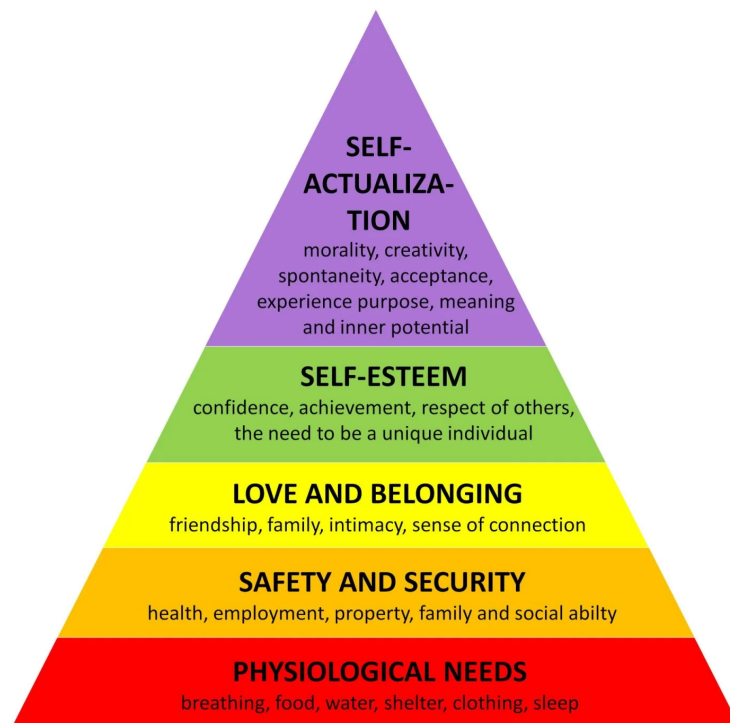


Transcend: The New Science of Self-Actualization

Scott Barry Kaufman, 2020

Review and Summation
Ken Hughes, July 2023

“One can choose to go back toward safety or forward toward growth. Growth must be chosen again and again; fear must be overcome again and again.” **Abraham Maslow**



Preface

Most people are familiar with Abraham Maslow's "hierarchy of needs" (above) with self-actualization depicted at the top of the pyramid. Typically it is presented that humans are motivated by increasingly "higher" levels of needs. The basic needs - physical, health, safety, belonging, and esteem - must be satisfied to a certain degree before we can fully self-actualize, becoming all that we are uniquely capable of becoming.

However, Maslow became increasingly convinced that health self-realization is actually a **bridge** to **transcendence**. Many of the people he selected as self-actualizing people experienced frequent moments of transcendence in which awareness was expanded beyond the self, and many of them were motivated by higher values. At the same time, Maslow observed these

individuals had a deep sense of **who they were** and what they **wanted to contribute to the world**.

This created a deep paradox for Maslow. How could many of these individuals simultaneously have a strong identity and actualization of their potential, yet also be so *selfless*? In a 1961 paper, Maslow observed that self-actualization seems to be a “transitional goal, a rite of passage, a step along the path to the transcendence of identity. This is like saying its function is **to erase itself**.”

In his 1962 book *Toward a Psychology of Being*: “Self-actualization ... paradoxically makes more possible the transcendence of self, and of self-consciousness and of selfishness.” He observed that self-actualization makes it **easier to merge as part of a larger whole**. He became preoccupied with this paradox of transcendence in the last few years of his life.

On September 14, 1967, Maslow delivered a riveting lecture, referring to the “Humanistic Revolution”, and that “every field of science and human endeavor is being affected”. He explained that humanistic psychology is beginning to unearth the mysteries of “real human experiences, needs, goals, and values.” This includes our “**higher needs**,” which are also part of the human essence, and include the need for love, for friendship, for dignity, for self-respect, for individuality, and for self-fulfillment

Just a few months after delivering the speech he suffered a heart attack. Instead of falling all the way down to the bottom of his hierarchy, the awareness of mortality actually heightened his own personal experience of transcendence, noting a significant shift in values.

Just before his death on June 8, 1970, at the age of sixty-two, Maslow elaborated in a seminar: “It’s quite clear that we are always suffering from this cloud that hangs over us, the fear of death. If you could transcend the fear of death, which is possible,...your life today, at this moment, would change. And the rest of your life would change. Every moment would change. I think we can **teach** this transcending of the ego.”

The author’s (Scott Barry Kaufman) career as a psychologist, and his personal approach to life, has been profoundly shaped by Maslow’s thinking and by the thinking of an entire generation of humanistic thinkers from the 1930s to the late 1960s, including [Alfred Adler](#), [Charlotte Buhler](#), [Viktor Frankl](#), [Erich Fromm](#), [Karen Horney](#), [Rollo May](#), and [Carl Rogers](#). Their combined wisdom about essential human concerns - security, commitment, love, growth, meaning, authenticity, freedom, responsibility, justice, courage, creativity, and spirituality - is just as relevant today, if not more so. We live in times of **increasing polarization**, selfish concerns, and individualistic pursuits of power.

In his career it has become clear that the more we have limiting notions of potential that are dictated by others (teachers, parents, managers, etc.), the more blind we become to the full potential of each and every **unique individual** and their own **unique path** to self-actualization and transcendence. We spend so much time looking **outward** for validation that we don’t develop the incredible strengths that are already **within**, and we rarely take the time to fulfill our deepest needs in the most growth-oriented and integrated fashion.

This book is written to reinvigorate the wise, profound, and essential human insights of humanistic psychology with the **latest scientific findings from a wide range of fields**. The integration of a wide variety of perspectives is necessary for a more complete understanding of the full depths of human potential, as too much focus on a single perspective runs the risk of giving a distorted view of human nature. As Maslow said, **“I suppose it is tempting, if the only tool you have is a hammer, to treat everything as if it were a nail.”**

While this book is about our higher possibilities, it is wholeheartedly believed that the best way to move toward greater growth and transcendence is not by ignoring the inevitability of human suffering but by **integrating everything that is within you**. This requires penetrating the depths of your being **with piercing awareness** with the intent of experiencing the full richness of human existence. This is very much in line with Maslow’s call for a **“Being-Psychology,”** which incorporates a full understanding of human needs that transcends the “psychopathology of the average”, but also “incorporates all its findings in a more inclusive and comprehensive structure that includes both the sick and the healthy, both deficiency, Becoming and Being.”

Too many people today are **feeling deeply unfulfilled** in our chaotic and divided world, which encourages the pursuit of money, power, greatness, even happiness, as the pinnacles of humanity. Yet despite climbing the status hierarchy and achieving momentary feelings of success, or even experiencing momentary feelings of happiness, we are still left feeling deeply unsatisfied, yearning for deeper connections with others and with **our own fragmented selves**. The social psychologist and humanistic philosopher Erich Fromm was quite right that there is an **art of being**. But now there is also a *science* of being.

Introduction: A New Hierarchy of Needs

“There is now emerging over the horizon a new conception of human sickness and of human health, a psychology that I find so thrilling and so full of wonderful possibilities.”

Abraham Maslow, *Toward a Psychology of Being* (1962)

Through his research on self-actualizing people, Maslow discovered that those who are reaching full heights of their humanity tend to possess the characteristics most of us seek in life; they tend to be altruistic, creative, open, authentic, accepting, independent, and brave. His belief was that if society could create the conditions to satisfy one’s basic needs, what naturally and organically emerges tends to be the characteristics that resemble the best in humanity. He viewed the role of the parent, teacher, and therapist as horticulturists, whose task is to “enable people to become more healthy and effective **in their own style**.” This meant that “we try to make a rose a good rose, rather than seek to change roses into lilies...It necessitates a pleasure in the self-actualization of a person who **may be quite different from yourself**. It even implies an ultimate respect and acknowledgement of the sacredness and **uniqueness** of each kind of person.”

Maslow was passionate about the need for a “**Being-Psychology**” - a field that involves the systematic investigation of **ends** rather than means -

- End-experiences, such as wonder, laughter, connection
- End-values, such as beauty, truth, justice
- End-cognitions, such as efficient perception of reality and newness of appreciation
- End-goals, such as having an ultimate concern or purpose, and with treating people as ends unto themselves, not a means to an end (what Maslow referred to as “Being-Love,” or “**B-Love**” for short).

His call for a **Being-Psychology**, which is also sometimes referred to as Positive Psychology, was in response to the mainstream psychologies that focused more on:

- Not-having rather than having
- Striving rather than fulfillment
- Frustration rather than gratification
- Seeking joy rather than having attained joy, and
- Trying to get there...rather than being there.

> *Deficiency mentality vs a Growth mentality*

The Third Force

Maslow was not alone. Between 1930 and 1970, a group of like-minded thinkers arose who all saw the limitations of the experimental psychology, behaviorism, and Freudian psychoanalysis of the day. These principles, they felt, did not do justice to the individual as a whole; they left behind humanity’s **immense potential** for creativity, spirituality and humanitarianism. They regarded themselves as the Third Force, and they attempted to integrate the insight of the more traditional perspectives while exploring “what it means to be **fully experientially human** and how that understanding illuminates the fulfilled or vital life.”

Eventually these psychologists became known as the “humanistic psychologists”, and the field was officially created in 1961 by Maslow and Anthony Sutich with the launching of *The Journal of Humanistic Psychology*. Within this psychological framework, the healthy personality is considered one that constantly moves towards freedom, responsibility, self-awareness, meaning, commitment, personal growth, maturity, integration, and change...rather than one that predominantly strives for status, achievement, **or even happiness**.

In the late nineties, psychologist [Martin Seligman](#) galvanized the field in order to generate more rigorous scientific research on well-being and “what makes life worth living.” The following thirteen sources of well-being have been rigorously studied over the past forty years, and each one can be reached in your own style:

Sources of Well-Being

1. More positive emotions - higher intensity and frequency of contentment, laughter, joy, in one’s **daily life**.
2. Fewer negative emotions - such as sadness, anxiety, fear, and anger, in one’s **daily life**.

3. Life satisfaction - having a positive, **subjective** evaluation of one's life overall.
4. Vitality - having a positive, subjective sense of physical **health and energy**.
5. Environmental mastery - having the ability to **shape your environments** to suit one's needs and desires; to feel in control of one's life; to not feel overwhelmed by the demands and responsibilities of everyday life.
6. Positive Relationships - feeling loved, supported and valued by others; having warm and trusting interpersonal relationships; **being** loving and generous to others.
7. Self-acceptance - positive attitudes toward the self; a sense of self-worth; like and respecting yourself for who you are and **who you can become**.
8. Mastery - feelings of competence in accomplishing **challenging tasks**; a sense of effectiveness in moving towards and accomplishing important goals one has set for oneself.
9. Autonomy - feeling **independent**; free to make one's own choices in life, and able to resist social pressures that do not align with your goals and/or values.
10. Personal Growth - continually seeking development and improvement rather than seeking achievement of a fixed state - **Growth Mindset**.
11. Engagement in life - being **absorbed**, interested, and involved in one's daily activities and life.
12. Purpose and meaning in life - a sense that one's life matters, is valuable, and is worth living; a clear sense of **direction and meaning** in one's efforts; a connection to something **greater than oneself**.
13. Transcendent experiences - experiences of awe, flow, inspiration, and gratitude in **daily life**.

Becoming fully human is about living a full existence, **not one that is continually happy**. Being well is not always about feeling good; it also involves continually incorporating new meaning, engagement, and growth in one's life - key themes in humanistic psychology.

Life is Not a Video Game

Maslow's theory of needs is often presented as a lockstep progression, as if once one area of needs is satisfied, we never have to concern ourselves with it again. This is a gross misrepresentation of his work. Maslow emphasized that we are **always in a state of becoming** and that one's "inner core" consists of "potentialities, not final actualizations", and which can all too easily become forgotten, neglected, unused, overlooked, unverballed, or suppressed by fear, disapproval and cultural expectations. He made it clear that growth is "not a sudden, saltatory phenomenon."

His theory of hierarchy of needs also, importantly, serves as an **organizing framework for different states of mind** - ways of looking at the world and at others. He argued that when deprived, each need is associated with its own distinctive world outlook, philosophy, and outlook on the future. Also, he was insistent that any one of us at any moment in time can return to a particular state of mind depending on the deprivation of the need.

A common misconception is that the needs are isolated from one another and don't depend on one another in any meaningful way. He stated, "The human needs are arranged in an **integrated** hierarchy rather than dichotomously, that is, they rest upon each other, and **regression** is not a sign of pathology, but rather as a prerequisite process (as needed), in the existence of the 'higher needs.'"

Maslow never actually created a pyramid to represent his hierarchy of needs - it was created by a management consultant in the sixties and became popular in the emerging field of organizational behavior - **and thus leaves out his critical notion of an integrated hierarchy.**

Maslow viewed development as often involving a **two-steps-forward, one-step-back dynamic**, in which we are continuously returning to our basic needs to draw strength, learn from our hardships, and work toward greater integration of our whole being.

When the whole person is well-integrated, all of their basic needs are not merely met but work together to facilitate growth towards realizing their highest goals and values

Maslow acknowledges that not only can our basic needs ebb and flow in salience (importance) across a person's lifetime, but there can be significant cultural and individual differences in the order in which people satisfy their basic needs, and that we can work on multiple needs simultaneously. Also, even within individuals, our needs are likely to change in importance as we mature and develop. Again, the key here is **change and growth.**

Deficiency and Growth

Rather than focusing on the triangular arrangement of the needs, Maslow actually emphasized and argued that all the needs can be grouped into two main classes, which must be integrated for wholeness: deficiency and growth.

He referred to deficiency needs as "D-needs", which are motivated by a lack of satisfaction with food, safety, affection, belonging, or self-esteem. The "**D-realm**" of existence colors all of our perceptions and distorts reality, making demands on a person's whole being (vs honest, daily gratitude). The greater the deficiency of these needs, **the more we distort reality** to fit our expectations and treat others in their usefulness in helping us satisfy these needs. Our defenses are quite "wise" in the sense that they can help us to avoid unbearable pain.

The growth needs of the Being-realm of existence or "**B-realm**", have a different kind of "wisdom". Instead of being driven by fears, anxieties, suspicions, and the constant need to make demands on reality, one is more accepting and loving of oneself and others. You see reality more clearly, and being in growth-wisdom mode leads to a greater integration and wholeness. One asks the question, "What choices will lead me to growth as a person?" rather than "How can I defend myself so that I can feel safe and secure?"

*Stop > take a breath > Is this thought real or a distortion? Am I stuck in a **distortive and obsessive rumination** or considering the "now" in deliberate rumination?*

It makes sense that our safety and security concerns, as well as short-lived hedonic pleasures, would make greater demands on our attention. All that our genes “care” about is getting propagated into the next generation, no matter the cost to the development of the whole person. If this involves narrowing our worldview, so be it. Per Robert Wright, **“The human brain was designed - by natural selection - to mislead us, even enslave us.”**

Maslow believed we all are capable of self-actualization. There is a general consensus in current research and theorizing that optimal functioning of the whole system (whether humans, primates, or machines) requires both **stability of goal pursuit** in the face of distraction and disruption as well as the **capacity for flexibility** to adapt and explore the environment.

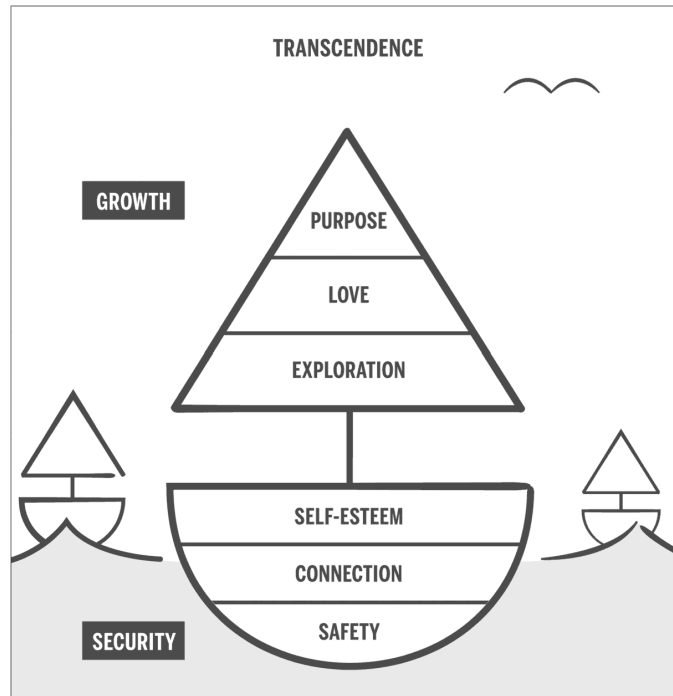
A New Metaphor

The human condition isn't a competition, **it's an experience**. Life is a vast blue ocean, full of opportunities for meaning and discovery, but also danger and uncertainty. Using a sailboat instead of the pyramid, as we sail through the adventure of life, it's rarely clear sailing. The boat itself protects us from the seas that are rarely as calm as we'd like - without it, **we would surely spend all our energy trying to stay above water**. The planks are important, the bigger the boat, the more waves you can endure.

