

Discovering the Real Me

A Student Text Book in Character Education

9th Grade

The Interreligious and International Federation for World Peace is an NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations

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Discovering the Real Me
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About the Universal Peace Federation, the Interreligious and International Federation for World Peace and the International Educational Foundation

The *Discovering the Real Me* series represents a unique collaboration of an international team of educators and writers. The original versions, appearing under the titles *My World and I* (Russian) and *My Journey in Life* (English), were produced by the International Educational Foundation (IEF) and are the foundational texts for this student textbook: *Discovering the Real Me: A Student Textbook in Character Education* and its accompanying teacher's manual.

Founded in 2000 by Dr. and Mrs. Sun Myung Moon, the Interreligious and International Federation for World Peace (IIFWP) is a global movement, led by a worldwide network of Ambassadors for Peace from all professional fields. These leaders, transcending barriers of race, religion, nationality and culture, pursue lasting peace for all humanity through lives of service to others. IIFWP sponsors a wide range of programs that include seminars, service projects, publications, sports activities and educational projects. *Discovering the Real Me: A Student Textbook in Character Education* is a central element of the IIFWP character education initiative that is being implemented in many countries around the world.

The Universal Peace Federation (Peace Federation) was founded by Dr. and Mrs. Sun Myung Moon on September 12, 2005, as a global alliance of religious, academic, and political and civic leaders, as well as organizations joined together to promote peace. This organization is animated by a vision of a unified world in which all people live together in harmony, cooperation and co-prosperity. The Peace Federation provides a mechanism for cooperative peace-building efforts among governmental, religious, cultural, educational and civil society representatives, all working together with mutual respect and a shared commitment to cooperation and good governance.

The launching of the Universal Peace Federation represents a new stage in the development of the mission and programs of IIFWP. In this respect, the launch of the Universal Peace Federation is not the establishment of a new organization. Rather, it represents the inauguration of a new mission and set of responsibilities that build on the achievements of the past. As such, the IIFWP from this point forward will be known as the Universal Peace Federation, or simply the Peace Federation.

The Universal Peace Federation and the Ambassadors for Peace work with many other organizations to achieve world peace through teaching universal principles. One of these organizations is the International Educational Foundation (IEF). IEF was founded by Dr. and Mrs. Moon in 1990 to promote moral and ethical values in education. Since that time it has published many textbooks and other educational materials in several languages for various age levels, while conducting numerous conferences for scholars and educators and training workshops for teachers throughout the world. The ideals of IEF coincide with those of the Peace Federation; therefore, cooperation on publications and their distribution is natural and desirable. *Discovering the Real Me*, both the student text and teacher's manual, is the result of the talents of many people associated both with IEF and with the Peace Federation and their dedication to educating for character.

Preface

Experience shows us that character education is most effective when it is a comprehensive, intentional effort of family, school and community working together. Character is affected by and affects all these interwoven levels of human existence. Good individuals form and are formed by good families, good families make up vibrant communities, vibrant communities comprise a healthy nation, and healthy nations create peace in the world. Hence, character education is more than an individual concern. It is a key to world peace.



The IIFWP/UPF Character Education Initiative is a multi-pronged approach that includes a school curriculum and program, family and community educational programs, as well as embedded service learning for all ages. This holistic approach is unique in character education, which primarily emphasizes the impact of schools on character. The Character Education Initiative is designed to guide and support young people to accomplish the three most essential goals in life, namely:

- 1) to grow to become a person of mature character
- 2) to build healthy relationships and a loving family
- 3) to make a positive contribution to society.

Further, while most character education programs emphasize the development of individual virtues, the IIFWUP/UPF Character Education Initiative encompasses all virtues under the rubric of its motto:

“LIVING FOR THE SAKE OF OTHERS”
or
“ALTRUISTIC LOVE”

Each component of the program is developed with that motto at the core. The key virtues that will be initially emphasized in this program are respect, responsibility, honesty, trustworthiness, compassion, integrity, gratitude, perseverance and commitment—all of which are components and expressions of altruistic love.

Our hope is that these books will benefit youth throughout the world by contributing to their character development and will assist them in making wise choices in relationship to themselves, to their families, to their communities, nations, and our shared world.

Dr. Chung Hwan Kwak
Chairman, IIFWP

Dr. Joon Ho Seuk
President, IEF

Discovering the Real Me: A Student Textbook in Character Education

Grade 9

Part I: What Do We Live For?

1. What Kind of Person Will I Be?
2. Do You Want to Be Happy?
3. Who Am I?
4. Masculinity and Femininity
5. Order and Harmony
6. My Purpose in Life

Part II: Becoming a Person of Good Character

7. The Process of Growth
8. Human Nature
9. Conscience
10. Honesty
11. Why We Don't Want to Change
12. Good and Bad
13. Freedom and Responsibility
14. Self-Control
15. The Teenage Years
16. Peer Pressure: Smoking, Drinking and Drugs
17. The Value of Life

PART I: What Do We Live For?

Introduction

Michelangelo's famous statue of David (a biblical hero and king) is considered one of the greatest works of art in the world. When people asked Michelangelo how he made his beautiful masterpiece, Michelangelo said he took a huge piece of marble and chipped away all the parts that did not look like David. He made the marble resemble the image in his mind and created one of the world's finest works of art.

If we are going to create something wonderful, we must have a good image in our minds of what it will look like first. If you want to make your life a work of art (or even just satisfying and worthwhile) you need to develop a clear vision of the kind of person you would like to be and how you can become like that. You are the artist of your own life.



This course, *Discovering the Real Me: A Student Textbook in Character Education*, is designed to help you develop a good vision for your life and show you how to make that vision come true.

In the first chapter, you will be asked to envision what kind of person you want to become. That's a tough one. An easier question is: Do you want to be happy?—the title of the second chapter. No doubt you do. What kind of person you are is actually very closely related to how happy you are.

The happiest people are people of virtue. They are people who care for others. They are respectful of others and respect themselves. They are responsible, honest, trustworthy, grateful, persevering (they stick to something, even when it's hard). They are full of integrity, able to make and keep commitments, compassionate, empathetic, and good citizens. These kinds of people experience a lot of joy and satisfaction in life. If you have some or all of these qualities, you are already experiencing rewards and happiness in your life. Yet all of us can use some help developing the virtues we do not have and strengthening the ones we do have.

Who is the most virtuous person *you* know?

The next three chapters are devoted to presenting some important principles that are

necessary to know and understand in order to achieve our goals in life. We all know the physical universe is governed by certain scientific laws (gravity, for example) that we have to follow if we're going to be happy and healthy.



There are certain "metaphysical" laws, too, that govern human social life, and we need to know and follow these laws in order to be happy and healthy too. We call these laws "moral" and "ethical" principles. If we are ignorant of or violate these laws, we will suffer the negative consequences. By understanding and following these laws, we can cultivate a mature, fulfilled, and joyful character. We can learn how to deal with intense passions and pressures from within and without. We can feel that we are in control of our lives, not victims of our environment or of controlling people or of our own confusing emotions. As Booker T. Washington said, "*Character is power.*" The last chapter in this section deals with the question of our purpose in life. If we can understand our purpose, this will give our lives impetus and focus. We can feel the significance of our being, and it will motivate us to live life to the fullest so that we can become all that we were meant to be.

No doubt, this will be a lifelong project. Yet in the end there is no more important task we will face. Let us begin our journey in life together.



CHAPTER 1

What Kind of Person Will I Be?

How would you like to live in a society where everyone “lives happily ever after”? That’s just a fairy tale...or is it?

Most of us have experienced how difficult it is to find the balance between making others happy and doing what makes “me” happy. It’s great when the two coincide, but what about when they don’t? What if your parents want you to be one way, but you want to be another way? What if your friends want you to do things you don’t like but you don’t want to lose your friends? What if your teachers expect so much work from you it means you have to sacrifice some fun time?

Life is full of choices. For instance, you are about to go out with friends. You expect it to be pleasant and fun, even though you’re just going to hang around together. Suddenly another friend calls and says he is in trouble and needs your help.

What do you do? Helping someone who is in trouble isn’t going to be any fun. Still, he’s your friend and he needs you—more than your other friends who just want to hang out. What’s the best thing to do? You have to make a choice.



Or imagine a different situation. Your friends have invited you to a party, and you are eager to go. But you know that your parents will not approve of your plans because they don’t like you to go to parties where there are no adults. What will you do? Lie to your parents about where you are going? Give up the party? Once again, you are faced with a choice. Every day, several times a day, we come across situations that require us to make a moral choice—a choice between right and wrong. Sometimes it is easy to make a decision, but often we are really at a loss. These little everyday decisions have a lot to do with forming our character and determining our future life. That is why it is so important sometimes to stop and consider a very basic question:

What kind of person am I, and what kind of person do I want to become?

Then it is important to ask: ***"Will the choice I'm making now bring me closer to being***

that kind of person, or will it take me further away?"

Examples of some every day choices we face are:

"My friend's hair looks awful in that new style. Should I be honest or tell a 'white lie'?"

"I want to spend money on that new electronic gadget I saw in the store. But it's my friend's birthday tomorrow. Should I get him a cheap gift and spend the money on myself, or should I get him a good gift and wait for the new electronic gadget?"

"I know I should treat people with respect, but that new kid comes from a different country and talks and dresses funny. Everyone's being mean to her. Should I be nice?"

"Vince says if I don't have sex with him it means I don't really love him. Should I do it to prove I love him or should I risk him breaking up with me?"



What hard choices have you had to make this week?

To aid us in making choices, it is helpful to have a system of moral values and principles that can help to guide us through these difficult decisions. A basic understanding of spiritual and moral realities is vital for every person—the proper formation of our character depends on it. This book will help you establish a set of moral values and principles that can guide your choices in life.

But Why Should I Be Good?

