viennese school of psychotherapy focuses on the meaning of human existence and man’s search for such a meaning. Logotherapy, therefore, focuses on man’s will-to-meaning, in contrast to Freud’s will-to-pleasure (the drive to satisfy the desires of the id, the pleasure principle) or Adler’s will-to-power (the drive to overcome inferiority and attain superiority; adopted from Nietzsche) (Frankl, 1946/1986, 1946/1992). The will-to-meaning is, according to Frankl, the primary source of one’s motivation in life. It is not a secondary rationalization of the instinctual drives, and meaning and values are not simply defense mechanisms. As Frankl eloquently points out:

…as for myself, I would not be willing to live merely for the sake of my “defense mechanisms,” nor would I be ready to die merely for the sake of my “reaction formations.” Man, however, is able to live and even to die for the sake of his ideals and values! (pg. 105; Frankl, 1946/1992)

Let us reconsider Frankl’s description of how one can find meaning in life: through creating a work or doing a deed; by experiencing something or encountering someone, particularly when love is involved; or by choosing one’s attitude toward unavoidable suffering. Those of us who have lost someone dear know how easily it leads to deep suffering. Frankl had already written the first version of *The Doctor and the Soul* when he entered the Theresienstadt concentration camp, so his views on how one should choose their attitude toward unavoidable suffering were put to a test that no research protocol could ever hope to achieve! His observations form the basis for much of *Man’s Search for Meaning*. Both his observations of others and his own reactions in this unimaginably horrible and tragic situation are quite fascinating:

…as we stumbled on for miles, slipping on icy spots, supporting each other time and again, dragging one another up and onward, nothing was said, but we both knew: each of was thinking his wife…my mind clung to my wife’s image…Real or not, her look was then more luminous than the sun…A thought transfixed me: for the first time in my life I saw the truth as it is set into song by so many poets, proclaimed as the final wisdom by so many thinkers. The truth - that love is the ultimate and the highest goal to which man can aspire. Then I grasped the meaning of the greatest secret that human poetry and human thought and belief have to impart: *The salvation of man is through love and in love*. (pp. 48-49; Frankl, 1946/1992)

…One evening, when we were already resting on the floor of our hut, dead tired, soup bowls in hand, a fellow prisoner rushed in and asked us to run out to the assembly grounds and see the wonderful sunset. Standing outside we saw sinister clouds glowing in the west and the whole sky alive with clouds of ever-changing shapes and colors, from steel blue to blood red…Then, after minutes of moving silence, one prisoner said to another, “How beautiful the world *could* be!” (pg. 51; Frankl, 1946/1992)

…The experiences of camp life show that man does have a choice of action. There were enough examples, often of a heroic nature, which proved that apathy could be overcome, irritability suppressed. Man *can* preserve a vestige of spiritual freedom, of independence of mind, even in such terrible conditions of psychic and physical stress.

We who lived in concentration camps can remember the men who walked through the huts comforting others, giving away their last piece of bread. They may have been few in number, but they offer sufficient proof that everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms - to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one’s own way. (pp. 74-75; Frankl, 1946/1992)

Baumeister & Vohs (2005) consider the essence of meaning to be connection. We routinely connect things which otherwise would have no value. Our possessions are valuable to us because we ascribe meaning to them. Money has value only because of the meaning we give to it. For example, you can’t eat money, but you can buy food. You can’t drive money, but you can buy a car. So by ascribing meaning (i.e., financial value) to coins and special green paper it has some value to us. Such meaning can be quite removed from any physical or objective reality, as in the case of a credit card.

Curiously enough, despite lacking objective reality, meaning can be quite stable. Life is constantly changing, but the things we value can be steadfast. Thus, meaning can provide a source of stability in our lives (Baumeister & Vohs, 2005). However, it may be difficult for some to find meaning in their lives.

In order for meaning to exist, there appear to be four needs. The first need is purpose, which creates a connection between the present and the future. A purpose can be merely some goal, or it can be a more subjective form of fulfillment. Then we need values, in order to provide a sense of goodness or a positive context for our actions. Third, we need a sense of efficacy, the belief that we can successfully pursue that which we consider meaningful (our purpose and values). And finally, we need a basis for self-worth, some source of recognition that we are a good person. Self-worth can be pursued individually, but it can also be pursued collectively, by belonging to a group doing something meaningful (Baumeister, 1991; Baumesiter & Vohs, 2005).

Many people make the potential mistake of thinking that meaning can be found in one pursuit. While this may be possible, most people find meaning from a number of sources in their life. By finding meaning in multiple ways, a person is protected from failing to find meaning should one source fail to prove fruitful (Baumeister & Vohs, 2005). For example, with regard to family I find meaning in my children. With regard to my career, I find particular meaning in writing things like this OER textbook. And in my physical/health related life, I find meaning (and some fun) in Brazilian Jiu Jitsu competition, and also in helping the kids and white belts begin their BJJ journey. In addition, having multiple sources of meaning can be more enriching than having one (upon which a person can become dependent).

When unfortunate things happen in life, it is possible to reappraise those events in a process known as meaning-making. When a person turns adversity to prosperity, such as feeling emotionally stronger and more resilient after surviving a tragedy, the process is known as benefit-finding. When one finds a way to attribute unfortunate events to some source, we call it sense-making. This process of making meaning out of these events (by attributing them to some external factor and finding the hidden benefits) can be either situation-specific or global. Global meaning-making refers to establishing a basic orientation toward life in which one sees the meaning in life (perhaps through a long-term belief system or a set of valued goals; Baumeister & Vohs, 2005).

One of the harsh realities of life is that we will grow old and die. Erik Erikson described the last two stages of life in terms of generativity vs. stagnation and then integrity vs. despair (Erikson, 1950, 1968). Generativity refers to contributing to the welfare of and helping the next generation to succeed, which can be done both personally (i.e., within one’s family) and professionally (i.e., making a significant contribution to one’s career). Clearly, being generative is closely associated with living a meaningful life, and leads to a sense of integrity in the final stage of life. Failure to be generative, however, results in old age marked by despair. However, as one ages, it is possible to prepare for the latter stages of life.

David Guttmann studied with Viktor Frankl, and he has examined ways in which logotherapy can help to provide the wisdom and spirit to find meaning later in life (Guttmann, 2008). A person’s fate (psychologically speaking) is influenced by three main factors: your natural disposition (genetics), your situation (e.g., family and finances), and your psychological disposition (whether or not you are actively engaged in the events of your life).

Suppose, from our discussion above, you arrive at old age facing despair (in Erikson’s terms). This creates an existential vacuum: a lack of understanding and doubt about the meaning of life, and a lack of interest in it. The first step in logotherapy is to distance oneself from the feelings of despair. The individual can then turn toward other sources of meaning which still exist in their life. One of the best ways to fight despair is to focus on some task that will lead to fulfillment, and to then pursue that fulfillment in the hope that it will lead to meaning (Guttmann, 2008).

There are, of course, a variety of sources for such fulfillment or meaning. One of the most valuable is music, which the ancient philosophers Plato and Aristotle considered to be a gift from the gods. According to Guttman:

Classical and popular music can awaken the heart, soul, and spirit and, via the beauty of the sound, give new meaning to life. The same applies to religious music, which can uplift the soul to heaven and fill the entire being with awe...Music can bring back long-forgotten feelings and memories, open new vistas, and suggest new areas for meaningful activities, even in advanced age. (pg. 105; Guttman, 2008)

Literature, intergenerational relationships, and humor are also all significant potential sources of meaning. People who may not have had much time to read (or much interest) throughout their lives have been known to become bookworms in their later years. Grandparents have much to tell their grandchildren about the places, events, and people in their family, as well as photos to share, advice to give, and love and kindness to bestow. Humor, of course, can lead to laughter, which is itself a wonderful feeling (we’ll look at humor later on). Humor and laughter are not solitary, but have important social value as well, promoting feelings of solidarity and cohesion, relieving tension, helping to overcome crises, and creating a pleasant atmosphere (Guttman, 2008).

Logotherapy also suggests a means for coping with loneliness in old age. Even if life has left us with little in terms of family, friends, money, etc., we still choose whether or not to find meaning in life. According to Guttmann, life is full of wonders, miracles, and surprises. Redirecting a person’s attention away from the negative (such as loneliness) and toward new meaning in life is the goal of logotherapy. Even in loneliness one can listen to music, read books, etc. One simply has to make a good choice regarding how to live out one’s life.

It appears that judging one’s life as meaningful is an important aspect of living a meaningful life. While this may seem obvious, judging one’s life as meaningful suggests that one has a sense of one’s place in the universe, a feeling of rightness about one’s life, and the phenomenological experience (or subjective feeling) that your life is meaningful. When a person rates their life as meaningful they tend to be more satisfied with their lives, more hopeful about the future, and they have better health outcomes (see Halusic & King, 2013).

### Aging Well and Flourishing

It may seem that happiness itself is a reasonable goal for positive psychology, but wouldn’t it be better to go further? Momentary happiness, meaning, or well-being may all be wonderful when they are present, but what about one’s entire life? In addition, shortly before the end of his life, Abraham Maslow wrote about the need for what he called a fourth force in the field of psychology (the first force was psychodynamic theory [à la, Sigmund Freud], the second force was behaviorism, and the third force was humanistic psychology), a transcendent elevation of the human experience resulting in what Maslow called Being-values (Maslow, 1964, 1964/1999, 1967/2008, 1971).

We’ll examine Maslow’s work later on, but for now we’ll consider the examination of what it means to lead a full life as we grow older and, relevant at any age, what it means to flourish.

According to George Vaillant (2007), there may be as many definitions of “successful aging” or “aging well” as there are people studying it. While many focus on physical and/or cognitive health, Vaillant has a different and quite enjoyable point of view:

…The heart speaks with so much more vitality than the head. Thus, successful aging is not just number of years lived with a perfect Mini-Mental State Exam. Successful aging is about the sustained capacity for joy. In the Study of Adult Development at Harvard Medical School, successful aging was associated with happy retirement and happy retirement was learning again how to play. Play provided a wonderful magic that is especially suited to retirement. For play permits a person to maintain self-esteem while giving up self-importance. Competitive play – social bridge, cribbage, shuffleboard – lets one make new friends, the same task that play performed for us when we were in the fourth grade. We forget that the word “competition” is derived from *con petire*, to seek together. (pg. 181; Vaillant, 2007).

In an earlier book, Vaillant (2002) suggested that “positive aging means to love, to work, to learn something we did not know yesterday, and to enjoy the remaining precious moments with loved ones.” Utilizing data from the Study of Adult Development Harvard University – three cohorts of 824 individuals selected as teenagers, including some women from Lewis Terman’s study of gifted children (at the time women did not attend Harvard University) – he identified a number of key factors regarding how our life can progress into old age:

* We are not doomed by bad events; rather, good people we encounter at any age facilitate enjoyable old age
* Healing relationships are facilitated by the capacity for gratitude, forgiveness, and becoming enriched by loving someone
* A good marriage at age 50 predicts positive aging at 80
* Alcohol abuse consistently predicted unsuccessful aging, partly because it damages social supports
* Learning to play and create after retirement and learning to gain younger friends as we lose older ones add more to life’s enjoyment than retirement income
* Objective good physical health was less important to successful aging than subjective good health; i.e., whether you *feel* sick is more important than whether you *are* sick

More precisely, factors that DO NOT predict healthy aging:

* Ancentral longevity
* Cholesterol
* Stress
* Parental characteristics
* Childhood temperament
* Vital affect and general ease in social relationships

Factors that DO predict healthy aging:

* Not being a smoker or stopping young
* Adaptive coping style (mature defenses)
* Absence of alcohol abuse
* Healthy weight
* Stable marriage
* Some exercise
* Years of education

Among the key factors that keep coming up in Vaillant’s writing are relationships and social support. Individuals who experience a loveless childhood and become lonely adults tend not to fare well as they grow older (see below in the section on love and the capacity to be loved). Although the factors cited above are independently significant in predicting successful aging, they are not entirely distinct. For example, smoking often goes hand-in-hand with drinking alcohol, and alcohol abuse is associated with divorce (and loss of other friendships), and both are associated with lack of exercise and obesity, etc. (see also Vaillant & Mukamal, 2001).

Perhaps the best predictor of an enduring and happy marriage in old age (even if it’s a second marriage) is generativity. Helping to raise the next generation is a powerful source of meaning, including the possibility of helping young people other than one’s own children (such as the work of a teacher or health care professional). However, it is important to remember that generativity is about the next generation, not just about caring for others. Having to care for parents or, in the case of many women, a husband before fully realizing one’s own self can be devastating. As Vaillant (2002) puts it, biology rolls downhill!

We often view retirement as the beginning of old age. While retirement can be challenging for those who are not prepared, it can also be rewarding. How do we prepare for our retirement to be rewarding? There appear to be four key steps: replace workmates with a new social network, rediscover how to play, be creative, and maintain lifelong learning. In this vein, creativity is similar to play (on a continuum), but it’s more visceral – think of sublimation (often referred to as the successful defense mechanism).

So which comes first, successful aging or the social support that is so essential to successful aging late in life? It seems that the same protective factors that predict good physical health also predict good social support. Those men in the Harvard Study who by age 70 were the most socially isolated had by age 50 already lacked most of the protective factors: they were 7x more likely to be alcohol dependent, 4x more likely to smoke, 2x as likely to have engaged in little exercise and 2x as likely to already be chronically ill (Vaillant, 2002). Thus, it appears that social support and other factors are interactively lacking in the lives of people who as young children lacked loving and supportive relationships (particularly with their parents; again, see below in the section on love).

Somewhat surprisingly, in the work that Vaillant has done, neither spirituality nor religion were associated with successful aging. Indeed, when comparing the most religious participants in the study (based on both affiliation and participation) to the least, Vaillant found the religious participants no more successful in aging, but they were 4x more likely to have experienced depression!

I’ve referred a few times to people who had difficult, loveless childhoods, but is there more to say about children who have loving and supportive childhoods (as opposed to merely average childhoods)? Children who were “cherished,” having warm relationships with two supportive parents, were likely to appear charming, extroverted, and energetic in their 30s, and to be rich in friendships in their 60s. They felt a sense of comfort in old age, and they were accepting of their own emotional life. They were also 5x more likely to play both competitive sports and games with their friends, and to take enjoyable vacations. Finally, they were 3x more like to enjoy wide social supports at age 70.

The previous paragraph presents what certainly sounds like an enjoyable old age, a good life. In 2011, Seligman published *Flourish: A Visionary New Understanding of Happiness and Well-Being*. In this book, Seligman transitions from his original theory of Authentic Happiness (pleasure, engagement, and meaning) to a theory based on well-being and flourishing. In this new theory, flourishing is a successful combination of positive emotion (happiness), engagement, meaning, positive relationships, and accomplishment (PERMA – positive, engagement, relationships, meaning, accomplishment).

Seligman’s concept of flourishing is particularly meaningful, since it adds relationships with other people (something very important in Vaillant’s work as well) and accomplishments (necessary for generativity and self-esteem) to his earlier theory of Authentic Happiness. With this new theory in hand, we can looks for ways to teach people how to pursue flourishing in their own life. One way in which this has been particularly promising has been in teaching resilience skills to school children and the U. S. Army (Seligman, 2011). We’ll examine that work below, in the section on resilience. First, however, we’ll take a look at the human expression of happiness and well-being: positive emotion.

## Positive Emotion

The field of evolutionary psychology seeks to explain the advantage(s) conferred by any behavior or cognitive process. Thus, given the existence of positive emotions, they should confer selective advantages to the human species. Buss (2000) has argued that humans have evolved a variety of mechanisms to account for changes from ancient environments to modern life. Consequently, we feel happy when we experience emotions that support friendships, mating bonds, kinship, and cooperation. Feelings of attachment, empathy, compassion, love, etc. are just such emotions. As social animals, humans need these feelings to help maintain the relationships necessary for our survival.

Evolutionary psychology, of course, can be viewed both ways. If positive emotions evolved, we should be able to see their presence in a variety of species. Anyone with a beloved dog or a cat will tell you they have a deep emotional connection, but can we see positive emotion in, for example, rats and mice? Yes! Rats appear to laugh when tickled (Panksepp, 2007; Panksepp & Burgdorf, 2000, 2003), as do other species (Panksepp, 2005), and both rats and mice appear to demonstrate empathy (Meyza et al., 2016).

Alice Isen and her colleagues have found that people behave in more positive ways when they are in a good mood. When subjects had been told that they performed very well on a task, and were thus basking in the “warm glow of success,” they were then more generous and helpful, and also more aware of the environment around them. This was clearly due to the positive effect of feeling good, since subjects who were told they had done poorly had no less desire to be helpful than control subjects (i.e., there was no “hostility” or “embarrassment” effect; Isen, 1970). In a subsequent study, subjects were induced to “feel good” either by receiving some cookies or by finding a dime in a payphone when they made a call (a *very* dated procedure!). Once these subjects were in a good mood, they once again proved to more helpful (Isen & Levin, 1972).

As wonderful as it would be if people simply kept getting more helpful each time they experienced a positive mood, it turns out that these effects are fairly short-lived. About 20 minutes after an induced good mood increases helpfulness, people revert back to their normal levels (Isen et al., 1976). However, as we’ll see below with Fredrickson’s broaden-and-build theory, there may be a way for these effects to be more long-lasting.

In addition to these effects on helpfulness, positive affect also facilitates creative problem solving (Isen et al., 1987) and cognitive flexibility in general (see Isen, 2003, 2005). Given the varieties of ways in which positive affect can improve human interaction and problem solving in pro-social ways, it stands to reason that we might be able to identify an underlying neuropsychological mechanism. Indeed, there is evidence to suggest that the dopamine system, well known for its role in reward mechanisms in the brain, may underlie the positive behavioral and cognitive changes associated with positive affect (Ashby et al., 1999; Isen, 2005; see also Alcaro et al., 2007; Burgdorf & Panksepp, 2006).

Building upon initial studies of the value of positive emotion, Barbara Fredrickson has proposed a broaden-and-build model for the influence of positive emotions on human behavior (Fredrickson, 1998, 2001, 2005, 2006). She began this line of research by addressing the relative lack of research on positive emotion for much of the history of psychology. For example, there is a wider variety of negative emotions, and they more clearly serve evolutionary advantages. For her initial study, Fredrickson (1998) chose four positive emotions: joy/happiness, interest (curiosity, excitement, perhaps flow), contentment, and love; more recently she used a list of 10 positive emotions (though she acknowledges this list is by no means exhaustive): joy, interest, contentment, love, awe, inspiration, amusement, pride, hope, and gratitude (Fredrickson, 2013a).

According to the broaden-and-build model, the experience of positive emotion increases an individual’s momentary thought-action repertoire, and also leads to building one’s personal resources, including physical, intellectual, and social resources. What is most important, perhaps, is that these resources appear to be more durable than the emotional states that gave rise to them (Fredrickson, 1998). Thus, the incremental advantage of positive emotions may accrue over time, providing durable resources that may later be drawn upon in different contexts and/or emotional states.

Let’s take a closer look at some of the evidence for the broaden-and-build model. In one study, Fredrickson & Branigan (2005) used short, emotionally evocative film clips to induce amusement, contentment, neutrality, anger, or anxiety. Subjects were then asked to separate themselves from the specifics of the film and list what they would like to do right then by completing up to 20 blank lines beginning with the phrase “I would like to…” Subjects in the joy and contentment conditions listed more things they would like to do than subjects in the neutral condition, whereas those subjects in the fear and anger conditions listed fewer options than those in the neutral condition (see also Fredrickson, 2006).

Positive emotions also appear to undo the lingering effects of negative emotions. For example, subjects who were experiencing anxiety-related sympathetic arousal after having been told they had one minute to prepare a speech which would be recorded and evaluated were then shown a film that elicited contentment, amusement, neutrality, or sadness (Fredrickson et al., 2000). Once again, the subjects in the contentment and amusement conditions recovered from their anxiety more quickly than those in the neutral group, who recovered more quickly than those in the sadness group (see also Fredrickson, 2006).

The preceding examples are just two of many studies which confirm that positive emotions play a valuable role in regulating emotional arousal and enhancing one’s cognitive/behavioral flexibility (see Fredrickson, 2005, 2006). But what about building personal resources? This is something that requires effort and commitment, but it is possible. Ways in which to increase positive emotion in one’s life include finding the positive meaning in events (e.g., reframing bad circumstances in positive ways), be open (positive emotion broadens attention and thinking, but you have to accept it), do good (the reciprocal of Isen’s work, but it does work both ways), and be social (humans are a social organism). In addition, it is good to practice relaxation to deal with negative emotions and stress, and increasing pleasant activities simply makes life more enjoyable and meaningful (Fredrickson, 2005, 2008).

The influence of positive emotion in this broaden-and-build theory is not merely linear, but rather it leads to an upward spiral of improved function. So, experiencing positive emotion leads to a momentary broadening of thought-action repertoires, but that broadening leads to building enduring personal resources, which transforms people, which feels good - an experience of positive emotions, and so on (Fredrickson, 2005; Fredrickson & Cohn, 2008).

**\* \* \***

There has been an interesting controversy regarding one aspect of Fredrickson’s work. In 2005, she co-authored an article with Marcial Losada suggesting a critical ratio of positive to negative emotion of 3:1. People with such a ratio will flourish in life, according to the paper, but those who do not may languish. However, the results of the paper were later challenged, and it has been partially retracted. The challenge was based on the statistical method used to calculate the 3:1 ratio – but neither the theory nor the original data were challenged (Brown et al., 2013). In her thoughtful reply to this challenge, Fredrickson defended her fundamental premise, and numerous other studies support her position (see Fredrickson, 2013b).

We were involved in a similar situation, in which we were the ones challenging an inappropriate use of statistical techniques (Pitts, Kelland, et al., 1990). It had become commonplace to use a technique called Probit Analysis to determine the ED50 (the effective dose achieving a 50% response) for studies examining drug effects *in vivo* on midbrain dopamine neurons (as well as other cell types *in vivo*). However, Probit Analysis was simply not appropriate (for technical reasons), and we demonstrated the value and appropriate application of a different technique (third-order polynomial regression). The key point, however, is that there was still an ED50, we just argued that it needed to be calculated in a different way. With regard to Frederickson’s research, there is likely still an optimal ratio of positive to negative emotion, and it’s still probably pretty close to 3:1. It just needs to be calculated in the proper way (or, if one takes a more Eastern/Buddhist perspective, one can just let it go).

## Resilience

As important as a preponderance of positive emotion is, the sad reality is that many people grow up in very unfortunate circumstances. And yet, some of these children grow up to be psychologically healthy and relatively happy people. Thus, despite conditions such as poverty, abuse, neglect, parental psychopathology, etc., some 10% or more of these children overcome life’s challenges and thrive (see Compton, 2005). The term usually applied to this phenomenon is resilience, which “generally refers to a class of phenomena characterized by patterns of positive adaptation in the context of significant adversity or risk” (pg. 75; Masten & Reed, 2005).

Both aspects of the definition of resilience are important, so we need to ask: what constitutes significant adversity or risk, and how might we objectively measure positive adaptation? Significant risk factors include premature birth, divorce, parental illness or psychopathology, abuse, poverty, homelessness, motherhood in unwed teenagers, and the more dramatic conditions of natural disaster or war. Whereas many researchers have considered one factor at a time, the reality is that these factors can occur together and/or accumulate over time. Thus, it is essential to consider the cumulative risk of threats to the development of a child (Masten & Reed, 2005).

Positive adaptation is usually measured in terms of the successful accomplishment of age-related developmental tasks. For very young children, these include walking, talking, and obeying simple instructions, then later on learning in school and getting along with other children, including making friends. Somewhat more objective measures include staying in school, getting good grades, and being involved in extracurricular activities (including sports, for those so inclined). Once again, it is important for an individual to achieve positive gains in a variety of these areas (Masten & Reed, 2005).

Models for the study of resilience have focused on three different approaches: variable-focused (the risks and assets present), person-focused (the traits or characteristics of resilient individuals), and pathway models (addressing patterns of behavior over time). The latter approach provides a framework for comprehensive intervention efforts, perhaps the most famous being Head Start (see Masten & Reed, 2005). Another example is the effort of Bonnie Benard and Carol Burgoa to help schools and school districts across California utilize data from the Resilience and Youth Development Module in the California Healthy Kids Survey to then promote effective programs for their students, parents, and in the community (see Benard & Slade, 2009).

Beginning with student-led focus groups, they examined how (and whether) students know an adult in their school or community cared about them and believed in them. They then developed the Listening to Students Circle, where students were given the role of speaking while the school staff listened. The benefits of this program included:

For students:

1. Experiencing a process that embodies the protective factors of caring relationships, high expectation, and meaningful participation
2. Contributing to policy and program changes based on their needs, experiences, and interests
3. Learning that young people from different backgrounds have similar perspectives
4. Developing greater respect for similarities and differences across different groups, cliques, and even gangs

For adults:

1. Learning that young people understand how their school and community operates, and that they value genuinely helpful adults
2. Appreciate knowing the little things within their power to make a difference in the lives of youth
3. Understanding resilience and youth development, and remembering why they became teachers of others who work with children

For the community:

1. Experiencing a strengthening of adult and staff relationships with youth
2. Generating action plans and activities that youth believe in
3. Increasing protective factors positively associate with youth development

(pp. 357-358; Benard & Slade, 2009)

This program has been put into use in a variety of schools with positive results. In one high school, scores on caring relationships, high expectations, and meaningful participation doubled or even tripled. According to Benard & Slade (2009), these little steps are simple, possible, necessary, and meaningful to the students they impact.

Based on their extensive work with resilient survivors, Wolin & Wolin (1993) offer a simple and practical definition of resilience: the capacity to rebound from hardship inflicted early in life. Based on their experience, and in order to help teach practical resilience skills to people growing up in (or having grown up in) troubled families, they have identified what they call the seven resiliencies:

1. **Insight** – asking tough questions and giving honest answers about difficult situations dispels denial, generates clarity, and provides a springboard for taking necessary action to solve problems
2. **Independence** – distancing oneself emotionally and physically from trouble provides both physical and emotional safety
3. **Relationships** – connecting with people who matter provides friendship, support, and perhaps love
4. **Initiative** – meeting challenges by taking charge and looking for solutions to problems leads to solutions and a sense of competence and mastery
5. **Creativity** –using imagination helps to express difficult feelings in positive ways
6. **Humor** – laughing at yourself, finding what’s funny even in sadness or pain, introduces liveliness and light-heartedness in somber situations
7. **Morality** – doing the right thing, and thinking of others as well as yourself, generates a sense of being a good person

(pg. 20; Wolin, 2003)

Although these strengths are within the individual, their development and expression depends on the presence of protective factors, such as support at school, in the community, and/or at home. For those children who lack these protective factors, special services (such as therapy) may be critical. Even when some strengths are present, they often exist alongside weaknesses and vulnerabilities. Professionals who recognize this can avoid labelling a child based on an either-or attitude in the presence of some psychological problems. And most importantly, strengths can be learned. Programs designed to help struggling children should include such training, since the child may well not be getting such support at home or in the community. Learning and developing resilience can help a person to master their painful memories, accept that the troubled family history has left its mark, gain some revenge by living well, and break the cycle of abuse and put the past in its place (Wolin, 2003; Wolin & Wolin, 1993).

In *The Resilient Self*, Wolin & Wolin (1993) combine the resiliencies of creativity and humor. Whereas the other resiliencies keep the wheels of reality rolling, creativity and humor allow the imagination to take over and rearrange one’s life to your own liking. The most obvious examples involve playing, or pretending to be something wonderful, like a superhero or a space explorer. In this way, resilience allows one to the channel their pain, as opposed to suppressing it until you explode.

In one example they present Jack McDuffy, who was the accidental child of a prostitute who quickly left him with his widower grandfather who neither wanted him nor knew how to care for him. Keenly aware of being unwanted and unloved, Jack decided to become a comedian. In 2nd grade he presented a play:

Bobby’s Brains: written by Jack McDuffy, starring Jack McDuffy, directed by Jack McDuffy, and produced by Jack McDuffy. The kids were in stitches. And the teacher liked me too. When I saw that, I thought, “I don’t have to stick up grocery stores. I can do something else.” (pg. 165; Wolin & Wolin, 1993)

By the time he was in high school, Jack was making joke books and selling them to his friends. Later he went on to become a consultant, and on at least two occasions he won a “funniest consultant” award. In addition, he occasionally attended open-mike night at a local comedy club, telling Dr. Wolin how much he enjoyed being on stage.

In *The Struggle to Be Strong*, Desetta & Wolin (2000) share the true stories of 30 teens who have overcome tough times. There are 3-5 stories for each of the resiliencies, providing practical, real-life examples of how each resiliency functions. The story by Quantwilla Johnson struck a cord with me, since she has experienced something I’ve been aware of in my own life (falling under the resiliency of morality). Having been in therapy herself, and *not* liking it, for some reason others began to confide in her. Before she knew it, she had become something of a therapist herself. But, she remembered what she had not liked about her own therapy, it was too intrusive regarding problems, while not being at all personable. She felt that her therapist did not care about her at all. So she fell into her own approach to working with others, an approach, by the way, that is quite reminiscent of the work of Carl Rogers (see Section IV, positive psychotherapy):

With my “patients” I establish trust – whatever you want to tell me will be of your own free will. I won’t force anything out of you. I think I’m a good person to talk to because I do not pass judgment on anything you say, do, or let happen to you. I believe you must work at your own pace and let a friendship build before I start being nosy. When my “patients” and I talk, I don’t think of myself as the “professional” – we both work together. (pg. 148; Desetta & Wolin, 2000)

Like Quantwilla, for some reason I’ve always been someone who others confided in, sometimes in the most unexpected ways. I was in a student lounge studying for an exam in college, and a girl from class came over to me. I recognized her, but we weren’t really friends. She asked me if she could talk about something, since I seemed like a pretty smart guy (I was getting an A in our class). She and her boyfriend had been sexually active, but she wasn’t quite clear how far they had gone. She needed to know if she might possibly be pregnant. So, I found myself trying to explain the biology of the birds and the bees to a woman in college! Once again, we weren’t really friends, but she needed someone to talk to and felt that I just seemed like someone wise enough to help her.

I am not a clinical psychologist, my Ph.D. is in physiological psychology, and before teaching full-time my focus was on biomedical research. However, I have something of a troubled past, I used to be an alcoholic (and with that statement you can tell I’m not an adherent of the AA model), and I’ve been in therapy on more than one occasion (I’ve had some bad therapists, but in high school I had a wonderful therapist for a year, who was quite helpful). Somehow or other, like Quantwilla, I seem to radiate an air of understanding and wisdom for others in need. At the end of her story, there is a note regarding Quantwilla. Seventeen years old when she wrote her story for the book, shortly before the book was published she had moved on to college, was writing for a campus magazine, and she had volunteered at a local youth center (Desetta & Wolin, 2000).

Regarding their own careers working with children who were trying to survive in troubled families, Wolin & Wolin (1993) discuss their transition from a “damage model” to a “challenge model.” The damage model is essentially the same as the germ theory of disease: the troubled family damages the child, resulting in childhood psychopathology, the child succumbs, and proceeds with a life marked by later adolescent and adult psychopathology. However, resilient people reported that they did not dwell on the past or the damage, they did not blame their parents for their own issues, and they did not succumb to the Victim’s Trap. Instead, they built on their strengths, they deliberately sought to improve on their parents’ life-styles, they married into strong families, and they fought off bad family memories so they might build new routines and traditions of their own. This led Wolin & Wolin (1993) to propose their “challenge model,” in which the potential damaging factors and the opportunities provided by the challenging factors are interacting with one another. Thus, the troubled family threatens the child, but also challenges the child, resulting in both childhood psychopathologies and resiliencies, the child then succumbs in some ways but also rebounds in other, finally resulting in adolescence and adulthood marked by a combination (interplay) of pathologies and resiliencies. When the challenged person is fortunate enough to find some measure of support (one good parent, a caring teacher, a sound therapist), then the resiliencies can overcome the pathologies.

One such measure of support may be the broaden-and-build theory we discussed in the previous section. Apparently, resilient individuals are able to experience positive emotion even in the midst of significantly negative situations. They are not blind to the negative events, but they are able to utilize simultaneous feelings of positive emotion to regulate their negative emotional arousal and, consequently, cope with the negative situation. Indeed, although maintaining and enhancing positive emotions may help anyone to cope with negative events, resilient individuals seem to be especially proficient at utilizing this coping mechanism (Tugade & Fredrickson, 2004, 2007). In addition, concomitant increases in positive emotion and resilience help individuals to develop resources for living well, resulting in increases in happiness and desirable life outcomes (Cohn et al., 2009).

Negative circumstances should not, however, be viewed as something to be avoided at all cost. There may well be benefits from overcoming traumatic experiences. For example, individuals who have faced such challenges report increases in self-reliance and a greater willingness to address new difficulties in an assertive fashion. They also recognize and appreciate their own vulnerability. When it comes to relationships with others, they are more emotionally expressive, compassionate, empathic, and willing to put effort into relationships (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995). Among the processes involved in this growth are rumination (in a healthy sense – thinking about and processing the traumatic event), managing the crisis (appraising the threat and reversing its negative aspects), working to make the crisis comprehensible, and finding that life continues to be meaningful. In their model, Tedeschi & Calhoun (1995) propose that traumatic events may (for resilient people) result in positive psychological growth when a change takes place in one’s view of self, this change is perceived as leading to a more profound understanding of one’s self and the world, this understanding results in proactive/protective changes in behavior, what was lost is transformed into a more valuable future, and the positive changes appear to be possible only because of the struggle resulting from the traumatic event (see also Amada, 1999; Tedeschi et al., 1998).

There is an abundance of literature on resilience, but most makes little or no mention of exercise and/or sports. However, physical exercise can be a powerful component supporting resilience, even in situations as extreme as a POW camp (Southwick & Charney, 2012). For youth, whether able-bodied or disabled, outdoor sports programs can be an important source of both self-efficacy and self-acceptance, in part through relationships with others (Willoughby et al., 2003; Wolin & Wolin, 1993). In addition, the spiritual aspects of martial arts training, such as meditation and mindfulness, can be a valuable coping mechanism for people with physical disabilities (Kelland, 2010).

## A Buddhist (Eastern) Perspective on Well-Being

Just as there is not one Western perspective on what constitutes happiness or well-being, there is not just one Eastern perspective. In the previous textbook I published, *Personality Theory: A Multicultural Perspective* (Kelland, 2014), there is a chapter on Yoga and Buddhism. Many scholars agree, myself included, that Buddhism is a branch of Yoga. After all, the Buddha was a yogi, and he did not consider himself to be any different than other people. However, Buddhism has developed its own unique character (indeed, there are several different schools of Buddhism), and is in some ways more in line with the field of positive psychology. Thus, we will focus on the Buddhist perspective here.

Technically, Buddhism is not a religion, but rather a lifestyle which leads individuals toward healthy psychological development. Nonetheless, over time it became mixed with religious stories and myths, as people tried to fit Buddhism into their traditional culture. Consequently, it is quite difficult to avoid the obvious religious and metaphysical overtones. It should also be noted that there are many translations of the classic books on Buddhism and terminology varies from translation to translation. One must simply accept this, since the only alternative is for each one of us to learn all of the languages in which these books were written.

“In the end, these things matter most: How well did you love?

How fully did you live? How deeply did you learn

to let go?” – Kornfield, 1994

People who only have a vague understanding of Buddhism sometimes make the mistake of believing that Buddhists cannot have fun or be in love. After all, the teachings of the Buddha emphasize non-attachment and equanimity. But this is a naïve understanding, not a true understanding. A Brahman (a Hindu priest or holy person) asked the Buddha what he must do to ensure that he would go to heaven to be with Brahma (the creator god). The Buddha replied that he must practice the four Brahmaviharas (or dwelling places of Brahma): love, compassion, joy, and equanimity (Thich Nhat Hanh, 2007a). As you can see, love and joy are included in this fundamental teaching.

We’ll begin with an examination of the life of the Buddha and two other great spiritual teachers, and then look at some of the fundamental teachings, finishing with how Buddhism can serve as a guide toward a fulfilling life.

### Siddhattha Gotama, Bodhidharma, and the Dalai Lama

Siddhattha Gotama is recognized as the Buddha, but this is technically incorrect. Anyone can be a Buddha, there were many before Gotama Buddha, many after, and more to come. Indeed, Siddhattha Gotama had lived many lives before he was born into that earthly identity (if, of course, you believe in such things), and this had an important impact on his life. According to legend, Dipankara Buddha foretold that Siddhattha Gotama would be born as a prince in the kingdom of the Shakyas (so he is also referred to as Prince Shakyamuni and as Shakyamuni Buddha), and that in that lifetime he would become a Buddha. Sometime around the fifth or sixth century B.C., Prince Shakyamuni was born. Not wanting his son to leave the kingdom, the king indulged his son with every sensual pleasure known to man. The king also protected his son from knowing the unpleasant realities of life (disease, death, etc.). However, the prince’s destiny was set. Prince Shakyamuni decided he wanted to see the kingdom. In order to prevent the prince from seeing the reality of life, the king ordered that everything in the city should be cleaned and decorated and everyone should be on their best behavior. However, four heavenly beings appeared to Prince Shakyamuni: the first as someone suffering the ravages of old age, the second as someone stricken with disease, the third as a corpse, and the fourth as a wandering monk. These visitors made a profound impression on the young prince, who left his wife, child, and home to seek enlightenment.

Living in India, the path to spiritual enlightenment that he followed was to become a yogi. He studied meditation, he became an accomplished ascetic (it is said he lived for a time on one grain of rice a day), but he failed to achieve anything satisfying. So finally he had a nice lunch and sat down under a Bodhi tree, vowing to remain seated until he achieved enlightenment. Finally, he was “awakened,” which is the meaning of the word Buddha. In his first sermon, Gotama Buddha revealed the Four Noble Truths and the Middle Way, the latter also being known as the Eightfold Path. Those who have followed his teachings have come to be known as Buddhists. For more on the life of the Buddha, an excellent chapter has been written by Goldstein and Kornfield (2001). The sayings of the Buddha have also been collected, and are readily available (e.g., see Byrom, 1993). In his own words, we can see the relationship between Buddhism and psychology, and how these teachings were meant to guide people toward a healthy and happy life. In the teaching entitled “Choices,” the Buddha says:

We are what we think.

All that we are arises with our thoughts.

With our thoughts we make the world.

Speak or act with a pure mind

And happiness will follow you

As your shadow, unshakable.

(pp. 1-2; Byrom, 1993)

Bodhidharma (c. 440-528) is recognized as the monk responsible for bringing Zen Buddhism from India into China. He was also present during the construction of the Shaolin Temple, and was one of the first monks there. During his time at Shaolin Temple he is most famous for spending nine years in meditation, staring at the wall of a cave. He is also credited with developing kung-fu, the well-known martial arts technique, so that the temple monks could protect themselves from bandits. Although Bodhidharma may have spent a great deal of time in meditation, his Zen teaching was based more on a sword of wisdom (Red Pine, 1987). Some of the strange practices in Zen that we will examine in this chapter can be described as almost surprising people into enlightenment. Of course, many years of practice and discipline are necessary in order to be ready for this enlightenment. Some of Bodhidharma’s writings are still available to us today (e.g., Red Pine, 1987), and in his own words (translated, of course) we can get a glimpse of just how strange a Zen understanding of the truth can be:

If you use your mind to study reality, you won’t understand either your mind or reality. If you study reality without using your mind, you’ll understand both. Those who don’t understand, don’t understand understanding. And those who understand, understand not understanding. People capable of true vision know that the mind is empty. They transcend both understanding and not understanding. The absence of both understanding and not understanding is true understanding. (pg. 55; Red Pine, 1987)

Unlike the historical figures Gotama Buddha and Bodhidharma, the Dalai Lama is alive today. Although his home is Tibet, where he was born in 1935, he lives in exile in India. He is believed to be the 14th Dalai Lama, a reincarnation of the previous Dalai Lamas, the first of whom is believed to have been the reincarnation of a boy who lived during the time of Gotama Buddha. That boy was an incarnation of Chenrezig (also known as Avalokiteshvara), the Bodhisattva of Compassion (a Bodhisattva is like a Buddha – see below), and the Dalai Lamas have served for over 650 years as the religious leader of the Tibetan people. Due to political circumstances in Tibet today, it is unclear what may happen to Tibetan culture. The Dalai Lama himself does not know whether he will be the last of the Dalai Lamas, but he hopes that choice will someday be made by a free and democratic Tibetan society (Dalai Lama, 2002).

### The Four Noble Truths of Human Life

Following his enlightenment, the Buddha began to teach what he had realized. In his first lesson, he described the Four Noble Truths: 1) suffering is an unavoidable reality in human life; 2) the source of suffering is craving or desire, and the bad karma it creates; 3) the craving that leads to suffering can be destroyed; 4) the Middle Way is the path to eliminate craving and suffering (Bhikkhu Bodhi, 1994; Suzuki, 1960; World’s Great Religions, 1957; Wilkins, 1967). People often ask why there is so much suffering in the world. When this question is asked, there is usually an unspoken desire to remove this suffering from the world. The Buddha, however, taught us that we cannot escape from reality. Who has never been sick? Who never dies? Who can live without desiring something? The problem is that when our cravings are satisfied, we typically find that we want something else, or something more, we never seem to be really satisfied. And so this cycle of craving, temporary satisfaction, craving again, and so on, continues throughout our life, unless we consciously do something to break the pattern. The Buddha taught us how to break that pattern, by following the Middle Way.

The Middle Way is also known as the Eightfold Path, because there are eight aspects to it: 1) right view, 2) right intention, 3) right speech, 4) right action, 5) right livelihood, 6) right effort, 7) right mindfulness, and 8) right concentration. Some believe that each step depends on what goes before it, so that in order to reach higher levels of this discipline one must accomplish the lower levels (Wilkins, 1967). Others see the path as more circular (or spiraling upward), in that as we deepen our understanding and practice we return to the earlier steps better able to practice them, which prepares us to better understand and practice the higher levels (Bhikkhu Bodhi, 1994).

We must begin with an understanding of how things really are, an understanding of the four noble truths, impermanence, and interbeing (right view). We must then develop the right intentions, to want to be compassionate, selflessly detached, loving, and non-violent. Once we have developed a conducive state of mind, we can choose to refrain from lying, gossiping, swearing, and other misuse of language (right speech). We can avoid doing things that are immoral, irresponsible, cruel, or illegal (right action), and we would not choose a career which required us to do any such things (right livelihood). Then we would be able to focus our will on avoiding any unhealthy states of mind, and on eliminating them quickly should they arise (right effort). Finally we could become more aware of our sensations, feelings, minds, and mental phenomena (right mindfulness), so that we might focus on the discipline necessary to continue our practice of the Middle Way (right concentration). Then we return to the beginning, again and again, so on and so on…

These principles provide the basis for a practical code of conduct, which all Buddhists must follow, known as the Five Precepts. They are: 1) to abstain from killing, 2) to abstain from stealing, 3) to abstain from sexual misconduct, 4) to abstain from lying, and 5) to abstain from mind-altering intoxicants (Bhikkhu Bodhi, 1994; Kornfield, 1993; World’s Great Religions, 1957). The first four seem to follow naturally from the Eightfold Path, but the last one is somewhat more interesting. The problem with intoxicating drugs, such as alcohol, is that they cloud the mind. They make it difficult for us to make responsible choices, which is what the Middle Way is all about.

“Calm and compassion are so precious. Make sure not to

lose them through intoxication.” – Kornfield, 1994

### Impermanence, Suffering, and Selflessness

The Buddha said that “everything arises and passes away…existence is illusion” (in Byrom, 1993). The idea that nothing is permanent is a central belief in Buddhism. People are born, grow up, grow old, and die. Buildings wear down, cars break down, and enormous trees wither away. Even mountains are eventually worn down by erosion. However, children are born, new cars and buildings are built, new plants grow, and life goes on. The implications for Buddhism are quite interesting. If everything, and everyone, changes, then even someone who is enlightened will change! One cannot be a Buddha, for they will change. We must always continue to grow. Likewise, Buddhism itself will change, so most of their doctrines are not seen as static. They anticipate change over time.

For psychology, this has both good and not so good implications. For people who are depressed or anxious, they might take heart in impermanence, since things should eventually get better. Indeed, studies on the effects of psychotherapy often show that some people get better over time without treatment. However, if things seem to be going great, if you are happy and having lots of fun, those things will change too. But knowing this, we can prepare ourselves for it. An important aspect of coping with life’s challenges is a sense of being in control. Although there are a wide variety of variables that contribute to individual resilience, maintaining a positive state of mind can help, and knowledge can help to maintain that positive state of mind (Bonnano, 2004, 2005; Folkman and Moskowitz, 2000; Ray, 2004).

If we practice mindfulness and meditation, we can begin to see the impermanence of our lives. As we let go of our attachments to our self-image, our life will flow by like the pictures of a movie, each one a separate image, which only appears to flow smoothly when viewed at high speed. As we observe these fleeting images, we see how our sensations, thoughts, feelings, every aspect of our lives, change so quickly. We might then embrace the change that is truly our life. This process of letting go can be very difficult, but also very liberating (Goldstein and Kornfield, 2001).

“Do not seek perfection in a changing world.

Instead, perfect your love.” – Kornfield, 1994

As we learned with the first of the Four Noble Truths, suffering is an integral part of the human experience. It is easy for us to think of suffering in terms of big pictures: war, famine, natural disasters, and the like. But how often do we think of suffering as an inherent part of our daily lives? Life is difficult, it is a struggle, especially the way most of us live it. A struggle can only lead to suffering. The ultimate outcome of life’s struggle, should we lose the battle, is death. If we could defeat death we would end up alone, and that loneliness might be even worse than the original suffering itself (Suzuki, 1962). Still, we do not even need to look at suffering in terms of a lifetime battle against aging and death, we can see suffering in every moment of the day. Goldstein and Kornfield offer a marvelous description of the daily challenge to be satisfied (2001). It goes something like this. Suppose we woke up on a day when we had no obligations at all. It might be tempting to stay in bed all day, but eventually we become uncomfortable because we have to go to the bathroom. Finally we go, and then crawl back into bed to get warm. But then we get hungry, so finally we get up to get something to eat. Then we get bored, so maybe we watch TV. Then we get uncomfortable, and have to change positions. Even each pleasurable moment is brief, and fails to bring lasting satisfaction. So on, and so forth. We just keep suffering!

The source of this suffering is attachment. We are attached to pleasurable things because we crave them. We are also attached to things that are not pleasant, because they occupy our mind and we cannot be free. The Buddha says, “Free yourself from pleasure and pain. For in craving pleasure or in nursing pain, there is only sorrow” (in Byrom, 1993). It may seem strange that we would be attached to our pain, but the word is used differently here than in most of Western psychology. Traditionally, psychologists think of attachment in a positive way, such as the attachment a child feels toward his or her parents. And yet, some cognitive psychologists do talk about individuals whose automatic thoughts lead them into consistently negative states of mind by disqualifying positive events, catastrophizing events, taking everything too personally, etc. (Pretzer and Beck, 2005). In Buddhism, attachment is neither positive nor negative, it is simply anything that reflects our illusion that the natural world is real. Only when we let go of our attachments to this world can we be one with the universal spirit, and only then can we end our suffering. There is also something hopeful in suffering. Bodhidharma taught that every suffering is a Buddha-seed, because suffering leads us to seek wisdom (in Red Pine, 1987). In this analogy, he describes the body and mind as a field. Suffering is the seed, wisdom the sprout, and Buddhahood the grain.

Buddhism teaches that there is no immortal, unchanging soul. All that we are is a temporary collection of attributes, made up of the body, the feelings, the perceptions, the reactions, and the consciousness of the mind (which, coming from the brain, is really part of the body). It is because we confuse our true self (the transcendental self) with this temporary collection of illusory things that we crave satisfaction, and ultimately suffer as a result. Now it may seem illogical to reject everything we are familiar with, including our own physical body, as an illusion, but Buddhists would suggest that there is a danger in choosing intellectual logic over faith. According to D.T. Suzuki (1962), “Faith lives and the intellect kills.” Try the following exercise. Consider your body. Is it real? How much food have you eaten in your life, and where is it now? How many times have you gone to the bathroom, and where did all of that come from? It certainly isn’t the same as when you ate it! Your body has been replaced many, many times. It is being replaced right now. It isn’t real, it is only temporary, ever changing. The same is true with your mind. Even when William James discussed the stream of consciousness, he described a constantly changing awareness, one in which you cannot have the same thought twice. It just isn’t possible. James (1892) realized that we cannot establish a substantial identity continuing from day to day, but concluded that our sense of continuity must reveal a functional identity. Arriving at a very different conclusion, Buddhists consider this to be maya, our inability to see things as they truly are (Suzuki, 1960).

These three characteristics of existence (impermanence, suffering, and selflessness) can be somewhat unsettling. It is not very appealing to believe that we don’t really exist, that we will suffer as long as we believe we do exist, and all of it will just eventually pass away anyway. So, how does one continue in this practice? It is important to keep as our goal a true understanding of the way things are, and the practice of meditation and other aspects of Buddhism will help to deepen our realization of these basic truths (Goldstein & Kornfield, 2001). The practice remains challenging, however, because as we deepen our understanding the characteristic most often occupying the center of our greatest realization is that of suffering (Goldstein & Kornfield, 2001; Suzuki, 1962). We must then put aside our intellectualizing, we must slay it and throw it to the dogs, experiencing what Buddhists call the “Great Death” (Suzuki, 1962). Only then will we know the greatest wisdom and compassion. This is the beginning of our transcendence. It is not a separation from others, but a realization that we are all one. In other words, we are all in this together.

### Interbeing – A Connection Between All People and All Things

Many people are familiar with the golden rule: do unto others as you would have others do unto you! This Christian saying also has great implications when considered from a Buddhist perspective. Based on the same philosophical/cosmological perspective underlying Yoga, Buddhists believe that there is one universal spirit. Therefore, we are really all the same, indeed the entire universe of living creatures and even inanimate objects in the physical world come from and return to the same, single source of creation. Thus, we could alter the golden rule to something like: as you do unto others you are doing unto yourself! This concept (known as karma) is not simply about being nice to other people for your own good, however. Much more importantly, it is about appreciating the relationships between all things. For example, when you drink a refreshing glass of milk, maybe after eating a few chocolate chip cookies, can you taste the grass and feel the falling rain? After all, the cow could not have grown up to give milk if it hadn’t eaten grass, and the grass would not have grown if there hadn’t been any rain. When you enjoy that milk do you remember to thank the farmer who milked the cow, or the grocer who sold the milk to you? And what about the worms that helped to create and aerate the soil in which the grass grew? Appreciating the concept of interbeing helps us to understand the importance of everyone and everything.

The value of this concept of interbeing is that it can be much more than simply a curious academic topic. The Vietnamese Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh writes very eloquently about interbeing and its potential for promoting healthy relationships, both between people and between societies (Thich Nhat Hanh, 1995):

“Looking deeply” means observing something or someone with so much concentration that the distinction between observer and observed disappears. The result is insight into the true nature of the object. When we look into the heart of a flower, we see clouds, sunshine, minerals, time, the earth, and everything else in the cosmos in it. Without clouds, there could be no rain, and there would be no flower. Without time, the flower could not bloom. In fact, the flower is made entirely of non-flower elements; it has no independent, individual existence. It “inter-is” with everything else in the universe. … When we see the nature of interbeing, barriers between ourselves and others are dissolved, and peace, love, and understanding are possible. Whenever there is understanding, compassion is born. (pg. 10)

One of the best known cross-cultural topics in psychology today is the distinction between collectivistic vs. individualistic cultures (Triandis & Suh, 2002; Triandis et al., 1988). It is generally accepted that Western cultures focus on the individual, whereas Eastern cultures focus on society as a collective group. One can easily imagine how people whose religious and cultural philosophy focus on a single, universal spirit (the basis of interbeing) would focus more on their family and societal groups than on the individual. Both individualistic and collectivistic cultures seem to have advantages. People living in individualistic cultures report higher levels of subjective well-being and self-esteem, whereas people in collectivistic cultures have tend to have lower levels of stress and correspondingly lower levels of cardiovascular disease (Triandis & Suh, 2002; Triandis et al., 1988). In collectivistic cultures people tend to view the environment as relatively fixed, and themselves as more flexible, more ready to fit in (Triandis & Suh, 2002). The collectivistic perspective supports the value of social cooperation and social interest (something Alfred Adler would likely appreciate). Still, even within cultures there are individual differences. There are idiocentric persons (those who favor individuality) living in collectivistic cultures, and allocentric persons (those who favor ingroups) living in individualistic cultures. The best relationship between personality and culture may be the “culture fit” model, which suggests that it is best to live in the culture that matches your personal inclinations.

Another interesting example of connections across cultures are the non-violent struggles of Mahatma Gandhi, Thich Nhat Hanh, Martin Luther King, Jr., and the 14th Dalai Lama. These four men are probably best known for their commitment to nonviolence as a way to achieve political and social justice. Most importantly, they vowed non-violence while those around them were committed to terrible violence in order to deny justice to others. The two who are not alive today were both assassinated, and the other two were forced to live in exile. Gandhi was a Hindu who practiced Yoga, Thich Nhat Hanh and the Dalai Lama are Buddhists, and M. L. King, Jr. was a Christian, and it was their spiritual beliefs that so profoundly determined those aspects of their personalities that demanded peace.

Gandhi (1869-1948) is considered the father of modern India. He was born when the British ruled India, and spent much of his life fighting for the independence of his homeland. Twice he was imprisoned by the government, even though he insisted that all protests should be nonviolent. Indeed, he had established a movement of nonviolence known as Satyagraha. Ultimately this movement was successful, and India achieved its independence. Gandhi, however, was assassinated less than a year later. As he died, he spoke the name of God: Rama (Easwaran, 1972; Wilkinson, 2005).

Thich Nhat Hanh (1926-present) was born in Vietnam, and saw his country dominated first by the French and then by communists. During those difficult times he helped to develop what he and his friends called “engaged Buddhism.” Rather than sitting in the temple meditating, they went out into the villages and tried to help the poor people of Vietnam. When confronted by soldiers they did their best to remain mindful, and to feel compassion for the soldiers who threatened them. After all, it was clear to Thich Nhat Hanh that many of those young soldiers were frightened themselves, and so their behavior was very hard to predict. Thus, the calm and peace that accompany mindfulness was often essential for protecting everyone in those terrifying encounters. After being exiled from Vietnam in 1966, he established a community called Plum Village in France, where he still resides today (Thich Nhat Hanh, 1966, 2003).

Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929-1968) was a major figure in America’s civil rights movement of the 1950s and 60s. The King children learned at an early age about the realities of racism in America. Coming from an educated and socially active family, both his father and grandfather were ministers, he vowed at an early age to work against racial injustice. According to his sister, he said he would turn the world upside down (Farris, 2003). However, he always insisted on doing so in a nonviolent fashion. For this commitment to nonviolence, in 1964 he became the youngest person to ever receive the Nobel Peace Prize. Despite the peace prize and the passage of both the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act in 1965, discrimination continued in America. So did the nonviolent protests led by Dr. King. Then, in 1968, Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated (Burns, 2004; Hansen, 2003; Patrick, 1990).

The Dalai Lama (1935-present) lives in exile in India, though he also spends a great deal of time in America. When China invaded Tibet in 1950, he appealed to the United Nations, other countries, and even tried to reach an agreement with the Chinese leadership. Eventually, however, he was forced to leave Tibet in 1959. Today, nearly 50 years later, he continues to seek a peaceful resolution resulting in freedom for Tibet. He also works to deliberately cultivate feelings of compassion for the Chinese, believing that someday those who have harmed the people of Tibet will have to face the consequences of their actions (Dalai Lama, 2002). The Dalai Lama received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989.

These men have more in common than simply their shared belief in nonviolence. In addition to M. L. King, Jr. and the Dalai Lama receiving the Nobel Peace Prize, Dr. King nominated Thich Nhat Hanh for the same award, as Nobel Laureates are entitled to do. Dr. King had received a letter from Thich Nhat Hanh asking for help in protesting the Vietnam war, which by the 1960s involved the United States. Dr. King was impressed by the Buddhist monk, and once appeared with him at a press conference in Chicago (Burns, 2004). Dr. King was also familiar with and impressed by the teachings of Gandhi. In 1959 he traveled to India to learn firsthand about Gandhi’s Satyagraha, the basis for Gandhi’s nonviolent independence movement (King, 2000). In 1966, Dr. King delivered the Gandhi Memorial Lecture at Howard University (Hansen, 2003). Since both the Dalai Lama and Thich Nhat Hanh are alive today, they have met one another and the Dalai Lama has written several forewords for books by Thich Nhat Hanh. If these men from different countries and different cultures can share so much through the simple (though not easy) practice of nonviolence, perhaps there is something special here for everyone to learn more about.

### Meditation Techniques

Meditation is the means by which we control our mind and guide it in a more virtuous direction (Dalai Lama, 2001). Modern brain imaging techniques have even begun to identify the brain regions involved in these processes (Barinaga, 2003). There are many different meditation techniques in Yoga and Buddhism, and no one technique is necessarily better than another. What is most important is to pick one type of meditation and stick with it. Meditation takes practice. Most of us find it very difficult to relax and clear our mind. Even when we do, it is difficult to stay relaxed and keep our mind clear. We are distracted by constant thoughts, getting uncomfortable, we have itches and sneezes and whatever… But over time we can get better at relaxing. It helps to have a well-described procedure, and it can be very helpful to meditate in a group (especially if they offer classes or lessons on how to meditate). If you try meditation, don’t get discouraged the first few times. Keep it up. As with all paths toward self-improvement, it takes time to progress in your ability to meditate.

Some of the writings of Master Dogen (1200-1253), the monk who founded Japanese Soto Zen, have survived during the 800 years since he lived (in Cook, 2002). Master Dogen recommends a very traditional form of seated meditation. Basically, sit straight up on a comfortable cushion with your legs crossed. Place your right hand in your lap, palm up, and your left hand on your right hand in the same manner, so that your thumbs touch slightly. Keep the eyes slightly open, the mouth closed, and breathe softly. Next comes the hard part: “Think about the unthinkable. How do you think about the unthinkable? Non-thinking.”

Non-thinking may sound strange, but it is a fascinating experience for those who achieve it. It can actually make a 3- or 6-hour mediation seem to go by more quickly than a shorter meditation in which you never quite clear your mind. If it sounds a little too strange, don’t worry, it isn’t the goal of every form of meditation. Some forms of meditation focus on a mantra, or in Christian meditation a short prayer. Trying to focus on God through the celestial eye (in the middle of the forehead) is also a common technique. The Dalai Lama describes several different approaches in one of his books (Dalai Lama, 2001), and Thich Nhat Hanh discusses being reasonable in one’s approach to longer meditations (Thich Nhat Hanh, 1991). Once again, there is not a right or wrong method of meditation. Whatever technique you try, whether from a book, a guru, a teacher, or a group, it is whatever works for you on your path to personal development.

In the *Visuddhimagga*, written some 1,600 years ago by Bhadantacariya Buddhaghosa, there are 40 subjects of meditation mentioned (Bhikkhu Nanamoli, 1956). Of those 40 subjects of meditation, two are singled out as being “generally useful.” In other words, they are “needed generally and desirable owing to their great helpfulness…” These two meditation subjects are loving-kindness and mindfulness of death. Loving-kindness is both the desire and the ability to bring joy and happiness to others. Thus, it creates a peaceful atmosphere for all. Mindfulness of death is of great value because it is the full awareness that we will die. Thus, it creates an urgency to live a good life (Bhikkhu Nanamoli, 1956; U Dhammaratana, 2011). Of course, in the Buddhist sense that would not be a life of hedonistic debauchery, but rather a good life in which one causes no suffering for oneself or others.

A wonderful resource for practicing basic meditation has been provided by Jack Kornfield, a clinical psychologist who trained as a Buddhist monk. *Meditation for Beginners* (Kornfield, 2004) not only briefly describes the history, purpose, and benefits of meditation, but it also includes a CD with guided meditations led by the author. Kornfield is an advocate of vipassana, or insight meditation (Goldstein & Kornfield, 2001; Kornfield & Breiter, 1985). Once again, the instructions are simple to begin with, and more detailed as one develops one’s meditation practice. In the book *A Still Forest Pool*, Kornfield & Breiter (1985) share these simple instructions from the venerable Achaan Chah:

Begin practice by sitting up straight and paying attention. You can sit on the floor, you can sit in a chair. At first, you need not fix your attention on much. Simply be mindful of in-and-out breathing… In this awareness of breathing you must not force… Just notice it and let it be… (pg. 81; Achaan Chah in Kornfield & Breiter, 1985)

Of course, one does not need to sit during meditation. Walking meditation is also quite popular, especially for people who find it uncomfortable to sit for a long time (I have two artificial hips, and at times it can be more uncomfortable to sit than to walk slowly and mindfully). The Buddha spoke of five benefits of walking meditation: it develops endurance, is good for striving, it’s healthy, it’s good for digestion after a meal, and the concentration won from walking meditation lasts a long time (Ajahn Brahmavamso et al., 2007).

Thich Nhat Hanh (1985, 1996, 2007b) is also an advocate of walking meditation. He talks about the value of walking to shake off burdens and worries, and to allow anger to subside (or to deal with stress; see Kabat-Zinn, 1990). Indeed, Thich Nhat Hanh offers a gatha one can recite while walking to dispel anger:

Breathing in, I know that anger is in me.

Breathing out, I know this feeling is upleasant.

[And then, after a while:] Breathing in, I feel calm.

Breathing out, I am now strong enough to take care of this anger.

(pg. 39; Thich Nhat Hanh,

As with seated meditation, there are many different techniques for walking meditation, including within vipassana meditation (Kornfield & Breiter, 1985). What matters most is relaxation, a clear mind, and mindfully being aware of your walking. This is not exercise; it is still meditation. Once again, Achaan Chah instructs:

Work with the walking meditation every day. To begin, clasp the hands in front of you, maintaining a very slight tension that compels the mind to be attentive. Walk at a normal pace from one end of the path to the other, knowing yourself all the way. Stop and return. If the mind wanders, stand still and bring it back. If the mind still wanders, fix attention on the breath. Keep coming back. Mindfulness thus developed is useful at all times. (pg. 85; Achaan Chah in Kornfield & Breiter, 1985)

Walking meditation can take place indoors or outdoors. The path where the Buddha practiced walking meditation is still there, and it’s 17 steps long. While engaged in walking meditation there is one meditation subject we can focus on that is not available when sitting: the walking posture (Ajahn Brahmavamso, 2007). As noted above, we can use our hand position to focus our attention, or our breath, but many people focus on the feet and/or the process of walking itself. I tend to have a little trouble with balance while walking very slowly, due to my artificial hips. When I feel a little off balance, I just use that to focus my attention on my body. Breathe naturally, adjusting the breath to match your steps if you desire. Of course, adjustments may be necessary if walking uphill and down (Thich Nhat Hanh, 1996, 2007).

And finally, we have standing meditation. Jon Kabat-Zinn (1994) suggests that:

Standing meditation is best learned from trees. Stand close to one, or, better still, in a stand of trees and just peer out in one direction. Feel your feet developing roots into the ground. Feel your body sway gently, as it always will, just as trees do in a breeze. Staying put, in touch with your breathing, drink in what is in front of you, or keep your eyes closed and sense your surroundings. Sense the tree closest to you. Listen to it, feel its presence, touch it with your mind and body. (pg. 149; Kabat-Zinn, 1994)

I often practice standing meditation together with walking meditation. While walking, I will stop from time to time and practice standing meditation for a while. There are no rules. There is also a form of standing meditation that I created for myself. Others may have done it, so I might not have been the first, but it came to me all on my own just the same.

In the middle of winter I will go out on a frozen lake, especially on very windy days, and just stand there. With my back to the wind, I experience both the wind and the inevitable cracking and groaning of the ice on the lake. The wind blowing around me creates a cocoon of energy that immerses me in nature, while also shielding me from any other sounds or distractions. Of course, I should point out that I have some very warm clothes, including a down mountaineering suit and Sorel boots. So I’m able to stand on a frozen lake in the howling wind in the middle of winter and be completely warm!

### Concepts of Enlightenment

There are a wide variety of concepts of enlightenment. One concept that is somewhat familiar in America is nirvana. Nirvana refers to the extinction of all ideas and concepts, thus resulting in the end of suffering due to the craving that results from being attached to anything in the natural world. In the Theravada tradition this should be the goal of all Buddhists, and a person who achieves nirvana is referred to as an Arhat. Other Buddhists, however, seek to avoid nirvana, because it leaves all others behind.

In the Mahayana tradition, an ideal person would be a Bodhisattva, one who vows to forgo complete enlightenment until all other beings have been enlightened. According to Thich Nhat Hanh (1995), such individuals touch mindfulness, and as a result of living mindfully they can touch the Buddha and shine their light of awareness on everything they do. The desire to help others achieve enlightenment comes from the deep compassion developed by Bodhisattvas. Mindfulness leads to this compassion, as it leads one to develop Bodhicitta. Bodhicitta, which means “mind of enlightenment” or “mind of love,” is an inner drive to fully realize oneself and to work for the well-being of all (in other words, it is the driving force of being a Bodhisattva; Dalai Lama, 2001; Thich Nhat Hanh, 1995, 1999).

Curiously, some Buddhists distinguish between “bodhi” as a temporary flash of enlightenment, which can even occur following arduous meditation or by accident, and “nirvana” or true liberation, which can only result from proper knowledge and dedicated practice (Mathew, 2001). This concept is similar to what Maslow described as the difference between a peak experience and a plateau experience. A peak experience is a brief period of fulfillment, usually associated with a particular event. A plateau experience, on the other hand, is a lasting feeling of oneness with the world around us. What is of particular importance for the study of personality is the recognition that individuals with certain personality characteristics, such as being kind-hearted and open-minded, can more easily accomplish long-term fulfillment, whether we call it nirvana or self-actualization.

### Compassion and Loving-Kindness

“Just as compassion is the wish that all sentient beings be free of suffering, loving-kindness is the wish that all may enjoy happiness” (Dalai Lama, 2001). With these simple words about Buddhism, His Holiness the Dalai Lama has captured the history of psychology briefly presented in the introductory chapter: that psychology focused for many years on helping to identify and treat mental illness (hopefully freeing people from suffering), whereas now there is a strong movement toward positive psychology (hoping to improve well-being for all). This recognition of compassion as the strong feeling or wish that others be freed from suffering comes from mindfulness. As one becomes truly aware of the suffering involved in human life, and if one is able to feel genuine empathy for others, then compassion naturally arises (Chappell, 2003; Dalai Lama, 2001; Goldstein & Kornfield, 2001; Thich Nhat Hanh, 1995). Compassion has described as the ideal emotional state (Bankart et al., 2003; Cook, 2002; Dockett & North-Schulte, 2003; Ragsdale, 2003), and Carl Rogers considered genuine empathy to be essential for client-centered therapy to be successful. Aside from Rogers, however, have other psychologists begun to examine the value of compassion and loving-kindness? The answer is an unequivocal “Yes” (Bankart et al., 2003; Batson et al., 2005; Cassell, 2005; Dockett & North-Schulte, 2003; Keyes & Lopez, 2005; Khong, 2003; Ragsdale, 2003; Schulman, 2005b; Young-Eisendrath, 2003)!

“Life is so hard, how can we be anything but kind?”

- Kornfield, 1994

### Obstacles to Personal Growth: The Three Poisons of Buddhism

Buddhists believe in three poisons, the great obstacles to personal development. They are greed, anger, and delusion. These poisons, or realms as they are often called, have no nature of their own, they are created by us and they depend on us. Greed flows from attachment, anger flows from our emotions, and delusion flows from maya. By following the practices of Buddhism, we can free ourselves from these poisons as did the Buddha. According to Bodhidharma, the Buddha made three vows. He vowed to put an end to all evil, by practicing moral prohibitions to counter the poison of greed. He vowed to cultivate virtue by practicing meditation to counter the poison of anger. And he vowed to liberate all beings by practicing wisdom to counter the poison of delusion (in Red Pine, 1987). Likewise, we can devote ourselves to the three pure practices of morality, meditation, and wisdom.

It is interesting to note how well this philosophy fits with the growing field of positive psychology (e.g., see Compton, 2005; Peterson, 2006a). Indeed, whole books have been written on the study of virtue in psychology (Fowers, 2005; Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Note, however, that these books are quite recent. Although the seeds of positive psychology, studies on virtue and similar topics, have been around since the earliest days of psychology in the Western world, we seem to be just starting to “discover” concepts that have been well established in Eastern philosophy/psychology for thousands of years. As we recognize more similarities between traditional Eastern perspectives and current Western perspectives, it may help to guide these developing areas of psychological research in the Western world.

### Sangha: A Community Practicing Together

The concepts of togetherness, friendship, social support, etc. are certainly well known in the West, despite the fact that Western cultures are generally considered to be individualistic. Adler identified developing friendships as one of three main tasks in life, and the value of social support during times of stress and grief has been well documented. In Yoga and Buddhism these concepts have been central for thousands of years. Buddhists refer to the Three Jewels (also known as the Three Gems or the Three Refuges): the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. A Buddha is one who is fully enlightened (not just Gotama Buddha), and the Dharma is the way of understanding and love taught by Gotama Buddha. A Sangha is a community of Buddhists who practice the Dharma and seek enlightenment together (Suzuki, 1960; Thich Nhat Hanh, 1995). The Sangha is not, however, just a get-together of companions with similar interests. The Sangha can renew our inspiration and energy, and it can help us to keep practicing when our own motivation wanes (Goldstein & Kornfield, 2001). The energy and motivation we gain from being part of a Sangha can help us to develop Bodhicitta, the altruistic desire to help all people achieve enlightenment. The ceremony to actively generate Bodhicitta within us begins with a series of visualizations in which we imagine Gotama Buddha being with us, surrounded by other Buddhas, great sages, and all sentient beings (Dalai Lama, 2001). Being filled with Bodhicitta makes us a Bodhisattva right away (Thich Nhat Hanh, 1999). This is not simply a belief or devotion, however. Taking refuge in the Sangha is a practice, one that can only take place in the company of others and with their support (Thich Nhat Hanh, 1995).

The Sangha is by no means unique to Buddhism. In Yoga they refer to Satsanga, associating with the truth or with someone virtuous such as a guru (Feuerstein, 2003; Yogananda, 1946). I remember when a monk, and a monk in training, from the Self Realization Fellowship visited the Yoga retreat center I sometimes visit. During the evening they offered Satsanga, a brief lesson followed by a question and answer discussion. In this semi-formal setting we were all able to expand our understanding of Yoga and share our interests and experiences. Indeed, some people practicing traditional Yoga or Buddhism consider the guru (or lama, in Tibetan) to be a fourth jewel in which to seek refuge (Feuerstein, 2003).

### Buddhism and Positive Psychology

In one sense it’s unfair to say that there is a separate Eastern perspective (with our current focus on Buddhism), since many people in the Western world are turning to spiritual philosophies like Buddhism in order to find happiness. Why? Because they have realized (either consciously or unconsciously) that the Western approach to getting happiness often just doesn’t work. Some people can’t get what they want, and those who can often find that what they wanted is unfulfilling. The Buddha taught that such things would always be unfulfilling in the end, and therefore people would always suffer. Unless, of course, they gain an understanding of the Buddha’s teaching and put it into practice in their lives.

So we have two paths we can examine: the Buddhist perspective itself, and the Western view of Buddhism. We will take a look at both, but keep in mind that the depth of understanding by Western authors varies from limited to profound. So whatever level you are at, there will something of interest if you put in the effort to find the right information.

Let us begin with a few passages from the Dhammapada:

Ah, so happily we live,

Without hate among those with hate.

Among people who hate

We live without hate.

Ah, so happily we live,

Without misery among those in misery.

Among people in misery

We live without misery.

**...**

Ah, so happily we live,

We who have no attachments.

We shall feast on joy,

As do the Radiant Gods.

(pp. 53-54; translated by Gil Fronsdal, 2005)

Positive psychology, in the eyes of some, has fallen into the trap of the Western world’s consumerism and materialism, and helped give rise to the Happiness Industry. As such, Westerners interested in Buddhism have tried to fit it into their hoped-for concept of a “religion of happiness” (Soeng, 2016). This mistake, however, perpetuates the problem: that looking without for new ways to find, get, or be happy is a fool’s errand. It will eventually lead to suffering. This may be particularly important in psychotherapy. As Jane Henry points out:

By directing attention toward focusing on the present and detaching from identification with troubles, one gives both problems and desires less attention than in therapy or self-help and perhaps avoids the danger of fanning the flames of pointless rumination and childish emotion. (pg. 125; Henry, 2006)

What the Buddha taught was a way to let go of attachments, and in this way to let go of our suffering. It is quite antithetical to Western society. Indeed, some of the ways in which it is described are rather esoteric. For example, we meditate in order to concentrate our mind. A concentrated mind leads to seeing things as they are, which leads to disenchantment, which leads to dispassion, which leads to freedom (a blissful state; Soeng, 2016 and personal communication during a BCBS course).

How can disenchantment and dispassion lead to freedom and, ultimately, happiness? The answer is based on a radically different view of reality:

The psychological life of disenchantment and dispassion, as a hallmark of Buddha’s teachings on happiness, is not an existentially negative condition. If anything, when it is built upon a long cultivation of preceding stages of joy, rapture, tranquility, and happiness, it offers a psychological matrix of completion; the feeling of being complete without seeking pleasure or gratification from external sources.

The Buddha called it the life of a noble person. This life is an antidote to the life of an ordinary, confused person, the “worlding” who sees the pursuit of sensual pleasures as a way to seek completion, to seek gratification, to become happy. (pg. 52; Soeng, 2016)

If one is able to grasp the meaning of what the Buddha taught, that letting go of the pursuit of happiness (the pursuit of sensual pleasures) will lead to freedom from all attachments (both good and bad), then one can follow a path toward true happiness. This may be particularly difficult in Western culture, since Buddhism (and related Eastern spiritual philosophies, such as Yoga) arose in a very different culture.