Having a secure boat is not enough for real movement, however. You need a sail. Each level of the sail allows you to capture more wind, helping you explore and adapt to your environment. You don't “climb” a sail - you open it - just like you drop your defenses when you are secure enough. **This is an ongoing dynamic**, open and spontaneous one minute, then afraid the next and dropping your sails to protect yourself. The more you open your sail, the more you will benefit from the people and opportunities around you - there are a lot of boats in the ocean of life. And when you are fortunate, you'll experience ecstatic moments of **peak experience**, as you leave your insecurities behind, grow as a person, and possibly show others a better route. The sailboat is you, and you are the sailboat, and it can help you explore the world and the people around you, growing and transcending together.

Under good conditions, the **security needs of the boat**- safety, connection, and self-esteem - work together to provide security and stability. When they are threatened, we get stuck and focus our attention on defending ourselves. We miss the ocean for the waves.

The **sail represents growth**, and it lies at the heart of self-actualization. Maslow later preferred the term “fully human” to capture what he was really trying to get at. Here, self-actualization, and therefore growth, is broken into three specific needs for which there is a strong contemporary scientific support: exploration, love, and purpose. Although they can build on one another, **they can not be reduced to one another**. These three needs synergistically work together to help us grow as a whole person.



At the base of growth is the spirit of **exploration**, the fundamental biological drive that is the **springboard to growth**. While security is primarily concerned with defense and protection, exploration is primarily motivated by curiosity, discovery, openness, expansion, understanding, and the creation of new opportunities for growth and development. Exploration is the desire to **seek out** and make sense of novel, challenging and uncertain events. The other growth needs of love and purpose can build on this fundamental need for exploration. Exploration deserves a place at the evolutionary table all its own and can not be reduced to any other needs including drives for affiliation, status, parenting, and mates.

At top of the new hierarchy of needs is the need for **transcendence**, which goes beyond individual growth, health and happiness and allows for the highest levels of unity and harmony with oneself and with the world. Transcendence - which rests on a secure foundation of both security and growth, is a perspective from which we can view our whole being from a higher vantage point with acceptance, wisdom, and a sense of connectedness with the rest of humanity.

Humans have developed a capacity for growth unprecedented in the animal kingdom. We are truly unique in the length and breadth of our goals and in the flexibility to choose which goals we most wish to prioritize, and therefore, in the **number of ways we can self-actualize**. Consider the many diverse forms of art, music, science, invention, literature, dance, business, and sports. What makes our cultures so diverse is our unique flexibility of goal pursuit.

No other animal has existential crises quite to the extreme that humans do. Erich Fromm, in "*The Sane Society*", puts it this way, "The problem of man's existence, then, is unique in the

whole of nature: he has fallen out of nature, as it were, and is still in it; he is partly divine, partly animal; partly infinite, partly finite.” We are all sailing the vast unknown of the sea, yet we should also be comforted by the fact that **we all exist together** and face the same dilemmas. Even though you are alone in your boat, it should be comforting to see the lights of the other boats bobbing nearby.

Irvin Yalom, an existential psychotherapist, posited **four “givens of existence”** that all humans must reconcile:

1. Death - the inherent tension between wanting to continue with life and the inevitably of death.
2. Freedom - the inherent conflict between the randomness of the universe and the responsibility that comes with the freedom to choose one’s destiny.
3. Isolation - the inherent tension between wanting to connect deeply with others and be a part of a larger whole and never being fully able to do so, always existentially alone.
4. Meaninglessness - the tension between existing in an indifferent universe with apparently no inherent meaning yet yearning to find purpose for our lives in the short time we have on the planet.

The new hierarchy of needs is not only a theory of human nurture, but is ultimately a theory of human existence. This book is not only about evolutionary heritage, but how each and every one of us can transcend our strengths/weaknesses, our *tendencies* - becoming **something greater than the sum of our parts**.

“...We should be open to this adventure in heightened awareness of living. We should stake our whole existence on our willingness to explore and experience.” Martin Buber

“There is one path in the world that none can walk but you. Where does it lead? Don’t ask, walk!” [Frederick Nietzsche](#)

The good life presented in this book is about the healthy expression of needs in the service of discovering and expressing a self that works best for you. The good life is not achieved - it is a way of living. **It is a direction - not a destination**. It requires continuously stretching outside your comfort zone as you realize more and more of your potentialities and launch yourself “fully into the stream of life.” It takes a lot of **courage** to fully open your sails.

This book can help you grow in precisely the direction you truly want to grow, in your own style, and in such a way that allows you to show the universe that you really existed, and benefited others, while you were here. **This is a life of - becoming**.

Part I - Security

Safety/Connection/Self-Esteem

Prelude

For Abraham Maslow, in 1927 at nineteen years of age, the book *Folkways* by Graham Sumner, changed his life. It inspired Maslow to have an appreciation for cultural influences on behavior and also the potent driving forces of human needs. **Need** is always the impelling force.

In 1938, he spent an entire summer studying anthropology among the Northern Blackfoot Indians on the Siksika reserve in Alberta, Canada. Maslow was particularly impressed with the general lack of crime, violence, jealousy, and greed among the Blackfoot, along with their high levels of emotional security, firm yet caring child-rearing practices, community feeling, egalitarianism, and generous spirit. Maslow observed that “wealth was not important in terms of accumulating property and possessions: **giving it away** was what brought one true status of prestige and security in the tribe. Their life perspective was rooted in the importance of community, gratitude for what one has, and giving back to future generations.

These experiences led him to a new notion of Fundamental or **Natural Personality**: That human beings are at birth....secure and with good self-esteem. And then societies do something to this Natural Personality, twist it, shape it, repress it...” In an unpublished note from 1938, he wrote, “**People are all decent underneath**. You have to find out what their motives are for their superficial behavior. Once these motives are understood, it is impossible to resent the behavior that follows.”

This was a radical departure from the psychoanalytic view of the time, that underneath were all cauldrons of destructive impulses relating to either self-preservation or sex. He continued, “The fact is that people are good, if only their fundamental wishes are satisfied, their wishes for affection and security. Give them these and people will give affection and be secure in their feelings and behavior. Everything that is nasty, mean, or vicious is an **overcompensatory** attempt to satisfy the basic needs of security, affection and self-esteem.” This cycle is termed the “insecurity cycle” and the common core of this cycle is **FEAR**.

Chapter 1 - Safety

Over thirty-three million Americans do not have health insurance and over half of Americans do not have \$400 on hand to help deal with catastrophe. Basic fundamental needs such as housing and health care are in crisis for large swaths of Americans. Ruth Whippman has pointed out, “**We are focusing on the tip of Maslow’s pyramid (self-actualization) at the clear expense of its base.**”

Modern-day science makes clear that unpredictability has far-reaching consequences for the lives we can envision and create for ourselves. The need for safety is tied to the struggle to make sense of experiences and a motivation to gain control over violated expectations. Having a safe base allows a person to take risks and explore new ideas and ways of being. In the absence of that base we become overly reliant on others - which compromises true growth.

The need for safety is tied to a particular form of meaning in life. Psychologists have identified **three different forms of meaning**:

Purpose - involves a motivation to realize future-oriented and valued life goals.

Mattering - consists of the extent to which people find that their existence and actions in the world are significant, important, and valuable.

Coherence - is the form of meaning that is most strongly tied to the need for safety. **Does my immediate environment make sense?**

Per research, "We need something to anchor our values upon, and when our lives feel incomprehensible, finding things that make our life worth living might be hard, if not impossible."

Researchers have found that coherence is associated with greater religiosity, spirituality, and the ability to grow from trauma. The flip side is that too much chaos pitches us into a state that psychologists call "**psychological entropy.**"

Psychological Entropy

The human brain is a prediction machine. We are constantly processing incoming information and assessing how it matches our expectations. Instructed (but not completely determined) by a blueprint from our genes, the brain attempts to help us satisfy our basic needs by directing our behaviors, thoughts, and emotions in ways that will reach its goals - **all kinds of goals**. Humans are quite unique in the flexible repertoire of goals that "mean" something to them.

Entropy is a measure of disorder. All biological systems - including humans - survive insofar as they are able to effectively manage internal entropy. In the state of psychological entropy, we experience uncomfortable feelings such as anxiety and stress. Stress systems in the body are activated and set off a cascade of **hormones** - including cortisol - that circulate through the body and prepare it to take action. Also, particular **brain regions** associated with vigilance, emotion, memory and learning are activated, as are **genes** that control inflammation and longevity at a cellular level. A certain amount of stress and unpredictability is healthy and normal.

However, some people - those with high levels of **neuroticism**, need for closure and OC disorder - find uncertainty particularly aversive. When these people are exposed to uncertain feedback compared to negative feedback, the nervous system delivers an outsize emotion-laden response. Some researchers go so far as to argue that neuroticism, with its particular flavor of negative affect, anxiety, fear and rumination, is the **common core** of all forms of psychopathology.

The ability to reduce, manage, and even **embrace uncertainty** is important for everyone seeking to develop the whole person. It is critical to health, fitness, and survival. Persistent fear and anxiety can have serious consequences on learning, behavior, and health - repeated exposure can actually alter connection in areas of the developing brain that are particularly sensitive to stress. Even though you may deeply desire to put your full powers toward an important goal, the system **cannot perform the work at full capacity** when there is too much energy invested in psychological entropy. The system, under constant stress and no relief - will eventually deteriorate.

When internal disorder becomes too great, we are at risk of resorting to strategies that are destructive to us and to others. Our sense of possibility shrinks, **and we are dominated by an exquisitely narrow repertoire of emotions, thoughts, and behaviors, leaving us with diminished potential to become the person we truly want to become.**

Our psychological processes are **deeply intertwined** with our physiology and when safety needs are severely thwarted, people react in quite specific ways to restore balance - **homeostasis**. When safety needs are diminished, we lose trust in others and can resort to destructive routes in order to regain safety.

Feeling Hungry

Lack of a reliable source of food gives rise to food insecurity which tends to produce a specific **cluster of negative behaviors**: increased impulsivity and hyperactivity, increased irritability and aggression, increased anxiety, and a propensity to use narcotics. This cluster of behaviors results specifically from extreme hunger, not from preexisting personality differences. Extreme hunger begets an adaptation to improve the location, capture, and defense of food resources, even at the expense of achieving other goals.

Prolonged **food uncertainty** - not complete deprivation - causes so much entropy that a sense of helplessness eventually sets in and other systems start to deteriorate. Most strikingly, many of these behaviors that arise from hunger significantly reverse upon refeeding.

The Need for Attachment Security

We are exquisitely attuned to how we are treated in times of stress. Our “attachment system” keeps track of successes at obtaining proximity and comfort from attachment figures - beginning with parents and caregivers but eventually expanding to friends and romantic partners. Psychologist **John Bowlby** argued that from the physical presence of the caregiver we gradually develop mental representations of “internal working models” of others and the self, which allow us to **forecast the behaviors of others** based on prior experiences.

It turns out that the four adult categories of attachment style - secure, fearful, preoccupied and dismissing - can be represented as a combination of just two dimensions: **anxious and avoidant**. Modern research suggests that there is no such thing as a completely securely attached person: all of us are at least a little bit anxious and avoidant when stress rears its head in our relationships.

However, those that are **more secure** report more constructive ways of coping and regulating their emotions, thoughts, and behavior, and they report higher levels of relationship satisfaction, adjustment, health self-esteem, and even heightened altruism, empathy and increased tolerance for others. **Anxious attachment** has been linked to depression, anxiety, loneliness, neuroticism, impulsivity, personality disorders, perfectionism, OC tendencies, substance abuse, PTSD. **Insecure attachment** has been linked to CV disease, inflammation, poor immune function and hyperactive neuroendocrine stress response.

Choose Your Own Attachment

Anxiously attached people explain events in more negative ways and reported more emotional distress in response to situations such as “didn’t want to cuddle” and “wanted to spend time alone” and this was more likely to lead to conflict. Insecurely attached people tend to make choices that are destructive to relationships - that bring out the negative outcomes they fear most and even expect. Research does suggest that the **sensitivity of their partner** can make a difference and that they can make better choices with enlightenment and practice.

The most comprehensive studies of the continuity of attachment styles suggests that there is only little continuity between early childhood attachment patterns and adult attachment patterns. ***Our personal, working models can change over time in response to new experiences, events, and people.*** That said, adequate parenting sensitivity can make a large difference in that a child may develop high levels of curiosity and exploration rather than fear and anxiety. Per Maslow, “**Children need** strong, firm, decisive, self-respecting, and autonomous parents - or else children become frightened. Youngsters need a world that is just, fair, orderly, and predictable.”

That being said, early attachment patterns are far from destiny. Our current attachment patterns are influenced by our entire history of relationships and interactions. Our models can change in response to **our personal growth** as well as to the sensitivity of our friends and partners.

We are not a slave to any pattern, regardless of time of life or origin.

Trauma On The Brain

More than 130 million children have witnessed intimate partner violence in the home and over 200 million have suffered some sort of sexual abuse. Many more experience **emotional abuse** daily. **Neglect** can be just as damaging as abuse with lack of response to a child’s distress and social needs, or neglecting to provide basic needs such as food, clean clothing, shelter and medical care.

According to the **predictive-adaptive-response theory (PAR)**, early childhood adversity serves as a “weather forecast” of the conditions into which the individual will mature, and it is adaptive for an individual who suffered early adversity to develop behavioral strategies attuned to the anticipated environment. Cognitive neuroscience research has demonstrated that **the brain reconfigures itself** in line with the predictions it has made about the future based on prior experiences. Although the potential for recovery is not completely lost - there is some neural plasticity available for future revisions - early life stressors do create **constraints on development**. They do so by activating genes that cause critical development periods to come to a close. Per Martin Teicher, “**Brain development is directed by genes but sculpted by experiences.**” Experiences that span our entire lives.

In particular, alterations occur first in sensory systems and pathways that act as the brain’s first filters of information from the outside world. The overall pattern suggests that when experiencing abuse, the brain modifies itself in such a way as to cut off conscious perception of

the abusive experience while simultaneously fostering avoidance of future situations that may pose similar threats, similar to what psychiatrists refer to as “**splitting.**”

However, many individuals with maltreatment-related brain adaptations are highly resilient individuals and are able to recruit other psychological and environmental resources (e.g., perseverance, social support, or community resources) that allow them to be resilient in the face of stress. Fear conditioning does take place, however, and can have lasting effects. Children of physical abuse **tend to generalize their fear** over time and the fear response can be activated by people and places bearing small resemblance to the original context. This process occurs below the level of conscious awareness. These early childhood perceptions of a fearful world can then affect social interactions that occur later in life.

Child development psychologists Nathan Fox and Jack Shonkoff explain, “Fears are not just passively forgotten over time; they must be actively unlearned.” Initially, the concept of “**learned helplessness**” - the process of simply giving up in the face of trauma or adversity because there was no perception that anything the person could do would elevate the problem - was offered as a cause of depression. However, the latest research by Steven Mair and Martin Seligman concluded that these findings were completely backward.

>This latest research suggests that **passivity and lack of control is actually the default response** in animals, an automatic, unlearned reaction to prolonged adversity. What must be learned is **hope** - the perception that one can control and harness the unpredictability in one’s environment. This capacity for hope relies on the development of the medial prefrontal cortex, which is not completed until early adulthood.

People who regularly experience conditions of harshness and unpredictability due to poverty tend to prioritize their most pressing needs at the expense of long-term needs and goals. Often there is little choice - and little hope. The lack of a stable and predictable home and access to positive external resources can influence one’s perceptions of the hope of future outcomes and can cause a shift in priorities to the basics, to the default of the genetic code: **survival and reproduction**. Instead of viewing the “poor” as a separate class of humans, we should recognize our **common humanity** and acknowledge that we would all most likely act in very similar ways under very similar circumstances.