You have probably faced this question more than once. Why should I be good? Why

can't I live just as I please? It is because being good means to be truly human. It is the perspective of the authors of this book that people are by nature good. They don't always look it. They don't always act it. But deep down inside, every person is good and wants to live according to that intrinsic good nature. If we aren't good, we get out of harmony with ourselves and with others and unhappy consequences follow.

Imagine the following simple example: You are tired of brushing your teeth every day, morning and evening. Isn't it boring? So you decide from this moment on you will never brush your teeth again. From your body's viewpoint it is a bad choice, and you soon experience the effects of that choice. In a couple of months, you develop cavities. They're painful and unsightly. What is worse, if you keep up with your bad choice, eventually you lose all your teeth. And so, the final outcome of your choice to disregard the principles of good oral hygiene is that you must spend the rest of your life eating oatmeal.

In the moral sphere, things are more complicated, but the general principle is the same. If we follow moral law and moral principles, good things will follow. If we don't, there are unpleasant consequences.

Choices Affect Who We Are Becoming

Values and principles shape who we are and what we are becoming. Every day we make countless moral decisions, even if we don't realize it. The decisions and choices we make, however small they may be or seem to be, influence the kind of person we become. A wise saying captures this truth:

Plant an act; reap a habit.

Plant a habit; reap a virtue or a vice.

Plant a virtue or a vice; reap a character.

Plant a character; reap a destiny.

A few definitions:

A **habit** is a regular pattern of acts.

A **virtue** is a good habit, an inner *tendency* to accomplish moral good.

A **vice** is a bad habit, an inner tendency to accomplish moral evil.

Character is the combination of our virtues and vices.

Unless we become conscious of the significance of our daily choices, we will be traveling on our journey in life with our eyes closed. Some of our choices involve ordinary things such as what to wear, what to eat, when to sleep, and so on. However important such choices may seem to be, they do not affect the development of our personality and character to the same extent that our moral choices do—the choices we make between doing right and doing wrong.

The choices we make at this time can have a deep impact on our character and view of the world. Likewise, our future success and effectiveness in life are largely determined

by the choices we make now.

As you embark on your journey of discovery, we hope that this course will help you to understand yourself better and help direct the values you will live by and the choices you make for the rest of your life.

Questions for Reflection

1. What kind of person are you?

2. What kind of person do you want to become?

3. What do you need to do to become that kind of person?

4. Why should you be good?

5. What are the values and principles by which you live?

6. Do you think that people are basically good, or not?

7. What do you want to be doing ten years from now?

8. What are the qualities of a good person?

9. What aspects of yourself would you like to change or develop?

Exercise: “My Tree of Life”



Unless we have clear moral values, our inner life will be confused and we will be people who are controlled by others and by our circumstances. Life will be something that happens to us rather than what we make of it. One of our greatest tasks in life is to create "my true self," a person who is in control of his/her life and influences his/her circumstances. Therefore, in this exercise you will clarify your ideas and moral values by discovering their source and seeing how they affect your actions. We use the symbol of a tree to help you clarify your ideas and basic concerns. Please complete the following statements:

1. The **soil** represents your cultural and socio-economic environment. Concentrate on the areas that concern you most.

I was brought up to believe that:

work is...

money is...

religion is...

my nationality is...

my race is...

man is...

woman is...

sex is...

marriage is...
the family is...
freedom is...
the law is...
learning is...
success is...
a friend is...

2. The roots of the tree represent your insights into the fundamental questions of your existence.

I believe that:

There is a higher power that directs our existence

There is no higher power directing our existence

I will exist after death

death ends all

evil does exist

evil does not exist

I can know the truth

I cannot know the truth

I am free

I am not free

I am basically good

I am basically evil

human beings are loving and caring

human beings are selfish and hostile

school is a joy

school is a burden

I believe that my life comes from...

Truth for me is...

I am living for...

Each day I am moving towards...

3. The trunk of the tree represents your beliefs about the nature of a human being. Check the statement that you believe and give the reason.

a. *I am basically good because...*

I am basically evil because...

b. *I am free and responsible for my actions because...*

I am not free and not responsible for my actions because...

c. *I am basically selfish because...*

I am basically caring and kind toward others because...

d. *My beliefs shape my personality because...*

My personality shapes my beliefs because...

4. The branches of the tree represent your values. List the things that are important to you and why (for example: people, activities, character traits).

5. The tree's flowers symbolize the emotions you experience in your life. List the dominant ones that you experience towards the following:

desirable

undesirable

myself

friends

family

school

6. The fruits of the tree represent your actions. List your characteristic ways of behaving in the following roles and activities:

desirable

undesirable

son/daughter

brother/sister

friend

student

neighbor

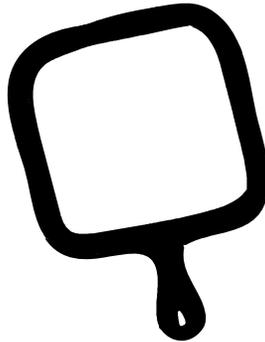
athlete

work

religious faith

leisure time

Reflection Exercise: "Who am I?"



Write a letter to an unknown person. Introduce yourself and tell him or her who you are. Describe your appearance, background, activities, interests and talents. You might include something about where you live, work, or go to school (the environment in which you spend your time) as well as something about the significant people in your life.

Read the letter back to yourself, imagining that you are the stranger who has received it. Write down your reactions to the letter.

Dear _____

Reaction:

CHAPTER 2

Do You Want To Be Happy?

Everyone without exception wants to be happy. It is the ultimate motivation behind everything we do. The expectation of happiness, joy or satisfaction is implicit in all of our activities. For example, no one ever goes to a party thinking, "I haven't had a miserable time for ages! Maybe tonight will be my chance. I hope the music will be awful, the food stale, the people boring, and I'll be attacked by some drunks on the way home!"

Yet strangely, happiness seems to be one of those things that we can never find by pursuing it directly, as expressed in the following Japanese haiku:

Chase a butterfly, And it will flutter away, Concentrate elsewhere, It will land on your shoulder.

It is important to know what the real source of happiness is so that we don't end up chasing butterflies.

Usually we feel happy when our desires are fulfilled. When we are hungry, we desire something to satisfy our hunger. When we have eaten enough, our desire has been fulfilled and we feel happy. If there is someone we love, we long to be with him or her. When we finally meet, we feel very happy. Happiness is the natural result of the fulfillment of desire.

But does the fulfillment of every desire make us happy? We know of some desires, which when satisfied, make us happy up to a certain point, but make us miserable if we don't stop at the right time. For example, almost everybody likes ice cream, and just mentioning the word may have already *stimulated* your desire to have some. Most people can eat one ice cream cone and still want more. A few might be able to devour three or four without feeling ill, but do you think there are many who can eat ten cones without getting sick? As we say, there can be "too much of a good thing."



What is more, there are some desires that we should not try to satisfy at all because, even though through them we may experience a momentary feeling of joy, in the long term we end up feeling deeply unhappy. Taking drugs is one obvious example, but consider the times when you may have done something that you knew in your heart was wrong. In these cases you may experience a kind of happiness, but it is likely tainted by a feeling of guilt that tends to remain long after the happiness has faded away.

For example, sometimes in the moment it feels good to shout at or curse somebody who has made us angry. Later, however, we feel pretty awful about it and about ourselves for having spoken ugly words. Nevertheless, it is often hard to resist the urge. A good part of growing up, in fact, involves learning to overcome these kinds of impulses so as to avoid their unpleasant consequences. Before we can do that, we have to learn to recognize which desires are healthy and good and which ones are unhealthy and damaging.

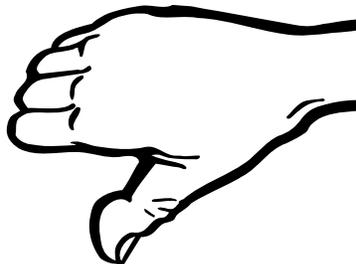
A Desire that Never Should Have Been Fulfilled

Eric Harris was the lead gunman who killed 12 classmates and a teacher at Columbine High School in April 1999. His diary and website were full of hatred. Harris had a strong desire to get back at the world for what he *perceived* as people's stupidity.

Harris had a desire to kill. He convinced his friend, Dylan Klebold, to enter into a plot with him to kill as many people as possible with bombs and guns. They thought it would be glorious.

Both gunmen turned their guns on themselves and died in pain and blood on the floor with their victims. Their names will go down in history as violent monsters most people shudder to think of. Many of their shooting victims--those who are not dead--are still paralyzed, or their families still traumatized by the deaths of their relatives at the hands of these madmen.

All of us feel hatred at some time or another. We may feel a desire to hurt someone who has made us very angry or to take revenge. Yet this is an example of a desire that should not be fulfilled. The fulfillment of this desire will not bring us the happiness we want. Instead, it will only bring more trouble and sorrow, upon us and upon others.



Physical happiness

If you think about it, there are actually two kinds of happiness. One is a physical or external happiness that we generally associate with our bodies. This happiness involves physical comfort, good food, lots of sleep, and plenty of material things. The other is happiness of the mind, or inner happiness. It would be great if we could always experience both at the same time, but often it is not like that. Often, we have physical or external comfort, but we don't feel good mentally, or internally. For instance, many people have all the food, sleep, and material things that they want, but they are lonely and unhappy if they have no close friends. At other times, people experience internal happiness but are unhappy physically. For instance, someone may be a happy person inside, full of virtues and joy, but come down with an illness and have to suffer. Both internal and external happiness are required.

Let's consider for a moment just our physical health. We realize that staying healthy requires observing certain natural laws. We know it's important to eat the right foods, get enough sleep, exercise and so on. We also know there are other laws, the observance of which strongly influences our life. For example:

- You're leaning over the balcony of your tenth floor apartment when you see your best friend, whom you've wanted to see all week, walking along the street. If you use the usual means to get down to the street (taking the stairs or the elevator), you may not have enough time to catch him. The quickest way, or course, is to jump, but in this case the law of gravity will ensure that the end result will most likely be your death.