One of the challenges of grasping the meaning of Buddhism for those of us who have been raised in a different culture is that we think of Buddhism as a religion, and as such, we believe its focus is more on nibbana (or nirvana in Sanskrit). But the Pali canon reveals three type of benefits to be derived from the practice of Buddhism: well-being and happiness in this present life, welfare and happiness in future lives, and the ultimate good (nibbana or enlightenment; Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2005). Whereas Westerners tend to think that Buddhism focuses on future lives and enlightenment, the emphasis on being present in this moment really focuses on our present life, here and now.

What follows now are some of the Buddha’s teachings on how to live a good life. Basically, they are a set of instructions for being a good person, from a Buddhist point of view.

The Buddha teaches that we should pay homage to the six directions, and he identifies those directions as: mother and father, teachers, wife and children, friends, workers, and religious leaders. He then proceeds to offer practice advice on what to do. For example, parents should be honored by supporting them (e.g., in their old age), performing their duties for them, keeping up family traditions, and distributing gifts on their behalf after they have died. During this, the parents will reciprocate this honor by restraining their child from evil, supporting the child in doing good, teaching them skills, helping them to find a suitable mate, and in time, turning over their inheritance to them (Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2005).

The Buddha goes on to say things such as honoring teachers by rising to greet them, being attentive, and mastering the skills they teach. In response, the teachers will provide thorough lessons, make sure they have learned the skills, and refer them to friends and colleagues. Similarly, husbands should honor their wives, remain faithful, and give them adornments from time to time. Wives should then also be faithful, and they should organize the household responsibly and be kind to the servants (Bhikku Bodhi, 2005).

This process of treating others well so that you will, in turn, be treated well by them is none other than what we commonly call the golden rule: do unto others as you would have others do unto you (which we already discussed above regarding interbeing). It is perhaps the most widely recognized principle in history, so it’s no surprise that we find this teaching in Buddhism as well. It’s interesting to note, however, that although many think of this as a Christian principle, the Buddha was teaching this approximately 500 years before the Christian era.

A particularly interesting teaching from the Buddha has to do with Right Livelihood, one of the steps on the Eightfold Path:

“These five trades, O monks, should not be taken up by a lay follower: trading in weapons, trading in living beings, trading in meat, trading in intoxicants, trading in poison.” (pg. 126; Buddha cited in Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2005

Apparently there were a significant number of people who earned their living selling poison, enough so that the Buddha felt it necessary to include it in this list. Of course, poisons would serve only one purpose, to violate the precept against killing. Personally, I consider poison to be a weapon in this context, but still the Buddha felt it necessary to specifically identify it.

Another important passage refers to the four kinds of happiness which may be achieved by a layperson (or householder). They are the happiness of possession(s), the happiness of enjoyment, the happiness of freedom from debt, and the happiness of blamelessness (Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2005). Since most of the people who read this will likely be college students, the difficulties created by student loan debt will be familiar to many of you. The cost of education keeps rising and good paying jobs (which allow for the happiness of possession as well) are disappearing. It is a shame that our society is creating a burden that strikes directly at two of the four sources of our happiness.

The Buddha also discussed such topics as cordiality, social stability, and how leaders can bring tranquility to the land. But let us turn our attention now toward those in the West, psychologists to be more precise, who are incorporating Buddhist ideas and practices into the field of psychology.

As noted above, there are many in the west who have embraced Buddhist philosophy and practices, particularly in the field of psychotherapy. It has been suggested that Buddhist mindfulness may be the most common element across various forms of psychotherapy, and if not, perhaps it should be (see Germer, 2005a,b; Fulton & Siegel, 2005; Fulton, 2005; Pollak, 2014; Segall, 2003). It is well beyond the scope of this project to cover in detail all the work that has been done to examine psychotherapy in a Buddhist context, or to blend Buddhist practices with psychotherapeutic practices, but suffice it to say the following list of references is certainly not complete (see, e.g., Bobrow, 2010; Brach, 2003; Germer & Siegel, 2012; Germer et al., 2005; Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Pollock et al., 2014; Rubin, 1996). One of the key themes throughout these books is the value of mindfulness in creating a basis for communication, both between the therapist and the client, and within the client themselves (i.e., leading to personal insight). As extensive as this is becoming, we will revisit the topic later, in Section IV.

Please note that most of the books cited at the end of the preceding paragraph are dated in the 2000s. This is a fairly new field of endeavor, but not entirely new. Freud wrote about a certain fascination with Eastern spirituality, but felt it was beyond his grasp. Carl Jung was also particularly interested in Eastern philosophy and religion, as was the American psychologist William James. However, it was the psychoanalyst Erich Fromm who co-authored *Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis* with the renowned Buddhist teacher D. T. Suzuki (Suzuki et al., 1960).

In Fromm’s contribution to this landmark book, he specifically addresses the issue of well-being! Indeed, Fromm states that “the first approach to a definition of well-being can be stated thus: *well-being is being in accord with the nature of man”* (pg. 86; his italics). He goes on to say that humans are unique, given their sentient nature. Consequently, *we* have to live our lives (as opposed to merely acting on instinct), which leads to an awareness of separateness (or, as it is often called in psychology, the process of individuation), which then demands that we answer the question: how do we overcome the suffering and shame that this experience of separateness creates? Fromm recognizes two answers to this question: either we regress and do not answer the question, i.e., we fail to live our lives fully, or we choose to be fully born, to develop our awareness, reason, and capacity to love so that we might transcend our egocentric nature and achieve harmony and oneness with the world (Fromm, 1960).

If you are still paying attention to the dates, you may be wondering why the book by Suzuki & Fromm, two very well-known people, was published in 1960, but there wasn’t an explosion of interest until some 40 years laters. Many great ideas are not appreciated in their time. It took the publication of Mark Epstein’s book *Thoughts Without a Thinke*r in 1995, which wonderfully examined the correspondence between Buddhist training and psychotherapeutic technique, to really jump start this field. Following in the footsteps of Jon Kabat-Zinn’s highly effective program in mindfulness-based stress reduction (Kabat-Zinn, 1990), the timing was right for a new chapter in psychotherapy.

As Fromm concluded his section in their book, he thanked Suzuki for making Zen understandable to the Western audience. Suzuki remains one of the best-known teachers of Zen to this day for that same reason. However, Fromm also makes another key point, and it ends his contribution to the book:

…the Westerner, if he takes the trouble, can arrive at an understanding of Zen, as far as it can be arrived at before the goal is reached. How could such understanding be possible, were it not for the fact that “Buddha nature is in all of us,” that man and existence are universal categories, and that the immediate grasp of reality, waking up, and enlightenment, are universal experiences. (pg.141; Suzuki et al., 1960)

In Martin Seligman’s (2002) *Authentic Happiness*, there is a brief section on mindfulness (an ongoing state of meditation, which we will examine in greater detail in Section III, along with flow), in which he discusses the importance of paying attention to what is happening in life. For example, he cites one research project by Ellen Langer in which she asked high school students to think about what Stephen Douglas thought and felt about the Kansas-Nebraska Act (Douglas is the man who defeated Abraham Lincoln in a U.S. Senate race, but then lost to him in the presidential race). The children who thought about Douglas learned more about their assignment than those students who merely read about Douglas and the Kansas-Nebraska Act.

In the *Handbook of Positive Psychology* (Snyder & Lopez, 2005), 55 chapters and 800+ pages packed with information, there is a brief reference to the Buddha’s wisdom leading to his compassion for others (Cassell, 2005), and a brief comparison of meditation to meditative prayer (aka, contemplative prayer; Pargament & Mahoney, 2005). However, there is also an entire chapter on meditation and positive psychology (Shapiro et al., 2005).

Shapiro et al. (2005) offer an excellent review of research on meditation and its positive effects on physiology and psychology. For example, meditation appears to facilitate profound physiological rest, increase cerebral flow and equalization of hemispheric communication, increase hormones associated with positive mood while decreasing hormone levels associated with stress, and improve immune system function in HIV-positive men. On the psychological side, meditation helps with memory and intelligence (including grades in school), improves creativity and self-esteem, increases positive affect while reducing anxiety, hostility, and depression, and it can help to provide a buffer against stress, among other positive effects. Included within these citations is the work of Jon Kabat-Zin (see Kabat-Zin, 1990, 2005).

Both their own earlier work and that of others has shown that meditation increases empathy in medical students and counselors (Shapiro et al., 2005; see also Wallace, 2005). This finding is of particular interest since Carl Rogers came to believe that a therapist’s empathic understanding of the client was the critical condition for being an effective therapist (Rogers, 1980). The Dalai Lama (2001) has said that empathy is an essential first step toward a compassionate heart. It brings us closer to others, and allows us to recognize the depth of their pain. According to Rogers, empathy refers to entering the private world of the client, and moving about within it without making any judgments. It is essential to set aside one’s own views and values, so that the other person’s world may be entered without prejudice. Not just anyone can accomplish this successfully:

In some sense it means that you lay aside your self; this can only be done by persons who are secure enough in themselves that they know they will not get lost in what may turn out to be the strange or bizarre world of the other, and that they can comfortably return to their own world when they wish. (pg. 143; Rogers, 1980)

Despite these positive results, Shapiro and her colleagues (2005) were concerned that the research was being held back by a compulsion to remove all cultural/spiritual elements from meditation in order to make a more pure subject for research and comparison. To work around this, they developed intentional systemic mindfulness (ISM), a model which brings intention back into the equation without the Buddhist overtones. ISM does indeed appear to be effective in reducing depression and anxiety, while enhancing empathy and a spiritual experience.

**\* \* \***

The connections being made between Buddhism and psychology are growing rapidly, so this section could go on for quite some time. However, I’ll endeavor to wrap it up with just a few more topics, several of which involve people I’ve had the pleasure of going on retreat with and/or taking classes from (in a retreat setting).

Andrew Olendzki (2003, 2005) has done a wonderful job of describing Buddhist philosophy in psychological terms, and he provided an article which was instrumental in helping me to understand the nature of mindfulness and teach it in psychology classes (we’ll discuss it below, in the section on mindfulness; Olendzki, 2008). Janet Surrey, one of the founding members of the Jean Baker Miller Training Institute at the Stone Center, Wellesley College (instrumental in the development of a modern psychology of women), has worked to blend that group’s relational-cultural theory with the relational nature of Buddhist practice (Surrey, 2005), and Trudy Goodman has been applying the Zen concept of “beginner’s mind” to psychotherapy with children (Goodman, 2005). I had the pleasure of studying and meditating with each of these amazing individuals at either the Barre Center for Buddhist Studies or the Insight Meditation Society in Massachusetts.

The Buddhist literature is replete with discussions of happiness and joy. Thich Nhat Hanh (2007) discussed the need to nourish happiness. Once again, however, we must recognize that our idea of happiness may interfere with actually being happy. We must give up the fruitless pursuit of pleasure-seeking and instead nourish mindfulness, understanding, and love. Sharon Salzberg (1995), a renowned author and Buddhist teacher, entitled her first book *Loving-Kindness: The Revolutionary Art of Happiness*. She argues that if we could just uproot our personal mythologies of isolation, through spiritual practice, we would not only find the radiant, joyful heart within each of us, but that we would also manifest that radiance to the world. That would lead to a great happiness beyond concepts and conventions.

There is a long tradition in Buddhist teaching about the practice being like a mirror, in which we see a reflection of who we truly are. In one of my favorite Zen stories, there was a poetry contest to determine who would become the sixth patriarch of Chinese Zen. The first poem was submitted by a senior member of the community:

The body is the Bodhi-tree,

The mind is like a clear mirror standing.

Take care to wipe it all the time,

Allow no grain of dust to cling to it.

However, this poem was considered entirely inadequate. The superior poem, and the one which earned Hui Neng the position of patriarch, is as follows:

The Bodhi is not like a tree,

The clear mirror is nowhere standing.

Fundamentally not one thing exists;

Where then is a grain of dust to cling?

This story and these poems can be found in *Mystics & Zen Masters* by Thomas Merton (on pages 18 and 19; 1967).

There is also a long history of the concept of mirroring in psychology, particularly with regard to the development of infants as they see themselves through the eyes of their caretakers (especially their mother) and in relation to how their caretakers love them (Winnicott, 1966/2002; 1968/2002). An important aspect of mirroring is empathy, a state in which the mother and child actually share their feelings as if they were one (Strozier, 2001; see also Jordan, 1991). It appears that there is actually a neurological mechanism underlying this phenomenon, known as the mirror-neuron system (see Rizzolatti & Craighero, 2004).

Rosenbaum (2003) has compared and contrasted the Eastern and Western perspectives on mirroring, from a therapists point of view. For most psychologists, they see themselves as the mirror, reflecting their clients issues and concerns back to the client. From a Buddhist perspective, that mirroring is quite different, it is present, yet it is nothing other than what is (i.e., it is “nowhere standing”).

In a wonderful example of how this process works, Rosenbaum walks through the various stages/aspects of a therapy session, writing first from the Western view, and then from the Buddhist view. Whereas a typical psychologist might focus on strengthening the client’s self, understanding developmental issues, and being supportive and empathic, the Buddhist-oriented therapist neither adds nor takes away self-concepts (non-self), reflects things as they are here and now, and is simply non-judgmental (Rosenbaum, 2003; though I have hardly done it justice).

Finally, I will leave you with an interesting conundrum. Mark Epstein, author of the seminal *Thoughts Without a Thinker* (1995), published another book in 2001 entitled *Going on Being: Buddhism and the Way of Change – A Positive Psychology for the West*. He begins his 2nd book with a quote from D. W. Winnicott (cited above, one of the first to study the process of mirroring): “The alternative to being is reacting, and reacting interrupts being and annihilates” (pg. vii; Epstein, 2001). Actually, the title of the book, going on being, is a term Winnicott used in an article published in 1949. He goes on to share some wonderful stories about his journey into the practice of Buddhism and the practice of psychotherapy.

In 2008, Epstein re-published this book. Not much changed, except for subtle changes in the names of chapters and sections. He also changed the subtitle, removing any reference to positive psychology. There is no explanation for this. Perhaps he, or his editor (he also published with a different publisher), was concerned that the growing field of positive psychology was something different, and they wanted to separate themselves from it. Who knows? Someone must; maybe I’ll have a chance to meet them and find out someday.

# Section II: Human Strengths and Virtues

Positive psychology textbooks typically begin their discussion of human strengths and virtues with fairly recent efforts to categorize and measure such psychological phenomena. There’s nothing wrong with this approach, but one unfortunate consequence is that it perpetuates the misconception that positive psychology is a fairly new field of study. However, the foundations of positive psychology were laid quite early, in particular with Alfred Adler, the man whom both Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow credit with inspiring their pursuit of the field of humanistic psychology. Indeed, Maslow studied with Adler personally, after Adler settled in New York City to escape Nazi Germany prior to World War II.

The work of Adler, Rogers, and Maslow is particularly important because it suggests that fundamentally positive psychological phenomena are the basis for, and the driving force underlying, healthy personality development. In other words, we have within us, from a very early age, both the drive and the ability to become a psychologically healthy individual. Once we’ve taken a look at some key elements of the work of these pioneers, we’ll turn our attention to the more recent perspectives on this topic.

## Adler’s Individual Psychology

Adler developed the concept of Individual Psychology following his observation that psychologists were beginning to ignore what he called the unity of the individual:

A survey of the views and theories of most psychologists indicates a peculiar limitation both in the nature of their field of investigation and in their methods of inquiry. They act as if experience and knowledge of mankind were, with conscious intent, to be excluded from our investigations and all value and importance denied to artistic and creative vision as well as to intuition itself. (pg. 1; Adler, 1914/1963)

To summarize Individual Psychology briefly, children begin life with feelings of inferiority toward their parents, as well as toward the whole world. The child’s life becomes an ongoing effort to overcome this inferiority, and the child is continuously restless. As the child seeks superiority it creatively forms goals, even if the ultimate goal is a fictional representation of achieving superiority. Indeed, Adler believed that it is impossible to think, feel, will, or act without the perception of some goal, and that every psychological phenomenon can only be understood if it is regarded as preparation for some goal. Thus, the person’s entire life becomes centered on a given plan for attaining the final goal (whatever that may be). Such a perspective must be uniquely individual, since each person’s particular childhood feelings of inferiority, creative style of life, and ultimate goals would be unique to their own experiences (Adler, 1914/1963).

### Social Interest and Cooperation

Adler believed that the right way to achieve superiority was through social interest and the cooperation that naturally follows. This is not some high-minded philosophy, however, but simple reality. According to Adler, “we are in the midst of the stream of evolution.” As such, the human species as a whole has sought superiority, just as each individual seeks their own personal superiority (Adler, 1964). The individual’s weakness causes them to seek support from others, by living within a society:

All persons feel inadequate in certain situations. They feel overwhelmed by the difficulties of life and are incapable of meeting them single-handed. Hence one of the strongest tendencies in man has been to form groups in order that he may live as a member of a society and not as an isolated individual. This social life has without doubt been a great help to him in overcoming his feeling of inadequacy and inferiority. We know that this is the case with animals, where the weaker species always live in groups…On the other hand, gorillas, lions, and tigers can live isolated because nature has given them the means of self-protection. A human being has not their great strength, their claws, nor their teeth, and so cannot live apart. Thus we find that the beginning of social life lies in the weakness of the individual. (pp. 60-61; Adler, 1929)

This evolutionary perspective provides an explanation for the paradox that Individual Psychology is focused largely on social relationships! Once again, we know (though perhaps unconsciously) that alone we are weak and inferior, but together we can accomplish great things. Adler’s hopeful vision for the future is that someday humanity’s social feeling will overcome everything that opposes it, and people will live in harmony. In the meantime, however, he acknowledges that many things still oppose it, and work to destroy the social feelings and social interest of children: sexism, racism, poverty, crime, the death penalty, suicide, greed, mistreatment of the poor, the handicapped, and the elderly, and all forms prejudice, discrimination, and intolerance (Adler, 1964). It is not an easy challenge facing humanity, but Adler suggested that the path toward harmony lies, in part, in recognizing the three main ties that every person must take into account. First, we are tied to this one world, the earth. We must learn how to survive here, given whatever advantages and disadvantages that means. Second, we are not the only member of the human race. Through cooperation and association we can find strength for all, and we can ensure the future of humanity. Finally, we must accept that there are two sexes. For Adler, this last tie is resolved primarily through love and marriage. While this may sound like a product of Adler’s cultural upbringing, it also implies caring for and respecting members of the other sex. Otherwise, love is a word used without meaning. Adler proposed that if we give meaning to life through the recognition of these three ties to our environment, then others can share in our meaning of life, and the benefit will then return to us (Adler, 1931).



*Children often cooperate without any need for encouragement,*

*especially when one of them has a skill that another lacks.*

In more practical terms, social interest is evident in cooperation. In order for an individual to overcome their own feelings of inferiority they must know that they are valuable, which comes only from contributing to the common welfare. Adler felt that those who seek personal power are pursuing a false goal, and they will eventually disappear from life altogether. However, by contributing to family and society, either through raising children or contributing to the success of one’s culture or society, one can claim a sense of immortality. Individual psychology is based on the premise that when a person realizes that the common good is essential to the development of humanity, then they will pursue personal development that is in accord with the greater good. They will recognize both the good and the challenges that come their way as belonging to all, and they will cooperate in seeking to solve the challenges. They will not ask for anything in return, since they recognize that whatever they do to benefit others is ultimately to their own benefit as well (Adler, 1933/1964). This perspective is surprisingly close to Eastern philosophies and the concepts of interbeing and karma, though Adler’s religious references are primarily Christian (though born Jewish, Adler later became a Christian).

### The Creative Power of the Individual and Fictional Finalism

The science of Individual Psychology developed out of the effort to understand that mysterious creative power of life - that power which expresses itself in the desire to develop, to strive and to achieve - and even to compensate for defeats in one direction by striving for success in another. (pg. 32; Adler, 1929)

Adler believed that we are all born with a creative force: the creative power of the individual. He did not reject the concepts of heredity, temperament, or disposition, but he emphasized that it not so important what we are born with, but rather what we do with it (Adler, 1932a/1964). As noted above, infants *are* inferior, so everyone begins life with feelings of inferiority. This leads to the striving for superiority, and the development of a style of life, which is aimed toward some goal. The nature of that style of life is unique because it is created by the child, and it is done very early in life. This is not a deterministic perspective, this creation of the style of life is just that, creative, and therefore it must be unique (hence, *Individual* Psychology). Since Adler believed that all thought and behavior was oriented toward some goal, there must be some goal that underlies the manner in which the style of life is created. Since a child cannot see into the future and create a specific goal in life, Adler proposed that we are guided by a fictional goal, the so-called fictional finalism (Adler, 1914/1963, 1928, 1929, 1932a/1964; Lundin, 1989; Manaster & Corsini, 1982).

The fictional final goal involves the sentiment of superiority, or at least the elevation of the personality to an extent that makes life seem worth living (Adler, 1928). Thus, it does not need to be precisely defined, which is important for our consideration that it is created by a young child. And yet it exists within the child’s mind, it provides the framework within which the style of life is creatively formed, and it serves as the child’s goal in life (though it remains primarily unconscious). It is also important to recognize that although this goal is fictional, it is entirely positive, it is a healthy and natural motivational force (Lundin, 1989).

The fictional finalism should definitely not be mistaken for fictive superiority. Fictive superiority is the imagination, or false belief, that one is actually superior. It is a typical neurotic symptom that stems, primarily, from having been pampered. A pampered child is superior, at least in the sense that everything is done for them. However, adult life no longer sustains that delusion, yet the child has never learned how to adapt to life’s challenges, their style of life is set in the expectation of challenges being solved for them. A healthy child, on the other hand, has learned to face challenges, and to strive toward overcoming them. Thus, the healthy child develops a style of life that incorporates the process of facing and overcoming life’s obstacles, and this carries over into a healthy adulthood (Adler, 1932b/1964).

## Humanistic Psychology and Self-Actualization

The humanistic psychologists Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow, both of whom had very positive outlooks on people and the field of psychology, focused their careers on studying how people do just that: fulfill *their* potential, i.e., *self*-actualize. As noted above, they both credited Adler with laying the foundation for their positive outlook, and Maslow had joined a study group which Adler ran in his apartment in New York City in the mid-1930s (following the Nazi takeover of Austria).

Although Rogers discussed self-actualization as the driving force underlying personality development, and he made it the desired outcome of client-centered therapy and person-centered personal growth programs, it was Maslow who studied self-actualization itself in great detail.

### Carl Rogers and the Actualizing Tendency

Carl Rogers grew up on a farm west of Chicago, IL, in a fundamentalist Christian family. Their life was rather austere, and he was not the healthiest of children, so Rogers spent a lot of time studying. He went to college to study scientific agriculture, but soon thereafter attended a World Student Christian Federation conference in Peking, China. Consequently, he decided to devote his life to the church. He did attend Union Theological Seminary for a time, and spent a summer as the pastor at a small church in Vermont. However, two things had altered his perspective on religious dogma.

First, the professor who inspired his renewed religious devotion, Prof. George Humphrey, was a facilitative leader who encourage students to make their own decisions. Second, his travels throughout the Far East resulted more in a fascination with the indigenous culture than with any desire to compel them to become Christian. Add to that the fact that Union Theological Seminary was quite liberal, and Rogers began to seek another path. He transferred to Teachers’ College of Columbia University and began studying psychology. The rest, as they say, is history.

Rogers believed that each of us lives in a constantly changing private world, which he called the experiential field. Everyone exists at the center of their own experiential field, and that field can only be fully understood from the perspective of the individual. This concept has a number of important implications. An individual’s behavior must be understood as a reaction to their experience and perception of the field. They react to it as an organized whole, and it is their reality. One’s perception of the experiential field is limited, however. Rogers believed that certain impulses, or sensations, can only enter into the conscious field of experience under certain circumstances. Thus, the experiential field is not a true reality, but rather an individual’s potential reality (Rogers, 1951).

The one basic tendency and striving of the individual is to actualize, maintain, and enhance the experiencing of the individual or, in other words, an actualizing tendency. Rogers borrowed the term self-actualization, a term first used by Kurt Goldstein, to describe this basic striving.

The tendency of normal life is toward activity and progress. For the sick, the only form of self-actualization that remains is the maintenance of the existent state. That, however, is not the tendency of the normal…Under adequate conditions the normal organism seeks further activity. (pp. 162-163; Goldstein, 1934/1995).

For Rogers, self-actualization was a tendency to move forward, toward greater maturity and independence, or self-responsibility. This development occurs throughout life, both biologically (the differentiation of a fertilized egg into the many organ systems of the body) and psychologically (self-government, self-regulation, socialization, even to the point of choosing life goals). A key factor in understanding self-actualization is the experiential field. A person’s needs are defined, as well as limited, by their own potential for experience. Part of this experiential field is an individual’s emotions, feelings, and attitudes. Therefore, who the individual is, their actual self, is critical in determining the nature and course of their self-actualization (Rogers, 1951).

The details of Rogers’ perspective on personality development are better covered in a personality course, but simply put, if a person receives unconditional positive regard from their parents and other caregivers, facilitating the growth of their real self toward their ideal self, then the individual will experience what Rogers called congruence.

Individuals who have experienced congruence become, according to Rogers (1961), a fully functioning person. He also said they lead a good life. The good life is a process, not a state of being, and a direction, not a destination. It requires psychological freedom, and is the natural consequence of being psychologically free to begin with. Whether or not it develops naturally, thanks to a healthy and supportive environment in the home, or comes about as a result of successful therapy, there are certain characteristics of this process. The fully functioning person is increasingly open to new experiences, they live fully in each moment, and they trust themselves more and more. They become more able and more willing to experience all of their feelings, they are creative, they trust human nature, and they experience the richness of life. The fully functioning person is not simply content, or happy, they are *alive*:

I believe it will become evident why, for me, adjectives such as happy, contented, blissful, enjoyable, do not seem quite appropriate to any general description of this process I have called the good life, even though the person in this process would experience each one of these feelings at appropriate times. But the adjectives which seem more generally fitting are adjectives such as enriching, exciting, rewarding, challenging, meaningful. This process…involves the courage to be…the deeply exciting thing about human beings is that when the individual is inwardly free, he chooses as the good life this process of becoming. (pp. 195-196; Rogers, 1961)

### Abraham Maslow and Self-Actualization

Abraham Maslow grew up in difficult circumstances. They moved often, his father’s business struggled and then went bankrupt, his parent’s marriage was not happy, and his mother was mentally disturbed and extremely cruel. Indeed, his mother once killed two kittens that Maslow had found by crushing their heads against a wall right in front of him! He grew to hate his mother, and everything she stood for (including religion – he became a proud atheist), and even refused to attend her funeral. In addition, there were many anti-Jewish gangs, making the area where they lived dangerous. Nonetheless, Maslow did well in school and in college, and he worked with some renowned scientists, including Harry Harlow and Edward Thorndike, and developed a relationship with Max Wertheimer (Gabor, 2000; Hoffman, 1988; Maddi & Costa, 1972). He was particularly impressed with Wertheimer, one of the founders of Gestalt psychology, and who helped to lay the foundation for positive psychology:

“Are there not tendencies in men and in children to be kind, to deal sincerely [and] justly with the other fellow? Are these nothing but internalized rules on the basis of compulsion and fear?” he asked rhetorically. (pg. 159; Wertheimer, cited in Gabor, 2000)

After Adler had settled in America, Maslow was one of the first to study with him. He was quite impressed with Adler’s work helping academically-challenged children to succeed despite their low IQ scores. He also studied with Ruth Benedict, an anthropologist who encouraged Maslow to gain some field experience. She sponsored a grant application that Maslow received to study the Blackfoot Indians. During the summer of 1938, Maslow examined the dominance and emotional security of the Blackfoot Indians. He was impressed by their culture, and recognized what he believed was an innate need to experience a sense of purpose in life, a sense of meaning. A few years later, shortly after the beginning of World War II, Maslow had an epiphany regarding psychology’s failure to understand the true nature of people. He devoted the rest of his life to the study of a hopeful psychology (Gabor, 2000; Hoffman, 1988; Maddi & Costa, 1972).

Maslow began his studies on self-actualization in order to satisfy his own curiosity about people who seemed to be fulfilling their unique potential as individuals. He did not intend to undertake a formal research project, but he was so impressed by his results that he felt compelled to report his findings. Amongst people he knew personally and public and historical figures, he looked for individuals who appeared to have made full use of their talents, capacities, and potentialities. In other words, “people who have developed or are developing to the full stature of which they are capable” (Maslow, 1970). His list of those who clearly seemed self-actualized included Abraham Lincoln, Thomas Jefferson, Albert Einstein, Eleanor Roosevelt, Jane Addams, William James, Albert Schweitzer, Aldous Huxley, and Baruch Spinoza. His list of individuals who were most-likely self-actualized included Goethe (possibly the great-grandfather of Carl Jung), George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Harriet Tubman (born into slavery, she became a conductor on the Underground Railroad prior to the Civil War), and George Washington Carver (born into slavery at the end of the Civil War, he became an agricultural chemist and prolific inventor). In addition to the positive attributes listed above, Maslow also considered it very important that there be no evidence of psychopathology in those he chose to study. After comparing the seemingly self-actualized individuals to people who did not seem to have fulfilled their lives, Maslow identified fourteen characteristics of self-actualizing people (Maslow, 1950/1973, 1970), as follows:

**More Efficient Perception of Reality and More Comfortable Relations with It**: Self-actualizing people have an ability to recognize fakers, those who present a false persona. More than that, however, Maslow believed they could recognize hidden or confused realities in all aspects of life: science, politics, values and ethics, etc. They are not afraid of the unknown or people who are different, they find such differences to be a pleasant challenge. Although a high IQ may be associated with this characteristic, it is not uncommon to find those who are seemingly intelligent yet unable to be creative in their efforts to discover new phenomena. Thus, the perception of reality is not simply the same as being smart.

**Acceptance (Self, Others, Nature)**: Maslow believed that self-actualizing people accept themselves as they are, including their faults and the differences between their personal reality and their ideal image of themselves. This is not to say that they are without guilt. They are concerned about personal faults that can be improved, any remaining habits or psychological issues that are unhealthy (e.g., prejudice, jealousy, etc.), and the shortcomings of their community and/or culture.

**Spontaneity**: The lives of self-actualizing people are marked by simplicity and a natural ease as they pursue their goals. Their outward behavior is relatively spontaneous, and their inner life (thoughts, drives, etc.) is particularly so. In spite of this spontaneity, they are not always unconventional, because they can easily accept the constraints of society and find their own way to fit in without being untrue to their own sense of self.

**Problem-Centering**: Self-actualizing individuals are highly problem-centered, not ego-centered. The problems they focus on are typically not their own, however. They focus on problems outside themselves, on important causes they would describe as necessary. Solving such problems is taken as their duty or responsibility, rather than as something they want to do for themselves.

**The Quality of Detachment; the Need for Privacy**: Whereas social withdrawal is often seen as psychologically unhealthy, self-actualizing people enjoy their privacy. They can remain calm as they separate themselves from problematic situations, remaining above the fray. In accordance with this healthy form of detachment, they are active, responsible, self-disciplined individuals in charge of their own lives. Maslow believed that they have more free will than the average person.

**Autonomy, Independence of Culture and Environment**: As an extension of the preceding characteristics, self-actualizing individuals are growth-motivated as opposed to being deficiency-motivated. They do not need the presence, companionship, or approval of others. Indeed, they may be hampered by others. The love, honor, esteem, etc., that can be bestowed by others has become less important to someone who is self-actualizing than self-development and inner growth.

**Continued Freshness of Appreciation**: Self-actualizing people are able to appreciate the wonders, as well as the common aspects, of life again and again. Such feelings may not occur all the time, but they can occur in the most unexpected ways and at unexpected times. Maslow offered a surprising evaluation of the importance of this characteristic of self-actualization:

I have also become convinced that getting used to our blessings is one of the most important nonevil generators of human evil, tragedy, and suffering. What we take for granted we undervalue, and we are therefore too apt to sell a valuable birthright for a mess of pottage, leaving behind regret, remorse, and a lowering of self-esteem. Wives, husbands, children, friends are unfortunately more apt to be loved and appreciated after they have died than while they are still available. Something similar is true for physical health, for political freedoms, for economic well-being; we learn their true value after we have lost them. (pp. 163-164; Maslow, 1970)

**The “Mystic Experience” or “Oceanic Feeling;” Peak Experiences**: The difference between a mystic experience (also known as an oceanic feeling) and a peak experience is a matter of definition. Mystic experiences are viewed as gifts from God, something reserved for special or deserving (i.e., faithful) servants. Maslow, however, believed that this was a natural occurrence that could happen for anyone, and to some extent probably did. He assigned the psychological term of peak experiences. Such experiences tend to be sudden feelings of limitless horizons opening up to one’s vision, simultaneous feelings of great power and great vulnerability, feelings of ecstasy, wonder and awe, a loss of the sense of time and place, and the feeling that something extraordinary and transformative has happened. Self-actualizers who do not typically experience these peaks, the so-called “non-peakers,” are more likely to become direct agents of social change, the reformers, politicians, crusaders, and so on. The more transcendent “peakers,” in contrast, become the poets, musicians, philosophers, and theologians.

Maslow devoted a great deal of attention to peak experiences, including their relationship to religion. At the core of religion, according to Maslow, is the private illumination or revelation of spiritual leaders. Such experiences seem to be very similar to peak experiences, and Maslow suggests that throughout history these peak experiences may have been mistaken for revelations from God. In his own studies, Maslow found that people who were spiritual, but not religious (i.e., not hindered by the doctrine of a specific faith or church), actually had more peak experiences than other people. Part of the explanation for this, according to Maslow, is that such people need to be more serious about their ethics, values, and philosophy of life, since their guidance and motivation must come from within. Individuals who seek such an appreciation of life may help themselves to experience an extended form of peak experience that Maslow called the plateau experience. Plateau experiences always have both noetic and cognitive elements, whereas peak experiences can be entirely emotional (Maslow, 1964). Put another way, plateau experiences involve serene and contemplative Being-cognition, as opposed to the more climactic peak experiences (Maslow, 1971).

**Gemeinschaftsgefuhl**: A word invented by Alfred Adler, gemeinschatfsgefuhl refers to the profound feelings of identification, sympathy, and affection for other people that are common in self-actualizing individuals. Although self-actualizers may often feel apart from others, like a stranger in a strange land, becoming upset by the shortcomings of the average person, they nonetheless feel a sense of kinship with others. These feelings lead to a sincere desire to help the human race.

**Interpersonal Relations**: Maslow believed that self-actualizers have deeper and more profound personal relationships than other people. They tend to be kind to everyone, and are especially fond of children. Maslow described this characteristic as “compassion for all mankind,” a perspective that would fit well with Buddhist and Christian philosophies.

**The Democratic Character Structure**: Self-actualizing people are typically friendly with anyone, regardless of class, race, political beliefs, or education. They can learn from anyone who has something to teach them. They respect all people, simply because they are people. They are not, however, undiscriminating:

The careful distinction must be made between this democratic feeling and a lack of discrimination in taste, of an undiscriminating equalizing of any one human being with any other. These individuals, themselves elite, select for their friends elite, but this is an elite of character, capacity, and talent, rather than of birth, race, blood, name, family, age, youth, fame, or power. (pg. 168; Maslow, 1970)

**Discrimination Between Means and Ends, Between Good and Evil**: Self-actualizers know the difference between right and wrong. They are ethical, have high moral standards, and they do good things while avoiding doing bad things. They do not experience the average person’s confusion or inconsistency in making ethical choices. They tend to focus on ends, rather than means, although they sometimes become absorbed in the means themselves, viewing the process itself as a series of ends.

**Philosophical, Unhostile Sense of Humor**: The sense of humor shared by self-actualizers is not typical. They do not laugh at hostile, superior, or rebellious humor. They do not tell jokes that make fun of other people. Instead, they poke fun at people in general for being foolish, or trying to claim a place in the universe that is beyond us. Such humor often takes the form of poking fun at oneself, but not in a clown-like way. Although such humor can be found in nearly every aspect of life, to non-self-actualizing people the self-actualizers seem to be somewhat sober and serious.

**Creativeness**: According to Maslow, self-actualizing people are universally creative. This is not the creativity associated with genius, such as that of Mozart or Thomas Edison, but rather the fresh and naive creativity of an unspoiled child. Maslow believed that this creativity was a natural potential given to all humans at their birth, but that the constraints on behavior inherent in most cultures lead to its suppression.

As desirable as self-actualization may seem, self-actualizing individuals still face problems in their lives. According to Maslow, they are typically not well adjusted. This is because they resist being enculturated. They do not stand out in grossly abnormal ways, but there is a certain inner detachment from the culture in which they live. They are not viewed as rebels in the adolescent sense, though they may be rebels while growing up, but rather they work steadily toward social change and/or the accomplishment of their goals. As a result of their immersion in some personal goal, they may lose interest in or patience with common people and common social practices. Thus, they may seem detached, insulting, absent-minded, or humorless. They can seem boring, stubborn, or irritating, particularly because they are often superficially vain and proud only of their own accomplishments and their own family, friends, and work. According to Maslow, outbursts of temper are not rare. Maslow argued that there are, in fact, people who become saints, movers and shakers, creators, and sages. However, these same people can be irritating, selfish, angry, or depressed. No one is perfect, not even those who are self-actualizing (Maslow, 1950/1973, 1970).

Maslow had something else interesting to say about self-actualization in *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature*: "What does self-actualization mean in moment-to-moment terms? What does it mean on Tuesday at four o'clock?" (pg. 41). Consequently, he offered a preliminary suggestion for an operational definition of the process by which self-actualization occurs. In other words, what are the behaviors exhibited by people on the path toward fulfilling or achieving the fourteen characteristics of self-actualized people described above? Sadly, this could only remain a preliminary description, i.e., they are "ideas that are in midstream rather than ready for formulation into a final version," because this book was published after Maslow's death (having been put together before his sudden and unexpected heart attack).

What does one do when he self-actualizes? Does he grit his teeth and squeeze? What does self-actualization mean in terms of actual behavior, actual procedure? I shall describe eight ways in which one self-actualizes. (pg. 45; Maslow, 1971)

* They experience full, vivid, and selfless *concentration* and total absorption.
* Within the ongoing process of self-actualization, they make *growth choices* (rather than fear choices; progressive choices rather than regressive choices).
* They are aware that there is a *self* to be actualized.
* When in doubt, they choose to be *honest* rather than dishonest.
* They trust their own *judgment,* even if it means being different or unpopular (being courageous is another version of this behavior).
* They put in the effort necessary to improve themselves, working regularly toward *self-development* no matter how arduous or demanding.
* They embrace the occurrence of *peak experiences*, doing what they can to facilitate and enjoy more of them (as opposed to denying these experiences as many people do).
* They identify and *set aside their ego defenses* (they have "the courage to give them up"). Although this requires that they face up to painful experiences, it is more beneficial than the consequences of defenses such as repression.

### Being and Transcendence

Maslow had great hope and optimism for the human race. Although self-actualization might seem to be the pinnacle of personal human achievement, he viewed Humanistic Psychology, or Third Force Psychology, as just another step in our progression:

I should say also that I consider Humanistic, Third Force Psychology to be transitional, a preparation for a still “higher” Fourth Psychology, transpersonal, transhuman, centered in the cosmos rather than in human needs and interest, going beyond humanness, identity, self-actualization, and the like…These new developments may very well offer a tangible, usable, effective satisfaction of the “frustrated idealism” of many quietly desperate people, especially young people. These psychologies give promise of developing into the life-philosophy, the religion-surrogate, the value-system, the life-program that these people have been missing. Without the transcendent and the transpersonal, we get sick, violent, and nihilistic, or else hopeless and apathetic. We need something “bigger than we are” to be awed by and to commit ourselves to in a new, naturalistic, empirical, non-churchly sense, perhaps as Thoreau and Whitman, William James and John Dewey did. (pp. xl; Maslow, 1964/1999)

Although Maslow wrote about this need for a Fourth Force Psychology in 1964/1999, it was not until the year 1998 that APA President Martin Seligman issued his call for the pursuit of positive psychology as an active force in the field of psychology. Maslow believed that all self-actualizing people were involved in some calling or vocation, a cause outside of themselves, something that fate has called them to and that they love doing. In so doing, they devote themselves to the search for Being-values (or B-values; Maslow, 1964, 1967/2008, 1964/1999). The desire to attain self-actualization results in the B-values acting like needs. Since they are higher than the basic needs, Maslow called them metaneeds. When individuals are unable to attain these goals, the result can be metapathology, a sickness of the soul. Whereas counselors may be able to help the average person with their average problems, metapathologies may require the help of a metacounselor, a counselor trained in philosophical and spiritual matters that go far beyond the more instinctoid training of the traditional psychoanalyst (Maslow, 1967/2008). The B-values identified by Maslow (1964) are an interesting blend of the characteristics of self-actualizing individuals and the human needs described by Henry Murray: truth, goodness, beauty, wholeness, dichotomu-transcendence, aliveness, uniqueness, perfection, necessity, completion, justice, order, simplicity, richness, effortlessness, playfulness, self-sufficiency (Murray, 1938).

Transcendence is typically associated with people who are religious, spiritual, or artistic, but Maslow said that he found transcendent individuals amongst creative people in a wide variety of vocations (including business, managers, educators, and politicians), though there are not many of them in any field. Transcendence, according to Maslow, is the very highest and most holistic level of human consciousness, which involves relating to oneself, to all others, to all species, to nature, and to the cosmos as an end rather than as a means (Maslow, 1971). It is essential that individuals not be reduced to the role they play in relation to others, transcendence can only be found within oneself (Maslow, 1964, 1964/1999). Maslow’s idea is certainly not new. Ancient teachings in Yoga tell us that there is a single universal spirit that connects us all, and Buddhists describe this connection as interbeing. The Abrahamic religions teach us that the entire universe was created by, and therefore is connected through, one god. It was Maslow’s hope that a transcendent Fourth Force in psychology would help all people to become self-actualizing. In Buddhist terms, Maslow was advocating the intentional creation of psychological Bodhisattvas. Perhaps this is what Maslow meant by the term metacounselor.

## Recent Efforts to Categorize and Measure Strengths and Virtues

One of the principles that sets the field of positive psychology apart from the humanistic approaches with which I began this section (e.g., self-actualization) is that positive psychologists are committed to empirical research (see Peterson & Seligman, 2004). We will now look at two approaches in which psychologists have attempted to categorize human strengths.

These two approaches differ in their emphasis, but share the same goal. Indeed, the individual behind the first approach, Donald Clifton, was on the board of advisers for the program that resulted in the second approach. Clifton is known as the father of strengths-based psychology (Rath, 2007), the forerunner of modern, empirically-based positive psychology.

### StrengthsFinder

The StrengthsFinder program was developed from the work of Donald O. Clifton, a Gallup researcher who realized that we had plenty of ways to describe what was wrong with people but insufficient ways to describe what was right with people (Rath, 2007). The original Clifton StrengthsFinder identified 34 themes that were described as distinct talents. It must have been quite an undertaking, since the data included over 100,000 talent-based interviews with a wide range of successful professionals.

The idea, however, was relatively simple. Working with a simple formula, Talent x Investment = Strength, we easily see that you can maximize your strengths by focusing your investment (time and energy) in those areas where you have more natural talent. In other words, if you invest a lot of time and energy in something you either aren’t good at or just don’t like, your strength in that area will be limited. Conversely, if you invest little time and energy in something you are good at, you will waste your talent. But if you invest your time and energy in areas where you are already talented, then you have the potential to excel (Rath, 2007).

Some years ago, our department coordinator here at Lansing Community College received a small grant for those of us in leadership positions (or wanting to be in leadership positions) in our department to take the StrengthsFinder 2.0 test. Her proposal included the suggestion that if we discovered the different strengths of the people in the department we could maximize performance by assigning people to the tasks they were best suited for. It was a wonderful idea, but it didn’t quite work out. The problem, however, was not the StrengthsFinder 2.0. My results fit me very accurately.

My top five strengths according to StrengthsFinder 2.0 were, in order: Learner, Input, Activator, Command, and Intellection. Numbers 1, 3, and 5 should not be at all surprising for a college professor who used to conduct biomedical research and now spends a lot of time writing – I love to learn, to collect new information and interesting objects (including old books), and I like to think (and debate). However, I was astonished to find out that few of my colleagues shared those traits!

Strengths 4 and 5 really emphasized the conflict I often find myself in when trying to work with many of my colleagues. I like to take charge (command) and get things done (activator). These strengths served me well when I served in the U.S. Marine Corps. Colleges, however, like committees and meetings and consensus and blah, blah, blah… (LOL! I never expected to get sarcastic in an academic text, but there you have it). Even when I’m interested in gathering data and thinking about innovative ways to implement a new plan (which fits with my other strengths), I’m only willing to do so when there is a clear expectation of moving forward, and doing so soon.

The Clifton StrengthsFinder was developed with an eye toward the business environment, which is more like the military in many ways (often a clear command structure, with the “boss” in charge). So although the department coordinator and I agreed that my profound differences in strength-based traits was a problem for working with my colleagues, she and I were good friends. And she, along with the department chair at the time, knew that when something needed to get done in a hurry, I was the one they could turn to.

It also worked out with my colleagues in certain ways. Whenever program review rolled around, and a lot of data needed to be crunched, they basically turned it over to me. They don’t like that kind of work anyway, and they were more than happy to let me do my thing, and then turn over my recommendations to them. And I began practicing mindfulness. So I would turn over my recommendations, and then let go of any expectations that what I wanted done would ever get done.

Over time, curiously enough, some of my colleagues began to see things my way. So, in a sense, taking the StrengthsFinder 2.0 did appear to help our program (the psychology program) to work together toward our common goals: of providing a quality education for the students majoring in psychology, and providing interesting psychology classes for those taking them as electives.

For anyone interested in reading the list of the 34 themes identified by the StrengthsFinder Program, here it is:

achiever, activator, adaptability, analytical, arranger, belief, command, communication, competition, connectedness, consistency, context, deliberative, developer, discipline, empathy, focus, futuristic, harmony, ideation, include, individualization, input, intellection, learner, maximizer, positivity, relator, responsibility, restorative, self-assurance, significance, strategic, and woo (pg. 35; Rath, 2007)

### Values in Action

The Values in Action Institute (VIA) was founded by the Mayerson Foundation in order to facilitate an understanding of the good side of human behavior and character. Martin Seligman was appointed as the scientific director, and he asked Christopher Peterson to be its project director. The primary result of their initial work was the extraordinary book *Character Strengths and Virtues: A Handbook and Classification* (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

Whereas the Clifton StrengthsFinder was based on interviews with professionals, thus making its applicability more appropriate for business and other professional settings, the VIA classification system was more akin to an academic version of a thought experiment. Initially a core group of scholars (Donald Clifton, Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi, Ed Diener, Kathleen Hall Jamieson, Robert Nozick, Daniel Robinson, Martin Seligman, and George Vaillant) created a tentative list. That list was elaborated by Christopher Peterson, presented at numerous conferences for discussion and refinement, and then compared to the results of work by the Gallup organization (the source of the Clifton StrengthsFinder) as well as by other sources addressing good character (i.e., youth development, philosophy, psychology, and psychiatry).

Another method used to validate the list was to compare it to historical inventories of strengths and virtues, including such wide ranging sources as Charlemagne (who happens to be my great38-grandfather), Benjamin Franklin, the Boy Scouts of America, Hallmark greeting cards, the Klingon Empire, and the school for wizards known as Hogwarts (seriously; see Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

It was determined that a virtue was a core characteristic valued by moral philosophers and religious thinkers, and that they were universal, likely grounded in biology as the result of evolutionary processes. Character strengths are the psychological aspects of the virtues. Although each strength is unique, several different strengths represent varying aspects of each of the core virtues.

When it came to defining the strengths themselves, the initial determination consisted of 10 criteria, which was later reduced to just seven (Peterson, 2006b). A strength needs to be manifest in the range of an individual’s behavior, it contributes to the fulfillments that comprise a good life, it is morally valued in its own right, its display does not diminish other people, its cultivation will be supported by institutions and rituals in the greater society, its existence is consensually recognized by paragons of virtue, and it is arguably unidimensional (i.e., it cannot be broken down into other strengths).

The six core virtues, and their corresponding strengths are as follows (Peterson & Seligman, 2004):

**Wisdom and Knowledge**

Creativity (Originality, Ingenuity)

Curiosity (Interest, Novelty-Seeking,

Openness to Experience)

Open-Mindedness (Judgment, Critical Thinking)

Love of Learning

Perspective (Wisdom)

**Courage**

Bravery (Valor)

Persistence (Perseverance, Industriousness)

Integrity (Authenticity, Honesty)

Vitality (Zest, Enthusiasm, Vigor, Energy)

**Humanity**

Love

Kindness (Generosity, Nurturance, Care, Compassion,

Altruistic Love, “Niceness”)

Social Intelligence (Emotional Intelligence,

Personal Intelligence)

**Justice**

Citizenship (Social Responsibility, Loyalty, Teamwork)

Fairness

Leadership

**Temperance**

Forgiveness and Mercy

Humility and Modesty

Prudence

Self-Regulation (Self-Control)

**Transcendence**

Appreciating Beauty/Excellence (Awe, Wonder, Elevation)

Gratitude

Hope (Optimism, Future-Mindedness, Future Orientations)

Humor (Playfulness)

Spirituality (Religiousness, Faith, Purpose)

When looking at my own results from the VIA Survey of Character Strengths (which can be taken online by going to www.positivepsychology.org and then going to the Authentic Happiness website), there are some clear similarities to my results on the StrengthsFinder 2.0, as well as some differences. My top five VIA strengths are: wisdom, spirituality (sense of purpose and faith), love of learning, open-mindedness (judgment and critical thinking), and curiosity (interest in the world). Just like my results on the StrengthsFinder 2.0 the majority of my top five strengths are related to the acquisition and contemplation of knowledge. No surprise there.

However, whereas my other two top strengths on the StrengthsFinder 2.0 were related to taking charge and getting things done, my other top five strength according to the VIA Survey was spirituality. The StrengthsFinder test does not include anything like spirituality, so I can’t say where I might have scored on that dimension on that test.

On the VIA Survey there are items somewhat related to *command* and *activator*. The closest is probably persistence (including perseverance and industriousness). That comes in as my 11th ranked strength. It is interesting to note that persistence is a strength under the virtue of courage. Two other strengths under the virtue of courage are integrity and bravery, which happen to be my 5th and 6th strengths, respectively. So the evaluations of my personal strengths are clearly compatible, confirming for me the validity of these two different approaches to measuring strengths (i.e., convergent validity).

Since an important goal of the development of this list was to identify universal virtues, their cross-cultural validation was critical. As expected, Peterson & Seligman (2004) present evidence confirming the validity of these virtues in such disparate cultural traditions as Confucianism and Taoism (China), Hinduism and Buddhism (India, China, Japan, Korea, southeast Asia, Indonesia, and others), Athenian virtues (ancient Greece; e.g., Aristotle and Plato), Judeo-Christian virtues, and Islamic virtues.

Peterson (2006b) has gone on to propose that these virtues and strengths could form the basis for a new categorization of human behavior that might replace the DSM system and its emphasis on psychological abnormality (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). He suggests that since all psychological traits exists on a continuum from its opposite to its exaggeration, the same can be said for each human strength. To wit:

opposite → absence → **strength** → exaggeration

If we then consider each virtue as a category of human behavior, we can consider disorders of behavior accordingly. For example, a disorder of humanity might be represented as this continuum:

cruelty → indifference → **kindness** → intrusiveness

Similarly, a disorder of wisdom and knowledge might be:

triteness → conformity → **creativity** → eccentricity

This fascinating new way of looking at human behavior provides us with the potential for a whole new approach to evaluating psychological adjustment and, therefore, adjustment disorders. What is most significant is that it views each person’s psychological makeup, their personality to a large extent, within a context that includes the positive perspectives.

Such an approach is very different than the traditional evaluation as to whether you are mentally ill or not. Including on the continuum a description of those areas in which you are psychologically healthy, or what might be the best path to get there, is the beginning of fulfilling the goals of positive psychology.

### Measuring Strengths and Virtues in Children

Before the VIA categorization of strengths was available, there were robust programs studying positive youth development. In particular, Peter Benson at the Search Institute and his colleagues have identified 40 development assets that are related to the psychological health and well-being of children (Benson, 2007; Benson et al., 1998; Leffert et al., 1998). These assets are broken down first into external vs. internal assets, and then grouped into similar categories. The list is as follows (Benson, 2007; Benson et al., 1998; Leffert et al., 1998):

**External Assets**

Support

1. Family support

2. Positive family communication

3. Other adult relationships

4. Caring neighborhood

5. Caring school climate

6. Parent involvement in schooling

Empowerment

7. Community values youth

8. Youth as resources

9. Service to others

10. Safety

Boundaries and expectations

11. Family boundaries

12. School boundaries

13. Neighborhood boundaries

14. Adult role models

15. Positive peer influence

16. High expectations

Constructive use of time

17. Creative activities

18. Youth programs

19. Religious community

20. Time at home

**Internal Assets**

Commitment to learning

21. Achievement motivation

22. School engagement

23. Homework

24. Bonding to school

25. Reading for pleasure

Positive values

26. Caring

27. Equality and social justice

28. Integrity

29. Honesty

30. Responsibility

31. Restraint

Social competencies

32. Planning and decision making

33. Interpersonal competence

34. Cultural competence

35. Resistance skills

36. Peaceful conflict resolution

Positive identity

37. Personal power

38. Self-esteem

39. Sense of purpose

40. Positive view of personal future

When children have an abundance of these assets, they are significantly more likely to thrive. In other words, they will: be successful in school, help others, be generally healthy and avoid danger, value diversity, be able to delay gratification, and overcome adversity. Children who lack these positive developmental assets are more likely to be involved with drugs and violence, and they are at greater risk for psychological disorders (e.g., antisocial behavior or depression/suicide) and having problems at school (Benson, 2007).

Just to cite a few examples of how Benson and his colleagues have demonstrated the important of these developmental assets, they studied some 148,000 public school students in grades 6-12, and categorized them as having 0-10, 11-20, 21-30, or 31-40 of the assets (see Benson, 2007). Comparing the lowest (0-10 assets) to the highest group (31-40 assets), the lowest group of students were more likely to drink alcohol (45% - 3%), use other illicit drugs (38% - 1%), be depressed/suicidal (44% - 5%), be engaged in violence (62% - 6%), or have problems in general in school (skipping school and/or poor grades; 44% - 4%). Conversely, the highest group was more likely to be successful in school (grades of A- or better; 54% - 9%), to help others (96% - 62%), to maintain good health (88% - 27%), and to exhibit leadership (87% - 48%).

In comparing the 24 character strengths from the VIA Survey to the internal developmental assets identified by Benson and colleagues, Peterson & Seligman (2004) suggested a “very rough correspondence” between them. Be that as it may, programs that help to foster either assets or strengths in children are likely to be beneficial. As noted in the preceding paragraph, having an abundance of assets is good. We’ll examine programs to help foster such assets later, but for the moment consider work reviewed by Peterson & Seligman (2004) that suggests how those programs should be implemented:

* more is better – programs should be intensive and long-term
* earlier is better – it is best to start early in childhood
* broad is better – effective programs target multiple systems (e.g., home *and* school)
* sophisticated is better – consider the person dynamically in their environment

For working with children, the VIA Survey was modified to produce the VIA Inventory of Strengths for Youth (see Park & Peterson, 2005, 2008, 2009). Numerous studies have examined the relationships between character strengths in children vs. adults and as predictors of childhood well-being (for review see Park & Peterson, 2008, 2009).

Similar to adults, most youth have developed a set of character strengths, with gratitude, humor, and love usually at the top of the list. Youth are more likely than adults to demonstrate the strengths of hope, teamwork, and zest. Strengths that are more common in adults, likely due to a need for maturation, include appreciation of beauty, honesty, leadership, forgiveness, and open-mindedness.

For all ages, life satisfaction is predicted by love, hope, and zest. For children in particular, the most robust predictors are the three just listed along with the addition of gratitude. Among young children, those described by their parents as having these strengths are also viewed as being happy.

In school, popular students tended to score highly on strengths such as leadership, fairness, self-regulation, prudence, and forgiveness. As for grades in school, after controlling for IQ, the strengths of perseverance, fairness, gratitude, honesty, hope, and perspective predicted end-of-year grade point average.

Since the latter point demonstrates that nonintellectual factors are important for academic success, Park & Peterson (2008, 2009) suggest that schools should focus more attention on measuring character strengths and implementing programs to promote their development. Indeed, of particular importance for school counselors, in addition to these important academic considerations the strengths of hope, zest, and leadership are significantly related to fewer internalizing problems (e.g., depression or anxiety), and the strengths of persistence, honesty, prudence, and love were related to fewer externalizing problems (e.g., aggression). Thus, counselors could utilize both measurement of strengths and application of programs to enhance their presence to improve the well-being of children in school and, hopefully, overall.

Above, I discussed how some colleagues in my department attempted to use the StrengthsFinder 2.0 to pursue ways in which we might improve and maximize the efficiency of our working relationshps. McGovern & Miller (2008) have suggested a promising way to use the VIA Survey of Character Strengths in an integrative strategy for faculty development. They offer three modules centered on examining individual differences, refining the teachers’ behaviors, and examining the character strengths and virtues in detail. Their hope is that procedures such as these will lead to greater reflection on one’s role as a teacher and, subsequently insightful learning and behavior change for the better.

## Strengths and Virtues in Conflict

I suppose this is something I could, or perhaps should, have discussed in the journal, but I wanted to put it here along with the discussion of the strengths and virtues themselves.

We tend to think of strengths/virtues as something we have or don’t have, or we have to some extent or to a great extent. But they don’t exist in isolation. Consequently, they can come into conflict. On August 26th I attempted to hike to the summit of Wheeler Peak in Nevada. This was a very meaningful hike for me, since my oldest son is named after Wheeler Peak in New Mexico. Yes, they are both named after George Montague Wheeler, a U.S. Army captain who explored much of the west. I’ve been to the summit of Wheeler Peak, and my experiences there led to naming my son after the mountain in NM (his middle name is Wheeler). I also have Wheeler Peak, NM tattooed on my right shoulder.

I had been to Wheeler Peak, NV once before, with my son, who is somewhat afraid of heights. So, we didn’t attempt going to the summit. Now, I had my chance to head up there and tag the summit. Unfortunately, the wind was brutal. I went well above tree line, to the last spot before the final summit ridge, and assessed the conditions. Since rising above the tree line, the wind had picked up from what I figured was a steady 30 mph to something more like 40 mph with gusts over 50 mph. I expected the winds on the summit to be significantly higher.

So what two strengths came into conflict? Courage vs. wisdom! Courage happens to be my #6 strength, and it suggests a simple solution to the issue: just climb the ridge to the summit. It’s that simple, nothing more to think about it. What are you waiting for? Go!

However, my #1 strength is wisdom. I’ve been in the mountains in high winds before. Once, on Mt. Washington in NH, on a day that was quite similar (though it was in the winter), and a gust of wind lifted me cleanly off the ground, flipped me over, and then dropped me onto the ground in a heap. Here, on Wheeler Peak, I already had to lean into the wind to be able to walk forward. Each time I lifted one of my feet or one of my hiking sticks the wind would blow it to the side. That’s right, the wind would blow my feet to the side as I tried to take steps. And I figured the wind would be stronger on the ridge and summit above me.

I have two artificial hips, and one of the consequences of that is that I move my feet slowly. My hips just don’t respond like they used to, so my footwork is clumsy. Not the sort of thing you want to experience while climbing a mountain ridge in howling winds.

So there I was, realizing that to continue up the summit ridge was simply dangerous, but feeling like a coward for not simply going up regardless. After giving the matter some serious thought, I came to two conclusions: that I would be so nervous going up the ridge that I wouldn’t have any fun, and that the only value/reward of making it to the summit was whatever I created for myself in my own mind.

So wisdom won the day. I decided it was too dangerous for no real reward, so I headed back down. Up to that point it had been a spectacular hike, and that’s how I’m able to remember it now. Because I made the safe choice, and because my hips had held up much better than expected on the hike I had accomplished. After all, a few years ago I would not have been able to even get up to where I was and have that difficult decision in the first place. So it was a good day.

## A Closer Look at Wisdom and Courage (and Generosity)

I had intended to cover just two of my favorite topics here in greater detail. However, while taking a class at the Barre Center for Buddhist Studies, I met Barbara Bonner, who has written a book which includes a variety of inspirational quotes regarding courage. Unfortunately, that book isn’t yet available (it will be soon, and I’ll likely add it later on). Then I earned that she has also published a book entitled *Inspiring Generosity* (Bonner, 2014). So, it seemed appropriate to add the section on generosity.

### Wisdom

There are two reasons I find the topic of wisdom particularly interesting. First, on the VIA Survey of Character Strengths, wisdom is my top strength. Second, one of the well-known researchers on the topic of wisdom is Gisela Labouvie-Vief (e.g., Labouvie-Vief, 1990). She was a professor at Wayne State University when I was in graduate school there, and she served as a member of my oral qualifying exam committee. Unfortunately for this discussion, in graduate school my major was physiological psychology and my minor was clinical neuropsychology, so she was the “outside” member of the committee. Thus, I had no particular interest in wisdom back then, and never had a chance to talk to her about it.

Wisdom is greatly admired and valued, yet it remains difficult to define. Peterson & Seligman (2004) created a bit of a challenge for themselves when they identified “Wisdom and Knowledge” as the first of their six core virtues. Among the five strengths that represent different aspects if this virtue, one of them is what most of us think of as wisdom (the others being creativity, curiosity, open-mindedness, and love of learning). So they used the term perspective as an alternative to wisdom. Keeping this in mind, for simplicity I will only use the term wisdom.

Wisdom is a complex combination of experience and knowledge that is used for the good of oneself and others. Consequently, we see rather complicated definitions, such as:

The present authors view wisdom as an emergent property of an individual’s inward and external response to life experiences. A wise person has learned to balance the opposing valences of the three aspects of behavior: cognition, affect, and volition. A wise person weighs the knowns and unknowns, resists overwhelming emotion while maintaining interest, and carefully chooses when and where to take action. (pp. 331-332; Birren & Fisher, 1990)

Hence we define this core virtue as knowledge hard fought for, and then used for good. Wisdom is a form of noble intelligence – in the presence of which no one is resentful and everyone appreciative. The strengths that wisdom encompasses are those entailing the acquisition and use of knowledge into human affairs, such as creativity, curiosity, judgment, and perspective. (pp. 39-40; Peterson & Seligman, 2004)

Wisdom is defined as the application of successful intelligence and creativity as mediated by values toward the achievement of a common good through a balance among (a) intrapersonal, (b) interpersonal, and (c) extrapersonal interests, over (a) short and (b) long terms, in order to achieve a balance among (a) adaptation to existing environments, (b) shaping of existing environments, and (c) selection of new environments… (pg. 152; Sternberg, 2003)

Given his extensive research on aging, it is only natural that Vaillant (2002) has also examined wisdom. From his perspective, one needs to be at least 30 years old in order to develop wisdom. However, beyond the age of 50 it does not *necessarily* grow any deeper. Vaillant notes that among those who appear to have reached the pinnacle of wisdom are Thomas Jefferson, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., Muhammed, Abraham Lincoln, Leo Tolstoy, and William Shakespeare. Later in life, around the ages of 65-75, although some studies show a deepening of wisdom, others show a loss of function.

For those who do demonstrate wisdom as one of their personal strengths, Vaillant (2002) considered five key factors: maturity, common sense & sound moral discernment, appreciation of context, intelligence, and emotional intelligence. When it comes to a specific definition, however, he offers something a bit simpler than the others:

Two of the very best definitions of wisdom that I have encountered came from young relatives. My wise young niece, Marian Wrobel, provided one definition: “Wisdom consists of many rich experiences that have been reflected upon until they can be empathically communicated to others.” My wise young son-in-law, Michael Buehler, noted that what all definitions of wisdom “have in common is the capacity and the willingness to step back from the immediacy of the moment – whether it is an affect, a judgment, or a conflict – in order to attain perspective.” (pg. 251; Vaillant, 2002)

Labouvie-Vief (1990) has suggested that the reason why age is important for wisdom is not merely due to the accumulation of knowledge and experience, but rather it’s part of a developmental process that turns back upon the cognitive processes described by Jean Piaget. Whereas the early stages of cognitive development proceed toward rationality, what Labouvie-Vief refers to as logos, in adulthood we need to achieve a balance between logos and mythos, which is more holistic and based on close identification between the self and the object of thought (which is more similar to an early childhood self-centered perspective of the world).

However, Labouvie-Vief cautions that the movement toward balance between rational and holistic ways of thinking is not wisdom *per se*. It does, however, provide an essential cognitive base. The adult then proceeds through three stages. In the intrasystemic phase the person is able to coordinate the elements that comprise one abstract system (abstract thought was the highest level according to Piaget, which begins as a person enters biological adulthood – following adolescence). Then comes the intersystemic level, during which multiple systems are acknowledged. Finally, at the integrated level, “historical change and contextual diversity are valued, resulting in an open flexibility tempered by responsibility and self-reflection. Self-chosen principles result in the potential for mature action and self-regulation.” (pg. 69; Labouvie-Vief, 1990).

Although Labouvie-Vief considered this cognitive process to be natural, she acknowledges that most people do not become wise. Thus, in agreement with Vaillant (2002), the development of wisdom is not directly associated with growing older. Nonetheless, for some people, wisdom will always be associated with aging. For example, in most African cultures the tribal elders are respected for the wisdom they have accumulated over a lifetime, and the “living” dead are kept alive by the tribe’s oral historian (Jahn, 1972; Parham et al., 1999; Sofola, 1973; Tembo, 1980). Erik Erikson described wisdom as “a detached and yet active concern with life in the face of death” (Erikson, 1968).

According to Erikson (1968), wisdom allows one to maintain and convey the integrity of one’s lifetime of experience, despite the gradual physical decline of the body. Wise people are able to pass on an integrated heritage to the next generation. When Carl Rogers was 75, he wrote an essay entitled *Growing Old: Or Older and Growing?* (Rogers, 1980). From the age of 65 to 75 years old he had been very productive, publishing numerous books and articles. He also led many workshops and encounter groups, including some that required him to travel around the world. Professionally he began to take many risks, experimenting with his theories and workshops in ways he might never have considered earlier in his career. Ten years later, as he turned 85 years old, Rogers wrote another essay, *On Reaching 85* (Rogers, 1989). Once again, he had been very productive during the 10 years between being 75 and 85 years old, most notably leading a number of peace conferences that led to his nomination for a Nobel Peace Prize. He felt deeply privileged to have lived long enough to see the great international influence of his work. There can be little doubt that when his life ended, which was actually before this essay was published (he wrote the essay, turned 85, and died 1 month later), he had experienced integrity and wisdom:

I hope it is clear that my life at eighty-five is better than anything I could have planned, dreamed of, or expected. And I cannot close without at least mentioning the love relationships that nurture me, enrich my being, and invigorate my life. I do not know when I will die, but I do know that I will have lived a full and exciting eighty-five years! (pg. 58; Rogers, 1989)

Labouvie-Vief (1990) is not the only one to consider wisdom to be a balance amongst various cognitive factors. Kramer (1990) has theorized that cognitive and affective (emotional) development interact in a reciprocal fashion to produce wisdom-related skills and processes which then allow the person to effectively resolve the many challenges of adult life (e.g., making important decisions in life, engaging in spiritual reflection, and advising others). This process is ongoing, and wisdom should deepen over time. A person who becomes wise will then be able to successfully manage five basic functions of wisdom: resolving dilemmas and making life decisions (“life planning”), advising others (important for generativity), managing and guiding society, reviewing one’s life, and questioning the meaning of life. These functions are not separate, but rather highly interrelated (Kramer, 1990).

Kitchener has developed a model of wisdom based on reflective judgment (see Kitchener & Brenner, 1990). The Reflective Judgment model considers an individual’s assumptions about what can be known, how we can know it, and how certain we can be about our knowledge. Our beliefs, and consequently our decisions, are then justified in terms of our certainty or lack of certainty regarding the situation. Of course, people in the early stages of reflective judgment would not necessarily be wise, as that would require development and refinement over time. Therefore, we see once again that although wisdom is not synonymous with older age, it is something that develops over time and is unlikely to appear early in life.

Sternberg (2012) raises an interesting question by asking whether or not personal wisdom should be a goal of psychotherapy. Do wise individuals experience higher levels of subjective well-being? While there is some evidence that wisdom is associated with higher levels of well-being and life satisfaction (see Sternberg, 2012), there is also evidence that wisdom leads to what Paul Baltes has called “constructive melancholy” (see Kunzmann & Stange, 2007; Sternberg, 2012). Wise people see both the joy and the sadness in life, so wisdom may be desirable for dealing with life in realistic and necessary ways (which may be essential for overall well-being), but it will not necessarily lead to happiness (for more on Baltes’ perspective on wisdom see, for example, Baltes & Smith, 1990 and Baltes et al., 2005).

As some people see it, whether or not there is an issue of psychological distress and/or potential psychotherapy, there should be a practicality to our understanding and application of wisdom. For Soccio (2016), wisdom refers to fundamentally understanding reality in relation to living a good life. Wisdom, therefore, is both reasonable and practical, and involves making good judgments. Schwartz & Sharpe (2010) echo the concept of practical wisdom, attributing its early discussion to none other than Aristotle. For Aristotle, and others, wisdom is necessary for attaining happiness and well-being in life. Knowing the right thing to do in complex situations helps us all to be happy (see also Goldstein & Kornfield, 2001; Long, 2015; Vaillant, 1993). One problem, however, is that it can sometimes be difficult to understand the writings/teachings of someone who is wise. The enigmatic philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche is such a man.

In *Joyful Wisdom*, Nietzsche (1882/1960) addresses a wide range of philosophical topics, several of which I have chosen to share here. The first one is fairly clear, the others somewhat deeper.

…There is, of course, here and there on this terrestrial sphere a kind of sequel to love, in which that covetous longing of two persons for one another has yielded to a new desire and covetousness, to a *common*, higher thirst for a superior ideal standing above them: but who knows this love? Who has experienced it? Its right name is *friendship*. (pg. 53; Nietzsche, 1882/1960)

*Animal Criticism*. – I fear the animals regard man as a being like themselves, seriously endangered by the loss of sound animal understanding; - they regard him perhaps as the absurd animal, the laughing animal, the crying animal, the unfortunate animal. (pg. 200; Nietzsche, 1882/1960)

*Wisdom in Pain*. – In pain there is as much wisdom as in pleasure: like the latter it is one of the best self-preservatives of a species. Were it not so, pain would long ago have been done away with; that it is hurtful is no argument against it, for to be hurtful is its very essence…as soon as pain gives its precautionary signal, it is time to reduce the speed… (pg. 247; Nietzsche, 1882/1960)

**\*NOTE:** *Joyful Wisdom* holds a special place in the history of philosophy, since it happens to be where Nietzsche first recorded his most famous thought, that god is dead.

*New Struggles*. – After Buddha was dead people showed his shadow for centuries afterwards in a cave, - an immense frightful shadow. God is dead: but as the human race is constituted, there will perhaps be caves for millenniums yet, in which people will show his shadow. – And we – we have still to overcome his shadow! (pg. 151; Nietzsche, 1882/1960)

Having mentioned Buddha, let’s briefly examine wisdom from a Buddhist perspective. Simply put, wisdom from a Buddhist point of view is to understand the essence of the Four Noble Truths and the three fundamental characteristics of the human life: suffering, impermanence, and selflessness (Bhikkhu Bodhi, 1994; Dudley-Grant et al., 2003; Goldstein & Kornfield, 2001; Hayes, 2003).

Once a person has learned to let go of all attachment, including attachment to mistaken ideas and concepts which lead to suffering, the result is peace, wholeness, and joy. In other words, the individual is able to awaken, which is the meaning of the word “buddha.” In a personal translation of a section of the *Majjhima Nikaya*, Andrew Olendzki (whom I’ve had the honor of studying with at the BCBS) offers the following view on wisdom:

When ignorance is abandoned and true knowledge has arisen,

one no longer clings to sensual pleasures,

one no longer clings to beliefs,

one no longer clings to a doctrine of self.

Without clinging, one no longer torments oneself.

No longer tormenting oneself, one inwardly awakens.

(pg. 121; Olendzki, 2012)

The combination of wisdom and compassion inherent in the practice of Buddhism, particularly through meditation and mindfulness, lends itself ideally to meaningful psychotherapy. The preceding quote is from a chapter in *Wisdom and Compassion in Psychotherapy* (Germer & Siegel, 2012), which includes among its chapter authors numerous well-known scholars in both positive psychology and Buddhist psychology and psychotherapy. We’ll come back to a number of these chapters in Section IV, when we take a closer look at positive psychotherapy.

### Courage

Courage, like wisdom, is one of the core virtues identified by Peterson & Seligman (2004). Included within it are the strengths of bravery, persistence, integrity, and vitality. Bravery is what most of us normally think of when we think of courage – they are generally considered synonymous. An important aspect of this virtue, what makes a given action virtuous, is the manner in which the action is taken (Fowers, 2005). Those who study courage generally address two main types of courage, with some proposing a third type given various names depending on the author’s perspective.

Lopez et al. (2003a) distinguished between physical courage, moral courage, and vital courage. Putnam (1997, 2004) also recognized physical and moral courage (as do various other authors; see, e.g., Kidder, 2003; Miller, 2000; Rachman, 1978; Staub, 2015; Walton, 1986), but referred to a third type which he called psychological courage. In each of these perspectives, physical courage refers to bravery in the usual sense, whereas moral courage pertains to doing the right thing while maintaining integrity and authenticity.

Examples of physical courage are evident every day, particularly in the examples of first-responders. Firefighters who enter burning buildings, police officers who apprehend dangerous criminals, smoke jumpers who respond to forest fires, and Coast Guard crews (especially the swimmers) who help rescue men and women in danger at sea are among those we greatly admire. Of course, there are also the other military personnel (since the Coast Guard is military too) who serve our nation in times of conflict or war. Our nation’s highest award is the Congressional Medal of Honor, and many of those who have earned it lost their life in the process (though they saved the lives of others – making the ultimate sacrifice).