Research suggests that the effect of moving out of poverty was strongest for behavioral symptoms such as aggression and hostility. Maslow noted that healthy growth and development involves not only gratification of our basic needs but also the ability to endure deprivation and grow as a result. We are still able to respond to our immediate set of circumstances and capable of **turning our earliest adversities into opportunities for growth**. **Education** is still one of the most important paths to upward social mobility and possibility in life.

Hope Through an Intelligent View of Intelligence

According to his Theory of Successful Intelligence, researcher Robert Sternberg emphasizes the importance of viewing intelligence in context. He states, “**Successful intelligence** is one’s

ability to choose and successfully work toward the attainment of one's goals in life. The mental processes may be similar or identical (problem solving) - what differs is the kinds of knowledge or skills they give rise."

With disadvantaged youth, much research operates under a "deficit model" and missing from this deficit approach is an attempt to leverage the unique strengths and abilities that develop in response to high-stress environments. Psychologist Bruce Ellis goes so far as to suggest that these children and youth may be "**cognitively gifted**" for functioning in harsh, unpredictable environments.

Recent research into skills acquired in harsh and unpredictable environments reveals enhanced emotional recognition of angry or fearful faces, enhanced memory for negative events, enhanced ability to learn at an implicit, experiential level and an enhanced ability to flexibly switch attention. They may also be able to read other people's affective states better, an "**enhanced empathic accuracy.**"

Researchers suggest a curriculum that allows these types of children more opportunity to move around and do independent projects on the computer and with others rather than focus on the traditional executive functioning skills that support doing well in school such as attention and impulse control - **working with them instead of against them**. Educational psychologist Beth Hart notes, "Allowing for both (street smart and book smart) would involve reinventing the idea of the "good" student, of what counts as legitimate knowledge, and broadening definitions of success within schools beyond grades and test scores." They need to be shown that **they do not have to choose** between the two worlds - they can thrive and be successful in both. They need a real reason for **hope**.

Led by educational psychologist Michael Nakkula, an emerging field called "**possibility development**" targets various aspects of agency, including attitude toward learning, engagement, and giving students an "authentic voice" in which they feel as though they are making choices that have a real impact on their desired future. As with all students, they need to be reminded that **their success is largely a matter of their own effort and engagement in meaningful activities**. They need a wide array of options and experiences.

Research highlights a focus on future possible selves. Students who were asked to identify their most important personal values and explain why they mattered achieved higher grades, were assigned to less remedial classes and more advanced math classes. The path to high academic achievement can be extremely nonlinear and nontraditional and these "Crooked-A's" can look very different from stereotypical straight-A students. These non-traditional students have immense creativity and innovative ideas because they see the world differently. Having an influential career demands originality, not conformity. They need to know that. We must close the critical thinking gap.

Chapter 2 - Connection

For much of the history of psychology, love and affection were ignored as a subject suitable for scientific investigation. In 1958, Harry Harlow, who taught Abraham Maslow at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, in his address to the American Psychological Association, admonished his peers: "Psychologists, at least those who write textbooks, not only show no interest in the origin or development of love or affection, but they also seem to be unaware of its very existence." Interested in the effects of maternal deprivation of love and affection, Harlow embarked on his now-famous experiments on [rhesus monkeys](#). The findings were highly influential and demonstrated the importance of **physical touch and reassurance in social development**. His research identified connection as essential to normal development. Maslow proposed that belonging and affection were fundamental needs in their own right - not reducible to safety or sex. Sixty years later, research has firmly established that **belonging and intimacy** are not only essential to survival of the individual and of the species but is also essential to full development of the whole person.

The need for connection - for forming and maintaining a minimum number of positive, stable, intimate relationships - is a **fundamental need that affects our whole being, permeating our entire suite of emotional thoughts, and behaviors**. Although there are individual differences, connection is an irreducible, undeniable human need. It consists of two subneeds:

- (a) The need to belong, to be liked, to be accepted, and
- (b) The need for intimacy, for mutuality, for relatedness.

The Need for Belonging

When one feels belonging, one feels accepted and seen, and when one is deprived of belonging, one feels rejected and invisible. These emotions stem from a deeply evolved "**social protection system**" that clearly had important survival and reproduction functions during the course of human history. Since we are intensely social animals, the need to seek at least a minimal amount of acceptance while avoiding complete rejection is vitally important for gaining social rewards in virtually all social situations - from influence to acquaintances to friendships to romantic relationships. Social acceptance can also literally be the difference between survival and death.

We detect threats to acceptance through incredibly painful emotions, whether the perceived threat is high and whether exclusion and ostracism are possible. Our attention also increases to focus on the problem. **For a social species, to be on the edge of the social perimeter is to be in a dangerous position**. Social pain from perceptions of low belonging has been shown to be indistinguishable from physical pain, with severe consequences on the functioning of the whole person. The unwanted effects can be "social evasion" and depression to various forms of narcissism, to even such catastrophic effects as suicide and mass shootings. In the U.S., suicide rates have increased 25% since 1999.

Independent of any various social conditions, however, people differ greatly from one another in their need for belonging, which - like every other need presented in this book - is **a result of a multitude of individual genes intricately interacting with personal experiences**. Research shows that those who report the highest levels of loneliness are those who have the highest

unmet need to belong. This finding applies both to those who are living alone as well as those who are living with others. It's the **quality of the connections** that matter for predicting loneliness, not the quantity or the proximity of the connection.

The Need for Intimacy

While the social protection system has its main goal the avoidance of rejection, the intimacy system is more about connecting to loved ones, caring for and protecting them, reducing their suffering, and supporting their growth, happiness, and development. The essence of intimacy is a **high-quality connection**, which can be defined as a “dynamic, living tissue that exists between two people when there is some contact between them involving mutual awareness and social interaction.” It makes both people feel vital and alive. The opposite would be **low-quality connections**, described as “black holes that absorb all the light in the system and give back nothing in return.”

Common characteristics of high quality connections share what Carl Rogers referred to as “**unconditional positive regard**.” Each person in the relationship feels seen and cared about and feels safe expressing a full range of experiences and thoughts. These connections also include a sense of **mutuality**: both parties are engaged and participating and have a sense of buoyancy and spontaneity to it. Lastly, these connections foster “**positive interpersonal processes**”, defined as “the good stuff that keeps us coming back for more in a friend or loved one.”

In a study of the happiest 10 percent of college students, one characteristic stood out; **they all enjoyed a highly fulfilling social life**. High quality connections act as a “**rising tide**” that enhances the effects of other sources of well-being, such as good physical health, self-esteem, optimism, constructive coping, and perceived control over the environment.

The Biology of High-Quality Connections

Our “calm-and-connect” system involves a suite of biological responses that work together to intensify a deep connection with another human being. Per Barbara Fredrickson, in moments of “positivity resonance”, one person’s brain literally syncs up with the other person’s brain, sometimes called “**neural coupling**.” In this realm people can experience an enhanced ability to anticipate the other’s stream of thought and feel the same emotions.

Opioid system - during heightened social connection, this system downregulates the HPA axis, dampening the body’s response to stress and in this manner, is a defacto opioid addiction of sorts in it’s own right

Oxytocin - is produced in the hypothalamus and acts and functions both as a hormone and a neurotransmitter. Some evidence suggests its effect in increasing the willingness to trust and cooperate and dials down the threats in specific parts of the amygdala, downregulating feelings of distress and fear. Oxytocin’s effects seem to be context-specific and mostly increases “in-group” favoritism via conformity, trust and cooperation.

Vagus nerve - emerges from the brain stem and connects the brain to many organs including the heart and lungs. It can soothe a racing heart beat, encourage eye contact, and synchronize

facial expressions. The strength of someone's "vagal tone" can be reliably measured and is associated with physical, mental, and social flexibility.

Connection, and lack of connection, clearly have powerful effects on our brain and physiology, with **deep implications for our mental and physical health** - even matters of life and death.

Loneliness Kills

Surveys suggest that 40% of adults say they are lonely, with 42.6 million adults over the age of forty-five reporting chronic loneliness. Social psychologist John Cacioppo reports that "**social isolation has an impact on health comparable to the effect of high blood pressure, lack of exercise, obesity, and smoking.**" Social isolation impairs immune functioning and increases inflammation, processes linked to a wide range of health issues, including heart disease and diabetes. Loneliness is not making us just temporarily ill, it is literally killing us.

No human being is exempt from the dire consequences of loneliness, and no other basic human need satisfaction can substitute for a deep connection, although we often seek one or another of other routes in the false hope that they can truly satisfy the connection need.

According to Hans Morgenthau, power and love offer very different strategies for attempting to achieve the same goal: "**Love is reunion through spontaneous mutuality, power seeks to create union through unilateral imposition.**" The quest for power, in an attempt to make oneself whole, always inevitably makes one want even more power, and ironically, the most powerful people tend to be the loneliest.

Why is loneliness so rampant in Western society? For one, there is a stigma against admitting loneliness and a taboo against openly wanting to make new, close friends. Also, per Emma Seppala, "**The way we are prioritizing our life**, and what we are prioritizing, often goes against our greatest need for belonging. Whether it's material goods or pleasures, financial or social advancement, **we're missing the point completely.** We're not seeing that our greatest happiness comes from connection, whether from family or religious or social community, something greater than yourself, something transcendental. We are so lost and there's a reason why so many people feel lost and anxious and depressed and lonely."

Money

It takes a certain amount of money to meet our most fundamental safety needs and realize opportunities for growth and development. However, beyond a certain point, research shows that having more money can be detrimental to growth and happiness. More money increases the materialistic drive, humans adapting quickly to the rewarding feeling of more money and what they can purchase or experience - "**the hedonic treadmill**" - leading to the constant feeling that no amount of money will ever be enough. Life on the hedonic treadmill almost invariably leads to decreased well-being.

More money also gives us more choices which can lead to a sense of life as overwhelming and highly stressful - "**the paradox of choice**", and those that make the most money, spend the most time on unenjoyable aspects of life like shopping and commuting, than those who make much less money. Those that make the most money also tend to give the smallest percentage

of their income to charity. Those who value money for its own sake are less satisfied with their lives.

Using money to make **“time-saving”** purchases can increase life satisfaction as well as **“growth purchases”** that foster personal growth, like mastering a new skill or hobby or engaging in retreats with others to foster connections. Psychotherapy is also an often overlooked personal growth activity.

Happiness is not having what you want, but wanting what you have.

Social Media

Today there are many social media outlets that offer the **allure and allusion** of connection. We can have the tendency and drive to be popular, if even just for a moment. In the end, the connections are mostly shallow and the popularity is fleeting at best. The total psychic energy spent on social media is bad enough, **the total time spent in negative head space is worse still.**

Social media can be the only way to connect with others and those with disabilities can find them essential to their lives and dating websites can also be beneficial to the growth of relationships. Nevertheless, this is not how most people use social media and it works against the deepening of any one connection in favor of many superficial ones.

The paradox is this: social media simultaneously enlarges the possibility of forming loving relationships while making it easier to avoid forming meaningful ones.

Read that again. Again, per Emman Seppala, “We’ve gone against our instincts, and we have fewer and fewer moments together ... there is something we are doing here that is profoundly unnatural and is going against what we really desperately need, which is connection.”

Blue Zones of Connection

For the people of Ikaria, a Greek island in the Aegean Sea, living to one hundred is common. What is their secret? Healthy diet and exercise certainly play a role, but the social structure is particularly important. Media use is very low and inhabitants enjoy frequent face-to-face interaction and social support. **It’s not a “me” place. It’s an “us” place.** Inhabitants report that they care little about money and during cultural holidays people pool their money and buy food and wine to share with the community. The elderly are celebrated and kept engaged in the community and live with their extended family. As one 101-year old Ikarian put it, **“We just forget to die.”**

The science is clear: social connection is not a reflection merely of the expansiveness of your social networks, your popularity, or the number of people you know. When we feel secure and satisfied in our relationships, **with just a few people**, we are more likely to develop a stable sense of self-worth and mastery. However, when this need for connection is thwarted, we tend to display a much more insecure need for belonging and care much more about status and popularity.

Chapter 3 - Self-Esteem

Around 1933, Abraham Maslow began studying [Sigmund Freud's](#) *The Interpretation of Dreams*. This soon led him to [Alfred Adler](#), founder of Individual Psychology, who had a very different take on human nature than did Freud.

Adler developed and argued for the importance of an “**aggressive instinct**”, distinct from the libidinal and self-preservation instincts Freud emphasized. He also developed a concept he called “Gemeinschaftsgefühl”, or “**social interest**”, which he considered a fundamental human drive, alongside the aggressive instinct. Adler noted that we are social animals, with a basic striving for connection and community and an interest in making a positive impact in the world. There is no doubt that Adler’s humanistic philosophy, with its focus on **equality, mutual respect, and civic values**, was a major inspiration for Maslow’s eventual humanistic psychology.

Maslow was equally, if not more so, drawn to Adler’s discussions of the power drive and its potential for destruction. Drawing on Nietzsche’s idea of the “will to power”, Adler argued that humans have a fundamental “striving for power.” To him, too much striving for power and dominance over others and **too little social interest** can lead to what resembles evil, something he sensed was emerging in the world at the time, especially among the Nazis in Germany.

Maslow then began his sophisticated research on sex and dominance in monkeys. One of his findings was that what appears to be sexually motivated behavior is **often a reflection of power** explainable by each monkey’s status within a dominance hierarchy. He also noted that the most dominant monkey was not always male, an example of Adler’s notion of “**masculine protest**”, in which females reject traditional female roles. This surely influenced Maslow’s later sexological research among humans.

In 1937, Maslow published the first of his studies on “dominance-feeling” among humans, a term he soon changed to “**self-esteem**.” In it, he argued the importance of distinguishing between the feelings of dominance and dominance behavior.

Dominance-feeling includes self-confidence, self-respect, a feeling of mastery and general capability, an absence of shyness, timidity and self-consciousness.

Dominance-behavior, on the other hand, can often be a form of over-compensation in the absence of feeling secure and confident. It is not so much dominant as *domineering*. It is more aggressive and louder than seems appropriate, giving the impression of being strained or unnatural. It can also take the form of snobbishness and aloofness.

Adler believed that one of the best paths to overcoming the seductive allure of power over others was **cultivating the drive for social interest** and he distinguished between striving for power and striving for mastery and overcoming obstacles - mastery over self vs striving for power over others. Maslow elaborated further in his 1954 book *Motivation and Personality*, noting between a secure self-esteem, which he associated with real strength and earned confidence, and insecure self-esteem, which he associated with the power drive. Those with an

insecure self-esteem, he said, are “**interested not so much in helping weaker people as in dominating and hurting them.**”

Modern science has revealed much about the importance of having a **healthy integration** of the need for self-esteem.

Healthy Self-Esteem

The most important attitude we have may be the attitude we have toward ourselves. A basic sense of self-worth and confidence in the effectiveness of our actions provides a **fundamental foundation for growth**. Self-esteem is one of the strongest correlates of life satisfaction (although it does differ with culture), and low self-esteem is one of the biggest risk factors for depression. But a closer look at the research reveals that the problem isn't with self-esteem but the **pursuit of self-esteem**.

The latest research suggests that a healthy self-esteem is an outcome of genuine accomplishment and intimate connection with others, and of a sense of growing and developing as a whole person. Difficulty maintaining self-esteem, and maladaptive efforts to do so, may be central to a variety of mental health problems - **we become insecure, unstable, and highly dependent on the validation of others**. *Gosh, I bet social media really pumps up that healthy self-esteem quotient around the world.*

Modern research identifies two faces of healthy self-esteem: self-worth and mastery.

Self-Worth

Self-worth involves the evaluation of your overall sense of self: *Are you a fundamentally good person with social value in the world?* Feeling worthy of who you are as a person lays a healthy foundation for who you want to become. The judgments we formulate of our self frequently incorporate the judgments of others. Feelings of self-worth are **strongly linked to the need for belonging and the social protection system** that underlies the need for belonging and tries to prevent damage by regulating our behavior *before we are actually rejected*. The consequences of complete rejection in our ancestral past when we interacted in much smaller groups was catastrophic and we retain remnants of the mechanism in our minds. Luckily, even the **perception of being moderately accepted** tends to increase feelings of self-esteem just about as much as being highly accepted.