If we want to grow up and be safe and healthy, we must live in accordance with natural physical law. We are not born with knowledge of such things. We have innate desires and must learn the best way to fulfill them. We do this partly through experience, partly through being taught, and partly through our own research.

Internal happiness

As with our physical being, there are certain ways of acting that promote healthy emotional growth and other ways that are unhealthy, ultimately causing pain and unhappiness, in accordance with universal moral law. As you will see throughout this course, spiritual and moral laws exist which are more than just a matter of personal opinion or some old-fashioned social convention. In other words, you cannot just choose or invent spiritual laws any more than you can change the law of gravity. Human experience tells us that moral or spiritual laws are as real as those that govern the natural world, even if their effect is not immediately recognized. Just as we know that our body functions best when it lives in harmony with the laws of nature, so also our mind is healthy and happy when it is in harmony with spiritual law.

A wise person learns from the mistakes of others.

A person with common sense learns from his own mistakes.

A fool never learns.

We learn about spiritual laws in much the same way that we learn about physical laws: experience, being taught, and our own research. In addition, spiritual understanding relies heavily on the example of others, on intuition and on the cultural norms with which we grew up. In history, religions have been the source of much wisdom, as they have dealt with profound questions of the origin and purpose of life, good and evil, death and our ultimate destiny, and how best to live. It is interesting that religion has been at the root of all human culture. Whether we are believers or not, we cannot ignore the impact religions have had on our spiritual knowledge.

The path to happiness

Can people be happy without being good? Can a person live a selfish and immoral life and still be happy in the end? Can a person who simply seeks his own pleasure truly be happy?

The ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle said that happiness came from living a virtuous life. One can experience momentary pleasure from committing an immoral act, but genuine and lasting happiness is possible only within the bounds of goodness.



Altruistic Love Brings Joy--Christa's Story

"I was running along the street to meet my two best friends. I was already a couple of minutes late and was a little afraid they'd go ahead without me. We were going to go to the park. All the flowers were in bloom, we expected to see lots of people there, and they were bringing snacks. I knew we'd have fun.

A little old lady with a walker stopped me on the street and asked me if I would help her get to her house. She said her nurse was sick that day, and she had tried to take her daily walk, but now she felt weak. I hesitated, thinking of my friends, but then I thought, "I've always heard I should love my neighbor." So I took her home--boy, did she walk slow!--and helped her get into her house.

She tried to give me a couple of dollars, but I turned her down.

As soon as I got back onto the street, this wave of joy just burst inside of me. I felt so high, I nearly flew to my friends, who were waiting for me.

"What took you so long?" they teased me, but they weren't mad. When we got to the park, I practically started singing, I felt so good for having helped my neighbor."

The girl in the above example applied a moral principle to the choice she made: she had heard she was supposed to love her neighbor, so she chose to help the old lady, even if it meant putting her pleasure on hold. In the end, she experienced more joy and pleasure because of her good deed.

The path to happiness depends on our knowledge of those principles that operate in the world of nature and the world of the mind and heart, and living according to those principles. It means living virtuously. If we do, then we will experience the true joy and happiness we are looking for.

Questions for Discussion

1. What makes you happy?

2. Give some examples of physical happiness.

3. Give some examples of inner happiness.

4. Name some physical laws we must understand and live by in order to be happy.

5. Name some moral laws we must understand and live by in order to be happy.

6. Did you ever do something that brought you temporary but not lasting happiness?

7. Is it possible to be happy without being good?

8. What is the difference between happiness and pleasure?

9. What is the difference between happiness and fun?

CHAPTER 3

Who Am I?

"There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy."

William Shakespeare, Hamlet

The last chapter indicated that there are two kinds of happiness that human beings need and seek: physical, or external happiness (comfort, good food, material things, etcetera) and internal or spiritual happiness (joy, friendship, love). Human beings seek two kinds of happiness because there are two aspects to a human being: inner and outer.

Inner nature and outer form

In fact, if we think about it, we will realize that every being has two aspects or dimensions that co-relate. One we may call the "inner nature," the other the "outer form." Here are some examples:

	Inner nature	Outer form
Human Being	Mind	Body
Animal	Instinct	Body
Plant	Inner directive nature	Cells, Tissues
Mineral	Inherent nature	Matter/Energy

It is important to understand how these two aspects are related to each other. We will examine this principle in more detail below.

Invisible and visible

A driver with engine trouble is standing on the edge of the road. A repairman arrives, opens the hood, and investigates the trouble. Then he seizes a hammer and gives the engine a strong blow and the engine starts running again. The driver is amazed. But he is even more amazed when the man asks \$100 for the repairs. On the bill he reads:

1 hammer blow	\$5
"Know how"	<u>\$95</u>
Total:	\$100



You might think that this is an example of exploitation, but it shows that knowledge, although intangible, is valuable. Sometimes people say, “I only believe in things that are real and verifiable.” But if we think about it, there are many things that are real which we cannot touch, such as love, beauty, and knowledge. Can we see knowledge or put it in a bag? No, it is invisible.

Another way to understand this is to examine language. Words themselves are bearers of meaning. While one can see a word if it is written down, or hear it if it is spoken, meanings are invisible and intangible. Yet the whole purpose of language is to convey meaning. Words are arranged in a sentence in a particular order so as to convey meaning. When we read a novel by Robert Louis Stevenson, we can analyze his use of language, grammar and literary form, but if we stop there we miss an important dimension of the book. In the same way, when we look at a painting like the Mona Lisa, if we just look at what kinds of paints and colors were used and ignore its intangible dimension, we will miss out on what has made that work of art famous and enduring for hundreds of years. It is the invisible aspect of a thing that determines its value.

The same principle applies to human character. A woman may be physically beautiful but also vain, dishonest, manipulative and selfish. Another woman may be rather plain or even unattractive but also modest, honest, sincere and unselfish. Many people are not good judges of character and do not know how to assess and value a person. They judge superficially and inappropriately, looking only at the outer form (the body) and fail to understand that it is the inner character (the mind) which decides how the outer form will act.

Piano Man



Eric was a borderline geek. He was pale, had pimples, and hair that might have been any color--sort of a mousy brown. He was one of those sub-average kids nobody paid much attention to--a high school nothing.

Then one day the music teacher started talking about Eric's piano playing. He said that music just poured out of Eric--that he had the potential to be a great pianist. He arranged for Eric to play a piano solo at the school concert.

Dull, ordinary, slightly geeky Eric was a master when he sat at the piano. The whole auditorium sat in awe-stricken silence as the music poured out and over them, charged with the passion of Eric's soul and the mastery of his flying fingers. No one

had known Eric had that much power and beauty and talent inside of him. They were impressed. From then on, people treated Eric with more respect.

Have you ever discovered some hidden talent or ability in someone who previously had seemed on the outside to be a "nothing"?

Order and chaos

Suppose that you have done exceptionally well at school and are to graduate with honors. Your parents promise to buy you a watch for doing so well.



How would you feel if they gave you a small bag of gray powder? Hurt? Perplexed? "But," your parents tell you, "It is the finest watch powder. It is a mixture of steel powder, gold powder, and ruby powder, all in the necessary proportions that make up a watch."

If your parents gave you such a present you would probably think they were crazy. There is a big difference between a watch and watch powder, even though the material is the same. The difference is qualitative: the method and manner in which the matter is arranged, the function of the watch, its ability to tell the time, and the creative investment of energy by the watchmaker. Someone constructed the watch for a purpose. It is the design, which started in the watchmaker's mind that determined the shape and structure of the watch. It is the design that adds value.

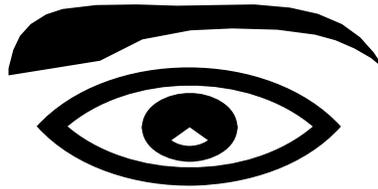
Another example could be taken from the world of minerals. The element carbon can exist in several quite different forms, such as coal, graphite and diamond. The carbon atoms in a lump of coal and a diamond are identical. Yet the first is soft, black, dull, plentiful, and cheap, while the second is hard, clear, dazzling, rare, and expensive. Imagine what would happen if a man gave his wife a lump of coal instead of a diamond on their fiftieth wedding anniversary! It is not the atoms themselves that determine value, but the way in which the atoms are arranged. The visible external structure is a reflection of the internal invisible structure.

The invisible inner aspect is the organizing principle that allows the visible outer

form to resemble its expression. Thus, the emotions we feel are expressed on our faces: When we are happy, we smile; when we are sorrowful, we cry. Our attitudes are clearly revealed through our “body language.” Since this is the case, we can learn and understand a lot about a person's character by studying his or her behavior and mannerisms. In much the same way, scientists try to uncover the hidden laws that govern nature by studying the phenomena they encounter.

For every event that has an explanation in natural terms, there is an invisible dimension underlying the reason why it happened; and it is this which gives it its ultimate meaning. The point is we must recognize both aspects, remembering that it is the internal dimension that determines the quality, meaning, and value of life.

Therefore, we would say that it is a basic principle of the universe that the inner aspect of something, including a human being, takes priority over the outer aspect. It is the inner aspect that holds the true essence of a person, being, or thing. When you are making choices for your life, listen to your inner self--your mind--not just your body's desires.



The Eyes--the Mirror of the Soul

There was a picture of Hillary Rodham Clinton in one of the major news magazines in the United States after her husband's sexual betrayal with White House assistant Monica Lewinsky. In the picture, Hillary Clinton was smiling. The magazine authors instructed readers to cover Hillary's smiling mouth with their hands and look at her eyes. With the external smile covered, the reader could see the expression in Hillary's eyes, which was one of sorrow, struggle, and pain. Sometimes, even when the mouth is smiling widely, the eyes show us more what is going on inside the person's mind and heart.