Moral courage can, at times, be as dangerous as situations which call for physical courage. When peaceful civil rights activists attempted to cross the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama on March 7, 1965 they were viciously attacked by armed police and a local posse who opposed equal rights for blacks. This event led most directly to the passage of the Voting Rights Act. Another famous example from the civil rights era is Rosa Parks’ refusal to give up her seat in the “colored section” of a bus to a white passenger who was unable to find a seat in the “white section” of the bus. She was then arrested for violating Alabama’s segregation laws. Moral courage, of course, can occur in less dramatic ways, such as when someone stands up against injustice in ways in which the consequences are serious, but not life threatening (such as losing one’s job, or facing public ridicule and/or being ostracized).

As I write this, there is still a fascinating movie playing in theatres which portrays the true story of Desmond Doss. Doss was a conscientious objector during World War II, who nonetheless volunteered to serve in a rifle company in the U.S. Army. He refused to carry a weapon in combat, since it went against his religious beliefs, so he became a combat medic. When the Japanese fighters on Okinawa repelled a U.S. assault on Hacksaw Ridge, Doss remained in the line of fire while attempting to aid and remove wounded comrades. He was credited with saving at least 75 men, ultimately being wounded four times himself, and consequently received the Medal of Honor!

When we compare psychological courage to vital courage it appears they are similar. Putnam (1997, 2004) describes psychological courage as facing the fear of losing one’s psychological stability. It involves escaping emotions that can hold us in “bondage,” such as fear and anxiety, and finding ways to cope so that the stability of our mind itself is protected. For Lopez et al. (2003a), vital courage is at play when a person is challenged by a life-threatening illness. Certainly, the danger of losing one’s mind, to anxiety or other psychological stressors (in the extreme, e.g., to delusions and hallucinations) is as threatening to the integrity of the ego as the loss of life itself.

In studies involving chronically ill adolescents and adults, the process of vital courage involves identifying and acknowledging the very real threat, accepting it, finding successful ways to cope with life’s changes and challenges, and gaining insight regarding personal relationships. A similar process may be helpful to those who work with such patients as well, encouraging the willingness to take risks despite an unclear outcome (see Lopez et al., 2003a).

When we think of people who exhibit vital courage, those who are facing death, we typically think of adults, not of children. However, the reality is that many young children face terminal illnesses (see, e.g., Epstein & Horwitz, 2003; Kübler-Ross, 1983). Children often process the possibility of impending death better than their parents, and Kübler-Ross (1983) shares a number of poems written by children in her book *On Children and Death*. In *If I Get to Five*, pediatric neurosurgeon Fred Epstein (Epstein & Horwitz, 2003) shares the story of the title of his book, and it offers a striking portrayal of vital courage. In between surgeries to remove a brain tumor wrapped around two arteries which had already caused bleeding inside her cranium, with her head still covered in bandages from the first surgery, four-year old Naomi would greet Dr. Epstein each day with a new pronouncement:

“If I get to five, I’m going to learn to ride a two-wheeler!”

“If I get to five, I’m going to beat my older brother at tic-tac-toe.”

“If I get to five, I’m going to learn to tie my shoes with a double

knot!”

“If I get to five, I’m going to jump rope – backward!”

(pg. 2; Epstein & Horwitz, 2003)

Reflecting on the determination of Naomi, who never asked if she would live to make it to five years old, Dr. Epstein had this to say:

Naomi taught me that the child’s determination to embrace the next stage in life, to become more powerful and master new skills, can be a lifetime asset. She reminded me that whenever I ran up against a tumor that had “inoperable” stamped across it, I needed to focus on the child whose life was on the line. That was crucial lesson for me at a formative stage of my career. It strengthened my resolve never to give up on a child, no matter how daunting the course appeared. (pg. 3; Epstein & Horwitz, 2003)

When we compare the categorization of virtues and strengths identified by Peterson & Seligman (2004) with those of Putnam (1997, 2004) and Lopez et al., (2003a), they line up fairly well. All three recognize bravery as one type of courage. Vitality clearly corresponds to vital courage, and as noted above psychological courage appears to be quite similar to vital courage. So how do persistence and integrity (the two remaining strengths in Peterson & Seligman’s virtue of courage) compare to moral courage? Integrity is further characterized as authenticity or honesty, and in definitions of moral courage we typically see words such as integrity and authenticity. And moral courage often requires persistence. For example, the civil rights movement took a long time, and even today we are seeing a backlash that demands continued effort if we are ever to achieve real freedom and equality in the United States of America. So there is fairly good correspondence between these classification schemes.

As noted above, persistence is one of the strengths listed under the virtue of courage by Peterson & Seligman (2004). Angela Duckworth and her colleagues (see Duckworth, 2016; Duckworth et al., 2007) have been examining a specific personality trait which they call grit, a topic that has become somewhat popular in higher education. Grit is defined as the perseverance and passion necessary to accomplish long-term goals. In particular, it refers to the ability to continue striving toward those goals despite temporary failure, adversity, and plateaus in one's progress.

We used to believe that individuals who become experts in a particular area (whether it's math, playing a musical instrument, playing chess, or competing in athletic events, etc.) had some innate ability or talent for their skill. However, Anders Ericsson proposed and studied a different theoretical framework. Although an individual may show some early talent in a particular domain, what resulted in their becoming an expert, or a star athlete, was the intensive deliberate practice that followed, often taking many years before the individual truly excelled (Anders Ericsson, 2004; Anders Ericsson et al., 1993). Working together, Duckworth, Anders Ericsson, and a few of their colleagues showed that deliberate practice is the key to success in an academic competition that tends to fascinate many people because of just how difficult it is: the National Spelling Bee (Duckworth et al., 2010).

Whether it's grit, persistence, or the associated behavior of deliberate practice, those who continue to strive toward their goals tend to succeed not only in school, but also in most aspects of life, including life satisfaction and earning a good income (Duckworth & Carlson, 2013; Duckworth et al., 2012). Although it appears that life stress in early adolescence can significantly impair one's ability to strive toward a positive and fruitful future (Duckworth et al., 2013), what factors are associated with the development of grit? First, there are internal factors, such as interest, practice, purpose, and hope (Duckworth, 2016). If you follow your passion in life, you’ll naturally be inclined to stick with it. The type of hope is important as well. For those with grit, hope is related to the belief and the intention that the person will continue to keep trying and keep working to make things better next time, with success as the expected outcome.

It’s also helpful to have had the right conditions for developing grit. Being involved in extracurricular activities can be beneficial, especially if they create a culture of grit. However, one of the most important factors is parenting, and those parents should be both supportive and demanding. Interestingly, “parenting” does not necessarily have to come from only your parents:

*What can I do to encourage grit in the people I care for?*... Sometimes it’s a coach who asks; sometimes it’s an entrepreneur or a CEO…. I’ve had army generals and navy admirals toss me this question, too, but most often it’s a mother or father who worries that their child isn’t close to realizing their potential.

All the people quizzing me are thinking as parents would, of course – even if they’re *not* parents. The word *parenting* derives from Latin and means “to bring forth.” You’re acting in a parentlike way if you’re asking for guidance on how to best bring forth interest, practice, purpose, and hope in the people you care for. (pg. 199; Duckworth, 2016)

A curious situation arises when we begin to look at fear and the measurement of courage. For some authors, fear is essential to identifying a given act as brave or courageous, since a person who is simply fearless has no reason not to act. Consequently, their action is essentially no different than any other behavior, though perhaps it would be viewed as reckless (Fowers, 2005; Rachman, 1978; Walton, 1986). However, Woodard & Pury (2007) are not so sure. Woodard (2004) initially developed a scale for measuring courage that took into account the willingness to take action and the fear that then resulted from taking action. In the more recent analysis, however, they find that courage and the situations in which it may be called for are indeed complex and varied. Thus, as is often the case in psychology, further research is warranted.

One of the challenges in measuring courage is the variability in the definitions of it. A variety of self-report measures have been developed for research, covering such topics as existential courage, social courage, civil courage, panic-specific courage, and courage in general (see Snyder et al., 2011). Some studies have shown differences in physiological responses between those who have experienced a courageous act and those who have not, or conducted interviews with courageous individuals or regarding views on what is courageous behavior (see Lopez et al., 2003a). After reviewing various studies, Staub (2015) suggests that courage can be developed. To help children develop moral courage, Staub suggests allowing them to participate in decision-making at home and at school, encouraging them from a young age to act on their values and empathic feelings, and developing their capacity for “critical consciousness” or independent judgment.

It can be somewhat difficult to gain an understanding of courage in the Buddhist sense, since many books refer to courage, but then what they discuss does not fall into our typical understanding of courage. Generally, the closest some works come is to address what it is we fear, and how meditation and mindfulness can help us to face and overcome our fears.

So, what is it that we fear? More often than not, it is ourselves that we fear, or rather, how others will view us given our perceived inadequacies and failings. This fear results in all manner of anxieties and, consequently, attempts to overcome this anxiety and fear by doing or getting something that will make our lives better (Jinpa, 2015; Trungpa, 2009). And yet, the teachings of the Buddha, to be aware of ourselves and accept with compassion the truth (the concept of the clear mirror), provides a way to let go of this fear. The value of such a philosophy may be most important when a person’s anxieties and life challenges have reached such a level that the person has sought psychotherapy (Pollak et al., 2014; Wegela, 2009).

Mruk & Hartzell (2003) have applied Zen principles in the practice of psychotherapy, including the principle of fearlessness (courage). Fear is manifested in a variety of ways, such as anxiety, or a sense of inability or incompetence. While it may seem natural to avoid fear and anxiety, when we do so we are avoiding reality. Thus, we can’t deal with it effectively. As Mruk & Hartzell point out, we know how to fear, but we don’t know how to be fearless, or to go beyond fear. Only by facing and accepting our fears can we see what they truly are: attachments to our past and to our desires for the future. It turns out to be a great irony, for both Zen and psychotherapy, that our fears typically turn out to be nothing more than that – just ghosts, not monsters (Mruk & Hartzell, 2003; see also Putnam, 2004).

There is a marvelous story in the Buddhist literature that exemplifies true bravery. It is a Jataka tale, the Nigrodhamiga-Jataka, from an earlier life incarnation of the Buddha (Cowell, 1895/1993). It is the story of the Banyan Deer, and a wonderful retelling of the story has been published by Rafe Martin (2010). The Banyan Deer was the king of his herd, when his herd and another were trapped in an enclosure to be hunted and killed. The kings of the two herds agreed to hold a lottery, so that only one deer would be harmed at a time, since many deer were harmed trying to escape each time the hunters came.

Eventually, the lottery fell onto a doe (from the Branch herd) who was carrying a fawn. She begged her king to let someone else take her place until her fawn was born and could survive on his own, but her king said no. So she went to the Banyan king, and he agreed that her life should be spared. He went in her place to be killed. When the human king learned of this, he was amazed and spared the Banyan deer (the king and all his herd).

However, the Banyan king refused to go until the other deer were spared. And so it was. Yet he refused to go again, stating that he could not abandon the birds, and the process was repeated, and yet again for the fish. In the end, the human king ordered that all the people would become vegetarians, and the Banyan king and his herd went on their way, in peace (Cowell, 1895/1993; Martin, 2010).

There is a wonderful, and rather well-known, book entitled *The Courage to Be*, written by the renowned existential theologian Paul Tillich (1952). Echoing the Buddhist perspective that we are afraid of our own perceived weaknesses and inadequacies, Tillich takes it to a deeper level: we fear the irrelevance of our own existence (the existential perspective that we are anxious throughout life because we know we will die someday). However, when we embrace life despite the reality of death:

The courage to be is the ethical act in which man affirms his own being in spite of those elements of his existence which conflict with his essential self-affirmation. (pg. 3; Tillich, 1952)

Tillich considered fear and anxiety to be essential as motivating factors in living one’s life fully. However, there must be a balance between courage and fear, for if we acted without regard to the warnings provided by fear and anxiety we might very well end up engaging in directly self-destructive behavior. The strength to engage in this pursuit of life despite the realities of challenge and danger in the world is what Tillich referred to as vitality, or life power. Vitality is not merely related to courage, however, since it cannot be separated from the totality of one’s being, including language, creativity, and a spiritual life (Tillich, 1952).

Courage, in this view, is the readiness to take upon oneself negatives, anticipated by fear, for the sake of a fuller positivity… A life process which shows this balance and with it power of being has, in biological terms, vitality, i.e. life power. The right courage therefore must, like the right fear, be understood as the expression of perfect vitality. (pp. 78-79; Tillich, 1952)

**\* \* \***

One of my prized possessions is a signed copy of Parker Palmer’s book *The Courage to Teach* (Palmer, 1998). I received it from him personally as a prize to accompany my Faculty/Staff Community Service-Learning Award from the Michigan Campus Compact in 1998 – he was the keynote speaker that year at their annual conference.

Why does it take courage to teach? In this book, he isn’t talking about the bravery it may sometimes require to enter into inner-city schools. I’ve been to schools in the city of Detroit, and the environment can be both frightening and depressing – at least at first glance. It’s a shame that we have so many bad schools in bad neighborhoods in America. But Parker Palmer is talking about courage in a different sense, in a sense that may be particularly salient in those underprivileged schools.

When most people begin teaching they are full of hope and high expectations. However, you will never be able to reach every student. So, do you revel in your many successes and brush off the handful of failures? Actually, it’s just the opposite! Teachers who really care will obsess over even a single apparent failure. They will take it to heart, painfully, and often blame themselves. It takes a special kind of courage to do this over and over again, be it each school year or each college semester. Simply put, Palmer (1998) suggests that a good teacher will never be happy, because there will always be a recent student you just couldn’t help/reach. And there’s no way around it.

So, is there any hope for those of us who find ourselves in this trap? My answer has been Buddhist mindfulness and the perfection of equanimity. By accepting the nature of reality, and understanding both my role and the students’ role in their success, I’m able to accept things as they will be. It’s still disappointing when even one student fails, but I accept it and move on, vowing to do my best next time, come what may.

### Generosity

Generosity is an aspect of the strength kindness, under the virtue of humanity, and it is different than giving. Generosity expects nothing in return. It is *freely* given (Bonner, 2014; Fowers, 2005). In that sense it fits with well with a Buddhist perspective, generosity is giving with no attachment to the outcome of having given, and it contains an element of compassion.

“He who gives when asked has waited too long.”

(pg. 13; Seneca, cited in Bonner, 2014)

Blaine Fowers (2005) makes the interesting argument that we need constructs like virtue in our lives to give meaning to strengths like generosity. Otherwise, there is no way to conceptualize the joy people feel when giving to others with no expectation of getting anything back. Whether someone is generous, or loyal, or brave, it is our concept of virtue that lends meaning to the activity.

There appears to be a connection between positive emotion in general, and a variety of prosocial behaviors, including helpfulness, generosity, and social responsibility (Isen, 2003, 2005). Likewise, responsible generosity is an example of practical wisdom (Fowers, 2005). So we often find that individuals are not merely virtuous in one area, but rather, they are indeed virtuous people.

In different schools of Buddhist thought, there are different lists of what are known as the paramitas, or perfections. The great sage Shantideva (an 8th century Indian Buddhist monk) listed six perfections, with the first one being generosity (Ettele, 2011; Michie, 2012). There are generally four ways that one can be generous, in the Buddhist tradition: giving materially (e.g., money), being generous with love by giving happiness to others, generosity of protection when saving other beings, and practicing generosity of the Dharma by sharing what we understand with others who sincerely ask (Michie, 2012).

If wishing to relieve a mere headache of another person brings

immeasurable merit,

what then of wishing to eradicate suffering and bring happiness

to every being?

…

This intention is an extraordinary jewel of mind and its birth

an unprecendented wonder.

It’s the cause of happiness for beings, a remedy for their sufferings.

How can its qualities be measured?

…

As poverty still exists, how is giving perfected?

Through a mind with the sheer wish to give everything.

(pp. 4 & 27; Shantideva as translated by Feusi, 2015)

In the year 2000, Thich Nhat Hanh met with many Nobel Peace Prize winners to discuss ways in which they might transform violence in the world for the good of children everywhere. The result was something they called the Manifesto 2000, and it helped lead to the United Nations declaring the decade 2001-2010 as the International Decade for the Promotion of the culture of Nonviolence and Peace for the Children in the World (Thich Nhat Hanh, 2012). The third principle begins, “Share my time and material resources in a spirit of generosity…”

## A Final Note on Virtue

Some of this book was written while taking some classes and a personal retreat at the Barre Center for Buddhist Studies in Barre, MA. It was a wonderful return after having done the same thing 7 ½ years ago. At that point in time I had been there several times, but I hadn’t been back since.

BCBS is very close to the Insight Meditation Society (they are loosely affiliated, and many people visit both centers), where I have done a 10-day retreat in noble silence. On that retreat I had the privilege of meeting one of our retreat leaders, the renowned Jack Kornfield. In addition to having trained as a Thai forest monk, he is now a clinical psychologist. His writings have been particularly insightful in my own education/training.

In *A Path With Heart* (Kornfield, 1993), he shares the Insight Meditation Teachers Code of Ethics. Simply, this is a recitation of the five Buddhist precepts. To address possible problems and misconduct there is an established ethics committee (one on each coast, east and west). After reciting the five precepts, they chant the short verse that follows. Note that it specifically identifies the goal of being virtuous (pp. 341-343).

We undertake the precept of refraining from killing.

We undertake the precept of refraining from stealing.

We undertake the precept of refraining from false speech.

We undertake the precept of refraining from sexual misconduct.

We undertake the precept of refraining from intoxicants that cause

heedlessness or loss of awareness.

The five precepts of nonharming

Are a vehicle for our happiness,

A vehicle for our good fortune,

A vehicle for liberation for all.

May our virtue shine forth.

# Section III: Positive Emotional & Cognitive States

In this section we’ll examine many of the topics one thinks of when thinking about the field of positive psychology: love, hope, compassion, humor, flow, forgiveness, etc. These are the emotional and cognitive states we experience when we are enjoying life or when we need to let go of pain and suffering so that we might move on (and hopefully enjoy life once again, when the time is right).

In other words, these states are not simply about the good times. Unfortunate things happen during our lives, and whether or not we can overcome them depends on whether or not we can achieve a state of mind that allows us to deal with difficulty. So, whereas humor and leisure may be entirely enjoyable (as long as we or some other vulnerable person/group aren’t the target of someone else’s bad jokes), forgiveness and compassion, for example, represent the good within us during challenging times.

You may ask yourself, why not simply focus on the good things and ignore the bad? The answer is quite clear: our lives are complex, and we must understand both the good and the bad to deal effectively with those challenges that test our psychological strengths. Indeed, the first topic we’ll consider is just such a complex challenge!

## Love

There are few topics in psychology that can be as confusing as love. It can make us feel wonderful in ways that nothing else can, and it can lead to horrible emotional pain. What’s worse is that the same relationship can result in both extremes, such as a love gone wrong or the death of a child. Nonetheless, most people devote a great deal of time and effort throughout their lives seeking love.

There is no shortage at all of perspectives on love, with literature, religion, and the fields of psychology and psychiatry being replete with examples and studies. In the Western world, where Christianity is the most common religion, the very basis for that religion is love:

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

*John 3:16; Holy Bible*

Also, when Jesus, the son of God cited above, was challenged to identify the most important of the Ten Commandments, he surprised those listening by saying:

Jesus answered, “The first is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’

The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”

*Mark 12: 29-31; Holy Bible*

Of course, many people are not Christian (and world-wide *most* are not), and a growing number are not religious in the least. Regardless, I’ve not known an atheist who does not believe in love. So what is it about this emotion that proves to be so powerful, and at times so all-consuming? We may never truly know the answer to those questions, but plenty of people have tried to express some understanding of love.

### Defining Love

One of the problems with love, and the very thing that dooms many relationships, is that people fall into one kind of love but never develop the type of love than can be sustained over time. So what kinds of love are there? Let’s take a look at some classic categorizations.

The existential psychologist Rollo May talked about four types of love in Western tradition: sex, eros, philia, and agape (May, 1969). Sex and eros are closely related, but they are different. Sex is what we also call lust or libido, whereas eros is the drive of love to procreate or create. As changes in society allowed the more open study of sex, prompted by the work of people like Sigmund Freud and Wilhelm Reich, May noted three particular paradoxes. First, our so-called enlightenment has not removed the sexual problems in our culture. In the past, an individual could refrain from sexual activity using the moral guidelines of society as an explanation. As casual sex became common, even expected, individuals had to face expressing their own morality as just that: their own! This also created a new source of anxiety for some, namely the possibility that their personal relationships might carry an expectation of sexual activity, and that if they did not comply they might not be able to continue dating someone they liked. The second paradox is that “*the new emphasis on technique in sex and love-making backfires*” (May, 1969). Emphasizing technique (or prowess) can result in a mechanistic attitude toward making love, possibly leading to alienation, feelings of loneliness, and depersonalization. Finally, May believed that our sexual freedom was actually a new form of Puritanism. There is a state of alienation from the body, a separation of emotion from reason, and the use of the body as a machine. Whereas in the Victorian era people tried to be in love without falling into sex, today many people try to have sex without falling in love.

Philia and agape are also related to one another, as with sex and love. Philia refers to feelings of friendship or brotherly love, whereas agape is the love devoted to caring for others. Friendship during childhood is very important, and May believed it was essential for meaningful and loving relationships as adults, including those involving eros. Indeed, the tension created by eros in terms of continuous attraction and continuous passion would be unbearable if philia did not enter into the equation and allow one to relax in the pleasant and friendly company of the object of one’s desires. Harry Harlow showed that the opportunity to make friends was also as essential in the development of young monkeys as it appears to be in humans (cited in May, 1969). In the West, however, given our highly individualistic and competitive society, deep, meaningful friendships seem to be something of the past, especially among men. May cautions, however, that since the evidence shows the importance of friendship during development, perhaps we should remember the value of having good friends.

Finally we have agape, a selfless love beyond any hope of gain for oneself. May compared this love to the biological aspect of nature in which a parent will fight to the death in defense of their offspring (May, 1969). The love of a parent for a child is often cited as an example agape, as is the love of a god for his/her people amongst those who are religious. In either example, agape is something we want to receive; we want to be loved completely.



*Agape is exemplified in the bond between a parent and their child.*

In the foreword to *Love and Will* (May, 1969), May acknowledged that some of his readers might find it odd that he combined the two topics in one book, but he felt strongly that the topics belong together. He considered both love and will to be interdependent, they are processes in which people reach out to influence others, to help to mold and create the consciousness of others. Love without will is sentimental and experimental, whereas will without love is manipulative. Only by remaining open to the influence of others can we likewise influence them, so love must have an honest purpose, and purpose must be taken with care.

Love was a very important topic for May. Simply put, “To be capable of giving and receiving mature love is as sound a criterion as we have for the fulfilled personality” (May, 1953). He was certainly not alone. Harry Harlow, best known for his studies on contact comfort (see below), described love as “a wondrous state, deep, tender, and rewarding,” and Abraham Maslow said “We *must* understand love; we must be able to teach it, to create it, to predict it, or else the world is lost to hostility and to suspicion” (Harlow, 1975; Maslow, 1975). However, there are “a million and one” types of relationships that people call love, so it remains a perplexing issue (May, 1953).

The main problem with May’s categorization of the types of love is that it is based on a very old perspective. What we needed in modern times was a theory that fit within our modern perspective of psychology, a more dynamic definition of love that could explain something about the types of love in relation to one another, while also accounting for both subtle and gross differences in how we approach love objects. Just such a theory was provided by Robert Sternberg: the triangular theory of love (first proposed in the 1980s; see Sternberg, 2006).

According to the triangular theory of love, love consists of three components: passion, intimacy, and decision/commitment (note: decision and commitment are not necessarily the same thing, but we’ll dispense with that technicality and just focus on commitment – as does Sternberg himself). Each of these components interact, and the type of love that results is based on their balance (or lack thereof). For example, friendship is the result of intimacy alone, infatuation is the result of passion alone, and empty love results from commitment alone. When intimacy and passion arise together, we have romantic love; intimacy and commitment together lead to companionate love; and passion and commitment provide us with fatuous love (e.g., a childhood “crush”). Finally, if we have all three components, there is consummate love.

From just the basics of this theory we can see the source of many failed relationships. For example, we are routinely enculturated in our society to seek a romantic love that will lead to marriage. However, romantic love lacks commitment, the very thing that Carl Rogers listed first as essential to a successful marriage (Rogers, 1972).

Sternberg (2006) also suggests that there are multiple triangles involved in the structure of love. What is described just above is the basic structure of love itself, but there are additional layers, including the amount of love (i.e., the overall intensity of a given love structure) and possible ideal triangles. In other words, although love must exist as it does, we may also be comparing it to how we wish the loving relationship could be. Consequently, our actions in relation to our love may not be consistent. This, obviously, can create problems within the relationship.

Having updated his original theory, Sternberg (2006) now refers to a duplex theory of love. The first element, the triangular subtheory of love, is the basic structure we have just examined. The second element, the subtheory of love as a story, suggests that each love relationship is based on, you guessed it, a story about love (or how love ought to be according to some preconceived notion[s]). Sternberg offered a tentative list of 26 love stories, with his research addressing a variety of potential stories. As examples of types of stories:

1. **Addiction:** “If my partner were to leave me, my life would be completely empty.”
2. **Art:** “Physical attractiveness is quite honestly the most essential characteristic that I look for in a partner.”
3. **Business:** “I believe close relationships are partnerships, just like most business relationships.”
4. **Fantasy:** “I think people owe it to themselves to wait for the partner they have always dreamed about.”
5. **Game:** “I view my relationships as games; the uncertainty of winning or losing is part of the excitement of the game.”
6. **Garden:** “I believe a good relationship is attainable only if you are willing to spend the time and enery to care for it, just as you need to care for a garden.”

(pg. 195; Sternberg, 2006)

The story with which each person enters into a relationship is important. When the story each person has is the same, they are more likely to achieve a satisfying relationship, whereas having different stories is more likely to lead to dissatisfaction. Malaptive stories are also problematic. For example, love as a game, or horror (in which a relationship is interesting when you terrorize your partner), or as a police officer (you must keep an eye on your partner, i.e. a lack of trust) predicts dissatisfaction.

So, for a loving relationship to have a good chance of working out, according to Sternberg (2006), there must be two people who experience passion, intimacy, and commitment (consummate love) and who have the same expectations regarding the nature of their relationship (similar stories).

Johnson (2001) has also offered a tripartite definition of love, focusing in what he calls care-love, union-love, and appreciation-love. While this theory may loosely correspond with that of Sternberg (care > intimacy; union > passion; appreciation > commitment; these being my own loose associations), of particular interest is a discussion in Johnson’s epilogue on the ideals of spiritual love.

The Judeo-Christian ideal of love typically falls within Johnson’s care-love, with the golden rule being to love one’s neighbor. There is an inherent aspect of self-sacrifice in this love, i.e., you must give of yourself to help others. In contrast, Buddhism holds to the ideal of metta (or loving-kindness). Metta practice often begins with loving oneself, so that you are then free (unburdened or unencumbered) to love others (see Johnson, 2001). He goes on to compare several other spiritual love ideals, not the least of which is his appreciation of how Zen Buddhists appreciate each moment of daily life without attachment (a profound appreciation-love, according to Johnson).

Continuing in the Buddhist tradition, the renowned Zen monk Thich Nhat Hanh describes true love as being comprised of four elements: loving-kindness, compassion, joy, and equanimity/freedom (Thich Nhat Hanh, 2004, 2007a). Loving-kindness is both the desire and the ability to bring joy and happiness to a beloved person. Compassion is the desire to ease the suffering of others. Joy is perhaps the measure of a *true* love, since if there is any pain or suffering the love cannot be true. The outcome of a true love is then equanimity/freedom. According to Thich Nhat Hanh, the ability to truly love in this way is not easy, and it takes practice. Most importantly, you must be present in the relationship:

To love, in the context of Buddhism, is above all to be there. But being there is not an easy thing. Some training is necessary, some practice. If you are not there, how can you love? Being there is very much an art, the art of meditation, because meditating is bringing your true presence to the here and now. The question that arises is: Do you have time to love? (pp. 5-6; Thich Nhat Hanh, 2004)

### Some Early Psychological Perspectives on Love

Alfred Adler described three life tasks: work, communal life, and love. These tasks are not unrelated, since each one depends upon the successful pursuit of the other two. Given this interrelationship, Adler believed that how a person approaches each of these tasks, through their style of life, reveals a great deal about what they view as the meaning of life. It is necessary, of course, for there to be balance. For example, a person in an unhappy marriage might spend a great deal of time at work. This represents a mistaken style of life (Adler, 1931, 1964). Worse still, is someone who fails to pursue any of the life tasks:

Suppose, for example, we consider a man whose love-life is incomplete, who makes no efforts in his profession, who has few friends and who finds contact with his fellows painful. From the limits and restrictions of his life we may conclude that he feels *being alive* as a difficult and dangerous thing, offering few opportunities and many defeats. (pg. 7; Adler, 1931)

When Adler referred to the third task of life, love, he was primarily talking about choosing a partner to bear and raise children. When a child is first born, the love of its mother is the basis for the child’s development of social feelings. If a child is neglected, they do not learn how to relate to others, or if they are spoiled, they do not need to relate to others. An early challenge for the child is found in the nature of the father, and then any siblings who may be a part of the family. They typically do not approach the child with the same tender love as the mother. If the mother protects the child from this, spoiling and coddling the infant, a disordered style of life develops, but if the mother leaves the child to face this new challenge on its own, they must rely on their creative powers to adapt to these different social relationships. Children readily have this capacity, if they are allowed to utilize it. Later in life, each person must choose a mate in order to have their own children, and their ability to adapt to relationships with love interests will, obviously, depend on their own development earlier in life. Active, friendly members of a community will have more opportunities to meet someone they are truly attracted to. Individuals who are successful and productive in their work will be better able to provide for a family. And of course, the ultimate existence of each member of the community depends on continued procreation of the species. Thus, work, communal life, and love come together within a healthy society for everyone’s benefit (Adler, 1931, 1964; Lundin, 1989; Mosak & Maniacci, 1999).

Abraham Maslow believed that human behavior is driven and guided by a set of basic needs: physiological needs, safety needs, belongingness and love needs, esteem needs, and the need for self-actualization. Throughout the evolution of the human species we found safety primarily within our family, tribal group, or our community. It was within those groups that we shared the hunting and gathering that provided food. Once the physiological and safety needs have been fairly well satisfied, according to Maslow, “the person will feel keenly, as never before, the absence of friends, or a sweetheart, or a wife, or children” (Maslow, 1970). Although there is little scientific confirmation of the belongingness and love needs, many therapists attribute much of human suffering to society’s thwarting of the need for love and affection. Most notable among personality theorists who addressed this issue was Wilhelm Reich, one of the founders of sex education (see Reich, 1973; Sharaf, 1983).

Sex is an important aspect of love and affection. Although sex is often considered a physiological need, given its role in procreation, sex is what Maslow referred to as a multidetermined behavior. In other words, it serves both a physiological role (procreation) and a belongingness/love role (the tenderness and/or passion of the physical side of love). Maslow was also careful to point out that love needs involve both giving and receiving love in order for them to be fully satisfied (Maslow, 1943/1973; Maslow, 1970).

Now let us consider the perspectives of two renowned psychoanalysts who were themselves intimately involved: Karen Horney and Erich Fromm. Horney struggled with relationships throughout her life, and it showed in some of the interesting theories she developed.

Horney (1932/1967) suggested that, during the Oedipus stage, boys naturally judge the size of their penis as inadequate sexually with regard to their mother. They dread this inadequacy, which leads to anxiety and fear of rejection. This proves to be quite frustrating, and in accordance with the frustration-aggression hypothesis, the boy becomes angry and aggressive toward his mother. For men who are unable to overcome this issue, their adult sexual life becomes an ongoing effort to conquer and possess as many women as possible (a narcissistic overcompensation for their feelings of inadequacy). Unfortunately, according to Horney, these men become very upset with any woman who then expects a long-term or meaningful relationship, since that would require him to then prove his manhood in other, non-sexual ways.

For women, one of the most significant problems that results from these developmental processes is a desperate need to be in a relationship with a man, which Horney addressed in two of her last papers on feminine psychology: *The Overvaluation of Love* (1934/1967) and *The Neurotic Need for Love* (1937/1967). She recognized in many of her patients an obsession with having a relationship with a man, so much so that all other aspects of life seemed unimportant. While others had considered this an inherent characteristic of women, Horney insisted that characteristics such as this overvaluation of love always include a significant portion of tradition and culture. Thus, it is not an inherent need in women, but one that has accompanied the patriarchal society’s demeaning of women, leading to low self-esteem that can only be overcome within society by becoming a wife and mother. Indeed, Horney found that many women suffer an intense fear of not being normal. Unfortunately, as noted above, the men these women are seeking relationships with are themselves seeking to *avoid* long-term relationships (due to their own insecurities). This results in an intense and destructive attitude of rivalry between women (at least, those women caught up in this neurotic need for love). When a woman loses a man to another woman, which may happen again and again, the situation can lead to depression, permanent feelings of insecurity with regard to feminine self-esteem, and profound anger toward other women. If these feelings are repressed, and remain primarily unconscious, the effect is that the woman searches within her own personality for answers to her failure to maintain the coveted relationship with a man. She may feel shame, believe that she is ugly, or imagine that she has some physical defect. Horney described the potential intensity of these feelings as “self-tormenting.”

In his classic book *The Art of Loving*, Fromm (1956) suggests that love is “the answer to the problem of human existence.” He believed that our self-awareness, our awareness of ourselves as separate entities, leads to the anxiety of feeling alone. Consequently, we seek not only intimate personal relationships but also relationships with our community and society. To this end, Fromm pursued an overall integration of the person and society. He believed that psychology cannot be divorced from philosophy, sociology, economics, or ethics. The moral problem facing people in the modern world is their indifference to themselves. Although democracy and individuality seem to offer freedom, it is only a promise of freedom. When our insecurities and anxieties lead us to submit to some source of power, be it a political party, church, club, whatever, we surrender our personal power (Fromm, 1947). Consequently, we become subject to the undue influence of others. The solution may be as simple as love, but Fromm suggests that love is by no means an easy task, and it is not simply a relationship between two people:

…love is not a sentiment which can be easily indulged in by anyone, regardless of the level of maturity reached by him. It [Fromm’s book] wants to convince the reader that all his attempts for love are bound to fail, unless he tries most actively to develop his total personality, so as to achieve a productive orientation; that satisfaction in individual love cannot be attained without the capacity to love one’s neighbor, without true humility, courage, faith and discipline. (pg. xxi; Fromm, 1956)

An individual’s capacity for love is a reflection of the extent to which their culture encourages the development of the capacity for love as part of the character of each person. Capitalist societies, according to Fromm, emphasize individual freedom and economic relations. Thus, a capitalist society values economic gain (amassed wealth) over labor (the power of people). And yet, such an economy needs large groups of people working together (the labor force). As individuals become anxious in their pursuit of life, they become psychologically invested in the capitalist system, they surrender themselves to capitalism, and become the labor force that leads to the wealth of those who own the company. Fromm believed this alienated us from ourselves, from others, and from nature (or, the natural order). In order to regain our connection to others in a healthy way, we need to practice the art of love, love both for ourselves and for others.

The concept of love for one’s self is usually seen as problematic in psychology. However, Fromm considered it entirely illogical to separate loving others from loving yourself:

If it is a virtue to love my neighbor as a human being, it must be a virtue – and not a vice – to love myself, since I am a human being too... The idea expressed in the Biblical “Love thy neighbor as thyself!” implies that respect for one’s own integrity and uniqueness, love for and understanding of one’s own self, cannot be separated from respect and love for another individual. (pg. 49; Fromm, 1956)

From a Buddhist perspective, Thich Nhat Hanh (2007a) agrees with Fromm that self-love is essential. He adapted a love meditation from the profound *Visuddhimagga* (*The Path of Purification*, c412 by Bhadantacariya Buddhaghosa; translated by Bhikku Nanamoli, 1956). It begins with:

May I be peaceful, happy, and light in body and spirit.

May she be peaceful, happy, and light in body and spirit.

May he be peaceful, happy, and light in body and spirit.

May they be peaceful, happy, and light in body and spirit.

…he then adds this exercise…

May I learn to look at myself with the eyes of understanding

and love.

May he learn to look at himself with the eyes of understanding

and love.

May she learn to look at herself with the eyes of understanding

and love.

May they learn to look at themselves with the eyes of understanding

and love.

(pp. 19 and 29; Thich Nhat Hanh, 2007a)

In order to be of any help to others, we must first learn to love and care for ourselves. There are greater implications here, however. For Buddhists, this is love on a deeper spiritual level. Loving oneself is the first step on a path to loving everyone, even our enemies. Thich Nhat Hanh shares a poignant story here. A Brahman once asked the Buddha if there was anything the Buddha would agree to kill. The Buddha’s response? Yes, he would agree to kill anger! All the wise ones would agree to kill anger, since killing anger would remove suffering and bring peace and happiness (see Thich Nhat Hanh, 2007a).

### Love and Marriage

One of the most important, and hopefully meaningful, relationships in anyone’s life is marriage. Carl Rogers was married for 55 years, and as the end of his wife’s life approached he poured out his love to her with a depth that astonished him (Rogers, 1980). As relationships became more and more meaningful to him, he wanted to study the extraordinary relationships that become more than temporary. Although this is not necessarily synonymous with marriage, it most typically is. So he conducted a series of informal interviews with people who were, or had been, in lengthy relationships (at least 3 years). In comparing the relationships that seemed successful, as compared to those that were unhappy or had already come to an end, Rogers identified four factors that he believed were most important for long-term, healthy relationships: dedication or commitment, communication, the dissolution of roles, and becoming a separate self (Rogers, 1972).

**Dedication, Commitment**: Marriage is challenging: love seems to fade, vows are forgotten or set aside, religious rules are ignored (e.g., “What therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder.”; Matthew 19:6; Holy Bible, 1962). Rogers believed that in order for a relationship to last, each person must be dedicated to their partnership. They must commit themselves to working together throughout the changing process of their relationship, which is enriching their love and their life.

**Communication**: Communication encompasses much of human behavior, and it can be both subtle and complex. Communication itself is not a good thing, since many negative and hurtful things can be communicated. However, Rogers believed that we need to communicate persistent feelings, whether positive or negative, so that they don’t overwhelm us and come out in inappropriate ways. It is always important to express such communication in terms of your own thoughts and feelings, rather than projecting those feelings onto others (especially in angry and/or accusatory ways). This process involves risk, but one must be willing to risk the end of a relationship in order to allow it to grow.

**Dissolution of Roles**: Culture provides many expectations for the nature of relationships, whether it be dating or something more permanent like marriage. According to Rogers, obeying the cultural rules seems to contradict the idea of a growing and maturing relationship, a relationship that is moving forward (toward actualization). However, when individuals make an intentional choice to fulfill cultural expectations, because they *want* to, then the relationship can certainly be actualizing for them.

**Becoming a Separate Self**: Rogers believed that “a *living* partnership is composed of two people, each of whom owns, respects, and develops his or her own selfhood” (pg. 206; Rogers, 1972). While it may seem contradictory that becoming an individual should enhance a relationship, as each person becomes more real and more open they can bring these qualities into the relationship. As a result, the relationship can contribute to the continued growth of each person.

For Erik Erikson, who viewed life as a progression through a series of psychosocial crises, the period of young adulthood was marked by the crisis of intimacy vs. isolation. Those who successfully formed an intimate relationship developed the human strength of love (Erikson, 1968; see also Erikson, 1950). With the onset of adulthood, the most significant social factors become partners in friendship, sex, competition, and cooperation. Once an individual has consolidated their own identity, they are capable of the self-abandonment necessary for intimate affiliations, passionate sexual unions, or inspiring encounters. According to Erikson, sexual encounters prior to fulfilling this stage are of the identity-confirming kind, rather than the truly intimate sexual relationships based on love. Love is the mutual devotion of two people. Individuals who are unsuccessful in making intimate contacts are at risk for exaggerating their isolation, which brings with it the danger of not making any new contacts that might lead to the very intimate relationship they are lacking.

Cultural differences also come into play in love and marriage. In America, passionate love tends to be favored, whereas in China companionate love is favored. African cultures seem to fall somewhere in between (Belgrave & Allison, 2006). When considering the divorce rate in America, as compared to many other countries, it has been suggested that Americans marry the person they love, whereas people in many other cultures love the person they marry. In a study involving people from India, Pakistan, Thailand, Mexico, Brazil, Japan, Hong Kong, the Philippines, Australia, England, and the United States, it was found that individualistic cultures placed greater importance on the role of love in choosing to get married, and also on the loss of love as sufficient justification for divorce. For intercultural marriages, these differences are a significant, though not insurmountable, source of conflict (Matsumoto & Juang, 2004). Attempting to maintain awareness of cultural differences when relationship conflicts occur, rather than attributing the conflict to the personality of the other person, can be an important first step in resolving intercultural conflict. However, it must also be remembered that different cultures acknowledge and tolerate conflict to different extents (Brislin, 2000; Matsumoto, 1997; Okun, Fried, & Okun, 1999; for a brief discussion of intergroup dialogue and conflict resolution options, see Miller & Garran, 2008).

As noted above, Adler considered two of the three life tasks to be work and love. Work and love interact, or don’t, depending on the nature of individual cultures. For example, in America we compartmentalize our lives. We tend to have clearly defined career paths, and our personal relationships exist primarily outside of the workplace (Smelser, 1980b). In contrast, the Gusii in Kenya have not traditionally had “careers,” but rather a domestically based economy. They also practice polygyny (each man having many wives, but *not* vice versa). Thus, a husband must balance the resources at his command between his different wives and their children. As such, although love plays some role in marriage, it can actually become a problem for that man who cannot maintain fair and equitable treatment of each wife and her children. This is handled by maintaining a certain distance from each wife, including having his own house, and visiting each wife on a rotating schedule that is acceptable to everyone (LeVine, 1980). Such a concept of love and marriage is extraordinarily alien to the symbolic and mythic nature of the love ideal that lies at the foundation of American culture: a man and a woman committed to one another in a way that ennobles and transforms them both (Swidler, 1980).

However, the romantic vision of love in American culture is not without its drawbacks. The romantic, passionate, committed love that Americans envision completes one’s identity. In Erikson’s terms, it stands in opposition to isolation. However, it is all too common that most marriages, as well as other long-term relationships, eventually come to an end. What then happens to each person’s identity? Love also provides a basis for rebellion, such as when a person “marries for love” in spite of the objections of one’s family and/or friends. Love can also lead to conformity, such as one sees in the term “settling down” or when women, in particular, are expected to take on the primary responsibility for the household as an expression of their love, even if they also have a job outside of the home as their husband does. When one partner, more so than the other, must engage in self-sacrifice, what happens to their opportunities for self-realization? If it is possible to find fulfillment through the love of another, then self-sacrifice can be self-realization (Swidler, 1980). If not, we might see high divorce rates. And a high divorce rate is the reality in America today.

So, whether love and work are intermingled or separate, whether simple or complex, whether fulfilling or a necessary social expectation, they dominate the years of early and middle adulthood. No one period in adulthood is more likely than another to result in change, as different stressors impact each age differently. Work related stress is particularly likely for the young adult, but older adults face the challenge of preparing (both financially and psychologically) for retirement, and unexpected changes can occur at any age. Love, particularly as it relates to marriage, causes stress throughout adulthood, but in different ways. Younger couples are more likely to experience separation and/or divorce, middle-aged adults experience their children leaving home and possible career transitions, and older couples are more likely to experience illness, disabilities, and perhaps the loss of a spouse. Each of these different forms of stress brings with it a need for coping mechanisms, and if those coping mechanisms fail, the likelihood for psychological distress becomes very real (Pearlin, 1980). Perhaps the most challenging stressor in our lives, one that ultimately cannot be overcome, but that may be transcended and accepted, is old age and our inevitable death.

One popular book on love and marriage that earned a spot on the New York Times Bestseller list is *The Five Love Languages* by Gary Chapman (2004). In this self-help style book for married couples he talks about, you guessed it, five ways of communicating with your mate. Unlike books which focus on fundamental differences between men and women (e.g., the famous *Men are From Mars, Women are From Venus* [Gray, 1992]), Chapman focuses on how individuals communicate within a relationship. By understanding how they communicate with each other, couples can hopefully improve both their communication and, ultimately, their relationship.

According the Chapman, each type of love language is a positive action. They involve actually doing things which will improve a relationship. They are: words of affirmation, quality time, receiving gifts, acts of service, and physical touch. When you understand your mate’s love language, you can choose to do those types of things they will appreciate the most. What better way to show your partner how much you care?

Thich Nhat Hanh (2004) also talks about the importance of communication. Through meditation, one can learn to look deeply into their own suffering and their own joy. If one then keeps mindfulness and concentration alive, they can learn to speak with love again. If, however, a relationship is already damaged, a critical first step may be the need to develop deep listening.

He suggests we may call upon the name of Avalokiteshvara, the Buddha of Compassion, who has the ability to understand the suffering of others (remember that compassion was one of the four elements of true love, according to Thich Nhat Hanh; see above). Through the practice of mindful meditation, we can cultivate calmness and compassion, and open our heart to deep listening. By listening calmly and understanding, our compassion will help to ease the suffering of the other person in the relationship.

So, we’ve seen that love and marriage are both complex and culture-dependant phenomena. Also, there are many different types of love, and marriage is just one type of relationship involving love (if, indeed, love is involved in a given marriage). So, can we say something about whether or not love and/or marriage are good for a person? It appears that we can.

### Positive Psychological Perspectives on Love

Healthy relationships appear to be essential for the development of well-being throughout our lives. John Bowlby originally developed what we know of today as attachment theory, and Mary Ainsworth played a valuable role in advancing Bowlby’s theory (see Jarvis, 2004; Mitchell & Black, 1995; Rothbaum et al., 2000). Bowlby proposed an evolutionary basis for attachment, a basis that serves the species by aiding in the survival of the infant. In other words, the attachment between an infant and its primary caregivers helps to ensure both that the infant stays close to the parents and that the parents respond quickly and appropriately to the needs of the infant.

Motivated in part by reports made by Bowlby, though he preferred to stick with the term love rather than attachment, Harry Harlow (1975) undertook to investigate the nature of an apparent need for what he came to call contact comfort. He demonstrated that infant monkeys prefer a soft, terry cloth “mother” to a wire mesh “mother,” even if the wire surrogate is warm and provides food. Although these studies were conducted with monkeys, it is easy to see similar behavior in humans. Most of us had blankets and/or stuffed animals which were very dear to us, even if we had adequate (or, perhaps, truly loving) parents taking care of us.

 \* 

*On the left, the author’s son John is cuddling his blanket. To the right is John’s other*

*important transitional object, his gorilla HaHas, along with the author’s old Teddy bear.*

Tiffany Field has also shown that touch is a very important element in the care of premature infants. Gentle physical contact (massaging or stroking) by the parents typically results in the babies gaining weight more rapidly and being more active (Field, 1993). This helps to create an essential bond between the child and its caregivers. Infant massage is quite popular in many countries around the world, and it is part of the total approach to therapy recommended by the enigmatic Wilhelm Reich (Field, 2000, 2001).

As people grow older, they cite close personal relationships as one of the most important sources of happiness. Indeed, those who have formed and maintained healthy relationships are happier than those who have not, and those who are in love are even more happy (Berscheid, 2003; Hendrick & Hendrick, 2005). Love also leads to more satisfaction in a relationship (Hendrick & Hendrick, 2005). In one study of very happy people, all but one of the people in the top 10% of happiness was currently in a romantic relationship (see Seligman, 2002).

When asked to identify someone with whom they discussed important matters, people who could identify five or more friends were 60% more likely to describe themselves as “very happy” than those who could not name such a close friend. People with close and supportive relationships experience greater social support, deal better with stress, and tend to be in better health – both mentally and physically (see Myers, 1999).

Conversely, there are significant associations between loneliness and unhappiness and between loneliness and a variety of mental and physical illnesses (see Berscheid, 2003; Myers, 1999). Myers (1999) cites a number of studies with poignant results:

* people with few social ties are more likely to die prematurely
* people living alone have twice the likelihood of a recurring heart attack
* people with broken social ties (e.g., divorce) are more likely to become ill
* high-IQ children of divorced parents die at a younger age than their counterparts

The benefits of close, loving relationships appear to be magnified when they become the most significant relationship of choice many of us will ever experience: marriage. Married people are happier than those never married, divorced, or separated (Hendrick & Hendrick, 2005). This is true for both men and women (Berscheid, 2003; Myers, 1999), though marriage may be somewhat more beneficial for the physical and mental health of men (see Argyle, 1999). As it turns out, marriage is a better predictor of happiness and well-being than age, gender, money, community, or job satisfaction (Myers, 1999; Seligman, 2002).

When it comes to the buffer that marriage provides against mental illness, we see something interesting in the data. Married people have the lowest levels of depression of any group, which stands to reason if they are also the happiest group (Argyle, 1999; Seligman, 2002). But the numbers reveal something fascinating. Married people may be the happiest group, but the difference between the groups tend to be fairly small, something on the order of 5% compared to single people and up to 15% compared to divorced people (see Argyle, 1999), although in some other studies the difference may surpass 20% (see Myers, 1999). However, the differences seen in depression among those who experienced a stressful life event or, perhaps most significantly, lost a spouse can exceed 30% (see Argyle, 1999). Thus, the psychological buffer of a close, loving relationship (esp. marriage) against mental illness appears to be more profound than the benefits to happiness and well-being during otherwise routine periods of life.

So, why is marriage beneficial, both in terms of enhancing happiness and well-being and in buffering against psychological distress and disorder? While the answer certainly varies somewhat, given differences between people, significant factors appear to be social support, psychological contact (perhaps as a continuation of our childhood need for attachment), and a source of positive emotion in our lives. Interestingly, marital satisfaction varies throughout the family life cycle, with highest satisfaction being early in the marriage (a time of romantic love) and later in the marriage (a time of companionate love). The low point for marital satisfaction is during the child-raising years (a time of stress and challenge, as any parent knows; see Argyle, 1999).

One of the challenges we face regarding the nature of much of this research is that it is correlational. So, if we find a positive correlation between marriage and happiness, is it the case that married people become happier or is it that happy people are more likely to get married? Fortunately, for those who are married, it does appear that marriage pays emotional dividends. Reasons for this include marriage being a source of self-esteem (as both spouse and, perhaps, as a parent) and providing a close, personal friendship (i.e., a buffer against loneliness). Furthermore, such a close relationship provides an opportunity for sharing, both the good and the bad events that come with living a life (see Myers, 1999).

Finally, let us consider the other side of love: the capacity to be loved (Seligman, 2002; Vaillant, 1977, 2002, 2012). In his studies of men in the Harvard Grant Study, George Vaillant has examined the consequences of having a childhood devoid of warmth, stability, and affection, resulting in what he referred to as a bleak childhood. These children were then referred to as the “Loveless” children, and often ended up lonely as adults.

For lonely men, there are a number of ways in which they fail to adjust well to life. They are more likely to be distant from their families, including their children. They are more likely to have been labeled as mentally ill during their life, much more likely to utilize immature defensive styles (i.e., ego defense mechanisms such as acting out or being passive aggressive), and they are more than 10x as likely to be chronically ill by the age of 52. Perhaps the most disappointing aspects of the lives of lonely men (and we can assume this may be similar for women, though the female group in this study was separate and not all the same data were available) are that they find it difficult to play, to take full vacations, and they are more likely to abuse alcohol and other drugs (Vaillant, 1977).

When Vaillant (2002) examined the lives of loveless children in old age, once again there was dramatic evidence that love experiences in early childhood, both loving and being loved, is essential to successful aging. Since these men were essentially the same group as the lonely men (literally, since these same men were studied for many years; one of the longest studies of its kind), we see many of the same results regarding mental illness, drug abuse, and the inability to enjoy life as measured by playing games or taking enjoyable vacations. Indeed, cherished children were 5x more likely to play both competitive sports and games with friends and to take full, enjoyable vacations.

Of greater concern, perhaps, is the actual effect of a loveless childhood on life itself. Half of these men who met criteria for mental illness by age 50 were dead by age 75, whereas only about 1 in 9 of those who were relatively free of psychological distress/disorders had died by age 75. In addition, those men classified as loveless children were several times more likely to die prematurely (e.g., accidents, suicide, cirrhosis of the liver or lung cancer). One of the key reasons for these problems was a significant lack of friendship or other forms of social support in old age.

On the other hand, a warm childhood led to a sense of comfort and acceptance of one’s life as old age approached. Cherished children with two loving and supportive parents were likely to appear charming, extroverted, and energetic in their 30s, and they were rich in friendships in their 60s (Vaillant, 2002).

## Play, Leisure, & Recreation

Play is something typically associated with children. Indeed, when adolescents or adults engage in play they are often referred to, in a negative manner, as being “childish.” But what is filled with more unrestrained positive emotion than children engaged in active, fun play? Why is it that adults are often restricted to moderated forms of leisure and recreation, as opposed to simply being allowed to play? Either way, escaping from the demands of reality seems to be a valuable and positively healthy activity.

Indeed, in 1938, the cultural historian Johan Huizinga wrote a fascinating thesis on the role of play in human culture (Huizinga, 1950). Huizinga suggests that play, including adult variations of play as ritualization, is so essential to human culture that our species should be called *Homo ludens* - the playing man (as opposed to *Homo sapiens*, the wise man). Amongst the earliest interactions between parents and their children, parents use playing to teach their infants about human agency:

For example, a parent will move her hand slowly toward her baby’s face and utter “Boop” as she touches the child’s nose. In this and countless other instances of “play,” the parent is seeking to communicate, “I’m doing this to you *on purpose*.” (pg. 320; Schulman, 2005a)

Oddly enough, in making his argument, Huizinga (1950) also challenges his argument. He points out that play is actually older and more ubiquitous in nature than culture itself. There is no question that other species think and have emotion, and there is now evidence that some dolphin species actually have names for one another. However, there is scant evidence of what we would properly call culture in other species. Play, however, is observed widely throughout the animal kingdom.

By the way, here’s an interesting tidbit. One of my favorite bands from days gone by is Thin Lizzy. There best album was definitely *Jailbreak*, and there’s a song that relates to this discussion. In the song *Emerald*, they talk about a town being attacked, and they end the second verse with the worst of all possible outcomes!

Down from the glen came the marching men  
With their shields and their swords  
To fight the fight they believed to be right  
Overthrow the overlords  
  
To the town where there was plenty  
They brought plunder, swords, and flame  
When they left the town was empty  
And children would never play again

*Emerald*, on the album *Jailbreak*, by Thin Lizzy

### Early Psychological Perspectives on Play

Psychiatrists and psychologists have long been interested in play, but typically from a therapeutic perspective. In order to conduct therapy with children, who do not have the verbal skills and experiences of adults, therapists need some way to delve into their minds other than the traditional methods involving some sort of conversation.

Melanie Klein pioneered the use of play analysis in psychotherapy (particularly in psychoanalysis). Klein acknowledged that some psychoanalytic work had been done with children prior to 1920, particularly by Hermine von Hug-Hellmuth (who, tragically, was murdered by her nephew in 1924). Hug-Hellmuth used some drawings and play during psychoanalysis, but she did not develop a specific technique and she did not work with any children under the age of 6. Klein’s interest in play analysis began with a 5 year-old boy known as ‘Fritz.’ Initially Klein worked with the child’s mother, but when his symptoms were not sufficiently relieved, Klein decided to psychoanalyze him. During the course of psychoanalysis, she not only listened to the child’s free associations, she observed his play and considered that to be an equally valuable expression of the child’s unconscious mind (Klein, 1955/1986). In *The Psycho-Analysis of Children* (1932/1963), she described the basics of the technique:

On a low table in my analytic room there are laid out a number of small toys of a primitive kind - little wooden men and women, carts, carriages, motor-cars, trains, animals, bricks and houses, as well as paper, scissors and pencils. Even a child that is usually inhibited in its play will at least glance at the toys or touch them, and will soon give me a first glimpse into its complexive life by the way in which it begins to play with them or lays them aside, or by its general attitude toward them. (pg. 40)

Anna Freud (Sigmund Freud’s daughter) acknowledged that Melanie Klein had contributed to our understanding of how children might be observed, but she felt that Klein had attributed too much to what Klein and her colleagues observed. Klein allowed children the opportunity to play with toys in her office, a situation in which the child’s imagination can run wild. Klein believed this was the same for a child as free association was for an adult. However, Anna Freud countered that an adult is aware of their goals in psychoanalysis, whereas a child at play is not aware of being in therapy. As a result, Anna Freud viewed the play of children as fundamentally different than an adult’s free association:

The play technique worked out by Mrs. Melanie Klein is certainly valuable for observing the child. Instead of taking the time and trouble to pursue it into its domestic environment we establish at one stroke the whole of its known world in the analyst’s room, and let it move about in it under the analyst’s eye but at first without his interference…

Mrs. Klein however…assumes the same status for these play-actions of the child as for the free associations of the adult patient…if the child’s play is not dominated by the same purposive attitude as the adult’s free association, there is no justification for treating it as having the same significance. (pgs. 28-29; A. Freud, 1946)

D. W. Winnicott was a pediatrician who later became an analyst, having studied with Melanie Klein, among others. His interest in analyzing children was sparked by watching the playful interactions between children and their mothers, in much the same way as Klein used her play technique. Winnicott developed a procedure he called the Squiggle Game, a technique that makes use of drawings by the child and the analyst, including the opportunity for each to make changes in the other’s drawings. Winnicott believed that this process provided a special opportunity to make contact with the child, in which it felt to him as if the child were alongside him helping to describe the case (Winnicott, 1971).

Erik Erikson was an analyst who studied with Anna Freud and her father. He borrowed Sigmund Freud’s famous line regarding dreams as the royal road to the unconscious mind, saying instead that play is the royal road to understanding the young child’s ego and identity development (Erikson, 1950). With very young children there is a unique challenge for both experimental psychologists and therapists: the child’s limited language development. Not only does observing play allow for insight into ego development, it can also show us the capacity for the ego to find recreation and to cure itself, if necessary.

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*When Samuel and John were young, Samuel was excited to share one of his favorite toys (a toy truck). As they got older and games got more complex (here they are playing poker), the desire to win sometimes led to excessive competition. Here, you can see Samuel has some cards under the table, so he is clearly cheating – and very much enjoying it!*

Erikson studied childhood play extensively, publishing articles that included clinical notes on how and why children build things or choose the toys they play with (Erikson, 1937), psychological factors behind and effects of disruptions in play (Erikson, 1940), gender differences in play (Erikson, 1955), and ethnic, racial, nationality, and socioeconomic status differences in play (Erikson, 1972). Ultimately, Erikson published *Toys and Reasons* (Erikson, 1977), in which he argued that childhood play provides a basis for ritualizing our life experiences, and that ritualization continues throughout the stages of life. Whether play serves to help master and resolve traumatic experiences, or provides catharsis for pent-up emotion or surplus energy, or whether it has a functional role in which a child can exercise new faculties and potentials in preparation for the future, Erikson argued that play is an act of renewal and self-expression, one that can be an expression of inventiveness and abandon. Play provides a means for connecting with others, in order to cope with the challenges of life (Erikson, 1977).

Alfred Adler, whom we encountered in the section on human strengths and virtues, also had something interesting to say about play. Having acknowledged the usefulness of play in assessing the motivations of a child for therapeutic purposes (especially with regard to aggression), he also viewed play in a very positive light. Overall, since he considered all behavior to be reflective of some goal (i.e., the fictional finalism), he considered play to be preparation for the future. By observing the type of play and/or games that a child prefers, and how they act during play or while playing games, you can learn a great deal about the child’s plans for the future, even though the child may not be consciously aware of those plans (Adler, 1928 and in Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956).

Play is indivisibly connected with the soul. It is, so to speak, a kind of profession, and must be considered as such. Therefore, it is not an insignificant matter to disturb a child in his play. Play should never be considered as a method of killing time. In regard to the goal of preparing for the future, every child has in him something of the adult he will be at sometime. Thus, in the appraisal of an individual we can draw our conclusions more easily when we have a knowledge of his childhood. (pg. 93; Adler, 1928)



*As children are growing up, their play often involves imitating adult behavior.*

*This is clearly reflective of Adler’s belief that play, in part at least,*

*helps to prepare children for adult life.*

### Benefits of Play

For both humans and other species, play often involves vigorous physical activity. This helps to build physical resources, and is associated with high-energy positive emotions like joy. Generally speaking, happy people play more, are in better health and physical condition, and they live longer. Play also leads to gratification. For example, a baby does not like a rattle because it makes a noise, but rather they like the rattle because *they* can use it make the noise for themselves (see Seligman, 2002).

When we think about play, we often associate it with friendship. After all, who is it that we play with? In looking at the nature of friendship over the lifespan, Hartup and Stevens (1999) found that young children describe friends as the ones they play with. In contrast, adolescents describe friends as those with whom they share common activities, and adults focus more on support and companionship.

For those of us with an interest in evolutionary psychology, we can draw correlates between what the ethologists have to say and the perspective of Alfred Adler. Ethologists and comparative psychologists have long studied the play of young animals. Most of their play involves practicing the skills they’ll need to survive. For example, young antelope, wildebeest, and zebras run and jump and kick; whereas young lions stalk, pounce, and “disembowel” everything from falling leaves to their mother’s tail (Gould, 1982). In each species (and likewise for many others), these skills will prepare the adult lions to hunt and kill, and the adults of the prey animals to run and jump to escape, or to kick the predators who get that close.

For humans, especially in modern times, survival is more about learning one’s place and opportunities in society. Thus, play serves an important socialization function, with analogous phenomena seen in other primate species (Cooper, 1972). When one examines the play of primitive cultures, such as the !Kung bushmen in southern Africa, although they seem to make no distinction between the sexes among their children, play groups are almost always comprised of a single sex. Boys spend significantly more time playing rough-and-tumble games or playing with “technical” equipment (crude hunting implements) than do the girls (Gould, 1982).

Thus, play for both humans and other animals appears to help prepare them for adult life – whether it be mere survival of the fittest or something more complex, such as pursuing an available career. And yet, there remain questions as to the nature and role of play. Play can occur in groups (such as with friends) or alone. It appears to occur primarily when there is no need for maintenance activities (and wouldn’t learning to survive be the ultimate maintenance activity?). And, most curiously of all, play often appears to serve no discernable function other than the creation of fun or pleasure (Cooper, 1972; Huizinga, 1950).

One interesting and important way in which play might help to prepare us for the challenges of life is to enhance our options. We previously discussed Fredrickson’s broaden-and-build theory as it pertains to positive emotion. Well, what leads to more positive emotion for many children than play? Consequently, in addition to improving physical and social skills (by literally running around playing with friends), the positive emotion (the *fun*) associated with playing enhances a child’s (and presumably both an adolescent’s and an adult’s) cognitive activity and skills (see Fredrickson, 2005). Thus, play is a wonderfully valuable activity for everyone.

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*Here are my boys playing one of our favorite games on Beaver Island, MI.*

*Where the small streams came down to the beach we would dam them. Once the water building up behind the dam overran the dam, we would watch it rapidly accelerate and destroy the dam. We would do this over and over. One of my own favorite games*

*was to do silly things with my dog Sunny. Here he is working on a computer*

*– writing by my side, as he enjoys a warm fire.*

Although play has resisted many attempts to explain exactly what it is and what specific role it “plays,” the likelihood that its primary purpose is to prepare the young child (as we now return to discussing humans exclusively) for adulthood, sets up our discussion of play in adulthood. Since adults no longer need to prepare for adulthood (they are there, though many may not act like it!), the activities they engage in during their free time change significantly. Thus, our terminology tends to change as well – from play to leisure activities or recreation.

### Leisure/Recreation

Leisure can be defined as those activities which people do in their free time, because they want to, for their own sake, for fun, entertainment, self-improvement, or for goals of their own choosing, but not for material gain. (Argyle, 2001; pg. 110)

Leisure is typically defined as free time, whereas recreation refers to what we choose to do in our free time. In other words, “leisure activities” would be the same thing as recreation. The play of children is leisure activity, but leisure activity and recreation for adults is often not what we typically think of as the unrestrained and seemingly irrational play enjoyed by young children. So it becomes quite interesting to look at what adults choose for their activities during leisure time.

Studies have shown that leisure is something that we both have and value. In the modern world adults have approximately 3-6 hours of free time each weekday, and 8-10 hours of free time on the weekend days. This amounts to roughly 45 hours of free time each week (nearly the same as a typical workweek). In the Western world at least, life satisfaction and happiness are positively correlated to significant degrees with one’s satisfaction regarding leisure activities. And it turns out that some 37% of people are satisfied with their leisure activities, whereas some 43% are pleased or delighted with their leisure activities (i.e., 80% of people enjoy their leisure activities). So the choice of one’s leisure activities is an important factor when it comes to enjoying life (see Argyle, 1999, 2001).

Leisure satisfaction during adolescence is predictive of adult leisure satisfaction (see Argyle 1999), and one form of leisure that often carries over from childhood into adulthood, though it may become more of a spectator sport, is actual sports. As mentioned above, the play of children often involves physical activity. For many, that is soon channeled into organized team sports. For adolescents, who are at the stage of life in which they try to determine their identity, success in sports is something on which our society places a great deal of value.

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*Recreation for children often involves organized sports.*

*Left: John cut behind the defender and drove the ball with his knee over*

*the goalie’s head and into the goal. Right: Samuel scores a round kick in a*

*Taekwondo tournament (on his way to a gold medal).*

Adults are less likely to continue engaging in organized sports, but many continue to exercise. Strenuous exercise appears to be one of the most effective activities for improving mood for extended periods of time. A key point here is that researchers have controlled for variables such as whether or not happier/more satisfied people are the ones choosing to continue exercising. Exercise reliably and actively improves mood, in part by leading to the release of endorphins within our body (see Argyle, 1999, 2001). Many of you have likely heard of the “runner’s high.”

Many adults do not continue to exercise; their choice of leisure activities becomes more sedentary. Nonetheless, what they choose to do is important, and activities which involve being part of a group have the benefit of maintaining social relationships – a particular source of happiness for extraverts. One of the interesting phenomena that various social clubs and leisure groups create is something Argyle (1999) calls the “leisure world.” These are self-contained mini-cultures, with their own values, traditions, skills, events, costumes, etc. One of the best known examples might be “Trekkies.”

Having mentioned Star Trek, we must note that the most common leisure activity is watching TV. However, this does not appear to be the result of enjoyment. Watching a lot of TV tends to be negatively correlated with happiness (see Argyle, 2001). It may be that people who watch a lot of TV don’t have the opportunity to do anything else. Thus, they are not choosing to watch TV *per se*, but rather lack alternative choices.

For some, there are periods of time during which every day is devoted to leisure: going on vacation! I was in a wonderful mood during my trip out west (see the end of August in my journal). Especially here in America many people enjoy the wilderness, as opposed to merely being outside on the beach or something similar, and I did head up a mountain after hiking out into the desert. Sadly, there are too many people who avoid vacations, and workaholics tend to be stressed until they get back to work (see Argyle, 1999, 2001).

While I was at the BJJ Globetrotters camp (again, see my journal from early September) there were some people from England. In Europe it is more common to take “holiday,” and to take that holiday for a longer period of time. It’s a practice that I think many Americans would benefit from. Having just been out west for a week, and then out east for a week, I was reminded how many wonderful places there are to visit in the United States.

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*My idea of recreation often involves something exciting. On the left I am hanging from two ice screws about 900 feet up the alpine route Pinnacle Gulley on Mt. Washington, NH. In the picture on the right, we are in the Alpine Valley above that route.*

*The temperature all day was about -15o F.*

The concept of leisure has changed dramatically throughout the ages. The word “school” originally meant leisure, and the ancient Greeks considered the pursuit of knowledge to be a valuable leisure activity for adults – as opposed to the required activities of state service, war, and ritual (Huizinga, 1950). A group known as the sophists arose and engaged in public presentations that were a mixture of education and entertainment, and the profession of sophistry was held on par with that of a star athlete.

Perhaps the most significant of the sophists, Protagoras (c490-c420 BC), taught that man was the measure of all things. Based on this philosophy, it was proposed that man was not merely subject to fate, but rather, he was free and able to determine his own way in the universe. The sophists questioned everything, including the existence of the gods! They emphasized individuality, and believed that young men (at that time such freedom was open only to men) should be trained to take care of themselves in order to be successful and happy (Frost, 1962).

Consequently, sophistry became a profession, with the sophists themselves earning a living educating young men of means. They believed that better educated men would rise higher in society, and become leaders of the people. Indeed, the best educated, as evidenced by their public speaking skills, would become the best leaders (Frost, 1962). One can easily imagine the haughtiness this competition would give rise to, hence the intentional playing up of the entertaining aspect of public sophistry (Huizinga, 1950).

## Flow & Mindfulness

One of the results of play is often an intense focus on the ongoing activity. In other words, the child becomes immersed in playing. Likewise, the recreational activities enjoyed by adolescents and adults can become all-consuming. When this is viewed in a positive light, as opposed to being an unhealthy obsession, the result is typically something described by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi as flow. Flow is an optimal state in which a person is so involved in an enjoyable activity that nothing else matters, and they will continue engaging in the activity for the sheer sake of continuing (Czikszentmihalyi, 1990).

There is also an ancient concept which addresses the complete focus of the mind in a different way. Over 2,500 years ago, Gotama Buddha came to a fascinating understanding of the human mind, and he taught a series of mindfulness exercises to train the mind. These exercises in mindfulness form the basis for many styles of meditations. Today, cutting-edge neurobiologists are using functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) and other brain imaging techniques to examine brain activity during deep meditation. Their goal is to understand the nature of the human mind and to examine whether the Buddha (as well as the Rishis and Yogis of ancient India) had discovered a way to actually alter the state of the mind.

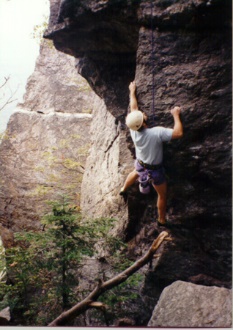
Approximately 1,000 years after the life of the Buddha (though still some 1,500 years ago), the founder of Zen Buddhism, Bodhidharma, determined that too much time spent in meditation can lead to a weak body. So, when Bodhidharma arrived at the Shao-Lin temple, he developed techniques of physical training to strengthen the monks and to help them both defend themselves from bandits and prepare for extended periods of meditation. This was the legendary beginning of the martial arts, formal techniques to train the body and mind. Since the martial arts were developed with noble goals, they have throughout their history had a reputation for developing strong, admirable character traits. In other words, those who practice martial arts with proper discipline also train themselves to conform to a personality style marked by a calm, humble, yet confident demeanor.

### Flow

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi began studying the state of mind experienced by people doing something enjoyable which was going really well for them in the mid-1970s (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975a,b). His subsequent description of what he termed “flow” is one of the best-known and most popular topics in positive psychology (see, e.g., Csikszentmihalyi, 1990 and Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2005).

…Flow denotes the holistic sensation present when we act with total involvement. It is the kind of feeling after which one nostalgically says: “that was fun,” or “that was enjoyable.” It is the state in which action follows upon action according to an internal logic which seems to need no conscious intervention on our part. We experience it as a unified flowing form one moment to the next, in which we feel in control of our actions, and in which there is little distinction between self and environment; between stimulus and response; or between past, present, and future. (pg. 43; Csikszentmihalyi, 1975a)

To study this phenomenon, Csikszentmihalyi and his students interviewed a variety of people who became totally absorbed in their chosen activity. The subjects included dancers, chess players, basketball players, music composers, rock climbers, and even surgeons (to show that flow can occur at work). Rock and ice climbing were once my passions (before I had double-hip replacement surgery), and I can attest to how absorbed one becomes on a long climb that is going well – especially when you are on the sharp end (aka, lead climbing)! There was is nothing quite like looking back on a long day of climbing, while perhaps having pizza and beer at a local bar, and realizing that it’s mostly a blur, but it feels so good to have done it. It is a sense of satisfaction that mere relaxation or typical fun just can’t achieve.



*This is one of the few nice pictures I have of myself rock*

*climbing. I’m on a challenging 5.9 route at Square Ledge, NH.*

There are two dimension of flow which have been defined: the elements of the flow experience and the structure of flow activities. The six elements of the flow experience are as follows:

* **merging action and awareness** – flow is not a dualistic perspective; the person experiencing flow is aware of his/her action but not of the awareness itself
* **centering of attention** – the individual centers their attention on a limited stimulus field; this is an active process of narrowing consciousness to block potential intruding stimuli
* **loss of ego** – since flow activities involve freely accepted rules, there is no need to negotiate one’s role with others; i.e., the person becomes one with the flow of the activity; loss of ego also results in an altered perception of time (time seems to disappear, or pass very quickly)
* **control of action and environment** – flow results in an active awareness of mastery, one does not worry about a lack of control
* **demands for action and clear feedback** – there are clear, noncontradictory demands for action (i.e., what must be done is obvious) and clear unambiguous feedback to one’s actions (i.e., whether or not what you did was successful)
* **autotelic nature of flow** – flow activities need no goals or rewards external to themselves

The autotelic nature of flow deserves some further comment. Csikszentmihalyi (1975b) included surgeons in his early book because he was interested in whether or not work could ever be enjoyable. Surgeons certainly receive significant external rewards, including prestige and a high salary. When asked why they became surgeons, they usually reply in socially desirable ways such as citing the desire to improve their professional skills or to serve their patients. But when directly asked “Why do you do surgery?” about one third of surgeons talk about the enjoyment, the excitement, and their love of working with their hands. So, although there may be extrinsic rewards, for some surgeons there are also intrinsic rewards which can lead to a state of flow.