Per the researchers Romin Tafarodi and William B. Swann Jr., “At no point in development do we become numb to the moral judgment of those we take an interest in. **As social animals**, we cannot refrain from peering into the looking glass that others hold up to us, as much as we may distrust the images we see there.” This is why the **internalization** of the judgment of our own self-worth is so important, so that we are not so easily swayed by the world.

Mastery

The second face of self-esteem - mastery - involves the evaluation of your overall sense of agency. *Are you an intentional being who can bring about your desired goals by exercising your*

will? As Tatarodi and Swann note, “Human development is characterized as much by the need to know ‘who we are’ as ‘what we can do.’”

Your entire life history of successes and failures influence the attitude you have toward yourself as an intentional being capable of reaching your goals in life. The more successful you are, the more confident you feel, and **the two tend to spiral up together** towards a stable sense of mastery. The opposite is also true.

While a healthy sense of self-worth and mastery are strongly related to each other - they tend to develop in tandem - the two can come apart. **Paradoxical self-esteem** arises when one of the two is much lower than the other and such variations have implications for how we process and remember social feedback from others. To be clear: high self-esteem is not narcissism.

Self-Esteem vs. Narcissism

Developmentally, both narcissism and healthy self-esteem start to develop around the age of seven. Children come to view themselves as they perceive they are seen by others - “I am worthy”, “I am a loser.” However, the development of these two traits show the **mirror image** of each other throughout development: whereas self-esteem tends to be at its lowest in adolescence and slowly increases throughout life, narcissism tends to peak in adolescence and gradually declines throughout the life-span.

They are also influenced by different **parenting styles**, with narcissism developing in tandem with parental overvaluation and overpraise. In contrast, high self-esteem develops in tandem with parental warmth, affection and appreciation. **They treat their children as though they matter.** More attention should be paid to the difference between healthy and unhealthy expressions of the common need for self-esteem.

The Two Faces of Narcissism

Modern researchers have identified two unhealthy attempts at regulating the need for self-esteem: grandiose narcissism and vulnerable narcissism. Both faces share a common set of features, including entitlement, exploitativeness, and grandiose fantasies. The sources of hostility and antagonism differ for each form of narcissism.

Those who score high in **grandiose narcissism** tend to be antagonistic toward others for reasons relating to their desire to increase their social status and dominance. Their entitlement is linked to their belief that they are special and superior and therefore deserving of greater resources and treatment.

In contrast, those scoring higher in **vulnerable narcissism** feel hostility and distrust in reaction to their negative ideas about themselves and others, and their response is often rooted in traumatic childhood experiences. Their entitlement is linked to a belief that they deserve special attention *because of their fragility*, not their superior characteristics.

Consider the perspective that **all of us have narcissistic tendencies** to one degree or another, after all, to have these tendencies would be human. We should attempt to get underneath the

label “narcissism” so that we can see how wholesome transformation of these tendencies can help us all to become more secure, whole people.

Vulnerable Narcissism

There are paradoxical features that tend to coexist when one’s sense of self-worth is wildly in flux, fragile and uncertain. People rarely score lower than around the midpoint on self-esteem scales, suggesting that few people have zero self-esteem. This suggests they really have an **uncertain self-esteem**.

This uncertainty of one’s self-worth **brings along with it**: hairpin triggers of shame and reactive hostility, avoidance of situations that may trigger these emotions, grandiose fantasies of receiving validation and respect from others, a constant need for validation from others and the feeling of entitlement to that validation, a hiding of one’s felt needs and perceived weaknesses, an excessive need to help others in order to feel good about themselves, and distrust and cynicism about people’s true intentions. All of these characteristics tend to go together.

If we look beneath the label we can see that these behaviors add up to a really smart strategy for **protecting oneself from the pain of being rejected**. Traumatic early life experiences can cause us to perceive our social value and capacities in ways that are not accurate and hence the fear if we act on these miscalibrated beliefs. Vulnerable narcissism develops through a complex process through which biological vulnerabilities are amplified by family and school factors. **Genetics, parenting and other environmental conditions - they all matter.**

Emotional abuse is a particularly crucial pathway to vulnerable narcissism considering that it may be invisible to others and even to the child. Emotional abuse can include having an extremely controlling, intrusive, or uncaring parent, or having a parent whose narcissistic needs are so great that the child feels guilty or ashamed of expressing their own needs and dreams. Research also suggests that there is an extremely strong relationship between vulnerable narcissism and reports of **imposter syndrome** as well as a great difficulty in reining in their strong impulses and taking constructive action on their own behalf.

From Vulnerability to Growth

A key way of overcoming severe self-esteem uncertainty is to **shed the perfectionist self-presentation**. As one meta-analysis of the literature found, vulnerable narcissism is significantly linked to an obsessive concern over whether one is coming across as imperfect to others, as well as perceiving others as demanding perfection of oneself. When people take risks and truly test the waters, they often find that **being more vulnerable and authentic** with others increases social connection. We tend to feel more comfortable with others who express our common humanity and imperfections.

Those that tend towards vulnerable narcissism need to understand the biologically seated social protection system, **that it can overreact** and that it is sometimes necessary to override the system. Learning to take control of this system and valuing honest feedback from people you respect and respect you is a way to move forward and grow.

You really can **retrain your brain** through therapy and learn to **contact the present moment** more fully as a conscious human being instead of being a slave to emotions that have no value other than to signal a threat - that may not be real.

Once you test your fears of all the things that could happen, you find that the reality often isn't nearly as bad as you thought it would be. The reality is instead, often positive. Lastly, **having dreams and ambition is healthy** - not something to keep secret and feel unworthy of. The cloak of false modesty and humility is inauthentic and serves no purpose. Evading your destiny is not growth. You are not entitled to shine, but you do have the **right** to shine.

“Stop walking through the world looking for confirmation that you don't belong. You will always find it **because you've made that your mission**. True belonging and self-worth are not goods; we don't negotiate their value with the world. Our call to courage is to protect our wild heart against constant evaluation, **especially our own**. No one belongs here more than you.”

Brene Brown

Grandiose Narcissism

Simply having high ambitions and confidence is not the same as overconfidence. In regulating our self-esteem in a healthy fashion, it's important to assess when our need for esteem has become so great that it is no longer in touch with reality or when it causes damage to others - that we protect a grandiose image of ourselves **no matter what the cost**.

Whereas vulnerable narcissism reflects an array of coping behaviors that clearly stunt personal growth (such as depression and withdrawal), grandiose narcissism is a mixed bag of traits. Those that score high have a strong drive for instrumental social value, as well as the social status and public acclaim that come with it. At the same time, they tend to care very little about their relational social value or if others think of them as a likable person. They are often so preoccupied with their social standing that it often lowers their relational value in the eyes of others and while they may think themselves superior to others, **they don't necessarily like themselves all that much as a whole person**. They are preoccupied with winning and view people as either winners or losers. **Being nice to people** does not relate to social status, money, power or other overt indicators of “success.”

Also, **communal narcissism** does exist in which one is overconfident that they will be the best at helping others and are sure that they alone will bring about peace and justice to the whole world. In reality, they aren't nearly as skilled or capable as they lead others to believe, often leaving a lot of destruction in their wake.

Research has found that those scoring high in grandiose narcissism reported high levels of imposter syndrome, a weak sense of self, self-alienation, a greater likelihood of accepting external influence, and higher levels of experiential avoidance. **Those scoring high in self-esteem showed the opposite pattern** - they show a greater sense of connection with one's self.

Both forms of narcissism involve defense of a particular self-image. Grandiose narcissists fiercely defend a superior self-image, and although this can be helpful in achieving self-enhancing goals, **it comes at a cost to others** and a cost to one's capacity to connect deeply with one's most valued goals and desires. Grandiose narcissists also tend to project their anger outward, prone to **reactive aggression** when provoked but also to **proactive aggression** and denial of facts. They also tend to have a black and white view of others as well as an extreme view of themselves, seeing themselves as fearless and bold.

One meta-analysis found that those scoring high in grandiose narcissism are more likely to impose harshly perfectionist demands on others, showing perpetual dissatisfaction with their perceived flaws. However, **they don't tend to care much about the costs of behaving imperfectly themselves - most likely because they believe that no such imperfections exist**. The overall problem is not with self-esteem but with **the addiction to self-esteem**.

Addicted to Self-Esteem

Power can be intoxicating for any of us; it's a drive that comes along with being human. It is the addiction to the power that is the issue, much like being addicted to anything else. The grandiosity isn't sustainable (eventually truth wins out over delusion), and those scoring extremely high in grandiose often end up in episodes of withdrawal, shame, or depression; their ability to maintain an unrealistic inflated self-evaluation fails, making them feel extremely vulnerable. Therefore, **narcissism tends to come and go in cycles**, and there is often a rapid cycling or even co-occurrence between vulnerability and grandiosity.

Any one of us, if given enough power, can become addicted to self-esteem, and history is riddled with examples of those experiencing the "**power paradox**" - the experience of power itself tends to destroy the skills that once earned us power.

In recent years, psychologists have been investigating "**collective narcissism**", a defensive form of in-group positivity. People who score high believe their in-group deserves special treatment and insist that their in-group gets the recognition it deserves - an attempt to compensate for insecurity and the need for control and self-esteem. In contrast, just as it's possible to have healthy self-esteem, **it's possible to have healthy in-group love**, where it feels good to be a member of your in-group and in which you have great pride for the genuine accomplishments of your group without constantly experiencing hypersensitivity to intergroup threat and hostility.

Almost all humans strive for mastery and to make a difference in the world, but we also have a striving for social interest - they are both within us.

Healthy Pride

The key to a healthy self-esteem is cultivating genuine relationships, skills, and competencies so that you can have healthy pride in your accomplishments. While pride can be thought of as the "deadliest sin", there is a big difference between **hubristic pride**, which is paved with

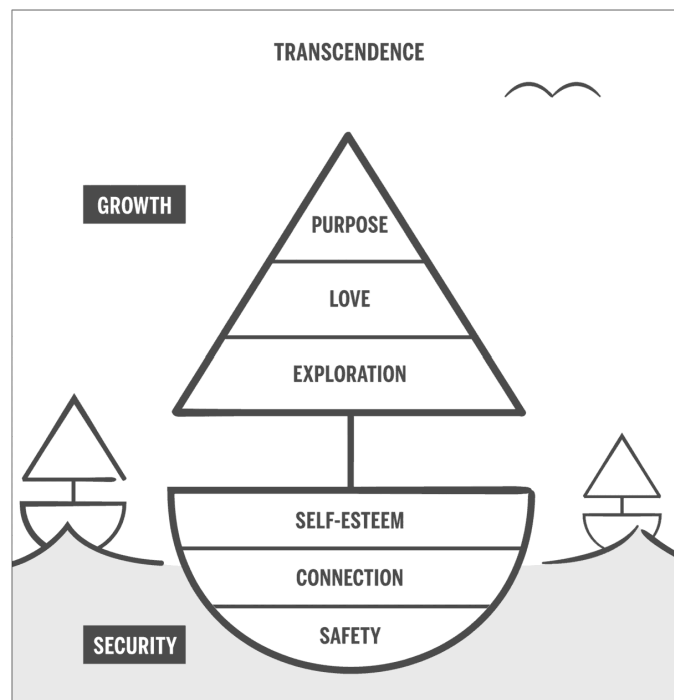
narcissism, self-aggrandizement, and antagonism at the expense of others, and healthy pride, which is paved with a healthy self-esteem and genuine accomplishments - referred to as “**authentic pride**” by psychologist Jessica Tracy. It also is referred to as “healthy pride.”

Research strongly suggests that self-actualization is most strongly correlated with the **growth-driven life** - a cluster that includes the drive for high performance, achievement, creativity, and wanting to make an impact, along with drives for meaning, close relationships and the desire to make a positive impact on the world. Humanistic psychologists frequently discuss that growth and humanitarian concerns tend to go together naturally. The other clusters of **status-driven life** and **security-driven life** were unrelated to self-actualization.

Wanting to make the world a better place is primarily driven by the **desire for growth** - the cultivation of growth in one’s self and others - not primarily the drive for money, status, and power.

Part II - Growth

Exploration, Love, and Purpose



Prelude

In 1935, Abraham Maslow began a postdoctoral research assistantship with [Edward Thorndike](#) at Columbia University in New York City. Due to the rise of fascism in Europe, within the span of about a decade (1935-1945), there was a **mass emigration** of psychoanalysts and other scientists from Europe, and he learned from some of the most influential psychologists and

anthropologists of his generation - both from Europe and America. And many became his friends.

Maslow was particularly fond of the anthropologist [Ruth Benedict](#) and the Gestalt psychologist [Max Wertheimer](#). He described his efforts to study self-actualization as an attempt to understand both of them, who he loved and adored. He was deeply curious about what made them so different from others. He noted a “wonderful excitement” when he realized that their pattern of personality could be generalized, suggesting that he had **discovered a kind of person**.

Maslow experienced a particularly transformative moment one afternoon shortly after the U.S. entered World War II. As he recounts, “...my car was stopped by a poor, pathetic parade, and as I watched, tears began to fall down my face. I felt we didn’t understand any of them - Hitler nor the Germans, Stalin nor the Communists. I felt that if we could understand them, then we could make progress. I had a vision of a peace table, with people sitting around it, talking about human nature and hatred, war and peace, brotherhood. I realized that the rest of my life must be devoted to discovering psychology for the peace table. That moment changed my whole life.” He then began **synthesizing an integrated theory of human motivation**.

One particularly important influence on Maslow’s theory of motivation was the writings of Kurt Goldstein, who emigrated to the United States in 1935. Goldstein, like Maslow, was influenced by the Gestalt psychologist and **their notion that the whole of the organism cannot be understood by looking only at isolated parts**. In 1943, Maslow brought all the threads together and seized upon the phrase “self-actualization” in his grand “Theory of Human Motivation.”

Maslow’s work on self-actualization was really his search for the characteristics of the “good” human being. He believed that human nature was basically good and his work was an attempt to systematically show that this is the case by studying those who he considered most fully human. He continued this work due in part to his fervent belief that in self-actualizing people, **“we find a different system of motivation, emotion, value, thinking, and perceiving.”** In a notebook entry in 1946, Maslow wrote, “There seems to be no intrinsic reason why everyone shouldn’t be this way (self-actualizing). Apparently, every baby has possibilities for self-actualization, but most of them get it knocked out of them....I think of the self-actualizing person not as an ordinary person with something added, **but rather as an ordinary person with nothing taken away.**”

Maslow admitted that his list of characteristics of self-actualization were the result not of a systematic line of research but of a composite “global or holistic impression” based on a small number of sources. **Acknowledging the limitations of his methodology**, he put forward the list in hopes that it might serve as the basis for further study. It’s been about 70 years since he published his list of characteristics of self-actualizing people, but his paper (1950) still provides a wealth of still-testable ideas.

The author converted his characteristics into a scale and administered them to a wide range of people. He found ten characteristics that **stand the test of scientific scrutiny** and are all significantly related to one another - those who tend to score high in one characteristic tend to score high in the others as well. To take the test, go to *selfactualizationtests.com*.

Characteristics of Self-Actualization

1. Truth Seeking
2. Acceptance
3. Purpose
4. Authenticity
5. Continued Freshness of Appreciation
6. Peak Experiences
7. Humanitarianism
8. Good Moral Intuition
9. Creative Spirit
10. Equanimity

Maslow, however, was way off base about one important thing: **the characteristics are not as rare as he believed**. The author found no gender, race, or ethnicity differences in self-actualization, and no association with age (above 18, which was the age requirement for the study).

Just as Maslow predicted, those with higher self-actualization scores were much more **motivated by growth, exploration and love of humanity than the fulfillment of deficiencies in basic needs**. Self-actualization scores were associated with multiple indicators of well-being and also predicted job performance/satisfaction, and reports of greater talent, skill, and creative ability across a wide range of fields, from the arts and sciences to business and sports.

The characteristics of self-actualization can be conceptually grouped into **four categories**: exploration, love, purpose, and transcendence. Together, the first three enable growth. **At the base of growth is exploration**, which all the other growth needs draw on.