Questions for Discussion

1. Give some examples of inner nature and outer form in human beings, animals, plants and minerals.

2. How would you describe inner nature and outer form?

3. How is inner nature reflected in the outer form of humans? Animals?

4. Give an example of how inner nature determines the value of something.

5. What makes something or someone valuable?

6. In what ways do human beings express their inner nature?

7. Is the inner nature of identical twins the same or do they have unique characteristics? Do you know of any examples?

Situations for Discussion

1. If the inner aspect should take priority over the outer aspect, what should you do in the following situation?

Your father said not to go out alone after dark. You tell him he's being overprotective, but inside you know he's right. Your friend calls and wants you to come over. It's dark. You:

A. Slip out the door and go to your friend's house. It's only two blocks away.

B. Fret a little, then tell your friend you can't come.

2. Your teacher's voice is calm, but you notice her jaw is tense. You:

A. Urge the other students to settle down--the teacher's mad.

B. Shrug and continue goofing around--if she were mad, she'd yell.

3. You can't tell what animal is rubbing against your leg in the dark. It's gentle, curious, graceful, and emitting a soft rhythmic noise. You know this is the nature of a:

- A. Possum
- B. Bear cub
- C. Dog
- D. Cat

4. The alarm has gone off, and you know you have a test today and need to get a little extra studying in before breakfast. Your mind tells you you'd better get up. Your body wants to lie in bed. You:

- A. Make yourself get up. Good grades are important to your future.
- B. Figure, "To heck with the test. I'm tired. I need my rest."

Reflection Exercise: "My Inner and Outer Self"

Ask yourself this question: *What do my inner and outer selves look and feel like at this time in my life?* Think of your inner self as your internal, private world of emotional feelings, fantasies, memories, wishes, and thoughts.

Your outer self is the part of you that you show to the outside world, the ways in which you express yourself for others to see: your interests, activities, behavior, accomplishments, appearance, etc. Close your eyes and reflect on your inner and outer selves.

Some images may have come to you that reflect the quality of your inner and outer aspects at this time. They may be contrasting. For instance, you may feel very active inside, with many thoughts and feelings buzzing around. Your external world, on the other hand, might seem quiet, calm, or even dull.

Draw an expression of your inner and outer selves. Use any style that feels right for you: doodles, images, symbols, pictures. You may express your inner and outer aspects in one drawing, or it may seem more appropriate to create several.

Afterwards, look at what you have drawn. Think about what your artistic expression tells you.

CHAPTER 4

Masculinity and Femininity

In the previous chapter we saw that it is in the nature of the universe that everything has both an inner and outer dimension and that the inner nature is what is most important. This helps us make better decisions when we are choosing friends (or later spouses) and making other choices. We know that the internal is more important than the external, although the external is also important.

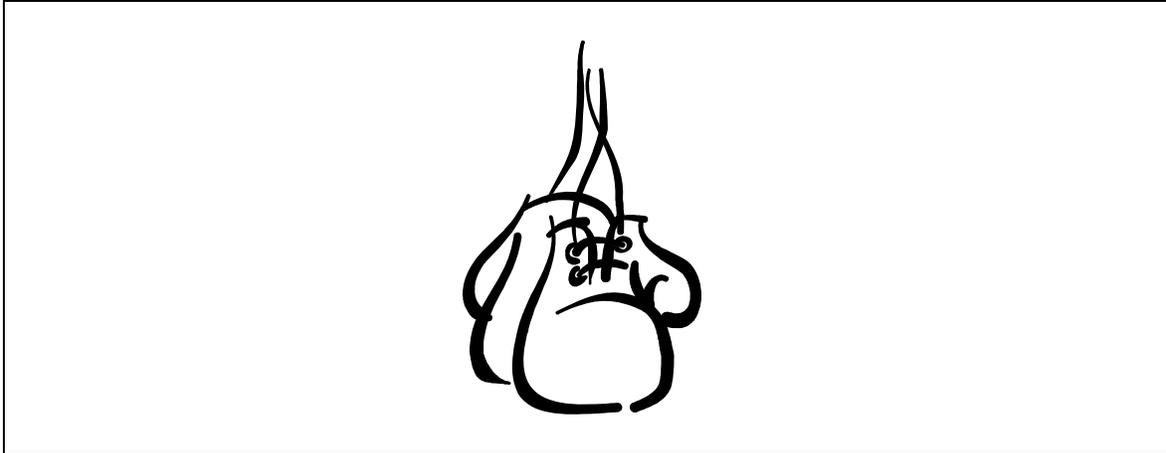
It is also in the nature of the universe that many things exist in pairs and are attracted to one another. Men and women are the most important example of this, but animals also exist as males or females. Even plants have a stamen and pistil—male and female parts. At the most basic level, positively charged protons and negatively charged electrons make up atoms through their mutual attraction. Atoms also have a charge that attracts them to other atoms of opposite charge to form molecules. DNA, the building block of life, is composed of two complementary strands. (Complementary means that each one has what the other lacks.)

Human being	Man	Woman
Animal	Male	Female
Plant	Stamen	Pistil
Mineral	Positive	Negative

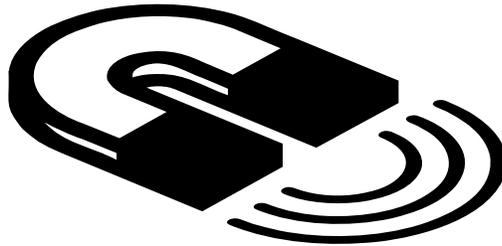
Some people believe that opposites repel each other and that progress comes about through conflict. But is this really true? Consider some examples from the realm of physics. A proton and an electron are attracted towards each other, as are the opposite poles of a magnet. In the realm of biology, male and female are attracted to each other, too. Although the masculine and feminine realms are in many ways very different from each other, some mysterious force compels men and women to seek each other, just as male and female animals seek one another and positive and negative charges seek one another. This is what is meant by the expression "Opposites attract."

"Rocky" and His Girl

In the movie *Rocky*, Rocky is asked why he likes a friend's sister so much. Rocky explains that the sister and he fill in each other's "gaps." What he lacks in his masculine personality is present in her feminine personality. What she lacks in her feminine personality is present in his masculine personality, so they are better together than apart. Each is more complete as a person because of what the other brings to the relationship. This is how "complementary opposites" work well together.



You can prove it to yourself with magnets. The north pole of one magnet will repel the north pole of another magnet; so will the south poles. It is when the north pole of one magnet is lined up with the south pole of another magnet that attraction pulls them together.



What is the result of the unions of these complementary opposites? The result is the creation of new combinations and new beings—progress and development. Thus, a grain of pollen unites with a pistil, and a seed for a new plant is formed. The union of male and female animals results in offspring. And, of course, every human being is the result of the sexual attraction and union of a man and a woman.

The masculine and feminine genius

Men and women need, want, and complement one another. What qualities one does not have, the other does. They are a perfect pair.

In recent years it has been the fashion to think that men and women were just the same except for their bodily structures. Now, however, extensive studies have shown that from conception to adulthood, in virtually every kind of society, boys and girls have differences in their bodies, brains, and temperaments due mainly to nature rather than nurture or upbringing. Boys tend to be more aggressive, exploratory, volatile, competitive, dominant, career- or goal-oriented, visual, abstract, impulsive, muscular, tall, and more compulsive sexually. Girls tend to be more patient, centered, nurturing, stable, cooperative, peaceful, communicative, relationships-oriented, verbal, sympathetic,

dependable and balanced. Scientific research has demonstrated significant differences between the female and male brain.

Of course, these tendencies are shaped and modified in various ways by our cultural environment. However, most of these characteristics are cross-cultural. At the same time, it is important to mention that these are generalized characteristics, and actual persons may deviate greatly from these characteristics.

The ancient Chinese philosophical text *I Ching, or Book of Changes*, describes what has been called the male and female genius and their interrelationship in life so that we may understand the difference in their essential natures. Within the symbol of the *Tao* (the Supreme Ultimate) shown below, it is clear that the masculine (*yang*) and feminine (*yin*) energies fit together perfectly. They are complementary. The dot within each form signifies the seed of the other. Within their duality is harmony and completion.



As expressed in the *I Ching*, *Yin* is the principle of maintaining relationships; it is the force that gathers and unites people. By nurturing her husband, her children, other people, plants and animals, a women's quality of devotion emerges and grows.

The male energy gives a man a sense of direction. When masculine energy has direction, it needs to be responsible. Responsibility and leadership are the main attributes of the male genius.

Healthy male energy perfectly complements female energy. The two energies are in complementary balance, which gives both men and women great vitality and harmony. There is an important disadvantage in relying exclusively on either the masculine or feminine energy. Neither aspect can realize its full potential without relating to its opposite. The masculinity inside us strives to actively organize and initiate, while our feminine aspect seeks to receive, integrate and harmonize.

Both are equally valuable and necessary. This is why men and women are drawn together so strongly and why in every society known in history there has been marriage.

In a marital relationship, when these essential natures are in balance, husband and wife can then represent the full splendor and dignity of their partnership. Marriage has been shown by scientists to be the best place for raising children. Harmonizing masculinity and femininity is an important building block of society. Men and women of

good character more readily harmonize their differences into the dynamic and versatile partnership marriage is meant to be.

Cooperation between Men and Women

When you think of a farmer, do you think of a man or a woman? Actually, women produce a great deal of the world's food! In some countries, they make up over 70% of the agricultural workforce.

In many places, men and women work together to farm in a complementary way. The strong men use the heavy machinery or large plowing animals to break up the earth and carry water; the long-working women seed, weed, harvest, clean and prepare the food for eating. Often, the men grow the large crops that are sold for cash to buy things the family cannot grow or make themselves; the women tend kitchen gardens that feed their families.

Together, men and women make a "dynamic duo"!