The value of autotelic activities, those activities which are their own reward, is not a new concept. Csikszentmihalyi (1975a,b) cites one of my favorite books from ancient times (written as early as 500 B.C.), the *Bhagavad Gita* (“*The Song of the Blessed One*”), one of the holiest books in the Hindu religion. For those who believe in such things, this book is a conversation between Lord Krishna and the warrior Arjuna, in which Lord Krishna instructs Arjuna on how to live a good and proper life.

The wise man lets go of all results, whether good or bad,

And is focused on the action alone. Yoga is skill in actions.

(pg. 55; translation by Mitchell, 2000)

**Note:** This translation is quite different from the one cited by Csikszentmihalyi, though it makes the same point. When reading translations of ancient books like this, they can be quite different. It makes it difficult, if not impossible, to find your favorite quotes in a different translation. Here is the quotation from the translation used by Csikszentmihalyi (1975b):

Let the motive be in the deed and not in the event.

Be not one whose motive for action is the hope of reward.

The structure of flow activities is essential, since it requires a balance between the action opportunities that are present (i.e., the challenges) and the individual’s action capabilities (i.e., one’s skills). If the challenges are daunting, and one’s skills are minimal, or vice versa, the result is anxiety. To a less extreme extent, if the challenge is too difficult for one’s skill level, it leads to worrying. Or, if one has more than sufficient skill for the challenge, one tends to get bored. Flow can occur when the person’s skill level is adequately challenged, yet they are able to perform well by focusing on the task at hand.

The quality of a flow experience depends on where on the continuum of balancing skills vs. challenges the person falls. Let’s use rock climbing as an example. When Csikszentmihalyi began his work in 1975, the technical rock climbing scale ranged from 5.0-5.11. The 5 refers to Class 5, technical rock climbing (Class 1 is a flat trail, Class 2 a rough trail, Class 3 is low rock scrambling, Class 4 is high rock scrambling where a fall could seriously injure you), and the grades from 0-11 refer to the difficulty, with 5.11 being the most difficult climb anyone could accomplish.

**Note:** I’ve climbed hard 5.10 climbs, and I was good, but certainly not an elite climber. The scale has been expanded several times, with the individual levels expanded as well. Indeed, there is an ongoing challenge throughout the climbing world to extend the upper limit to new, more difficult levels (the top currently being about 5.16). Climbing at 5.10 and beyond typically involves overhanging cliffs and one-handed moves (which I have done), whereas climbing at the elite level typically involves single-finger moves on overhanging cliffs (which I managed only one time in a gym).

So, if a new climber chooses a 5.2 climb, their limited skill is a fair balance for the easy climb. Given that balance between skill and challenge, they may experience flow. However, a skilled climber may choose a 5.10 climb. Once again, there is a balance between their skill and the challenge, but their flow experience is more complex because the challenge is much more difficult. Thus, as one improves their skills and successfully takes on more difficult challenges, the flow experience can become ever more satisfying.

The question now, quite simply, is whether or not a flow state affects a person’s well-being. The answer, as you might expect, is yes (for reviews see Compton, 2005; Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2005). In several longitudinal studies involving high school students who had an opportunity to experience flow in their preferred activities, flow was associated with commitment, achievement, and better grades. It also appears that having the opportunity to experience flow protects against a variety of negative outcomes, including physical pain. In addition, experiencing flow appears to be related to resilience in children, and it has been suggested that school counselors should be made more aware of flow theory as a means to counsel students who are facing challenges in their lives (Parr et al., 1998).

Not only young students benefit from experiencing flow. College students who are high in intrinsic motivation (i.e., they are studying their major because it has meaning for them) are more likely to experience flow and, consequently, they become more engaged with their educational pursuits (Fullagar & Mills, 2008). On the other side of the coin, teachers who are more likely to experience flow while teaching also perform better than those teachers who do not (Chu & Lee, 2012).

For people of all ages, flow experiences can lead to a higher quality of experience during their daily life. When home life flows, adolescents are happier and more involved, and mothers who experience flow while caring for their children felt they were better mothers (see Compton, 2005). Flow also seems to be a universal phenomenon, having been studied in a variety of countries/cultures, including Canada, Taiwan, Germany, Switzerland, Japan, the United Kingdom, China, Italy, and Spain (Asakawa, 2004, 2010; Aubé et al., 2014; Chu & Lee, 2012; Engeser & Rheinberg, 2008; Kowal & Fortier, 1999; Moneta, 2004a,b, 2012; Schüler, 2010; Zumeta et al., 2016).

Let us now turn our attention to the key question: What is it about flow that helps to improve subjective well-being? According to Csikszentmihalyi (1990), psychic disorder is one of the main forces that negatively affects our consciousness. Simply put, when we don’t know what’s going on, or how to deal with challenges we face, we experience psychological distress. This distress may be experienced in a variety of ways, such as anxiety, fear, rage, jealousy, etc. Flow is a state in which consciousness is in a state of optimal experience. The information coming into awareness is congruent with one’s goals, resulting in an effortless flow of psychic energy.

Following a flow experience, the self becomes more complex. This involves an interplay between differentiation and integration, resulting in a good type of complexity. For example, think back to Fredrickson’s broaden-and-build theory – positive emotion leads to a wider variety of perceived options when faced with challenges.

As noted in Section II, creativity has been identified as one the 24 basic human strengths (Peterson & Seligman, 2004), one we’ll examine somewhat more later on (see below). It turns out that flow sometimes plays an important role in the creative process, and that role may be in enhancing the positive complexity of personality. In Csikszentmihalyi’s study of creativity (1996), he emphasized the complexity of the creative personality. He believes that creative individuals share a number of paradoxical personality dimensions:

* they have a great deal of physical energy, but are often quiet and at rest
* they tend to be smart, but can also seem naïve
* they can be playful, yet are also disciplined
* they alternate between imagination and fantasy on one hand, while rooted in a sense of reality on the other hand
* they seem to harbor opposite tendencies on the continuum between introversion and extraversion
* they can be both humble and proud at the same time
* they transcend typical gender roles
* they are thought to be rebellious and independent, but creativity must exist in opposition to internalized domains of culture
* they are very passionate about their work, yet remain highly objective about it
* their openness and sensitivity predisposes them to suffering and pain, but also to a great deal of enjoyment

Although Csikszentmihalyi (1996) acknowledges that this list may not be definitive, the key is the polarity of the creative individual’s personality. From one pole they are capable of recognizing new ideas, and the other pole then makes it possible to develop novel ideas to the point of acceptance. Once again, flow will lead to enjoyment and the consequent enhanced complexity of the personality.

### Mindfulness

Mindfulness is a form of meditation that occurs throughout every moment of the day. Indeed, it is very important to live fully in every moment, and to look deeply into each experience (Thich Nhat Hanh, 1991, 1995). By being mindful, we can enter into awareness of our body and our emotions. Thich Nhat Hanh relates a story in which the Buddha was asked when he and his monks practiced. The Buddha replied that they practiced when they sat, when they walked, and when they ate. When the person questioning the Buddha replied that everyone sits, walks, and eats, the Buddha replied that he and his monks *knew* they were sitting, *knew* they were walking, and *knew* they were eating (Thich Nhat Hanh, 1995). Mindfulness can also be applied to acts as simple as breathing. According to Thich Nhat Hanh, conscious breathing is the most basic Buddhist technique for touching peace (Thich Nhat Hanh, 1991, 1995). He suggests silently reciting the following lines while breathing mindfully:

Breathing in, I calm my body.

Breathing out, I smile.

Dwelling in the present moment,

I know this is a wonderful moment!

Andrew Olendzki (2003, 2005), a scholar of early Buddhist tradition and former executive director of the Barre Center for Buddhist Studies in Massachusetts, has done a marvelous job of trying to put the teachings of the Buddha into a perspective understandable to Western psychologists. In *very* simple terms covering only a small part of what the Buddha taught, when a sense object that we are capable of detecting is, indeed, detected by one of our sensory systems, we become aware of the experience. For example, when a sound is detected by our ear, we become aware of hearing a sound. Consciousness is an emergent phenomenon of each of these individual moments of contact, i.e., the moment of contact between the sense object, the sensory organ, and the awareness of the object. Since we are constantly encountering different moments of contact that arise and then fall out of consciousness, from all of our various senses, the Buddhist concept of consciousness is not a continuous one (this is in contrast to the stream of consciousness perspective of America’s preeminent psychologist William James; James, 1892/1992). Since consciousness is not continuous, neither is the self. Our sense of self as continuous and real is an illusion, and it is because we cling to that illusion that we inevitably suffer (the first noble truth in Buddhism). In order to alleviate our suffering, and to understand the true nature of our self, the Buddha taught a series of mindfulness meditations to help us see ourselves as we really are.

There are four mindfulness trainings: mindfulness of body, mindfulness of feeling, mindfulness of mind, and mindfulness of mental objects (Olendzki, 2005; Thanissaro Bhikkhu, 1996). When meditating mindfully on the body, it is common to focus on the breath. This can be done in a variety of positions: sitting, standing, lying down, or walking. One can also become very mindful of the body by performing certain martial arts as moving meditation, particularly Tai Chi Chuan or Qigong (Khor, 1981). When meditating mindfully on feelings, one considers the pleasant or unpleasant quality of each experience. For example, after sitting for a while, pain or discomfort may arise in a knee or hip. There is nothing wrong with this pain, and with practice one can experience it as a sensation without the negative or unpleasant feeling that we describe as pain. This is, of course, not easy. All forms of meditation require time and practice. Still, it is important to remember that if there is a real problem, such sitting on a sharp rock, you may want to move in a slow and mindful manner until comfortable again. When meditating mindfully on the mind itself, one takes notice of the thoughts arising during meditation. One should pay particular attention to whether the thoughts are related to one of the three root causes of suffering: greed, hatred, or delusion.

…In any given moment, the mind is either caught up by one or more of these or it is not, and this is something of which one can learn to be aware. Greed and hatred are the two polarities of desire, the intense wanting or not wanting of an object, while delusion is a strong form of the basic misunderstanding that gives desire its power over us. (pg. 255; Olendzki, 2005)

One does not pass judgment on these thoughts; mindfulness teaches us only to become aware of our thoughts and to recognize their presence and reality. Finally, there is mindfulness of mental objects (or mental qualities), a deep understanding of the content of mental experience that arises as one masters mindfulness meditation (Olendzki, 2005; Thanissaro Bhikkhu, 1996). Mindfulness of mental objects involves focusing on the nature of desires as they arise in relation to the five hindrances: desire, aversion, indolence, restlessness and doubt.

This conservative and traditional understanding of mindfulness may seem rather esoteric, but it is proving to be very influential in psychology today. To be sure, meditation has been described as “now one of the most enduring, widespread, and researched of all psychotherapeutic methods” (Walsh & Shapiro, 2006). A mindfulness-based stress reductionprogram has been developed and popularized by Jon Kabat-Zinn (1990, 1994, 2005), and a similar therapeutic technique, called Focusing, had previously been developed in the late 1970s (Gendlin, 1990). Mindfulness has also been incorporated into psychotherapeutic approaches to dealing with anxiety, depression, and feelings of unworthiness and insecurity (Brach, 2003; Brantley, 2003; McQuaid & Carmona, 2004), and it has provided new perspectives on the treatment of addiction and anger issues (Aronson, 2004; Dudley-Grant, 2003). Of particular interest to students, mindfulness has proven to be helpful in alleviating the stress associated with studying psychology in graduate school (Borynski, 2003)! In addition, Janet Surrey, one of the founding members of the Stone Center group, has studied comparisons between mindfulness and relational therapy (Surrey, 2005). Likewise, Trudy Goodman, who studied with Jean Piaget and now also teaches insight meditation, has utilized mindfulness in therapy with children (Goodman, 2005).

This traditional approach to mindfulness is usually associated with Southeast Asia, particularly the Thai forest monks. Jack Kornfield, a former Buddhist monk and currently a clinical psychologist, practiced with the renowned Ajahn Chah. Ajahn Chah’s teachings have been translated into English (Ajahn Chah, 2001), and another of his students has written two books in English (Ajahn Sumedho, 1987; 1995). Thanissaro Bhikkhu is another interesting individual dedicated to offering the teachings of the Buddha, known as the Dhamma. In conjunction with Dhamma Dana Publications, he has written his own book (Thanissaro Bhikkhu, 1993), translated the works of Buddhist monks and nuns (Ajaan Fuang Jotiko, 2005; Upasika Kee Nanayon, 1995), and translated with commentary some of the Pali Canon, the first written record of the teachings of the Buddha (Thanissaro Bhikkhu, 1996). Dhamma Dana Publications is committed to the free dissemination of these teachings and their books, sending many copies to people in prison who wish to better their lives. This is, of course, an active application of the Buddha’s teachings, and a way to help improve our society.

Before turning to our next topic, the neurobiology of mindfulness, let’s take a closer look at developing mindfulness. According to Andrew Olendzki (2008), and based on the teachings of the Abhidhamma (the third section of the Tipitaka, or Three Baskets of Buddhist Doctrine; Narada, 1956; Nyanatiloka, 1938; van Gorkom, 1969), mindfulness is much more than meditation. Consciousness arises and passes away, from moment to moment, resulting in a subjective experience of a stream of consciousness. Other mental factors arise with consciousness, some automatically. Included among these automatic or universal mental factors, are contact, feeling, perception, intention, attention, and focus. When we begin to meditate we try to get in touch with each experience at the point of its inception. However, attention and focus, which many people think are what meditation is all about, exist in every moment of consciousness.

If we move on to the so-called occasional factors, we find the likes of initial application, sustained application, and energy. Now we are beginning to turn our mind to something (such as the breath) without interruption, and to do so with energy (the impetus to keep our mind on, say, the breath). At this point we may be deep in meditation, perhaps doing so with determination and joy, but mindfulness is still something more.

Mindfulness is a wholesome state, during which unwholesome states cannot arise. It has the characteristic of not letting the mind waver, the function of eliminating confusion or forgetfulness, the manifestation of confronting an objective phenomenal field, and is caused by strong perception of the four foundations of mindfulness (mindfulness of body, feelings, consciousness, and mental objects). According to Olendzki (2008), the definitions of mindfulness “suggest an enhanced presence of mind, a heightened attentiveness to objects of experience in the present moment, a special non-ordinary quality of attention.” Interestingly, we can have an unwholesome moment of consciousness, and then become mindful of that experience (at which point only a wholesome mental state is possible).

When true mindfulness arises, one feels as if one is stepping back and observing what is happening in experience, rather than being embedded in it. This does not mean separation or detachment, but is rather a sense of not being hooked by a desirable object or not pushing away a repugnant object. (pp. 55-56; Olendzki, 2008)

The tradition of the Abhidhamma helps us understand that we can always move forward, learn from our experiences, accept them, and try again. Included in the wholesome mental states are self-respect, respect for others, and faith, all of which co-arise with mindfulness. Thus, each moment of mindfulness is also one of confidence and trust (Olendzki, 2008).

While it may seem that true mindfulness is a very difficult state to achieve, Olendzki (2008) believes we all experience it in one context or another. The key is to cultivate mindfulness, develop it, learn to recognize it, then cultivate and develop it further. When meditating mindfully, we can create favorable conditions, such as relaxing the body, focusing the attention softly, while maintaining enough energy to remain alert yet tranquil.

### A Sampling of the Buddha’s Teachings on Mindfulness

There are many books on the teachings of the Buddha, including both translations of the official teachings themselves and countless commentaries that have been written over the millennia. What follows is a very brief sampling of those quotes, including two quotes on establishing mindfulness training, two quotes based on recognizing and establishing one’s personal domain (using amusing animal stories), two quotes on the nature of the body (hence, the mistake of feeling so attached to it), one quote on the importance of protecting oneself and others, and finally, one quote on what it means to neglect one’s practice of mindfulness.

***Note:*** A ‘bhikkhu’ is a Bhuddist monk, particularly those included among the original followers of the Bhudda. In the discourses of the Buddha, he was teaching his followers. Thus, you will see the word ‘bhikkhu’ repeatedly.

This first quote is from the *Kayagatasati Sutta* (*Mindfulness of the Body*) - ***Note:*** Nearly identical passages can be found in this sutta and the *Satipatthana Sutta* (*The Foundations of Mindfulness*). It addresses the basic foundation of mindfulness within the practice of meditation:

“Here a bhikkhu, gone to the forest or to the root of a tree or to an empty hut, sits down; having folded his legs crosswise, set his body erect, and established mindfulness in front of him, ever mindful he breathes in, mindful he breathes out. Breathing in long, he understands: ‘I breathe in long’; or breathing out long, he understands: ‘I breathe out long.’ Breathing in short, he understands: ‘I breathe in short’; or breathing out short, he understands: ‘I breathe out short.’ He trains thus: ‘I shall breathe in experiencing the whole body [of breath]’; he trains thus: ‘I shall breathe out experiencing the whole body [of breath].’ He trains thus: ‘I shall breathe in tranquillising the bodily formation’; he trains thus: ‘I shall breathe out tranquillising the bodily formation.’ As he abides thus diligent, ardent, and resolute, his memories and intentions based on the household life are abandoned; with their abandoning his mind becomes steadied internally, quieted, brought to singleness, and concentrated. That is how a bhikkhu develops mindfulness of the body. (pp. 949-950; Bhikkhu Nanamoli & Bhikkhu Bodhi, 1995)

This next quote is from the *Sangiti Sutta* (*The Chanting Together*), and addresses both the foundation of mindfulness and the effort needed to cultivate it:

‘There are [sets of] four things which were perfectly proclaimed by the Lord …’

(1) ‘Four foundations of mindfulness: Here a monk abides contemplating body as body, ardent, clearly aware and mindful, having put aside hankering and fretting for the world; he abides contemplating feelings as feelings…; he abides contemplating mind as mind…; he abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects, ardent, clearly aware and mindful, having put aside hankering and fretting for the world.’

(2) ‘Four great efforts (*sammappadhana*): Here a monk rouses his will, makes an effort, stirs up energy, exerts his mind and strives to prevent the arising of unarisen evil unwholesome mental states. He rouses his will … and strives to overcome evil unwholesome mental states that have arisen. He rouses his will … and strives to produce unarisen wholesome mental states. He rouses his will … and strives to maintain wholesome mental states that have arisen, not to let them fade away, to bring them to greater growth, to the full perfection of development.’

The next quote addresses the challenge of finding oneself outside one’s domain (or comfort zone). However, the following quote helps to teach how one’s domain can be brought under control through mindfulness. This first quote is from the *Satipatthanasamyutta* (*Connected Discourses on the Establishments of Mindfulness*):

“Bhikkhus, in the Himalayas, the king of mountains, there are rugged and uneven zones where neither monkeys nor human beings can go; there are rugged and uneven zones where monkeys can go but not human beings; there are even and delightful regions where both monkeys and human beings can go. There, along the monkey trails, hunters set out traps of pitch for catching monkeys.”

“Those monkeys who are not foolish and frivolous, when they see the pitch, avoid it from afar. But a monkey who is foolish and frivolous approaches the pitch and seizes it with his hand; he gets caught there. Thinking, ‘I will free my hand,’ he seizes it with his other hand; he gets caught there. Thinking, ‘I will free both hands,’ he seizes it with his foot’ he gets caught there. Thinking, ‘I will free both hands and my foot,’ he seizes it with his other foot; he gets caught there.’ Thinking, ‘I will free both hands and feet,’ he applies his muzzle to it; he gets caught there.”

“Thus, bhikkhus, that monkey, trapped at five points, lies there screeching. He has met with calamity and disaster and the hunter can do with him as he wishes. The hunter spears him, fastens him to that same block of wood, and goes off where he wants. So it is, bhikkhus, when one strays outside one’s own resort into the domain of others. (pg. 1633; Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2000)

In this next quote, from the *Salayatanasamyutta* (*Connected Discourses on the Six Sense Bases*), we see how the body can become the center of our initial mindfulness training. This helps us to accept, and be in touch with, the sometimes overwhelming sensory input coming from the six animals (sight, hearing, taste, smell, touch, thought):

“Suppose, bhikkhus, a man would catch six animals - with different domains and different feeding grounds - and tie them by a strong rope. He would catch a snake, a crocodile, a bird, a dog, a jackal, and a monkey, and tie each by a strong rope. Having done so, he would bind them to a strong post or pillar. Then those six animals with different domains and different feeding grounds would each pull in the direction of its own feeding ground and domain. The snake would pull one way, thinking, ‘Let me enter an anthill.’ The crocodile would pull another way, thinking, ‘Let me enter the water.’ The bird would pull another way, thinking, ‘Let me fly up into the sky.’ The dog would pull another way, thinking, ‘Let me enter a village.’ The jackal would pull another way, thinking, ‘Let me enter a charnel ground.’ The monkey would pull another way, thinking, ‘Let me enter a forest.’”

“Now when these six animals become worn out and fatigued, they would stand close to that post or pillar, they would sit down there, they would lie down there. So too, bhikkhus, when a bhikkhu has developed and cultivated mindfulness directed to the body, the eye does not pull in the direction of agreeable forms nor are disagreeable forms repulsive; the ear does not pull in the direction of agreeable sounds nor are disagreeable sounds repulsive; the nose does not pull in the direction of agreeable odours nor are disagreeable odours repulsive; the tongue does not pull in the direction of agreeable tastes nor are disagreeable tastes repulsive; the body does not pull in the direction of agreeable tactile objects nor are disagreeable tactile objects repulsive; the mind does not pull in the direction of agreeable mental phenomena nor are disagreeable mental phenomena repulsive.”

“It is in such a way that there is restraint.”

“‘A strong post or pillar’: this, bhikkhus, is a designation for mindfulness directed to the body. Therefore, bhikkhus, you should train yourselves thus: ‘We will develop and cultivate mindfulness directed to the body, make it our vehicle, make it our basis, stabilize it, exercise ourselves in it, and fully perfect it.’ Thus should you train yourselves.” (pp. 1256-1257; Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2000)

Although mindfulness of body may be a starting point for mindfulness, we should not make the mistake of becoming attached to our body, or of thinking that we are our body. In this next quote, the body is put in something of a different perspective which is less than flattering, but nonetheless true. This quote is from the *Kayagatasati Sutta* (*Mindfulness of the Body*):

“Again, bhikkus, a bhikku reviews this same body up from the soles of the feet and down from the top of the hair, bounded by skin, as full of many kinds of impurity thus: ‘In this body there are head-hairs, body-hairs, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, sinews, bones, bone-marrow, kidneys, heart, liver, diaphragm, spleen, lungs, large intestines, small intestines, contents of the stomach, feces, bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, tears, grease, spittle, snot, oil of the joints, and urine.’ … so too, a bhikkhu reviews this same body as full of many kinds of impurity … (pg. 951; Bhikkhu Nanamoli & Bhikkhu Bodhi, 1995)

For an even less flattering perspective on the body, consider the following quote from the *Kayagatasati Sutta* (*Mindfulness of the Body*):

“Again, bhikkhus, as though he were to see a corpse thrown aside in a charnel ground, one, two, or three days dead, bloated, livid, and oozing matter, a bhikkhu compares this same body with it thus: ‘This body too is of the same nature, it will be like that, it is not exempt from that fate.’ As he abides thus diligent … That too is how a bhikkhu develops mindfulness of the body. (pg. 952; Bhikkhu Nanamoli & Bhikkhu Bodhi, 1995)

The martial arts have long been taught, at least by most practitioners, as being exclusively for self-defense purposes, or for the defense of others who cannot defend themselves. Although I may be taking some liberty here, by suggesting that the following quote applies to physical defense, it is interesting to see that it involves a dangerous physical act. It is from the *Satipatthanasamyutta* (*Connected Discourses on the Establishments of Mindfulness*):

“Bhikkhus, once in the past an acrobat set up his bamboo pole and addressed apprectice Medakathalika thus: ‘Come, dear Medakathalika, climb the bamboo pole and stand on my shoulders.’ Having replied, ‘Yes, teacher,’ the apprentice Medakathalika climbed up the bamboo pole and stood on the teacher’s shoulders. The acrobat then said to the apprentice Medakathalika: ‘You protect me, dear Medakathalika, and I’ll protect you. Thus guarded by one another, protected by one another, we’ll display our skills, collect our fee, and get down safely from the bamboo pole.’ When this was said, the apprentice Medakathalika replied: ‘That’s not the way to do it, teacher. You protect yourself, teacher, and I’ll protect myself. Thus, each self-guarded and self-protected, we’ll display our skills, collect our fee, and get down safely from the bamboo pole.’”

“That’s the method there,” the Blessed One said. “It’s just as the apprentice Medakathalika said to the teacher. ‘I will protect myself,’ bhikkhus: thus should the establishments of mindfulness be practiced. ‘I will protect others,’ bhikkhus: thus should the establishments of mindfulness be practiced. Protecting oneself, bhikkhus, one protects others; protecting others, one protects oneself.”

“And how is it, bhikkus, that by protecting oneself one protects others? By the pursuit, development, and cultivation [of the four establishments of mindfulness]. It is in such a way that by protecting oneself one protects others.”

“And how is it, bhikkhus, that by protecting others one protects oneself? By patience, harmlessness, lovingkindness, and sympathy. It is in such a way that by protecting others one protects oneself.” (pg. 1648; Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2000)

Finally, we have a short quote from the *Satipatthanasamyutta* (*Connected Discourses on the Establishments of Mindfulness*), which very simply addresses the issue of either neglecting or undertaking the cultivation of mindfulness:

“Bhikkhus, those who have neglected these four establishments of mindfulness have neglected the noble path leading to the complete destruction of suffering. Those who have undertaken these four establishments of mindfulness have undertaken the noble path leading to the complete destruction of suffering. (pg. 1656; Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2000)

### Mindfulness in Martial Arts Training

The martial arts can bring together everything we’ve been talking about in this and the previous section: play, leisure, recreation, flow, and mindfulness. Although it may be a stretch to suggest that the Buddha’s teachings on mindfulness of the body carry over into martial arts training, for some time I have had an interest in utilizing Buddhist mindfulness as a coping mechanism while training in the martial arts with a physical disability (see Kelland, 2009, 2010). We can, on occasion, find suggestions that a physically healthy body is an important aspect of being able to meditate, and therefore to achieve mindfulness.

…If the meditator wishes properly to control his body for its entry into the state of imperturbable stillness, he should, even before sitting, examine closely to find out whether or not his acts of walking, standing, moving or staying are rough. If they are, his breathing will be coarse so that his mind will be unsettled and unrecordable, and when he sits, it will be perplexed and uneasy. (pg. 124; Lu K’uan Yü, 1964)

One of the unique characteristics of traditional martial arts training is the balanced approach to both physical exercise and spiritual/mental discipline. Although the martial arts certainly existed farther back in ancient times, it is accepted by many that they were first formalized in the Shao-Lin temple by Bodhidharma, the recognized founder of Zen Buddhism. Legend has it that when Bodhidharma first arrived at the Shao-Lin temple in China, after leaving his home in India, he found the monks in very poor physical condition. He developed a series of eighteen exercises that helped the monks to achieve a good level of physical fitness, something necessary for their self-defense as well as for extended periods of sitting in meditation (Johnson, 2003a; Lewis, 1993; Red Pine, 1987; Ribner & Chin, 1978). These exercises established the first formal practice of Kung Fu, i.e., the legendary beginning of Chinese Kung Fu (Ch’en, 1964; Gach, 2004; Red Pine, 1987). It is important to note the role of Bodhidharma, a highly spiritual monk who had left his home to help spread the teachings of the Buddha. Since one of the basic tenets of Buddhism is to not harm any other living being, the martial arts have always emphasized mental discipline and the intention that the fighting skills should only be used in self-defense, or in the defense of others who cannot defend themselves.

Non-combative forms of the martial arts have developed around the concept of mindfulness of the body, which can be used as forms of moving meditation. Examples of such forms are Tai Chi Chuan and Qigong (Johnson, 2003a,b; Lewis, 1993; Khor, 1981; Ribner & Chin, 1978). There are also various styles, such as Aikido, Jiu Jitsu, Judo, and Hapkido (Hapkido being “the way of harmony”; Chesterman, 2003), which emphasize the soft style of defending oneself that is advocated in the *Tao Te Ching* (Lao Tsu, c600 B.C./1989). Similarly, the asanas (or positions) taught in Hatha Yoga serve the purpose of helping to prepare the body for lengthy periods of meditation (as well as aligning the body’s channels for Kundalini energy and prana; Bailey, 1927; Feuerstein, 2003).

When the martial arts are approached properly, as a means to health, strength, and a calm state of mind, we can refer to the practice as the Martial Way, a means to living one’s life in a virtuous manner (Chu, 2003). Since martial arts training can result in injuries it must be approached with the right attitude:

…This concept of power as the cornerstone of personal freedom lies at the bottom of all martial arts philosophy. The recognition that power emanates from physical force and martial capability cuts both ways; it can be channeled toward constructive uses or abused as a means of destruction. This is the reason why martial arts training must always be directed toward the cultivation of the higher ideals of discipline, humility, benevolence and responsibility. (pg. 29; Chu, 2003)

Continuing to emphasize the role that the martial arts can play in helping people to live a more satisfying life, Chu goes on to say:

The demands of work, family, finances, as well as fatigue, neglect and health all distract the martial artist from his best intentions. Even the devoted student may be disappointed if he expects martial arts training to neatly bring his physical and spiritual condition into working order. Nevertheless, regular training can serve as a constant, to discipline him to develop his best self even as the daily routine pulls him in different directions. The strategies underlying training can be effectively applied not just in life threatening situations but to daily life. (pgs. 44-45; Chu, 2003)

In order to help martial artists pursue and maintain this virtuous Way, various codes and tenets have been devised. My family used to practice Taekwondo, so we were taught to follow the five tenets of Taekwondo: courtesy, integrity, perseverance, self-control, and indomitable spirit. These principles were set forth by General Choi Hong Hi, who re-established the modern forms of Taekwondo when Korea regained its independence after World War II. He believed that if Taekwondo students lived their lives according to these principles they would become better people and help to make the world a better place (Chesterman, 2003; Lewis, 1993).

Perhaps the most famous of the martial arts codes is the Bushido code of the Japanese Samurai. It can sometimes be difficult to translate Asian languages into English, but generally the Bushido code contains seven essential principles: making right decisions, bravery, compassion, taking right actions, honesty, honor, and loyalty. Although these principles seem to include states of mind, or conscious intentions, it is through the physical practice, through the body and the unconscious mind, that Bushido becomes a way of life (Deshimaru, 1982). Only after many years of practice does this become a natural way of life, without the need for continued attention to one’s practice. The consciousness, or mindfulness, necessary for this combined practice of body and mind is commonly found in Zen Buddhism, which is closely intertwined with Budo, the Japanese way of the warrior (Deshimaru, 1982). As with the tenets of Taekwondo, the principles of the Bushido code helped warriors to restrain themselves from violent aggression in their daily lives (Chu, 2003). According to Chu (2003), it is the higher ideals of spirituality in codes like Bushido and the tenets of Taekwondo that separates the warrior from the predator.

So, one way in which a person can bring martial arts training into one’s domain in life is by bringing mindfulness to bear. Indeed, mindfulness is important in every aspect of life, and one should perform every activity mindfully. One can be mindful of every aspect of the body while walking, whether it is a formal walking meditation such as Jongram (Ajahn Sumedho, 1987) or just taking a quiet, mindful stroll in the park (Thich Nhat Hanh, 1975). We can mindfully be present in everything we do, including washing dishes, eating a tangerine, making tea, or cooking. It is not the activity that determines whether or not it should be done mindfully, we should live mindfully. This is how true masters of the martial arts can espouse non-violence and spiritual purity while practicing skills which have the potential for great harm. Once again, it is not the skill which does harm, but the person who wields it with cruelty. Training body and mind together is essential for a person’s full development:

…‘If the body is unmastered, the mind will be unmastered; if the body is mastered, the mind is mastered.’ (pg. 105; the Buddha, cited in Nyanaponika Thera, 1965)

**\* \* \***

Several years ago, one of my sons tried archery in his gym class. Afterward, he asked if he could have a bow and some arrows. I hadn’t used a bow in many years, and was never very good with one, but I had always enjoyed them so I quickly agreed. We got him a good, children’s bow and set up a target. At first, none of us were very good at hitting the target. So I decided to read a classic book on archery, *Zen in the Art of Archery* by Eugen Herrigel (1999; first published in 1953). One day, as my son and a friend were using his bow, I brought the book outside and told them they should read it, and that it would really help develop the right mindset for using the bow. They just scoffed at me, so I asked for the bow. I set an arrow to it, drew back the string, released the arrow, and struck the bull’s-eye. They were surprised, but suggested it was just luck. So I set another arrow to the bow, drew back the string, released, and struck the bull’s-eye. They stood there, slack-jawed, as I handed the bow back to my son and said, “You really should read this book.”

Of course, I didn’t tempt fate by trying a third shot. Herrigel, a German philosophy professor teaching in Japan, spent six years studying with the kyudo (archery) master Awa Kenzo (1880-1939). His book is marvelous, and fairly short, making it an easy and *highly* recommended reading. In one story, Herrigel challenges Kenzo to shoot blindfolded. Kenzo has him turn out the lights, leaving only one small candle to light the hall. It was so dark that Herrigel could not even see the outline of the target. Kenzo shot two arrows. The first struck the bull’s-eye, the second struck the first! When Herrigel carried the target back to Kenzo, Kenzo claimed no credit for the success. “I at any rate know that it is not ‘I’ who must be given credit for this shot. ‘It’ shot and ‘It’ made the hit. Let us bow to the goal as before the Buddha!” (pg. 59; Herrigel, 1999).

In 2007, John Stevens published *Zen Bow, Zen Arrow*, a collection of the teachings of Awa Kenzo. He was struck by how similar the life and teachings of Kenzo were to those of Morihei Ueshiba, particularly their emphasis on purification of both body and mind through martial arts training. This is not to say that training with Kenzo was easy. When a student was relaxing, Kenzo would admonish them with an ear-shattering *kiai* (the classic yell in martial arts that helps to generate power) that was like the roar of a lion. Stevens relates a number of fascinating stories from Kenzo’s life, a few Zen tales of the bow, and, of course, some of Kenzo’s personal teachings:

The First Principle is to awaken oneself. Once that is realized you can accomplish anything with ease.

With no set form, pull the bow. Release the arrow with no intent. Each shot reveals your character, it shows who you are, what you can do. Each shot must be sincere, use it to foster mind power, bring *ki* into your *tanden*, and polish your inner heart.

Each shot can make you or break you; each shot reveals you as a living Buddha or a bumbling fool.

*Awa Kenzo, cited in Stevens, 2007*

*\*Note: ki is internal energy, tanden is the center of balance in the belly*

By the way, I can’t leave this section without a quote from an individual mentioned above: Morihei Ueshiba. Ueshiba (1883-1969) is renowned as an extraordinary martial artist, but even more so for being a prophet for the Art of Peace (Stevens, 2002). In 1925, on a day Ueshiba had defeated a kendo master (kendo is the Way of the Sword) by not allowing him to land a single strike, Ueshiba had a mystical experience in his garden. He believed he had been called to serve Miroku Bosatsu, the golden Buddha-to-come, who will bring heaven to earth. After this revelation, even martial artists who had in the past beaten Ueshiba could not compete with him in the least. From that time forward, he developed Aikido with sincere thoughts of peace.

Life is growth. If we stop growing, technically and spiritually, we are as good as dead. The Art of Peace is a celebration of the bonding of Heaven, earth, and humankind. It is all that is true, good, and beautiful.

From ancient times,

Deep learning and valor

Have been the two pillars of the Path;

Through the virtue of training,

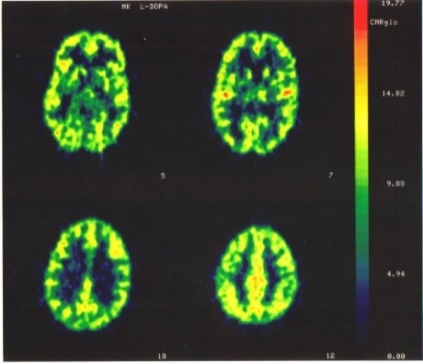
Enlighten both body and soul.

*Morihei Ueshiba, cited in Stevens, 2002*

### The Neurobiology of Mindfulness

Although Buddhist mindfulness techniques are thousands of years old, and the study of genetics and biology is fairly recent in psychology, today these disciplines have come together in some fascinating research. Neurobiologists and psychologists are working together with advanced meditators and respected Buddhist monks (including His Holiness the Dalai Lama) to study the activity of the brain, in real time, during meditation. These studies may also help to advance our understanding of the nature of the mind, but that may still be somewhat beyond our technical abilities. The interest of the field of psychology, and of academia in general, is clearly evidenced by articles that have been written about these studies in venues such as the prestigious journal *Science* (Barinaga, 2003), the popular *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (Monastersky, 2006), and the *Monitor on Psychology* published by the American Psychological Association (Winerman, 2006).

Cognitive neuroscience has taken advantage of many technical advances in brain imaging, such as functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), single photon emission computed tomography (SPECT), and positron emission tomography (PET) to study the activity of the brain during mental tasks. Initially, these studies focused on identifying brain regions involved in very specific tasks. More recently, however, some investigators have become interested in using these techniques to study broad questions, such as the nature of the mind. Since we don’t know what the nature of the mind is, we don’t exactly know what to look for in these brain imaging studies. So, the investigators pursuing this research must creatively examine the brain during meditation (as well as under other conditions). It has been shown that meditation activates neural structures involved in attention and arousal (Lazar et al., 2000, 2005; Newberg, 2001), alterations in sensory processing and the sense of space (Lazar et al., 2005; Newberg, 2001), and a dramatic increase in synchronization of neural activity (Lutz et al., 2004). In perhaps the most striking of these studies, Lazar and her colleagues have demonstrated that long-term meditation practice is associated with increased cortical thickness in brain regions associated with attention and sensory processing (see Lazar, 2005). These effects were most pronounced in the older subjects, suggesting that meditation may have beneficial effects in terms of offsetting age-related declines in cortical thickness. Given these dramatic changes in brain function as a result of meditation, perhaps it should come as no surprise that meditation and mindfulness have proven to be useful adjuncts to therapy for a wide variety of psychological and medical disorders (for reviews see Lazar, 2005 and Newberg & Lee, 2005; see also Cozolino, 2002; Germer et al., 2005; Siegel, 2007).



*PET scan images of the author’s brain on the*

*anti-Parkinson’s Disease drug l-DOPA (for research).*

The use of these brain imaging techniques to study the mind during meditation raises the possibility that they may be useful in studying other altered states of consciousness. Indeed, Amir Raz and his colleagues (2005) have utilized fMRI and electrical scalp recording of event-related potentials to demonstrate that hypnotic suggestion reduces the activity of cortical regions in the brain that have been associated with conflict monitoring. In other words, when hypnosis is used to alter the behavior and cognition of individuals, there are recognizable changes in brain function. When the study of hypnosis is combined with the data obtained on alterations in brain function during meditation and under the influence of mind-altering drugs (see Mathew, 2001), it seems clear that the mind, either in its normal state or in various altered states, is reflected in unique states of neural activity. We may be a long way from fully understanding the details of the relationship between the mind and neural activity, and there may indeed be more to the mind than simply the neural activity itself, but this is certainly a fascinating field of study on the nature of who we are as individuals.

### Mindfulness vs. Flow – They are Not the Same!

It’s easy to think of flow and mindfulness as the same thing, or at least something very similar. One might also include other states of mind in the same category, such as Maslow’s peak experiences. Indeed, Csikszentmihalyi compares flow to a variety of such states, including religious rapture, Zen, and Yoga (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975). However, although something indistinguishable from flow may occur in many of these states of mind, true mindfulness is distinctly different.

Consider the following quote from Csikszentmihalyi:

…for flow to be maintained, one cannot reflect on the act of awareness itself. The moment awareness is split so as to perceive the activity from “outside,” the flow is interrupted. (pg. 45; Csikszentmihalyi, 1975)

as compared to part of a quote we saw earlier from Olendzki:

…When true mindfulness arises, one feels as if one is stepping back and observing what is happening in experience, rather than being embedded in it. (pg. 55; Olendzki, 2008)

So it’s clear there is a fundamental difference between flow and mindfulness. This begs the question: why is it that the human mind is not only capable of altered states of mind, but of multiple altered states of mind? Add to that the question of why these altered states of consciousness are so enjoyable. We may know a lot about the human brain, but we are still a long way from understanding the mind.

Also, these phenomena may not be uniquely human. We know that other animals play, and in the case of some marine mammals (like dolphins) they have names for one another. So perhaps other species are also capable of altered states of consciousness. How we might test that will take a breakthrough by a particularly clever ethologist.

## Forgiveness

Forgiveness has proven to be a difficult concept to define, and those who study it often say as much (see, e.g., McCullough, 2008; McCullough et al., 2000b; Worthington, 2006). This may be somewhat surprising for two reasons. First, forgiveness (along with mercy) is recognized as one of the 24 character strengths, under the virtue of temperance, by Peterson & Seligman (2004). Thus, we might expect our understanding of it to be well established. Second, as with many psychological principles, most of us believe we have an understanding of what forgiveness is, so we tend to expect others to share our understanding.

One problem with the definition of forgiveness is that it has strong roots in religion, but most situations in which it comes into play have little to do with religion, and today many fewer people are religious than in the past (and those who are often tend to be less dogmatic). My interest in forgiveness stems from my decision to join the Roman Catholic Church many years ago, due in large part to their emphasis on the Sacrament of Reconciliation (one of the seven sacraments, more commonly known outside the church as “confession”). Obviously, this was some years before I left both the church and all concepts of a god or gods behind (and now I am an atheist).

Given my particular interest in reconciliation (which involves confession, asking for forgiveness, receiving forgiveness, performance penance, and reconciling with god), I used to teach about it to both children and adults in our local parish. My two primary sources are still on my shelf (Cooke, 1986; DeGidio, 1985), and tucked inside the latter were some 30 year old lecture notes (on paper from Sinai Hospital of Detroit, where I did my postdoctoral fellowship).

Alongside the books just cited was another I picked up a few years later, a book which greatly helped me with my work to forgive someone in my own life. In *The Process of Forgiveness*, Meninger (1997) proposes five stages: claiming the hurt, guilt, victim, anger, wholeness. First, we must realize that we have been hurt (which may involve breaking down defense mechanisms such as denial), after which we often go through a period of believing that somehow we were to blame for our misfortune (guilt). When we know we’ve been hurt, and that it wasn’t our fault, we become a victim. If this stage goes on, the depression often associated with victimization can trap a person at this point in the process (though people can become stuck in any of the stages). Once we choose (whether consciously or not) to no longer be a victim, we often lash out in anger. Finally, though this final stage is not achieved by everyone, we arrive at the stage where forgiveness can occur and lead us back to wholeness (Meninger, 1997).

In a section on the tools for forgiveness, Meninger (1997) emphasizes meditation and what could be called mindfulness. He describes three types of meditation from a Christian perspective (scriptural, compassion, and centering), and refers to a similar technique called Focusing (see Gendlin, 1990). As we’ll see below, Buddhist concepts of forgiveness are quite similar to Eastern concepts.

In *Psychology – Through the Eyes of Faith* (Myers & Jeeves, 2003), there is a chapter on forgiveness by Charlotte Witvliet (2003). She addresses whether or not there are actual physical and psychological benefits to forgiveness that go beyond the Christian belief that people should be forgiving because their god is forgiving. Indeed, it appears that people who are forgiving, including those who have gone through forgiveness therapy, experience less anxiety, depression, anger, and grief. Physically, students focused on forgiveness, exhibit significant lower levels of the physiological stress responses associated with classic Type A hostility, including blood pressure, heart rate, sweating, brow muscle tension, and negative feelings. On the positive side, they are more hopeful, have higher self-esteem, and they have more positive attitudes toward those who have offended them (Witvliet, 2003).

### Definitions of Forgiveness and Its Cultivation

There are many definitions of forgiveness, but we’ll focus on just two of them. The reason for choosing these two is that they are offered by leaders in this field of research and they offer a contrast which is of considerable importance.

Michael McCullough and his colleagues attempted to arrive at a concise and practical definition of forgiveness that others could use for the purpose of comparison and continued study. Specifically, they define it as “intraindividual, prosocial change toward a perceived transgressor that is situated within a specific interpersonal context” (pg. 9; McCullough et al., 2000b). When a person forgives someone, it is the person who is forgiving who changes their feelings, thoughts, and behaviors toward the person who caused them harm, but that forgiveness clearly exists within the context of an interpersonal relationship. One concern with this definition is the phrase “prosocial change,” which suggests that reconciliation will or should be part of the forgiveness process (see also McCullough & Witvliet, 2005; see, however, McCullough, 2008).

McCullough’s apparent emphasis on reconciliation as an expectation of forgiveness may have something to do with his additional interest in the evolution of forgiveness (McCullough, 2008). As noted above, evolutionary psychologists suggest that any behavior has some basis in conferring an evolutionary advantage. For other primates, forgiveness and reconciliation appear to go hand-in-hand, with the emphasis being on reconciliation itself in order to maintain both tolerance and cooperation. Although primate and human social groups are complex, and conflict is inevitable, remaining within the group and cooperating in various ways (such as self-defense and food gathering) is essential for survival (de Waal, 2005).

Robert Enright and his colleagues are also well-known in the field of forgiveness studies, and they offer a definition of forgiveness that I find much more palatable. They define forgiveness as the “willingness to abandon one’s right to resentment, negative judgment, and indifferent behavior toward one who unjustly injured us, while fostering the undeserved qualities of compassion, generosity, and even love toward him or her” (pg. 46-47; Enright et al., 1998). The authors themselves point out four key aspects of this definition:

* The offended person suffered an unjust wound.
* The offended person willingly chooses to forgive.
* The offended person’s new stance involves affect, cognition, and behavior
* The offended person may offer forgiveness regardless of the offender’s current attitudes or behaviors.

(pg. 47; Enright et al., 1998)

An important aspect of Enright’s approach to forgiveness is what’s not there: there is no need for interaction with, or any attempt at reconciliation with, the individual who caused the harm in the first place. If the person responsible for a very real injury (psychologically and/or physically) is still a threat, such as someone clearly abusive, it may be much better that reconciliation is not pursued. Forgiveness can occur without reconciliation, but true reconciliation is difficult without forgiveness (see also, Coleman, 1998; Exline & Baumeister, 2000; Gordon et al., 2000; Kornfield, 2002; Witvliet, 2003; Worthington, 2006).

Enright (2012) goes on to suggest that we cultivate forgiveness within ourselves so that we might live a forgiving life. The benefit of being able to give and receive love, according to Enright and a wealth of literature and philosophy, is the ability to be psychologically healthy and to have healthy families and communities (see Enright, 2012). And since relationships often stumble (or worse), forgiveness is essential either for their healthy continuation or, at least, for the injured party to move on with their life. In the final chapter of *The Forgiving Life*, Enright has this to say:

We have come to the end of the book, but your forgiveness journey has just begun. It is my hope for you that you never reach the end of that journey because we never reach the end or perfection of the virtues, including forgiveness. So, no matter what happens to you in this life, you have important work to do. (pg. 331; Enright, 2012).

What more can we say about the benefits of being a forgiving person? First, can we help people to become more forgiving? The answer to that question appears to be yes. Indeed, a variety of approaches can be successful in helping individuals to develop forgiveness skills and a willingness to forgive (see Wade et al., 2005). Consequently (as noted above), there are numerous personal and mental health benefits, including lower levels of depression, anxiety, grief, anger, and interpersonal sensitivity, as well as increases in hope and self-esteem, overcoming addiction, and enhanced quality of life and longevity in persons living with HIV/AIDS (see McCullough & Witvliet, 2005; Temoshok & Wald, 2005). Thus, being a forgiving person does appear to confer numerous positive advantages in life.

Since it appears that being a forgiving person is beneficial to well-being, and that forgiveness can be developed/cultivated, how do we know if a person is forgiving? There are numerous scales for measuring forgiveness. Indeed, if it wasn’t already obvious, that’s what made the research cited above possible! Actually, one of the reasons there are such a variety of forgiveness scales is that we haven’t settled on one clear definition of it (Thompson & Snyder, 2003). Thus, different researchers often develop their own scale to suit their own needs.

Be that as it may, the list of forgiveness scales includes at least the following: the Enright Forgiveness Inventory, the Willingness to Forgive Scale, the Forgiveness of Self and Forgiveness of Others (FS and FO) Scale, the Interpersonal Relationship Resolution Scale, the Multidimensional Forgiveness Inventory, and the Heartland Forgiveness Scale. Although these scales have much in common, they differ in terms of addressing the different investigators’ conceptualizations of forgiveness itself and their research goals (Hoyt & McCullough, 2005; McCullough et al., 2000a; Tangney et al., 2005; Thompson & Snyder, 2003).

Finally, if you happened to take the VIA Survey of Character Strengths, which was introduced in Section II, you will have received a ranking for “forgiveness and mercy” among your 24 character strengths. Remember, forgiveness (the Sacrament of Reconciliation) was the primary reason I joined the Roman Catholic Church once upon a time. It must have been in recognition of a personal need, because I am not naturally a forgiving person. Indeed, “forgiveness and mercy” is very low on my list of character strengths. It ranks 22nd out of 24. Perhaps I should take Robert Enright’s (2012) advice and cultivate a more forgiving life. Or perhaps my interest in Buddhist compassion and mindfulness (see discussion of compassion and anger below) has led to a reasonable alternative. One cannot say for sure.

### Marriage and Forgiveness

For many people (if not most), marriage is the most significant and meaningful relationship they will choose to enter into in their life. As we’ve seen, a healthy marriage is also strongly associated with psychological well-being. However, most marriages end in divorce, and along the way one or both partners feel betrayed and hurt in ways that Holmes & Rahe (1967) considered extremely stressful (second only to the death of a spouse).

Given the psychological suffering that follows a divorce, it is not surprising that forgiveness is a topic often covered in relation to marriage counseling. As the individuals in a broken relationship struggle, anger often leads to daily conflict, stress, and isolation. Developing a regular practice of forgiveness can give the couple something positive to share in their lives, especially if tied to shared spiritual/religious beliefs (Krejci, 2004). Guilt is also a common challenge, including being a challenge for the therapist. Therapists do not typically tell their clients that the client is guilty of some transgression. However, addressing such feelings (or the lack thereof) may be necessary to help the client develop empathy (e.g., Coleman, 1998).

Within marriage counseling, forgiveness can be a difficult process, one which should not be addressed too quickly. Once the process is a possibility, however, Coleman (1998) has found that, if successful, it progress through five stages:

* Identifying the Hurt
* Confronting
* The Dialogue to Understanding
* Forgiving
* Letting Go

Gordon and her colleagues (2000, 2005) have also found that the process of forgiveness in marriage counseling goes through a series of predictable stages. From their perspective, there must first be a realistic view of the relationship, followed by a release from being controlled by negative affect (emotions) toward the marriage partner, and finally a reduction in the desire to punish the partner (i.e., less desire to seek revenge). Another way to describe this process is to consider the first step as “understanding” what happened, the 2nd step as providing “meaning” to the relationship (which is essential to putting in the effort to continue that relationship), and finally choosing to “move on” (the 3rd step; Gordon et al., 2000).

In the end, however, not every marriage can be saved, and certainly there are situations where this is for the best, as well as times when forgiveness simply might not be an appropriate thing to do. For example, forgiveness typically forgoes a process of healing, it might be taken advantage of, the person being forgiven might be offended, etc. (Puka, 2002); and additional special considerations apply when dealing with women who have been abused (e.g., they may be expected to be forgiving whether they are ready to forgive or not; see Lamb, 2002). Nonetheless, there is often one person who wishes a marriage could still be saved, and that the parties might somehow reconcile. When reconciliation is not going to occur, whatever the reason(s), the willingness to forgive might still play a vital role:

In a family, the effort to overcome deep hurt and betrayal often includes a desire for reconciliation on at least one member’s part. Forgiveness is not reconciliation…it is not possible to reconcile truly without forgiving. Consequently, forgiveness is a must in any family problem where there has been deep hurt, betrayal, or disloyalty. If there can be no reconciliation, forgiveness is the process that enables the forgiver to get on with his or her life unencumbered with the pain of betrayal. (pg. 78; Coleman, 1998)

### Additional Perspectives on Forgiveness

Fowers (2005) views forgiveness as an act of generosity, since it is something we give to others, and it can only be valued when it is given freely. In particular, it is related to relationship commitments, especially with regard to turning negative emotion toward relationship-enhancing thoughts and actions. While I find this notion intriguing, it is difficult to reconcile this concept with the categorization of virtues and strengths by Peterson & Seligman (2004), since they consider generosity to be an aspect of kindness, a strength found under the virtue of humanity. Nonetheless, although forgiveness and generosity may fall under separate strengths and virtues, the concept of freely giving forgiveness can fit with most people’s concepts of generosity. In the book on generosity I mentioned previously, there is one quote that seems to support Fowers’ notion of forgiveness as generosity:

Believe, when you are most unhappy, that there is something for you to do in the world. So long as you can sweeten another’s pain, life is not in vain. (pg. 120; Helen Keller, cited in Bonner, 2014)

So far we’ve looked at forgiveness entirely as something aimed outward toward others. Although we’ve considered that forgiveness is for our self, in that we let go of the past for our own well-being, it’s still directed toward the person(s) we are forgiving. But what about our self? There are times, perhaps particularly in therapeutic settings, when self-forgiveness becomes important as the third leg in the “forgiveness triad:” forgiving, receiving forgiveness, and self-forgiveness (Enright & the Human Development Study Group, 1996; Tangney et al., 2005).

When a person is in the role of transgressor, and this is something they are able to care about (i.e., they are not a psychopath [antisocial personality disorder]), they will experience feelings of guilt and/or shame. Left unchecked, guilt, shame, and remorse can prove to be very debilitating (Tangney et al., 2005). Although the process of self-forgiveness is very similar to forgiving others, there are two important differences. First, self-forgiveness is more likely to be conditional. For example, one forgives oneself only if one is committed to not making the same transgression again. Second, self-forgiveness requires reconciliation with the person (yourself) being forgiven (see Holmgren, 2002; Tangney et al., 2005).

When we look at forgiveness from a Buddhist perspective, we see many of the same ideas present in Western concepts – that forgiveness frees us from an unpleasant past (Kornfield, 2002).

Forgiveness is a letting go of past suffering and betrayal, a release of the burden of pain and hate that we carry.

Forgiveness honors the heart’s greatest dignity. Whenever we are lost, it brings us back to the ground of love.

With forgiveness we become unwilling to attack or wish harm to another.

Whenever we forgive, in small ways at home, or in great ways between nations, we free ourselves from the past.

It is hard to imagine a world without forgiveness.

Without forgiveness life would be unbearable.

Without forgiveness our lives are chained, forced to carry the sufferings of the past and repeat them with no release.

(pp. 20-21; Kornfield, 2002)

Once again, in keeping with the perspective that forgiveness is different than forgetting, Jack Kornfield offers one of my favorite, yet most poignant, perspectives:

Forgiveness means giving up all hope of a better past. (pg. 25; Kornfield, 2002)

In his book entitled *Anger: Wisdom for Cooling the Flames*, Thich Nhat Hanh (2001) focuses primarily on helping people to restore damaged relationships in a Buddhist context (see also Umbreit et al., 2015). He does not talk about forgiveness, and only briefly mentions reconciliation (though reconciliation is a common theme throughout the book), but rather encourages mindfulness and compassion. In a typical Buddhist fashion, this begins with mindfulness of one’s own state of being (akin to self-forgiveness). All in all, he encourages people to seek peace rather than punishment, in part because the latter will return in kind (ala karma).

The dharma [the teachings of the Buddha] can remove the heat of anger, and the fever of suffering. It is a wisdom that can bring joy and peace in the here and the now. Our strategy for peace and reconciliation should be based on this…We are primarily responsible for our anger, but we believe very naively that if we can say something or do something to punish the other person, we will suffer less. This kind of belief should be uprooted. Because whatever you do or say in a state of anger will only cause more damage in the relationship…You make the other person suffer, and he will try hard to say or do something back to get relief from his suffering…Trying to punish the other person is only going to make the situation worse. Punishing the other person is self-punishment. (pp. 52-53; Thich Nhat Hanh, 2001)

For people living in Eastern and African cultures, which are typically collectivistic, social harmony is valued somewhat more highly than in the individualistic Western world. When discord is present, forgiveness would certainly be a reasonable path back toward harmony. Thus, one might expect people in places like the Far East and Africa to be more forgiving, and some research has suggested they are (Kadima Kadiangandu et al., 2007; Suwartono et al., 2007). However, Paz et al. (2007, 2008) found contrary results comparing Europeans to Chinese and Christians (a Western religion) to Buddhists (an Eastern religion). So it remains unclear whether there are predictable differences in one’s beliefs about forgiveness and/or willingness to forgive in the Eastern and Western worlds (see also Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Sandage & Williamson, 2005).

## Compassion

Since compassion is integral to a Buddhist perspective on life, we encounter it in numerous places throughout this book. We looked at compassion when we examined a Buddhist perspective on well-being, and we’ll address it again in the section on psychotherapy. Nonetheless, I wanted to highlight it in this section as well, because it really is something of great value in the Western world as well. And yet, it isn’t widely discussed in psychology (see, however, Ladner, 2004).

It’s surprising how many books on positive psychology make no mention of compassion whatsoever. As someone with a background in studying Eastern and Buddhist philosophy and spirituality, this is hard for me to accept. Be that as it may, I’m pleased to say there is a chapter on compassion (Cassell, 2005) in the *Handbook of Positive Psychology* (Snyder & Lopez, 2005), and Peterson & Seligman (2004) include it as an aspect of the strength kindness, under the virtue humanity.

Cassell (2005) considers compassion to be the word most commonly associated with how we feel when we experience the suffering of others. He further suggests that there are three generally accepted requirements for compassion. First, we must consider the troubles which evoked our feelings to be serious. Second, the sufferers’ troubles must not be self-inflicted (i.e., the trouble is the result of an unjust fate). And third, we must be able to see ourselves in the same predicament (the basis for empathy). Cassell himself recognizes one problem with these requirements: who is to judge the seriousness of an unfortunate situation? Simply put, compassion is our emotion, and the person who is the object of our compassion may not even be aware that their situation is leading to feelings of compassion in other people (Cassell, 2005).

The core of compassion appears to be the process of connecting with another person (see also the quote below by the Dalai Lama). At a deeper level, some consider compassion to be an essential component of being human. And yet, we often fail to simply ask another person if they are suffering. This failure to communicate can leads to problems in both directions, either assuming a person’s situation is not serious enough to cause suffering or assuming they must be suffering when, in fact, they have risen above the challenge (i.e., they are resilient; see Cassell, 2005). Thus, our connection with others, our social interest as Alfred Adler called it (1929, 1964), is essential to our well-being.

Our knowledge of others is a central and constantly expanding feature of life. In other words we share community – a “we-ness” where all are joined – and from which the absence of the sufferer who is withdrawn into the suffering can be recognized. Thus, compassion is realized through all these methods – identification; knowledge of behaviors; the sights and sounds of suffering; the transfer of feelings; awareness of the change in goals and purposes of sufferers; the sense of absence of the sufferer from the group – and through their mutual reinforcement. (pg. 441; Cassell, 2005)

In Eastern/collectivistic cultures there tends to be an emphasis on harmony. This is considered by some to be an extension of the importance they place on compassion, in contrast to the emphasis of individualistic societies in the West on one’s personal agency (Nisbett, 2003; Snyder & Lopez, 2005). In other words, when your culture emphasizes compassion one naturally seeks harmony in order to avoid causing any suffering on the part of others.

Harmony has also not received much attention in the field of positive psychology, but it is definitely *not* to be confused with conformity. Harmony does not involve surrendering one’s will to the norms of society or the social situation, but rather is a positive choice made for the benefit of all.

The Chinese were concerned less with issues of control of others or the environment than with self-control, so as to minimize friction with others in the family and village and to make it easier to obey the requirements of the state, administered by magistrates. The ideal of happiness was not, as for the Greeks, a life allowing the free exercise of distinctive talents, but the satisfactions of a plain country life shared within a harmonious social network. Whereas Greek vases and wine goblets show pictures of battles, athletic contests, and bacchanalian parties, ancient Chinese scrolls and porcelains depict scenes of family activities and rural pleasures. (pp. 5-6; Nisbett, 2003)

As noted earlier in this book, the religious people of Tibet believe that His Holiness the Dalai Lama is the current reincarnation of Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion. Living in exile in India since 1959, he continues to seek a peaceful resolution resulting in freedom for Tibet. He also works to deliberately cultivate feelings of compassion for the Chinese, believing that someday those who have harmed the people of Tibet will have to face the consequences of their actions (Dalai Lama, 2002).

If he is, indeed, Avalokiteshvara (aka, Chenrezig), and we do know that he received received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989, we might expect the Dalai Lama to have something meaningful to say about compassion:

What is compassion? Compassion is the wish that others be free of suffering…In the first step toward a compassionate heart, we must develop our empathy or closeness to others. We must also recognize the gravity of their misery. The closer we are to a person, the more unbearable we find that person’s suffering. The closeness I speak of is not a physical proximity, nor need it be an emotional one. It is a feeling of responsibility, of concern for a person. In order to develop such closeness, we must reflect upon the virtues of cherishing the well-being of others. (pp. 91-92; Dalai Lama, 2001).

It may not always be easy to exercise one’s compassion, living in a world where being self-centered seems to have become the norm. However, Buddhism teaches us mindfulness:

With mindfulness, our natural compassion grows. We can see that we are all carrying our own burden of tears. You and everyone you meet are sharing in some measure of the pain present on the planet. You are called upon to witness this pain – in yourself and others – with compassion. But how can we do this when we live in a time where it seems we have lost contact with the power of mercy and compassion, when we have closed off to the suffering of ourselves and others? … it is necessary to learn that you are worthy of being loved. Buddha put it quite simply: “You can search the whole tenfold universe and not find a single being more worthy of love and compassion than the one seated here – yourself.” Self-compassion and self-forgiveness are not weaknesses, but the roots of our courage and magnanimity. (pp. 22-23; Kornfield, 2011)

Ram Dass and Mirahai Bush, in a moving book entitled *Compassion in Action* (1992), discuss the development of compassion in their own lives and in the lives of others. As we’ve already seen, they believe compassion begins within ourselves, and then spreads out to others.

Compassion is the tender opening of our hearts to pain and suffering. When compassion arises in us, we see and acknowledge what we often push away – the parts of life that cause us sadness, anger, or outrage. The powerful awakening of our own compassion can tune us not just to the nurturing and sustaining forces of the world but to the oppressive and destructive ones as well. When we open to these directly and become familiar with them, instead of avoiding them as we often do, we are more likely to hear ways to respond with love and support to relieve the suffering. When the pain is our own, we want to end it. If we can’t do this by ourselves, we long for help. When it is not our cry, but someone else’s, compassion allows us to feel it as our own, to feel the same longing, to hear our hearts calling us to help. (pg. 4; Ram Dass & Bush, 1992)

Now let’s revisit the story of the Banyan Deer, which we covered earlier in the section on courage. King Banyan (a deer) would not accept his freedom unless all other animals were granted their freedom from hunting as well. What motivated his courage was his unbounded compassion for all other animals. In this quote, the Banyan Deer is talking to the human king:

Too long have I lived with danger to let it fall so heavily on others now. All the other four-footed animals of the forest will suffer terribly if I leave. They will be hunted without limit or mercy. How can I abandon them and be at peace myself, knowing that my freedom was bought at such a price? I know the terrors of the hunt. I, too, have lived in the midst of that fear. Free them as well, Great King – if you really mean for me to be happy and at peace, it is the only way. (pg. 30; Martin, 2010)

**\* \* \***

I don’t want to dwell on the following point, but something quite fascinating has happened in the marketing world. Many of us are more than willing to have others do good works for us, and we support them with charitable donations. We go about our busy lives, content in the belief that our money is being put to good use helping those in need (i.e., those who are suffering).

Corporations have picked up on this with slick marketing campaigns that tie their products to a wide variety of social causes. It may have been a good idea at first, but in *Compassion, Inc.*, Mara Einstein (2012) addresses the dangerous side of this trend:

The proliferation of cause campaigns has had negative effects on charitable giving overall. In the short term, scholars have noted that cause-related marketing hinders further philanthropy – either through reduced financial giving or limiting volunteering – because consumers see their cause-related purchases as donations. More broadly, there is concern that consumers have begun to suffer from “compassion fatigue.” This term, originally applied to stressed-out caregivers, is now being attached to consumers, because shopping for a cause has become so ubiquitous…In response, people may simply tune out and say ‘no’ because they cannot process each and every request, or because they believe they have already donated enough…Thus, the ultimate outcome may be that cause campaigns desensitize us to real problems and trivialize serious concerns. (pg. 110; Einstein, 2012)

## Creativity & Genius

Creativity and genius are distinct characteristics, but they are not unrelated. In the field of positive psychology, creativity is the more common topic. Indeed, it is recognized as one of the human strengths (under the virtue Wisdom & Knowledge; Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Although genius (as the highest level of intelligence) is not recognized as a unique strength or virtue, its connections to both creativity and well-being are worthy of our attention.

Arthur Jensen described the interconnection of genius and creativity with regard to *g* (typically considered an abbreviation of ‘general intelligence,’ though Jensen considers that a wholly inadequate simplification; Jensen, 1998) as follows:

*Creativity* and *genius* are unrelated to *g* except that a person’s level of *g* acts as a threshold variable below which socially significant forms of creativity are highly improbable…Besides the traits that Galton thought necessary for “eminence” (viz., high ability, zeal, and persistence), *genius* implies outstanding creativity as well. Though such exceptional creativity is conspicuously lacking in the vast majority of people who have a high IQ, it is probably impossible to find any creative geniuses with low IQs. In other words, high ability is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the emergence of socially significant creativity. (pg. 577; Jensen, 1998)

Since we’ll pay a little more attention to these constructs in terms of creativity, let’s first address the relationship between genius *per se* (as in being highly intelligent) and well-being.

### Genius

We’ve already examined the work of George Vaillant and his studies on the lives of men who went to Harvard University in late 1930s and early 1940s. While those men may not have reached the actual level of genius, most students at Harvard are highly intelligent people. Generally speaking, they’ve led good lives. What was interesting, and a sign of the times, was that there weren’t any women at Harvard back then. So, in part of his work, Vaillant used women who had been identified by Lewis Terman in his studies on gifted children.

Terman’s long-standing interest in the relationship between intelligence and life in general led to a famous, long-term study of children who had been identified as intellectually gifted (see, e.g., Terman, 1906/1975; Terman & Oden, 1947, 1959). Terman stayed in touch with many of these children over the years (including outside the constraints of the study itself). They thought of him like a godfather, and often referred to themselves as the “Termites” (Seagoe, 1975).

When they followed up on the success of these children 25 years later, on the whole they were doing quite well. The group was well above average with regard to education, profession, income, publications and patents, and their contribution to the war effort during World War II (Terman & Oden, 1947). A good number of the subjects had accomplished notable achievements. However, the study at this point did not include any specific measure of well-being:

We have no yardstick for measuring the intangible achievements that make for contentment, and we venture no estimate of the success of our gifted subjects in this quest. We do not even know whether they are more happy or less happy than the average person in the generality. We do know that they are better fed, better housed, and better doctored than the average person, that they are in a position to care better for their children, and that they have less reason generally to be anxious about the future. Such things cannot insure happiness, but they would seem to favor it. (pg. 372; Terman & Oden, 1947)

Ten years later, however, they did add one question to their study which, informally at least, measured well-being to some extent. Upon publishing the 35-year follow-up, which came out shortly after Terman’s death, the gifted children as a group (now in middle age – generally 46 years old) had continued their overall success in life. The final question that was added to their survey was, “From your point of view, what constitutes success in life?” Among the most common answers, on 40-50% of the responses, four were clearly related to aspects of psychological well-being, with the fifth (though only reported by approximately 20% or the respondents) being an “adequate income for comfortable living.” Those four most common responses as to what constitutes success in life were:

* Realization of goals, vocational satisfaction, a sense of achievement;
* A happy marriage and home life, bringing up a family satisfactorily;
* Contributing to knowledge or welfare of mankind; helping others, leaving the world a better place;
* Peace of mind, well-adjusted personality, adaptability, emotional maturity.

(pg. 152; Terman & Oden, 1959)

So now we ask the question, “Were the subjects in Terman’s study merely gifted, or were some of them worthy of the title genius?” Clearly they were gifted, but going back to what Jensen said (see above, Jensen, 1998), being a genius is something more than being very intelligent. Indeed, the two follow-up studies by Terman & Oden (1947, 1959) leave the issue in question right in the titles of the books they published: *Genetic Studies of Genius, Vol. IV: The Gifted Child Grows Up* and *Genetic Studies of Genius, Vol. V: The Gifted Group at Mid-Life*. Terman & Oden refer to the subjects first as geniuses and then as gifted, without clarifying whether or not they actually achieved the additional characteristics of creativity which seem to define true genius.

Curiously, Terman & Oden (1947) do address the great challenge of achieving eminence (a word often associated with creative geniuses; see also Cassandro & Simonton, 2003; Eysenck, 1995), and they note:

That the group contains no one who shows promise of matching the eminence of Shakespeare, Goethe, Tolstoy, da Vinci, Newton, Galileo, Darwin, or Napoleon is not surprising in view of the fact that the entire population of America since the Jamestown settlement has not produced the like of one of these. Such eminence in a given field is usually possible only at a given stage of cultural progress and can never be very closely paralleled in a different era. (pg. 370; Terman & Oden, 1947)

Robinson (2011) offers an interesting perspective on how our recognition of genius changes over time. People who were once widely respected, might later be considered as geniuses, and vice versa. The modern concept of genius, which refers to innate abilities or talents, derives from the Latin word *ingenium*, not from the Latin word *genius*, which refers more generally to a guardian spirit of a person, place, or thing (and is tied to fate and the rhythm of time; Robinson, 2011; see also Cassandro & Simonton, 2003; Eysenck, 1995).

More recently, given that Terman’s studies ended around the year of his death in 1956, others have continued in his footsteps (see Subotnik & Arnold, 1994). Unfortunately, as with Terman’s studies, the focus was almost entirely on academic and career success, as opposed to well-being. However, there were a few references to gifted students being actively involved in work, hobbies, and relationships (continuing into adulthood; Delcourt, 1994; Subotnik & Steiner, 1994), experiencing less stress and anxiety (thought they were not more curious, one of the 24 human strengths; Perleth & Heller, 1994), and the importance of father-son relationships in the development of success and potential eminence (Albert, 1994). Although these factors are not direct measures of well-being, as noted above “they would seem to favor it” (Terman & Oden, 1947).

In conclusion, there appears to be a significant connection between genius and creativity, but that connection is essential only for the “genius.” Highly intelligent people may achieve the distinction of being considered a genius (i.e., the achieve eminence) if, and only if, they are also creative. As had Lewis Terman, the renowned personality theorist Hans Eysenck combined both terms in the title of his book *Genius: The Natural History of Creativity* (Eysenck, 1995). However, that title is misleading, in that Eysenck was studying genius first, and considered creativity to be essential for it, whereas the title suggests that genius is a natural outcome of creativity (he does not suggest that circumstance). Indeed, people who are considered creative need not be highly intelligent:

Perhaps we should think of a genius as a person who is both brilliant and creative at the same time. But certainly a person can change the culture in significant ways without being a genius. Although several of the people in our sample have been called a genius by the media, they – and the majority of creative individuals we interviewed – reject this designation. (pg. 27; Csikszentmihalyi, 1996)

### Creativity

So, if genius is high intelligence combined with creativity, what then is creativity itself? There appear to be two distinct aspects essential for the definition of creativity: an act of creativity must be both unique/novel and it must be adaptive/practical (appropriate to the situation at hand). In addition, it is important that the creative work is complete and valuable (Boon, 2014; Cassandro & Simonton, 2003; Kerr & Gagliardi, 2003; Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Simonton, 2005). In other words, for a work to be recognized as truly creative, it must be both new and serve some purpose.

Given that it’s difficult to settle on one definition of creativity, it should not be surprising that there are different approaches to measuring creativity. Three main lines of measurement have become common. One can measure the creative process, the creative person, or the creative product (Averill, 2005; Cassandro & Simonton, 2003; Kerr & Gagliardi, 2003).

Tests of creativity that focus on the creative process emphasize divergent thinking over convergent thinking. Convergent thinking serves to arrive at a single correct answer to some problem. Typical intelligence tests emphasize this approach. For example, questions like “how much is 2+2” or “who was the first president of the United States of America” do not require creative thought; either you know the correct answer or you don’t. Divergent thinking, in contrast, suggests multiple answers, including those of considerable variety and originality. Examples of creativity tests include the Alternate Uses test (how many ways can you use a common object, such as a paper clip or a brick) the Remote Associates Test (RAT), and the Consensual Assessment Technique (CAT; see Kaufman, 2016; Simonton, 2005).

The Guilford Battery is a classic test of creativity dating from the early 1960s (see Eysenck, 1995; Kerr & Gagliardi, 2003). This battery of tests includes verbal and nonverbal tasks, which are timed and scored for fluency (number of responses) and originality. The individual tests are:

* Names for stories
* What to do with it
* Similar meanings
* Writing sentences
* Kinds of people
* Make groups
* Different letter groups
* Making objects
* Hidden letters
* Adding decorations

Another well-known set of tests are the Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking (TTCT; see Eysenck, 1995; Kaufman, 2016; Kerr & Gagliardi, 2003). Once again, there are figural (non-verbal) and verbal subtests. A few examples of the items include:

* Picture construction (figural)
* Picture completion (figural)
* Just suppose (verbal)
* Unusual uses (verbal)

A particularly amusing set of items in the TTCT (at least from my perspective) is the “Ask-and-Guess.” The subject is shown an ambiguous picture, followed by three tasks. First, the subject is directed to ask as many questions as they can about the picture. Second, they are directed to guess as many possible causes as they can for the pictured action. And finally, they are directed to guess as many possible consequences as they can for the pictured action (see Kaufman, 2016). Clearly this test would allow for a wide variety of answers both in terms of number (fluency) and originality.