Chapter 4 - Exploration

The need for exploration - the desire to seek out and make sense of novel, challenging, and uncertain information and experiences - **is an irreducible fundamental need**. A central problem of existence is managing uncertainty and reducing entropy and disorder in our lives, which is always increasing. It is often necessary to **leave the safety of familiarity**, at least to some extent, in order to grow. It takes courage to grow.

To Maslow, the key to helping people move toward growth is to **make the growth choice more attractive and less threatening, and make the safety choice less attractive and more costly**, so that a person can feel unthreatened, free, and spontaneous enough to “dare to choose the unknown.” Maslow believed that if people are inwardly free, they will more often than not choose wisely, in a healthy and growth-oriented direction. To him, this is how the psychology

of being and the psychology of becoming can be reconciled. Just by being yourself and shedding your defenses and fears and anxieties, you move forward and grow. Too much safety holds us back from real opportunities for learning and growth.

Exploration is not just for kids, and it is unfortunate that the spirit of exploration and play often wanes in adulthood. Per Maslow, “**Our healthy subjects are generally unthreatened and unfrightened by the unknown** ... They accept it, are comfortable with it, and often are even more attracted to it than by the known.” One way of coping with anxiety is to render our deepest fears “familiar, predictable, manageable, controllable, i.e., frightening and harmless...to know them and to understand them.” Exploring then can serve as an “anxiety-reducing function.” **Stress tolerance** demonstrates the strongest correlations with every single dimension of well-being including happiness, meaning in life, satisfaction of the needs for mastery, autonomy, and relatedness.

The Fuel of Exploration

The potential for growth from disorder has been encoded deeply into our DNA. Engaging in exploration allows us to integrate novel or unexpected events with existing knowledge and experiences, a process necessary for growth.

The general motivation for exploration is driven by **dopamine**. Dopamine is often labeled the “feel-good molecule,” but this is a gross mischaracterization of the neurotransmitter. Dopamine’s primary role is to make us **want** things, not necessarily like things. We get the rush of dopamine at the **possibility of reward** - whether we actually enjoy what we got or not. Its role in motivating exploration toward our more **primal “appetitive” rewards** such as chocolate, social attention and status, sexual partners, gambling, and drugs is well researched, but other pathways in the the brain have been proposed that are strongly linked to the **reward value of information**.

People who score high in the general trend toward exploration are not only driven to engage in behavioral forms of exploration but also tend to get energized through the possibility of discovering new information and extracting meaning and growth from their experiences. Maslow referred to them as “**cognitive needs**.”

Exploration - Five Subneeds

Social Exploration - There is a clear difference between social engagement that arises from insecurity and deprivation and the sort that is fueled by exploration and growth. The growth-oriented form of social engagement can be called social exploration, the drive to learn about people and **how they feel, think, and behave** - social curiosity. Learning information about others enables us to effectively adapt to our social environment by learning from other’s mistakes as well as becoming aware of opportunities, without the need to personally undergo extreme trial and error. The drive to attain social information has been essential to the survival of our species and is an extremely complex process.

Although **gossip** tends to be driven more by the desire for entertainment, both social curiosity and gossip are essential for gathering and transmitting information about cultural norms and behaviors that are rewarded and punished and about who is worthy of trust and who should be treated with suspicion.

The drive to actively engage in **novel** social and physical environments is also important and affords the opportunity to be exposed to new people and ideas as learning opportunities.

Adventure Seeking

Scientists define adventure seeking as the willingness to risk physical, social, and financial safety for varied, novel, exciting, intense, and challenging sensations and experiences. These types of people have an extreme sensitivity to the possibility of reward and a hyperactive reward circuitry in the brain.

Exploration with great insecurity can lead to antisocial behaviors, but security without exploration can lead to frustration and boredom. Too much of an **imbalance** of one over the other can lead to destructive outcomes.

High-adventure seekers are more likely to use a **problem-focused** coping strategy which allows them to see stressors in their life as manageable. This is typically contrasted from **emotion-focused** coping in which one attempts to reduce the negative feelings associated with stress through strategies such as distraction, suppression, and drugs and alcohol. One does not have to be traumatized by trauma; one can grow from trauma.

Post-Traumatic Growth

“In some ways, suffering ceases to be suffering at the moment it finds a meaning. When we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves” **Viktor Frankel**

Clinical psychologist Georgy Bonanno defines **resilience** as the ability of people who have experienced a highly life-threatening or traumatic event to maintain relatively stable, healthy levels of psychological and physical functioning and found through the review of a wealth of studies that resiliency is **actually common** - it is not the same as the simple absence of psychopathology, and that it can be attained through multiple, sometimes unexpected routes.

Studies show that the majority of trauma survivors do not develop PTSD, and a large number even report growth from their experience. The term “**posttraumatic growth**” is defined as the positive psychological change that is experienced as a result of the struggle with highly challenging life circumstances. **Growth and pain often coexist**. It is precisely when the foundational structure of the self is shaken that we are in the best position to pursue new opportunities in our lives.

Cognitive exploration - a general curiosity about information and a tendency toward complexity and flexibility in information processing - enables us to be curious about confusing situations, increasing the likelihood that we will find new meaning in the seemingly incomprehensible. It is

only through shedding our natural defense mechanisms and approaching the discomfort head on, **viewing everything as fodder for growth**, that we can start to embrace the inevitable paradoxes of life and come to a more nuanced view of reality.

Rumination is often a sight that you are working hard to make sense of what happened and are actively tearing down old belief systems and creating new structures of meaning and identity. While **ruminations** typically begin as automatic, intrusive, and repetitive, over time such thinking becomes more organized, controlled and deliberate. This process of transformation can be difficult, but rumination, in conjunction with a strong social support system and other outlets of expression, can be beneficial to growth and enable us to tap into deep reservoirs of strength and compassion we never knew existed within us.

Instead of trying everything we can to inhibit or “self-regulate” these emotions, **experiential avoidance** - avoiding feared thoughts, feelings, and sensations - paradoxically makes things worse, reinforcing our beliefs that the world is not safe and making it more difficult to pursue valued long-term goals. By embracing “**psychological flexibility**”, we face the world with exploration and openness and are better able to react to events in the service of our chosen values.

Research has found that the form of cognitive processing was critical in explaining growth after trauma. **Intrusive/obsessive** forms of ruminations caused a decline in multiple areas of growth, whereas **deliberate** ruminations led to an increase in five domains of posttraumatic growth. The willingness and desire to explore our full range of thoughts and feelings is important not only for posttraumatic growth but for growth in many other domains of life as well, including innovation and creativity.

Openness to Experience

The concept of “openness to experience” played a central role in the thinking of founding humanistic psychologists. For both Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow, the height of self-actualization was **creativity**, and one of the key drivers of creativity was openness to experience. Rogers defined it as “**the opposite of psychological defensiveness**” and conceptualized it as **a mode of cognitive processing where one is open to all of one’s personal experiences, receiving conflicting information without forcing closure, tolerating ambiguity, and seeing reality clearly without imposing predetermined categories onto the world.**

The array of characteristics that are part of openness to experience - including imagination, aesthetic sensitivity, and intellectual curiosity - are centrally human characteristics and help define and advance our species.

At the top of the hierarchy is a general **drive for cognitive exploration**, which comprises two separate but related features: openness to experience and intellect.

Openness to experience - reflects a drive for exploration of aesthetic, affective, and sensory information through imagination, perception, and artistic endeavor.

Intellect - reflects a drive toward exploration of abstract and verbal intellectual information, primarily through reasoning.

For cognitive explorers, creativity is a way of being, expressed spontaneously and voluntarily, emanating from the core of their being.

In the brain, openness to experience is linked to the “default network”, also referred to as the “**imagination network**.” **Here’s a list** of some of the cognitive processes that have been linked to this network in recent years: daydreaming, mental simulation, remembering the past, thinking about the future, generating new ideas, improvisation and flow among jazz musicians, rappers and poets, the comprehension of stories, reports of immense and moving aesthetic experiences, feeling inspiration for the virtue of others, and reflecting on mental and emotional states, both our own and those of others. *These are uniquely human capacities.*

These processes and more have been found to be critical for the healthy development of compassion, empathy, and the ability to understand ourselves, create meaning from our experiences, and construct a linear sense of self. Clearly these processes form **the very core of human experience**.

Openness to experience is related to a lack of imposing predetermined conceptual categories onto the world. Technically, it has been related to “**latent inhibition**,” a preconscious, biologically based gating mechanism that we share with other animals and which is associated with dopamine production in the brain. Latent inhibition helps us automatically precategorize stimuli **as relevant or irrelevant to a current goal**, - an immensely important mechanism - which keeps us from “drowning in possibility.”

However, those scoring higher in openness to experience tend to **have a reduced latent inhibition**, which results in immediate experience not being shaped by prior experience. It is also linked to creativity, and to Maslow’s notion of “continued freshness of appreciation”, which he believed was a central characteristic of self-actualization. Maslow stated that this **continued freshness of experience** brings about an “acute richness of subjective experience.” The opposite notion would be, for instance, automatically ignoring a beautiful sunset or disregarding a kind gesture from a friend because it has become commonplace to you. Many of the greatest and most impactful ideas of all time seemed quite irrelevant, at least initially.

Intellect: Finding Your Way Back To Shore

While openness to experience is essential for entertaining the possibilities of creative potential, the human intellect is essential for finding your way back to shore. Some of the most well-studied facets of the human intellect include **IQ, intellectual curiosity, and the need to know solutions to problems**. All of the facets of intellect can play an important role in truth seeking and reality monitoring and have been linked to the functioning of the “**executive attention brain network**.” This network is essential for helping us focus on the most immediate task, block out external distractions, suppress seemingly irrelevant information, flexibly switch our attention when necessary, deliberately plan future actions, and integrate multiple sources of information in working memory.

There are **meaningful distinctions** between the various manifestations of intellect: Intellectual curiosity and deprivation sensitivity (curiosity as you seek to understand something new vs needing to know the answer to a question) are only moderately correlated with each other and intellectual curiosity is **more tied to well-being** and the ability to cope with the stress of confronting new situations.

Research suggests that intellectual curiosity may indeed be “higher” than the need to know the solution.

There is only a moderate relationship between IQ and intellectual curiosity - there are plenty of people very high in one, but very low in the other.

Intellectual curiosity is a significant predictor of academic success, independent of IQ.

When it comes to real-life achievement, intellectual curiosity **predicts** the creative achievement of inventions and scientific discovery even better than IQ.

Openness to experience is more strongly related to achievement in the arts (particularly visual arts, music, creative writing, and theater/film) whereas **openness to intellect** is more strongly related to achievement in the sciences (particularly inventions and scientific discovery).

Nevertheless, both make important contributions to creative thinking, **and self-actualized people are able to transcend the seemingly contradictory nature of these two ways of being.**

The Creative Paradox

How can **two seemingly opposed sets of processes** - on the one hand, processes associated with deep absorption, imagination, and a loose filter, and on the other hand, processes associated with deliberate reflection, evaluation, and a strong filter - both be tied to the very same outcome: **creativity**?

Like most things with self-actualization, this is only an apparent paradox. Creativity is typically defined as the generation of ideas or products that are **both novel AND meaningful**. As philosopher Immanuel Kant once observed, “There can be original nonsense”. Meaning can cover a wide gamut, however, from practical inventions and innovative business models, to aesthetic experiences that evoke strong emotions, to intellectual ideas that stimulate and generate thought

Creativity requires both novelty and meaningfulness and depends both on **generation** and **selection of ideas to be explored, developed, or expressed** and this requires the ability to flexibly switch between seemingly contradictory modes of thought.

Per the Imagination Institute (imagination-institute.org), and a series of hosted retreats with some of the most imaginative and productive people in their respective fields, one thing that was quite evident is that creative, self-actualized people are *very* human, and they clearly still wrestle with many of the same problems of human existence as anyone else. Nevertheless, they were **very passionate about their work**, and in solving problems within their domain, they

often drew on their **intuition and imagination** just as much as, if not more than, their rationality and deliberate reasoning.

Per neuroscientist Roger Beaty and his research, the map of the creative brain consists of strong communication between the two brain networks discussed earlier **that in most people work in opposition:**

1. The **default network** - associated with mental simulation, perspective taking, aesthetic experience, meaning-making, and construction of the self.
2. The **executive network** - associated with concentration, working memory, and inhibiting potentially distracting information.

Beaty and his colleagues found strong communication between these two networks and the salience network. The **salience network** serves a similar function as latent inhibition, preconsciously tagging information generated from the default network as either relevant or irrelevant to the current task and then passing that information on to the executive attention network for further conscious reflection.

These same sets of brain networks show strong connectivity among those scoring high in cognitive exploration - including both openness to experience and intellect - even when the subjects being tested were sitting idly in the brain scanning machine - it was as if their **whole self** was on call at a moment's notice. It appears that a cognitively flexible brain and the neurologically flexible brain are one in the same.

The author states that he is very hesitant to prejudge a person's ultimate level of self-actualization based solely on the results of a **single test**, administered at a **single point in time** and believes that many tests of "intellectual potential" (such as IQ tests) miss out on some core aspects of cognition that reflects the fundamental experience of being human, such as the individual's personal goals, dreams, and aspirations.

The true power and potential of **human intelligence** reveals itself when it is completely absorbed in a personally meaningful activity that matches one's own unique potentialities and engages both our rational faculties as well as the depths of our imagination and experience.

Creative self-actualizers are capable of transcending the ordinary dichotomy between intelligence of the mind and wisdom of the heart. They are able to throw their whole selves into their work, **flexibly switching between seemingly contradictory modes of being** - the rational and the irrational, the emotional and the logical, the deliberate and the intuitive, and the imaginative and the abstract - **without prejudging the value of any of these processes.** Creative self-actualizers are true cognitive explorers.

Chapter 5 - Love

"Love is the only sane and satisfactory answer to the problem of human existence." Erich Fromm, *The Art of Loving* (1956)

Societies have always deeply underestimated those who, **just by being who they are**, bring joy and light to everyone they meet. Since so many people focus on achievement, they will often strategically act more altruistically in order to achieve greater personal success.

Psychiatrist George Vaillant writes that “successful human development involves first, absorbing love, next, reciprocally sharing love, and finally, giving love unselfishly away.” Humans not only have a need for belonging and connection, as previously discussed, but also have a need to feel they are having a positive impact in the lives of other people, and in this process, also feel more secure. Per Claire Nuer, a holocaust survivor, **“The only way to create safety, acceptance and love is by giving them.**

Maslow observed that those who have been love-need-satisfied, show that although they need less to receive love, they are more able to give love. In this sense, they are more loving people. He explicitly distinguished “needing love” from “unneeding love” and referred to the former as **D-love** (deficiency love) and the latter as **B-love** (love for the being of another person”). Whereas D-love can be gratified, those who love from a place of B-love do not need to receive love except in “steady, small maintenance doses and they may even do without these for a period of time”. **D-love is needing and striving for satisfaction whereas B-love usually grows rather than disappears in waxing and waning.** B-love is typically a more enjoyable experience, as it is intrinsically valuable (not valuable as a means to some other end).

Per [Erich Fromm](#), “mature love is an **active**, not a passive, process; an **attitude**, not a feeling”. Love is an orientation toward others and you don’t have to wait until you have a “positivity resonance” with another person before acting lovingly towards them. Again, Fromm writes, “Infantile love follows the principle: I love because I am loved. Mature love follows the principle: I am loved because I love. **Immature love** says, ‘I love you because I need you.’ **Mature love** says, ‘I need you because I love you.’” Love is not a specific encounter but an attitude. A problem of not-being-loved is **more often than not a problem of not loving.**

The Light vs. Dark Triad

The dark triad has been well studied and was first discovered by Paulhus and Williams in 2002.

The **dark triad of personality** consists of:

Grandiose narcissism - entitled self-importance

Machiavellianism - strategic exploitation and deceit

Psychopathy - callousness, cynicism, and impulsivity

Hundreds of studies have been conducted linking the dark triad characteristics to a wide range of socially aversive outcomes, including higher levels of aggression and violence, strong motives for power, money and social status and higher likelihood to commit all of the seven “deadly sins”. While each of these dark traits have multiple dimensions and unique properties, there does appear to be a **“dark core”**, and is best characterized by its “antagonistic social strategies”; seeing others as objects to be exploited or rivals to be defeated - a mix of callousness, dishonesty and manipulation.