Exercise: "Complementary Pairs"

Copy the following chart onto a separate piece of paper that you have folded in half vertically. On the left side of the fold, write in the words from the left column; on the right side, fill in the blanks on the right column. The first few are filled out for you.

Complementary Pairs

inside	outside
front	rear
right	left
inner	
up	
long	
east	
north	
wide	
high	
active	
clear	
mountain	
positive	
initiating	
convex	
protruding	
dynamic	
strong	

male
sun
day
light

Questions for Discussion

1. What are some of the psychological and physical differences between men and women?

2. What are some of the differences between boys and girls?

3. What are some of the ways in which men and women complement each other?

4. What are some of the ways in which boys and girls complement each other?

Reflection Exercise: "A Man's World"

You have become temporarily invisible. You are visiting a community very far away from your home. You have never been here before, but you notice immediately that there is something strange about this place. It is called Manville, and there are no women to be seen anywhere. In fact, there are no women to be seen because there are absolutely no women in this town. There are only men in Manville, men of all ages. Every few months, a shipment of newborn baby boys is sent to Manville, so there are men, boys and infants of all ages. It is your job to write an article describing this town of men. It is your assignment to tell the world what this place is like. How well are the men able to raise their children? What is their daily life like? How do people relate to each other? What kind of personalities do they have? Do you feel there is anything missing in this town? Does it feel strange to you in any way?

CHAPTER 5

A World of Relationships

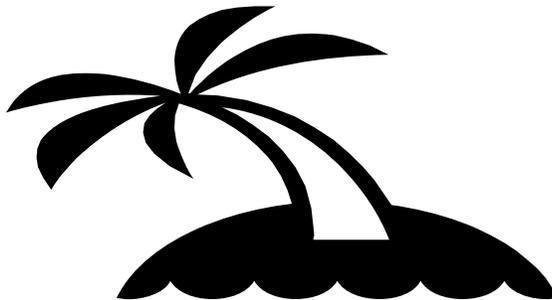
Stranded

You are going to take a trip to a strange but very beautiful place. For some unknown reason, when your eccentric uncle died, he left you with an island. His wealth was phenomenal. As you fly over the island, ready to land and take possession, you can hardly believe your eyes. There are multiple dwellings, fantastic foliage, a harbor with a yacht and a beach perfect for swimming. You learn that the weather is warm and breezy all year. As the plane departs, leaving you on the runway, you walk to the waiting limousine with the car keys in your pocket. You find a map on the front seat and go to the main house. Upon arriving you step through the door, walk through several massive rooms and come to the pool where you are greeted by an array of luncheon delicacies. After you have eaten your fill, a silent waiter appears and leaves a tray of sweets and coffee. You attempt to speak to him, but he bows silently and leaves.

As you gaze towards the beach, you take out your uncle's final letter from your pocket. In the letter are the strange details of your inheritance. You know you will never lack for any possible material comfort for the rest of your life. However, there is one restriction upon your inheritance: under no circumstances are you to bring another person to this island. The servants do not speak your language and have been instructed to have no personal interaction with you whatsoever. You are forbidden to make contact with the outside world.

Only one man will remain constantly on the island to wait on you; all the others return to shore each afternoon. You can communicate all your desires to them and they will fulfill all of your material wishes. If you decide to leave the island you may never return, and your inheritance will become null and void. Because your uncle was deeply hurt by one close personal relationship, he has decided to protect you from this pain by secluding you on this island of paradise.

What would you do? Do you think you will be happy staying on the island?



To most people the idea of spending their lives in solitude is not very appealing. In fact, "solitary confinement" is used as a severe punishment in prisons, because even criminals like to be with other people! Why are relationships with others so important to people?

We see relationships everywhere. They permeate all that exists. This interrelationship among elements, this connection of one thing to many other things, is one of the most fundamental principles of all reality.

We see interconnections among atoms, molecules, cells, the organs of a body, all the way up to social and political relationships. Every being's existence is determined by relationships within it and between it and other things around it.

We can safely say that a person's happiness and well-being depend on:

- the relationships among the different organs of his or her physical body; the relationship between his or her mind and body; and the relationships among his or her intellect, will, and emotion;
- the relationship he or she has with parents, siblings, friends, and other associates; and
- the relationship he or she has with the environment with which he or she comes into contact.

Relationships are important to our well-being and our character development. We can't sit alone in a room and develop our character! We need to interact with people, learning to show patience, compassion, kindness and unselfishness, among other virtues. We need to learn from others' virtues too.

Human society is basically composed of the relationships among individuals, families, groups, businesses, associations, nations, etcetera. In fact, if we tried to diagram the interactions among all these different components of our world, the picture would be infinitely complex.

It is helpful to recognize that relationships have a structure. One structure of all relationships is the "subject" and "object" positions described in the following section.



Positions in relationships

The word “relationship” itself implies the presence of at least two partners. We may call one partner the subject. This is the one that initiates the relationship. The other may be called the object. This is the one that is relatively more passive and responds to the initial impulse.

These subject and object positions exist in all relationships. Let us look at some examples:

- ***The solar system.*** At the center of our solar system is the sun (subject), around which all the planets revolve (object). Then the moon (object) is revolving around the earth (subject). We see that the earth, although object to the sun, is subject to the moon. All entities tend to be in this kind of dual situation—sometimes subject, sometimes object, depending on the relationship.
- ***A conversation.*** In a conversation, the person speaking is in the subject position while the one listening is the object partner. However, when the listener begins to speak, the roles are reversed. If they both are trying to speak at once, it means both are trying to be the subject. In this case, there is bound to be conflict.
- ***A school.*** In a classroom, the teacher is in the subject position and the students are in the object position. If there were no clear subject or object, chaos would reign and little learning would take place.
- ***A family.*** Here the parents are the subject while the children are object partners. If the parents’ role as subject is not recognized, family life will likely turn into a series of endless and meaningless arguments.

These few examples tell us of the importance of clear subject and object positions for order and harmony to exist in any relationship. Recognizing one another's positions can help the proper respect and care to flow in a relationship.

We should understand that neither subject nor object is more important than the other. In fact, neither partner can exist without the other. They belong together and to each other. Through their relationship they create a larger whole, a higher level of existence. Protons and electrons combine to form atoms, atoms combine to form molecules, molecules combine to form minerals and the complex molecules that form the basis of life. A nucleus and cytoplasm combine to form a cell, cells form an organism, organisms form communities, and so on. Everything is linked in a great chain of existence.

The natural world is full of variety. These differences, however, do not lead to conflict but to a beautiful picture of harmonious, mutually complementary relationships. The more varieties of plants one finds in a garden, the more beautiful the garden is. Beauty comes not from uniformity but from the harmony of variety.

How do relationships develop?

In order for relationships to develop, certain conditions should be fulfilled.

First, there has to be a basis for interaction. It helps if people who wish to communicate with each other share a common language. They also should have something of common interest. The more they have in common with each other, the deeper the relationship can be.

Besides the potential to form a relationship, there must be a purpose for doing so. One can easily imagine two students passing each other in the school corridor day after day without ever speaking to each other. But if they have a common purpose, such as being on the same basketball team, or in the drama club together, then this can become the starting point for a meaningful relationship to develop. On the contrary, if two people have different or contradictory purposes, a conflict or competitive relationship may easily develop.

Further, as we observed above, for a constructive relationship to be established there has to be clear order. Every relationship has its own features; for example, leader and subordinate, partnership, cooperative, and others--but the positions and responsibilities of each need to be clearly defined. Otherwise, the relationship cannot function and confusion abounds.

You can identify a bad soccer team by the way all the players chase after the ball, regardless of position. In a good team, each player is well disciplined and keeps his position. They all pass to each other. They play together harmoniously, and everything just "clicks." Passes go to the right place and players anticipate each other because they are in harmony with each other. They play as a team, not as eleven independent individuals. Their interactions with one another are smooth and well-coordinated because they are united around a common purpose and they are respecting one another's positions.



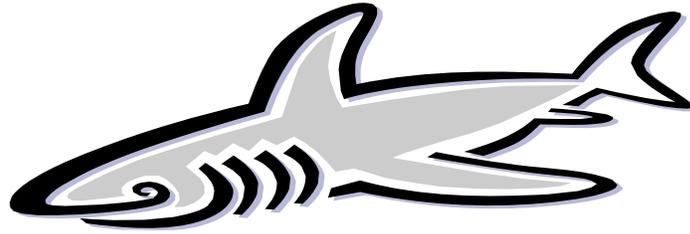
Dual purposes

Because everything is connected in relationships with others, every organism has a double purpose: supporting its own well-being and supporting the well-being of others surrounding it, who in turn support it too. It can be said, then, that every being has two complementary purposes: an individual purpose concerned with its own well being and existence, and a whole purpose, where it contributes to the well being of the entire organization of which it is a part. In a healthy ecosystem, or a healthy society, a balance is maintained between these purposes.

In the Mouth of a Shark

In nature, there are what are called "symbiotic" relationships. That means that creatures help one another to have a better life, and by doing so, they experience a better life themselves.

How would you like to swim into the mouth of a shark? This is just what "cleaner fish" in a symbiotic relationship with sharks do. The cleaner fish go in and clean the shark's teeth for him! The shark does not bite or eat these fish. In return for his services, the cleaner fish get all the scraps of delicious fish--fish they couldn't possibly catch for themselves--from the shark's teeth.



Practical applications of relationships principles: What is the right answer?