For those who consider creativity to be primarily a cognitive process, tests of divergent thinking are an appropriate way to study creativity. However, it has long been appreciated that aspects of personality other than intelligence were relevant. From the early days of Terman’s research on genius, Catharine Cox found that persistence and motivation were as important as high intelligence for becoming a creative genius (see Cassandro & Simonton, 2003). Creative people tend to possess characteristics that favor coming up with numerous and diverse ideas when faced with a problem/challenge. They tend to be independent, nonconformist, and unconventional. They also have a wide range of interests, greater openness to new experiences, and they demonstrate cognitive and behavioral flexibility and boldness (Boon, 2014; Kaufman, 2016; Simonton, 2005).

The popular personality test known as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator has been used to come up with a Creativity Index. Apparently, creative people are more likely to score as introverted (as opposed to extroverted), intuitive (as opposed to sensing), thinking (as opposed to feeling), and perceiving (as opposed to judging) people. I have good reason to know I was a pretty good scientist back in the day when my career focused on biomedical research. As a scientist, I believe I was reasonably creative, and that it helped my scientific career. However, on the MBTI, my profile is extroverted, sensing, thinking, and judging. Do we have a problem here? Actually, creative scientists score quite differently than creative artists on various measures of creativity; they tend to be somewhere between artistic people and those who are not particularly creative. Scientific creativity appears to be somewhat different than artistic creativity, further complicating our understanding of what creativity may be.

There is one rather odd circumstance that we’ll only very briefly consider: the relationship between mental illness and creativity. First, it’s unclear whether such a relationship actually exists, although some investigators consider it a very real possibility (see Eysenck, 1995 for discussion, as well as Boon, 2014; Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2003). Although Eysenck tends to favor a possible connection between psychoticism and creativity (as a causal factor and/or as a coping mechanism), he addresses a most critical issue: if certain types of mental illness enhance creativity, would their treatment reduce creativity? Simply put, the evidence is equivocal, and we cannot come to any clear conclusion (Eysenck, 1995).

Previously, we examined the relationship between flow, creativity, and personality. Flow can play an important role in the creative process, and that role may be in enhancing the positive complexity of personality. In Csikszentmihalyi’s study of creativity (1996), he emphasized the complexity of the creative personality. He believes that creative individuals share a number of paradoxical personality dimensions:

* they have a great deal of physical energy, but are often quiet and at rest
* they tend to be smart, but can also seem naïve
* they can be both playful yet are also disciplined
* they alternate between imagination and fantasy on one hand, while rooted in a sense of reality on the other hand
* they seem to harbor opposite tendencies on the continuum between introversion and extraversion
* they can be both humble and proud at the same time
* they transcend typical gender roles
* they are thought to be rebellious and independent, but creativity must exist in opposition to internalized domains of culture
* they are very passionate about their work, yet remain highly objective about it
* their openness and sensitivity predisposes them to suffering and pain, but also to a great deal of enjoyment

Although Csikszentmihalyi acknowledges that this list may not be definitive, the key is the polarity of the creative individual’s personality. From one pole they are capable of recognizing new ideas, and the other pole then makes it possible to develop novel ideas to the point of acceptance. Experiencing flow leads to enjoyment and the consequent enhanced complexity of the personality.

Although most research on creativity focuses on either the creative process or the creative person, the true measure of creativity is its product – an actual act of creation (Cassandro & Simonton, 2003; Simonton, 2005). To some extent, we can measure creativity by counting someone’s productivity. For instance, inventors hold patents, scientists publish research articles, and artistic authors publish books, plays, and poetry. However, as the old saying goes, beauty is in the eye of the beholder. In my own research, I consider some of my papers to be impressive, whereas others are more routine. So, simply counting them seems inappropriate, as the degree of creativity varies greatly. Did Shakespeare ever write a bad play? Perhaps, but such a play would have been tossed aside and lost to history. And it would do little to challenge the brilliance of his remaining works.

The relationship between age and creativity is complex. Many creative geniuses exhibit a peak in their career, suggesting that as one gets older one becomes less creative. However, it may be more a matter of becoming more conservative, and therefore not allowing oneself (whether consciously or unconsciously) to be as creative later in one’s life or career. As for childhood, children are often more creative than adults, but they don’t have the knowledge and experience necessary for their creative impulses to take form until they’ve matured somewhat. Consequently, during the lifespan, creativity grows, reaches a peak, and then typically declines later in life (Boon, 2014).

Although this pattern may be common for all domains, it appears that the age at which peaks are likely to occur is different for various disciplines. For example, in areas such as math, chess, and musical performance the peak of creativity typically comes at an early age. The reason for this may well be that in these clearly defined disciplines it is easier to identify the cutting edge, and then one can proceed toward creative innovation. In fields such as literature or philosophy, however, it is more difficult (i.e., it takes longer) to define the parameters of what is routine vs. that which is truly creative (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2003).

When looking at the childhoods of creative geniuses, there is some debate as to what one sees. It is generally agreed that they tend not to be first-born children, their families are economically and/or socially marginalized, they receive special training early in life, and they benefit from role models and mentors. There is less agreement regarding two potential additional factors: that they are intellectually precocious and that they suffer some childhood trauma (see Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2003). In some cases, the interests of childhood stem from some area in which the child exhibits a competitive advantage to begin with, leading to praise and support that encourages continuing with that endeavor (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996).

Despite what is said above regarding an apparent decline in creativity in the later years of life, this is definitely not always the case. Some individuals remain active very late in life, and both their productivity and their creativity continue unabated. It then becomes important to distinguish between enduring engagement (staying in a field because either one needs to or it has become a habit) as compared to vital engagement. Vital engagement refers to an absorbing and meaningful relationship with some domain (art, science, etc.) throughout one’s life (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2003). Having forged a deep relationship with one’s domain of interest, continued fruitful activity is likely to occur until the very end of one’s life.

There are numerous topics in this book which overlap. For example, we just re-examined flow and creativity, and earlier in this book we discussed resilience. In *The Resilient Self*, Wolin & Wolin (1993) combined the resiliencies of creativity and humor. Whereas other aspects of resiliency keep the wheels of reality rolling, creativity and humor allow the imagination to take over and rearrange one’s life to your own liking. To some extent, this view of resiliency sounds like a distinction is being made between reason and emotion. When such distinctions are made, in the Western view we typically favor reason over emotion. But what about the relationship between creativity and emotions?

James Averill has noted that in our language non-emotional words typically have a positive connotation, whereas emotional words are most likely to have a negative connotation (at a rate of 2 to 1; see Averill, 2005). However, he considers it possible that emotions can be a creative product. When considering an emotional syndrome, such as anger, love, or grief, people typically use their emotion to fulfill some social role. For example, people are somber at a wake or funeral. However, this is not always the case. The Irish wake is infamous for being a drunken party which celebrates the life of the dead person, and some cultures have something of a family reunion prior to the aged person going off to die in the wilderness. Personally, I once watched a young child get hurt during playtime at the gym. He looked around, walked over to near where his mother was sitting, and then began to cry. Clearly, his emotional response was used for an effective purpose, and he had realized it made no sense to cry if his mother couldn’t hear him.

Averill suggests that we can use our emotional states and responses in creative ways to achieve some goal, particularly in the arts and with regard to the mysticism of everyday life – spiritualizing the passions as he calls it (though he acknowledges borrowing the term from Nietzsche; see Averill, 2005). Unfortunately, this sort of creativity can create challenges for the individual (see also the discussion that follows):

Emotions embody the values of a society. If, for example, you strip all connotations of right and wrong, of good and bad, from concepts such as *love*, *anger*, *grief*, and *fear*, you also strip them of much of their meaning…Mystical experiences tend to transcend ideological boundaries and hence pose a threat to accepted creeds. Claims to authenticity – a hallmark of spirituality as well as creativity – only exacerbate the apostasy. In such instances, recognition of the experience as effective may be long delayed…But if the task seems difficult and the goal elusive, that is no reason for discouragement. Positive psychology promises challenge more than comfort; emotional creativity is part of that challenge. (pg. 182; Averill, 2005)

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Although we typically view creativity in a positive light, it can become something dangerous. For example, the Manhattan project resulted in the creation of the first atomic bombs. Although nuclear power, another result of this line of research, has benefited mankind greatly, nuclear weapons have created a very real potential for almost unimaginable death and destruction. And yet, those first atomic bombs have been credited with saving as many as a million American lives (the estimated cost in human lives had we invaded the Japanese homeland at the end of World War II – and that’s *not* counting the estimated cost in Japanese lives!). Therefore, “negative creativity” is not bad *per se*, and must be distinguished from “malevolent creativity” (Kaufman, 2016).

There is an old saying that an artist must suffer for their art. Although it could be argued that the examples of creative geniuses who suffer from psychological disorders are merely anecdotal, given that there are very few people recognized as creative geniuses and many of us are familiar with stories of their struggles, it gives one pause to think. Without going into much detail, here are just a few examples of eminent individuals who struggled with psychological issues/disorders:

* **Charles Dickens** – his writing expressed his profound feelings of inferiority as the result of living in a debtor’s prison for a time during his childhood and he railed against the injustices of society.
* **Franz Kafka** – having suffered an abusive childhood, his writing often reflects the confusion of the struggle that such a child lives through.
* **Gustav Mahler** and **Sergei Rachmaninov** – these musicians turned personal tragedies into the motivation for some of their best compositions.
* **Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart** – having become fatally ill due to a heart condition, Mozart wrote his *Requiem Mass* knowing that he would soon die (indeed, he died before it was complete).
* **Edvard Munch** – having experienced a childhood surrounded by illness and death (both of his parents, a brother, and a sister all died while he was young), Munch painted his expressionistic view of the realities of life. His most famous painting is well known in the field of psychology: The Scream (aka, The Cry).
* **Vincent van Gogh** – one of the most famous painters of all time, he is almost equally famous for his mental torment and emotional instability, much of his best work was completed during the last three years of his life, which ended in suicide.

*(for additional examples and more detail see Amada, 1999)*

Malevolent creativity is typically seen in either criminal activity or terrorism (Kaufman, 2016). During the second Iraq war, most of the casualties were caused by IEDs (improvised explosive devices). We’ve all heard about suicide bombers wearing explosive vests (for a theoretical discussion of the psychological processes involved in becoming a suicide bomber see Moghaddam, 2005, 2006), and recently a movie was released about the 2013 terrorist attack at the Boston Marathon (where bombs were hidden inside backpacks so the terrorists could get close to their target sites).

The relationship between creativity and ethical behavior is odd. Although research has shown that creativity cannot predict a person’s ethical behavior, it has also been suggested that creative people are more likely to feel entitled, make unethical justifications, and then behave unethically (see Kaufman, 2016). How we might deal with this reality is somewhat beyond the scope, and also outside the domain, of this project.

## Strengths Within Transcendence: Gratitude, Hope (& Optimism), and Humor

The virtue transcendence contains several strengths which are covered in most positive psychology textbooks. Perhaps this should not be at all surprising, since Peterson & Seligman (2004) define transcendence as “strengths that forge connections to the larger universe and provide meaning.” That could serve as a definition of positive psychology as well. Thus, in this section we will examine the strengths of gratitude, hope (an aspect of which is optimism), and humor.

Gratitude, hope, and optimism are not only valuable for living a good life, but they also appear to be related to living a longer life. There has been some fascinating research done based on the “Nun Study.” In 1930, a group of nuns were asked to write a short autobiography. In the early 1990s, those who could be located were asked to participate in a study of longevity and health (in particular, Alzheimer’s Disease). Danner et al. (2001) took advantage of this extraordinary group to examine whether positive emotion (as expressed in the autobiographies) was related to longevity.

When the autobiographies were scored for the expression of positive or negative emotion, some were high in positive emotion but others were low (more matter of fact, merely describing the reality of their choice to pursue a religious life). Among the positive emotions expressed, happiness was the most common and love was third (two topics we have covered); whereas interest was second (positive engagement is related to optimism), hope was fourth, and gratefulness was fifth. Here are the examples used to demonstrate low vs. high positive emotion:

*Sister 1 (low positive emotion):* I was born on September 26, 1909, the eldest of seven children, five girls and two boys…My candidate year was spent in the Motherhouse, teaching Chemistry and Second Year Latin at Notre Dame Institute. With God's grace, I intend to do my best for our Order, for the spread of religion and for my personal sanctification.

*Sister 2 (high positive emotion):* God started my life off well by bestowing upon me a grace of inestimable value... The past year which I have spent as a candidate studying at Notre Dame College has been a very happy one. Now I look forward with eager joy to receiving the Holy Habit of Our Lady and to a life of union with Love Divine.

(pg. 806; Danner et al., 2001)

So, what was the relationship between positive emotion and longevity? Those nuns whose autobiographies were scored as highest in positive emotion were 2.5x more like to survive into their nineties than those who scored the least positive (Danner et al., 2001). Although happiness and love were highly significant, so were gratitude, hope and optimism. Given Peterson & Seligman’s (2004) definition of transcendence, and the nature of a religious/spiritual life, it makes sense that nuns who approach their faith in a positive way would experience those aspects of transcendence (i.e., gratitude, hope, and optimism). What may be surprising, however, is that it actually relates to an apparent prolongation of that life!

### Gratitude

Gratitude is a pleasant feeling (joyful) that we have when we realize that we’ve been given a gift. Such gifts can be quite tangible, like a birthday present, or more spiritual/transpersonal, such as feeling grateful for a beautiful day or a wonderful life. There appear to be three elements related to gratitude: a sense of thankfulness toward the person (or whatever) who has given us our gift, positive feelings toward that person, and an increased desire/motivation to be more giving ourselves, both for the one to whom we are grateful to as well as to others (McCullough et al., 2001; Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

Gratitude can be viewed as either a situational mood (i.e., we get a present and we feel grateful) or as a trait (an enduring quality of thankfulness that extends over time and across situations). Regardless, it is a complex emotion that does not arise until later in childhood (see McCullough et al., 2004; Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Once a child has developed the cognitive capacity to experience gratitude, it can be further nurtured (as it can be in adults). Emmons & McCullough (2003) conducted a series of experiments in which they had students (or others, in the case of their third study) either reflect on things they were grateful for in life or keep a daily journal of such items. Heightening one’s awareness of gratitude tended to result in feeling better about one’s life (including being more optimistic about the near future), having fewer negative physical symptoms, and engaging in a healthier lifestyle (e.g., exercising more).

Although research on gratitude is still fairly new, a number of measures have been developed to measure it, including the Gratitude Adjective Checklist, the GRAT (gratitude, resentment, appreciation test), the Gratitude Questionnaire, and the use of free responses (Bono & Froh, 2009; Emmons et al., 2003; Peterson & Seligman, 2004). For those with a grateful disposition, there appear to be four facets: intensity (how strong one’s feelings of gratitude are), frequency (how often one feels grateful or for how many little things one feels grateful for), span (the range of things for which one feels grateful), and density (how many people one attributes their gratitude to; Emmons et al., 2003).

When dealing with children, it can be somewhat difficult to distinguish gratitude from social politeness. Nonetheless, when school-age children were instructed to “count blessings” they soon had higher levels of optimism, life satisfaction, and they were more satisfied with school (which leads to a greater desire to attend school, better feelings about being in school, and, consequently, better school performance). When school children were further asked to reflect on the things they were grateful for, and why they were grateful, those children often became more socially aware and empathic (i.e., they began to understand that others might not have as much to be grateful for; Bono & Froh, 2009).

The desire to form strong social ties is a fundamental need, and securing strong and supportive relationships early on can provide the bedrock for many positive outcomes in human development. Experiencing and expressing gratitude is one way for youths (and adults) to boost their mood, strengthen their social ties, and cultivate a sense of purposeful engagement with the world. (pp. 84-85; Bono & Froh, 2009)

Overall, grateful people tend to report higher levels of positive emotions, life satisfaction, vitality, and optimism, and they report lower levels of depression, stress, and physical problems/symptoms. Gratitude has a long and positive history in moral philosophy, so it’s not at all surprising that it is widely valued in many cultures and spiritual traditions (see Emmons & Shelton, 2005; Peterson & Seligman, 2004). According to Vaillant, who spent decades studying the men in the Harvard Grant Study, gratitude is an essential component of a long and meaningful life:

…I wish to examine a thread that ran through the lives of many of the men as they matured, a thread of spiritual growth or, for want of a better term, *religious wonder*. Others may prefer to call the process moral development… Mature defenses grow out of our brain’s evolving capacity to master, assimilate, and feel grateful for life, living, and experience. Such gratitude encompasses the capacity for wonder. (pg. 337; Vaillant, 1993)

### Hope

There are conflicting myths as to the origin of hope. In the classic *Bulfinch’s Mythology* (Martin, 1991), the first myth suggests that Zeus sent Pandora (the first woman) to the Titans Prometheus and Epimetheus (who had created man) as punishment for stealing fire from heaven and giving it to man. Epimetheus had a box full of things of no use to man (indeed, they would become plagues), which Pandora opened out of curiosity. After all the plagues had escaped, only hope remained. In the second myth, Zeus sent Pandora as a gift, with a box full of wedding blessings from the gods. However, Pandora impatiently opened the box, allowing all the blessings to escape. Once again, only hope remained (Martin, 1991).

Peterson & Seligman (2004) include optimism within the strength of hope, noting that hope is more emotional, whereas optimism has more to do with expectations. However, most positive psychology textbooks and handbooks treat them as separate topics (e.g., Gilman et al., 2009; Lopez & Snyder, 2003; Snyder & Lopez, 2005). So we’ll examine hope first, and then we’ll turn to optimism and explanatory style.

Snyder (1994) described hope as the willpower and waypower to achieve one’s goals. Willpower underlies the motivation to move from where you are toward your goals, and waypower refers to your cognitive understanding of how to actually achieve those goals. Understanding this definition is greatly enhanced by considering what hope is *not:* it is not Pollyanna optimism, learned optimism, Type A behavior, emotion/self-esteem, intelligence or previous achievement, useless, or vague. As for why it isn’t vague, there are several scales for measuring hope (see below).

One of the advantages of being hopeful is that it helps one to cope with life. According to Snyder (1994), individuals with high levels of hope tend to naturally cope effectively because of the following attributes: they minimize the negative, they look outward and problem solve, they call on friends, laugh, pray, exercise and watch their health, and they age gracefully. This appears to be true for both men and women, as well as most racial/ethnic groups in the West (with the exception of Asian-Americans, who appear less hopeful; see Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Snyder, 1994).

According to Erik Erikson, hope is the successful outcome of the first psychosocial crisis in development (developing trust vs. mistrust; Erikson, 1950, 1968). If we learn as infants that we can basically trust our caregivers, who will never be perfect, we learn to hope that they will be there soon when they are not there immediately. Hope can then provide a framework within which we face and work to overcome challenges in our lives. Parents can nurture hope in their children by helping them to set goals and then encouraging them to stretch those goals and strive toward new heights. The success with which we face these challenges will then largely determine how hopeful we are as adults (Snyder, 1994).

Snyder et al. (2005) have further defined hope in terms of pursuing goals through both pathways thinking and agency thinking. Pathways thinking pertains to believing in one’s ability to generate workable paths to achieving one’s goals, whereas agency thinking refers to the motivational component of hope. These are not separate functions, but rather work together:

In the progression of hopeful thinking in the goal-pursuit sequence, we hypothesize that pathways thinking increases agency thinking, which, in turn, yields further pathways thinking, and so on. Overall, therefore, pathway and agency thoughts are iterative as well as additive over the course of a given sequence of goal-directed cognitions… (pg. 258; Snyder et al., 2005)

As we saw with gratitude, hope can be either a state (one’s current mood) or a trait (a general attitude of hopefulness in one’s life; see Lopez et al., 2009; Snyder et al., 2005). Hope can also be viewed as either an emotion or a cognition (Lopez et al., 2003b). Given these differing definitions/perspectives, there are numerous tests for the measurement of hope, including the Trait Hope Scale, the State Hope Scale, the Children’s Hope Scale, and observational measures can be used as well, such as scoring written passages for indications of hopeful thinking or actions (Edwards et al., 2007; Lopez et al., 2003b; Snyder et al., 2005).

For individuals who have high levels of hope there are numerous benefits. Across various levels of education, hope is correlated with higher achievement test scores and better grade point averages, as well as higher graduation and lower dropout rates. Athletes who score high on hope tend to perform better, and for most people their overall health is better if they are hopeful. When people do become ill or injured, hope proves to be an important and effective coping mechanism. These health benefits are not only physical. Hopeful college students feel more inspired, energized, confident, and they have higher levels of self-worth, while also exhibiting lower levels of depression and stress. Overall, hope is related to feelings of positive emotion, life satisfaction, and a sense of well-being (Edwards et al., 2007; Lopez et al., 2009; Snyder et al., 2005).

### Optimism

Pangloss taught metaphysico-theologo-cosmonigology. He proved admirably that in this best of all possible worlds, His Lordship’s castle was the most beautiful of castles, and Her Ladyship the best of all possible baronesses.

“It is demonstrated,” said he, “that things cannot be otherwise: for, since everything was made for a purpose, everything is necessarily for the best purpose. Note that noses were made to wear spectacles; we therefore have spectacles. Legs are clearly devised to wear breeches, and we have breeches. Stones were created to be hewn and made into castles; His Lordship therefore has a very beautiful castle: the greatest baron in the province must have the finest residence. And since pigs were made to be eaten, we eat pork all year round. Therefore, those who have maintained that all is well have been talking nonsense: they should have maintained that all is for the best.”

(p. 18; Voltaire, 1759/1959)

Optimism and hope are both future-minded orientations, in which we believe (or wish) things will work out for the better in the future (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). As noted in the previous section, optimism is about expectations, whereas hope is more emotional. The book from which the preceding quote is taken, *Candide, or Optimism*, is a satirical work which mocks what we referred to as hope *not* being – Pollyana-ish optimism. But reasonable optimism, a generally positive attitude regarding future outcomes, appears to be something of significant value. It appears that an important factor is the explanatory style a person develops. In other words, how do they explain what happens in life and how (or if) the events of life are connected.

Peterson et al. (1988) found that men with pessimistic explanatory styles (stable, global, and internal) at age 25 are significantly less healthy later in life, even when controlling for factors such as initial physical and emotional health. While it does not appear that this psychological factor is critical in young adulthood, as health becomes more variable in middle age the psychological factor of pessimism comes to the fore. This may be the result of its influence on such things as lifestyle, self-care, and social support. Indeed, in a surprising twist, an optimistic explanatory style tends to predict depression in response to stressful events in older adults, perhaps due to their expectations that things will be OK, particularly with regard to one’s health, but then they aren’t OK because they are, in fact, getting old (Isaacowitz & Seligman, 2001; Peterson & Seligman, 2004)!

Nonetheless, most research has shown that people who are optimistic following stressful events tend to experience less depression and hostility, they have higher levels of subjective well-being and a better quality of life, and they are more resilient against distress during prolonged medical treatment and its follow-up (see Abramson et al., 2000; Carver & Scheier, 2005; Mosing et al., 2011). In addition, for caregivers attending to those with prolonged medical conditions, those caregivers who were optimistic experienced less depression, less of an impact on their physical health, and they adjusted better in their daily lives (see Carver & Scheier, 2005).

The relationship between optimism and pessimism may have a lot to do with coping with life’s challenges. Optimism leads to working toward one’s goals, since there is an expectancy that things will work out well. Thus, optimistic people are more highly motivated to work toward the resolution of challenges in life. In contrast, pessimistic people are more likely to give up, which can lead a person to turn instead to unhealthy forms of coping, such as substance abuse (Carver & Scheier, 2003, 2005; Hamvai & Piko, 2011). Then again, excessive optimism might lead some people to ignore real problems until it is too late, merely hoping that things will work out while, unfortunately, a minor medical problem, for example, becomes life threatening (Carver & Scheier, 2005).

For students, whether in grade school or college, optimism is related to being better able to adjust to stressful situations and challenges. For school-aged children, a pessimistic explanatory style was positively correlated with anxiety, depression, and dysfunctional attitudes. As might be expected, these children failed to fulfill their potential in school. There have been a few studies looking at the ability to develop optimism in children, with mixed results. What appears to be needed are longitudinal studies to assess whether programs aimed at promoting optimism have sustained effects over a longer period of time (see Boman et al., 2009; Carver & Scheier, 2005).

There are a number of tests available for measuring optimism, including the Life Orientation Test, the Attributional Style Questionnaire, the Children’s Attributional Style Questionnaire, the Hopelessness Scale, the Generalized Expectancy of Success Scale, and the Optimism-Pessimism Scale (Carver & Scheier, 2003; Reivich & Gillham, 2003; Seligman et al., 1995). You can go to the Authentic Happiness Website, which is maintain by Martin Seligman at Penn, and take an optimism/hopefulness test for yourself, and see how you compare to a variety of other groups (for my results see below; the site is www.positivepsychology.org). As we saw with hope, collectivistic cultures express less optimism than individualistic cultures (although there may at times be collective optimism; Peterson & Chang, 2003), and people in communistic countries tend to be quite pessimistic (Chang, 2002; Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

Although Christopher Peterson’s early work focused on the pessimistic explanatory style, more recently he and his colleagues have shifted their focus to the optimistic explanatory style. Although some data are conflicting, in some studies an optimistic explanatory style is associated with good health (Peterson & Bossio, 2002; Peterson & Chang, 2003; Peterson & Steen, 2005).

It is not clear where one’s explanatory style comes from. While there appears to be a genetic influence, the role of parenting in determining the explanatory style of children is not at all clear (see, e.g., Fincham, 2000; Mosing et al., 2011; Zuckerman, 2002). Unfortunately, one type of parenting does appear to have detrimental effects. Having abusive parents is traumatic, and trauma can result in a pessimistic explanatory style (Peterson & Steen, 2005). On the positive side, however, optimistic individuals tend to be more likely to put themselves in situations where more good things are possible, suggesting further that optimism and its consequent benefits, which lead to greater optimism, may be mutually reinforcing (Hamvai & Piko, 2011; Peterson & Chang, 2003).

In 1995, Martin Seligman and several colleagues published *The Optimistic Child*. Aiming to counter the effects of learned helplessness and depression, and in response to the failed movement to increase children’s self-esteem (in unrealistic ways), they were interested in providing parents (and others) with the tools to help children learn “the skills of a flexible and reality-based optimism” (pg. 9; Seligman et al., 1995). Not surprisingly, they address one’s personal attributional style (aka, explanatory style). The general theory of attribution in psychology focuses on three main elements: permanence, pervasiveness, and personalization (aka, stable vs. unstable, global vs. specific, and internal vs. external). Optimistic people see bad events as temporary and good events as permanent. They see bad events as specific, and good events as global. And finally, they see bad events as internal in a general way (self-critical, self-blaming; e.g., I failed because I’m stupid) and they see good events as internal in behavioral ways (e.g., I did well because I studied).

In discussing the Penn Prevention Program, designed to prevent pessimism and depression, the approach taken by Seligman and his colleagues is a classical cognitive therapy design. First they set up an understanding of the ABC’s: adversity, beliefs, and consequences. The program is then expanded to include DE: disputation and energization, steps necessary to forge ahead with the program. The also discuss how all of this can be taught to children.

Ultimately, they come to a five-step process for problem solving:

* Slow down
* Take perspective
* Set goals
* Choose a path
* How did it go?

(pp. 241-260; Seligman et al., 1995)

**\* \* \***

On the Authentic Happiness website you can take the Gratitude Survey and the Optimism Test (which also provides a hopefulness score). I was recently joking with a friend about not having these attributes, and then I remembered I’d taken these test and could check my scores. I also took the VIA Survey of Character Strengths, so where these strengths rank on my list of virtues is also available.

While talking to my friend, I corrected myself and said I was definitely grateful for certain things in my life. Indeed, my score on the Gratitude Survey put me at approximately the 70th percentile. In other words, I am more grateful for various aspects of my life than ~70% of other people. Since the 50th percentile is average, I’m well above average on this measure of gratitude.

On the different aspects of the Optimism Test, I vary between average and quite pessimistic. As for the hopefulness score, which ranges from -16 to 16, I score a -1, which is moderately hopeless. This is not entirely surprising, since I have struggled with depression most of my life. And yet, I don’t consider this a bad thing, necessarily. It has been shown that mildly depressed people are more accurate, more realistic in their assessment of the connections between life’s events (Alloy & Abramson, 1979). Since my primary strengths (as confirmed by the VIA Survey) have to do with wisdom, knowledge, and processing information, accuracy is something I value highly. It served me well as a research scientist.

As expected, on my list of character strengths, gratitude (13/24) comes in somewhat higher than hope (19/24). Interestingly, hope is not at the bottom of my list. So, as my hopefulness score indicates, my life is not devoid of any hope. That’s definitely a good thing!

### Humor

At our college, like many others, we have a strategic plan. Since we keep creating new strategic plans, many people just don’t take the plan seriously. Recently, at a college-wide meeting, one of the presenters intended to make reference to the strategic plan, but instead she referred to the “strategic bland.” Sometimes Freudian slips can be pretty funny!

Even those who know little about psychology have probably heard of Freudian slips. What most people, even those in the field of psychology, don’t know, however, is that one of Sigmund Freud’s earliest books was *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* (Freud, 1905/1960). This book was not intended to be funny, or to explain what it is that makes a joke funny in any general sense. Instead, Freud described humor as a means to release pent up tension and psychic energy as a defense mechanism against anxiety. Consequently, he was more interested in the purpose of telling a joke than in any general principle of humor.

For example, among the so-called tendentious jokes (jokes that serve a purpose), he described four classes: exposing or obscene jokes, aggressive jokes, cynical jokes, and skeptical jokes. The following is an example he included of a skeptical joke. Personally, I see no humor in this joke whatsoever. By the way, Freud’s family was Jewish, though he was an atheist, and he included a number of Jewish jokes in his book.

Two Jews met in a railway carriage at a station in Galicia. “Where are you going?” asked one. “To Cracow,” was the answer. “What a liar you are!” broke out the other. “If you say you’re going to Cracow, you want me to believe you’re going to Lemberg. But I know that in fact you’re going to Cracow. So why are you lying to me?” (pp. 137-138)

Freud was not the only one to consider dark humor as an understandable coping mechanism when dealing with negative emotions and traumatic situations. George Vaillant considered humor to be a mature defense mechanism, and Victor Frankl discussed how humor helped prisoners in the Nazi concentration camps separate themselves from the pain and suffering of their lives, even if only for a moment (see Amada, 1999; Lefcourt, 2005). For further discussion of the dark side of humor, as well as plenty of amusingly nasty jokes (if you enjoy such things), see the chapter on humor in Amada’s book *The Power of Negative Thinking* (1999).

There was a time when humor was seen as something entirely negative, even evil. In those times, even something as routine today as applause was considered a form of mocking behavior (Carroll, 2014; Lefcourt, 2005). Freud shared one such example in line with this old way of thinking:

When on one occasion Phocion [an Athenian statesman] was applauded after making a speech, he turned to his friends and asked: “What have I said that’s stupid, then?” (pg. 67; Freud, 1905/1960)

Over time, however, physicians began to see the value of laughter with regard to a person’s physical health. As early as the 13th century, doctors began to consider laughter as helpful in recovery from surgery, good for blood flow and the complexion, an aid to digestion, and even a form of exercise (see Lefcourt, 2005; see, however, Devereux & Heffner, 2007). Current research has confirmed and extended these early suggestions. For example, humor serves as a stress moderating factor in accordance with an emotion-focused coping strategy, and higher scores on humor are related to lower levels of depression and irritability. Humor also helps people to recover from illness and injury/surgery, enhances immune system function, and helps people cope with the challenges of facing death (possible or actual death of oneself and/or loved ones; see Devereux & Heffner, 2007; Lefcourt, 2005). Humor can also play an important role in coping with disabilities. Making light of a seemingly overwhelming or uncontrollable situation can help to restore some feeling of control, and there appears to be a positive relationship between humor and self-concept and vitality (see Reuman et al., 2013).

If humor is, indeed, a beneficial positive asset, it would be valuable to actually define it. However, since there are different forms of humor it has defied a simple definition; the definition has clearly changed over time as well. The definition of what is funny is also something different than defining a sense of humor, which may actually be a personality trait. Efforts to enhance a person’s sense of humor in a psychotherapeutic setting have proven problematic, likely owing to the fact that we can’t clearly define it in the first place (see Lefcourt, 2005; Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

Attempting to define humor from the perspective of primarily jokes, Carroll (2014) discusses several possibilities, including the superiority theory (e.g., bigotry jokes, jokes which humiliate or demean a particular group), release theory (e.g., Freud’s suggestion that humor releases pent up anxiety), play theory (e.g., jokes that are simply silly), and the category which Carroll considers the most relevant/important – incongruity theory (e.g., a twist or absurdity).

Carroll (2014) goes on to address something that others often neglect, and he uses this to support his perspective that incongruity theory is the most important way to define/identify humor. What is the purpose of humor/laughter in the first place? In other words, what vital human interest does humor serve? The enjoyment of absurd perspectives encourages us to see the world, and the objects in it, in different ways. Recognizing the incongruency, however, then serves to reinforce our concepts and schemas of what is normal, thus helping us to make sense of the world around us (Carroll, 2014). In simpler terms, we enjoy learning how the world works!

There are numerous measures of humor available, including the Humorous Behavior Q-Sort Deck, the State-Trait Cheerfulness Inventory, the Humor Styles Questionnaire, the 3 WD Test of Humor Appreciation, the Sense of Humor Questionnaire, the Multidimensional Sense of Humor Questionnaire, and two tests developed by Martin & Lefcourt, the Coping Humor Scale (CHS) and the Situational Humor Response Questionnaire (SHRQ; see Lefcourt, 2005; Martin, 2003; Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Each of these tests is useful in its own way, but an interesting difference was discovered between the CHS and the SHRQ. Apparently the SHRQ is more predictive of male humor, whereas the CHS is more predictive of female humor. The humor preferred by males tends to be more derisive and divisive (consider, e.g., the superiority theory of what is humorous), whereas humor preferred by females typically promotes social cohesion (see Lefcourt, 2005). This is clearly an area where further research is warranted.

The most obvious effect of humor or a good joke is laughter, which also serves as a measure of how humorous or funny something is for us. Conversely, if a joke fails to make us laugh, we don’t consider it to be very funny. So, what is laughter and what do we know about it? First and foremost, laughter is apparently *not* uniquely human – rats, dogs, and chimpanzees appear to laugh as we do (see Panksepp, 2005, 2007; Panksepp & Burgdorf, 2000, 2003).

Laughter itself is difficult to define, in part due to its multifaceted collection of facial, postural, acoustic, and physiological properties. There are also several different kinds of laughter. However, laughter seems to be primarily a social phenomenon, and it occurs more quickly when it is specifically social than when it is either tension release, in response to humor, or the result of tickling (in that order). Indeed, laughter seems to be primarily for others, as a display that sets the stage for prosocial behaviors like cooperation and bonding (see Devereux & Heffner, 2007).

Devereux & Heffner (2007) argue in favor of physiological studies of laughter, because there is an inherent problem with questionnaires: when you interrupt the situation to have a subject fill out a questionnaire, they typically stop laughing. The may still find the situation humorous, suggesting that questionnaire measures of humor may be fine (as briefly noted above), but laughter itself is more spontaneous and short-lived. In addition, there appear to be brain regions specifically related to the behavior of laughing, though some of these studies are suspect since the subjects were having their brain activity monitored due to the occurrence of seizures (see Devereux & Heffner, 2007).

In Section V we’ll take a look at the need for positivity with regard to stigmatized groups. Although there isn’t anything funny about being disabled, Dietz (2000) emphasized the importance of maintaining your sense of humor while trying to cope (see also Martin, 2003; Reuman et al., 2013). Humor provides a source of enjoyment and makes life easier for everyone (provided jokes aren’t demeaning, or at the expense of someone). The renowned theoretical physicist Stephen Hawking, who has amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS, aka Lou Gehrig’s Disease) has joked about some of the equipment he needs to communicate with others:

I have also given a number of…popular talks. They have been well received. I think that is in a large part due to the quality of the speech synthesizer…One’s voice is very important. If you have a slurred voice, people are likely to treat you as mentally deficient. This synthesizer is by far the best I have heard because it varies the intonation and doesn’t speak like a Dalek. The only trouble is that it gives me an American accent. However, by now I identify with its voice. I would not want to change even if I were offered a British-sounding voice. (pg. 26; Hawking, 1993) - ***Note:*** *The Daleks are a race of evil cyborgs from the classic British science fiction series “Dr. Who.”*

**\* \* \***

Personally, I like simple jokes. For example: A fish was swimming along, and he hit his head on some concrete. He said, “Dam!” After hearing this joke I made one up. I know that at least one other person made up the same joke, because I saw it on a t-shirt on a trip to northern Michigan (yes, I bought one of the t-shirts). Here it is: What does a beaver say when he sees a stream? “Dam it!” Then I made up another joke, that as far as I know is entirely my own. What does a beaver pray for in church? “God, dam it!”

As promised above, here are some jokes that were included in Sigmund Freud’s *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* (1905/1960). Unlike the example from Freud’s book used above, I’ve chosen these particular jokes because I do find them rather amusing. Nonetheless, they are clearly dated, and I don’t think they’d be featured at any comedy clubs today.

This joke is attributed to Lichtenberg, and is classified by Freud as a ‘stupid’ joke: ‘He wondered how it is that cats have two holes cut in their skin precisely at the place where their eyes are.’ A related joke, attributed to Michelet, is as follows: ‘How beautifully Nature has arranged it that as soon as a child comes into the world it finds a mother ready to take care of it!’ (pp. 68-69)

An impoverished individual borrowed 25 florins from a prosperous acquaintance, with many asseverations of his necessitous circumstances. The very same day his benefactor met him again in a restaurant with a plate of salmon mayonnaise in front of him. The benefactor reproached him: “What? You borrow money from me and then order yourself salmon mayonnaise? Is *that* what you’ve used my money for?” “I don’t understand you,” replied the object of the attack; “if I haven’t any money I *can’t* eat salmon mayonnaise, and if I have some money I *mustn’t* eat salmon mayonnaise. Well, then, when *am* I to eat salmon mayonnaise?” (pg.56)

A gentleman entered a pastry-cook’s shop and ordered a cake; but he soon brought it back and asked for a glass of liqueur instead. He drank it and began to leave without having paid. The proprietor detained him. “What do you want?” asked the customer. – “You’ve not paid for the liqueur.” – “But I gave you the cake in exchange for it.” – “You didn’t pay for that either.” – “But I hadn’t eaten it.” (pg. 69)

A horse-dealer was recommending a saddle-horse to a customer. “If you take this horse and get on it at four in the morning you’ll be in Pressburg by half-past six.” – “What should I be doing in Pressburg at half-past six in the morning?” (pg. 62)

The bridegroom was most disagreeably surprised when the bride was introduced to him, and drew the broker on one side and whispered his remonstrances: “Why have you brought me here?” he asked reproachfully. “She’s ugly and old, she squints and has bad teeth and bleary eyes…” – “You needn’t lower your voice,” interrupted the broker, “she’s deaf as well.” (pp. 74-75)

# Section IV: Positive Institutions

In this section we’ll examine some of the institutions that exist around us to help people achieve well-being in their lives. Within the field of psychology, therapy has always been and will likely continue to be the primary focus of the field. Many people spend a lot of time in school (though there are those who are home-schooled), and then spend most of their life working for a living. Thus, school, work, and therapy are all institutions in which positive psychological principles can be helpful.

In addition, programs which help people to avoid the need for help, whether it be psychological, academic, or occupational, are by their very nature positive. Many community programs are designed for teens or the elderly, but there are also some well-known preschool programs (e.g., Head Start). Often these programs serve members of our society who most need that assistance to achieve their full potential in life.

## Psychotherapy

Psychotherapy is of unique interest in the field of positive psychology. The critique that positive psychology began with, that the field of psychology has focused too much on the negative aspects of human life, is based on the fact that most psychologists are therapists and that therapy has too often focused on people’s problems. Thus, moving toward positive forms of psychotherapy was one of the original driving forces underlying the development of positive psychology.

Of course, it would be better if we could help people to avoid reaching the point where therapy is necessary, and positive psychology has helped to identify factors which serve as buffers against mental illness. For example, training in skills such as learned optimism can indeed help to preempt problems such as depression and anxiety. Actually, a wide range of positive human strengths serve as buffers against mental illness, including courage, optimism, hope, honesty, perseverance, insight, the capacity for flow, and future-mindedness. Programs (or therapies) with focus on developing these strengths, particularly the skill of “disputing,” can help people to avoid both mental illness and related problems such as substance abuse (see Seligman, 2005; Seligman & Peterson, 2003).

Seligman and Peterson (2003) have suggested that one of the reasons that psychotherapy works is that there are core positive aspects commonly used by all good therapists, even if they don’t name these techniques as positive *per se*. According to Carl Rogers (see below), one such factor is empathy. In terms of the strengths built upon within the client, according to Seligman & Peterson (2003), there is courage, interpersonal skill, rationality, insight, optimism, authenticity, perseverance, realism, capacity for pleasure, future-mindedness, personal responsibility, and purpose (or meaning). Although most good therapists likely work to develop these strengths, it isn’t often discussed, researched, or taught. Consider narration, the telling of one’s personal story:

We believe that telling the stories of one’s life, making sense of what otherwise seems chaotic, distilling and discovering a trajectory in one’s life, and viewing one’s life with a sense of agency rather than victimhood are all powerfully positive…Notice, however, that narration is not a primary subject of research on the therapy process, that we do not have categories of narration, that we do not train our students to facilitate narration… (Pg. 313; Seligman & Peterson, 2003)

Seligman & Peterson (2003, 2005) also distinguish between tactics and deep strategies that are common to all forms of psychotherapy when a competent therapist is involved. Tactics include such factors as attention, rapport, trust, and tricks of the trade (e.g., “Let’s pause here,” rather than “Let’s stop here”). Deep strategies include approaches such as instilling hope or building the buffering strengths listed above.

Another deep strategy that has something of a checkered past in the field of psychology is spirituality, particularly strong views on specific religions themselves (see Myers & Jeeves, 2003). Following the early and harsh critique of Sigmund Freud (1927/1961; 1930/1961), and the disregard of that which could not be studied by the radical behaviorists, the fields of psychology and psychiatry avoided religion for a long time. However, there are natural connections between spiritual therapy and positive psychology, not the least of which are a focus on ethics and values (see, e.g., Elkins, 2005; Fredrickson, 2012; Lukoff & Lu, 2005; Neff, 2012; Richards & Bergin, 2005; Shafranske & Sperry, 2005; Siegel, 2012; Sperry, 2005). Even for those therapists who are not themselves spiritual or religious, for example the renowned co-founder of cognitive therapy and atheist Albert Ellis, when the religious beliefs of the client are important and can contribute to psychological well-being, then they need to be included within the therapeutic relationship (Ellis, 2004).

Before examining some positive approaches to psychotherapy, let’s consider ways in which people try to deal with stressful challenges in life on their own. Lazarus & Folkman (1984; for additional discussion see Baumgardner & Crothers, 2009; Compton, 2005) described three basic approaches to dealing with stressful challenges: emotion-focused coping, problem-focused coping, and avoidance. Avoidance is just that, and does nothing to deal with one’s situation (*not* a good option in the long-term).

Emotion-focused coping refers to attempts to change or regulate the negative emotional response to some stressful event. A variety of approaches might be successful in this regard, such as reinterpreting the situation, seeking the emotional support of others, seeking pleasant stimuli to overcome the negative, exercising, meditation, or simply venting to a friend. Problem-focused coping, on the other hand, involves doing something realistic to address the problem. For example, gathering information to assess one’s options, asking others directly for help, or deciding to leave an unhealthy relationship. Problem-focused coping can involve cognitive reappraisals. If our own expectations or beliefs are the source of our stress, then realistically changing our attitude or perspective will reduce our stressful reaction (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; see also Baumgardner & Crothers, 2009; Compton, 2005).

Experiencing negative emotions, in order to process it and work through it, may be as important as seeking positive emotions to bolster one’s well-being. Larsen et al. (2003) have proposed that, especially when faced with severe stress, an optimal balance of negative and positive emotions is best. Although this may be uncomfortable in the short-term, resolution of unavoidable negative events is beneficial in the long-term. Hence the observation in a number of studies that people who used more negative words to describe their traumatic experiences were more likely to improve. Rather than avoiding reality, they are coping with it, i.e., they are taking the good with the bad (Larsen et al., 2003).

Aspinwall & Taylor (1997) have examined how some people engage in proactive coping, anticipating and acting to prevent or mute the impact of stressful events. For example, if a person has initial symptoms of a potentially serious illness, it makes sense to see a doctor and get a professional opinion and perhaps some tests, rather than ignoring the problem or hoping it will just go away. They identified five stages in successful proactive coping: resource accumulation, recognizing potential stressors, the initial appraisal, preliminary coping efforts, and eliciting and using feedback concerning those initial efforts.

If it seems like those five stages sound something like self-psychotherapy, I would have to agree. People who cope well with life’s challenges usually don’t end up needing the help of a therapist. But not everyone is so fortunate. So, now let us turn our attention to several approaches to positive psychotherapy. First, we’ll examine two classics: client-centered therapy and logotherapy. Then we’ll examine one of the earliest approaches (if not the earliest) to specifically use the term “positive psychotherapy” as well as compassionate approaches inspired by Buddhist perspectives on mindfulness.

Storytelling by people who have experienced similar challenges in life can also prove helpful. For example, cancer patients found stories by or about other cancer patients helpful, but only if those stories were positive. Unfortunately, the stories they heard were positive only about 20% of the time (Taylor et al., 1993). Positive coping as the result of hearing positive stories (stories about others who coped well) fits within social comparison theories of coping (Taylor et al., 1990).

### Client-Centered and Person-Centered Therapy

Central to Carl Rogers’ view of psychotherapy is the relationship between the therapist and the client, and we must emphasize the distinction between a client and a patient. This involves shifting the emphasis in therapy from a psychologist/psychiatrist who can “fix” the patient to the client themselves, since only the client can truly understand their own experiential field. The therapist must provide a warm, safe environment in which the client feels free to express whatever attitude they experience in the same way that they perceive it. At the same time, the client experiences the therapist as someone temporarily divested of their own self, in their complete desire to understand the client. The therapist can then accurately and objectively reflect the thoughts, feelings, perceptions, confusions, ambivalences, etc., of the client back to the client. In this open, congruent, and supportive environment, the client is able to begin the process of reorganizing and reintegrating their self-structure, and living congruently within that self-structure (Rogers, 1951).

In 1957, Rogers published an article entitled *The Necessary and Sufficient Conditions of Therapeutic Personality Change* (Rogers, 1957/1989). The list is fairly short and straightforward:

1. The client and the therapist must be in psychological contact.
2. The client must be in a state of incongruence, being vulnerable or anxious.
3. The therapist must be congruent in the relationship.
4. The therapist must experience unconditional positive regard for the client.
5. The therapist must experience empathic understanding of the client’s frame of reference and endeavor to communicate this experience to the client.
6. The client must perceive, at least to a minimal degree, the therapist’s empathic understanding and unconditional positive regard.

According to Rogers, there is nothing else that is required; if these conditions are met over a period of time, there will be constructive personality change. What Rogers considered more remarkable are those factors that do *not* seem necessary for positive therapeutic change. For example, these conditions do not apply to one type of client, but to all clients, and they are not unique to client-centered therapy, but apply in all types of therapy. The relationship between the therapist and client is also not unique, these factors hold true in any interpersonal relationship. And most surprisingly, these conditions do not require any special training on the part of therapist, or even an accurate diagnosis of the client’s psychological problems! Any program designed for the purpose of encouraging constructive change in the personality structure and behavior of individuals, whether educational, military, correctional, or industrial, can benefit from these conditions and use them as a measure of the effectiveness of the program (Rogers, 1957/1989).

Can any one of these conditions be considered more important than the others? Although they are all necessary, Rogers came to believe that the critical factor may be the therapist’s empathic understanding of the client (Rogers, 1980). The Dalai Lama (2001) has said that empathy is an essential first step toward a compassionate heart. It brings us closer to others, and allows us to recognize the depth of their pain. According to Rogers, empathy refers to entering the private world of the client, and moving about within it without making any judgments. It is essential to set aside one’s own views and values, so that the other person’s world may be entered without prejudice. Not just anyone can accomplish this successfully:

In some sense it means that you lay aside your self; this can only be done by persons who are secure enough in themselves that they know they will not get lost in what may turn out to be the strange or bizarre world of the other, and that they can comfortably return to their own world when they wish. (pg. 143; Rogers, 1980)

Within a group therapy situation all of the factors described above hold true. Rogers, who late in his career was becoming more and more interested in the growth of all people, including those reasonably well-adjusted and mature to begin with, became particularly interested in T-groups and encounter groups. These groups were developed following the proposition by Kurt Lewin that modern society was overlooking the importance of training in human relations skills (the “T” in T-group stands for “training”). Encounter groups were quite similar to T-groups, except that there was a greater emphasis on personal growth and improved interpersonal communication through an experiential process. Each group has a leader, or facilitator, who fosters and encourages open communication. The group serves as a reflection of the congruence, or lack thereof, in the communication of whoever is currently expressing themselves. As a result, the group hopefully moves toward congruence, and the subsequent personal growth and actualization of the each individual (Rogers, 1970).

Given the usefulness of T-groups and encounter groups in a variety of settings, as well as the importance of continued personal growth and actualization for both the well-adjusted and those suffering psychological distress, Rogers shifted his focus from simply client-centered therapy to a more universal person-centered approach, which encompasses client-centered therapy, student-centered teaching, and group-centered leadership (Rogers, 1980; see also Rogers & Roethlisberger, 1952/1993). Rogers believed that all people have within them vast resources for self-understanding and for changing their self-concepts, attitudes, and behaviors. In all relationships, whether therapist-client, parent-child, teacher-student, leader-group, employer-employee, etc., there are three elements that can foster personal growth: genuineness or congruence, acceptance or caring, and empathic understanding. When these elements are fostered in any setting, “there is greater freedom to be the true, whole person.” The implications go far beyond individual relationships. We live in what seems to be an increasingly dangerous world. Globalism has brought with it global tension and conflict. However, Rogers argued that a person-centered approach would help to ease intercultural tension, by helping each of us to learn to appreciate and understand others. Whether the cultural differences are political, racial, ethnic, economic, whatever, as more leaders become person-centered there is the possibility for future growth of intercultural understanding and cooperation (Rogers, 1977).

What’s most interesting about Rogers’ necessary and sufficient conditions is that a good friend will naturally fulfill these conditions. In the *Visuddhimagga* (Bhikkhu Nanamoli, 1956), which was written in the year 412 and constitutes what may be the preeminent guide to Buddhist meditation (see also U Dhammaratana, 2011), Bhadantacariya Buddhaghosa refers to “the Good Friend,” who is likely a spiritual teacher. He describes the good friend as one who possesses these qualities:

He is revered and dearly loved,

And one who speaks and suffers speech;

The speech he utters is profound,

He does not urge without a reason…

He is wholly solicitous of welfare and partial to progress.

(pg. 99; Bhadantacariya Buddhaghosa, cited in Bhikkhu

Nanamoli, 1956)

Being such a good friend is no easy task. Buddhaghosa goes on to acknowledge how Gotama Buddha spoke to his disciple Ananda about the people: “Ananda, it is owing to my being a good friend to them…” Indeed, according to Buddhaghosa, “only the Fully Enlightened One who possesses all the aspects of the Good Friend” (in Bhikku Nanamoli, 1956).

It has been suggested that when Buddhaghosa wrote the *Visuddhimagga* he followed the general outline of an older work known as the *Vimuttimagga*. The original *Vimuttimagga* has been lost to time, and it comes to us now via a Chinese translation of the original (further translated into English for those of us who do not read Chinese; Ehara et al., 1995). It’s authorship has been attributed to an arahant named Upatissa. Whether or not Buddhaghosa followed the outline of Upatissa Thera’s work, in the *Vimuttimagga* we once again find a description of the good friend:

A good friend who may be likened… to a kind good-hearted person, to a dearly loved parent… like a physician who cures diseases and removes pain… like parents who ward their children from perils and like a teacher who instructs (his pupils)… Therefore, the Blessed One declared to Ananda: “Good companionship is the whole of the holy life.” (pg. 48; Upatissa Thera in Ehara et al., 1995)

Upatissa Thera goes on to list seven qualities of a good friend: loveableness, esteemableness, venerableness, the ability to counsel well, patience (in listening), the ability to deliver deep discourses (based on understanding well, which follows in part from patient listening), and not applying oneself to useless ends. The parallels with Rogers’ understanding of what is necessary to be an effective therapist are quite remarkable.

### Existentialism and Logotherapy

The French existentialist Jean-Paul Sartre, winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1964, extended existential philosophy directly into psychology, with books such as *The Transcendence of the Ego* (Sartre, 1937/1957) and a section entitled “*Existential Psychoanalysis*” in his extraordinary work *Being and Nothingness* (Sartre, 1943). Whereas Kierkegaard believed that man could never truly be one with God, and Heidegger trivialized God, Sartre simply stated that God does not exist. But this is not inconsequential:

The Existentialist, on the contrary, thinks it very distressing that God does not exist, because all possibility of finding values in a heaven of ideas disappears along with Him; there can no longer be an *a priori* Good, since there is no infinite and perfect consciousness to think it. (pg. 459; Sartre, 1947/1996).

Without going into the details of existential philosophy, Sartre argued that, unfortunately, many people reject their unique consciousness (pour-soi – the for-itself) and desire to be merely en-soi (the in-itself), just letting life happen around them. As the en-soi closes in around them, they begin to experience nausea, forlornness, anxiety, and despair. Herein lays the need for existential psychoanalysis:

Existential psychoanalysis is going to reveal to man the real goal of his pursuit, which is being as a synthetic fusion of the in-itself with the for-itself; existential psychoanalysis is going to acquaint man with his passion…Many men, in fact, know that the goal of their pursuit is being; and…they refrain from appropriating things for their own sake and try to realize the symbolic appropriations of their being-in-itself…existential psychoanalysis…must reveal to the moral agent that he is *the being by whom values exist*. It is then that his freedom will become conscious of itself… (pg. 797; Sartre, 1943)

As noted in an earlier section, Viktor Frankl extended existential philosophy into a type of therapy he called logotherapy, or “meaning” therapy. While Frankl was in medical school, he considered specializing in dermatology or obstetrics. A fellow student who was aware of Frankl’s wide-ranging interests, however, introduced Frankl to the works of Kierkegaard. This friend had been reminded of Kierkegaard’s emphasis on living an authentic life, and he urged Frankl to pursue his interest in psychiatry. While still in medical school Frankl delivered a lecture to the Academic Society for Medical Psychology, of which Frankl was the founding vice-president, and used the term logotherapy for the first time (a few years later he first used the alternative term existential analysis; Frankl, 1995/2000).

Logotherapy focuses on man’s will-to-meaning, or the search for the meaning of human existence and one’s own meaningful role within that existence. According to Frankl, the will-to-meaning is the primary source of one’s motivation in life, rather than merely a secondary rationalization of the instinctual drives. Also, meaning and values are not simply defense mechanisms. As noted earlier in the book, Frankl eloquently noted that:

…as for myself, I would not be willing to live merely for the sake of my “defense mechanisms,” nor would I be ready to die merely for the sake of my “reaction formations.” Man, however, is able to live and even to die for the sake of his ideals and values! (pg. 105; Frankl, 1946/1992)

Unfortunately, one’s search for meaning can be frustrated. This existential frustration can lead to what Frankl identified as a noogenic neurosis(a neurosis of the mind or, in other words, the specifically human dimension). Frankl suggested that when neuroses arise from an individual’s inability to find meaning in their life, what they need is logotherapy, not psychotherapy. More specifically, they need help to find some meaning in their life, some reason to be. When reading Frankl’s examples of how he helps such people, and Frankl offers many of these examples in his writings, it seems so simple. But it must be remembered that it takes a great deal of experience, knowledge, and maturity, as well as an ability to put oneself in another’s shoes, in order to creatively think of how another person can find meaning in their life. It would be safe to say that many of us find it difficult to find meaning in our own lives, and research has indeed shown that the will-to-meaning is a significant concern throughout the world (Frankl, 1946/1992). In order to make sense of this problem, Frankl has suggested that we should not ask what we expect from life, but rather, we should understand that life expects something from us:

A colleague, an aged general practitioner, turned to me because he could not come to terms with the loss of his wife, who had died two years before. His marriage had been very happy, and he was now extremely depressed. I asked him quite simply: “Tell me what would have happened if you had died first and your wife had survived you?” “That would have been terrible,” he said. “How my wife would have suffered?” “Well, you see,” I answered, “your wife has been spared that, and it was you who spared her, though of course you must now pay by surviving and mourning her.” In that very moment his mourning had been given a meaning - the meaning of a sacrifice. (pg. xx; Frankl, 1946/1986)

Unfortunately, as noted by Frankl, not everyone can successfully accomplish the will-to-meaning, some people can not identify any goal that provides meaning for their future. Such individuals exist in what Frankl called an existential vacuum. We have no instincts that tell us what we have to do, fewer and fewer traditions that tell us what we should do, and we often don’t even know what we want to do. Therein lays the need for logotherapy. As for techniques, logotherapy relies primarily on paradoxical intentionand dereflection (Frankl, 1946/1986, 1946/1992). Paradoxical intention is based on a simple trap in which neurotic individuals often find themselves. When a person thinks about or approaches a situation that provokes a neurotic symptom, such as fear, the person experiences anticipatory anxiety. This anticipatory anxiety takes the form of the symptom, which reinforces their anxiety. And so on… In order to help people break out of this negative cycle, Frankl recommends having them focus intently on the very thing that evokes their symptoms, even trying to exhibit their symptoms more severely than ever before! As a result, the patient is able to separate themselves from their own neurosis, and eventually the neurosis loses its potency.

Similar to anticipatory anxiety, people often experience a compulsive inclination to observe themselves, resulting in hyper-reflection. For example, people who suffer from insomnia focus on their efforts to sleep, or people who cannot enjoy a sexual relationship often focus on their physical, sexual responses. Because of this intense focus on sleep, or having an orgasm, these very things are unattainable. In dereflection, patients are taught not to pay attention to what they desire. A person who cannot sleep might read in bed, they will eventually fall asleep. A person who cannot enjoy intimate sexuality could focus on their partner, and as a result they should experience satisfaction that they did not expect. In essence, whereas paradoxical intention teaches the patient to ridicule their symptoms, dereflection teaches the patient to ignore his or her symptoms (Frankl, 1946/1986).

Existential psychotherapy is not so much a technique as it is an overall approach to understanding the nature of the human being. By asking deep questions about the nature of anxiety, loneliness, isolation, despair, etc., as well as about creativity and love, existential psychotherapists seek to avoid the “common error of distorting human beings in the very effort of trying to help them” (May & Yalom, 1995). Rollo May, America’s foremost existential psychotherapist (Reeves, 1977), believed that American psychology has had both an affinity for and an aversion to existential psychotherapy. The affinity arises from an historical place in American psychology that was very similar to existentialism: William James’ emphasis on the immediacy of experience, the importance of will, and the unity of thought and action. The aversion arises from the Western tendency to dehumanize people through strict adherence to scientific principles of research, i.e., to reform humans in the image of machines (May, 1983).

An essential aspect of existential psychotherapy is to help individuals realize their own being, their own role in choosing the form that their life will take. This is known as the “I-Am” experience. It is all too common for us to associate ourselves with external factors: I am a professor, I am a student, I work at a store, I run a business, etc. We repress our own sense of being. To use an example similar to a case described by May: I am a professor, but that is not really who I am. I am a father, but that isn’t all that I am. I am a brown belt in Brazilian Jiu Jitsu, but that’s just a hobby for exercise and competition. What is left, or what is common in each of these statements? I am! And as May put it, if I am, I have a right to be (example cited in May & Yalom, 1995). This realization is not the solution to my problems, but it is a necessary precondition to finding the courage to pursue the rest of my life.

Once an individual finds the courage to recreate their life, the existential therapist will address a variety of issues. May placed a great deal of emphasis on anxiety. Guilt is also an important issue to be addressed, since we may feel guilty about poor ethical choices or instances when we failed to be responsible with our actions. As with anxiety, guilt can be normal (after actually doing something bad) or neurotic (when we fantasize some transgression). Another important concept in existential psychotherapy is time. Because we tend to think about ourselves spatially, as objects within our life, we tend to focus on the past. In other words, we focus on what we have become, as opposed to what we might be. Moments when we truly encounter ourselves are rare, but it is only when we grasp the moment that we truly experience life. Those moments can be positive, such as the experience of love, or negative, such as the experience of depression, but they are real nonetheless. Individuals who suffer from brain damage often cannot think in terms of abstract possibilities, they become trapped in concrete time. In order to be fully healthy, and something essential to the growth of humans, is our ability to transcend time:

If we are to understand a given person as existing, dynamic, at every moment becoming, we cannot avoid the dimension of transcendence. Existing involves a continual emerging, in the sense of emergent evolution, a transcending of one’s past and present in order to reach the future. (pg. 267; May & Yalom, 1995)

The general process of existential psychotherapy is similar to psychoanalysis. It is accepted that the client experiences anxiety, that some of this anxiety is unconscious, and that the client is relying on defense mechanisms in order to cope with the anxiety. A fundamental difference, however, is the focus of the therapy. Rather than digging into the deep, dark past, the existential psychotherapist strives to understand the meaning of the client’s current experiences, the depth of experience in the given moment. For this reason, the therapist-client relationship remains important, but the emphasis is not on transference. Rather, the emphasis is on the relationship itself as fundamentally important (May & Yalom, 1995). In that regard, we see a similarity with the client-centered therapy of Rogers.

Existential therapy is actively used today, as therapists try to address the four ultimate concerns as identified by Yalom: death, freedom, existential isolation, and meaninglessness (Yalom, 1980; Zafirides et al., 2013). Zafirides and his colleagues (2013) offer two relevant case studies involving individuals who had lost their sense of meaning and purpose in life, and needed help to restore it. One client served in Operation Iraqi Freedom, and since coming home from the war he experienced depression, anxiety, and symptoms of PTSD. He was deeply conflicted regarding the deadly challenges of combat and the peace of being back at home, as well as guilt over his feelings of happiness being home despite his awareness of comrades who had died. The existential concerns regarding death and isolation (aloneness) were clearly evident. Through the existential therapy process, he realized the context of his life in the greater scheme of things, that he controlled how he reconciled the deaths of his comrades, and that he had a duty to reclaim his life and happiness in their honor. He was able to reconnect with his family and friends, and once again found meaning in his life (Zafirides et al., 2013).

### Additional Perspectives on Positive Psychotherapy

The knowledge that enhancing positive mindsets can free us from inhibitions to act in positive ways is as old as the field of psychology itself. Over a century ago, in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, William James wrote:

The difference between willing and merely wishing, between having ideals that are creative and ideals that are but pinings and regrets, thus depends solely either on the amount of steam-pressure chronically driving the character in the ideal direction, or on the amount of ideal excitement transiently acquired. Given a certain amount of love, indignation, generosity, magnanimity, admiration, loyalty, or enthusiasm of self-surrender, the result is always the same. That whole raft of cowardly obstructions, which in tame persons and dull moods are sovereign impediments to action, sinks away at once. Our conventionality, our shyness, laziness, and stinginess, our demands for precedent and permission, for guarantee and surety, our small suspicions, timidities, despairs, where are they now? Severed like cobwebs, broken like bubbles in the sun… (pp. 244-245; James, 1902/1987)

If one is to utilize human strengths and/or capacities to promote positive approaches to psychotherapy, the starting point needs to be positive psychological assessment (see Lopez & Snyder, 2003a; Lopez et al., 2003c). Positive psychological assessment, including identifying and enhancing strengths, offers benefits such as improved school achievement, more meaningful and productive work, better mental health, and improved psychological practice and research. Additional important considerations in this process will be to pay careful attention to cultural differences in our increasingly diverse world (Flores & Obasi, 2003), and to build on existing combinations of positive assessment and positive psychotherapy with young adults and children (Rashid & Anjum, 2008).

In the course of the preceding discussion, Snyder et al. (2003) make a bold proposal: they suggest the addition of an Axis VI to the DSM system (*The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders – Text Revision*; American Psychiatric Association, 2000). Their proposed Axis VI would have measured personal strengths and facilitators of growth. In 2003, we were still under the guidelines of the DSM-IV-TR. Since then, however, the DSM-V has been published (APA, 2013). To the great surprise of many, the multiaxial system was abandoned altogether!

In 1977, Michael Fordyce began developing a program to help students at the community college where he taught increase their personal happiness (Fordyce 1977, 1983). Based on his own research, Fordyce identified nine (the “nifty nine”) behaviors he believed would increase personal happiness:

* Spend more time socializing
* Develop an outgoing, social personality
* Become more active
* Lower expectations and aspirations
* Develop positive, optimistic thinking
* Get better organized and plan things out
* Eliminate negative problems (*stop* worrying)
* Become more present oriented
* Value happiness

In each of several variations, subjects who were taught ways to increase their personal happiness were able to do just that. In the final study, involving a 9-18 month follow-up, over 70% of the respondents reported continued improvement in their level of happiness, with over 50% reporting those happiness increases were a “good deal” or “extremely” happier (Fordyce, 1983). Although this was not psychotherapy *per se*, the same procedures could certainly be applied in a therapeutic setting.

Also in 1977, Nossrat Peseschkian published *Positive Psychotherapy*, which was not available in English for 10 years (Peseschkian, 1987). As suggested by James and Fordyce, as well as Adler, Rogers, and Maslow, Peseschkian’s positive psychotherapy was based quite directly on building a person’s strengths as part and parcel of the therapeutic approach:

The expression “positive” in Positive Psychotherapy should be taken to mean that the therapy is not primarily directed toward resolving an existing disturbance, but rather toward first mobilizing the available capacities and self-help potential. “Positive” means, in accordance with its original definition (“positum”), the “real,” the “given.” Real and given facts are not necessarily just conflicts and disturbance, but also capacities which every human being has within him. (pg. viii; Peseschkian, 1987)

Of particular interest to Peseschkian are a person’s relationship with their own future and the meaning of life, as well as their attitudes and expectations in the domains of trust, hope, and faith. The overall aim of this positive psychotherapy is to understand the patient in a comprehensive way, in accordance with the many different ways in which disturbances are manifested, while also being mindful of the uniqueness of each patient. To achieve this overall aim, the patient must be employed toward being their own therapist. The overall approach is eclectic, but can basically be broken down into five stages:

* **Observation/distancing –** the patient records the people and situations that cause both distress and pleasure; one begins learning to discriminate; the problem(s) is(are) encompassed and described
* **Making an inventory –** with an inventory of capacities in hand, one examines domains of behavior that are rated positively or negatively
* **Situational encouragement –** in order to build trusting relationships, the patient pays attention to their own negative qualities while reinforcing positive qualities in others
* **Verbalization –** the patient is taught communication skills, while positive and negative qualities and experiences are discussed
* **Broadening of goals –** “The neurotic narrowing of the field of vision is purposefully demolished. One learns not to carry the conflict over into other domains of behavior, but rather to steer toward new and as yet unexperienced aims.”

(pp. 271-273; Peseschkian, 1987)

Peseschkian (1987) provides a thorough review comparing and contrasting his positive psychotherapy to a number of other major therapeutic approaches. The two which he finds most closely related are Adler’s individual psychology and Frankl’s logotherapy. He also notes some major similarities with Rogers’ client-centered approach, which grew, in part, out of Adler’s theories. Thus, positive psychotherapeutic approaches can be seen as part of the continuing development of therapy as the fields of psychology and psychiatry continue to grow and expand.

Peseschkian also expressed the desire “to unite the wisdom and intuitive thinking of the East with the new psychotherapeutic knowledge of the West” (pg. 5; Peseschkian, 1987). One of those Eastern techniques, mindfulness (in the Buddhist context), has become an important technique for most eclectic psychotherapists, though sometimes it is referred to instead as reflection or a “quieting of the mind” (see Fulton, 2005; Henry, 2006; Siegel, 2007). As noted in an earlier section, meditation has been described as “now one of the most enduring, widespread, and researched of all psychotherapeutic methods” (Walsh & Shapiro, 2006). Given the growing wealth of information on the application of mindfulness in therapeutic settings, we’ll address it in a separate section.

### Mindfulness in Psychotherapy

As noted in an earlier section, there are many in the west who have embraced a Buddhist approach to psychotherapy, particularly with an emphasis on mindfulness. However, not everyone is comfortable with the religious overtones of Buddhism (though the true essence of Buddhist teaching, the Four Noble Truths and the Eight-fold Path, is not technically a religion), so some theorists avoid using any Eastern terminology. Nonetheless, the techniques applied are essentially the same.

Mindfulness training involves learning to accept one’s emotional realities, and one of the most significant realities is that much of human life involves suffering. Starting with these basic observations, Steven Hayes and his colleagues have developed Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT; Hayes & Smith, 2005; Hayes, Strosahl, & Wilson, 1999; see also Eifert & Forsyth, 2005; Hayes, Follette, & Linehan, 2004). Hayes and his colleagues do not mean acceptance in the sense of resigning oneself to suffering, but rather in the sense of accepting life as it comes. Then, one must commit oneself to moving forward and living a values-based life, regardless of the presence of challenges:

The constant possibility of psychological pain is a challenging burden that we all need to face…This doesn’t mean that you must resign yourself to trudging through your life suffering. Pain and suffering are very different. We believe that there is a way to change your relationship to pain and to then live a good life, perhaps a great life, even though you are a human being whose memory and verbal skills keep the possibility of pain just an instant away. (pg. 12; Hayes & Smith, 2005)

Although Hayes and his colleagues make passing reference to mindfulness as a Buddhist teaching, they do not take a spiritual approach with ACT. They do, however, acknowledge that psychologists often make the mistake of ignoring spiritual practices that might prove helpful to their clients (Hayes, Strosahl, & Wilson, 1999). As for “acceptance” itself, Mruk & Hartzell (2003) identify it as the first of six Zen principles of therapeutic values (the others being fearlessness, truth, compassion, attachment, and impermanence).

Many people in psychology today, including Albert Ellis and Aaron Beck, recognize that cognitive psychology began with the Buddha some 2,500 years ago (Ellis, 2005; Pretzer & Beck, 2005; see also Olendzki, 2005). Dr. Tara Brach, a clinical psychologist and teacher of mindfulness meditation (also known as vipassana, which means “to see clearly”), makes no qualms about following a Buddhist approach to therapy. In *Radical Acceptance: Embracing Your Life with the Heart of a Buddha* (Brach, 2003), Brach talks about living in a trance of unworthiness. Plagued by beliefs of their own inadequacies, some individuals limit their ability to live a full life. Consequently, they cannot trust that they are lovable, and they live with an undercurrent of depression or helplessness. They then embark on a series of strategies designed to protect themselves: they attempt self-improvement projects, they hold back and play it safe, they withdraw from the present moment, they keep busy, they criticize themselves, and they focus on other’s faults. Radical Acceptance as a therapeutic approach involves both mindfulness meditation and Buddhist teachings on compassion as a basis for teaching people to accept themselves as they are:

Radical Acceptance reverses our habit of living at war with experiences that are unfamiliar, frightening or intense. It is the necessary antidote to years of neglecting ourselves, years of judging and treating ourselves harshly, years of rejecting this moment’s experience. Radical Acceptance is the willingness to experience ourselves and our life as it is. A moment of Radical Acceptance is a moment of genuine freedom. (pg. 4; Brach, 2003)

One of the most significant applications of mindfulness training has given rise to perhaps the most thoroughly studied and effective approach to the treatment of personality disorders: dialectical behavior therapy(DBT). DBT was developed by Marsha Linehan specifically for the treatment of borderline personality disorder and its commonly associated element of suicidal behavior (Linehan, 1987, 1993; Robins et al., 2004). DBT emphasizes the complete process of change, incorporating both the acceptance of the patient’s real suffering and the desire for change. Since a natural conflict arises between acceptance and the desire/need for change, a conflict that can arouse intense negative emotion, DBT involves teaching patients mindfulness skills necessary to “allow” experiences without the need to either suppress or avoid them. These mindfulness skills were drawn primarily from Zen principles, but are similar to and compatible with Western contemplative practices (Robins et al., 2004).

Mindfulness as a therapeutic technique has also been used by a variety of other therapists: in couple therapy (Christensen, Sevier, Simpson, & Gattis, 2004; Fruzzetti & Iverson, 2004), following traumatic experiences (Follette, Palm, & Rasmussen Hall, 2004), and for the treatment of eating disorders (Wilson, 2004) and substance abuse (Marlatt, et al., 2004). Janet Surrey, one of the founding members of the Stone Center Group, has favorably compared relational psychotherapy to mindfulness (Surrey, 2005), and Trudy Goodman, who studied child development with Jean Piaget, uses mindfulness in therapy with children (Goodman, 2005). A very popular mindfulness-based stress reductionprogram was developed by Jon Kabat-Zinn (1990, 1994, 2005), and a similar therapeutic technique, called Focusing, was previously developed in the late 1970s (Gendlin, 1990). Mindfulness has also been incorporated into psychotherapeutic approaches to dealing with anxiety, depression, and feelings of unworthiness and insecurity (Brach, 2003; Brantley, 2003; McQuaid & Carmona, 2004), and it has provided new perspectives on the treatment of addiction and anger issues (Aronson, 2004; Dudley-Grant, 2003).

Thus, whether in the more structured approach of ACT or Radical Acceptance, or in more informal ways in the hands of therapists familiar with mindfulness meditation, paying attention to the mind in a calm and careful way is becoming an important trend in psychotherapy. According to Steven Hayes (2004), this approach represents a third wave in behavioral-cognitive therapy, following traditional behavior therapy and then the cognitive therapies of Ellis and Beck. This third wave is also the basis for the popular and influential work of Jon Kabat-Zinn (1990, 1994, 2005; see also Germer et al., 2005) and connects behavioral and cognitive theories to the rapidly growing field of social neuroscience (the study of the interactive influences between the structure/function of the brain and social behavior; see, e.g., Begley, 2007; Cacioppo et al., 2006; Cozolino, 2002; Harmon-Jones & Winkielman, 2007; Siegel, 1999, 2007).