Through the author's research with colleagues, they identified three clear members of the **light triad**:

Kantianism (via [Immanuel Kant](#)) - treating people as ends unto themselves, not as mere means

Humanism - valuing the dignity and worth of each individual

Faith in Humanity - believing in the fundamental goodness of humans.

You can find your dark vs light triad balance at selfactualizationtests.com.

Via research, it is clear that the light triad is not merely the opposite of the dark triad. Although they are negatively related to each other, the relationship is only moderate in size, suggesting that there is **at least a little light triad and dark triad in each of us**. It was found that the average person was tipped more toward the light than the dark triad in their everyday patterns of thoughts, behaviors, and emotions. Extreme malevolence was extremely rare.

Those scoring high on the Light Triad Scale reported growing up with less chaos and unpredictability, feeling close and connected to other people with a strong sense of intimacy with others. Those scoring high on the dark triad showed the reverse pattern. The findings show that those with a callous and manipulative orientation toward others are **motivated more by deficiency** than by growth in their interactions with other people. *They are trying to fill something that can never be truly filled by simply taking it from others.*

Portrait of a B-Loving Person

Transcendent Values

B-loving people are high in universal concern, universal tolerance, trustworthiness and dependability for close loved ones, and benevolence and caring toward close friends and family. They score high on some **agency-related traits**, such as grit, industriousness, productiveness, organization, and responsibility. Therefore, B-loving people show that agency and communion need not be at odds with each other. Psychologist David Bakan, in his book *The Duality of Human Existence* (1966) argued that optimal mental health requires a state in which "there is a coalescence between charity and self-interest, **between communion and agency.**"

Those with **higher agency** in life show greater independence, assertiveness, and constructive use of anger; display less emotional distress and anxious attachment; and are embedded in more supportive social networks. Complimentarily, those with **higher communion** are more comfortable with social relationships, and are more likely to have support available when in distress. These two dimensions of human nature can be in harmony with each other, leading to greater growth and wholeness. They transcend the false dichotomy between in-group love and unconditional love.

Health Compassion

B-loving people tend to enjoy caring for others and believe it's important to help alleviate the suffering of all people from all walks of life. They tend to grow up in environments in which helping others was highly valued - as were their own personal needs - and their motives for helping others are **growth motivated**, for those they are helping, and for themselves.

B-loving people tend to score high in both **cognitive empathy** - the ability to appreciate and understand another's feelings, a "theory of mind" ability - and **affective empathy** - which reflects the capacity to share another person's emotional experience and come as close as possible to feel what they are really feeling. Those that score high on the dark triad score high in cognitive empathy only and use them to exploit the weaknesses of others.

B-loving people have the capacity to accurately assess the real needs of others but not get swept away by their empathy in a way that is unhealthy or even damaging to themselves or others, the other side of **pathological altruism**.

Healthy Coping Mechanisms

In George Vaillant's massive seventy-five year [Harvard study](#), he found that five mature coping mechanisms were associated with a health adaptation to life. B-loving people tend to focus on each of the following strategies when they feel that burnout is near:

Anticipation - permits the person to become aware of an event before it happens and thus attenuate associated anxiety and depression.

Suppression - intentionally avoiding thinking about disturbing problems, desires, feelings, or experiences until a later time when they can more maturely be processed and integrated. Suppression does not mean complete repression or denial.

Humor - the use of humor to allow one to cope and yet still focus on the job that needs to get done. It does not involve distraction or displacement away from the issue at hand. He described humor as "one of the truly elegant defenses in the human repertoire." Humor allows both the idea and the emotion to coexist in consciousness.

Sublimation - expression of aggression through pleasurable games, sports, hobbies, romance, and creative expression.

Altruism - getting pleasure from giving to others what you yourself would like to receive

Healthy Self-Love

Erich Fromm wrote in 1939, "Modern culture is pervaded by a taboo on selfishness." B-loving people transcend the dichotomy between care to others and care to self, however. Healthy selfishness, **rooted in psychological abundance** and the motivation to become a unique person and to learn, grow and be happy is not unhealthy selfishness. Fromm put it, "*Greed is a bottomless pit that exhausts the person in an endless effort to satisfy the need without ever reaching satisfaction.*"

B-loving people have healthy respect for oneself and one's boundaries, practice self-care, and engage the capacity to enjoy themselves, even if it isn't necessarily helping anyone else. Healthy selfishness is positively associated with the light triad as well as self-esteem and authentic pride in one's work. They tend to **show themselves self-compassion**. Fromm put it, "People are their own slave drivers; instead of being the slaves of a master outside of themselves, they have put the master within." We must free ourselves from ourselves.

Psychologist Kristen Neff notes, “We must see our own experience in light of the common human experience, acknowledging that **suffering, failure, and inadequacies are part of the human condition**, and that all people - oneself included - are worthy of self-compassion.”

Quiet Ego

The fundamental capacities for self-awareness, self-reflection, and self-control are essential for reaching our goals, but the self has a desire to be seen in a positive light. One researcher put it, “the self engenders a **self-zoo of self-defense mechanisms**.” The defensive strategies to see the self in a positive light can be collectively summed up as the “ego”.

A noisy ego spends so much time defending itself as if it were a real thing, and then doing whatever it takes to assert itself, that it often inhibits the very goals it is most striving for. Paradoxically, quieting the ego is so much more effective in cultivating well-being, growth, health, productivity, and a healthy self-esteem than focusing on self-enhancement.

B-loving people are much more likely to express these **four deeply interconnected facets** of the quiet ego:

Detached Awareness - those with a quiet ego and an engaged, non defensive form of attention to the present moment. They attempt to **see reality as clearly as possible**, open to what one might discover about the self or others in the present moment while letting the moment unfold naturally - an important component of mindfulness. It also involves the ability to retrieve moments past and **reevaluate them** and make appropriate adjustments that will lead to further growth.

Inclusive Identity - those with quiet egos understand other perspectives in a way that allows them to identify with the experience of others, break down barriers, and come to a deeper understanding of humanity. During moments of conflict, when your core values are challenged, you are **capable of listening to other perspectives and learning**. They treat people as humans first, just like themselves.

Perspective-Taking - by reflecting on other viewpoints, the quiet ego brings attention outside the self, increasing empathy and compassion

Growth-Mindedness - an interest in changing oneself over time increases the likelihood of prosocial behaviors because it causes one to **question the long-term impact of their actions in the moment** and to view the present moment as part of an ongoing life journey instead of a threat to one’s self and existence.

The quiet ego perspective emphasizes balance and integration - **it is not silent**. A quiet ego is an indication of a healthy self-esteem, one that acknowledges one’s own limitations, doesn’t need to resort to defensiveness whenever the ego is threatened, and yet has a firm sense of self-worth and mastery.

Health Authenticity

B-loving people are authentic, but in a healthy fashion. There is a difference between deficiency authenticity (D-authenticity) and healthy authenticity (B-authenticity). *Nobody wants to hear everything that's in your head.*

Healthy authenticity is an **ongoing process of discovery**, self-consciousness, and responsibility taking and is built on a secure foundation of a personality structure not dominated by the needs for safety, connection, and self-esteem. As Karen Horney put it, "better at trusting that alive, unique, personal center of ourselves." B-loving people are more likely to experience *whole love*.

The **main components** of healthy authenticity are:

Self-awareness

Self-honesty

Integrity

Authentic Relationships

Whole Love

"In mature love, the paradox occurs that two beings become one and yet remain two." Erich Fromm, *The Art of Loving* (1956).

"B-love, in a profound but testable sense, creates the partner....It is a real question whether the full development of the human being is possible without it." Abraham Maslow, *Toward a Psychology of Being* (1962)

Romantic love doesn't have to be perfect. By forgiving our own foibles as well as accommodating those of our partner, we connect with our common humanity and foster growth in ourselves and our partner.

According to psychologists Arthur and Elaine Aron, a fundamental motivation in humans is **self-expansion**, and one way (out of many ways) we fulfill this motivation is through romantic relationships, in which each partner incorporates aspects of the loved one's self into one's own self. The author refers to self-actualizing love as **whole love**, an enduring loving relationship that is continually and reciprocally in a state of health, growth, and transcendence. It is not the attainment, but the striving that matters.

One key aspect of whole love is the healthy integration of the need for individuality and the need for connectedness. It is not about "**role abandonment**", the detachment from other roles, goals, and priorities. A key to maintaining a harmonious relationship is exercising a certain degree of healthy selfishness, a great self-respect. In whole love, both partners can be interested in helping each other **grow in their own direction**.

Anxiously attached people have a desperate need to merge completely with the other person, whereas **avoidant people** have a desperate need to maintain their complete individuality. Whole love has an *openness* to love. The more we can be present in our relationships and not try to make the moment meet our prior expectations, the more we can help our partner grow.

Another core aspect of self-actualizing love is having a **renewed sense of awe and wonder** for your partner. In this way, the normal choice between either security or exploration in a relationship is resolved. The challenge for modern couples lies in reconciling the need for what's safe and predictable with the wish to pursue what's exciting, mysterious, and awe-inspiring. Indeed, this is a common given dilemma of not only relationships - **but existence itself**.

Per Sharon Salzberg, "How often do we stop paying attention to our partner? Mystery doesn't necessarily come from the unknown, it also comes from discovery, sometimes, as we discover each other." Human beings are **constantly growing and developing**. The sustainability of passion in a relationship is limited only by the imagination of the partners and a commitment to safe exploration and growth of each other's needs.

B-Sex

In the strict evolutionary sense, sex is a need, being the mechanism for propagating the genes into the next generation. But also, "sex is a strategy we use **to meet our psychological needs** and not a need itself." However, not all sexual motives are equally conducive to sexual satisfaction and growth as a whole person. Those that are most securely attached in their relationships (with low levels of attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance) tend to report the highest levels of sexual satisfaction. It has to do with the *motives* for having sex. When you are preoccupied by self-evaluation or relationship security, it's difficult to fully enjoy the sexual moment.

Eros, or romantic passion, is about imagination and possibility, while sexuality is about stimulation and release. Eros draws us from ahead, whereas sex pushes us from behind. Eros is a focus on growth, not outcome. Research tells us that higher reported sexual pleasure and intimacy lead not only to boosts in positive mood but also to increases in a sense of meaning of life. Per Rollo May, "The untamed eros fights against all concept and confines of time ... Love grows in depth by virtue of the lovers experiencing encounters with each other, **conflict and growth, all over a period of time.**"

Is Love All You Need?

Love is most strongly correlated with growth, with becoming a whole person. However, those who are B-loving may forfeit some of themselves out of guilt and can become easy targets for exploitation by more malevolent personalities attempting to exploit their compassion and hard work to achieve their own self-enhancing goals.

It is important to cultivate a healthy integration of agency and communion and recognize that both **unmitigated agency** (overdominance and control over others) and **unmitigated communion** (overinvolvement in the problems and suffering of others) are linked with poor health, anger, and relationship problems.

With a secure foundation of safety, connection, and health self-esteem, and motivated by exploration and love, we are ready to strive for a **higher purpose** that simultaneously benefits one's own self and the world.

Chapter 6 - Purpose

“If one does not know to which port one is sailing, no wind is favorable.” [Seneca](#)

Taking the **summer of 1962** off from teaching at Brandeis College, he spent that summer with entrepreneur Andrew Kay, who founded Non-Linear Systems, a digital instrumentation manufacturing plant. He was invited to visit and to spend one afternoon a week engaging in discussions with Kay. Maslow was impressed by the way Kay managed the plant, who had set out to increase the well-being and productivity of his employees drawing heavily on principles Maslow had put forward in *Motivation and Personality*, as well as texts by [Peter Drucker](#), *The Practice of Management*, and [Douglas McGregor](#), *The Human Side of Enterprise*.

As Maslow consumed existing management literature that summer, he realized the immense potential of the workplace for testing his ideas about self-actualization and world betterment. He was particularly taken with MacGregor’s contrast between Theory X and Theory Y. Managers who subscribe to **Theory X** have an authoritarian style of management, believing that employees have little intrinsic motivation for their work and therefore must be controlled and given external rewards to reach their goals. Those who subscribe to **Theory Y** have a more collaborative, trust-based style of management, centered on the belief that employees have the potential for self-motivation, enjoy taking ownership of their work, seek responsibility, and are capable of solving problems creatively. Drucker and McGregor were already deeply influenced by Maslow’s theory of human motivation.

Maslow had deemed education the best means of improving the human species, but only now had realized that perhaps even more important is **the work life of the individual**. He noted that the industrial situation may serve as the new laboratory for the study of “psychodynamics.” His musings and notes from the summer were published by Kay in October, 1965, *Eupsychian Management: A Journal*.

One major thread in the journal was the idea of “**synergy**”, first learned from his friend and mentor, anthropologist [Ruth Benedict](#), one of the main inspirations for his work on self-actualization. Benedict referred to **synergistic cultures** as those that are holistically structured and function for mutual benefit of the individual and the larger society. Maslow placed this notion within the organizational context, that in an enlightened workplace - one conducive to self-actualization - that which is good for personal development is also good for the company. In this way, the **ordinary dichotomy between selfish and unselfish** is resolved because people who pursue their selfish gratifications are automatically helping others - the cause for which one works is “introjected” and becomes part of the self so that “the inner and the outer world fuse and become one and the same.” He argued that such synergy would most likely occur under Theory Y conditions.

In his summer notes, he also noted his disdain for the younger generation and their work ethic. He noted, “Self-actualization is hard work. It involves a calling to service from the external,

day-to-day world, not only a yearning from within.” To Maslow, those who were the most self-actualized **pursued their calling, not happiness**. He did note that happiness often comes as a result anyway: “The only happy people I know are the ones who are working well at something they consider important.”

The Need For Purpose

The need for purpose can be defined as the need for an overarching aspiration that energizes one’s efforts and provides a central source of meaning and significance in one’s life. Having a purpose often causes a **fundamental reordering** of the most central motives associated with the self. Things that once preoccupied you suddenly cause you little concern, become trivial.

Per psychotherapist James Bugental, “The neurotic is often threatened by his restricted, covert concern that he is unable to allow himself investment in that which is truly important to him.” As a neurotic takes on more important concerns, like being more selective in their commitments and to let things matter, their **earlier concerns fall into perspective**. Per Bugental, “It seems only the neurotic and the unhappy expend their concern explicitly and directly on their happiness...Happiness is a state that is pushed away by the hand that would grasp it but that tends to accompany the person who is **alive to his own being**.”

Maslow argued for the need to redefine, and enrich, the entire concept of happiness. He argued that it is a privilege of existence to have “**worthwhile pain**” - childbirth, loving someone as you share their suffering, or being tortured over your craft. He considered these and others “miserable privileges.”

Another key aspect of purpose is that it is energizing - it fuels perseverance despite obstacles because your purpose is worth the effort. As Nietzsche said, “Those that have a *why* to live for can bear almost any *how*.” Viktor Frankel, a survivor of the Nazi death camps forwarded the concept of a “**will to meaning**” and noted that “man is originally pushed by drives but pulled by meaning.” Frankel believed the will to meaning is the most important existential concern in our lives but crucially that it is irreducible to the other needs. Those that have a calling, are called into the future and science confirms that seeing one’s work as a calling is related to satisfaction in life.

People who view their job as a calling reported greater levels of life satisfaction and job satisfaction and missed fewer days at work compared to those that viewed their vocations as a job or career. These findings hold even when you control for **income, education, and occupation**.

Having a purpose involves **responsibility**, and by committing to a higher aspiration, you accept responsibility for your actions. Those that make a positive impact on the world take “ultimate responsibility” for their actions, making the morally right choice in the service of a higher purpose. Self-actualizing people often have the ability to strive for a purpose that will make them unpopular with the neighboring environment, particularly if that environment is unhealthy, hostile, or dangerous.

Maslow argued for getting in touch with our “intrinsic conscience,” one based on the **accurate perception** of your own nature (tendencies), destiny, capacities, and calling in life. But you must strive wisely and pursue wisely.

Striving Wisely

“What is not worth doing is not worth doing well.” Abraham Maslow

You must choose the right goals for YOU.

The What of Purpose

In the 1980’s, Robert Emmons initiated a research program on **personal strivings** using an innovative method, having people list their strivings instead of identifying their goals from a preselected list by the experimenter. He then had the participants report their moods and thoughts at regular intervals over a three-week period using “**experiential sampling**”, pioneered by the flow and creativity researcher Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi.