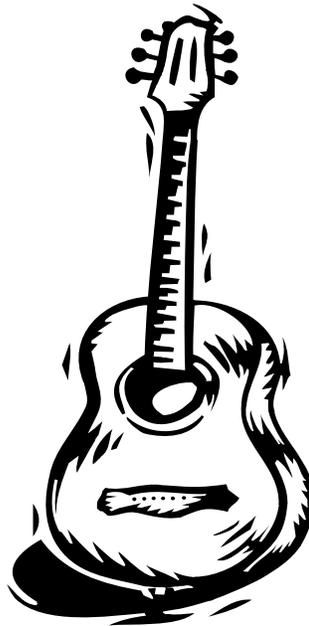
1. You have just started a new year in a new school. Based on the information given in this chapter, what would be the best way to make some friends?
 - A. Hang around after school, hoping someone will talk to you.
 - B. Join a team or club with others who are interested in what you are interested in and who want to work together for a common purpose.
 - C. Start a food fight in the cafeteria.
 - D. Follow the most popular kids around.
2. Your coach keeps telling you to "Play your position! Play your position!" You know you're the best shot on the team, though, and have the best chance of making goals. You:
 - A. Play your position when the coach is watching.
 - B. Play your position but sulk and don't try hard.
 - C. Don't play your position—go for every goal--it's the only way this team can win.
 - D. Play your position. He's right.
3. You really like Mary, but she does all the talking. You:
 - A. Dump her.
 - B. Interrupt her rudely.
 - C. Practice good listening skills and then jump in when she pauses, making it clear you want some talking time too.
 - D. Complain about her to other friends.

CHAPTER 6

My Purpose in Life

Sometimes you must have asked yourself, “Why am I here? What is the purpose of my life?” The philosopher Aristotle noticed that everything changes or grows so as to achieve some goal. For example, acorns always grow into oak trees and never into anything else. (Unless, of course, they are eaten by squirrels--in which case they won't grow at all!) Similarly, children always grow into adults. Everything has a purpose, an inner goal that guides its development. We would be shocked if a kitten grew up to be a duck, or a fish suddenly took wing and flew in its adolescent years. Everything has a goal to mature into what kind of being it was originally designed to be.

Likewise, everything was designed to fulfill a certain purpose. For example, a guitar is designed and made to produce beautiful music. When the guitar fulfills the purpose for which it was created, the guitar maker is happy and so, one might imagine, is the guitar. If, however, the guitar were used for knocking posts into the ground, it would be damaged and no longer would be able to fulfill its intended purpose. The maker would probably feel hurt and disappointed, and maybe angry.



How about people? Ultimately, we cannot be happy without attaining a goal or purpose, but it must be the goal or purpose for which we were designed, the purpose that is embedded in our human nature. If we try to set for ourselves a different purpose, even if we fulfill it, we will not be happy for long. We will damage ourselves in some way.

Money, power, knowledge or love?

What is the purpose of life? Let's think about what motivates people. As we saw in the chapter on happiness, everyone wants to be happy. But how do people go about seeking for it? Some people think that they will be happy if they become rich, so they make it their life's ambition and goal to make as much money as possible. But will money alone make us happy? There are many rich people in the world who are also quite unhappy.

If Only I Could Win the Lottery!

Lots of people say this. They think that if they only won the big jackpot, their lives would be so much better and they would at last be happy. Is it true?

Charles Lynn Riddle, who won \$1 million dollars in 1977. Five years later, he was divorced, had been sued several times, and wound up in jail for cocaine. Larry Frederick won half of a \$33 million dollar jackpot in 1988. Soon he had so many lawsuits on his hands, his happiness level plummeted. Callie Rogers, a 16 year old foster child, admitted to "not having a happy moment" since winning 1.9 million pounds in the United Kingdom lottery. All Callie wanted to do was to live modestly and provide well for her foster parents. She did go on a trip abroad and spent some money on relatives and friends, but soon she found herself being fooled by friends and boyfriends and having fights with people she was close to--over money. "Two months ago I thought I was the luckiest teenager in Britain. But today I can say I have never felt so miserable."

The majority of lottery winners (55%) say that they are happier because they are more secure about their financial future and have fewer worries. Yet those who have won lesser amount are just as happy after their win than those winning huge amounts.

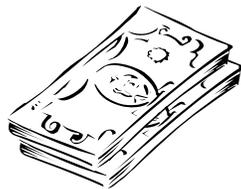
Researchers say, "It is as much the person's character as well as winning something which is the key to their happiness."

Sources:

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Others think knowledge is most important, so they bury their heads in books. Such people can become eccentric and isolated and lose the ability to form close relationships. Still others think power is the way to happiness. Their way of life is to try to dominate others. Such people are often deeply insecure and paranoid. Some people long to be famous. But many famous people have said they found life empty and meaningless; that they lost their way in life once they became famous. A notable example is rock star Kurt Cobain, who ended his own life after the pressures of fame made him miserable.

If we look at the question more deeply, we will realize that the most precious thing in life is love. No matter how wealthy, knowledgeable, powerful or famous you may be, unless you have someone with whom you can share your joy, your sorrow, your opinions, and your ideals, you are in truth poor.

Ultimately, each of us seeks a person with whom we can share our heart:

- Someone we can love and care for;
- Someone we can trust and to whom we can tell anything;
- Someone with whom we can be ourselves and who will never betray us.
- Someone who can understand us and to whom we can even entrust our life.
- Someone we want to be with all the time and whom we miss when we are away.
- Someone who is like us but about whom we are always discovering new things.
- Someone who can be a friend.



Eventually we want to find someone we can marry and have a family with. Such love is the source of the deepest joy and happiness. Love is the highest value, because love is the source of life itself.

Along with love and life, we also want to have an ideal, something beyond ourselves for which to live, strive and maybe even give our lives to. When we have love, life and an ideal, everything seems possible and worthwhile. Without them, life is empty and meaningless. Then people begin to look for other ways to fill the void, such as through drinking, sex, food, money, power or knowledge.

What is it that we want?

What do you really want in life? What do you want to achieve and accomplish? What kind of person do you want to become? We have already asked these questions several times, so perhaps we can now draw a few conclusions. In the end, we can say that each person is seeking to achieve the following basic life goals:

- *to grow up and become a person of mature character;*
- *to marry and have a loving family*
- *to make a worthwhile and lasting contribution to society*

These are all creative acts. It is an astonishing fact that we create our own character. Our bodies will naturally grow to be fully mature human beings. But becoming a mature person on the inside involves our responsibility and choices.

Within us is the yearning to fulfill our potential and become persons of mature character, the first life goal. Sadly, many people, for one reason or another, never do this. They give up when faced by challenges they think they can't overcome or they simply are not motivated to develop themselves. Instead of putting love and virtue at the center of their life, they allow negative emotions like greed, resentment, laziness or revenge to guide their decisions and actions.

Although we have the ability and responsibility to create our own selves, we cannot do this alone. In the chapter on relationships, you will remember we talked about how everything has two complementary purposes—an individual and whole purpose. We accomplish our individual purpose by living for the whole purpose, which requires developing healthy relationships with others—the second basic life goal.

It is in the family that we learn how to form relationships, through which we discover our own identity and develop our character. From the position of a child, sibling, spouse and parent, we learn how to love and be loved, to forgive and be forgiven, to disagree and be reconciled, to give and receive. We learn how to behave and have good manners. Through our family life, we learn how to make relationships and friendships too, which also help us to mature our character. A mature character is the foundation to achieve our second goal in life: to marry and create a loving family. Anthropologists have found that all human societies, everywhere in the world and throughout history, have had marriage and family as their basic social unit. The vast majority of human beings marries and has families. This would indicate that it is a natural human drive and desire—a basic life goal.

Loving families are not only important to us as individuals; they are the foundation for creating good communities, societies, nations, and a better world.

"Almost everybody in the world gets married--you know what I mean? In our town there aren't hardly any exceptions. Most everybody in the world climbs into their graves married."

***Our Town*, a play by Thornton Wilder**



The third basic goal in life is to contribute something of value to our society and the natural world with our creative talents and professional skills. We love to experience the beauty of nature. We also seek to utilize the material resources of our world to create and play musical instruments, to sculpt, to paint, to design, and to build things. Creating gives us joy because it gives expression to our character and dreams. We also hope that what we create will please others. Nearly every artist looks forward to the day when he can hold an exhibition of his work and have it appreciated by others. People want to find fulfillment through their work, whether as a teacher, factory worker, farmer or businessman. They want to feel that they can create something, which is good and valued by others.

These three fundamental life goals encompass the entire realm of human experience. They present us with a standard and model of moral excellence we should all strive to fulfill. Attaining them involves practicing virtues, the most encompassing of which is altruistic or true love—love which seeks the benefit of others rather than just ourselves. In the coming lessons we will explore how to achieve each of these life goals.

Questions for Discussion

1. Have you ever thought about the purpose of life?

2. Does everything have a purpose?

3. Who determines the purpose of something?

4. In what way are you creating yourself and the world around you?

5. Do we all have the same purpose or different purposes?

6. In which way are our purposes the same and in which way are they different?

7. In which ways does a person create the kind of person he is and will become?

8. How much are we responsible for developing ourselves and how much does the environment influence us?

9. Can you think of somebody who grew up in difficult circumstances yet still achieved great things? What did he or she do to develop a positive personality?

10. Is there a connection between maturity and the ability to love?

Exercise: “The Wrong Purpose”

The following story is a fictionalized account:

A plane is flying somewhere over the vast rain forest near the Amazon River in South America. Suddenly an engine explodes, ripping a big hole in the bottom of the plane where the cargo is stored. Many suitcases and bags fall out of the plane into the impenetrable jungle of tropical plants and trees. A few seconds later another much bigger explosion occurs, totally ripping the plane apart. Nobody survives the plane crash.

Now it happens that in this part of the rain forest there lives a tribe of natives that has never been discovered by the outside world. The tribe, for its part, has no idea that there exists such a thing as an outside world. They believe that all these suitcases and bags that suddenly fall like rain from the sky are a gift from the gods.