Why is mindfulness proving to be so successful in helping people feel better and overcome their challenges? Phillip Moffitt, author of *Dancing With Life* (2008), describes mindfulness in the classic sense – as one of the tools taught by the Buddha to provide us with insight into the cause(s) of our suffering:

The most life-changing benefits of mindfulness meditation are the insights, which arise spontaneously the way a ripened apple falls from the tree of its own accord. Insight is what changes your life. Through insight you realize what brings well-being to yourself and others as well as what brings stress, discomfort, and dissatisfaction into your life…Each insight is a direct knowing or “intuitive knowing” of the truth of your experience…This direct knowing is what enables mindfulness meditation to have such impact in your life – you feel the truth of your experience, instead of conceptualizing it, reacting to it, or being lost in the past or the future. (pg. 20; Moffitt, 2008)

Such insight can also lead to wisdom, and in the Buddhist perspective wisdom also leads to compassion, the desire to alleviate suffering. When considering happiness in this context, Moffitt (2008) distinguishes between three kinds of happiness. You can be happy because everything in your life is going well, or you can be happy because you are happy – regardless of how life is going overall. In each of these conditions, your happiness is dependent on something, either the conditions of your life or the condition of your mind. The third type of happiness is the unbounded joy experienced when you are free of all attachments, whether external or internal. Only by being fully present, or mindful, can one attain this final degree of happiness.

Buddhist training and psychotherapy have the same overall goals: to alleviate suffering and cultivate well-being. Mindfulness, defined as awareness of the present moment with acceptance, is the foundation for wisdom and compassion, which are inseparable. One simply cannot experience one without the other (Germer & Siegel, 2012; Siegel & Germer, 2012):

Most of us notice that when we have a multilayered understanding of a patient’s problem, our hearts open. Conversely, when we feel warmly toward a client, our minds can see many more treatment possibilities. (pg. 3; Germer & Siegel, 2012)

Tara Brach (2012) has offered both a wonderful acronym for an approach to cultivating compassion and wisdom when things are particularly difficult and a marvelous image of the process of awareness with and without mindfulness. The acronym, for cultivating wisdom and compassion during stormy weather is R.A.I.N.

R **R**ealize what is happening.

A **A**llow life to be just as it is.

I **I**nvestigate inner experience with kindness.

N **N**onidentification; rest in **N**atural awareness.

(pg. 40; Brach, 2012)

Imagine your awareness as a great wheel. At the hub of the wheel is mindful presence, and from this hub, an infinite number of spokes extend out to the rim. Your attention is conditioned to react to whatever arises – whether within you or outside you – by grasping after pleasant experience, avoiding what is unpleasant, and being inattentive if it is neutral. This means that the mind habitually leaves the hub, moves out along the spokes, and affixes itself to one part of the rim after another…While attention naturally moves in and out of presence, the problem is that it is easy to get stuck on the rim. If you are not connected to the hub, if your attention is trapped out on the rim, you are cut off from your wholeness and living in trance. You have lost contact with your physical aliveness, your feelings, and your heart. Mindfulness is a pathway home. (pp. 37-38; Brach, 2012)

Although most of the attention in psychology has been on mindfulness, Fredrickson (2012) prefers to focus on loving-kindness meditation, believing it is more likely to promote positive emotions, especially within relationships. One such positive emotion, compassion, operates as if it were empathy in the Buddhist context. In other words, when we sense the suffering of others, we naturally wish to help them be free from that suffering (Makransky, 2012). Since empathy was the most important element of therapy according to Rogers (see above), once again we see a natural connection between Buddhist principles and modern positive psychotherapy.

…I would regard a compassionate, warm, kindhearted person as healthy. If you maintain a feeling of compassion, loving kindness, then something automatically opens your inner door. Through that, you can communicate much more easily with other people. And that feeling of warmth creates a kind of openness. You’ll find that all human beings are just like you, so you’ll be able to relate to them more easily. That gives you a spirit of friendship…I think that cultivating positive mental states like kindness and compassion definitely leads to better psychological health and happiness. (pg. 40-41; Dalai Lama in Dalai Lama & Cutler, 1998)

Germer (2012) has offered a variety of ways in which compassion can be cultivated, other than maintaining a deep and lengthy meditation practice. He describes compassion as “a quality of mind that can transform the experience of pain, even making it worthwhile” (pg. 93; Germer, 2012). Of particular interest are five pathways he believes are involved in the cultivation of compassion:

* **Physical –** soften the body; stop tightening up
* **Mental –** allow thoughts to come and go; stop fighting them
* **Emotional –** befriend feelings; stop avoiding them
* **Relational –** connect safely with others; stop isolating
* **Spiritual –** commit to larger values; stop “selfing”

(pg. 100; Germer, 2012)

Two additional factors are also important. First, it is important to focus on good will, rather than good feelings. Anything done to avoid feeling what is authentic in the moment is a form of resistance; compassion is necessary when someone feels bad. Second, it is important to manage one’s compassion fatigue. Despite a therapist’s best intentions, this is something than can occur. Therapists can train themselves to repeat simple compassion and/or equanimity phrases (e.g., in the form of a gatha) in order to mindfully re-center themselves (Germer, 2012).

## Work

When people are young, they spend a lot of time in school. As adults, however, that time (and often much more) is spent at work. For many, the simple truth is that work is nothing more than a way to make money in order to earn a living. That would be OK, if money could buy happiness. We’ll come back to that in a minute, but first let’s consider one’s presence at work in the first place.

Many people are familiar with the problem of absenteeism. Employees who are overwhelmed by stress develop medical and psychological conditions which cause them to miss work. Among those conditions are feelings of powerlessness, meaninglessness, isolation, and self-estrangement. Consequently, businesses lose as much as 10% or their productivity to problems including absence, turnover, increased training costs, and disruption of other workers (see, e.g., Argyle, 1972; Arnold et al., 1991). However, having workers show up despite stress and negative psychosocial factors is not necessarily a good thing.

Presenteeism can refer to two conditions. First, some workers will come to work when they are sick. In a medical setting, this can create unreasonable risks, not only for other employees but also for patients. More relevant to our discussion of positive psychology, however, is that some employees come to work each day but they are unmotivated, unproductive, and demoralized. Among the factors that lead to presenteeism are feelings that you can’t be replaced (which may well be true), high job demands, low social support, and low remuneration, as well as the factors contributing to absenteeism cited above. The performance of these employees can actually be more costly to their employer than their absence (Aronsson, 2000; Janssens, 2016; Johns, 2010; Snyder et al., 2011).

Given the problems of absenteeism and presenteeism, what do we know about making the workplace a more meaningful and psychologically healthy place? As early as the 1950s and 1960s it was known that group cohesiveness, quality supervision, and job satisfaction lead to a reduction in absenteeism (see Argyle, 1972). Similar factors are relevant to conditions that contribute to presenteeism, and would, presumably, reduce it if they were addressed (Janssens, 2016).

Efforts to understand and improve workplace satisfaction and meaningful involvement in one’s work have been around for at least 50 years. We’ll examine some classic approaches, and then turn our attention to topics discussed more commonly in the field of positive psychology. First, however, let’s take a look at a common reason that many people go to work: money!

### Why Work – Money or Calling?

Money may be a good reason to go to work (most of us do need some money to pay our bills), but can money buy happiness? It turns out the answer isn’t that simple. Most of the research in this area has focused on large groups, typically by comparing different countries to one another, or comparing people within a country. It turns out that there is something of a complicated relationship between money and overall happiness.

There are positive correlations between national wealth, life satisfaction (subjective well-being), and positive emotion, as well as a negative correlation between wealth and negative emotion (Diener & Suh, 1999; Seligman, 2002). However, the correlations between countries are stronger than those within countries, income change has little effect, and other factors are equally or more significant (Diener et al., 1993; Diener & Suh, 1999; see also Diener et al., 2005; Morrison et al., 2011). To clarify, people in wealthy countries tend to have higher levels of subjective well-being, but the relationship is not as strong as one might expect. Within a country, the relationship is weaker, especially above the lower levels. Some have interpreted all this to mean that once a person lives in a country that meets basic needs for all citizens (such as clean water, an adequate food supply, access to health care and education, etc.) then money is less important as a factor in determining happiness and subjective well-being.

Diener and his colleagues (Diener et al., 1985) have also looked more closely at wealthy individuals as compared to others. In a fascinating study, they interviewed 49 wealthy people chosen from the *Forbes* list of wealthiest Americans and compared their results to a control group of 62 Americans (chosen from the phone book – a dated approach!). The wealthy individuals were happy more often and more satisfied with their lives overall. They experienced more positive emotion and less negative emotion. So, wealthy people were very happy, but most non-wealthy people were also happy.

Of particular interest in this study by Diener et al. (1985) is that money was rarely mentioned. Rather, the subjects in this study mentioned factors such as good family and friends, achieving goals, and good health. In fact, a majority of individuals stated that money could increase or decrease happiness, depending on how it’s used, followed by the choice that other factors could outweigh it. None of the subjects believed that money guaranteed happiness. When money was cited as a significant factor, it was due to the fact that money made it possible to do other things which were the actual source(s) of happiness.

As for a direct relationship between work and money, there are many people who say that if they had all the money they needed they would continue to work, or there are those who say that pay becomes a concern primarily when they perceive that their coworkers are not commited to the same level of quality work (Harter & Blacksmith, 2013). Therefore, earning money cannot be the sole reason that these people go to work. According to some theorists, there are three main reasons why people choose to work. First, work is simply a way to earn a living, as such their work is just a job. However, as we’ve just seen, money is apparently not clearly rewarding for everyone, especially for those who don’t earn much. And if the pay is poor, that can contribute to presenteeism. The second reason is the rewards of advancement at one’s place of employment. These are people who are career oriented – it is success within the career itself that motivates them. The third group, however, are those who find the work itself to be fulfilling. They consider their job to be a calling (see Wrzesniewski et al., 1997, 2003).

What defines work as a calling is determined by the individual. More recently, this term has lost its traditional religious connotation (being “called” by a god to do his/her work) and now refers also to work that makes a meaningful contribution to the good of society (once again, in the mind of the individual). Those who consider their work to be a calling are maximally engaged in their work, and passionate about it. They feel a stronger relationship with their work, and they spend more time at work and gain more enjoyment and satisfaction from it. In addition to being highly satisfied with their work, they also tend to be more highly satisfied with their lives overall (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997, 2003).

Even if a person’s connection to their work does not rise to the level of a calling, the workplace can still become a more meaningful place. So now let’s turn our attention to ways in which that can be proactively planned for within a company, or within any such institution (such as a college or university, etc.).

### Eupsychian Management and Theory Z

Abraham Maslow, best known for his studies on self-actualization, is also well-known in the field of business. He spent three years as the plant manager for the Maslow Cooperage Corporation, and later he spent a summer studying at an electronics firm in California (Non-Linear Systems, Inc.) at the invitation of the company’s president. He became very interested in industrial and managerial psychology, and the journal he kept in California was published as *Eupsychian Management* (Maslow, 1965). Eupsychia refers to real possibility and improvability, and a movement toward psychological health, as opposed to the vague fantasies of proposed utopian societies. More precisely, though this is something of a fantasy itself, Maslow described Eupsychia as the culture that would arise if 1,000 self-actualizing people were allowed to live their own lives on a sheltered island somewhere (see Atlas Shrugged for an interesting perpective on this concept; Rand, 1957/1992). Maslow applied his psychological theories, including both the hierarchy of needs and self-actualization, to a management style that takes advantage of this knowledge to maximize the potential of the employees in a company (also see the collection of Maslow’s unpublished papers by Hoffman, 1996).

Maslow introduced a variety of terms related to his theories on management, one of the most interesting being synergy. Having borrowed the term from Ruth Benedict, synergy refers to a situation in which a person pursuing their own, selfish goals is automatically helping others, and a person unselfishly helping others is, at the same time, helping themselves. According to Maslow, when selfishness and unselfishness are mutually exclusive, it is a sign of mild psychopathology. Self-actualizing individuals are above the distinction between selfishness and unselfishness; they enjoy seeing others experience pleasure. Maslow offered the personal example of feeding strawberries to his little daughter. As the child smacked her lips and thoroughly loved the strawberries, an experience that thrilled Maslow, what was he actually giving up by letting her eat the strawberries instead of eating them himself? In his experience with the Blackfoot tribe, a member named Teddy was able to buy a car. He was the only one who had one, but tradition allowed anyone in the tribe to borrow it. Teddy used his car no more often than anyone else, but he had to pay the bills, including the gas bill. And yet, everyone in the tribe was so proud of him that he was greatly admired and they elected him chief. So, he benefited in other ways by following tradition and letting everyone use his car (Maslow, 1965). In the business field, when managers encourage cooperation and communication, everyone benefits from the healthy growth and continuous improvement of the company. And this leads us to Theory Z (which is Eupsychian management).

Douglas McGregor, a professor of industrial relations at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, was greatly impressed with Maslow’s work, and McGregor had used *Motivation and Personality* as a textbook in his business classes. Based on Maslow’s theories, McGregor published a book in 1960 in which he outlined two managerial models, Theory X and Theory Y (Gabor, 2000; Hoffman, 1996). Maslow described the two theories as follows:

…To put it succinctly, *Theory Y* assumes that if you give people responsibilities and freedom, then they will like to work and will do a better job. Theory Y also assumes that workers basically like excellence, efficiency, perfection, and the like.

*Theory X*, which still dominates most of the world’s workplace, has a contrasting view. It assumes that people are basically stupid, lazy, hurtful, and untrustworthy and, therefore, that you have got to check everything constantly because workers will steal you blind if you don’t. (pg. 187; Maslow, 1996a)

The Theory X/Theory Y strategy was intentionally put into practice at Non-Linear Systems, hence Maslow’s invitation to study there. Maslow concluded, however, that even Theory Y did not go far enough in maximizing people’s potential. People have metaneeds(the need for Being-values), needs that go beyond simply offering higher salaries. When employees have their basic needs met, but recognize inefficiency and mismanagement in the company, they will still complain, but these higher level complaints can now be described as metagrumbles (as opposed to the lower level grumbles about lower level needs). Theory Z attempts to transcend Theory Y and actively facilitate the growth of a company’s employees toward self-actualization (Hoffman, 1996; Maslow, 1971; Maslow 1996b).

### Frankl’s Existentialism Applied to the Workplace

In 1989, Stephen Covey published *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. Covey’s book became very popular, selling millions of copies on the way to becoming a #1 New York Times bestseller. If you were to read the first chapter of that book now, it would seem very familiar. Covey presents a very existential approach to understanding our lives, particularly with regard to the problems we experience every day. Perhaps it should not be surprising, then, that in the chapters describing the first two of these seven habits he cites and quotes Viktor Frankl numerous times. Indeed, Covey cites Frankl’s first two books as being profoundly influential in his own life, and how impressed Covey was having met Frankl shortly before Frankl’s death (see Covey’s foreword in Pattakos, 2004).

The first two habits, according to Covey, are: 1) be proactive, and 2) begin with the end in mind. He briefly describes Frankl’s experiences in the concentration camps, and refers to Frankl’s most widely quoted saying, that Frankl himself could decide how his experiences would affect him, and that no one could take that freedom away from Frankl! People who choose to develop this level of personal freedom are certainly being proactive, as opposed to responding passively to events that occur around them and to them. It is not necessary, of course, to suffer such tragic circumstances in order to become proactive in one’s own life:

…It is in the ordinary events of every day that we develop the proactive capacity to handle the extraordinary pressures of life. It’s how we make and keep commitments, how we handle a traffic jam, how we respond to an irate customer or a disobedient child. It’s how we view our problems and where we focus our energies. It’s the language we use. (pg. 92; Covey, 1989)

Covey compares his habit of beginning with the end in mind to logotherapy, helping people to recognize the meaning that their life holds. Covey works primarily in business leadership training, so the value of working toward a greater goal than simply keeping a company in business from day to day is clear, especially for those who care about employee morale and quality control (see also *Principle-Centered Leadership*; Covey, 1990). When employees share a sense of purpose in their work, they are likely to have higher intrinsic motivation. Think about it for a moment. Have you ever had a job you didn’t really understand, and didn’t care about? Have you ever been given that sort of homework in school or college? So, how much effort did you really put into that job or assignment?

Covey’s remaining habits are: 3) put first things first, 4) think win/win, 5) seek first to understand, then to be understood, 6) synergize, and 7) sharpen the saw. At first glance these principles seem reasonably straight forward, emphasizing practical and responsible actions. However, what does “sharpen the saw” mean? Sharpening the saw refers to keeping our tools in good working order, and we are our most important tool. Covey considers it essential to regularly and consistently, in wise and balanced ways, to exercise the four dimensions of our nature: physical, mental, social/emotional, and spiritual. By investing in ourselves, we are taking care to live an authentic life.

More recently, Covey has examined his principles beyond the business world. In 1997 he published *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Families*, a book in which he applies the same 7 habits to family life. Covey certainly has solid credentials as a family man, as father of 9 and grandfather of 43 children, and he won the 2003 Fatherhood Award from the National Fatherhood Initiative. Drawing in large part on his own extensive, personal experience, Covey uses many stories, anecdotes, and examples of real-life situations to help provide context to the challenges of raising a family and how we might best work with them. But first, he introduces a simple process: have a clear vision of what you want to accomplish, have a plan of how you might accomplish it, and use a compass (your own unique gifts that enable you to be an agent of change in your family). In essence, Covey is recommending that you prepare yourself to develop the seven habits. We all know how difficult it is to establish a new habit or break a bad habit; how is your New Year’s resolution going?

Just as families change, so does the world we live in. Recently, Covey addressed this change by proposing an eighth habit (Covey, 2004). He says that this was not simply an important habit he had overlooked before, but one that has risen to new significance as we have fully entered the age of information and technology in the twenty-first century. As communication has become much easier (e.g., email), it has also become less personal and meaningful. Thus the need for the eighth habit: find your voice and inspire others to find theirs. According to Covey, “voice is unique personal significance.” Essentially, it is the same as finding meaning in one’s life, and then helping others to find meaning in their own lives. It is through finding a mission or a purpose in life that we can move “from effectiveness to greatness” (Covey, 2004).

Whereas Covey presented an approach to personal and professional effectiveness (and later to greatness as well) that parallels the principles set forth by Viktor Frankl, Alex Pattakos very directly applies Frankl’s theories to both the workplace and one’s everyday life in *Prisoners of Our Thoughts: Viktor Frankl’s Principles at Work* (with a foreword by Stephen Covey; Pattakos, 2004). Frankl himself urged Pattakos to publish his book during a meeting in 1996. Pattakos, like Covey, has been profoundly influenced by Frankl’s writings throughout Pattakos’ career. According to Pattakos, we are creatures of habit, and we prefer a life that is both predictable and within our comfort zone. As the world is changing in the twenty-first century, so the conditions under which we work are changing. Pattakos believes there is a need for humanizing work. More than just balancing one’s personal life and career, humanizing work is an attempt to honor our own individuality and to fully engage our human spirit at work. Simply put, it is an effort to apply Frankl’s will-to-meaning in our workplace (Pattakos, 2004).

Like Covey, Pattakos presents seven core principles. They are similar to Covey’s seven habits, but in keeping with Pattakos’ intentions they are aligned more directly with the principles of logotherapy and existential psychology described by Frankl. The seven core principles are: 1) exercise the freedom to choose your attitude, 2) realize your will-to-meaning, 3) detect the meaning of life’s moments, 4) don’t work against yourself, 5) look at yourself from a distance, 6) shift your focus of attention, and 7) extend beyond yourself. These principles include not only the ideas of personal freedom and will-to-meaning, but also dereflection (principles 4 and 6) and the will-to-ultimate-meaning (principle 7). Clearly Pattakos has accomplished his goal of applying logotherapy to the workplace, but how well does this application work in real life?

Pattakos describes the case of a probation officer with the state department of corrections. Rick, as Pattakos identifies him, was raised in foster care and orphanages. However, rather than developing a sense of caring and concern for others who have difficulties in their lives, Rick refers to his clients as “maggots.” Rick has become insensitive and unforgiving, he has also become deeply depressed and anxious. Overall, he feels lost, unhappy, and unfulfilled, and he doesn’t know what to do about it. According to Pattakos, he has become a prisoner of his own thoughts, and only he has the key to his own freedom. Very simply put, he needs to find a new job or find meaning in the one he has now. One possibility is for Rick to consider his own life circumstances in relationship to his clients:

…Whenever we stop long enough to connect to ourselves, to our environment, to those with whom we work, to the task before us, to the extraordinary interdependence that is always part of our lives, we experience meaning. Meaning is who we are in this world. And it is the world that graces us with meaning. (pg. 157; Pattakos, 2004)

By making a responsible choice to seek meaning in our lives, to not work against ourselves, we can put ourselves on a path we had not seen before:

When we live and work with meaning, we can choose to make meaning, to see meaning, and to share meaning. We can choose our attitudes to life and work; we can choose how to respond to others, how to respond to our jobs, and how to make the very best of difficult circumstances. We can transcend ourselves and be transformed by meaning. We can find connection to meaning at work, in the most unusual places and with the most unexpected people. Meaning is full of surprises. (pg. 159; Pattakos, 2004)

And finally, it does not matter what sort of job we have. It is our choice, our freedom:

No matter what our specific job might be, it is the *work* we do that represents who we are. When we meet our work with enthusiasm, appreciation, generosity, and integrity, we meet it with meaning. And no matter how mundane a job might seem at the time, we can transform it with meaning. Meaning is life’s legacy, and it is as available to us at work as it is available to us in our deepest spiritual quests. We breathe, therefore we are - spiritual. Life is; therefore it is - meaningful. We do, therefore we work. (pg. 162; Pattakos, 2004)

Viktor Frankl’s legacy was one of hope and possibility. He saw the human condition at its worst, and human beings behaving in ways intolerable to the imagination. He also saw human beings rising to heights of compassion and caring in ways that can only be described as miraculous acts of unselfishness and transcendence. There is something in us that can rise above and beyond everything we think possible.

### Additional Positive Changes in the Nature of Work

As we’ve seen, there have been individuals and organizations pursuing ways to make the workplace a more positive and rewarding environment. However, the need for applying principles of positive psychology in the workplace has increasingly become more critical due to recent changes in the nature of the workplace. Long-term employment with one company is becoming much less common. Instead, many companies are relying on part-time, contingent employees, and those employees are expendable when the given task is complete. Consequently, those employees have no control over the number of hours they are able to work, often have to work multiple jobs, and still have feelings of insecurity regarding their jobs as well as feeling they’ve been treated unfairly. Often, individuals responsible for implement changes in processes have little understanding of how either individuals or groups function on a psychological level (Frey et al., 2003; Turner et al., 2005).

Nonetheless, there are ways in which both employers and employees can strive to make the workplace a positive experience. Turner et al. (2005) identified four main areas in which these efforts are applicable: work redesign, group work, developing proactive role orientations, and transformational leadership. We’ve already examined some early work on transformational leadership, so now let’s examine the other three categories.

*Work Redesign* just happens to be the title of a book published by Hackman & Oldham in 1980. In general, work redesign refers to an overall approach in which jobs are designed to maximize employee engagement (see below for more discussion of engagement) by creating conditions that facilitate high levels of motivation, satisfaction, and performance (Hackman & Oldham, 1980; Turner et al., 2005). In part, this was an intentional backlash against trends earlier in the 20th century to create “Taylorism” in the workplace (named after F. W. Taylor): minimizing skill requirements, maximizing management control, and minimizing time on task (Arnold et al., 1991). In contrast, work redesign focuses, among a few other factors, on increased autonomy in the workplace.

The approach advocated by Hackman & Oldham (1980), the job characteristics model (JCM), addresses five core job characteristics:

* **Skill Variety** – Many people benefit when a variety of skills and talents are necessary, and can therefore be exercised, in the performance of a task.
* **Task Identity** – Many people prefer tasks which require the completion of a “whole” piece of work; i.e., doing a job from beginning to end with a clear outcome.
* **Task Significance** – People like to know that their work has a substantial impact on the lives of others (whether locally or globally).
* **Autonomy** – This refers to the degree to which a given task allows for freedom, independence, and discretion by the individual in scheduling the work and determining how it should be carried out.
* **Feedback** – An essential component of any task is information regarding whether or not it has been completed effectively.

(pgs. 78-80; Hackman & Oldham, 1980)

When designed appropriately, the first three factors (skill variety, task identity, and task significance) lead to experiences of meaningfulness regarding one’s work. If given autonomy, the individual(s) experiences responsibility for the outcomes of the work. With proper and professional feedback, the individual(s) knows the actual results of their efforts. Overall, when employees experience meaningfulness, responsibility, and they are informed that their work has been successful, the result is high levels of internal work motivation, a valuable commodity going forward for the organization (Hackman & Oldham, 1980).

Hackman & Oldham (1980) went a step further, and created a formula for addressing workplace motivation based on the JCM, the motivating potential score, or MPS.

MPS = (skill var + task id + task sig) ÷ 3 x autonomy x feedback

Utilizing the MPS formula to study the applicability of the JCM, much of the research has been supportive. Although some concerns remain, it appears that each of the five characteristics contributes to overall satisfaction and motivation. However, different characteristics relate to different outcomes. For example, task identity is most significantly related to performance, but has less effect on psychological outcomes (e.g., well-being). Absenteeism, as another example, can best be addressed by enhancing skill variety, autonomy, and feedback (Fried & Ferris, 1987; Turner et al., 2005). Thus, more work remains to be done, especially given the continued changing nature of the workplace due to external forces (as noted above).

An alternative approach to the JCM can be found in the demand/control model (Karasek, 1979; Karasek & Theorell, 1990; see also Turner et al., 2005). This approach suggests that healthy work environments are those in which psychological demands are balanced against one’s decision latitude (control). There are four basic types of work, according to this model. High-strain jobs combine high psychological demands with low levels of control. This results in high levels of stress, and potentially corresponding psychological strain (e.g., anxiety, depression, physical illness). Low-strain jobs are the result of high control but little in the way of psychological demands (aka, a relaxed job). Such jobs are not stressful, but they also fail to generate much in the way of intrinsic motivation (i.e., they are unlikely to be fulfilling or meaningful). Passive jobs have both low demands and little control. Overall, such jobs are demotivating, and can result in the degradation of one’s skills and subsequent feelings of helplessness (Karasek & Theorell, 1990; Turner et al., 2005).

Finally, however, we come to active jobs – those with high psychological demands but also with high levels of control. Despite the demands of such jobs, the ability to exercise one’s skills and options for coping can lead to an exhilarating work experience. Indeed, Karasek & Theorell (1990) cite Csikszentmihalyi’s studies of surgeons, rock/mountain climbers, and professional athletes and their experiences of flow in such challenging and stimulating situations. Not only are people involved in this type of work active, they also tend to be much more active outside of work. In other words, an ideal life at work can facilitate an ideal life outside of work, resulting in the best of both worlds (Karasek & Theorell, 1990).

In both of the primary texts addressing the JCM, *Work Redesign* by Hackman & Oldham (1980), and the demand/control model, *Healthy Work* by Karasek & Theorell (1990), the authors address working in groups, and how their models might be applied to such groups or teams. So let us now take a brief look at group work.

Often work is done in groups or teams, which in and of themselves can be a positive source of social networking and support, as well as helping to fulfill the individual need to belong. Indeed, feeling a strong sense of commitment to one’s team(s) can lead to extending that commitment to the organization as a whole (Argyle, 1972; Turner, 2005; see also Arnold et al., 1991). The overall effectiveness of the team, as well as the satisfaction derived from it, is a combination of the task assigned, the official working arrangements, and the individual personalities, each of which influences the overall social system of the group.

However, there is an inherent danger when working in groups: the possibility of “groupthink” (Janis, 1982). Groupthink refers to a false sense of harmony and certainty, due to an excessive tendency to strive for agreement while suppressing opposing views (see also Frey et al., 2003). The likelihood that such a situation can arise within a group, even to the extreme, led Friedrich Nietzsche to declare:

Insanity in individuals is something rare – but in groups, parties, nations, and epocks it is the rule. (pg. 48; Nietzsche, 1886/2011)

However, groups can achieve their potential top performance if certain conditions are met. According to Frey et al. (2003), those conditions include the following:

* Team members agree on the rules for interaction, are able to communicate honestly, and are respectful and loyal
* Membership represents a variety of talents, experiences, education, and background
* The team has a strong commitment to excellence and achievement
* Everyone takes responsibility for the team’s success
* Team goals are clear, specific, and meaningful
* The team is able to profit from individual strengths
* Team members fit together technically and personally, and are able to reflect on both what is good and what is bad regarding the process

(pg. 155; Frey et al., 2003)

Highly conducive to the develop of “dream teams” is the application of a positive input-process-output model which focuses on key inputs (e.g., an inspiring task, valuing diversity, developing attachment, and clear and evolving roles) and processes (e.g., confidence, trust, optimism, and supportive leadership) which allow teams to functionally optimally (Richardson & West, 2013). When teams are supported and allowed to function at this ideal level, the benefits are twofold:

…we propose that financial growth and positive human functioning come hand-in-hand and should no longer be seen as alternatives or trade-offs…The task now is to instill such concepts into the commonsense philosophies of all managers, leaders, and organizations, in order to make dream teams a widespread reality. (pg. 246; Richardson & West, 2013)

When leadership, in collaboration with employees as individuals and/or within teams, is intent on making the workplace a positive environment, what exactly does that look like? Peter Warr (1999) has identified 10 factors which play a significant role as “environmental determinants of well-being:”

* Opportunity for personal control
* Opportunity for skill use
* Externally generated goals
* Variety
* Environmental clarity
* Availability of money
* Physical security
* Supportive supervision
* Opportunity for interpersonal contact
* Valued social position

A number of these factors relate to a person’s engagement at work. Engagement has been defined as one’s involvement with and enthusiasm for work, and at the most fundamental level it is a strong determinant of who stays at and who leaves an organization (Harter & Blacksmith, 2013). The two main reasons that people stay with a job are pay and how well the job fits the person’s interests (which includes whether it is fulfilling – like a calling). The primary reason that people leave a job is being disengaged, and employees who are disengaged typically cite their immediate supervisor as the primary problem (6x more often than any other reason; Harter & Blacksmith, 2013; see also Harter, 2000).

Engagement is an essential factor when it comes to making work meaningful. When employees comprehend a sense of self in their work it can lead to both a sense of purpose and a feeling of “mission” about one’s work, resulting in engagement and performance which helps one to transcend personal interests in favor of concern for your contributions to the organization and the greater good (Steger & Dik, 2013). Given the importance and the value of engagement, and the role played by supervisors cited above, it is interesting to note that when the Sunday Times in the United Kingdom identified the “Best Companies to Work For” it turned out that many of those companies have an intentional engagement program and a dedicated engagement champion to oversee those efforts (Stairs & Galpin, 2013).

Within companines and organizations that have achieved notable success in achieving excellence, Frey and his colleagues have identified what they refer to as center of excellence cultures (see Frey et al., 2003). The more of these that exist, the more likely the company/organization is to continue moving forward toward achieving their full potential. Examples of center of excellence cultures include:

* **Customer orientation culture** – employees understand what needs to be done to satisfy their customers
* **Competitor orientation and benchmarking culture** – being guided by the best in the world, members of an organization learn the best practices in all fields and on all levels
* **Net production and entrepreneurial culture** – all employees are conscious of the entire production process, the economic implications of their actions, and they have an attitude of responsibility and initiative
* **Culture of permanent improvement and innovation** – this includes a variety of potential subcultures, including a problem-solving culture, mistakes-as-learning-opportunities culture, and a creativity and fantasy culture
* **Recognition-of-diversity and synergy culture** – diverse people are selected to join the organization, and diversity remains key when they are assigned to groups
* **Constructive confrontation and conflict culture** – different views are discussed constructively and false harmony is avoided (i.e., groupthink and blind obedience are not acceptable)

(pp. 157-158; Frey et al., 2003)

It’s important to note that pursuing the goal of making the workplace a more positive environment is not merely a nice thing to do. Rather, it has real benefits for both the organization and the individuals working there, including improved customer satisfaction, greater productivity, fewer accidents, and higher profits (Harter et al., 2002, 2003). In addition, having some control over one’s working conditions may actually facilitate leisure-time physical activities and their consequent health benefits (Choi et al., 2010; see also Wright, 2013).

**\* \* \***

Overall, this section of the book (Section IV) refers to positive institutions. In many fields of study and practice, once a particular approach becomes popular and influential there is an interesting “institution” that appears: the handbook. Positive psychology has seen the creation of a bunch of handbooks, all of which are cited (or chapters within them are cited) in various locations throughout this book. There is the *Handbook of Positive Psychology* (Snyder & Lopez, 2005), the *Handbook of Positive Psychology in Schools* (Gilman et al., 2009), *Positive Psychological Assessment: A Handbook of Models and Measures* (Lopez & Snyder, 2003), the *Oxford Handbook of Methods in Positive Psychology* (Ong & van Dulman, 2007), *The Oxford Handbook of Positive Psychology and Disability* (Wehmeyer, 2013), and finally, the one relevant to this specific section, *The Oxford Handbook of Positive Psychology and Work* (Linley et al., 2013).

In the foreword, Dave Ulrich (2013) talks about abundant organizations. There are three perspectives on this: the abundant organization, the antecedents of abundance, and the outcomes of abundance. The antecedents involved in building an abundant organization include a sense of identity, purpose/meaning, positive relationships, delight (enjoying time at work), and an overall positive work environment. These principles can lead to an organization in which there is appreciative inquiry, social responsibility, high performing teams, and commitment (among other factors). The outcomes, then, are positive advantages for not only the organization itself, but also for the individuals involved, their families, and the community (Ulrich, 2013).

One essential component of a positive working environment is the quality of leadership in the organization. It has been suggested that authentic leaders help to create authentic followers, i.e., followers who share the same characteristics (Avolio et al., 2013). So, what are the characteristics of an authentic leader? They tend to be self-aware, they are activated by trigger events, they are capable of self-reflection, and they exhibit developmental readiness (i.e., they view trigger events as learning experiences and respond accordingly). The psychological components underlying these characteristics include confidence, resilience, and hope. In such an environment, there can be a reciprocal relationship that reinforces ongoing authentic leadership development, not only in the United States, but in other cultures as well (Avolio et al., 2013).

In order to be maximally effective, it is important for leaders to emphasize a strengths-based approach to organizational development. This will both engage others in the organization and the community of stakeholders as well as lead to transformative cooperation (Morris & Garrett, 2013; Sekerka & Fredrickson, 2013). Transformative cooperation involves a shift in how people view their organization as well as how they view their role within it, with an emphasis on mindfulness directed toward strengths that already exist within the organization. Overall,

…transformative cooperation is therefore defined as: a dynamic process that brings organizational members together to create innovation through social interaction, where positive change emerges through new organizational forms that provide benefit for all who participate. (pg. 83; Sekerka & Fredrickson, 2013)

Two techniques that can promote and/or enable an ideal working environment are coaching and mindfulness. Although coaching typically focuses on goal attainment, rather than psychological well-being, the two need not serve contrary purposes. Indeed, coaching can serve as a platform for incorporating positive psychological principles in a variety of ways. Although the research in the field of organizational coaching does not explicitly address positive psychology in the same manner as research specifically in the field of positive psychology, many of the same outcomes are achieved. In other words, successful coaching programs often result in outcomes that would be routinely examined in related research on positive psychology (see Grant & Spence, 2013).

Marianetti & Passmore (2013) have noted that many of the challenges facing organizations today, such as rapidly advancing globalization, intense competition, and cultural differences tend to push organizations to their limits, the result of which is a stress-filled focus on future-oriented planning and outcomes. Mindfulness, as we’ve seen previously, prepares one to focus on the present, which Marianetti & Passmore (2013) believe can offer a more authentic view of “reality,” leading to a more reasoned and effective use of resources within the organization.

Finally, let’s address some concerns regarding the application of positive psychological principles in the workplace (an attitude we’ll examine further in Section V). Samantha Warren (2013) expresses the concern that the theories and perspectives we’re discussing here focus primarily on what people do well *at* work, or on how to feel good and have “fun” *at* work. Consequently, the organization is more likely to reap all the benefits from these efforts. Of particular concern is what happens to the individual when they pour themselves into their work, only to be dismissed by an uncaring organization that decides their position is no longer needed? At it’s worst:

…much of the positivity agenda is aimed at the *individual* – improving coping strategies and resilience, developing positive responses and states of mind, with little regard for the structural inequalities and power struggles that characterize working life, resulting in unwelcome and untenable demands being made on employees…If this is true, positive psychology might unwittingly be providing the apparatus for a kind of “organizational projection” whereby the organization remains blameless and appears saintly in “allowing” its staff to learn how to flourish, rather than recognized for generating the conditions for negativity to take such deep-rooted hold in the first place. (pg. 320; Warren, 2013).

So, although there may be benefits to pursuing positive psychological principles in the workplace, there may also be dangers. What matters, perhaps, is having truly authentic leaders who actually care about their employees. Then, when concerns arise, they might be dealt with in ways that address the concerns of the employees as equal to the concerns of the organization.

## School

Education has an interesting place in the history of both the United States of America and the field of psychology. Thomas Jefferson, principal author of the *Declaration of Independence*, considered education to be essential to a free and democratic society. Of particular importance was the ability to read, without which the freedom of the press was irrelevant (since few would be able to read that press without education). So, Jefferson became a strong advocate for a public system of education, “so much as may enable them to read and understand what is going on in the world, and to keep their part of it going on right…” (pg. 534; Thomas Jefferson in 1795, cited in Koch & Peden, 1944). Indeed, the right and ability to participate in the affairs of government should lead to what Jefferson called “public happiness” (see Battistoni, 1985).

An important influence on Jefferson’s perspectives on education was the Italian criminologist Cesare Bonesana di Beccaria. Beccaria believed that education was an essential component of a healthy society, either in a positive way or in terms of reducing discontent and crime – depending on which translation of his work (or which quotation) you prefer. The preceding sentence may sound strange, but I have encountered two different “quotations” of this passage, neither of which is in Italian (which I cannot read). In one translation of Beccaria’s *An Essay on Crimes & Punishments*, it reads as follows:

Finally, the most certain method of preventing crimes, is to perfect the system of education. (Beccaria, 1872/2017).

However, in a letter written by William Duane to Thomas Jefferson on July 5th, 1811, Duane transmitted the quote to Jefferson as follows:

The most certain means of rendering a people free and happy, is to establish a perfect method of education. (William Duane, 1811/2017; also cited in Koch, 1957)

Regardless of which quote best represents Beccaria’s idea (or if the second quote is from a second, unknown source), both Beccaria and Jefferson believed that education helped people both in their own lives and as citizens of a democratic society. Jefferson carried this obligation one step further, having proposed a bill in Virginia to ensure that the education of everyone would be paid for by those members of society who could afford it. However, his plan failed to come to fruition:

And in the Elementary bill, they inserted a provision which completely defeated it; for they left it to the court of each county to determine for itself, when this act should be carried into execution, within their county. One provision of the bill was, that the expenses of these schools should be borne by the inhabitants of the county, every one in proportion to his general tax rate. This would throw on wealth the education of the poor; and the justices, being generally of the more wealthy class, were unwilling to incur that burden, and I believe it was not suffered to commence in a single county. (pg. 50; Thomas Jefferson in 1821, cited in Koch & Peden, 1944)

As it turns out, there’s more to Jefferson’s support for education than simply the ability to know what’s going on with one’s government. It runs deeper than that. Jefferson believed that people should be judged on their own merits, not on the privileges associated with birth in aristocratic England and most other countries, including early America (as noted in the preceding quote). In a letter to John Adams in 1813, Jefferson wrote:

…I agree with you that there is a natural aristocracy among men. The grounds of this are virtue and talents…There is also an artificial aristocracy, founded on wealth and birth, without either virtue or talents; for with these it would belong to the first class. The natural aristocracy I consider as the most precious gift of nature, for the instruction, the trusts, and government of society. And indeed, it would have been inconsistent in creation to have formed man for the social state, and not to have provided virtue and wisdom enough to manage the concerns of the society…even in Europe a change has sensibly taken place in the mind of man. Science had liberated the ideas of those who read and reflect, and the American example had kindled feelings of right in the people. An insurrection has consequently begun, of science, talents, and courage, against rank and birth, which have fallen into contempt. (pp. 632-634; Thomas Jefferson, cited in Koch & Peden, 1944)

A bit later in the 19th century, 1899 to be precise, William James wrote *Talks to Teachers on Psychology – and to Students on Some of Life’s Ideals* (James, 1899/1992). James believed that teaching was about more than merely the transmission of information:

A professor has two functions: (1) to be learned and distribute bibliographic information; (2) to communicate truth. The 1st function is the essential one, officially considered. The 2nd is the only one I care for. (pg. 298; William James cited in Frager & Fadiman, 1998)

What might be involved in communicating truth, and how might one go about it? That would vary from topic to topic, but something James considered important was helping to develop a student’s will (as in the exercise of will power). James considered our will to be of great importance, and he included chapters on the will in two classic books: *Psychology: Briefer Course,* published in 1892 and in *Talks to Teachers…* James not only thought about the importance of the will, he recommended exercising it. In *Talks to Teachers…,* he sets forth the following responsibility for teachers of psychology:

But let us now close in a little more closely on this matter of the education of the will. Your task is to build up a character in your pupils; and a character, as I have so often said, consists in an organized set of habits of reaction. Now of what do such habits of reaction themselves consist? They consist of tendencies to act characteristically when certain ideas possess us, and to refrain characteristically when possessed by other ideas (p. 816).

Earlier in *Talks to Teachers…* he described the process of teaching in rather vivid words:

The science of psychology, and whatever science of general pædagogics may be based on it, are in fact much like the science of war. Nothing is simpler or more definite than the principles of either. In war, all you have to do is to work your enemy into a position from which the natural obstacles prevent him from escaping if he tries to; then to fall on him in numbers superior to his own, at a moment when you have led him to think you far away; and so, with a minimum of exposure of your own troops, to hack his force to pieces, and take the remainder prisoners. Just so, in teaching, you must simply work your pupil into such a state of interest in what you are going to teach him that every other object of attention is banished from his mind; then reveal it to him so impressively that he will remember the occasion to his dying day; and finally fill him with devouring curiosity to know what the next steps in connection with the subject are. The principles being so plain, there would be nothing but victories for the masters of the science, either on the battlefield or in the school-room… (pp. 718-719)

In the last of his three talks to students, James asks “What Makes a Life Significant?” In a sense, he describes what we think of as being a renaissance “man,” a combination of intellectual and physical pursuits at the highest level. In addition, it refers to the value of healthy social relationships.

A few summers ago I spent a happy week at the famous Assembly Grounds on the borders of Chautauqua Lake. The moment one treads that sacred enclosure, one feels one’s self in an atmosphere of success. Sobriety and industry, intelligence and goodness, orderliness and ideality, prosperity and cheerfulness, pervade the air. It is a serious and studious picnic on a gigantic scale…You have a first-class college…You have magnificent music…You have every sort of athletic exercise…You have the best of company…You have no zymotic diseases, no poverty, no drunkenness, you have cheapness, you have equality, you have the best fruits of what mankind has fought and bled and striven for under the name of civilization for centuries. You have, in short, a foretaste of what human society might be, were it all in the light, with no suffering and no dark corners. (pp. 862-862).

Now that we’ve examined some historical perspectives on education and teaching (I hope you’ll excuse the brief personal indulgence), let’s turn our attention back to positive psychology and teaching. We’ll examine teaching at two different levels. First, there is what we typically think of as school – the K-12 system. Second, we’ll look at higher education, more commonly known as college. This work is clearly important, since having bad experiences in school, particularly feelings of helplessness and sensing a lack of personal control, leads to continued failure in school and the consequent challenges of limited income and lower occupational status (see Argyle, 1999; Peterson, 1999).

### K-12 Schools

The early school years are particularly important, since for many people this is the beginning of society’s influence on a person. The earliest years of one’s life are, naturally, spent primarily with the family and/or friends (playmates). School is the place where a person begins their entrance into society as a whole, as well as preparation for one’s eventual career. Consequently, school has been referred to by some as a life industry (Peterson, 2006a).

However, there is a need for positive personality development in schools, as well as a need to prepare teachers to aid in this process, that goes well beyond the simple need for education. School-aged children face many problems, including abuse, violence, depression (and suicide), and dropping out. Indeed, as many as 1,500 students drop out every day (Conoley & Conoley, 2009)! Thus, efforts to improve the experiences children have in school can have profound positive influences for both individuals and society as a whole.

One area in which society plays a role in this process is, obviously, teacher education. As straightforward as that may seem, it varies from program to program and across different countries and cultures (Quick & Siebörger, 2005; Siebörger & Quick, 2004). My colleague Geoff Quick and his associate from South Africa, Rob Siebörger, have found that the important factors which need to be consider when developing a high quality teacher education program include ample time for teaching practice, full partnerships between the university and the school where the practice teaching takes place, effective supervision/mentoring, the student teacher’s knowledge and professionalism, and the value of actually being in a real school gaining hands-on teaching experience (Quick & Siebörger, 2005).

Returning specifically to the issue at hand, what would be involved in a decidedly positive approach to education? When it comes to teacher preparation, several principles (among a total of 10) identified for teacher education programs by academic deans working at research-based educational institutions connect with positive psychology. For example, teachers should encourage students to construct their own understandings by building on existing knowledge and beliefs, learning tasks should be interesting, relevant, and meaningful, teachers should model the behaviors and practices they want their students to adopt, and students should often be encouraged to work together (see Conoley & Conoley, 2009).

An essential component of this approach is to involve school children in the process of determining the best approach to positive education. Whereas parents and teachers have traditionally thought of school as a place to learn academic material, when children are given the opportunity to voice their concerns they mention factors such as safety, social relationships, and physical well-being (e.g., obesity). Creating an educational environment that is engaging and positive leads to children being more engaged, more successful, and happier (see Conoley & Conoley, 2009).

According to Maehr and his colleagues, the critical role for educators to play is that of being a motivator (Maehr et al., 1992). The goal is to get the students themselves invested in their learning, and this can be done by helping them to recognize the purpose of education and their own goals in school. When children accept the goals they have helped to define, it influences their willingness to work hard, take on challenges, and persist when things are difficult. Furthermore, it is beneficial when this engaging and challenging approach pervades the entire school. While working with the entire staff of select schools, Maehr et al. (1992) identified seven approaches that were useful in attempting to positively change the overall learning environment:

* Provide meaningful, challenging, contextualized tasks
* Give students an increased sense of control over their schooling with opportunities for choices and decisions
* Recognize students based on progress, effort, and improvement rather than in comparison to others
* Group students heterogeneously and based on interest rather than on relative ability
* Use evaluation to provide helpful feedback rather than for comparison to others
* Allow all students equal access to school resources
* Allow flexibility in how teachers and students use time during the school day to allow for innovation and variety

(pg. 415; Maehr et al., 1992)

By directly involving teachers in these changes, they should be more highly motivated as well, just as the students should be. In addition, this allows the teachers to bring their expertise and pedagogical knowledge into practice, as well as their personal awareness of the daily circumstances of their particular classroom (Maehr et al., 1992). Providing a simple overview of these changes as they affect an entire school’s culture, Maehr & Midgley (1996) re-emphasized the role of school leadership in promoting a positive culture, a culture which focuses on both the children and on learning. Unfortunately, in too many situations:

Not only do educators fail to recognize that they can do something to enhance motivation and learning – even for students at most risk for school failure – they behave incorrectly…Too often, school is made to be a competitive game in which some become losers and others become winners – but not learners. Too seldom do children experience the intrinsic and inherent joy of learning for its own sake. (pp. 214-215; Maehr & Midgley, 1996)

After reviewing several lines of research, Snyder et al. (2011) propose that positive schooling is built upon a foundation of care, trust, and respect for diversity, and then combines planning, motivation, and setting goals. In relation to the material cited above, care, trust, and respect are important aspects of making the learning environment a safe place, where children will hopefully feel welcome and comfortable. The motivation, planning, and setting of goals then plays a role somewhat more directly in getting to the business of academic learning, but within a context in which the students are taking ownership of their education. Taken together, this will not only help students to learn and do well academically, but it will also set them up to be lifelong learners, with benefits that extend far beyond graduation (see Peterson, 2006).

It’s also important to consider the age of students as it pertains to education. For example, there appears to be a significant decline in motivation among students of middle school age (grades 6-8; see Anderman & Maehr, 1994). This is an important time, since children are beginning the transition from childhood toward adulthood. The structure of school itself changes, presenting students with different challenges and risks, all of which can be a challenge to a students’ self-efficacy and subsequent motivation. As students are moving toward the potential independence of adulthood, school becomes more focused on rules and discipline, stricter grading, grouping by ability, poor teacher-student relationships, and little opportunity for students to make important decisions (i.e., take ownership of their education; Anderman & Maehr, 1994). To help alleviate these problems, Anderman & Maehr (1994) suggest shifting the focus in school toward establishing goals, which helps to provide purpose and meaning to one’s education. This approach can be applied both in the classroom and to the school as a whole, can be extended to the pursuit of mastery levels of learning, and should include a focus on social goals in addition to more traditional task and ability goals (see also Kaplan & Maehr, 2007; Urdan & Maehr, 1995).

An important approach to addressing those social goals is to consider social emotional learning (SEL), something of considerable importance during adolescence (see Cohen, 1999a; Elias et al., 1997). According to Elias et al. (1997), lost in the myriad of approaches suggested for the improvement of schools is a reasonable appreciation of the developmental stage of the typical adolescent. It is undeniable that adolescents have relationships and emotions. So failing to consider them appropriately puts an undue (and often unattainable) burden on them with regard to success in school. SEL, however, can provide a framework within which to coordinate the various challenges faced by adolescents outside of (though in some ways also within) the classroom – such as delinquency and stress prevention, suicide prevention, teen pregnancy prevention, chemical dependency prevention, AIDS education, etc. (Elias et al., 1997).

When developing a program to address SEL issues, it is important to consider the following (for additional/alternative perspectives see, e.g., Brooks, 1999; Shriver et al., 1999):

* Describe your needs, goals, and current practices
* Consider your options (re: preparation, knowledge, expertise)
* Get started (with everyone on board – teachers, staff, administrators)
* Consider whether the program is working (provide for tracking, feedback, evaluations, etc.)
* Let others know about the program (particularly the parents and the community)

(pp. 119-124; Elias et al., 1997)

Once again, addressing SEL involves a developmentally informed perspective. Although development is driven biologically, there are four major factors that come into play: an individual’s strengths and weaknesses, the conscious and unconscious meanings we attribute to experience, interpersonal experiences (e.g., family, friends and other peers, teachers), and the community in which one lives. The interplay of these factors, along with physical development/maturation, can result in very different social and emotional competencies for each child (Cohen, 1999b). When allowed to foster, this process continues an age-old quest to “know thyself:”

An individual’s capacity to recognize what self and others are experiencing fosters self-discovery, a spirit of cooperation, and the potential for creative problem solving. By the same token, how young people understand and give meaning to learning, including the frustrations, failures, achievements, and important moments of confusion, determine the degree to which they can learn from the experience. (pg. 20; Cohen, 1999b)

Although developing a positive approach to education is clearly desirable, it can only be successful if the students themselves buy into the program. We cannot force them to succeed, and we cannot force them to enjoy the process. Consequently, Strahan (1997) has suggested taking a mindful approach to learning. In his conception, mindful learning involves first helping children to develop a sense of self-worth and self-discipline, and to then teach academic concepts in ways that tap the students’ strengths. Once again, this should involve a school-wide cultural shift toward caring and cooperation. It will take time and effort, but the benefits far outweigh the costs (Strahan, 1997).

With regard to other ages, what about the youngest of our children in the K-12 education system - the little ones in kindergarten? Although kindergarten used to be a relatively informal setting which prepared children for elementary school (to wit, it is *not* the 1st grade), now it has become much more like the actual elementary school experience (Golant & Golant, 1999). Thus, it’s important that parents help their children prepare for the kindergarten experience.

Today…children are admitted at increasingly earlier ages. (In many cities a child born before January 1 can enter kindergarten the preceding September, making his or her effective entrance age four.) Once enrolled in kindergarten, children are now often presented with formal instruction in reading and math once reserved for the later grades.

How did this radical turnabout in attitudes happen?...The Russian launching of the Sputnik in 1957 drove Americans into a frenzy of self-criticism about education and promoted the massive curriculum movement of the 1960s…Unfortunately, many academics knew their discipline but didn’t know children… (pp. 6-7; Elkind, 1981)

Since most parents will not have a choice as to where there children attend kindergarten, Golant & Golant (1999) emphasize getting involved and helping children to prepare for the relationships that will be necessary for school to be a positive experience (relationships with both teachers and other students). One suggestion for helping children prepare for kindergarten (in the “it’s funny cuz it’s true” category) is to put them in a good preschool program. Among the factors that characterize a good preschool, parents should look for the following:

* Learning activities are geared toward socialization
* Staff address each child’s personal needs
* Teachers get down to the children’s level(s)
* Staff helps children put their feelings into words
* Staff is skilled at dealing with conflict management

(Golant & Golant, 1999)

Sending children to preschool to prepare them for kindergarten, so that they can handle the kindergarten curriculum that really belongs in elementary school, is, of course, begging the question: are we hurrying them even more? In my personal experience, having sent two children to both preschool and then all-day/all-year kindergarten, it’s wonderful if…you can afford really good childcare. My two boys actually “graduated” from the kindergarten program at Schoolcraft College in Michigan. It was a wonderful experience, and they have done great throughout their education (Samuel is about to begin a doctoral program in physical therapy, and John is a junior at an Ivy League college), but it cost us a lot of money. I am very much aware of the fact, and very thankful, that we were able to pay for it when we had the opportunity for them to go there. Not everyone is so fortunate, and space is limited as well (full disclosure, we also had connections that helped our first son get in – a friend on the Board of Trustees!).

It is interesting to note that in his book *The Hurried Child*, David Elkind (1981) proposes a simple antidote for the pressures of pushing children too hard too early: let them play! Play can also create transitions into more traditional schoolwork, such as working on art projects, and helps to prepare children to focus on a topic for an extended period of time (being absorbed in play can later be conceptually applied to working on a lengthy assignment; Golant & Golant, 1999). Indeed, research suggests that how children learn is as important as what they learn, and that chosing between playing and learning is a false dichotomy:

Playful learning or guided play actively engages children in pleasurable and seemingly spontaneous activities that encourage academic exploration and learning. Here, teachers using guided play have a set of learning goals in mind. They are subtly directive, embedding new learning into meaningful contexts that correspond with children’s prior knowledge and experiences. (pp. 27-28; Hirsh-Pasek et al., 2009)

And yet, the 2003 reauthorization of Head Start (which we’ll revisit in the next section on community programs) directed attention toward preliteracy and premath skills while ending program evaluations that included assessment of something we just reviewed as being very important in children’s lives: social and emotional functioning (Hirsh-Pasek et al., 2009). Based on their review of the current research, Hirsh-Pasek and her colleagues offer the following seven recommendations (with one subset that also numbers seven):

* Disseminate research-based, accessible informationl to parents and the community on the vial role of play in learning
* Broaden the definition of evidence-based learning
* Demand that preschool/kindergarten academic curricula follow principles on how young children learn best:

1. Policies, programs, and products directed toward young children should be sensitive to their developmental age and ability (research-based)
2. Children are active learners who acquire knowledge by examining and exploring
3. Children are fundamentally social beings who learn most effectively in socially sensitive and responsive environments
4. Children learn best when their social and emotional needs are met and when they learn life skills necessary for success
5. Young children learn most effectively when information is embedded in meaningful contexts
6. The *process* of learning is as important as the outcome
7. Recognizing that children have diverse skills and needs as well as different cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds encourages respect for individual differences and allows children to optimize their learning

* Maximize children’s social development in preschool/kindergarten
* Improve education preparation of early childhood administrators and teachers
* Improve preschool assessment
* Build connections among homes, preschool, and the community that foster play and playful learning

(pp. 68-72[59]; Hirsh-Pasek et al., 2009)

**\* \* \***

In the preceding section of this book (the section on work), I mentioned the curious institution of the handbook. And…yes, there is a *Handbook of Positive Psychology in Schools* (Gilman et al., 2009). Since each of the chapters in this handbook is itself a review of relevant literature, I can’t really summarize it further. Consequently, I’ll just mention some of the key points regarding the relevance of topics we’ve already covered as they pertain to the experience of going to school.

Hope, optimism, and gratitude are all important for children in school. Higher levels of hope are correlated with better grades and social skills, and even with superior athletic performance amongst student athletes. This is true not only in grade school, but also in college (see Lopez et al., 2009). When helping children to develop a more hopeful perspective, it is important to focus on three key areas: goals, pathways thinking, and a sense of agency (the belief that they can be successful). For the good of the whole school, it is also important to help teachers maintain their own personal hope, to keep them engaged and to help avoid burnout (Lopez et al., 2009).

Optimism is more closely related to how young students deal with stressful challenges, particularly when it comes to making difficult adjustments. Students who are optimistic are less likely to resort to aggression when dealing with their anger (Boman et al., 2009). Gratitude is a factor in promoting strong and healthy social bonds in school, making the school-based experience generally more positive. In part, gratitude enhances one’s sense of purposeful engagement in life (including, of course, school itself; Bono & Froh, 2009).

For some, it is most important to help young students develop positive self-concepts (Bracken, 2009). Indeed, the field of psychology is full of “self” related terms (e.g., self-esteem, self-efficacy, self-control, self-respect, self-actualization, and lots of so-called “self-help” programs). As we’ve already seen, Maslow described one of the characteristics of self-actualized individuals as knowing they have a “self” to actualize. Bracken believes that a child’s global self-concept (or any person for that matter) is based on a collection of domain-specific self-concepts, which are in turn influenced by their own perspective as well as the perspective(s) of others. Thus, if we endeavor to enhance positive self-concepts in those various domains (e.g., academic, family, physical, racial, etc.), the consequent positive developments will influence the overall self-concept in positive ways, with myriad potential benefits (Bracken, 2009).

Prosocial behavior, particularly behavior related to empathy and sympathy, can have numerous benefits in schools, including enhanced ability to work in groups on academic assignments and reduced aggression or other externalized behavioral problems. Obviously, greater levels of prosocial behavior are also consistently associated with positive social relationships. Although the role of parents is very influential with regard to such a disposition, when teachers are trained in child-centered approaches they can also foster improved empathy-related responding in school children (Spinrad & Eisenberg, 2009). Indeed, applying empirically-based programs school-wide can have positive benefits in many areas, for the betterment of both students and teachers/staff (see Miller et al., 2009; Varjas et al., 2009).

Once again, the engagement of students themselves is a most important determinant of their long-term success in school and, should they pursue higher education, in college as well. This can be critical when considering students who are minorities and/or impaired due to some disability (Griffiths et al., 2009; Prout, 2009). One approach to helping students be more engaged in their education is the use of flow techniques (Shernoff & Csikszentmihalyi, 2009), and another valuable factor is the involvement of parents (Reschly & Christenson, 2009).

If it hasn’t become apparent, what offers the highest probability for the success of children in school, as well as school being an entirely positive experience, is an holistic approach involving cooperation between the students, their peers (i.e., students in relationship to one another), teachers, staff, parents, and the community with an eye toward incorporating evidence-based positive psychological programs. It may sound ambitious, but are our children and the future worth anything less?

**\* \* \***

Finally, let’s address a particularly unfortunate situation that can be very deleterious to a positive school experience. Bullying has become very prominent, and it’s quite a complex phenomenon in schools (see, e.g., Jankauskiene et al., 2008; Jenkins et al., 2017). In addition, a wider range of violence among youth affects or interacts with their experiences at school and, as we’ll see in a more hopeful vein, vice versa (see Eron et al., 1994).

A school, like any other organization, has a “personality,” or climate. That climate influences the individuals within the school, and can have a profound influence on their behavior. When schools are crowded, when rules are rigid (fostering anger and resentment), and the building is poorly designed, the school environment can actually foster aggression and violence (Pepler & Slaby, 1994). Furthermore, failure in school can lead to a variety of antagonistic reactions and behavioral problems, as well as distrust, estrangement, and conflict between the school and the child’s home/parent(s) (see Bandura, 1997). In contrast, a school which has a positive environment is inviting, and often sees a reduction in aggression and bullying (Orpinas & Horne, 2006). According to Orpinas & Horne (2006), a positive school climate results from successfully addressing eight essential components:

* **Excellence in Teaching** – since the goal of school is education, there is no substitute for good teaching
* **School Values** – a clear and easily understood philosophy promoting a safe and positive environment is essential
* **Awareness of Strengths and Problems** – awareness is essential both for addressing any problems and for building on strengths
* **Policies and Accountability** – policies for handling bullying (or any problem) should involve all members as partners in seeking win-win solutions
* **Caring and Respect** – this is an intentional approach to counteract the unfortunate tendency to “get tough” and turn the school into something resembling a jail
* **Positive Expectations** – again, an intentional approach to counteract the tendency of many teachers to pay less attention to students who are not expected to succeed in school (creating a negative self-fulfilling prophecy)
* **Teacher Support** – in order to achieve these goals, much is asked of teachers, so they need to be supported in their efforts
* **Physical Environment Characteristics** – for example: is the school clean, attractive, organized, safe, etc.

(pp. 80-105; Orpinas & Horne, 2006)

Among the best approaches to dealing with bullying, as well as other forms of aggression and violence, are programs which help students to develop social competence (Guerra et al., 1994; Jenkins et al., 2017; Orpinas & Horne, 2006; Pepler & Slaby, 1994; Slaby et al., 1994). Orpinas and Horne (2006) have identified six areas in which social competence skills can be improved: awareness, emotions, cognitions, character, social skills, and mental health/learning abilities.

Awareness involves recognizing different types of bullying as well as understanding that bullying is an unacceptable behavior, even though many adults consider it a natural part of childhood. The latter point is why character education is an important component of anti-bullying campaigns. Bullying must be recognized as unacceptable.

When it comes to one’s emotions, the role they play in a person’s life and in their decisions is critical. Obviously, children who come to school angry, frustrated, pessimistic, etc. are going to have difficulty relating to others and controlling subsequent emotions in conflict situations (which they may have created). Daniel Goleman suggests, in his popular and widely acclaimed book *Emotional Intelligence* (1995), that the human brain retains primitive emotional structures that can easily hijack our rational thoughts and cause, instead, emotional reactions. Thus, according to Goleman, the ability to work with emotional intelligence is essential to one’s well-being in life. Fortunately emotional intelligence can be trained and strengthened (Goleman, 1995, 1998). Based in part on Goleman’s work, Orpinas & Horne (2006) offer a variety of examples pertaining to how teachers can work with students to control their emotions. Included among these examples is something we’ve seen before in this book: mindful breathing.

Although bullying and other types of violence often take place outside of school, school can still be an ideal location for the implementation of anti-bullying and anti-violence training. Since most children attend school, particularly at younger ages when such programs are best implemented, programs instituted in a school setting will reach a wide-ranging audience that must attend them. Example programs, such as those reported on by Guerra et al. (1994), address a wide range of topics, including: stress management, self-esteem, assertiveness, social networks, anger management, impulse control, and modeling and role-playing nonaggressive solutions to common social problems. Unfortunately, these programs have met with limited success. However, even short-term reductions in problematic behavior is a good thing, and research and training need to start somewhere.

### Higher Learning

Generally speaking, teaching in college is not really different than teaching in the K-12 schools, at least not in any important way. In other words, although the content may be more advanced and more independent learning may be expected, the principles that help to make someone a good teacher are no different.

In the field of psychology, there has been a valuable and widely proclaimed book available since 1951, originally entitled *Teaching Tips* but now known as *McKeachie’s Teaching Tips*. The varied editions over the years have changed significantly, so it’s important to know that the two editions I will be referring to are the 3rd (the oldest one I could get; McKeachie & Kimble, 1956) and the 14th (the most recent; Svinicki & McKeachie, 2014). This book, which has grown from 124 pages to 392 pages (and added 10 contributors), covers a wide variety of topics including preparing for a class, meeting a class, facilitating engaged and motivated learning, addressing cultural diversity, technology, ethics, and continuing to grow as a teacher.

If there is one message that seems to come across loud and clear over the years, it is that the personal connection between the instructor and the students is what facilitates deep learning. As for technology, it’s quite amusing to look at the older edition. For example, in 1956 they talked about exciting new developments on television and with slide projectors which make it possible to watch slides in a lighted room. I’m willing to bet that most students today wouldn’t be able to recognize a slide projector, even if PowerPoint is based conceptually on giving a slide show.

Another interesting change over time, which reflects my experiences during my teaching career, has to do with cheating. In the early edition, it isn’t even mentioned. It was simply taken for granted that students did not cheat. Later this topic became an entire chapter, but currently it is contained within a chapter. It’s not that professors are less concerned about cheating, but a variety of techniques to deal with it (from searching online for plagiarism to teaching students about their own responsibilities) have arisen.

In the final chapter of the most recent edition, Marilla Svinicki (who has taken over as main editor) has this to say:

The great thing about teaching is that there is always more to learn…As we improve, our students respond more positively, and their increased interest and enthusiasm sparks us to even more effort and enjoyment…What most impresses us is that, no matter how difficult the circumstances, there are always some vital, effective teachers…However much you are intrigued by new possibilities, it is important not to forget what you enjoy doing. Our final advice is, *“Have fun!”* (pg. 337; Svinicki & McKeachie, 2014).

While having fun, however, what is it that really defines a master teacher? According to Buskist et al., (2002), master teachers are highly capable in terms of knowledge, classroom management skills, and personality.

Knowledge and classroom management skills are fairly straight forward. As for knowledge, the master teacher know his or her subject area. They are aware of current research and developments in the field. However, they also have ready access to a variety of personal anecdotes that bring the material to life as well as connect it to other areas of study. In other words, they make the material meaningful. As for classroom management skills, among other characteristics, they are able to communicate well and motivate their students. They downplay their own authority, and foster an environment of participation and enjoyable learning (Buskist et al., 2002).

The personality of a master teacher is a bit more difficult to define, since it is unlikely that there is just one type of teacher who can be effective. Master teachers rely on their own, unique personal strengths to adapt to the learning environment and to their students. They are approachable, genuine, have a sense of humor, and respect their students. These characteristics help to create a rapport between the instructor and the student(s), of which trust is a significant factor. Perhaps most important, however, is that master teachers are enthusiastic and passionate about their subject, and that excitement is conveyed to students both in and outside the classroom (Buskist et al., 2002).

### Teaching as a Calling

Similar to what we addressed in the previous major section (on work), teachers are particularly effective in positive ways when they consider their career to be a calling. Remember that those who consider their work to be a calling are fully engaged with their work, they derive a great deal of satisfaction from the work, and they are passionate about it (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997, 2003). Indeed, what could make a more meaningful contribution to the good of society than helping lots of children (many more than just your own) grow and flourish as productive members of that society?

In an article entitled *The Call to Teach*, Buskist et al. (2005) commented on a once popular bumper sticker (I know I’ve seen it, but not in a while) that says “If you can read this, thank a teacher.” Unfortunately, it seemed necessary to create such a bumper sticker, in part, to offset the commonly uttered, derogatory statement, “Those who can, do; those who can’t, teach.” It’s a shame that teachers are often held in such disregard, which begs the question, “Why do it?” Simply put, some teachers truly love to teach. For example, consider the following quotes from two renowned psychology professors:

We are fortunate to be teachers of psychology. We have a fascinating, continually developing subject to teach, and we have students in our classes who are primarily there because of their interest in the subject matter…In this, my 55th year of teaching, I still enjoy preparing for the next week’s classes… (pg. 487; McKeachie, 2002).

Teaching is more fun than most people should have. After 40 years of great fun, I cannot imagine doing anything else even for more prestige and money…The real reason for teaching is to make a difference – to be honorable, competent, responsible, productive, and unselfish but proud. Teaching is not a profession; teaching is a calling – delightful, invigorating, mysterious, frustrating, passionate, precious, and sacred. Good teachers stretch the mind and heart. I hope the world is a better place because we teachers make a difference… (pg. 507; Brewer, 2002).

Upon having received an award as one of the outstanding new teachers from the Central States Communication Association, David Worley had this to say:

…for me, it is a charge (a “charge”), a challenge, and a choice because teaching remains a duty to be fulfilled, a delight to be enjoyed, a discipline to be embraced and a decision to be repeatedly made with each entrance into the classroom…While effective teachers certainly develop their skills, insights, and understandings through education, experience, and personal and faculty development, these alone, in my view, may help make a solid and important contribution to effective teaching but *do not* make great teachers. In contrast, great teachers have a “vocation” or a sense of call and mission which presses them to teach. (pg. 278; Worley, 2001)

Worley (2001) goes on to address a topic of considerable importance. Who are the teachers who shape teaching? He mentions his father, his 1st grade and 5th grade teachers, two high school teachers, and several college professors. From my perspective, it is interesting that he only lists positive influences. In contrast, my teaching has been influenced, in part, by some bad teachers. It has always been my goal to be nothing like them.

The teachers I remember most fondly were my 8th grade math teacher, and my high school German (all 4 years) and biology (2 ½ years) teachers. Each of these teachers clearly loved their subjects, and they were willing to tolerate some typically juvenile shenanigans, so long as we continued to learn what they were teaching. Granted, I enjoyed math, German, and biology on their own, but these teachers knew how to feed into that and keep class entertaining while we were also learning.

Although I had some good college professors, it wasn’t until graduate school that I once again encountered some professors who had a profound influence on me. I had the pleasure of being a teaching assistant for Dr. Alice Young, who was also the professor for several of my classes and she was on my thesis, qualifying exam, and dissertation committees. As one of her teaching assistants, I was impressed by how professionally and seriously she approached her teaching, while doing the same with regard to her research. From Dr. Larry Stettner, more than anything else I learned about writing amusing exam questions – in other words, you don’t always have to take everything so seriously! I’ll never forget his question about a rhinoceros on a Lashley jumping-stand (look it up). I’ve done my best over the years to come up with a few funny questions of my own. For example:

Q: According to Carl Jung, the psychic resources common to all humans are known as: archetypes, archipelagos, archaeopteryx, or Arkansas?

Q: Karen Horney suggested that a compliant personality can be the result of overemphasizing which interpersonal strategy of defense: moving toward others, moving against others, moving away from others, bowel movements?

Last, but certainly not least, was my history of psychology professor, Dr. Charles Solley. One of the things he made us do, which I admired greatly, was to act like we were students in an old European university. What this meant in his class was that we had to stand when he entered, and wait for permission to be seated (much like in a courtroom in America). The effect this had was to make us really think about the value of an education, something that was *not* available to just anyone back in the day, as well as respecting our professors for the invaluable knowledge they would then impart to us (and Dr. Solley was fascinating).

For some reason not immediately obvious, Prof. Solley and I got along really well. He gave me his copy of an old set of translations of Russian medical literature on the central nervous system and behavior (my Ph.D. is in physiological psychology; Russian Scientific Translation Program, 1957), as well as an autographed copy of his own book *Peterkin – An Educational Fable* (Solley, 1972). In this story, Peterkin is a boy who strives throughout his education to fit in, and to find a great teacher. Along the way he encounters many problems, with people finally telling him not to worry about it. This leads to my favorite line in the book:

Telling a person not to worry when he is worried is like telling a fire not to burn when it is burning. (pg. 64; Solley, 1972)

Eventually Peterkin meets some good teachers, and along the way he learns the true meaning of what it is to be a good teacher. Consequently, he makes the decision to become a teacher himself.

## Community Organizations

As I began to do a little research for this section, I ran into something of a problem. There are many community-based programs to help people of all ages and challenges. Indeed, we’ve encountered some already, such as in the section on resilience (programs that included the community in helping children to overcome challenges). Consequently, it is particularly difficult to do this field justice. So I’ll mention just a few things, including some that are of personal interest to me (once again, I’ll have to ask you to forgive my personal indulgence).

### The Need for Community

In Abraham Maslow’s hierarchy of human needs, belongingness and love needs are the third of five categories (more immediately necessary than esteem needs or self-actualization; Maslow, 1943/1973; Maslow, 1970). Humans are a social creature, and close, meaningful relationships are an important factor fostering physical and subjective well-being (see, e.g., Myers, 1999). People who emphasize such an approach to life in general can be referred to as communitarians. As such, they are neither libertarian nor collective, and they defy labels such as liberal or conservative (Myers, 1999).

A community approach within the field of psychology offers numerous advantages, including focusing attention on such things as cultural relativity, diversity, and empowerment. Within community organizations there is also an opportunity for people to volunteer their time and talents in the pursuit of personally meaningful goals that also benefit others (see Compton, 2005; Stoecker et al., 2009). There is a natural connection between academia and community organizations for volunteerism under the guise of service learning. Service learning involves having students in a class perform community service that directly enhances learning the academic material in the class (Raybuck, 1996; Stoecker et al., 2009).

When I was teaching in New Hampshire at St. Anselm College, we had an active relationship with the Manchester Mental Health Center (MMHC). For our psychology students this was an invaluable opportunity. Not only did they learn a great deal more (in real life) about psychological disorders, but the director of the program for MMHC said quite directly that when they looked to hire new employees they would always lean toward experience over grades. The reason was quite simple – an experienced student knew what the career was really like. Working with mentally ill people is not easy, and often not pretty, but it is critical work. The benefits to the student, therefore, were not merely feeling good about doing community service, but also more substantial in terms or preparing them for their chosen career, and ultimately providing the community with the best available mental health practitioners (see Kelland, 1996, 1998).

### Head Start

One of the best known community-based programs in America is Head Start. A federal program currently housed in the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), part of the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), this program was designed as part of President Johnson’s Great Society campaign. The goal was to fight the insidious effects of poverty by providing cognitive, social, physical, emotional, and family support to children in poor families (Head Start, n.d.; Vinoskis, 2005; Zigler & Muenchow, 1992; Zigler & Styfco, 1993, 2004).