Emmons found a clear relationship between strivings and mood: those who scored highest in life satisfaction were those who perceived their strivings as important, valued, and not likely to produce conflict with their other strivings. Also, research suggests that optimal psychological health requires not only the right goal content but also integration among various strivings. Ultimately, our strivings would be organized in such a way that they are supportive of our “**ultimate concern**” and help us become a better whole person. Self-regulation researchers emphasize that goal-directed behavior is hierarchically organized, from concrete, short-term, actionable goals up to the most abstract, longer-term, overarching life goals.

Even though many of our behaviors are influenced by automatic habits, and consciousness typically arrives late to the party, consciousness still has at least some capacity to select among behavioral possibilities. Our most self-defining strivings do give us free will in the sense that they allow us to **intentionally cross** the Rubicon from deliberation/rumination to commitment. The importance of having a clear image of our possible self cannot be overstated.

The wisest path in life is to deliberately commit to a goal that is expressed in your subjective vision of your future self and is highly integrated with your other strivings. You must make the **rational decision** that you:

1. Want to live these decisions you have made and experience the transformative process without knowing what that will be like.
2. Do not know what you will eventually transform into as a person.
3. Fully understand and accept that your newest “you” will be different, with different preferences, thoughts, and emotional and cognitive awareness.

You will almost assuredly have to consciously change habits that no longer serve the broader vision of who you could become, indeed, **you are your habits**. Your “not to do list” will be just as important as your “to do list”, for some, very much more important.

If you have multiple higher-level strivings, then it's important to make sure there is integration among your striving hierarchies, so that one life project is **likely to foster growth of the others**. You may need to set aside a striving if it simply does not fit with the others, for any number of reasons, and set a time in the future to reevaluate.

They Why of Purpose

According to self-determination theory, people differ in the extent to which they **feel ownership over their life**. People differ dramatically in the extent to which they feel as though their choices reflect something deeper about themselves vs. being controlled by external forces or by internal insecurity and guilt. These various motivations lie on a continuum of "motivational quality" (MQ) and range from:

1. Total amotivation - just going through the motions.
2. External pressure - controlled by rewards, punishment, pressure from others.
3. Internal pressure - controlled by guilt/shame, ego, self-pressure.
4. Personal value - endorsing and valuing the goals of your tasks and work, enjoyable or not.
5. Intrinsic - you find inherent satisfaction in your work and it is implicitly enjoyable.

Those who feel the greatest autonomy in their strivings are those that are more open to experiences and **more mindful** of their inner experience, and also scored higher on self-actualization. Strivings that more accurately represent an individual are "self-concordant goals." Self-concordant goals tend to set off an **upward spiral of growth**, fulfillment, and well-being but also increase the amount of effort you are willing to give to the striving.

It is possible to end up in situations or jobs that you may consciously value, or think you "should" value, but you don't actually value at a deep level. We often operate so much at the level of our "rational self" - who we "should" be - that we love touch with our "experiential self" - **who we actually are**. The experiential, subjective self often has considerable wisdom about who we are and, more importantly, **who we could become**.

Assess your "**signature strengths**", or the particular aspects of your personality that you yearn to use, that enable authentic expression, and that energize you and give you a sense of vitality. It is helpful and wise to continuously be curious and seek out new things, being "open to experience." There is a lot of "you" inside you - and a lot of "out there" to explore.

Moral Purpose

Merely having a purpose is not always healthy. It is entirely possible to choose a striving that brings out the worst in yourself and others because it is motivated by a desperate, never-ending quest to fill a deficiency in one of the security needs - safety, belonging, or self-esteem.

According to research, the most growth-fostering purpose is one that has a **deep integration with, and is built on**, a strong foundation of a secure environment, belonging, connection, and a healthy self-esteem, and is driven by exploration and love.

Based on extensive analysis of influential figures throughout the past half century, “**moral exemplars**” are: principled/virtuous, consistent, brave, inspiring, and humble. The common thread between heroes and villains is their capacity for toughness, bravery, risk-taking, and rebelliousness. That being said, the moral exemplars demonstrated “enlightened self-interest”, showing an **integration of the agency and communion** drives in such a way that advancing their own interests necessarily involved helping others. This is strikingly similar to Maslow’s conceptualization of **synergy**. While agency and communion are for most people psychologically separate (one is often active at any given time), those who are moral exemplars **show an exceptional integration in these dualities of human existence**.

We tend to be most happy, persistent, productive, and high-performing when we feel both self-determined and are motivated to make a positive impact. This level of integration **is not easy** and requires considerable self-development, but it is an essential part of becoming a whole person. We must raise our swords and do battle with the real dragon within us. If you are deliberately planning nothing, you are **deliberately planning on being less than you are capable of being**, and you will be deeply unhappy for the rest of your life.

Pursuing Wisely

Strivings are the crucial **energizing force** on our path to purpose, but they are not enough. Living your calling involves pursuing wisely. Consider the following characteristics:

SMART Goals

Grit and equanimity

Harmonious passion

Exercising your signature strengths

Hope

Being supported

Knowing when to move on.

1. SMART Goals

We can improve our self-efficacy by breaking down large global goals into smaller, more achievable and specific tasks within the framework of:

Specific - the objective should be as specific as possible

Measurable - it should be measurable

Achievable - it should be realistic, not overreaching

Relevant - it should be in line with overarching goals

Time-specific - it should have a concrete time period so that you can measure whether you have succeeded and also modify the goal proactively before too much time has passed.

2. Grit and Equanimity

“Compared with what we ought to be, we are only half awakePeople the world over possess amounts of resources, which only exceptional individuals push to their extremes of use.”

William James, *The Energies of Man* (1907).

To live your passion and purpose, it's important to recognize that **your deepest passions develop and grow over time**. Your passions and interests are not fully formed and simply in need of being discovered. Grit is passion and perseverance for long-term valued goals and it is indeed essential for living your purpose. Grit is about **consistency** of your most deeply valued commitments and not giving up when the road becomes difficult. Grit, per Angela Duckworth, is "living life like it's a marathon, not a spring."

It can also be helpful to have a wide range of **diverse interests**, and defining and working within those interests positively correlates with persevering in the face of adversity. Diversity of interests is strongly related to the exploration drive. You can have consistency of effort AND diversity of interests. **Grit, in combination with exploration and love** make it more likely that you will have the drive to persevere among setbacks.

Equanimity is radiating warmth and openness as you encounter the inevitable stressors of life and also consists of cultivation of **mindfulness** and observation, of not pursuing one's purpose with blinders on but constantly being open to new information, **seeking wisdom** and honest awareness of reality, and constantly monitoring your progress and impact on your own personal growth as well as the impact on others. It is also balance, stability, and centeredness and draws on **inner strength**, grounded in health authenticity and the most alive center of your being. Equanimity is what is needed to weather the storms gracefully and **stay focused**. It should be your **default position**, but knowing you also retain the capacity for defense, fighting, and taking a forceful stand.

Grit depends on a person's reported level of **authenticity** and sense of **coherence** - the extent to which the world feels comprehensible, manageable, and meaningful.

3. Harmonious Passion

Striving wisely requires accessing why you have committed to a particular purpose, an assessment that must be ongoing. When you become passionate about something it becomes who you are, instead of just some activity you happen to enjoy. This is harmonious passion vs. obsessive passion, which can eclipse other sides of yourself or push aside other activities. Harmonious pursuit of your purpose can drive out obsessive ruminations and trivial insecurities. Obsessive passion encourages pursuit without regard to self-care or to the exclusion of other aspects of life that can be highly energizing.

4. Exercising Your Signature Strengths

As you live your purpose, make sure you are continually using your greatest personality strengths in new and different ways. The more authentic you feel as you pursue your purpose, the more likely you will be to stand up straight in the face of hard knocks because you are driven by a solid core deep within.

5. Hope

There are three character strengths that are universally worth cultivating on the path to purpose: **exploration, love and hope**. Hope consists of both the will and the ways to get to your goal, not simply an expectation of a positive future.

The hope mindset fosters belief that multiple/flexible paths are possible to get where you want to go - **flexible templates vs rigid and concrete “battle plans”** - so that inevitable roadblocks are conquered. Hopeful people interpret failure as opportunities for growth, attribute setbacks to poor strategy rather than character flaw, summon multiple resources and strategies for handling setbacks, and recognize rationally the potential barriers to goal attainment.

Hope is related to a number of **positive outcomes** in life including physical health, mental health, academic achievement, creativity, and athletic performance and buffers against the negative impacts of traumatic life events on well-being.

6. Being Supported

Environmental support involves two components that work together to bring out the best in people:

Enlightened leadership

Enlightened culture

Focusing on the organizational workplace...

Enlightened Leadership Characteristics

- **Lead By Example:** They set high standards, work as hard as anyone else, articulate clearly with genuine enthusiasm a compelling purpose and vision for the organization.
- **Good at Informing Employees:** They make explicit links between the tasks of the jobs and the broader purpose/vision of the organization, make clear expectations and give honest and fair answers in response to employee concerns.
- **Trust Employees:** They explicitly state their confidence and belief that the employees will meet their high expectations.
- **Engage in Participative Decision-Making:** They downplay power hierarchies, encourage all employees to voice opinions and use that feedback to make decisions for the organization.
- **Good at Coaching Employees:** They provide help when necessary, teach people how to solve problems on their own, tell people when they are performing well, help them stay on task and sometimes see greater possibilities for others that they may not see in themselves.
- **Care About Their Employees:** They take the time to chat with employees and get their feedback to figure out ways to increase their well-being and meaning in the workplace, assign tasks that are challenging and will always continually help their employees grow, develop, and feel a sense of authentic pride.

Enlightened Culture

An enlightened culture is “**autonomy supportive**”, and those in this type of environment feel as though their decisions are freely chosen and that their most committed goals and highest strivings are self-endorsed, rather than a result of external rewards or obligations to follow the

orders of the manager. The key factor is that the person is provided with clear and meaningful explanations for **why they are doing something**, rather than feeling controlled or pressured, and that they feel some choice in how they manage their task. Responsibility is a burden that most people are glad to bear - as long as they feel self-determined and autonomous in their decisions.

Autonomy-supportive organizations are:

- Open, forward-thinking, and **growth-oriented**. Employees feel safe to undertake risky, exploratory, and even failure-prone activities that may be crucial to creativity. If senior leadership makes a serious mistake, they are allowed to be challenged.
- Have **core values** in the workplace that are endorsed by most of the employees and involve self-transcendent values that transcend particular group interests - most people want to feel they are benefitting a greater good.
- Foster coworker support: **coworkers/peers are interested** in one another's growth and freedom and share expertise and knowledge, helping those that fall behind schedule or those that are experiencing difficulty in their personal strivings. Coworkers can provide specific and important growth motivation - the optimal fuel for living your purpose. People aren't interacting with others only to get something from them. They truly admire others and care for their growth, development and freedom.
- Allow for a **certain degree of job-crafting**, whereby employees have some say in developing their job to allow growth, engagement, job satisfaction, resilience, purpose, and well-being. Job-crafting also has the potential to satisfy one's unanswered callings, expand their current task repertoire or reframe the purpose of their work to better integrate all of the above. These are good reasons why having a **diversity of interests** is associated with so many growth-related outcomes in life.

Indeed, knowing when an occupation or purpose is no longer serving your growth is also an essential part of becoming a whole person.

Knowing When to Move On

An essential part of growth is flexibility in goal pursuits and strivings. Sometimes it makes the most sense to change direction. Of course, it's important not to move on too soon. **Living your calling takes time**, for developing both the calling and your strength to persevere and maintain equanimity in the face of hard knocks. Then sometimes, one's highest-level striving turns out to be unattainable.

Protecting people from uncomfortable experiences shows a lack of respect for the integrity, nature, and future development of the person - life is an ever-evolving process of discovery and accretion. There is something to be learned from any experience, no matter how unrelated it may seem to other areas of your life, including your future callings.

Those that confront an unattainable goal can thrive by disengaging from that goal, withdrawing effort completely, and stopping to truly reconsider the goal. After **reflection**, sometimes letting go (not quitting) is the smart move because it **frees up our limited resources** that can be applied to alternative choices that foster new purpose and promote future development. Ideally, the new goal is energizing and self-organizing and provides a central source of meaning and significance.

Purpose is a bridge to even higher ceilings of human nature. Ultimately, Maslow came to believe that self-actualization was not, in fact, the pinnacle of the hierarchy of human needs. He realized that there is a human longing for something even higher.....

Part III - Transcendence

Chapter 7 - Peak Experiences

Abraham Maslow observed that peak experiences - **unusual moments of heightened joy, serenity, beauty, or wonder** - occurred in a wide range of people and seemed to have many triggers. They expanded within and beyond a range of experiences such as athletic and music performances, creative experiences, aesthetic perceptions, the experience of love and sex, childbirth, acute moments of insight and understanding, religious or mystical experiences or overcoming profound challenges. He described them as, "any experience that comes close to perfection."

In 1954, Maslow took a deep dive into understanding these mystic experiences, first treated as a positive experience by [William James](#), 1902, in his book, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, in which James discussed such experiences largely in a religious context. Maslow, after reading widely from Eastern religious thought, [Carl Jung](#), and others, designed a phenomenological approach with a prompt given to 190 college students to answer. From this prompt and his readings he created "an impressionistic, ideal, composite photograph" of the "**peak experience**" - a term he settled on as less religious and more generalizable to the population at large.

Maslow outlined **seventeen characteristics** describing what the cognition was like in the throes of peak experience, "these transient states of absolute Being":

- Complete absorption
- Richer perception
- Disorientation in physical time and place
- Intrinsic reward of the experience
- Ego transcendence
- Dichotomy transcendence
- Momentary loss of fears, anxieties, and inhibitions
- Greater acceptance and forgiveness of oneself and others
- Heightened aestheticism, wonder, awe, and surrender
- Fusion of the person and the world

Maslow believed that peak experiences offer the opportunity to see more of the **whole truth**, unimpeded by the many cognitive distortions evolved (within us, in our lifetime) to protect us from psychic pain. He noted that peak experiences are often profound and transformative for

the person experiencing them - some so intense “as to remove certain neurotic symptoms forever after.”

Maslow noted that any person in any of the peak experiences **can temporarily take on** many characteristics of self-actualizing people. What really distinguishes self-actualizing people, Maslow argues, is that peak experiences come much more frequently and intensely. He published *Religion, Values and Peak Experiences* in 1964.

The Science of Transcendent Experiences

Andrew Newberg, neuroscientist at Thomas Jefferson University, and his colleagues, published *Why God Won't Go Away* in 2001. From Tibetan monks to Franciscan nuns, Newberg scanned the brains of expert meditators who had encountered intense feelings of unity - transcendent experiences. He found that regardless of their spiritual beliefs, **the very same brain area was implicated** - the superior parietal lobe, a region of the brain associated with spatial body awareness.

David Yadon and colleagues from the University of Pennsylvania published a review article in 2017, “*The Varieties of Self-Transcendent Experience*.” These researchers defined transcendent experiences as “transient mental states marked by **decreased self-salience** and increased feelings of connectedness.” They noted, “This line of reasoning emphasizes how most fears and anxieties come from the prospect of damage to one’s physical or social self. Therefore, when the self temporarily disappears, so, too, may some of these fears and anxieties.” At its most extreme, transcendence is a feeling of complete unity with everything - “Absolute Unitary Being”.

But not all transcendent experiences are mystical. There are a variety that **differ in their intensity and degree** of unity with the world, a continuum, ranging from becoming deeply absorbed in an engrossing book, sports performance or creative activity (what psychologist Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi refers to as the **flow experience**), to experiencing an extended mindful meditation retreat, to feeling gratitude, to merging with a loved one, to experiencing awe at a beautiful sunset or the stars above all the way up to the great mystical illumination. While transcendent experiences differ in different ways, they all have in common **weakening of the boundaries** to connectedness with others, the world, and one’s own self.