As they start to investigate these heavenly gifts, however, they are not always so sure how best to use them. For instance, they find a guitar without any strings that—packed safely as it was in a strong case— miraculously survived intact the impact with the ground. The natives try several uses for the guitar. First, they use it as a tool to catch butterflies, then as a paddle for their canoes, and finally as a club to chase down monkeys. None of this works very well, and eventually the guitar breaks apart. The pieces are then used as firewood. The guitar strings, which the natives find neatly rolled up in a packet inside the case, come in more handy. One girl immediately recognizes the value of these strings and, after a while, many girls in the village are wearing them as necklaces, some with computer disks or music cassettes strung on them.

One clever boy discovers how to pull film out of its cartridge but then can't figure out what to do with it. An old man who finds a camera is fond of music and becomes really fascinated by the metallic click of the shutter each time he winds up the camera and then pushes the release. The camera immediately becomes his favorite musical instrument. Not quite as happy is a girl who finds a pair of skates. Even though she has never seen shoes before, she quickly figures out that the skates are meant to be put on one's feet. But as she is trying to climb a tree wearing the skates, which to her look like some kind of claws, she falls down and breaks her leg. Even more unfortunate are two boys who find a gun in a briefcase. As they investigate it, one boy pulls the trigger and the bullet strikes the other boy in the shoulder. Many of the natives are witnesses to this incident, causing the tribe to break into a panic.

The medicine men discuss the event and decide that the gun is a god that has become angry. They call it "Boom-Boom". In order not to upset Boom-Boom again, they start to worship the gun and make offerings to it every day.

All these useful things became useless and even harmful in the hands of those who did not understand the purpose of them.

Questions for Discussion

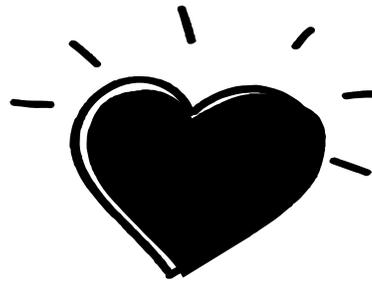
1. Can you think of some other things that would be damaged or malfunction if they were not used for the purpose for which they were created? Be specific.
2. If all man-made items have been created for a specific purpose, could it be that human beings themselves were created for a specific purpose?

PART II: Becoming a Person of Good Character

This section is concerned with issues connected to our first purpose in life: becoming a person of good character. Right away, the word “becoming” tells us that our life is a growth process, which is the theme of Chapter 7. Although we live in a world which sometimes seems to be telling us we can have whatever we want--right now--the reality of life is that things take time to grow and mature. So, no matter how much we may want to be an adult, we cannot speed up our physical development.

In the same way, there are no easy shortcuts to our spiritual and moral development either. The process of maturing requires time, patience and investment.

In the process of becoming a person of good character, perhaps the most important elements are the development of the heart and conscience, which are the themes of Chapters 8 and 9. Our heart is connected to our ability to give and receive love, while our conscience is there to guide us along the right path and tries to protect us from getting involved in things that are not good for us. The proper development of these two things, our heart and conscience, pretty much will determine whether we become people of good character or not.



HEART

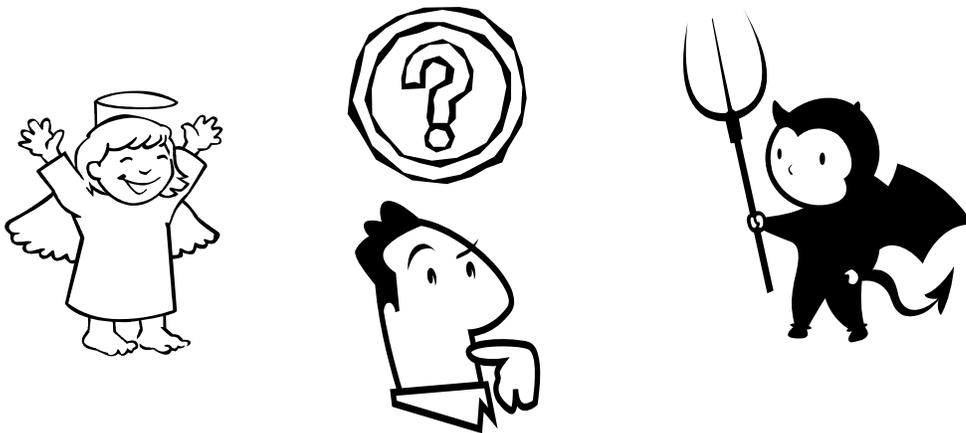


CONSCIENCE

The next chapter deals with the issue of honesty. Whether we are honest or not influences greatly the development of our consciences. In order to get our way, we can easily fall into the habit of telling lies, which will stunt the development of our consciences and turn us into self-centered manipulative people. Being dishonest could get us into serious trouble.



The next four chapters deal with some important internal issues. In the process of growing up, we all find ourselves struggling with conflicting desires inside of ourselves. While one part of us wants to do what is right and unselfish, we find within us another side that urges us to seek easy self-gratification. We find ourselves not wanting to do the hard work involved in growing to maturity. We would rather just live for the moment and enjoy ourselves. We want to be free—a natural impulse as we get older and one of the hallmarks of adulthood. Another mark of adulthood, however, is responsibility. One chapter explores the connection between freedom and responsibility.



All of this involves self-control and the relationship between our mind and body. One of our most important challenges in life is learning to control our bodily desires. In our younger years, we should establish good eating and sleeping habits. As we enter our

teenage years, we start grappling with the issue of our sexual desires. For our character to develop properly, our minds must be able to control our bodies.

The next two chapters deal directly with the peculiar features of adolescence. As you have no doubt noticed, it is a time when many changes are taking place—physically, emotionally and mentally. It marks a transition period between childhood and adulthood. We are no longer mere children. At the same time we are clearly not yet adults.



It is a confusing time when we are trying to understand who we are, what we believe and what is important to us. We have to deal with many pressures surrounding us, especially in our social relationships. It is a time when life suddenly seems more complicated, and many adolescents lose their way.

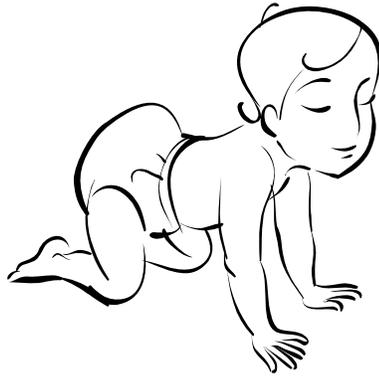
The final chapter of this section reminds us of the precious value of life. Even as life seems to be becoming more confusing, it is important to reflect on the meaning and value of human life. Despite the difficulties that come our way, life is always worth living. We only have to look for its potential and possibilities to know this is true. In the next step of our journey, we hope you can begin to imagine the tremendous possibilities for your own life.



CHAPTER 7

The Process of Growth

When you were born, how much did you know? Were you able to walk or talk?



Everything and everyone goes through a process of growth and development before reaching maturity or completion. As the proverb says, “From acorns mighty oak trees grow.” And it is not just our bodies that grow and mature. Intellect, emotions, and character also grow.



Although you already have been through many changes and have had many experiences, more changes and experiences await you in the future. We need to have a sense of perspective about where we came from and where we are going. In fact, we can say that all development goes through three main stages:

- Formation
- Growth

- Completion

Physical development

Physical growth and development happen naturally. We don't have to worry about stretching our skin and enlarging our organs as we grow taller. We don't have to train our stomach to digest food or take courses in breathing. We don't have to supervise and regulate our heart to make sure that it is pumping enough blood through our arteries.

Like everything in the natural world, our physical body reaches maturity through an automatic growth process governed by natural law. Still, we have to channel our physical energy constructively into sport, art, music or some other skill to develop our physical bodies optimally.



Internal Development

Around the world many people celebrate their 21st birthday as their passage into the adult world. Adulthood represents maturity, but is everyone truly mature by the time they turn 21? Besides our physical development, there is another aspect to our growth — that of our character. Although this also develops through stages, it is not automatic. As we know, there are many people who have reached adulthood by physical age, but who continue to act very childishly.



There is an order and connection between the stages. Each of us is responsible to advance to a higher level of maturity. The challenges of life and training at home and school may speed this process, but a person's will decides whether he or she cultivates a better way of thinking, feeling and acting through the choices he or she makes. Let us look at the process of inner growth in more detail.

Experience shows us that the person's inner self does not grow in the same way that the body does: inner growth requires conscious effort.

Formation stage

A newborn child is driven by a few basic needs and desires. Babies want to be nourished, sleep peacefully, excrete comfortably, and be held and loved. When any of these needs is not met adequately, babies communicate immediately through crying: "I'm hungry, I'm tired, I'm wet, I want to be held — and someone had better do something about it quickly!"



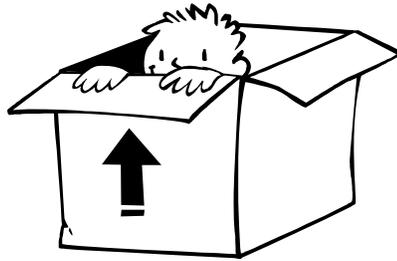
By growing up in a warm, responsive environment, the baby develops confidence and an attitude of basic trust toward life. The baby feels loved and that needs will be fulfilled. The baby knows that even if a parent is absent for a while, he or she will return. Soon the baby learns to smile and finds that this is rewarded with even more love and attention. If, on the other hand, these needs are not fulfilled consistently, or if a loving parent is absent, a person may grow up with a basic mistrust not only of his parents but also of people and life in general.



This initial stage of life is characterized by a receptivity to love. While infants and small children are keenly aware of their own needs and desires, they have a very limited awareness of the needs of others. No one complains about their behavior, telling them, “Oh, you're so selfish.” This kind of self-centeredness is natural at this stage of the growth process. However, if an older person acts like this, we tell him to “Grow up and stop acting like a baby.”