Despite the popularity of Head Start, the success of this program has been equivocal. There are entire books on this debate, such as Zigler & Styfco’s *The Head Start Debates* (2004), and numerous government reports can be found on the ACF/DHHS website (at www.acf.hhs.gov). These studies are complicated by the fact that the quality of Head Start programs varies, and despite Head Start enrollment, parents seldom have any choice where their children then go to school. In the simplest terms, Head Start has measurable, positive benefits for the children in the program. However, these benefits tend to fade away by the time the children are in 3rd or 4th grade. There are also positive effects on the quality of parenting by the parents who participate with their children.

These data leave us with a conundrum. Some would say that Head Start is a failure, because the effects wear off. Others would say, and I include myself in this latter category, that the data tell us Head Start works, but that we need to add continued support throughout the children’s years in school (overall better education). It seems unconscionable to me that some communities might choose money over improving the lives of disadvantaged members of our society. But that is a challenge we still face.

Interestingly, in the early 90s the decision *was* made to expand Head Start – to the earlier years of life. The Early Head Start (EHS) program began in 1995, with a mandate to focus on cognition, language, attention, behavior problems, and health, as well as on maternal outcomes including parenting, mental health health, and employment (Head Start, n.d.; Love et al., 2013). Generally speaking, the outcomes for EHS have been uniformly positive, if modest. Effects were best if the children received additional support between the earliest years of life (when they were in EHS) and the beginning of school (such as being in Head Start or some other program of academic support following EHS; see Chazan-Cohen & Kisker, 2013; Love et al., 2013).

When it comes to serving children with special needs, although this was not originally part of Head Start, it was encouraged by President Johnson. In 1972 it became an official aspect of the program’s mission. This made Head Start the first large-scale program to actively serve young children who have special needs. Today, all Head Start and Early Head Start programs are required to have both a Disabilities Services Plan and a coordinator who ensures the plan is updated annually and carried out within the community. As with all Head Start programs, there is also support for the family members of the special needs children (Quesenberry & Clark, 2011).

So it’s clear that Head Start has had both success and challenges. So, now what? Looking ahead, Barbara Bowman had this to say with regard to the continued development of the Head Start program:

Over the years, Head Start has been a beacon of hope for many children and families…Head Start has contributed not only to the education of low-income children, but, through research and demonstration programs, it has also made a lasting contribution to our understanding of children’s development and learning. Few in our field will forget Head Start’s emphasis on the whole child and comprehensive services. Nevertheless, as we go forward it is important to continue Head Start’s tradition of adaptations and improvement. Much can be gained if Head Start continues to analyze the changes in society and considers policy and program alternatives. Head Start has served well in the past. I am certain that the Head Start heritage will live on no matter what its future directions. (pp. 543-544; Bowman, 2004).

Another important program, which has focused on reading, was established by two pediatricians in Boston with the goals of encouraging parents to read to their children and supporting their efforts to do so. Reach Out and Read (www.reachoutandread.org) began as a single program distributing 1,000 books in 1989, and as of 2015 they had 5,800 programs distributing 6.5 million books to 4.5 million children (some 78 million books in total so far). The success of this program is not merely wishful thinking. In fact, empirical research has demonstrated that this program has significantly increased literacy behaviors in the families affected (Golova et al., 1999; High et al., 1998; Needlman et al., 1991 – Note: these are just the first few references, the Reach Out and Read website lists another dozen peer-reviewed articles confirming the effectiveness of their program). The Reach Out and Read program has made a special effort to support particular groups, including low-income Hispanic families, Native American families, families with children who have special needs, and children of military personnel (on the military based themselves; see Klass et al., 2009).

### The Special Olympics and Other Disability Sport Programs

Before there were calls for the formal pursuit of positive psychology, there were some authors in the field of disability studies taking an assertively positive approach right in the titles of their books: *Disabled? Yes. Defeated? No.* (Cruzic, 1982); *Yes, You Can!!!* (Dietz, 2000); and *No Pity* (Shapiro, 1993). In keeping with a positive approach to living one’s life with a physical disability, a number of sports programs have been developed along this line. Certainly, one of the best known athletic programs for people with physical disabilities is the Special Olympics.

The Special Olympics began in 1968, having been founded by Eunice Kennedy Shriver, a sister of former U.S. President John F. Kennedy. Another sister, Rosemary Kennedy, was born mentally retarded. Shriver desired a better life for all people with mental retardation, and this motivated her to organize the first Special Olympics competition. The Special Olympics rapidly spread around the world, and remains both popular and inspirational today. The competition is organized around different levels of ability for both children and adults with mental retardation. More important than the competition, however, is the opportunity to participate in athletic events with other athletes, and to enjoy that opportunity. The motto of the Special Olympics is “Let me win, but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt” (Cobb, 1983; Kennedy, 2002; Kent, 2003; Single, 1992; Songster, 1986).

Prior to the Special Olympics there were also other organizations which focused on athletes with disabilities. The first International Silent Games for the Deaf were held in 1924. Following World War II, wheelchair sporting competitions began in England and the United States, typically involving basketball, archery, rugby, tennis, and marksmanship. In 1960, the first Paralympic Summer Games were held for people with spinal cord injuries. Today, the Paralympic Games include seven classes for athletes with spinal cord injuries, eight classes for people with cerebral palsy, three classes for blind people, and twelve classes for amputees. Although all these events are designed to provide individuals with the opportunity to compete against individuals with similar disabilities, some of the athletes have been able to compete with anyone. Kevin Szott, a blind competitor who won a Paralympic Games gold medal in Judo, has won a bronze medal in a national event. This helped to qualify him for a spot at the Olympic training center. Andy Leonard was a champion in power lifting, and not just in the Special Olympics. He has won open national competitions in his weight class (***Note:*** Power lifting is not an Olympic sport, though it is included in the Special Olympics.).

Perhaps the first disabled athlete to win a medal at the Olympic Games was Lisel Hartel of Denmark. A wheelchair user, she competed in dressage, a form of precision horseback riding. At the 1952 Olympic Games in Helsinki, Finland, Hartel won the silver medal (with a little help from her horse). Baseball player Jim Abbott won a gold medal at the 1988 Olympic Games (pitching the winning game despite having only one hand). Jackie Joyner-Kersee, winner of multiple gold medals at the Olympic Games and World Championships (plus silver and bronze), is considered one of the greatest female athletes ever, despite having asthma. Thus, when given the opportunity to compete in athletic competition, true champions are able to overcome their apparent disadvantages and excel in their sport (Buell, 1986; Kent, 2003; Montelione & Davis, 1986; Savage, 2000; Single, 1992).

Richard Zulewski (1994) has written a very helpful book entitled *The Parent’s Guide to Coaching Physically Challenged Children*. Full of insightful suggestions and guidelines, this book provides a very helpful resource for anyone working with special needs children, including descriptions of common disabilities and a wonderful chapter on communication. Of particular note is what he has to say at the beginning of his first chapter:

What makes some children special? Perhaps they have a physically or mentally handicapping condition, or they have physical or mental retardation. But what, other than a physical or mental handicap, warrants that these children be treated differently than other children? The answer is really quite simple. There should be no difference in the way we treat or acknowledge them…Special children laugh and cry and savor and hurt just like other children. They have feelings, emotions, joys and pains like everyone else…Often, exceptional children are identified only by the way they respond to the world around them or in the way they learn or fail to learn. They are individuals with special needs or who require special consideration. (pg. 5; Zulewski, 1994)

Another valuable resource is *Disability Sport and Recreation Resources, 3rd Ed.* (Paciorek & Jones, 2001). This book lists a wide variety of athletic organizations which exist to support athletes with disabilities, as well as individual locations where disabled athletes can learn and train. A total of 46 different individual and team sporting activities are listed, including the martial arts and traditional track & field events, but also ranging from activities such as scuba diving and flying to wheelchair dance sport, fishing, and driving all-terrain vehicles.

### A Sampling of Additional Programs

Earlier in this book we’ve looked at positive youth development and resilience, areas in which community organization involvement (including schools as part of the community) has been an important factor in working to improve the lives of young people at risk. Far too many programs exist to simply cover them all; for a review of this topic in general (as it pertains to youth development) from the National Research Council and the Institute of Medicine see Eccles & Gootman (2002; see also Jenson et al., 2013). Of course, for anyone reading this it would be best, should they need the help of such an organization, to investigate what is available in their own community.

An interesting area in which community organizations can prove most helpful is that of adult education, whether formal or informal (see Galbraith, 1990a,b). It’s interesting to note that as I looked at Galbraith’s book, I was reminded of things I’ve done from time to time in my community that I had forgotten about. Two institutions in communities that can provide a source of adult education are social organizations (i.e., clubs of various types; Ferro, 1990) and local libraries (Sisco & Whitson, 1990). Some years ago I gave a talk for the Brighton Senior Men’s Club here in Michigan, and I’ve done some public readings at Cromaine Library in Hartland, MI during their Banned Books Read-Out. The first invitation came from a student who took a class with me at the Adult Center for Enrichment – Livingston County (MI), and the second invitation came from a student in a class I taught at the Hartland Senior Center (MI). So, as I was performing some community service, I was asked to perform some more, and I was more than happy to comply. Although I refer to these activities as service to the community, please don’t fail to realize that it was greatly rewarding (and fun) for me as well. After all, I’m part of those communities!

Having emphasized the importance of community, it is also important, however, to maintain a sense of individuality (esteem needs according to Maslow [1943/1973; 1970]). Western culture is individualistic, as opposed to being collective. Snyder et al. (2011) refer to this as the Me/We Balance, and suggest that the positive psychological goal is to achieve a recognition of “Us.” One amusing aspect of this perspective is how we respond to others who are more or less similar to us. As is widely recognized in the field of psychology we tend to prefer others who are similar to us. However, if they seem to be exactly like us, then we get very uncomfortable (Snyder & Fromkin, 1980; Snyder et al., 2011).

One source of uniqueness, of course, is our name. For many of us, we add to that identity a nickname, which often has more meaning for our immediate circle of friends. Although nicknames assigned by others may be negative (even cruel), nicknames created or assented to by ourselves can be a valuable way to assert our unique identity (e.g., see Snyder & Fromkin, 1980). I’ve collected quite a few nicknames in my lifetime, but two are of particular significance. The oldest, and the one used by all my friends growing up, is “claw.” It came from having an old-fashioned, first baseman’s mitt (which is a hybrid between a regular glove and a catcher’s mitt). In the Marine Corps the guys in my unit gave me the nickname “Mad Dog.” It was partly a reflection of my personality, and partly based on my initials, M. D. Kelland (for Mark David).

### Concluding Note

As I mentioned at the beginning of this section, there are countless community organizations. I’ve coached soccer for our community youth sports program, and I’ve taught meditation at the local senior center. For a couple of years I volunteered some time at the Capital Area Center for Independent Living here in Lansing, MI, teaching cane and wheelchair-based self-defense (to clients with various physical and psychological disabilities).

For several years, while my children attended elementary school, I tutored 1st-graders in that school who were struggling to read. This was a school-based program which brought in local parents to help the reading specialist. She called the program H.U.G.S. (Hallways Used for Great Success – since we tutored the kids in the hallway). Most parents who volunteered were grateful that their children had been helped, but I had a very different motivation. My children just learned to read on their own, by picking up sight reading while we read to them (they both spent their school years in the gifted/talented program). So, since I didn’t have to really teach my own children to read, I thought it might be rewarding to help some other children learn to read. I was right, it was very rewarding!

I’ll finish up with one special story from those 1st grade tutoring sessions. Normally, we would take the folder for whoever the next child in line was, that way all the children got the same number of tutoring sessions. At the end of the session we would make some notes on how it went, so the next tutor was better prepared. One day I picked up the file of a boy I had not worked with before. All the notes were bad: he wouldn’t pay attention, he wouldn’t try, he was uncooperative, disrespectful, etc. These behavioral issues were seriously interfering with his ability to learn!

When I worked with him that day, it went great. We had no trouble at all, and he did the best he could. The notes made no sense to me, and thankfully I had not let them influence me. So, afterward I went to talk to the reading specialist about this young boy. It turns out he was from a different culture (that was a little obvious, of course), and women are traditionally NOT respected in that culture. Looking around the school: all the teachers were women, the reading specialist was a woman, the art and music teachers were women, the librarian was a woman, the principal was a woman, even the janitor was a woman! And all the tutors so far had been women. OK, the gym teacher was a man, but his student teacher was a woman too!

When this boy finally saw a man had come to tutor him, he was amazed, and he did the very best he could. I wasn’t anything special as a tutor, but yes, I *was* a man. The reading specialist asked me to pull his file every time I came in to tutor, which I was happy to do. Then she assigned me another boy, who was described in general as “squirrelly.” A lot of boys could be described that one, I was certainly one of them myself. I really enjoyed working with these boys, and they were solidly at grade level in reading by the end of 1st grade. They just needed to know that education was OK for boys/men. Once they realized reading had value, they were able to focus better and do their best. I’m glad I was able to help, just by being me.

# Section V: Stigmatized Groups and the Need for Positivity

Overall, the field of positive psychology is just that – positive. However, there are times when a scientific and/or scholarly approach requires us to pay more attention to being realistic, as opposed to being blindly or foolishly happy-go-lucky. In other words, as good social scientists, we must apply critical thinking skills to anything we study.

In this section we will begin with a critical analysis of various aspects of positive psychology, and then we’ll take a look at several areas of study where one might not expect the field of positive psychology to be involved, to wit, the topics of disability studies, racism, and tribalism.

Mick Power (2016) has written a very interesting book, entitled *Understanding Happiness: A Critical Review of Positive Psychology*. Simply put, he challenges the notion that happiness is as easy as a 10-step program mixed in with a little positive thinking. I consider an overall critical approach to be essential, because it keeps us focused on the pursuit of realistic goals. Keep in mind, when I use the term “critical” it refers to a rational, logical, and thoughtful approach. It most definitely does not refer to the common usage of “critical” as something which is always negative.

When I first went on a sabbatical, in 2009, I studied the psychology of disability and martial arts programs for people with a physical disability (Kelland, 2009, 2010). Not only were both the article and the subsequent book intended to present a positive perspective on how Buddhist mindfulness applied through martial arts training could help people improve their lives, the book also included a specific section on positive psychology. More recently, Michael Wehmeyer (2013) edited a collection of works resulting in *The Oxford Handbook of Positive Psychology and Disability*.

Finally, we will examine two topics that are not entirely unrelated: racism and tribalism. In his classic treatise on prejudice, Gordon Allport (1979) discussed the conceptual use of “they” as the definition and identification of out-groups. Whatever is going wrong in life, “they” are the ones to blame! It appears that racism, perhaps in a more primitive form of tribalism (simply us vs. them), is hard wired in the human brain (Marsh et al., 2010). However, the same research which tells us we are born racist also sheds light on how we may combat this insidious problem in human society.

## A Critical Analysis of Positive Psychology

We won’t spend much time challenging what we’ve studied about positive psychology, but there are at least two good reasons why we should. First, if positive psychology really is the scientific study of what makes for a good life and/or psychological well-being, then we must be critical in our analysis. By ‘critical’ I don’t mean being negative, rather I mean that we should consider alternative perspectives and explanations for what we learn so that we might be more confident about it (if, indeed, what we’ve learned holds up to that scrutiny).

The second reason for a critical analysis of positive psychology is that it provides a nice transition into the material we are about to cover: disabilities and bigotry. Most educated people would agree that these are important topics to discuss, but few would consider them topics for a positive psychology course. But where do we need to focus on the positive more than with those whose lives are currently in a negative state (or perhaps aren’t, but that’s what we’ll study)? So if we approach our studies with open minds, aka critical analyses, we might learn something important.

As Power puts it in his preface:

So this book is premised on a very simple proposal – that ‘happiness’ has come to be used mistakenly as an end to be aimed for rather than being merely an ephemeral emotion. It is time to drop the illusions and delusions that are a consequence of such an impossible pursuit. Instead, we need to pursue our valued roles and goals, our relationships, and our hobbies in and of themselves. Meaningful work, connection through relationships and the occasional holiday in Italy go a long way to making life tolerable, and then dealing as best you can with the adversities that inevitably come at you. If your pursuits offer fleeting feelings of happiness, and of course many other emotions along the way, so be it. (pg. ix; Power, 2016)

### Happiness and Love

In his critique of happiness, Power (2016) refers to two important concepts: the happiness formula (H = S + C + V) and the hedonic treadmill (see Seligman, 2002). According to the formula, enduring happiness is the combination of your set point (primarily biological), your circumstances in life (external factors), and your voluntary actions (the choices you make). Since only the choices you make are under your control, your overall happiness is primarily outside of your control. To make matters worse, when you choose things that make you happy, according to the theory of the hedonic treadmill you will quickly adapt to those sources of happiness. In other words, the things you choose to make you happy will soon no longer work.

This takes us back to the concept presented at the end of the quote above. If happiness is only a temporary emotion, then its pursuit as a permanent state of being is a fool’s errand. Power suggests instead that we look at people, and their lives, in terms of what he calls the HAS and HAS-nots. In this case HAS is an acronym for Healthy lifestyle, Adaptability, and Sociability. If you live a healthy lifestyle, and are flexible (something we’ll address below), and maintain at least some healthy relationships/friendships, then you will, at least from time to time, experience happiness.

However, the pursuit of relationships can lead to problems as well, especially when the relationships you pursue are loving relationships. Power begins with the approach that love is a disorder of happiness. Literature is replete with descriptions of love unfortunately leading to painfully negative experiences.

In *The Art of Courtly Love,* recognized as the original classic on romantic love, by Andreas Capellanus (c1185):

Love is a certain inborn suffering derived from the sight of and excessive meditation upon the beauty of the opposite sex…That love is suffering is easy to see, for before the love becomes equally balanced on both sides there is no torment greater, since the lover is always in fear that his love may not gain its desire and that he is wasting his efforts…To tell the truth, no one can number the fears of one single lover. (pg. 28; Capellanus, 1185/1941)

Men find it easy enough to get into Love’s court, but difficult to stay there, because of the pains that threaten lovers; …For after a lover has really entered into the court of Love he has no will either to do or not to do anything except what Love’s table sets before him or what may be pleasing to the other lover. Therefore we ought not seek a court of this kind, for one should by all means avoid entering a place which he cannot freely leave. Such a place may be compared to the court of hell, for although the door of hell stands open for all who wish to enter, there is no way of getting out after you are once in. (pg. 71; Capellanus, 1185/1941)

In *The Anatomy of Melancholy* by Robert Burton (c1621):

Now if this passion of love can produce such effects if it be pleasantly intended, what bitter torments shall it breed when it is with fear and continual sorrow, suspicion, care, agony, as commonly it is, still accompanied! what an intolerable pain must it be! (pg. 148; Burton, 1621/1927b)

In *Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare (c1591)

This love that thou hast shown

Doth add more grief to too much of mine own.

Love is a smoke raised with the fume of sighs;   
Being purged, a fire sparkling in lovers' eyes;   
Being vexed, a sea nourished with lovers' tears.  
What is it else? A madness most discreet,   
A choking gall, and a preserving sweet.

(pg. 861; Shakespeare, c1591/1969)

In *As You Like It* by William Shakespeare (c1600)

Love is merely a madness, and, I tell you, deserves as well a dark house and a whip as madmen do; and the reason why they are not so punished and cured is that the lunacy is so ordinary that the whippers are in love too. (pg. 261; Shakespeare, c1600/1969)

Power suggests that love may be similar to a manic or hypomanic state. Such individuals can experience extremely positive emotion, but their emotions are also highly labile. When love goes wrong, especially when an obsessive love is unrequited or a relationship is betrayed by infidelity, then the problems that arise can become quite dangerous – literally and physically!

While it may seem unfair to challenge love based on situations in which love has gone wrong, the truth is that most romantic loving relationships end. However, there are other types of loving relationships that are more enduring. For example, the love a parent has for their children is quite different than the love between the two parents of those children. Many marriages end in bitter divorce, yet those two parents may well love their children just as strongly as ever and forever.

So love may be a wonderful thing, but it may or may not be permanent, and whether it is long-term depends more on the type of love or the type of relationship leading to love than on the emotion of love itself. Either way, it’s complicated.

### The Value of Negative Emotions

If you read a typical textbook on positive psychology you will come away with a pretty clear impression that negative emotions are something to be avoided. However, suggesting that negative emotions are indeed negative is something of a bias. After all, if we take an evolutionary perspective, they must have evolved to serve some useful purpose.

Among the ‘basic’ emotions, most are negative: sadness, anger, fear, and disgust (with only happiness as a basic positive emotion). It may be difficult to think of these emotions in positive ways, but when we do their usefulness becomes clear, or at least it gives us even more to think about. Consider sadness. Movies that make us sad can be very popular, even ostensibly children’s movies, such as *Old Yeller* and *Where the Red Fern Grows*. Sadness helps us to process important losses, and may then help us to set priorities in our lives. And for some inexplicable reason, people often cry when they are happy!

Anger prepares us to stand up for ourselves. Anger in the face of injustice is even seen as noble, and there are many examples of righteous anger on behalf of the god described in Judeo-Christian bibles. Similarly, fear can alert us to danger. If the danger is life-threatening, then maintaining vigilance is critical. Disgust can also protect us from unhealthy substances and behaviors.

Power (2016) ends with a brief discussion of creativity and negative emotions. It is a well-known saying that artists have to suffer for their craft. The association between depression and creativity is perhaps the best known, though it tends to go hand-in-hand with alcohol and drug abuse. Of course, any such connection is merely correlational, and may not even be significant to begin with.

### “A Timeshare in Paradise”

The field of psychology has a long history of denying even the discussion of religion. This has a lot to do with Sigmund Freud, an atheist who had an abiding contempt for religion (1927/1961; 1930/1961; 1939/1967). And yet, Freud was fascinated with it, and repeatedly addressed the subject (though primarily as a psychological disorder). In his definitive biography, Ernest Jones had this to say about Freud:

…he told me once that he had never believed in a supernatural world. Thus he went through his life from beginning to end as a natural atheist…one who saw no reason for believing in the existence of any supernatural Being and who felt no emotional need for such a belief. The world of nature seemed all-embracing, and he could find no evidence of anything outside it. (pg. 351; Jones, 1957)

As psychoanalysis became the dominant force in European psychology, America was primarily the domain of the behaviorists. Most behaviorists, particularly the radical behaviorists, consider religion to be an invalid subject of study because gods and other divine beings cannot be examined or controlled. In other words, you can’t do experiments on them!

The humanistic psychologists were more open to spiritual considerations, if not outright religious beliefs, but Abraham Maslow led that field in the direction of Being and transcendence – in a decidedly existential way. After all, Maslow was an atheist. In contrast, Carl Rogers attended a seminary for a while, and spent a summer as the pastor of a small church.

Meanwhile, throughout the history of psychology, there was the parallel field of anthropology, and some anthropologists were telling us that if you really wanted to understand people you needed to understand their religious beliefs, traditions, and rituals (Kardiner, et al., 1945; LeVine, 1973; Sorokin, 1947):

…religion in its turn exerts the most decisive influence upon all groups and systems of culture, from science and the fine arts to politics and economics. Without knowing the religion of a given culture or group - their systems of ultimate values - one cannot understand their basic traits and social movements. (pg. 228; Sorokin, 1947)

Mick Power is an atheist, and directly challenges the value of religion in the field of positive psychology. Perhaps I should note, for anyone who is curious, that I am also an atheist, as is my youngest son. When he asked me once if I had heard of the books *The God Delusion* or *God is Not Great* (Dawkins, 2006; Hitchens, 2007), he was quite surprised to learn that I had a copy of each one. There was a time when I was willing to consider that Jesus of Nazareth was a real person, though not the son of any god. Recently, however, it has become quite clear that Jesus never even existed (Fitzgerald, 2010; Lataster, 2013). However, I know better than to argue with people of faith. Faith, by definition, is believing in something for which there is no evidence. So, well-reasoned arguments, no matter how rational or logical, are irrelevant.



*Religion/spirituality appear to be the most significant cultural factors*

*affecting people’s lives and personal development. Shown are some of the*

*author’s copies of the Holy Bible, Holy Quran, Discourses of the Buddha,*

*Yoga-Sūtra, Bhagavad Gita, and the Tao Te Ching.*

In *Understanding Happiness*, Power (2016) does not challenge the evidence that religion is associated with increased longevity and happiness in many people. Indeed, he is quite fair in acknowledging the sense of community and support that religion can provide, which may primarily be a buffer against stress, anxiety, and depression. Religion provides a sense of community, and it’s well-known in the field of psychology that Maslow included ‘belongingness and love needs’ in his hierarchy of needs. It has also been found that people who experience another type of profoundly spiritual experience, a near-death experience, later become significantly more accepting, loving, and empathic toward others, and they have a greater sense of purpose in life (see Power, 2016).

The problem with religion, however, is that it is a delusion. There are no gods, and there is no afterlife. Now this might seem irrelevant, but when we shift from looking at individuals to looking at society as a whole, religion starts to become much less beneficial, and in some instances dangerous. For example, the Catholic Church’s opposition to birth control has, among other problems, contributed greatly to the spread of AIDS in Africa. Religious opposition to abortion has caused untold amounts of anxiety in many people, and in a few cases actually led to the murder of those who provide abortions. Of potentially much greater concern is the global split between Christianity and Islam, especially when one throws into the mix the animosity between Judaism and Islam. This religious animosity, among three religions that all share the same patriarch (Abraham – if any such person ever existed), is the most likely source of World War III (Power, 2016). Even here in America, which pretends to cherish our first amendment and its call for freedom of religion, a major political party candidate for president has called for banning all Muslims who seek to enter the country. And he has been applauded by many for it!

The most valuable aspect of this chapter in *Understanding Happiness* is that Power (2016) suggests some ways in which atheists might gain the benefits that religion does seem to provide to individuals, with the hope that we will all eventually move beyond the bigoted conflict that religious societies often find themselves embroiled in. He suggests that atheists consider the typical religious prescriptions against drug and alcohol abuse, smoking, and gluttony. There are many secular organizations which atheists can join to provide a sense of community and/or purpose in their lives. And finally, an alternative to prayer exists in practices like Buddhist meditation.

So, we can acknowledge that religion may be beneficial to the well-being of many people, even though it is, technically, a delusion. We can then examine what it is about religion that helps those people, and identify ways in which atheists can achieve the same benefits in their own lives.

### Health and Illness

Power (2016) addresses two issues in this particular chapter of his book, physical health and mental health. Once again he first reviews a number of studies that seem to demonstrate the value of positive thinking (e.g., optimism, gratitude, positive reminiscing, etc.) in promoting better health. However, he then addresses contrary studies, as well as the notorious debunking of Barbara Fredrickson’s 3:1 ratio of positive to negative emotion as a beneficial goal (see Brown et al., 2013). With regard to one of the more critically important diseases, cancer, he includes a quote that I will also present to you:

No randomized clinical trial designed with survival as a primary endpoint and in which psychotherapy was not confounded with medical care has yielded a positive effect. (pg. 367; Coyne et al., 2007)

Of greatest concern here is the danger that unreasonable, or unrealistic, positive thinking may result in avoiding necessary treatment (either medical or psychological). And yet, sometimes a positive outlook does appear to be helpful; and a positive outlook can definitely be more psychologically satisfying. So when might pessimism prove to be a better choice? Power suggests that something called ‘defensive pessimism’ may be the key to preparing for and dealing with life’s challenges. Rather than relying on some pie-in-the-sky illusion that all is well, or the satirical statements of a Prof. Pangloss that all is for the best in this the best of all possible worlds (in Voltaire’s *Candide*; Voltaire, 1759/1959), we should instead deal directly with whatever we are faced with.

But where does this leave us? Sometimes a positive attitude is good, but sometimes we need to deal with reality. So what then? Power cites several studies which have demonstrated the advantage of flexibility in one’s reaction(s) to a challenge. Indeed, cognitive inflexibility, or perseveration, is definitely recognized as a psychological problem, and is included in the definition of a personality disorder (DSM-5; American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

In conclusion, Power emphasizes the importance of flexibility in making life’s choices. There are advantages to both positive and negative emotions, but those advantages are situational, and the situation may change with time. When individuals gather relevant and accurate information, so that they might make realistic appraisals of the situation they find themselves in, and if they are then willing to make the right choice for the situation (i.e., cognitive flexibility), and if they have beforehand chosen to live a healthy lifestyle in general, then happiness or well-being will arise from time to time in their lives. When it does, they should feel free to enjoy it.

**\* \* \***

We are now ready to move into our discussion of applying positive psychological approaches within groups of people who are challenged in some way. First, however, let me briefly point out that Power (2016) is by no means alone in critically challenging the claims of the field of positive psychology. The final chapter in *The Oxford Handbook of Positive Psychology and Disability* is one in which Robert Cummins does the same.

Cummins (2013) discusses evidence that subjective well-being is, like many other human conditions, maintained in a homeostatic fashion. In other words, we protect ourselves from changes in either direction, and the set-point is largely determined by genetics (see our discussion above regarding the happiness formula [H = S + C + V] and the hedonic treadmill; Seligman, 2002). Thus, it may be that applying positive psychological theory can only help those who are in homeostatic defeat, and even then other factors may limit its applicability.

Nonetheless, if there are short term effects, or if some people may be helped, applying what we’ve learned about positive psychology may be worth the effort. Over time, perhaps we’ll learn more about how to make it effective for all.

## Stigma

Before taking a look at how positive psychology can be applied when considering and/or interacting with people in stigmatized groups, let’s consider the definition of stigma. Stigma is a powerful social construction linked to placing value on social identities, and in the case of stigma those values are entirely negative. It involves both recognizing a given group based on some distinguishing characteristic and subsequently devaluing those people. Individuals who are stigmatized are considered deviant and are typically marginalized. As wrong as stigmatizing others may seem, social stigma apparently exists within all societies. Its function appears to involve self-esteem enhancement, control enhancement, and anxiety buffering for those individuals who stigmatize others (Dovidio et al., 2000). In a more general sense, stigma serves the function of creating the social solidarity necessary for one group to maintain its identity by stigmatizing those who are “outsiders.”

Although stigmatization appears to have weakened in the United States due to a dilution of the Protestant ethic (due to immigration and the blending of different cultures) and the rise of technology, it is likely to always be with us (Falk, 2001). Among those who have traditionally been the target of stigma we have the mentally ill and mentally retarded, homosexuals, the obese, immigrants, the homeless, minorities, prostitutes, alcoholics and other drug addicts, criminals, the elderly, and the physically disabled (Falk, 2001; Goffman, 1963; Heatherton et al., 2000).

People with physical disabilities are not only a commonly stigmatized group, they are a group that in one sense we will all join eventually. Although we commonly think of physical disability in terms of someone requiring something like the use of a wheelchair, there are many types of physical disability. One which all of us who live long enough will experience is that of old age, with its concomitant loss of physical vitality. As for those who are physically disabled at earlier ages, the presence of their disability typically leads to nonequitable/dysfunctional interactions with nondisabled individuals. When people without disabilities encounter the disabled, the nondisabled people often stare at, laugh at, joke about, overcompensate with feigned hospitality toward, or simply ignore the disabled (Hebl & Kleck, 2000).

In a series of studies begun in the 1960s by Robert Kleck and colleagues, as well as subsequent studies conducted by others (see Hebl & Kleck, 2000), the dysfunctional nature of these interactions between the disabled and the nondisabled becomes abundantly clear. When nondisabled individuals interacted with someone in a wheelchair (as opposed to someone who is not disabled) they were more aroused, they took longer to ask questions, they terminated the encounter more quickly, they conformed their personal opinions more readily to those of the disabled individual, they reduced their motor behavior and gestures, they spoke in simplistic terms, and they stood at greater speaking distances. Indeed, the nondisabled individuals acted toward the disabled individuals very much like parents interact with children. And if given the opportunity without confrontation, they simply avoided interacting with physically disabled people altogether.

It has been suggested that research such as this is too artificial, and that in real-life encounters people with physical disabilities may develop strategies to compensate for being stigmatized. However, when individuals with physical disabilities were interviewed by nondisabled individuals (as compared to being interviewed by another disabled person in a wheelchair), they also inhibited motor activity, avoided eye contact, and terminated the interaction more quickly. Thus, rather than compensating for relational difficulties, individuals with physical disabilities often exacerbate the dysfunctional interactions they have with nondisabled individuals (Hebl & Kleck, 2000).

How might people with physical disabilities work to reduce the effects of stigmatization? There appear to be three basic approaches: passing, requesting favors, and acknowledging. Passing involves efforts to “pass” as nondisabled, by attempting to hide or downplay one’s disability. While this approach may work occasionally, in can also be counterproductive, and can lead to a pervasive interpersonal strategy of withholding personal and social information that is unrelated to the disability.

Given that nondisabled persons often avoid those who are disabled, asking for favors, even simple ones, can create an interaction. This helps to draw in the nondisabled individuals, often leading to more favorable reactions toward those who are disabled, but it can also have the negative effect of reinforcing stereotypes about people who are disabled also being dependent and needing to be treated like children.

The best strategy for creating healthy interactions and relationships appears to be acknowledging. In this strategy, people with disabilities simply and honestly acknowledge their disability, particularly in ways that move the focus of the interaction away from the disability. This allows both parties to quickly move past a potentially awkward moment. Research has shown that when individuals with physical disabilities acknowledge their stigmas, nondisabled individuals view them in ways that are more receptive, open, and empathic, and they are more willing to make eye contact, continue conversations, and talk more about potentially sensitive issues (Goffman, 1963; Hebl & Kleck, 2000).

As common as it may be to stigmatize others, there have been some very famous people throughout history who have achieved great things despite being disabled. Thus, these individuals were able to overcome the effects of stigmatization to achieve lasting acclaim. Henderson & Bryan (1984) put together a brief, but nonetheless fascinating, list of some people of whom they were aware. From that list, the following names will most likely be recognized:

* **Aristotle** (384-322 BC) was one of the greatest philosophers in history. He stuttered.
* **Louis Braille** (1800-1852) developed the Braille system of raised dots for blind people to read and write. He was blind himself.
* **Elizabeth Barrett Browning** (1806-1861) was a renowned poetess. She had a spinal injury.
* **Julius Caesar** (100-44 BC), considered one of the greatest military geniuses of all time, and who ultimately became the Roman emperor, had epilepsy.
* **George Washington Carver** (1864-1943) was a scientist and educator, best known for identifying an incredible variety of uses for the peanut. He also stuttered.
* **Thomas A. Edison** (1847-1930), perhaps the greatest inventor of all time, is best known for inventing the light bulb. He was deaf.
* **Rudyard Kipling** (1865-1936) was a Nobel Prize winning author who was only partially sighted.
* **Horatio Nelson** (1758-1805) was one of the greatest naval commanders (a British admiral). He had one arm amputated and had sight in only one eye.
* **Louis Pasteur** (1822-1895) verified that diseases were caused by germs and developed the process of pasteurization. He was a paralytic.
* **Franklin D. Roosevelt** (1882-1945), the only U.S. President to be elected to 4 terms, was crippled by poliomyelitis, and his highly respected wife Anne Eleanor Roosevelt (1884-1962) was hard-of-hearing.

Franklin Roosevelt presents a particularly interesting example. Apparently he made every effort to avoid being photographed or filmed in any way that showed his disability, and the media made every effort to support him. Thus, most people had no idea that the “leader of the free world” typically needed a wheelchair to get around. On the one hand, this ignored who he really was as an individual and hid from the public an inspirational story; but on the other hand, his disability was not relevant to his ability to be president. This latter point, that media coverage of people with disabilities should not address the disabilities if they are not relevant to the story at hand, is an important recommendation for portraying the disabled in the media (Riley, 2005). Riley also suggests the importance of presenting stories about typical people with disabilities, as opposed to only portraying truly extraordinary people like those listed above. But perhaps the most valuable recommendation made by Riley for those who are interviewing someone with a disability is to simply *relax*. As noted above, with regard to terminology and the challenge of “political correctness,” if we could somehow avoid tripping all over our relationships, then those relationships would be genuine and meaningful.

Another interesting point regarding the stigmatization of people who are exceptional was raised by Falk (2001). Since people in America are all supposed to be created equal, those who excel are considered deviant, and thus are subject to stigmatization. Today, this can perhaps be best observed in how the media swoops in and attacks any celebrity (actor/actress, musician, politician, etc.) who has some sort of downfall (drugs, corruption, infidelity, etc.). But this is by no means just a modern occurrence. In the *Hagakure* (“*Hidden Among the Leaves*”), Yamamoto Tsunetomo wrote about this same concern. One of the classic books on the duties of a samurai, the *Hagakure* was written between 1710 and 1716, and Tsunetomo had this to say about a man who was exceptionally intelligent and clever:

…He thinks that everything can be handled through his own cleverness and intelligence. There is nothing as offensive as intelligence and cleverness. Right from the start people do not trust him, and he is not the sort of person with whom people can relax and whom they can take into their confidence. By contrast, a person who seems to be not so clever, because he has substance, can be a retainer who really gets things done. (pg. 100; cited in Steben, 2008)

## Positive Psychology and Disability

*Deformities and imperfections of our bodies, as lameness, crookedness, deafness, blindness, be they innate or accidental, torture many men: yet this may comfort them, that those imperfections of the body do not a whit blemish the soul, or hinder the operations of it, but rather help and much increase it. Thou art lame of body, deformed to the eye; yet this hinders not but that thou mayst be a good, a wise, upright, honest man. (pg. 154; Burton, 1621/1927a)*

**\* \* \***

Words such as disabled, handicapped, impaired, challenged, and crippled, as well as many related terms, evoke strong emotions, controversy, and confusion. There are numerous books on people with disabilities, coping with disabilities, raising children with disabilities, etc., but this group has largely been ignored in the cross-cultural studies that are so popular in the field of psychology. Another meaningful trend in psychology is, of course, positive psychology, the focus on helping people to fulfill themselves and lead happier, meaningful lives. It is interesting to note that there is common ground between these two topics. Much of the information available on people with disabilities takes a decidedly positive approach, despite what some people may expect.

Eastern philosophies, stemming from Yoga, Buddhism, and Daoism, emphasize mindfulness and acceptance. For those with physical disabilities, it is not only important to be fully aware of one’s physical condition but also to be aware of what one can accomplish and be willing to try. This is not simply about compensating; I am not suggesting that the physically disabled should only try to excel at non-physical tasks. Quite the contrary! Physically disabled people can still be physically active, and some have excelled in amazing and inspirational ways. For those of us who are not extraordinary, there is still the possibility of achieving the best we are capable of achieving.

### Historical Treatment of the Disabled

In *Understanding Disability*, Jaeger & Bowman (2005) offer a concise history of how people with disabilities have been treated throughout history. As far as ancient history is concerned, the reality is quite shocking. Disabilities were seen as punishment by an angry god, and the birth of a disabled child was often viewed as a prophetic sign of impending doom. At the height of Greek and Roman civilization it was commonly accepted to abandon disabled babies and allow them to die. In the Greek city-state of Sparta it was *mandated* that such children would be killed. Some people with disabilities were kept for amusement. One famous example, Balbous Balaesus the Stutterer, was actually kept in a cage on the side of the road for the entertainment of passersby. A special market existed for the sale of people with disabilities.

The abuse of people with disabilities was also common in ancient China and pre-Columbian America. 2,000 years ago the Chinese created a term for disabled individuals which roughly translates as “disabled person, good for nothing.” Today, the term has been replaced with one that roughly translates as “disabled but not useless.” Similar words exist in the language in Brazil and Zimbabwe. When the Code of Justinian was established in the year 533, by the Roman Emperor Justinian, it laid out a series of legal rights that many disabled people were *not* allowed to have. Consequently, for over a millennium the legal systems of Europe denied social, legal, and educational rights to people with disabilities. Indeed, many wealthy families in Italy, including some of the Roman Catholic popes, owned servants with disabilities for entertainment or sport (often facing the possibility of death; Jaeger & Bowman, 2005).

As Europe entered the Renaissance, and later in America, there was little improvement. During the Protestant Reformation both John Calvin and Martin Luther believed that people with mental disabilities should be classified as creations of Satan. In 1679, in colonial America, Philip Nelson began teaching a child who was deaf. Nelson was denounced by his local church, accused of blasphemy, and his life was threatened. Thus, the people of America very nearly executed their first special education teacher. Harvard University president Increase Mather, father of Cotton Mather of Salem witch trials notoriety, helped popularize the belief that disabilities were heavenly wrath. However, attitudes did begin to change in the 1700s. In 1752, Benjamin Franklin, one of the most revered founding fathers of America, along with Thomas Bond founded the first general hospital providing care and rehabilitation for people with disabilities (Jaeger & Bowman, 2005).

During the history of the United States there has been a very slow, but steady improvement in the protection of legal rights for people with disabilities. In 1973 the United States finally passed federal law granting specific, affirmative legal rights to the disabled as part of the Rehabilitation Act. Then, in 1990, the United States passed the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). When President George H. W. Bush signed the ADA into law, he proclaimed, “Let the shameful wall of exclusion finally come tumbling down.” However, the United States Supreme Court has issued a number of critical rulings which limit the conditions under which a person can be considered disabled and, therefore, deserving of protection under the ADA (Jaeger & Bowman, 2005). Thus, the protection of legal rights for people with disabilities remains an ongoing process.

An important trend in attitudes toward and treatment of people with disabilities has been a change in terminology that shifts the focus from the disability itself to the person. *Person-first* terminology addresses the individual as primary, and then addresses the disability as an aspect of that person. This approach endeavors to avoid stereotyping people with disabilities. For example, rather than referring to a “disabled person,” refer to a “person with a disability.” Rather than saying someone is “wheelchair bound,” they are a “wheelchair user.” A person might be “hearing impaired,” rather than “deaf and dumb.” The newer terminology not only attempts to put the focus on the person first, it also tries to avoid identifying the person *in toto* with their disability. Thus, the term wheelchair bound may stigmatize an individual, and lead others to think they are totally helpless. However, a person using a wheelchair may be quite capable of taking care of themselves in many situations, and they are likely to be fine intellectually. Just consider the extraordinary case of Dr. Stephen Hawking (see, e.g., Hawking, 1988, 1993; Hawking & Mlodinow, 2005). Almost completely paralyzed by amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS, or Lou Gehrig’s Disease), Dr. Hawking has had an illustrious career in theoretical physics, and his brilliance has been compared to that of Albert Einstein. Overall, it is considered that any language which dehumanizes or objectifies people with disabilities should be avoided. (Jaeger & Bowman, 2005).

I have had motor neurone [sic - British] disease for practically all my adult life. Yet it has not prevented me from having a very attractive family and being successful in my work. This is thanks to the help I have received from my wife, my children, and a large number of other people and organizations. I have been lucky that my condition has progressed more slowly than is often the case. It shows that one need not lose hope. (pg. 26; Hawking, 1993)

Another interesting trend has been a form of defiant self-naming or reclaiming of the terminology by people with disabilities themselves. They may refer to being a disabled person as a source of pride. They can subvert traditional slurs by adopting those words themselves. Thus, people with disabilities may refer to themselves as cripples or “crips.” This led to the use of the affirmative slogan “Crip is hip.” This movement to reclaim the language that has been used to define them is seen as an effort by people with disabilities to embrace a disability culture (Jaeger & Bowman, 2995).

### Models for the Study of Disability

There are two models that most people have relied on when studying disability: the medical model and the social model. The medical model focuses on disability as something a person *has*, which theoretically can, and *should*, be treated and cured. The body is viewed as an object-like physiological system, subject to the rules of science. While it may be true that physical disabilities are medical in nature, the same can not always be so easily said about mental/psychological disabilities. Even in the case of physical disabilities, the medicalization of disability has received numerous critiques. Perhaps the most significant critique is that medical doctors, particularly specialists, focus their attention on the medical condition, not the patient. Indeed, there are many examples of situations in which medical staff ignore or even reject the reported condition of the patient. This may be particularly true in the case of pain, which can not be seen or quantified by the medical staff (it depends entirely on the report of the patient). As a consequence of this dismissive attitude (i.e., dismissive of the patient’s personal experience), the medical model of diagnosing and treating disability has become self-serving and disabling. It has been suggested that many people are actually harmed (at least psychologically, if not also physically) by undergoing myriad exams and tests only to be labeled and treated as a commodity. The treatment of people with disabilities has become a major industry, and the medical field looks to bring a wider group of patients (i.e., more business) into its domain, all the while appearing to be part of a society which now “cares” more about the people with disabilities (Barnes & Mercer, 2003; Byrom, 2001; Iezzoni, 2003; Longmore & Umansky, 2001; Marks, 1999; Potok, 2002; Thomson, 2001).

The social model of disability suggests that problems arise as the result of disabling circumstances in the world around us. It begins with an important set of definitions for impairment, disability, and handicap (we will discuss terminology a bit more below).

* Impairmentis any loss or abnormality of psychological, physiological, or anatomical structure or function, such as the loss of part or all of a limb, or having a defective limb, organ or mechanism of the body.
* Disability is any restriction or lack of ability to perform activities within what is considered the normal range, particularly when it is caused by contemporary social organization which excludes people with disabilities by failing to take into account their impairments.
* Handicaprefers to disadvantages resulting from impairment or disability that limit or prevent fulfilling what are considered normal roles for the individual.

(see Marks, 1999; Swain et al., 2003)

From this perspective, impairments are still recognized as medical conditions. Disabilities or handicaps (the above definitions blend some differences between the World Health Organization and the now defunct Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation), however, are reconstructed as the result of social and political processes. In other words, disability is no longer something that someone has, but rather something that is done to someone. For those of us who have become disabled after being able-bodied, the value of this perspective is quite clear. I remember very well the day I decided to get a handicapped placard for my car. I had helped to move some equipment at the gym in preparation for a major gymnastics meet (that my son would be competing in). Later that day I had to go to the store, and when I got out of the car my hips were so stiff and in so much pain that I almost could not walk. Thankfully, I benefited from changes that have occurred over the years. If the store had not had a curb cut/ramp I would not have been able to go in. I would not have been able to step up onto a curb! I recently learned that curb cuts were championed by Ed Roberts (1939-1995), who some consider to have been the father of the disability rights movement in America, along with efforts to bring disability services to even the most impaired individuals (Scotch, 2001; also see Iezzoni, 2003). Today, there is an international center for people with disabilities which was built in Roberts’ honor in Berkeley, CA, bringing together a wide variety of organizations involved in the independent living movement (their website is www.edrobertscampus.org).

The social model of disability has focused on the rights of individuals with disabilities and has been used to argue that the exclusion of the disabled has gone on far too long (Marks, 1999; Swain et al., 2003; Thomson, 2001). Although changes have certainly been made, to some extent problems still exist. One reason for continued problems is continued prejudice and discrimination, which is often referred to as ableism (as with racism or sexism). Ableism leads to the devaluation of the disabled, and results in social attitudes that it is *better* to walk than be in a wheelchair, *better* to talk than use sign language, *better* to read print than Braille, etc. As a result, certain beliefs become common, such as:

* If you have one disability you probably have more - a person in a wheelchair is probably deaf and mentally retarded as well.
* Disabled people are angry at the world, selfish, and want more than they deserve.
* They depend on the government for financial support.
* Parents who abuse disabled children were driven to it and should not be condemned.
* People with disabilities have sinned and are being punished.
* People with disabilities are incapable of taking care of their own affairs, living on their own, or making their own decisions.

(from pp. 9-10; Johnson, 2006)

It is generally accepted in psychology that bringing groups together can help to reduce or eliminate prejudice. However, this is not quite correct. In his classic *The Nature of Prejudice*, Gordon Allport (1979; first published in 1954) reported that programs designed for contact and acquaintance only work when the groups are brought together in the spirit of mutual respect and can work toward a common goal. Thus, when something like a disability awareness day is held, it must be done carefully. For example, a common activity during such days is the disability simulation, such as having people ride around in a wheelchair or wear a blindfold. The first problem with these simulations is that they reduce the person to their disability. In addition, the person in the simulation knows that they will be ending it soon. A person with a disability will not be ending it soon, they can not cheat as some people in simulations may, and they have adapted to their disability in many ways (perhaps throughout their entire life). It is also true that some disabilities simply can’t be simulated well. Thus, a poorly planned disability awareness day may not engender mutual respect. Mary Johnson (2006) suggests that a successful disability awareness day is one which increases the understanding of ableism on the part of the participants. Ideally, it is “one in which participants learn from disabled people how to become allies in the work to create a more equitable, more accessible society” (pg. 34; Johnson, 2006; also see Marks, 1999).

### Early Studies on the Psychology of People with Physical Disabilities

Pintner et al. (1941) examined the environmental and sociocultural factors that influence the personality development of children with disabilities. It is safe to say that most psychologists would agree that individuals begin adjusting to their environments the moment they are born, and that adjustment continues throughout life (though some would say the earliest adjustments are by far the most important). The sociocultural factors are perhaps the most important, since they determine the patterns of behavior that are expected within a given community. Thus, the environment that each child grows up in, and has to adapt to, has already undergone a long-term cultural adaptation that lays down a limited number of situational expectations. Thus, the role we play in life, and the roles played by those with whom we interact and from whom we learn, are determined largely by social expectancy:

In the case of physically handicapped persons, the nature of the social participation of the individual is influenced in a profound way by the manner in which society indicates what the role and status of his behavior should be. The fat child *expects* that he will be the butt of jokes and the object of comments on the part of persons in his home, in school, and in his neighborhood. The crippled child *knows* that he will meet with oversentimentality and pity; the blind child *anticipates* oversolicitude and maudlin sympathy from the members of his environment. (pp. 6-7; Pintner et al., 1941)

In their review of studies on the emotional adjustment of “crippled” children, Pintner et al. (1941) found mixed results. Although some studies suggested that these children are, on average, emotionally maladjusted, other studies found the children to fall within the normal range of emotional adjustment. They decided that there was not enough information to draw any meaningful conclusions. There did seem to be, however, a significant degree of social handicap, as compared to either educational or vocational handicap. Thus, the primary difficulty facing the physically handicapped appeared to be social, as opposed to their ability to gain an education or pursue an appropriate occupation. Perhaps this would explain the additional observation that these children generally lacked initiative in school, and were relatively docile. They seldom participated in their own rehabilitation/therapy, simply following the instructions given to them by their case workers.

Roger Barker, Beatrice Wright, and Mollie Gonick (1946) conducted a thorough and detailed review of the studies available on the psychology of disability for people who they considered crippled, covering a few of the same studies as Pintner et al. (1941), but also covering additional material. As above, they also found that there was no clear relationship between being physically disabled and having psychological problems as compared to a normal control group. However, there were some interesting findings within the details of the studies. Children tended to be less well adjusted if their disability was severe and if they were considered to be overprotected and indulged by their family. These variables confound one another, however, since more severely handicapped children are probably more likely to be overprotected and indulged. A more curious finding was that if information was drawn from interviews, observations, or third party reports (such as family member offering their perspective) then there was a greater likelihood to rate physically disabled people as maladjusted (Barker et al., 1946). This may well reflect a stereotyped expectation on the part of able-bodied individuals, who assume that the physically disabled *must be* maladjusted, so they see what they believe must be true.

Supporting the notion that there is a tendency to find expected psychological problems in the physically disabled, Barker and his colleagues (1946) have found an imbalance in the descriptions of maladjustment and good adjustment. Whereas only three general aspects of good adjustment were described in the literature, there were 12 different and specific categories of maladjustment. Included among those tendencies found in some people with physical disabilities are social withdrawal, fearful behavior, feelings of inferiority, anxiety, paranoia, and craving affection and attention. These symptoms of maladjustment appear quite commonly among those people with physical disabilities who do suffer psychologically as a result of their disability (or rather, the social circumstances of their life consequent to their disability). Although there appear to be weak correlations with duration, severity, and unpredictability with regard to the disability, the particular type of disability is apparently unimportant.

Heinrich Meng was a psychoanalyst who believed that although there may be environmental factors which tend to distort the personality of those with disabilities, there are also factors operating at the same time which can mitigate the distortion. Since the disabled individual is different, this can offer a helpful sense of narcissism, or the feeling that one is special. A most serious problem arises, however, if the disabled child can not play. Meng considered play to be a very important part of child development in the shift from the pleasure-principle to the reality-principle. He also considered overcompensation to be a problem, but Meng suggests that it becomes a problem only when the child feels unloved, or that love has been withdrawn. He then suggests that the primary role for parents (and we may extend that role to family and friends for an adult) is to alleviate the child’s anxiety. An important aspect of that role is to provide appropriate opportunities for the child to play. Overall, Meng had this to say:

We do not think that the normal human being is the one whose motor and mental abilities function effectively, but he is the one whose psychological activities run in a harmonious way; he conquers life anew each day. This is possible for the handicapped in his own way, and it can be aided by mental hygiene. ‘Everyone must carve his life out of the wood he has.’ (pg. 87; cited in Barker et al., 1946)

Some 14 years later, Beatrice Wright published her own book, *Physical Disability - A Psychological Approach*, with an introduction by Dr. Barker (Wright, 1960). Although she added valuable insight to our understanding of the psychology of disability, the major contribution of her book was an effort to move rehabilitation psychology toward being an applied science. We will return to rehabilitation later, for now let us examine the contribution of this book to our understanding of individuals with disabilities.

One might suppose that a stigmatizing, underprivileged social position would predispose the individual toward feeling inferior as a person. As a matter of fact, feelings of inferiority are mentioned with considerable frequency by experts and laymen alike as characterizing disabled groups…However, when we turn to the research literature on the *actual* feelings of persons with disabilities, a far less clear-cut picture is found…No matter how the studies are grouped, the data cannot be ordered so that scores of inferiority are in any systematic way related to disability or to such aspects of disability as type, duration, or degree. (pp. 51-52; Wright, 1960)

Following nearly a decade and a half of additional research, Wright still finds no evidence to suggest that physical disability results in predictable psychological maladjustment. She addresses this conundrum by arguing that the alleged connection between disability and feelings of inferiority has been oversimplified. For example, she considers the effects of the severity of a disability in the following manner. If a child has a mild disability, we might expect their adjustment to be easier than that of a child with a severe disability. However, the child with the mild disability is *almost* normal, so they may try to hide or deny their disability, thus avoiding the process of adjustment. The child with the severe disability must deal with it, and given proper social support they can, and subsequently they become psychologically well adjusted. Similarly, someone with a disability who constantly suffers devaluation and social stigmatization must adapt their value systems to cope. So, the more they are mistreated, the more likely they are to at least try developing coping strategies. Thus, we cannot make simple predictions about the psychological effects of having a physical disability. We must instead examine the social environment in which the individual is living (Wright, 1960).

To this end, Wright began to examine the development of the self-concept, an important part of which is the body-image. This is a complex process in which the infant/child first differentiates the world outside as something different than itself, and then integrates its experiences into an understanding of what, and then who, the child is in relation to others. So, the developing concept of self begins with all of the sensory experiences of the baby, and then continues with what the child learns about himself or herself through the reactions of and interactions with those people the child encounters. As the child attempts to integrate its experiences, they will undergo a process of self-evaluation. Wright tells a moving story about a boy named Raymond who could no longer walk due to infantile paralysis (poliomyelitis). On the first day of school other children made fun of him. But Raymond did not realize they were making fun of him, because Raymond was relatively well-adjusted and had a positive self-image. When he came to realize the other boys were making fun of him, it hurt terribly, and he ended up physically attacking one of the boys. The incident had a devastating effect on his self-esteem. According to Wright, the single attribute of his physical disability now became the determining factor in his self-evaluation and self-esteem, and it was very negative.

Wright described this as a three-step process. First, self-evaluation dominates perception. Second, there is incongruence between self-evaluation and outside events (Raymond had a positive self-concept, but then other boys made fun of him). And finally, the single attribute comes to dominate the self-evaluation (Raymond feels inferior; “A few ill-mannered boys had implanted in me the seed of shame from which I was to conceive a monster” [pg. 146; Wright, 1960]). Of course, Raymond might have avoided these feelings of shame and inferiority under more fortunate supportive circumstances, but the likelihood of coping with such a traumatic incident depends on what Wright refers to as the self-connection and status-value gradients. The self-connection gradient refers to how intimately we identify some aspect of our body-image with the central core of our personality, or Self. For example, facial disfigurement is typically more difficult to cope with than the loss of a limb, because when we think of a person we think of what their face looks like. Similarly, an athlete who is paralyzed may find it particularly difficult to adjust, because impressive physical actions helped to define who they were in society. The status-value gradient refers to how highly we regard an attribute with respect to our self-esteem. Considering an athlete once again, a runner would be likely to place particular value on their legs, and might adapt much more easily to the loss of an arm as opposed to being paralyzed and losing the loss of their legs.

In terms of the age at which a disability occurs, and whether it is congenital or happens later in life, Wright argues that there simply is no conclusion as to what represents a more challenging situation. With a congenital disability, it may seem that the person never has to adjust their self-concept to the disability. But it is still possible that a moment may occur in life when the disability suddenly becomes an issue (such as Raymond’s first day of school, noted above). An adult who becomes disabled may very well have to alter their self-concept, but there may be other aspects of the self-concept that help to maintain an integrated and healthy sense of self despite the disability. Wright offers some helpful recommendations for raising children, which apply to adults as well. Overall, she suggests open communication in order to foster a realistic understanding of one’s condition. Negative and devaluating aspects of the disability should be discussed, along with ways to cope. Wright referred to this process as *realization and interpersonal acceptance*. The person with the disability then needs to know that they are loved unconditionally, in spite of their disability. This should help to alleviate negative aspects of the self-connection gradient. Similarly, the support of family and friends can help to alleviate the status-value gradient, by emphasizing that the individual is valued for the positive attributes they bring into those relationships. Most importantly, Wright suggests that if one is brought face-to-face with their disability in a hostile and rejecting environment the results can be devastating, and it can greatly interfere with future opportunities for positive self integration:

The resistance against positive change in the self-concept is especially interesting since it runs counter to what would seem to be the wishes of the person. Would not everyone rather feel better about himself? The resistance, however, is simply one of the consequences of the integrating process. Once self-abnegation involving the total person has taken place, then the old and new events tend to be interpreted in harmony with a negative self-concept. Raymond, for example, could no longer really think of his performance as accomplishments because such an evaluation, which previously had fitted in well with his high self-regard, now had nothing to which it could be anchored…The therapeutic problem involves identifying the worthy aspects of the upsetting characteristic in question, of giving them sufficient weight to effect a change in self-concept, and of reintegrating the negative features accordingly. This process may be designated as the *principle of positive identification*. (pg. 148; Wright, 1960)

Twenty-three years after writing her book, Wright published a second edition (1983). There are many changes in the book, not the least of which is the title: *Physical Disability - A Psychosocial Approach*. The shift in emphasis from ‘psychological’ to ‘psychosocial’ was made in anticipation of today’s social model of studying disability and disability rights, though Wright was already dealing considerably with social issues in her first edition. Perhaps the most valuable contribution of her second edition is a list of principles which Wright said had guided her work in rehabilitation. It was her desire that they should be examined, improved, and kept in the forefront of our commitment to furthering our understanding of the psychology of people with disabilities and our efforts to improve the study of rehabilitation as an applied science. There are a total of 20 guiding principles, including:

* Every individual needs respect and encouragement; the presence of a disability, no matter how severe, does not alter these fundamental rights.
* The severity of a handicap can be increased or diminished by environmental conditions.
* The assets of the person must receive considerable attention in the rehabilitation effort.
* The significance of a disability is affected by the person’s feelings about the self and his or her situation.
* The active participation of the client in the planning and execution of the rehabilitation program is to be sought as fully as possible.
* It is essential that society as a whole continuously and persistently strives to provide the basic means toward the fulfillment of the lives of all its inhabitants, including those with disabilities.
* People with disabilities, like all citizens, are entitled to participate in and contribute to the general life of the community.

(pp. xi-xvi; Wright, 1983)

### Perspectives on Living with Physical Disabilities

Lisa Iezzoni (2003) has written a marvelous book entitled *When Walking Fails*, and she included a chapter on how people feel about losing the ability to walk. A professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School and Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, Dr. Iezzoni interviewed 119 people during her research for this book. She quotes them often, lending their personal voices to her work. This seems to be something of a trend, and may represent a backlash against the social model of disability which focuses entirely on the disabling bias of society and has been accused of ignoring the reality of people’s individual experiences with being disabled. The fact is that people with disabilities really do have difficulties, such as being unable to walk. Very few, if any, people would rather *not* be able to walk.

One of the most interesting aspects of reading the chapter on feelings is the interplay between maintaining a positive attitude and recognizing just how difficult an impairment sometimes makes one’s life. As we have seen, there is no overall difference in personality between people who are able-bodied and those who are disabled. We all face challenges, and we all react differently, differently both from one another and to each unique situation we face. Still, there are some common reactions to developing mobility difficulties, including: not knowing your body anymore, a loss of independence, loneliness and isolation, depression, and anger. At the same time, some people feel that they have found a strength they didn’t know they had. Mostly, the people Iezzoni interviewed just talked about getting on with life:

While bodies and external identities (e.g., career, relationships) clearly can change, fundamental inner beliefs about self remain intact: independent, self-reliant, stoic, autonomous…But with mobility difficulties, the strategies required to be independent, self-reliant, stoic, and autonomous inevitably change…New tactics for getting through each day can alter how people interact with others and how they see their role in life. (pg. 78; Iezzoni, 2003)

There is another wonderful book which provides a wide array of perspectives on the diversity of disability in a collection of fascinating personal stories. *A Matter of Dignity* by Andrew Potok (2002) contains eight chapters about people who have dedicated their lives to helping the physically disabled. Many of them are disabled themselves, but not all. The various chapters include, for example, disability rights activists, scholars, a computer engineer, and a man who specializes in making and fitting prosthetic legs. In each chapter Potok presents numerous personal stories and experiences (both his own and those of the subjects of the chapter). The most interesting chapter for me was the result of a coincidence. Potok, who is blind and currently has a dog named Tobias, went to revisit the main campus of Seeing Eye, and writes about and interviews their training manager Pete Lang. Seeing Eye happens to be in Morristown, New Jersey. My grandparents lived in Morristown, and when I asked my mother if I ever did, she said I lived there briefly when I was a baby. She also said they enjoyed watching the Seeing Eye dogs train, and considered raising one of the puppies. One of my fondest memories as a child was going to a toy store in Morristown named the Dog Pound. I also had occasion to meet a Seeing Eye dog one weekend while ice climbing with Erik Weihenmayer (see below). Now I’m going to have to find time to get back to Morristown in order to watch some Seeing Eye dogs train, and see if I can still find my grandparents old house without having to ask for directions (which may prove difficult - it has been a long time since they both passed away).

In one of his more poignant stories, Potok relates a conversation with a friend named Danny who had his leg amputated below the knee after a motorcycle accident. Since the results were unsatisfactory, the doctors decided to amputate again, above the knee:

“It seems not to have taken you long to get over it.”

“No choice,” he says.

“What do you mean ‘no choice’? Some people take a lifetime. You should be proud.”

“Proud?” He gets a little testy. “What were my options, for Christ’s sake? You should know that. You either kill yourself or you damn well get on with it. If there’s no real choice, it’s not bravery.”…He hops over to his old, ill-fitting leg, standing in a corner of the room. He puts it in place and, not securing it properly, hobbles outside, Tobias and I following. (pg. 100; Potok, 2002)

### Rehabilitation and Coping

As rehabilitation teams begins their work, a few simple rules should be followed to maintain a secure and helpful atmosphere. According to Ayrault (2001), the cardinal rule is to ensure the disabled person’s dignity and modesty. The staff should avoid using infantile language, and no matter what the requirements of physical therapy or medical treatment, they must remember that they are working with a person. Positive rapport should be maintained between the disabled person and the team, and parents should be encouraged to seek help and, perhaps, consider family therapy. The rehabilitation team must anticipate several behaviors that can cause problems, including: aggression, daydreaming, withdrawal, temper tantrums, and using the disability as an excuse. While a few of these may be much more likely with children, it is a possibility that they could all occur with an adult as well. The staff must also be careful to avoid allowing their own unresolved conflicts to interfere with the patient’s adjustment, such as permitting too much patient dependency should the patient become passive (Siller, 1977).

Roessler & Bolton (1978) suggest a comprehensive “behavioral coping” model. They believe that such a model should focus on the person/situation fit and how their disability disrupts that fit, it should be an asset model emphasizing abilities (not disabilities), and it should emphasize skills and behaviors the individual needs to contain the effects of the disability, broaden the range of the individual’s values, and avoid eliminating behavioral potential. They further suggest that parts of previous models can prove useful in this more comprehensive model. The survival model contributes the importance of the desire to live. The engineering model takes into consideration maximizing the individual’s potential. And the positive striving model emphasizes values important for identifying future directions in rehabilitation and in life. Overall, the behavior coping model emphasizes the individual’s ability to manage their own environment with minimal discomfort to self and others.

Cristian (2006) has offered a list of some practical coping strategies that can be followed to assist one’s rehabilitation team. He suggests that people should express their concerns, be active participants, carry a notebook at all times, gather information, allow themselves to deny their situation for a while, maintain a positive and hopeful attitude (you have survived), be realistic, focus on small tasks and new ways to perform them, confront their fears, and form a quality relationship with at least one therapist. These steps can help a person with a disability to get the most out of their rehabilitation team, provided they also remain open to the suggestions of the team. Open, honest dialogue is the best way to address concerns. Wright (1960, 1983) has emphasized the importance of actively involving the person with the disability in their own rehabilitation. When children are involved, it becomes important to involve the parents as participants, and to come up with ways to motivate children. For example, can a task be modified so that it becomes part of an activity that the child already likes to do? Attention must be paid to the child’s attitudes toward disability and rehabilitation and whether the staff is friendly toward the child. And, is the child experiencing success or failure? Once again there is an emphasis here on two-way communication. The rehabilitation team has expertise and general experience, but only the person with the disability knows their own feelings and comfort level.

Winchell (1995) also offered a list of steps that one can take to help oneself through the grief that may come and go in waves. She believes there is no single timetable, grieving is uniquely personal, and the mourning process cannot be forced. Nonetheless, she recommends the following as concrete steps that can be taken:

* **Be good to yourself** - take time to adjust, have compassion for yourself
* **Nourish yourself with healing relationships** - sharing the grieving process can be very helpful, children and pets can remind you of the joy and wonder life still holds
* **Seek out other people with similar disabilities** - they can be an invaluable resource
* **Nourish yourself spiritually** - your heart is likely to be especially open to deeply questioning your values and purpose
* **Care for yourself physically** - don’t focus on the disability and neglect your overall health
* **Fully experience your feelings** - be honest with yourself about sadness, anger, resentment, and frustration
* **Let go of “How Life Should Be”** - this doesn’t mean giving up on dreams, but rather embrace your life as it is now
* **Accept Loss** - but don’t confuse acceptance with approval
* **Develop a sense of closure** - this can lead to greater peace of mind

(pp. 114-118; Winchell, 1995)

### Religion, Spirituality, and Coping

One of the questions often asked following the occurrence of a disability is “Why me?” Spirituality offers answers beyond medical statistics or actuarial tables. One of the most important things that spirituality offers is hope. It can also infuse our lives with a larger, all-pervasive sense of meaning and purpose. For women in particular, the development of faith appears to have a positive impact on well-being and coping (Robinson et al., 1995). And yet, in Western societies there is an emphasis on putting one’s ‘faith’ in medicine. Vash (1981) suggests that an ideal situation would be one in which we combined the technological advantages of the Western world with the spiritual values that we commonly associate with the East. Even here in America, where we have an odd sense of separation of church and state, rules were changed by law for Medicare/Medicaid home healthcare beneficiaries so that attending church services did not put their benefits in jeopardy (Iezzoni, 2003).

It is probably not possible to overestimate the value of recognizing *meaning* in one’s life. In one of the most famous and extraordinary books ever written, *Man’s Search for Meaning*, Viktor Frankl (1946/1992) described how his belief that his life had meaning helped him to survive the Nazi Concentration Camps that claimed the lives of his parents, his brother, and his wife. People with severe disabilities have reported that similar beliefs have helped them to cope with their disabilities and move forward (see Vash, 1981).

Spirituality can also help one to experience both compassion and forgiveness. Feeling compassion for oneself is not the same thing as self-pity. Self-pity implies that you think of yourself as less than others. Compassion is part of the healing process, it helps to strengthen one’s self-esteem. It also helps with facing reality, and recognizing the challenges that lie ahead. Compassion also opens your heart to nonjudgmental acceptance and forgiveness. It is most important to forgive oneself, for any causes, circumstances, results, or responses related to the disability. If others were somehow involved (and medical staff who save people’s lives may be blamed for ‘failing’ to save a lost limb, for example), they must be forgiven as well. Otherwise you deny yourself peace, and may be plagued by self-blame and guilt (Winchell, 1995).

Cultural values interact with the experience of disability in many ways, both positive and negative, and they can contradict our expectations based on selected philosophies from the oversimplified concepts of East vs. West. The Bible specifically disqualifies disabled people from being priests. Hindus believe in Karma, suggesting that congenital defects are punishment for bad acts in a previous life. The Trobriand Islanders believe that afflictions are caused by their enemies through sorcery. On the other hand, in modern Turkey, people who are blind are indispensible at religious ceremonies and funerals. Clairvoyants were typically blind throughout Greek history, and many Koreans believe that people who are blind have an inner vision which is held in high esteem. Perhaps most surprising, is that even gods can be ‘crippled’: Wieland, the Nordic/Anglo-Saxon god of blacksmiths (aka, Wayland, Volund, and associated with the Roman god Vulcan), was lame because he has been hamstrung by a king who kept him captive for a time (Willis, 2006; Wright, 1983), and the Norse god Tyr had only one hand, the other having been bitten off by the great wolf Fenrir (Dougherty, 2013; Guerber, 2014; Martin, 1991; Willis, 2006).

The recognition that spirituality may play an important role in coping with disability is by no means new. The quote at the beginning of this text, written by Robert Burton in 1621, declares that the soul can not be blemished, and that physical disabilities can not affect one’s ability to be a good person (Burton, 1621/1926, 1621/1927a,b). Likewise, some 2,500 years ago, Gotama Buddha realized the Four Noble Truths, beginning with the truth that *all* human life is suffering, and ending with the truth that there is a way to alleviate that suffering. Whether you are religious, spiritual, or neither, you can still be true to yourself:

By following your inner voice, you may discover you have profound wisdom from which to draw. This should give you a quiet satisfaction and a sense of being connected to something greater than your everyday concerns; it should keep you from feeling alone in a cold, uncaring universe. (pg. 209; Winchell, 1995)

### Ethnicity and the Ability to Cope

Ethnic minorities face a number of difficulties due to prejudice and stereotypes surrounding their ethnicity which then magnify the difficulties they face due to their disability (Henderson & Bryan, 1984; Iezzoni, 2003; Swain et al., 2003). Many members of ethnic minority groups live in poverty, lacking adequate housing, nutrition, and medical care. If they work, it is often difficult labor which can be hard on the body. If they obtain medical care, the health care practitioners often don’t know whether certain types of care are culturally sensitive, or they may assume that extended minority families prefer to ‘take care of their own.’ When the stigmatization of being both an ethnic minority and disabled are combined, there is a distinct possibility of extreme negative self-devaluation. This can lead to loss of emotional stability, loss of sustained personal pleasure, and loss of physical and economic independence (Henderson & Bryan, 1984).

Black children face a most significant difficulty very early in life: high infant mortality rates and a much higher chance of losing their mother during childbirth. Due to inner city poverty, where many Blacks live, educational opportunities lag far behind those typically available to White children with disabilities. For many Hispanics, the culture of machismo, or the expectation that men will be strong, leads those who are disabled to try hiding their physical disabilities so they are not seen as weak. Native Americans are perhaps the most poverty stricken group in the United States, and many Asian Americans also suffer from poverty. In addition, Asian Americans are taught to be inconspicuousness, and if they disappoint their family there are powerful feelings of shame and guilt. Thus, it may be particularly difficult for them to request assistance when their disability requires it (Henderson & Bryan, 1984).

Fortunately, there are also some cultural aspects of ethnic minority groups that assist individuals with disabilities (Henderson & Bryan, 1984). Extended families with important kinship bonds provide support for both disabled individuals and their caretakers. For Blacks and Hispanics, their typically strong Christian faith is an additional source of support and comfort, as well as a means for offering hope to those with disabilities. Asian folk medicine and philosophy has profound Chinese influences, including Daoism. Daoism emphasizes balance, the importance of which is seen in the beginning of the second chapter of the *Tao Te Ching*:

Under Heaven all can see beauty as beauty only because

there is ugliness.

All can know good as good only because there is evil.

Therefore having and not having arise together.

Difficult and easy complement each other.

Long and short contrast each other;

High and low rest upon each other;

Voice and sound harmonize each other;

Front and back follow one another.

(*Lao Tsu, c600 B.C./1989*)

According to this philosophy, there can be no one who is able-bodied without those who are disabled. And finally, there is a quite curious advantage related to ethnicity and rehabilitation. According to Ludwig & Adams (1977), a substantially higher proportion of ethnic minorities satisfactorily complete their rehabilitation program. They attribute this to the subordinate role adopted by minorities due to their social position. Thus, they are more likely to comply with the instructions of the rehabilitation team.

It has been shown that having a disability is viewed as more negative than being either a woman or an ethnic minority; this perspective was shared by a black woman with a disability interviewed for a study on disabled woman (see Henderson & Bryan, 1984). In order to work well with disabled ethnic minorities, Henderson & Bryan (1984) consider it essential to establish trust. Both verbal and non-verbal communication need to convey acceptance and respect, and an honest effort must be made to understand the different customs that may be important within different cultural groups. For example, when helping a disabled person you may be expected to sit down during a home visit, or to shake hands without hesitation. Some cultures consider it bad manners to stare at someone, so the person you are talking to may not look back at you. It appears to be an advantage if someone helping ethnic minorities with disabilities has few ego-centered thoughts during their interactions with the disabled individual. If the client is given the best opportunity for social adjustment, with the least chance of disillusionment, there is a real prospect for bridging the gap between the helper and the client. The possibility then exists for a meaningful and helpful relationship to form (Henderson & Bryan, 1984).