William James observed, “It is as if the opposites of the world, whose contradictoriness and conflict make all our difficulties and troubles, were melted into unity.” Modern research suggests these states of consciousness are related to **positive mental health** - including positive changes in family life, reduced fear of death, better health, and a greater sense of purpose - as well as motivation for increased altruism and prosocial behaviors. **Self-loss** during these experiences appears to be very conducive to health and growth

Healthy Self-Loss

When we are in the grips of insecurity there is often a sense that we don’t know who we are, our real identity. The world often feels less real, and we feel disconnected. **This form of self-loss,**

which is deeply impacted by the environment (*that we choose to exist with*), often results in excessive self-focus and a lack of healthy integration with the rest of one's personality structure.

Healthy self-loss does not involve fear. Rather it is characterized by curiosity and openness to the present moment and one's inner experiences, what Mark Leary refers to as the "**hypo-egoic**" state of consciousness. He argued that "people in this state focus primarily on the present situation; introspect minimally on their thoughts, motives, and feelings; think about and evaluate themselves primarily in concrete, as opposed to abstract, ways; and pay relatively little attention to other people's perceptions and evaluations of them." This is similar to the quiet ego. A substantial **quieting of the ego** is strongly related to having a strong, not weak, sense of self and with increased, not weakened, authenticity.

Heightened sense of connectedness **is not contrary** to a heightened sense of individuality, and Maslow pointed out that this dichotomy is resolved among self-actualizing people. He noted, "The fact is that self-actualizing people are simultaneously the most individualistic and the most altruistic and social and loving of all human beings. The fact that we have in our culture put these qualities at opposite ends of a single continuum is apparently a mistake that must be corrected."

Awe: The Everyperson's Spiritual Experience

"The most fortunate are those who have a wonderful capacity to appreciate again and again, freshly and naively, the basic goods of life, with awe, pleasure, wonder and even ecstasy."
Abraham Maslow, *Toward a Psychology of Being* (1962)

While the concepts of awe and wonder have a long history in philosophy and religion, William James and Maslow helped bring them to psychology. From a 2003 paper, "*Approaching Awe, a Moral, Spiritual, and Aesthetic Emotion*", written by Dacher Keltner and Jonathan Haidt, the authors argued that there are two main cognitive appraisals that are central to awe experiences: the **perception of vastness** and the **struggle to mentally process the experience**. Vastness can also be conceptual, such as contemplating eternity. Awe is an unusual and complex emotion because it mixes emotions that don't tend to go together, such as ecstasy and fear.

Studies since the above paper have linked awe with increased life satisfaction, a feeling that more time is available, increased altruism, and decreased aggressive attitudes. Awe can also temporarily increase both supernatural belief and the tendency to perceive human agency in random events. From surveys, things that elicited awe experience were natural scenery, childbirth, buildings and monuments, powerful leaders, grand theories or ideas, music, art, and specific epiphanies.

Per the author and others, they developed via surveys and from those developed the **Awe Experience Scale** (*selfactualizationtests.com*). This scale includes **six facets**:

Vastness - experiencing something greater than myself

Need for Accommodation - I found it hard to comprehend the experience in full

Time - I sensed things momentarily slow down

Self-Diminishment - I felt that my sense of self was diminished

Connectedness - I felt closely connected to humanity

Physical Sensations - I had chills

The research found that the six facets were substantially related to one another and that they **tend to co-occur** during the awe experience. The only uncomfortable emotions that were related to the experience were “stressed, nervous, overwhelmed.” This is consistent with awe being a unique mix of exaltation and fear/reverence. The largest personality trait associated with the awe experience was **openness to experience**. The findings suggest that certain spiritual practices, rituals, and interventions are able to increase awe and other transcendent experiences for all of us - regardless of our religious beliefs.

Mind-Altering Interventions

Psychedelics such as **LSD** and **psilocybin** have helped addicted smokers quit smoking, terminal patients face death with less depression and anxiety, treatment-resistant depression (TD) patients decrease their levels of anxiety and increase their mood and openness to experience and veterans substantially lower their PTSD and intrusive flashbacks.

MDMA-assisted psychotherapy also shows promise in treating PTSD as well as improving social anxiety among autistic adults. In the case of depression, psilocybin therapy may show even more progress in improving mood and openness to experience than traditional antidepressant treatment.

Per May Cosimano, via the Johns Hopkins Psilocybin Research Project, “that psilocybin can offer a means to reconnect to our true nature - our authentic self - and thereby help find meaning in our lives...I believe that the nature of our true self is love....**Yet very often we’re afraid to open ourselves to this connection so we put up barriers and wear masks.** If we are able to remove the barriers, to let down our defenses, we can begin to know and accept ourselves, thus allowing ourselves to receive and to give love.”

Of course, psychedelics aren’t the only path to such a colossal shift in perspective. A number of researchers have begun incorporating “**awe” induction techniques** in their work, showing participants awe-inspiring images and videos of architecture and natural scenery, then having them write or read about an awe experience or have them engage in meditation. Virtual Reality (VR) is a particularly promising tool for generating feelings of awe and can help hospitalized or disabled patients who would not have the opportunity to move around physically in the world.

While some forms of invasive brain stimulation technology exist - such as deep brain stimulation and electroconvulsive therapy - **noninvasive forms of brain stimulation** are showing promise in affecting well-being and transcendent experience. These noninvasive forms can increase insight, imagination, morality, learning, attention, as well as reductions in depressive rumination.

Healthy Integration of Mind-Altering Interventions

As technologies develop, it will be increasingly important to consider the ethical implications of their use. Part of what gives meaning to life is the struggle to overcome adversity. For Maslow,

the highest high seemed to follow the lowest low. He noted that peak experiences are seen in high proportion among those **“who have overcome adversity and who have been strengthened by it rather than weakened.”** We find through these types of experiences, that we don't need to live with the fear of that thing or process anymore.

Maslow believed there are **no shortcuts** to authentic, long-lasting self-actualization, and that a quick hit of transcendence without the hard work of inner integration can be dangerous. He noted, “I think an unearned Paradise becomes worthless.” Maslow believed the true magic was in the **integration** of peak experiences with one's ongoing stream of consciousness, used in the service of making yourself and the world a better place to live.

Chapter 8 - Theory Z: Toward the Farther Reaches of Human Nature

Considering the writings of Maslow and modern psychological research related to self-actualization and the heights of human nature, the author proposes the following definition of health transcendence:

Healthy transcendence is an emergent phenomenon resulting from the harmonious integration of one's whole self in the service of cultivating the good society.

In a nutshell, healthy transcendence involves harnessing all that you are in the service of realizing the best version of yourself so you can help raise the bar for the whole of humanity. It is not about being outside the whole, or feeling superior to the whole, but being a harmonious part of the whole of human existence. It is also not a level any human ever actually achieves, but it is a north star for all of humanity.

Transcenders

By 1967, Maslow realized that there belongs an additional motivation in his hierarchy of needs, not just a temporary peak experience - which anyone can experience, regardless of motivation. While many of the people he included under the umbrella of “self-actualizing people” were regularly motivated by health and growth, **their highest motivation** seemed to be a continual striving for transcendent experiences and transcendent values. Importantly, these people were **not primarily motivated by happiness**, and in fact many of them were continuously frustrated as they struggled to realize their higher vision for humanity - visions that were often gleaned from peak experiences.

He noted different levels of self-actualizers, but singled out a “transcender”, whose value system implied a path to enlightenment, “that is, the helping service to humanity or the helping of other people...and of **simply becoming better human beings** for others, as well as for themselves, and the finally the transcending of the ego.”

Maslow took these new insights and put them into a 1969 paper called **“Theory Z,”** echoing the distinction between “transcenders” and “merely healthy people.” He argued that merely healthy people fulfilled the expectations of **Douglas MacGregor's Theory Y:** free of deficiency needs, driven by actualization of their personalities and self-development of their uniqueness. Per

Maslow, "Such people live in the world, coming to fulfillment in it. They master it, lead it, and use it for good purposes."

He then argued that transcendents fulfill the expectations of Theory Y, but transcend it, having more frequent "illuminations or insights or cognitions which changed their view of the world or themselves, perhaps occasionally, perhaps as a usual thing." He proposed that they are "**metamotivated**" by **higher ideals** and values that go beyond the satisfaction of basic needs and the fulfillment of one's unique self. They are devoted to a calling outside oneself, a commitment to the ultimate values, or the B-values, the values of Being. **His list of B-values includes:**

Truth
Goodness
Beauty
Justice
Meaningfulness
Playfulness
Aliveness
Uniqueness
Excellence
Simplicity
Elegance
Wholeness

In transcendents, when asked what makes life worth living, why they do what they do, they often cited the above values - **there was no further reason why** they devoted so much time to their work. The values were not in service to anything else, or a means to an end. **They just were**, and in the minds of the transcendents, irreducible to anything else. Maslow noted, "These values were worth dying for. Contemplating them, or fusing with them gives the greatest joy that a human being is capable of."

Transcendents are less "happy" than the simply healthy self-actualizers. They can be more ecstatic, more rapturous, and experience greater heights of "happiness", but they are prone - or maybe more prone - to a kind of **cosmic sadness or B-sadness** over the stupidity of other people, their self-defeat, their blindness. Perhaps this comes from the contrast between what actually is and the ideal world that the transcendents can see so easily and vividly, and which in principle so easily attainable. **Perhaps this is a price these people** have to pay for their direct seeing of the beauty of the world, of the saintly possibilities of human nature, of the nonnecessity of so much human evil and stupidity and willfulness, of the seemingly obvious necessities for a good world, for human goodness rather than for higher IQs or greater expertness at some atomistic job.

Viewed holistically, the characteristics of transcendents represent a complete worldview, similar to what Maslow referred to as “healthy childishness,” or a “second naivete.” A transcendent is able to **fluidly navigate** both the D-realm and B-realm of existence.

Theory Z worldview is congruent with other prominent theories of ego development, such as the “integrated” level in Loevinger’s stages of development, the “ego integrity” and “generativity” stages of Erik Erikson’s stages of psychosocial development and the interindividual stage of Robert Kegan’s constructive development theory.

Theory Z worldview is strikingly similar to the modern psychological research on **wisdom** and is conceptualized in the literature as involving integration among cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions. From the perspective of Theory Z, you are able to look at all the human needs - lovingly and nonjudgmentally - from the **highest vantage point possible**, viewing them not as separate from one another but as **integrated and harmonious**. This vantage point isn’t tethered to your own self-identity, although if need be, it can still clearly see it all.

Becoming a whole person involves a hierarchical integration of security, growth, and transcendence. We need not pit these realms of being against one another; at the highest level of integration **they fuse into a single whole**.

What Humans Could be

The authors thoughts on what humans could be:

First, Theory Z **expands the scope of topics** that are open to scientific investigation. A number of modern day researchers from a variety of disciplines within psychology are examining the cultural, evolutionary, and biological foundations of our higher nature.

Second, Theory Z offers a **new image of relationships** - from friendship to family to romantic love to sex. B-love looks very different from D-love.

Third, a true humanistic education involves **educating the whole child** and their unique goals, dreams, and aspirations as valuable and that schools were also a place full of wonder, awe, and self-actualization. **Instilling a love of learning** well beyond the classroom would be instilling an important B-value to students.

Fourth, imagine if we treated clinical patients as **whole people first** and foremost, and their clinical DSM-related symptoms as secondary. What many people need is healthy integration of the “dark side”, not a cordoning off of their strongest potentialities. Imagine if frustrated idealism could be encouraged, rather than something that needs to be **medicated** and cut off from the rest of their being.

Fifth, Theory Z worldview also allows us to experience **greater depths of joy**, calling this sort of joy associated with B-values, “metahedonism.” Pushing towards the B-realm of existence can be the antidote to discontent and stress.

Sixth, Theory Z worldview allows for the possibility of **healthy interactions among those who have different religious or political beliefs**. Liberals and conservatives can complement each other, and the felt sense of the “sacred” - reverence, mystery, wonder, and awe - can be experienced by anyone, anywhere. **Political chaos** and inequality breed antagonism, distrust, and cynicism because they activate our deepest insecurities. Opportunistic politicians with a quest for glory can craft their message in just such a way to tap into the power of the D-realm of existence, speaking the language of hate and fear.

Finally, the realization of healthy transcendence offers a **new vision of civilization**. The purpose and values of the person can be synergistic with what’s good for society. Maslow suggested that the healthiest societies are those in which “virtue pays” - in other words, societies that reward people who behave virtuously, rather than rewarding those with the most money or the most prestige and accomplishments. We can simultaneously work on making the good society better and making ourselves better. Improving the good society **starts from within** - each and every one of us.

The Ultimate Unknown

“We can experience union with something larger than ourselves and in that union find our greatest peace.” William James

Irvin Yalom notes, “Though the physicality of death destroys us, the idea of death may save us. In the state of full-mindedness of one’s own existence, one marvel’s not about the way things are but that they are.” Working with terminally ill cancer patients via his psychotherapy work, Yalom noticed that the confrontation of death is **often highly transformative**, leading to a rearrangement of life’s priorities, a sense of liberation, an enhanced sense of living in the present, a vivid appreciation of elemental nature and life, deeper communication with loved ones and fewer interpersonal fears.

Three characteristics that seem to be especially predictive of growth after an extended period of death awareness are **mindfulness, openness to experiences, and having a quiet ego**, characteristics that are part and parcel of the B-realm of existence.

Sources of [personal meaning in life increases in proportion to commitment to higher levels of meaning. A **personal sense of meaningfulness** involves things that integrate self-actualization with transcendence, such as generativity, appreciation, inner harmony, growth, values, spirituality, creativity, care, and love. Lower down on the list are things like fun, individualism, achievement, tradition, order, and comfort.

The Plateau Experience

“..the sacred is in the ordinary, that it is to be found in one’s daily life, in one’s neighbors, friends, and family, in one’s backyard.” Abraham Maslow

While peak experiences are ecstatic and momentary, Maslow argued that **plateau experiences** are more enduring and cognitive and involve seeing the extraordinary in the ordinary. He referred to the form of consciousness present as “unitive consciousness”, defined “as the simultaneous perception of the **sacred and the ordinary**.” He believed that these experiences were more voluntary than peak experiences and could be deliberately sought and eventually taught.

Maslow’s Theory Z was partly for the benefit of the world - and partly aspirational for himself. As he was working through his issues, he was *simultaneously* discovering higher possibilities within himself, which he was then eager to share as possibilities that lie within all human nature. By embracing his own full humanness and **opening himself up to a deeper connection to the everyday world**, Maslow eventually found his greatest peace, deepest sense of completion, and confidence that future generations could and would carry on his life’s work and vision.

Live More in the B-Realm

Below are some B-exercises that Maslow was working on during the last few years of his life:

Sample things. Trust your curiosity to lead you to passions and ultimately, purpose.

Keep your eye on the ends, not just the means.

Get out of the D-realm by deliberating going into the B-realm.

Cultivate periods of quiet, meditation, “getting out of the world”.

Embrace your past. It’s just a story about you.

Be compassionate with yourself and forgiving

Ask yourself: How would this situation look to a child?

Practice gratitude often.

Never underestimate the power of a single individual.

Do not let anyone force roles on you.

Do not conceal your ignorance. Admit it.

Engage in deliberate, experimental philanthropy.

Contemplate people who are admirable, beautiful, lovable, or respectable. This is B-realm ruminations.

Try a close-up fascination with the small world - insects, sand, blades of grass.

Be with babies or children for a long period of time.

Contemplate your life from a historian’s point of view.

Look at a person as if you are viewing them for the last time.

Imagine yourself to be dying, then imagine how vivid and precious everything and everyone looks.

While we should not strive for perfection, **each of us is capable** of transcendence in this brief, suffering, and yet sometimes miraculous lifetime. We each have the potential **to be a guide** to future generations, to help them fill out the pages of their life’s book in their own style. There is a wide world out there, with many blank pages to fill in your own style, and in such a way that you not only existed but existed well.

Appendix 1

Seven Principles for Becoming a Whole Person

1. Accept your whole self, not just your best self.
2. Learn to trust your self-actualizing tendency.
3. Become aware of your inner conflicts.
4. Look out for lopsided development.
5. Create the best version of yourself.
6. Strive for growth, not happiness.
7. Harness the power of your dark side

“One can choose to go back toward safety or forward toward growth. Growth must be chosen again and again; fear must be overcome again and again.”

Abraham Maslow

Author - Scott Barry Kaufman, born 1979 - American cognitive psychologist

<https://scottbarrykaufman.com/>

Abraham Maslow, April 1, 1908 - June 8, 1970, American humanistic psychologist

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abraham_Maslow