### Exercise, Recreation, and Coping with Disability

As early as 1946, Barker et al. (1946, 1953) recognized the need for providing children with disabilities an opportunity for playing. This is a natural activity necessary for the healthy development of children, and parents of disabled children must pay careful attention to providing appropriate activities. More than just an opportunity for fun, play allows children an opportunity to exercise and develop their motor skills. Barker and his colleagues also point out that organized play activities in hospitals benefit not only the children, but the medical staff as well. In addition, playing can help to relieve stress and it can be very useful in therapy, especially with young patients who can not communicate well. In fact, play itself can be a therapeutic activity, and is not necessarily limited to children (Ayrault, 2001; Sobsey, 1994; Vash, 1981; Winchell, 1995):

Undergoing the crisis of amputation can make life seem so serious. You and your spouse may feel there is so much to do between normal household upkeep, child care, medically related appointments, and physical therapy that you neglect to make time for fun. This is a big mistake! You may think you can’t afford the time to play, but the truth is you can’t afford *not* to play…Make time to relax and revitalize yourselves… (pg. 272; Winchell, 1995)

For older children and adults, play typically becomes some type of athletic activity, such as physical fitness training. Studies have shown that physical fitness training can lead to enhanced self-esteem, increase social effectiveness, fewer behavioral problems, and better physical functioning. Roessler & Bolton (1978) reviewed several studies that examined coordinated physical training programs for the physically disabled in the 1970s. Although these studies found improvements in physical fitness, they did not necessarily lead to improvements in personal adjustment. However, more recent studies have shown that important components of whether or not participating in sports is beneficial include the desire of the disabled athlete to continue being active in a sport and their motivation to be more competitive. As dramatic advances continue to be made in the quality of prosthetic devices, these opportunities are growing for many people with disabilities. Even for those who are not competitive athletes, improved physical fitness helps with a variety of daily activities, stress, and overall health (Cristian, 2006; Robinson et al., 1995; Winchell, 1995).

Sports and recreation can add a great deal of pleasure to one’s life. Of course, finding an activity that one enjoys is important. Fortunately, a wide variety of recreational activities and sports are available to people with disabilities. For those who use wheelchairs, options include basketball, tennis, bowling, archery, horseback riding, and track and field. For amputees, or those who are blind or deaf, options include swimming, golf, and skiing. And just about anyone can enjoy fishing (Cruzic, 1982; Winchell, 1995). Suffice it to say that with the proper help and motivation, and perhaps a little ingenuity, nearly any activity can be adapted for someone with a physical disability (see *Disability Sport and Recreation Resources, 3rd Ed*., by Paciorek & Jones, 2001).

For people with disabilities who practice the martial arts, pain, discomfort, and frustration may be inevitable. But the tradition of the Abhidhamma helps us understand that we can still move forward, learn from our experiences, accept them, and try again (Olendzki, 2008). The widely respected author and Professor of Medicine Emeritus Jon Kabat-Zinn, who developed a program based on mindfulness meditation for treating stress, included a very interesting subtitle to one of his books, *Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain, and Illness* (Kabat-Zinn, 1990). There is wisdom within the body, for those who are willing to experience their body, rather than just taking it for granted. As Kabat-Zinn points out, making a personal commitment to working with the very stress and pain that is causing suffering may be even more important for people with chronic illness or disability. It may be one way of regaining some control over the condition of your life.

As he sat there, the housefather Nakulapitar addressed the Exalted One, saying: ‘Master, I am a broken-down old man, aged … I am sick and always ailing …’

‘True it is, true it is, housefather, that your body is weak and cumbered … Where, housefather, thus you should train yourself: “Though my body is sick, my mind shall not be sick.”

(pp. 1-2; *Kindred Sayings*; Woodward, 1975)

### Athletes with Physical Disabilities

Alfred Adler’s studies on inferiority began with physical problems, what he called organ inferiority (Adler, 1917). Most students of Adler look past that medical beginning, and focus instead on the psychological inferiorities that children experience during development. However, there are many people with organ inferiority, or what we more commonly refer to as disabilities, handicaps, or “challenges.” There may be some debate as to which term is preferred, but here I will use the terms disability and handicap as presented in Warren Rule’s book *Lifestyle Counseling for Adjustment to Disability* (Rule, 1984). In his summary of previous research, Rule adopts the definition of a disability as a “relatively severe chronic impairment of function” that occurs as the result of a congenital defect, disease, or an accident. Accordingly, disability refers to actual physical, mental, or emotional impairments that become a handicap *only if* they cause lowered self-assessment, reduced activity, or limited opportunities. When disabilities become a handicap, they can affect the individual’s entire style of life. Thus, Rule brought together a group of therapists trained in Individual Psychology, and published the aforementioned book on using lifestyle counseling for people with disabilities that have led to handicaps.

However, not everyone with a disability develops a handicap. Instead, some individuals become truly inspirational by the way in which they live their lives in spite of their disability, or rather, as if they simply were not disabled. Erik Weihenmayer (2001; see also Stoltz & Weihenmayer, 2006) was born with retinoscheses, a degenerative eye disease, which slowly destroyed his retinas, leaving him blind by the age of 13. In high school, Erik spent a month one summer at the Carroll Center for the Blind in Massachusetts. The summer camp included a weekend of rock climbing in N. Conway, New Hampshire (where the author has done a lot of rock-climbing). Weihenmayer’s rock climbing experience altered his life. He continued climbing rock, and then moved on to ice-climbing and mountaineering. He didn’t just followed more experienced climbers up the cliffs, he also learned to lead-climb: placing one’s own protection along the climb and then clipping in the rope, what climbers call “the sharp end” of the rope. I had the pleasure of climbing with Erik in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula a few years ago, while his seeing-eye dog slept in a sort of ice cave formed by the overhanging ice. It is truly extraordinary to watch him climb. He moves so smoothly, as he feels the ice above with his ice axe, and then sets the ice axe so deliberately when he finds the right spot, that you would not know he was climbing blind if you only watched for a little while. Eventually, Erik decided to pursue the Seven Summits, climbing the highest peak on each continent: Mt. McKinley (N. America), Aconcagua (S. America), Mt. Everest (Asia), Mt. Elbrus (Europe), Vinson Massif (Antarctica), Mt. Kosciusko (Australia), and Kilimanjaro (Africa). He accomplished his goal in 2002.

Erik Weihenmayer is by no means the only well-known, disabled climber. In an amazing video, *Beyond the Barriers* (Perlman & Wellman, 1998), Erik goes climbing with Mark Wellman and Hugh Herr. Wellman was paralyzed from the waist down in a climbing accident (Wellman & Flinn, 1992), and Herr lost both of his lower legs to frostbite after being caught in a vicious winter storm on Mt. Washington, NH (Osius, 1991; Note: The author has suffered a small patch of frostbite during a winter storm on Mt. Washington). In *Beyond the Barriers*, Herr leads the hike toward the climb, while Erik carries Wellman. Once on the climb, Herr leads the climb, Erik follows, and they set ropes for Wellman to do pull-ups up the cliff. It simply has to be seen to be believed. One of the surprising aspects is how they joke with each other about what they are doing. As Erik is carrying Wellman, Wellman says: “I don’t know man. A blind man giving a para a piggyback ride? It’s a pretty scary thing!” When Herr starts climbing on a day when it was snowing, he says his hands are getting numb from the cold. So, Erik asks him how his feet feel! Humor was always an important part of Adlerian psychotherapy (Scott, 1984), so perhaps it should not be surprising that a sense of humor is an aspect of their personalities. One of the funniest stories that Erik tells is about the time he accidentally drank out of his climbing partners piss bottle (a bottle used to urinate inside the tent during storms). Erik became quite upset that the bottle wasn’t marked somehow, but his partner defended himself by saying he had clearly written on the bottle which one it was. It slowly dawned on Erik’s partner that the writing was of no help to Erik. As another example of Erik’s humor, consider the challenge he tried to avoid after having climbed the highest peaks in Africa and North and South America:

Emma Louise Weihenmayer was born on June 21, year 2000, at 3:57 A.M. There is so much to learn about parenthood. Sometimes being a father is about as intense as climbing Denali, Kilimanjaro, and Aconcagua, all in a day. Because I’m blind, I tried to convince Ellie that I couldn’t change diapers, but for some reason, she didn’t buy it. (pg. 303; Weihenmayer, 2001)

In addition to his climbing, Erik Weihenmayer is a college graduate with a teaching certificate, and he spent some time as a middle school teacher. He also tried the sport of wrestling, and was a wrestling coach. Trevon Jenifer was also a wrestler.

Trevon Jenifer was born without legs. Perhaps even more challenging, however, was the fact that he was the fourth child of a poor, single mother living in a ghetto outside of Washington, DC. Obviously, Trey (the name he goes by) began life facing difficult obstacles, but little by little, things got better. His mother, Connie, made a conscious decision to take care of him the best she could. She soon met Eric Brown, who became Trey’s step-father, providing a stable home for their family. He met a wonderful special education teacher named Bob Gray, who got Trey interested in sports, and who helped to make participating in sports a realistic possibility. He eventually joined a wheelchair track and basketball team named Air Capital, and he was very successful on the track, setting national records in the 100-, 200-, and 400-meter races. It was prior to his junior year in high school, however, that his step-father, who had been a wrestler, recommended that Trey try out for the wrestling team, the *regular* wrestling team.

What Trey wanted more than anything was to fit in, to have a normal social life at school. Being in a wheelchair, that was not likely to happen. However, he felt that sports might help him accomplish that goal, so he did try out for the wrestling team. He worked hard, learned as much as he could, and he made the varsity team as the 103-pound competitor (actually, there was no one else that light on the team, but he didn’t know that). His coach, Terry Green, did all he could to help Trey find a wrestling style that would take advantage of his relative arm strength (he made weight without legs, so his upper body was relatively large) while overcoming the disadvantage of not being able to balance or leverage his body weight by spreading out his legs. Now it was up to Trey. He was nervous in his first match, didn’t assert himself, and was easily pinned. In his second match he became the aggressor and earned his first victory. The rest of his junior year continued to be a series of wins and losses, and he ended the season 17-18. Of course, it had only been his first season of wrestling.

In anticipation of his senior year in high school, Trey continued to train hard. Outside of the ring he also received recognition, and became a part of the social network of the school. He received a *Medal of Courage* from the National Wrestling Hall of Fame, he attended his school’s prom, and he was chosen as co-captain of the wrestling team. Once again, humor played a role, as he compared his strength to a teammate from the previous year. Trey had made significant strides in how much he could bench-press, so his former teammate asked him how much he could squat (a lift done entirely with the legs)! Both wrestlers enjoyed a good laugh at that one.

Trey was doing quite well in league wrestling, and he also began to do well in tournaments. Eventually, he won a tournament, ended his season at 26-6, and from there went on the state championship. He won his first match, but then had to face an undefeated wrestler. He lost, but in that loss there was a sense of accomplishment due to how far he had come:

I lost 5-2…I was hurt less by the fact that I lost, and more by the closeness of it. This one hurt even more because of how close I was to beating the best wrestler in the state. Sharbaugh went on to win the state championship. In fact, he won his last two matches very convincingly, 6-0, and, 12-5. He told reporters afterward that my match was his toughest of the tournament. (pp. 171-172; Trevon Jenifer in Jenifer & Goldenbach, 2006).

The next morning he had to return to the championships to wrestle for a chance at third place in the state. He began with a vengeance, scoring victories of 9-1 and 9-2. His next match, and a shot at third place, was not so easy, but he won 3-1, earning his 30th victory of the season. He then won his final match, and earned third place in the state championship. However, an even more important challenge loomed ahead of him: college.

Coming from a poor, Black family, there was no tradition of children going to college. However, a group of concerned philanthropists became interested in supporting his dreams. His old coach at Air Capital had talked to Jim Glatch, who coached wheelchair basketball at Edinboro College in Pennsylvania, a school with a large population (10 percent) of students with disabilities. Trevon Jenifer attended Edinboro College and played on the wheelchair basketball team.

Some years ago, Trey was kind enough to respond to an email I sent him, and he provided me with an update on how things had gone during his first year of college. He missed wrestling very much, but he really enjoyed his return to wheelchair basketball. It probably didn’t hurt that the team was very good, and they came in second-place in the NCAA championship for wheelchair basketball. Trey maintained good grades, his family strongly supported him in pursuing his education, and he had made many new friends. But a few challenges remained. It had been a little difficult for him to get used to the weather in northwestern Pennsylvania, and he had been too busy to attend as many book signings as his publisher would have liked. As for becoming the inspiration his mother thought he was born to be:

I think that I have inspired some people, and I think that is great, but I don’t think that it has reached all the people that I would like it too. My family says that I have done a good job, but I [think that I could do a lot better], and I will try until I feel that I have reached that. (Trevon Jenifer; personal communication, 2007)

The range of sports in which disabled individuals compete is extraordinary today. *Beyond the Barriers* also includes disabled individuals sailing, scuba diving, surfing, and hang gliding. A few years ago, after beginning to practice Tae Kwon Do, I discovered that I had degenerative joint disease in both hips. I considered quitting Tae Kwon Do, but was strongly encouraged to continue by my instructors, as well as by my orthopedic surgeon and physical therapist. I learned that Dirk Robertson, a former social worker turned actor and writer, had worked hard promoting martial arts training for people with disabilities (Robertson, 1991; see also McNab, 2003). Each person simply needs to be encouraged to do their best. Now I train in Brazilian Jiu Jitsu, and it has done wonders for my strength and flexibility with two artificial hips.

Adler suggested that the best way to strive for superiority was through social interest. Whether it’s a climbing partner, a wrestling team, a wheelchair basketball team, a martial arts school, whatever, when people work together to help each individual achieve their potential, it can prove to be a highly rewarding experience.

Whilst it is important to be sensitive to their particular situation, their disability should not be the central focus all the time. Their *ability* to learn, listen and adapt should be built on and encouraged. Do not be over-protective or an instant expert on people with disabilities. The experts are the people themselves, so listen to what they have to say. (pp. 101-102; Robertson, 1991)

### A Buddha with a Physical Disability?

There are some wonderfully strange stories called *Jataka*, which relate experiences from the Buddha’s former lives. A person who is destined to become a Buddha is known as a Bodhisatta, and Gotama Buddha is often referred to as *the* Bodhisatta. In some of these stories the Bodhisatta is an animal, and my children enjoyed hearing these stories when they were young (for some contemporary versions with commentary see Martin, 1999). In other Jataka tales, the future Buddha is a person who acts in wise and compassionate ways, as befitting a person who will someday become the Buddha. In one of these stories, the *Supparaka Jataka*, the Bodhisatta was born into a family of mariners. When his father died and he became head of the mariners, “wise he was, and full of intelligence; with him aboard, no ship came ever to harm.” (pg. 87; Cowell, 1895/1993). After a while, however, his eyes were injured by salt water and he became blind. He resolved to live in the service of the king, who appointed him valuer and assessor. Using his hands to feel items that were brought to the king, including elephants, horses, and chariots, he was able to find the hidden defects that others had overlooked. He then returned home, and was asked to be a ship’s captain again. Though he was blind, the local merchants believed that no harm would come to a ship with him at the helm. Indeed, their faith was rewarded (though not without some drama along the way; Cowell, 1895/1993).

In the *Sivi Jataka* the Bodhisatta is born as a prince, and grows up to become King Sivi. A ruler of great compassion, he vows to give anything asked of him to the poor. When Sakka, the king of the gods, disguises himself as a poor, blind Brahmin and asks King Sivi for an eye, King Sivi gives him both of his eyes. He considers his word to be more important than his sight! Later, Sakka restores King Sivi’s eyesight in recognition of the king’s generosity and commitment to his pledge (Cowell, 1895/1993).

### Current Directions in the Application of Positive Psychology to Disability

In 2013, *The Oxford Handbook of Positive Psychology and Disability* was published (Wehmeyer, 2013). It consists of 31 chapters (over 500 pages) reviewing the application of positive psychological approaches and/or theories to a wide variety of conditions pertaining to those who have disabilities. My point here is that I cannot do justice to this impressive work (though some of it covers issues already discussed). Instead, let us merely take a glance at the wide range of topics presented in this handbook. For those who are interested in pursuing this topic further, you are certainly welcome to do so.

Buntinx (2013) discusses how the field of disability studies has shifted to a focus on strengths, with an emphasis on quality of life. An individual’s quality of life involves the perception of one’s position in life within their culture and value system(s) and how that affects their goals and expectations. Buntinx cites three well-known descriptions of the domains of quality of life: Schalock and colleagues; the World Health Organization; and the Quality of Life Research Unit (Toronto). These lists all contain physical health or well-being as being essential to one’s quality of life.

Shogren (2013) continues this discussion of the value of physical health, and examines how the field of disability studies has paralleled the development of positive psychology in two important ways: first with a shift in the focus from challenges (physical impairments or mental illness) toward the good life (optimal functioning) and second, by recognizing that people with these challenges are part of the overall continuum of human functioning (thus helping the remove the stigma associated with such conditions).

Although the two fields have developed similar conceptual frameworks, only recently have they done so in conjunction with one another. Thus, Shogren (2013) suggests that the suggested pillar of positive psychology referred to as positive institutions (see Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) is an ideal area for an emphasis on helping improve the lives of those with physical impairments (as psychology in general has pursued improving the lives of those with mental illness).

…a vision articulated by positive psychologists is that positive psychology can “unify” psychology…If positive psychologists accept disability as part of the universal human experience, then the impact of positive psychology constructs and processes for all people, including people with disabilities, can become part of this unified mission…A greater infusion of disability within positive psychology also has the potential to bring greater attention to the role of supports in promoting optimal functioning for all individuals…All of us benefit when we have supports available to address mismatches between our capabilities and environmental demands, regardless of whether these mismatches define a “disability.” (pp. 28-29; Shogren, 2013)

Returning to the overall quality of life for individuals with impairments (or anyone, for that matter), Schalock & Alonso (2013; the same Schalock referred to above by Buntinx) review the history of the quality of life approach and ask, quite simply, whether or not it has worked for individuals with intellectual impairments (and other similar developmental disorders). Their approach to quality of life emphasizes three factors and eight domains. Within the factor of independence, we find the domains of personal development and self-determination. Within the factor of social participation, we fine the domains of interpersonal relations, social inclusion, and rights. And within the factor of well-being, we find the domains of emotional well-being, physical well-being, and material well-being.

Schalock & Alonso (2013) suggest that further research is needed to conclude that the quality of life approach has been an unqualified success, but they identify five significant contributions. The quality of life concept has provided: a positively oriented service delivery framework, an outcomes evaluation framework that addresses the eight quality of life domains, short-term gains in most of the quality of life domains, a balanced approach to evaluating outcomes utilizing multiple data sets, and the quality of life concept has become an organizational- and systems-level agent of change.

There are numerous other studies in this handbook addressing topics typically found in positive psychology texts that demonstrate the potential for improving the lives of people who have an impairment. For example, it appears to be helpful when an individual with an impairment is optimistic (Rand & Shea, 2013), hopeful (Buchanan & Lopez, 2013), resilient (Murray & Doren, 2013), forgiving and grateful (Gaventa, 2013), has friends and a supportive family (Blacher et al., 2013; Kersh et al., 2013), is provided with opportunities for exercise and leisure (Rowland, 2013), and is able to contribute to their own self-determination (Mithaug, 2013; Wehmeyer & Little, 2103).

When it comes to identifying systems, or institutions, that can be agents of support for people with disabilities, it should be no surprise that families and schools would make the list (Chiu et al., 2013; Field, 2013). But what about later in life? Wehman and colleagues (2013) discuss the history and importance of supported employment. In the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1986, supported employment was both referenced and funded.

Here in Lansing, MI we have a company that specializes in providing training and opportunities for people with disabilities. It was there at Peckham, Inc. that I met the guy who introduced me to Brazillian Jiu Jitsu. He is an employment specialist, and he loves his job. There is an interesting reason that I am jealous of him: his company is repeatedly recognized as one of the best companies to work for in America! I suppose it makes sense that a company devoted to helping people become employable and improve their lives would be a nice place to work.

As noted above, this handbook finishes with a chapter that questions whether or not the application of any of these positive psychological principles is of any value, due to the genetic set-point of subjective well-being. Keep in mind, however, that Cummins (2013) believed a positive approach may be most helpful for those in homeostatic defeat.

People born with an impairment may be less subject to disability, since they have always had the impairment. In contrast, those who acquire an impairment may be more subject to disability, since they must make difficult adjustments in their life. One of my students once asked what bothered me most about my impairment. Essentially, she was asking me if my impairment was a disability. Keep in mind that I teach psychology, so a question like this was in no way rude or disrespectful, and I didn’t take it that way. We were simply having a frank discussion about life.

At the time, I was still finding it difficult to walk, and could only do so with a cane. I told her that what bothered me most is that I couldn’t simply do whatever I wanted to do with my children. And some things I couldn’t do at all. So yes, my impairment was a disability. Since then, thanks to two major surgeries, extensive physical therapy, and my own continued exercise, there isn’t much that I can’t do anymore (notwithstanding my age!). However, my children have grown up and moved out. Life goes on.

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*Aesop* was crooked, *Socrates* purblind, long-legged, hairy, *Democritus* withered, *Seneca* lean and harsh, ugly to behold; yet shew me so many flourishing wits, such divine spirits! *Horace* a little blear-eyed contemptible fellow, yet who so sententious and wise? *Marcilius Ficinus, Faber Stapulensis*, a couple of dwarfs, *Melancthon* a short hard-favoured man, *parvus erat, sed magnus erat*, etc. yet of incomparable parts all three. *Ignatius Loyola*, the founder of the Jesuits, by reason of an hurt he received in his leg at the siege of *Pampeluna*, the chief town of *Navarre* in Spain, unfit for wars, and less serviceable at court, upon that accident betook himself to his beads, and by those means got more honour than ever he should have done with the use of his limbs, and properness of person, *vulnus non penetrate animus*, a wound hurts not the soul. (pg. 155; Burton, 1621/1927a)

## Positive Psychology and Racism/Tribalism

As I mentioned previously, there have always been psychologists who pursued positive aspects of psychology. Gordon Allport was one of those individuals. Allport was a sincerely religious/spiritual man, with a deep commitment to social justice. These principles came from Allport’s family, and his older brother Floyd is recognized as one of the founders of the field of social psychology. Gordon Allport focused on personality, and is recognized as the founder of trait theory in personality, an endeavor he became interested in after meeting Sigmund Freud and becoming concerned that the psychoanalysts were trying too hard to analyze every little thing a person does. He wrote one of the first two textbooks on personality (Ross Stagner also wrote a personality textbook in 1937; Allport, 1937, Stagner, 1937), and he likely taught the first course on the psychology of personality (in 1924 at Harvard University).

During World War II, Allport began working on problems of morale, which led into the study of rumors. A disturbing aspect of many rumors was that they were designed to enhance prejudice and group antagonism. This led to a series of seminars on race relations for the Boston Police Department, a book entitled *The Psychology of Rumor* (Allport & Postman, 1947), and ultimately to Allport’s classic study *The Nature of Prejudice* (first published in 1954; Allport, 1979).

### The Nature of Prejudice

Since Allport was committed to social ethics throughout his life, his classic study on prejudice did not arise suddenly. During World War II, one of his projects was to study the effects of rumor. A rumor, according to Allport’s definition, is a specific proposition for belief, passed from person to person, without any secure standards of evidence. When a rumor follows some event, the information that people report is based on memory. Important aspects of those memories are often false, and they are false in conjunction with negative stereotypes. Interestingly, this is much less likely to occur with children, who often fail to identify the racial aspects of scenes they have observed (at least in a research setting). Rumors are particularly dangerous when they incite riots, and Allport and Postman wrote that “no riot ever occurs without rumors to incite, accompany, and intensify the violence” (pg. 193; Allport & Postman, 1947). In 1943 there were major riots in Harlem and Detroit, in which negative racial rumors played an important role. In Detroit in particular, according to Allport, if the authorities had listened to the rumors the violence might have been avoided.

The following year, Allport taught a course on minority group problems to the police captains for the city of Boston, Massachusetts. In 1947 he repeated the course for police officers in Cambridge, Massachusetts. One year later, he presented some of his material in a *Freedom Pamphlet* entitled *ABC’s of Scapegoating* (Allport, 1948). This pamphlet later grew (rather dramatically, from 36 pages to 537 pages) into his book *The Nature of Prejudice*, which was published in 1954 (Allport, 1979). Despite his preparation (i.e., the pamphlet), the challenge of a major study on prejudice was still daunting. The problem of the causes of prejudice was so large that it took Allport several years to work out the table of contents, which ended up being eight pages long, including sections on preferential thinking, group differences, perceiving and thinking about group differences, sociocultural factors, acquiring prejudice, the dynamics of prejudice, character structure, and reducing group tensions.

Despite being over 500 pages long, *The Nature of Prejudice* is concise. In part, this indicates the magnitude of the problem of prejudice, and also makes it extremely difficult to summarize the book. Allport begins by asking “What is the problem?” He describes five levels at which people act on prejudice. Most people will only talk about their prejudice with like-minded friends. If the prejudice is strong, they may actively avoid members of another group, and then they may discriminate against them, engaging in detrimental activities toward the disliked group. More extreme prejudice may actually lead to physical attacks, and ultimately, to extermination, such as lynchings or genocide. Is this behavior to be expected? According to Allport, the essential ingredients of prejudice, erroneous generalization and hostility, are natural and common capacities of the human mind. What is necessary, however, is the formation of in-groups, and the rejection of out-groups. We form in-groups naturally as we develop; we learn to like the things we are familiar with. This does not require hostility toward out-groups, but it is an unfortunate reality that many people define their loyalty to the in-group in terms of rejecting the values and customs of the out-group. For those people, rejecting the out-group becomes a powerful need.

Although many differences exist between groups, why has race been emphasized? The answer is, in part, disturbingly simple: we can see race. In addition, most people don’t know the difference between race and ethnic group, or race and social caste. Thus, it is simply easier to identify out-groups on the basis of race. Making matters worse, of course, is the reality that we can’t even define race that well. Allport discusses research that has suggested as many as thirty different human races or types, yet most of us think in terms of three basic races: White, Black, and Asian (more recently the number would be at least four, including Hispanics). Discriminating against one “race,” such as Blacks in America, without even beginning to understand individual character (i.e., personality) or other aspects of culture, such as religion, customs, or national character (which can also be quite complex), is simply an ignorant act. Yet a point that Allport returns to, as an explanation regarding how natural it is to be prejudice, is that people who are different seem strange, and strangeness is something that makes most people uncomfortable, and it may actually be aversive to many people.

Unfortunately, the victimization of minority groups can enhance the differences and discomfort that exist between groups. As Allport noted:

Ask yourself what would happen to your own personality if you heard it said over and over again that you were lazy, a simple child of nature, expected to steal, and had inferior blood. Suppose this opinion were forced on you by the majority of your fellow-citizens. And suppose nothing that you could do would change this opinion - because you happen to have black skin. (pg. 142; Allport, 1979)

Minorities can become obsessively concerned about everything they do and everywhere they go in public. They develop a basic feeling of insecurity. The simplest response to prejudice is to deny one’s membership in the minority group. For example, some very light-skinned Blacks have passed as White people. But this can lead to great personal conflict, and the feeling that one is a traitor. Huey Newton, co-founder of the Black Panthers, had to fight against prejudice within the Black community itself against those Blacks whose skin was viewed as too light (see Kai Erikson, 1973). Oppressed minority group members might also become withdrawn, passive, or they might act like clowns, trying to make fun of their circumstances. Worse, they may identify with the majority group, leading to self-hate and acting out against members of their own group. Of course, there are those who will also fight back aggressively, such as Huey Newton and the members of the Black Panthers (e.g., see Hilliard & Weise, 2002; Newton, 1973).

How might we begin to combat prejudice? Allport discussed an interesting study that addressed the sociological theory of contact between groups. During the Detroit riots of 1943, both Black and White students at Wayne University (which later became Wayne State University) attended class peacefully during what became known as Bloody Monday. It has been suggested that when groups of humans meet they go through a four-stage process: contact itself, followed by competition, then accommodation, and finally assimilation. Thus, the initial contact naturally leads to a peaceful progression of the inter-group relationship. While this is not always the case, there are many examples where it has been. But, it cannot occur without the initial contact. Thus, encouraging contact between groups is an important step in combating prejudice. Allport notes, however, that it is important for the contact to be of equal status and to be in the pursuit of common goals.

Allport also addressed the issue of using legislation to fight prejudice. Unfortunately, as he points out, laws can only have an indirect effect on personal prejudice. They cannot affect one’s thoughts and feelings, they can only influence behavior. However, it is also known that behavior can influence one’s thoughts, opinions, and attitudes (e.g., cognitive dissonance). Thus, Allport encourages the continued use of legislation as a significant method for reducing public discrimination and personal prejudice. More important, however, is the need to take positive action toward reducing prejudice, including the use of intercultural education.

In a fascinating study published one year after *The Nature of Prejudice*, Gillespie & Allport presented the results of a study entitled *Youth’s Outlook on the Future* (Gillespie & Allport, 1955). What made the study remarkable was that it included students from the United States, New Zealand, South Africa (both Black and White students), Egypt, Mexico, France, Italy, Germany, Japan, and Israel. Included among the questions was the issue of racial equality, whether students desired greater racial equality and whether they expected greater racial equality. A large majority of college students reported that they desired greater racial equality, ranging from 83 to 99 percent. The notable exceptions were Germany (65 percent), and English speaking South Africans (75 percent) and Afrikaners in South Africa (14 percent - this was during Apartheid). As for the expectation that there would be greater racial equality in the future, students in most of the countries studied said yes between 67 to 73 percent of the time, with notable exceptions being Black South Africans (57 percent), Japanese (53 percent), and Mexicans (87 percent). Thus, most college students around the world (in 1955) desired racial equality, but a significant portion of them did not expect to see it in the future. Considering the state of the world today, we are far from learning the final outcome of this crucial social issue.

If it were possible to achieve a world in which people were not prejudice, what attitude should replace it? This question was recently addressed by Whitley and Kite (2006), and they identify the two most commonly raised options: color-blindness and multiculturalism. The color-blind perspective suggests that people should ignore race and ethnicity, acting as if they simply don’t exist, whereas the multicultural perspective considers ethnic/racial identity as cognitively inescapable and fundamental to self-concept. Color-blind proponents argue that as long as race is an issue, there will be some forms of discrimination. Multicultural proponents argue in favor of retaining one’s cultural heritage, thus preserving integrity, while also encouraging group interaction and harmonious coexistence. Does one approach appear to be more effective at reducing prejudice? To date, the evidence favors the multicultural approach. Whitley and Kite suggest that reducing prejudice is most likely to occur as a result of individuals both changing their own attitudes and working to help others change their attitudes as well. It is important to reflect on one’s own thoughts and behaviors, and to help others become aware of their attitudes and behaviors. In addition, it is important to learn more about other groups, and to actively participate in inter-group contact (Whitley & Kite, 2006; see also Blais, 2010). In other words, multiculturalism works best when it actually exists; people need to associate with people of other races, religions, and cultures. Only then can ignorance, as in simply not knowing about other people and their cultural differences, be replaced by knowledge and acceptance.

When Allport published his study on prejudice, it was important that the topic was even being addressed. Today, it is more common to examine the nature of cultural differences and to pursue positive aspects of the value of multicultural settings. A number of recent studies have emphasized various aspects of the differences between people from various cultures, the importance of not feeling so different, and how interaction between groups can prove valuable. For example, the Chinese tend to anticipate change more readily than Americans, they predict greater levels of change when it begins, and they consider those who predict change to be wise (Ji, Nisbett, & Su, 2001). Asian Americans, South Koreans, and Russians are more likely than Americans to adopt avoidance goals, but the adoption of those goals is not a negative predictor of subjective well-being in those collectivist cultures, as it is in individualistic cultures (Elliot et al., 2001). The Japanese appear to be subject to cognitive dissonance effects in a “free” choice paradigm, but only in the presence of important others. Americans, in contrast, are less affected by social-cue manipulations in “free” choice situations (Kitayama et al., 2004).

Although social stereotyping typically results in an over-generalized tendency to include people in groups, under certain circumstance it can also lead to excluding certain individuals from their apparent in-group (Biernat, 2003). Particularly for young people, in-group connection is very important. Low-income, high risk African American and Latino teens who do not “look” like other members of their in-group are at a much higher risk for dropping out of school, but the ability to fit in also has a protective effect (Oyserman et al., 2006). Even when significant contact between groups does occur, it may only reduce certain aspects of prejudice, and may do so only for the minority group (as opposed to changes in the majority group; Henry & Hardin, 2006).

So, how can contact between different cultural groups begin to reduce prejudice and discrimination in such a complex issue? It has been shown that when college students are placed in racially diverse groups, they actually engage in more complex thinking, and they credited minority members with adding to the novelty of their discussions (Antonio et al., 2004). Perhaps most importantly, multiculturalism can also foster the development of a character strength described by Fowers and Davidov (2006) as openness to the other.

However, multiculturalism is not without its challenges. Working in diverse teams can lead to social divisions, increasing the likelihood of negative performance teams. Accordingly, it is essential to examine the types of diversity that come into play, since some favor and exploit a wider variety of perspectives and skills, whereas others more readily lead to conflict and division (Kravitz, 2005; Mannix & Neale, 2005). Within the field of psychology, a discipline actively encouraging the growth of minority group membership, there has been a lag in successfully moving students beyond the bachelor’s degree to the doctoral level (Maton et al., 2006). The challenges faced by minority graduate students and faculty are, not surprisingly, as diverse as the individuals themselves (see Vasquez et al., 2006). Thus, we have a long way to go in understanding and overcoming prejudice and discrimination. However, within a framework first established in detail by Allport, our examination and understanding of the major issues is rapidly growing.

When Allport conducted his work on prejudice, the specific field of “positive psychology” was still over half a century away. Indeed, it was not until 2010 that a specific collection of research was pulled together from disparate areas of psychological research in an attempt to address racism within the context of positive psychology *per se*. So let’s now turn our attention to that work.

### Racism Viewed from a Positive Psychological Perspective

Are we born racist? It seems like a simple question, and it’s the title of a collection of essays addressing the issue (Marsh, Mendoza-Denton, & Smith, 2010). The editors of this book begin by emphasizing the key point that we must acknowledge the existence of racism, even in its most subtle forms, if we are to change the behavior of people for the better.

It appears that the human brain is programmed to recognize “us vs. not-us” distinctions very quickly, and sometimes the recognition automatically involves negative evaluations. For example, when white people are shown pictures of other white people, or when black people are shown pictures of other black people, as we might expect the areas of the brain that become active are associated with the recognition of faces. In other words, the subjects were trying to recognize the pictures they had seen. In contrast, when white people view pictures of black people, and vice versa, the brain regions activated immediately are associated with vigilance and fear (see Fiske, 2010). Perhaps the most disturbing suggestion from this research is that whites do not see blacks as people first, and likewise the black subjects saw white people as a threat before seeing them as people.

However, this initial reaction is not necessarily the only reaction. If whites view the image of a black face for a longer period of time (to get past the initial reaction), brain regions associated with self-control and inhibition kick in. Manipulating the social context, and providing non-racial distraction can also ameliorate or even eliminate the racial negativity (see Fiske, 2010). And yet, social interactions reveal more complexity when examined in detail.

Studies of implicit racial bias have shown that body language and facial muscle activity suggest there is much more discomfort when experiencing an interracial encounter. Consequently, our body language conveys that stress to the other person, potentially negatively influencing the encounter. This occurs even in individuals who explicitly deny any negative racial bias or prejudice (Johnson, 2010). However, there is a simply way to counter this effect: have the subject smile. It appears that putting a person in a good mood can significantly weaken implicit bias and lead to more positive racial interactions.

Just how much does all of this really matter, some of you might be asking yourselves? A lot really, since racism can have significant effects on our health. Health psychology was something of a precursor to the field of positive psychology, and encouraging people to make healthy choices so they might live a longer and more productive life is a noble goal. Areas which are the target of significant racial discrimination often have significantly higher levels of disorders ranging from infant mortality to heart disease and cancer. These problems are likely the result of increased and unrelenting stress resulting in chronic feelings of powerlessness and leaving no apparent room for optimism, self-esteem, or any apparent coping mechanisms (Ekman & Smith, 2010).

It’s not only the people subjected to racism who suffer. Racist individuals view interracial encounters not as a challenge, but as a threat! If they live in a community where interracial encounters are common, then they are going to experience chronic stress levels as well, leading to many of the same health consequences as those who are discriminated against. However, once again, these stress levels can be reduced if the racially biased individual participates in a cross-race friendship building program (Page-Gould, 2010).

So it appears that we are biologically programmed to be racist, which has potentially serious, negative health consequences if we cannot avoid the stress of interracial encounters, but when we take the time to process an interracial encounter longer, and if we are either already smiling or otherwise encouraged to be in a good mood (e.g., by experimental manipulation), then these interracial encounters can be significantly more positive. How then, can we do more to encourage positive interracial attitude encounters?

In the second section of their book, Marsh et al. (2010) emphasize the perspective mentioned earlier: that the color-blind perspective is simply not an effective approach.

But what the color blindness camp overlooks – deliberately or not it’s hard to say – is that the roots of racial prejudice lie not in *whether* we perceive race but in *how* we perceive it. There’s a crucial difference between seeing skin color as a marker of inferiority and seeing skin color at all: the latter is cognitively inevitable, the former is socially conditioned. A realistic goal for Americans – for all humanity - is not to train ourselves to be blind to the existence of racial differences. Rather it’s to become more attuned to how our brains and bodies respond to such differences, and why we’ve learned to respond as we do.

(pg. 57; Marsh et al., 2010)

So, how to proceed? Allison Briscoe-Smith (2010) suggests talking to children from an early age about race. Of course, how you talk to children is an important component of these interactions. Naturally, the talk should remain positive, particularly avoiding language that induces fear in children. Should such language become somewhat necessary, such as talking to a child about prejudice and discrimination they may well encounter, it is important to also discuss ways to cope with problems. This can provide the child with the support and coping skills they need to make sense of the world they encounter, hopefully leading to greater understanding and tolerance.

We spend much of our lives either in school or at work. Schools can actively promote tolerance and equality by adopting specific curricula addressing issues such as multiculturalism (teaching students about diverse groups) and antiracist/antibias interventions (teaching students about social problems such as racism and xenophobia). They can also strengthen their character education by teaching positive values and promoting cross-group contact (Holladay, 2010). Cross-group contact is also valuable in the workplace, but it is important that individuals publicize their strengths and that the group strives to recognize its shared fate. Thus, the role of the manager(s) is essential in ensuring that the team is actually functioning as a team (Chatman, 2010).

Unfortunately, when people try to talk to people, especially about a sensitive subject like race, a variety of problems arise. Strangely, research has shown that the *less* biased a white person is in a paired interracial conversation, the *less* their black partners like them! Why? The research suggests that the more the white partner focused on self-monitoring, to appear not racist, the worse they were as a partner in the conversation. In situations like this, white subjects appear to be threatened by the expectation that they will be viewed as prejudiced. Factors such as these stereotype threats lead both blacks and white to assume that the other group is not interested in interracial interactions, even though both groups tend to actually desire such contact (Mendoza-Denton, 2010).

Consequently, Mendoza-Denton (2010) suggests it is important to work on learning the skills of communication, beginning with setting aside the assumption that people are either prejudiced or not. It’s not that simple. He suggests that three factors are critical: contact, time, and patience. Contact, of course, has been recognized since the work of Allport and others (see previous section). However, in conjunction with time, we recognize that brief contact may not be adequate for the positive effects of contact to take hold. This is an age-old problem, and it will not simply go away quickly. Given what has already been said about some of the difficulties inherent in this process, we must be patient.

Happily, over time, the cross-race interaction partners in our study achieved cross-race friendships – and that is precisely the point. Research suggests that frank conversations around race are likely to be saddled with negative expectations, so the beginnings of these conversations are likely to be rocky. We need patience for ourselves and others – not only in how to unlearn our biases and negative expectations, but also in how to learn from each other during our interracial interactions. And we need time – time to allow each other to be understood, time for us to relax, time for us to simply talk and get to know each other as human beings. (pg. 94; Mendoza-Denton, 2010)

### Ubuntu and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission

The traditional African concept of *ubuntu* is one that encompasses the best that the people of Africa have to offer in terms of social harmony. It has come into play several times during difficult periods of nation building as African countries have gained independence and moved toward democracy. Archbishop Desmond Tutu, winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1984, served as Chairman of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission as the nation of South Africa transitioned from apartheid to democracy. Rather than seeking revenge and the punishment of those who had supported apartheid, or attempting to achieve some sort of national amnesia through blanket amnesty, the South Africans chose a third alternative. Amnesty would be granted only to those who admitted what had been done in the past. While some were concerned that such an option would allow crimes to go unpunished, the deep spirit of humanity that is *ubuntu* can lead to being magnanimous and forgiving.

*Ubuntu*…speaks of the very essence of being human. When we want to give high praise to someone we say, “*Yu, u nobuntu*”; “Hey, so-and-so has *ubuntu*.” Then you are generous, you are hospitable, you are friendly and caring and compassionate. You share what you have. It is to say, “My humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in yours.” We belong in a bundle of life. (pg. 31, Tutu, 1999)

Essential to the process of reconciliation is forgiveness. According to Archbishop Tutu (2010), forgiveness is based on true confession. So, as evidenced by its very name, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission only afforded amnesty to those who had committed crimes under apartheid if they fully disclosed all they had done – only if they told the *truth*. Out of more than 7,000 applications, only 849 were granted. Nonetheless, South Africa was able to move forward, since their goal had been restoration rather than retribution, a world that is whole rather than one that is fragmented. As Archbishop Tutu put it, “only forgiveness enables us to restore trust and compassion to our relationships.”

Samkange and Samkange (1980) discuss how extensively *ubuntu* (aka, *hunhu*, depending on the language) is intertwined with life amongst the people of Zimbabwe. It leads to a sense of deep personal relationship with all members of different tribes related by the marriage of two individuals. It has influenced the development of nations as they achieved freedom from colonial governments, and it encourages amicable foreign policies. *Ubuntu* can help to guide judicial proceedings, division of resources, aid to victims of war and disaster, and the need to support free education for all people. The special characteristic that *ubuntu* imparts on African people can also be seen among the African diaspora, those Africans who have been displaced from their homeland. For example, Black Americans typically have something unique that distinguishes them from White Americans, something called “soul.” According to Samkange and Samkange (1980) “soul is long suffering (“Oh Lord, have mercy”); soul is deep emotion (“Help me, Jesus”) and soul is a feeling of oneness with other black people.” As a result of the Black American’s experience with slavery, we now have soul food, soul music, and soul brothers.

Although *ubuntu* is uniquely African, the peace and harmony associated with it can be experienced by all people. According to Archbishop Tutu it is the same spirit that leads to worldwide feelings of compassion and the outpouring of generosity following a terrible natural disaster, or to the founding of an institution like the United Nations, and the signing of international charters on the rights of children and woman, or trying to ban torture, racism, or the use of antipersonnel land mines (Tutu, 1999). Though *ubuntu* itself may belong to Africa, the essence of it is something shared by all dispossessed groups around the world (Mbigi & Maree, 1995). It embodies a group solidarity that is central to the survival of all poor communities, whether they are inner city ghettos in the West, or poor rural communities in developing countries. According to Mbigi and Maree (1995), the key values of *ubuntu* are group solidarity, conformity, compassion, respect, human dignity, and collective unity. They believe that African organizations need to harness these *ubuntu* values as a dynamic transformative force for the development of African nations and the African people. Samkange and Samkange share that view:

…*ubuntuism* permeates and radiates through all facets of our lives, such as religion, politics, economics, etc…Some aspects of *hunhuism* or *ubuntuism* are applicable to the present and future as they were in the past…It is the duty of African scholars to discern and delineate *hunhuism* or *ubuntuism* so that it can, when applied, provide African solutions to African problems. (pg. 103; Samkange & Samkange, 1980)

### Tribalism

As noted above, the concept underlying racism is usually the perceived contrast between “us vs. them.” Tribalism refers to perhaps the major aspect of what defines the in-group, the “us.” Interestingly, however, tribalism can reach across other lines of discrimination, so it can work both ways. Specifically, tribalism is a cultural phenomenon in which individuals exhibit greater loyalty to the tribe than to their friends and/or family.

In his recent book *Tribe*, Sebastian Junger (2016) takes a close and disturbing look at one of the most tribal groups in our society: the military (disclosure: I served 9 years in the U.S. Marine Corps reserve). Most of us are likely aware of stories of the many men and women who have served in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan who now suffer from PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder). This has led, in part, to an apparent epidemic of suicides amongst military personnel and veterans (according to an Army study the suicide rate *doubled* between 2004 and 2009; Kessler et al., 2014; Nock et al., 2014; Schoenbaum et al., 2014).

However, Junger (2016) points out that increases in PTSD and suicide rates do *not* appear to correlate with combat experience. Rather, they correlate with psychological stressors prior to joining the military (i.e., typically during childhood) which then manifest after the veterans return home, sometimes only after a significant period of time. So, what is happening here? According to Junger, and the many professionals he interviewed for his book, the problem appears to be our society.

Let’s back up for a minute, and examine how this process seems to play out. Many of the people joining the military come from poor and often negative environments, perhaps outright abusive. The military provides an escape, and the training they undergo emphasizes something called unit cohesion. Their military unit becomes a family of sorts, aka, a tribe. Even in the midst of something seemingly as traumatic as combat this tribe provides a solid base of support.

But then they come home, to a society that does not understand their experiences and does not support them. Indeed, our society today is terribly divided. Consider this: for everyone serving in the military their commander-in-chief is the U.S. President. When Barack Obama was elected many people hailed it as signaling the end of racism in the U.S.A. However, there were reports that Republican leadership met and vowed to never work with President Obama. The “birthers” claimed he was born in Africa, not in Hawaii, and as I write this the most famous of the birthers is the Republican nominee for president (and as I proofread it he has been elected). Many people also kept accusing the former president (President Obama) of being a secret Muslim, as if that mattered (perhaps they should read the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution).

Imagine what it must be like for people serving in the military, supposedly defending our constitution (including the first amendment!), to come home to such hateful and unpatriotic vitriol in our government. Indeed, we have people who hold government positions, making *much* more money than the military personnel, wanting to shut down a wide range of government services. It must be very psychologically disorienting! Circumstances like this have led many veterans to report that they miss their time in the military, even in combat.

The question then arises, is this something unique to the military experience, or are there other examples of people pulling together in times of particular stress? If there are other examples, it might say something very positive about the nature of people, i.e., that the worst of times have the potential to bring out the best in people. Obviously, if the answer were no I wouldn’t be bringing it up.

As it turns out, groups of people tend to come together in support of one another following disasters. A disaster involves mass destruction of property and the consequent injuries and loss of life that accompany such destruction. Of greater concern, however, is that a disaster occurs when the established social life of a community abruptly comes to an end (at least for a time; Form et al., 1958). It should be noted that more recent studies have taken a broader and more complex view of what defines disasters, but in so doing they have made it all but impossible to define a disaster in any simple terms (see Oliver-Smith & Hoffman, 1999). For our purposes we’ll try to keep things simple.

Although the time immediately following a disaster may seem chaotic, this is typically not actually the case:

To the untrained observer, behavior in the aftermath of a disaster may seem random, disconnected, and perhaps highly inefficient. To those trained to study the organized life of a community, no observation could be further from the truth. Everyday community life is the result of what people believe in, their values, their expectations, and their social loyalties. These beliefs and values are not destroyed by tornadoes or bombs. They survive physical destruction and enable people and their communities to function under the most distressful conditions. (pg. 10; Form et al., 1958)

In their study, Form et al. (1958) emphasized that following a disaster people tend to perform their expected societal roles within the context of certain intervening variables. Generally, these roles are complementary. For example, men will play more of a role in protecting people and aiding in rescue, whereas women will play more of a role in caring for the injured. In addition to gender roles, the age of the individual, their status within a family, their connections with their neighbors, and their occupation are all important factors in determining how they act during the crisis.

Of course, other factors come into play as well. For example, where the individual is when the disaster strikes in relation to their family, and what, if any, knowledge they have regarding the safety of or injuries to their loved ones is important. Likewise, their training and occupation may dictate how they react, and whether they are specifically connected with an organization responsible for reacting to disasters (e.g., fire, police, or medical staff). So, if one knows who a person is and what their personal circumstances are, thus suggesting their expected role following the disaster, we should be able to recognize that their behavior is understandable and predictable. And the predictions typically are that people do what needs to be done in spite of the stressful conditions, at least during the initial aftermath of a disaster (Form et al., 1958; see also Hoffman, 1999a).

Susanna Hoffman is an anthropologist who has studied disasters and recovery with particular interest since her home, *all* her possessions (including 25 years of research and 7 manuscripts), and her pets were destroyed in the firestorm that swept through Oakland and Berkeley, CA on October 20th, 1991 (Hoffman, 1999a,b). Nearly four thousand houses were destroyed, and 25 people died (a surprisingly small number, actually, since the firestorm raged through the neighborhoods at 60 miles/hour). As noted above, following the immediate shock of the disaster itself, people then began to help each other in whatever ways they could: taking people to safety, caring for the injured, sharing food and clothing, searching for the missing in groups so no one was alone. In the days that followed they joined into groups and began working toward the rebuilding of the community (Hoffman, 1999a,b).

There is, however, a dark reality that follows. Let me comment on this before actually going into it. This book is intended for positive psychology, so there is a temptation to keep it positive. However, we also need to focus on reality. Yes, immediately after a disaster we see the best in people as they struggle to both survive *and* help others to survive. The purpose here in taking a look at what happens next is in keeping with the whole point of this last section in my class: that there are those who need positivity in their lives, and life doesn’t always treat people fairly or with compassion. In other words, reality is dispassionate, unless we know that and do something to make things better.

As noted above, immediately following a disaster people fall into their traditional cultural roles and get to work helping one another (Form et al., 1958). Susanna Hoffman (1999b) noticed this most dramatically in a negative way: even though she lived in a largely progressive, academically oriented community, following the firestorm nearly everyone reverted to traditional male/female gender roles. Consequently, women were overburdened with caring for the injured and everyone else, including themselves. Perhaps the most dramatic examples involved work. In the weeks following the firestorm, men would start going back to work each day, leaving the women to deal with the damaged properties and struggling survivors. Some of these women had to quit their jobs to do this, but that was simply expected of them!

After the initial phase of the recovery, which is marked by the people of the community coming together, the community begins to split apart. The survivors become isolated as society at large loses its interest in dealing with the disaster. Divisions occurred along such sad lines as those who lost their entire home vs. those who lost only part of a home. Friends who were not directly involved stopped communicating with survivors. Even families split apart, as those not involved in the disaster thought they had more pressing needs for the insurance settlements than the people who actually suffered the loss of property and possessions. As Hoffman describes it (1999a,b), the phases of recovery from a disaster demonstrate the best in people followed by the worst in people.

The loss of friendships and familial ties following a disaster is particularly difficult when it comes to the recovery of survivors. Indeed, social capital, the networks and resources available to people through their connections to others, may be the most important factor underlying a community’s ability to recover (Aldrich, 2012). When a community maintains the social ties of its members, that community is likely to be resilient, as people will come together and stay together. Consequently, that community is more likely to recover from a disaster. Unfortunately, top-down, government-driven programs tend to ignore or even damage social ties, including the standard reaction of throwing money at the problem (when even that is done).

…high levels of social capital – more than such commonly referenced factors as socioeconomic conditions, population density, amount of damage, or aid – serve as the core engine of recovery. Survivors with strong social networks experience faster recoveries and have access to needed information, tools, and assistance. Communities and neighborhoods with little social capital may find themselves unable to keep up with their counterparts with these deep networks. More pernicious is that for those already on the periphery of society, who lack strong network ties to translocal authorities, other groups with strong social capital can further marginalize them, pushing these less-connected survivors out of the rehabilitation process and slowing down their recovery. (pg. 15; Aldrich, 2012).

The latter point, that more connected groups can crowd out and actually interfere with the recovery of other groups, was the concern expressed by Hoffman (1999b) when she saw post-disaster recovery bring out traditional gender roles in a community that defied them prior to the Oakland firestorm. Being a woman is one of the factors associated with being a marginalized group facing particular difficulties following a disaster.

So, if we recognize that recovery for humans goes beyond infrastructure recovery, how might we go about aiding the re-establishment of the social and daily routines that promote well-being in a community? One possibility is following the example of grass-roots organizing campaigns. By encouraging and supporting local organization of recovery systems, the community begins to rebuild itself – as opposed to relying on something like government programs that bring in people and resources from outside, thus having little investment in the community itself, other than their role as disaster recovery agencies (e.g., FEMA or the Red Cross). Programs in keeping with this principle are new, but some have begun. Only time will tell if this becomes a more routine aspect of aiding in the recovery from a disaster (Aldrich, 2012).

# Section VI: Recommendations for Classroom Assignments

**\*Note:** This section is written for instructors who are or may soon be teaching a positive psychology class (or any other class for that matter, at least in general). For students who read this, it might give you a little insight into some of the things instructors think about when developing or modifying a class (assuming the instructor has some freedom in how to teach – that isn’t always the case).

**\* \* \***

As I think back over the 30+ years I’ve been teaching college, it’s fascinating how things have changed. Not only has the nature of the classroom changed, but how I approach both teaching and assessment have varied greatly. Part of that is the fact that I’ve taught in very different settings, beginning with introductory and then upper level classes at a major university, then moving on to lectures in a graduate course at a medical school, followed by a wide range of classes at a private four-year college, and finally to my current gig at a community college.

Long gone are the days of a midterm, a term paper, and a final exam. I wholly embrace the infamous “edutainment.” Indeed, when teaching positive psychology I start each class with some funny video clip from either a show on Comedy Central (there’s nothing better than the informative satire on The Daily Show or The Nightly Show [\*Note: while working on this book the latter show was canceled – I was very disappointed!]) or YouTube. After all, humor is part of positive psychology.

The point, however, is not simply to have fun with my students, but rather, to get them thinking about the material we are covering and how it might apply to their real lives. I’m not worried about my students learning any particular facts, though I hope they remember a few things down the road. Instead, my goal is their overall education, as expressed over a century ago (and in Section IV) by America’s preeminent psychologist William James:

A professor has two functions: (1) to be learned and distribute bibliographic information; (2) to communicate truth. The 1st function is the essential one, officially considered. The 2nd is the only one I care for. (pg. 298; William James cited in Frager & Fadiman, 1998)

Of course, teaching is, or at least should be, a personal endeavor. Just as our students are individuals, so are we as instructors. I have always believed that students should get some variety in their education by virtue of having different instructors, as opposed to having each instructor try to be everything to every student (which, quite simply, can’t work). So although I will make a few recommendations here, it is my intention to keep this section very brief. What exactly you should do in your own class (once again, assuming you have sufficient freedom) is up to you.

## First Day Activities

Generally speaking, I’m not an ice-breaker kind of guy. I cringe when I’m at a talk and the presenter wants to do anything more than maybe go around the room and have people introduce themselves. That’s OK, but when we have to get up and walk around and introduce ourselves or sort ourselves into different areas according to some silly criterion or whatever, I get really annoyed. And if you plan to start a talk with some form of exercise, no matter how simple, odds are I’ll be angry for the rest of the time. First, I am disabled, and second, I sweat a lot (and very easily). So not only am I angry, but I’m sore, sweaty, and angry!

Suffice it to say I’m careful about first day activities other than going over the syllabus and talking with the students about the class and my expectations for them. Still, I was recently introduced to a first-day activity by Dr. Richard Light of Harvard University which fit very nicely with the positive psychology course. Simply hand the students a sheet of paper with a list of potential core values, and have them circle 3-5 of them. Here’s the list:

Peace, Wealth, Happiness, Success, Friendship, Fame, Authenticity, Power, Influence, Justice, Compassion, Respect, Diligence, Courage, Integrity, Joy, Love, Recognition, Family, Truth, Wisdom, Status, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (you can have a couple of blank lines for the students to add their own values if necessary – I added one for myself, that being Knowledge).

At the bottom of the page there are two reflection questions:

* What core values will guide the big decisions you will make in your life?
* What do you believe are life’s essential conversations?

Since these potential core values are positive in nature, their discussion makes for a wonderful first day activity in the positive psychology class.

## Academic/Personal Journals

Try as I might, I cannot remember when the idea of having students in my classes keep journals came to fruition as an actual assignment. Since then, however, they seem quite indispensable. End-of-semesters evaluations are largely useless to anyone with significant experience. They are highly standardized, and also highly correlated with a student’s expected grade. Good grade = good evaluation! Semester-long journals, however, can provide all sorts of information.

For example, I used to teach a technology in education class. The class typically went well, and I received good evaluations. However, in their journals, a fair number of students reported that they really struggled with the Excel project we were doing to record/calculate grades. So, I started doing that assignment much more slowly, and did it hand-in-hand with the students. They found it much easier, and learned the material better as well.

In my personality classes, I used to use a book that had a chapter on the psychology of women. I thought I was being quite progressive at the time. However, as I read the students’ journals, the young women in class were offended by the chapter. Basically, the textbook pandered to radical sixties feminism, and it seems that young women today don’t identify all that well with radical sixties feminism. So when I wrote my own personality textbook (Kelland, 2014), I took an historical approach to those theorists who addressed the psychology of women, and I’ve never had a complaint about the various chapters in which it is covered (though students don’t care much for Freud’s perspective on the psychology of women!).

There are different perspectives on how to use student journals as a teaching tool, some of which are discussed in one of the books I published on student journals. Actually, I’ve published two such books, and they both contain student journals in them. Each book provides nice examples of student journals, and one focuses on positive psychology. In each case, the goal is to determine how journaling can (and does) help my students to learn and appreciate the material in the course(s) they are taking (see Kelland et al., 2013, 2014).

## Targeted Journal Discussions

The most recent assignment I’ve added to my class, specifically in the positive psychology class, is a combined journal entry/group discussion. I have the students do five of them, and I require three for their grade (so they can miss a couple, or not do well on a couple, and still get full credit). The first three require them to take one of the tests on the Authentic Happiness website maintained by Martin Seligman at Penn.

For the first assignment, the students take the Approaches to Happiness test and write a journal entry on their impressions regarding their results. They bring that journal entry to class (so they can hand it in for their grade), and discuss it with classmates in small groups. Since they all have their results from the test (even if their journal entry is inadequately short and lacking in any detail), the discussions go well. My students really seemed to enjoy this assignment, especially when it came to seeing the results of the other students in their group.

For the second one, I have them take the VIA Strengths test, and for the third one they take the Positive Affect Negative Affect Scale (PANAS). During regular classes I have already shared my personal results as a point of discussion while covering these topics, so I’ve set the example for being willing to share personal information (most students really appreciate that).

They have a little more freedom with the fourth and fifth assignments. Number four covers leisure and recreation – the things they do for fun. Number five covers the need for positivity with stigmatized groups. That last one can get pretty interesting, and it can lead to some deep, soul-searching contemplation. But that’s what education should be all about.

## Presentations

I am a firm believer in the need for people to learn and practice public speaking skills! However, I recognize that some students really don’t like to do it (I was once one of them). So, although I have my students do an oral presentation in class, I keep it as simple as possible (which includes grading really easy). In the positive psychology class, they have the added requirement that their presentation should be about something positive.

In my other classes in psychology, the presentations often take a rather negative turn: e.g., mental illness, suicide, family problems (including physical and sexual abuse), money problems, roommate problems, work problems, etc. But in positive psychology I tell them to keep it positive.

One thing I encourage them to do is use pictures. If they have kids, pets, hobbies, whatever, if they can use visual aids to help them present it usually goes quite well. We end up with some pretty cute pictures!

Nonetheless, as an instructor you must be prepared for the unexpected. I once had a student with some serious psychological issues. She did her presentation on kittens, including the kitten she had. It was a very disturbing and depressing presentation. Never would I have thought that a presentation on kittens could be depressing, but this one was. It was a bit tricky handling that one with the rest of the class looking on.

Interestingly, that student was well aware of her issues, and the basis for her issues (serious abuse during her childhood, that continued to the present day [and had something to do with her kitten]). She took another class with me after positive psychology, and when I last saw her she was finishing up at LCC and doing OK. So it seems there was a positive outcome. I hope things have continued well for her.

One more thing, I urge the students who are really afraid to speak in public to go the first day. Not only will it then be over, and they won’t have to dwell on it all semester, but I guarantee that if they go the first day (and do indeed present, rather than freeze up and chicken out altogether) they are guaranteed full credit. Each semester a few students take me up on that offer, and nearly all of them agree it was a good idea. But once in a while there is a student who tells me they still just can’t stand public speaking!

## Videos in the Positive Psychology Classroom

There are plenty of fun videos on YouTube and websites like Comedy Central, some of which are actually meaningful. If you want to be a little more serious, go to the Positive Psychology Center website maintained by Martin Seligman at the University of Pennsylvania. There you can find video lectures and talks (such as TED talks) by a veritable who’s who list of well-known researchers in the field of positive psychology.

# Conclusion

So, what does it mean to live a good life, and how do we go about doing so? Approximately 2,500 years ago the Greek philosophers began asking those questions, and we’re still trying to make that determination today. Obviously, the answer isn’t easy to find. On the other hand, maybe the problem has been the questions themselves.

About the same time in antiquity, thousands of miles away in northwestern India, a man named Siddhattha Gotama came to the realization that the source of human suffering was desire (or, as it is most often referred to, craving). Thus, pursuing a good life, in any fashion, was in and of itself antithetical to being happy. True and lasting happiness could only be present when one let go of all attachments.

I would like to leave you with an interesting list of guidelines for living one’s life that comes from a surprising source (which I’ll mention below). As you read the list, think about what life would be like if we all aspired to live in accordance with these tenets, as well as where you think this list might have come from.

* One should strive to act with compassion and empathy towards all creatures in accordance with reason.
* The struggle for justice is an ongoing and necessary pursuit that should prevail over laws and institutions.
* One’s body is inviolable, subject to one’s own will alone.
* The freedoms of others should be respected, including the freedom to offend. To willfully and unjustly encroach upon the freedoms of another is to forgo your own.
* Beliefs should conform to our best scientific understanding of the world. We should take care never to distort scientific facts to fit our beliefs.
* People are fallible. If we make a mistake, we should do our best to rectify it and resolve any harm that may have been caused.
* Every tenet is a guiding principle designed to inspire nobility in action and thought. The spirit of compassion, wisdom, and justice should always prevail over the written or spoken word.

No doubt most of you will be surprised to learn that these are the seven basic tenets espoused by the The Satanic Temple, and can be found on their website (thesatanictemple.com). Although some people will be immediately offended by Satanism, since I’m an atheist it doesn’t mean anything to me (good or bad). So, when judging their view of how to live a good life, I like the emphasis on science (my initial career training), compassion (very Buddhist), wisdom (my top strength), and justice.

I am by no means advocating this particular list, nor any other, but rather I’m reiterating that we still don’t know what makes life good for any particular person. We may know a lot about ways in which some people are happy, and those principles may be true for most people most of the time, and yet people are complex. Personal differences, cultural differences, situational differences, and more, all make it quite difficult to simply say, “This will make you happy, and that will make you unhappy!”

What then, are people to do? If the situation is so complex, and if biological set points predetermine our happiness and there’s little we can do about that, we might ask a quite different question: Is life worth living? In 1897, America’s preeminent psychologist William James published an essay by that very title (James, 1897/1992). James began by describing how some people see the value in life, indeed they fully enjoy life, no matter what happens to them or around them. Regarding people who have lost their way in life (indeed, he included those who are suicidal), and relying heavily on religious faith (though not any particular religion), James wrote these words:

…Suppose, however thickly evils crowd upon you, that your unconquerable subjectivity proves to be their match, and that you find a more wonderful joy than any passive pleasure can bring in trusting ever in the larger whole. Have you not now made life worth living on these terms?…This life *is* worth living, we can say, *since it is what we make it, from the moral point of view*, and we are determined to make it from that point of view, so far as we have anything to do with it, a success…These, then, are my last words to you: Be not afraid of life. Believe that life *is* worth living, and your belief will help create the fact. (pp. 501-503; James, 1897/1992)

Before closing, I would like to share a story that was published in my book *Purple Vision* (Kelland, 2013). It’s a chapter entitled *The Horror of Life*, and since the book is my own there is no special need for permission to republish it (or rather, I whole heartedly give myself permission). The story addresses what I consider to be the true issues regarding positive psychology: are you trying to live a better life; are you trying to make life better? As noted above, my life is not one of happiness, but it is one of meaning. In my own way, I try to make the world a better place. My inadequacies are many, but there are times when I’m willing to do something. Just that – *do something*.

**\* \* \***

**The Horror of Life**

"Again, bhikkhus, as though he were to see a corpse thrown aside in a charnel ground, one, two, or three days dead, bloated, livid, and oozing matter, a bhikkhu compares this same body with it thus: 'This body too is of the same nature, it will be like that, it is not exempt from that fate.' As he abides thus diligent ... That too is how a bhikkhu develops mindfulness of the body."

from the *Kayagatasati Sutta* by Gotama Buddha; pg. 952

in Bhikkhu Nanamoli & Bhikku Bodhi, 1995

So, why the sudden switch to something so unpleasant? I had an astonishing experience while flying home, one of those experiences that puts so much of life in perspective. It occurred on the first of my flights, from Los Angeles to Houston.

These days, airlines allow people with disabilities to board first. My left hip has been really hurting me lately, so I had my good cane with me, and I took advantage of the early boarding. However, getting on first, was a very old and very frail woman. Her daughter was taking her home, probably for good. I would guess the daughter was 65-70 years old, and the mother at least 90 years old! I later learned that the mother was also suffering from Alzheimer's disease.

It was very difficult for the crew to get the woman boarded, but they finally succeeded, and then I took my seat, which happened to be nearby.

In the midst of the flight, I heard the daughter and her mother fussing a bit. Apparently the mother needed to go to the bathroom, but she couldn't get up to walk. The daughter said that if her mother didn't get up she would have to go to the bathroom in her pants. No one else seemed to even notice what was going on, and I debated whether I really wanted to help. Interestingly, I happened to be reading a book on Buddhism by Stephen Batchelor. I had just read a paragraph which began with the sentence:

"Compassion is the very heart and soul of awakening."

(pg. 90; Batchelor, 1997)

I decided the right thing to do was to help the two women. So, I got up and went over to offer my assistance.

The first thing we needed to do was raise the arm of the seat, but I couldn't find the secret little switch that made that possible. I went and asked the steward who had first done it, and he came to help. He showed me how to get to the switch, and we helped the woman get up. Together, we helped her get to the bathroom.

As the steward went back to serve passengers on the flight, I waited outside the bathroom while the daughter helped her mother. I let her know that I was right outside in case of an emergency.

Primarily, I wanted the daughter to know that she wasn't alone. I can hardly imagine how difficult it is to help someone so old, so frail, and suffering from Alzheimer's as well. I'm sure I couldn't do it. The steward told me several times how wonderful he thought it was that I was helping. But all I could think about was that helping for a few minutes was a whole lot easier than actually being a caregiver for someone whose life has become such a challenge. And that's all I was doing, just helping for a few minutes.

Nonetheless, the steward knew that my assistance left him free to continue serving the other passengers on the flight. So he offered me a free cocktail. I ended up choosing a can of Heineken. It was good!

After quite a while, the mother was done with the task at hand. The daughter still needed to clean up the bathroom, so I then helped the mother back to her seat. Basically I just supported her, but she needed so much support that I was pretty much carrying her. As I sat her into her seat she begged me not to give her back to her daughter, who she said was beating her. Wow! I saw no evidence that this woman was being abused, but who knows. I attributed her statement to her Alzheimer's disease, and I'll pray that's the case. Still, it's sad that she lives in such fear due to her illness.

I then went back to the daughter, who was just finishing up in the bathroom. I put my hand on her shoulder and told her that I recognized she was doing what so many people dread having to do someday, and that I just wanted to help so that she knew she wasn't alone. She was crying as she thanked me for helping.

A minute later I settled back into my seat. Still, there was nothing to indicate that anyone else on the flight even noticed what had happened. Everyone just wanted to keep to themselves, either not wanting to get involved or at least not wanting to admit that they'd done nothing to help when they might have had the chance.

I picked up my book and read the following:

The way of the Buddha is to know yourself;

To know yourself is to forget yourself;

To forget yourself is to be awakened by all things.

Dogen, the *Genjo Koan*, pg. 91, cited in Batchelor, 1997

The significance of this passage was astonishing, to such an extent that it has to be my latest example of synchronicity (as defined by Carl Jung). Allow me to break it down.

"The way of the Buddha is to know yourself;"

I am disabled. My compassion for the elderly woman was likely stirred by my identification with her. She needed help to accomplish simple physical tasks. After my hip surgeries I needed assistance as well. And, it's a fact that we will all grow old and feeble if we happen to live long enough.

"To know yourself is to forget yourself;"

Many of us do not want to get involved in difficult situations. It's also true that people tend to rely on others to help, thus resulting in the so-called bystander effect. In other words, the more people there are to help, the lower the chances that any one person will step up. So, I had to set aside any personal hesitation and decide to step up and help. And that's exactly what I did.

"To forget yourself is to be awakened by all things."

By helping the two women I had done something good - my good deed for the day, so to speak. Afterward, I felt good about having done it. They needed help, and I set aside the common inclinations either to not get involved or to leave it to someone else. I had put into action what I believe, and what I teach to others. Those others include both my students at the college and my own two sons.

There is an old saying: practice what you preach. I did. Perhaps the world would be a better place if more people did the same.

For some strange reason, this chance encounter inspired me to write a haiku. I thought of it in my mind, and told myself to remember it. But I forgot. While I was hiking a couple days after getting home I remembered the basic elements of the haiku. I reworked it a little while continuing my hike, and here is the result:

An old woman cries

Her mother needs so much help

I offered two hands

It's hard for me to describe how much this encounter between myself and these two women has moved me. Combined with the extraordinary book I was reading by Stephen Batchelor, one of the best I have ever read on any aspect of Buddhism or other eastern philosophies, I have found my resolve to BE enlightened most extraordinarily renewed and enhanced.

I expect I am going to grow much older than I am now, and I know that if I do I will likely end up like the frail, old mother I met on the flight. There is simply no avoiding it if one lives long enough to die of old age. As Gotama Buddha taught us some 2,500 years ago we are "not exempt from that fate."

How much of myself, as someone who is disabled, did I see in that frail old woman? Did I see my loneliness in relation to her Alzheimer's-induced isolation? When she expressed her fear of being beaten, did I feel something of my own fears in life?

Something struck a chord deep within me. Perhaps I will never know what it was. Perhaps I don't want to know what it is. All I know is that as I held that old woman in my hands it felt like her entire skeleton would just crumble into dust right there in my hands.

There was death in her eyes, and I met her gaze deeply. I sensed a peace that she was fighting to avoid. I wanted to tell her to let go, but she isn't ready to do so. Not yet anyway.

**\* \* \***

In closing, I would like to return to the ancient Greek philosophers. Xenophon was a student of Socrates, a well-known historian (see, e.g., Xenophon, 1887), and like Plato (also a student of Socrates) wrote in defense of their teacher following Socrates’ execution. His glowing description of what a great man he believed Socrates to have been is full of positive psychology and self-actualization:

Of those who knew what Socrates was like, all whose hearts are set upon goodness continue still to miss him more than anything, because they feel that he was their greatest help in the cultivation of goodness.

Socrates was, as I have described him, so deout that he never did anything without the sanction of the gods; so upright that he never did the smallest harm to anybody, but conferred the greatest benefits upon those who associated with him; so self-disciplined that he never chose the more pleasant course instead of the better; so judicious that he never made a mistake in deciding between better and worse, and needed no advice, but was sulf-sufficient for such decisions, capable of stating and distinguishing such alternatives, and capable both of otherwise appraising and of exposing errors and encouraging towards goodness and excellence of body and mind. In view of these qualities he seemed to me to be the perfect example of goodness and happiness.

If anyone disapproves of this assessment, let him compare other people’s characters with these qualities, and then make his own decision.

(pp. 227-228; Xenophon, 1970)

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# About the Author

Mark Kelland has a PhD. in physiological psychology from Wayne State University (MI) and teaches full-time at Lansing Community College (MI). After graduate school, he conducted biomedical research at the Sinai Research Institute in Detroit, the National Institutes of Health, and Wayne St.’s medical school. He then spent several years in the psychology department at St. Anselm College (NH), before returning to Michigan and spending a year as a stay-at-home dad. Finally, he accepted his current position at LCC, where he has now taught for some twenty years.

After moving to a community college, Prof. Kelland turned his scholarly ambitions toward the study of personality, spirituality, and Eastern philosophy. He eventually wrote a personality textbook, which is now freely available as an open educational resource. In his textbook he presented Eastern and other spiritual approaches as guiding paths for making positive, intentional changes in one’s personality as an adult.

Prof. Kelland is also active in martial arts, despite the fact that both of his hips had to be replaced due to having been crushed by a horse when he was in high school. He brought his interests in personality, Eastern philosophy, and martial arts together in his first sabbatical leave, publishing both an article and a book on the psychology of disability and the application of Buddhist mindfulness in martial arts programs for people working to cope with physical disabilities.

In addition to his 2nd degree black belt in Taekwondo, he earned black belts in the American Cane System and Defense-Ability (Hapkido for people who use a wheelchair). He also earned certification in the C.R.I.T.I.C.A.L Approach™, and he has taught classes for students with disabilities (often for free, as community service).

Prof. Kelland currently trains and competes in Brazilian Jiu Jitsu. In 2015 he became the IBJJF Master 5 Purple Belt Super-Heavyweight World Champion, and he earned the silver medal in the open division. He has since been promoted to the rank of brown belt in BJJ (with one stripe).

As the end of this project was drawing near, Prof. Kelland was elected president of the academic senate at Lansing Community College.