Experiencing the joy of receiving love as a baby is an important prerequisite to developing a mature heart that later seeks to continually give love to others—unselfish or true (altruistic) love—which is the primary virtue and the main satisfaction in a good life. Therefore, during this phase it is important to learn how to receive love and respond to it. Have you ever tried to do something nice for someone who was unable to accept it or respond to you? How did you feel when your kindness and concern were rejected? Perhaps this person never received enough love as a baby and does not know how to receive well.

The development of responsive love is an important step. It is this responsive quality that makes a child’s heart so beautiful and attractive. Even as adults, it's good to retain the spontaneous qualities of childhood, such as open-heartedness, trust in others, and responsiveness to love.



Growth stage

The time of dependency and absorbing love gives way to a period of learning to share love. This occurs concurrently as we become more aware of others.

As a child begins to learn how to live with and relate to others, he or she also begins to learn the value of giving. Our giving at this stage, however, is limited and conditional. We tend to give as much as we are given. We give as long as we know that something will be returned. We are usually nice to someone as long as he is nice to us. We are just beginning to learn about reciprocation, giving and receiving, and we learn a great deal of it from having to share our parents, our home, and our things with siblings.

As we grow older, we become more aware of people, including those outside our immediate family. We begin to realize that people have many different kinds of feelings, desires, and ways of seeing the world; at the same time, we realize that we have to treat others as we would like to be treated ourselves. At school and at play, we learn to wait

our turn, stand in line patiently, and respect the space of others by not hitting or taking. We learn to share our teacher, our classroom, and our learning facilities with a community of others.



All this is training in altruistic love—being aware of and responding to the needs of others, even if it means giving up something ourselves. As we reach adolescence, intimate interpersonal relationships become a central preoccupation. We want to be together with our friends, do things together, reach out and communicate with one another. Early adolescence is a time of developing circles of friends, of reaching out beyond the family into the outside world. Our ability to make friends and keep them is rooted in our family relationships—the trust we learned as babies, and the way we have been taught to treat our brothers and sisters.

As teenagers, our desire is for greater independence. Physically, we are looking more and more like adults, and we desire to be the same internally. During this phase, defining ourselves — creating a sense of our own identities — is the central issue.



During adolescence many dramatic changes are happening to our physical bodies. We are trying to come to terms with our new appearance. Along with this is the awakening of our sexuality and learning how to relate with persons of the opposite gender. Our challenge at this time involves channeling our sexual energy into creative and productive activities: friendships, sports, work, or studies — until our character matures in integrity and unselfish love. At this time, exclusive, passionate relationships with members of the opposite sex are actually counterproductive to our inner growth, for they limit our ability to practice altruistic, unselfish love.

We are challenged during this time to gain control over our unruly emotions by focusing more and more on the needs and wants of others rather than ourselves. As we learn to control a certain self-centeredness and begin to think first of others and their situations, we pave the way for success in friendships and relationships with others in general, and for our future family relationships, including with our future spouses. We grow our hearts and ability to love and care for others.

Living for the Sake of Others - Maria's Story

"It's strange to say it, but one of the times I grew the most during my teenage years was when my mother was diagnosed with breast cancer and had to have surgery and stay in the hospital. My dad and older siblings were working, so there was no one to cook dinner but me; there was no one to do laundry but me, no one to clean the house but me. So I did my mother's work. Even though it was a frightening time for us, I remember feeling a certain amount of peace and fulfillment, because I was taking care of the family. My heart would swell with hope and strength as I did the tasks and I would think, 'We're going to get through this.' Taking care of them gave me the strength to believe that we could get through the crisis together."



Completion stage

In this stage we are beginning to learn to give love unconditionally. This totally unselfish love, described by the Greeks as *agape*, has the quality of giving without expecting anything in return. Joy comes from the act of giving. The prompting of our heart and conscience to live for others fully guides us.

You may wonder if it is really possible to love like this. But we see this standard of love all of the time in parental love. While the child is primarily receiving, the parent is primarily giving. Even in the middle of the night, her sleep interrupted, a mother patiently gives to her child. Does the mother expect the child to give her a massage in the morning after such a sleepless night? No, the mother expects nothing from the child. Still, she continues to give and give and give.



You don't have to be a parent to express this quality of love. A mature person is one who expresses this kind of heart in every relationship, i.e., giving without expecting to receive. Of course, everyone likes to receive love, but a mature person continues to give love even without receiving anything in return. If we use parental love as an ideal for relating to others, we will become more unconditional in our love and, hence, more free.

Loving unconditionally doesn't necessarily mean that we accept everything a child does, both good and bad. Limits have to be set; scolding is sometimes necessary so a child understands the difference between right and wrong. Good parents, however, don't focus on the faults and mistakes of their children but instead look for the beautiful and good things in them.

People who love unconditionally are free even to love their enemies. When we can love those who reject and hate us, or commit wrongful actions against us, then our heart is truly liberated. This is true freedom.

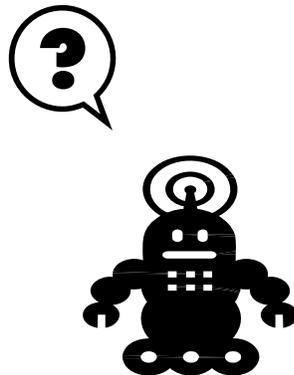


Mature love requires effort. It is not automatic. Loving is an art and requires training and discipline to develop, just as any other skill. Good doctors, musicians, artists, and athletes spend countless hours in training in order to perfect their abilities and talents. How much more difficult is it to become a person capable of true love?

How do we become loving persons? To become physically fit, we have to challenge our body's limitations. If we stop running whenever we become tired, how can our body become strong? If we stop loving whenever a relationship becomes difficult, we won't ever develop our ability to love. We can end up being isolated and lonely people.

Love and free will

We have mentioned that we participate in our own maturing in love through our will—the choices we make whether to act selfishly or to act altruistically. Indeed, love cannot exist without free will. Love cannot be forced. Without free will and freedom, we would be nothing more than sophisticated robots, lacking any true potential for love and creativity.



Therefore, in order for love to exist in our life, we must freely participate in our own becoming, choosing the way of true love and goodness. We are responsible for our own spiritual growth and maturity.

Of course, we are free to take the path in life we choose. But what do wealth, power, knowledge and freedom mean if we're not truly happy with ourselves and our relationships with others? If we *choose* to use our creativity, freedom, and responsibility for the sake of true love and goodness, then the doors will open to endless fulfillment and happiness.

Questions for Discussion

1. Explain the 3 stages of growth.

2. Why do things take time to grow and develop?

3. What is the difference between internal growth and physical growth?

4. For human beings, what are the basic characteristics of the formation stage of growth?

5. What are the basic characteristics of the growth stage for humans?

6. What are the basic characteristics of the completion stage for humans?

7. What is the relationship between freedom and love?

8. Name some qualities of a person who is internally mature.

Exercise: “Taking Ted”

Taking Ted is a tall, rather handsome young man. He loves himself very much. He loves to tell people about all of his accomplishments, and he loves to have parties where he is the guest of honor.

Taking Ted asks a lot from his friends. He often goes to their homes for dinner, or gladly accepts when they want to treat him to a nice gift, but Taking Ted has a very hard time giving. In fact, Taking Ted almost never invites his friends over for dinner, and although he is an excellent repairman he never helps his friends when something in their homes needs repair—because he hates to get dirty after work.

Taking Ted makes a good salary, but he spends the money on himself—never on his friends. When he does give a gift he always asks the person receiving the gift to give it back to him if they do not like it for some reason; he would not want them to be unhappy with his special gift! His mother does all of his laundry, even though he does not live with her, but he knows that it makes her happy because she enjoys taking care of him. His sister cleans his apartment for him every few weeks, and he does not even have to pay her (she would hate for her brother to live in a mess).

Taking Ted is very charming and has a wonderful sense of humor. He never lacks for women friends, but he rarely stays interested in any particular one for very long. He loves to meet new girls because they are always so impressed with him at first. They love to bring him little gifts, knit him new sweaters and cook him special treats. One day he might get married, if he can find a girl that is good enough for him. He does not want to have children; that would surely cramp his life style. And besides, children are just too expensive. Taking Ted likes his life just the way it is.



Questions for Discussion

1. How does Ted's selfishness limit him? Does he think of anyone except himself?

2. Can people be Internally mature if they cannot act for the sake of others?

3. Do you think Ted's friends would want to be friends with him for long? Why or why not?

CHAPTER 8

Human Nature

What comprises human nature? Undoubtedly this is one of the most important questions in life. The meaning and purpose of human life, our actions and desires — everything depends on the way we understand human nature.

Let us start with defining the difference between humans and animals.

Why do people flock to zoos? What is so attractive about animals? Of course, this question has many answers, but if you have visited the zoo, you most likely have noticed that there is always a crowd around the cages with monkeys. Why? Because of all animals, the behavior of monkeys is the most similar to that of humans. Their antics and expressions cause us to smile. Of course, there are also differences between humans and monkeys—and animals in general.



You may want to draw up a list of these similarities and differences. Here are a few differences to get you started:

Animal qualities	Human qualities
Has no sense of self	Capable of self-reflection
Has only a biological clock	Has a sense of time and history
Capable only of concrete thought	Capable of abstract reasoning
Speaks only one “language”	Capable of learning other languages
Inhabits only its own niche	Lives in almost any kind of environment
Has no moral sense	Has a moral sense
Behavior is guided by inborn instinct	Capable of learning skills, is creative
Is rarely monogamous	Is usually monogamous
Creates no economy	Engages in trade
Has brief childhood, little sense of “family”	Has long childhood, strong sense of family
Does not bury its dead	Has feeling of respect toward the dead

One can always find exceptions to this list. For example, swans are known to be monogamous, and there are many people who do not study foreign languages. Taken all together, however, it is clear that human beings are not just another kind of animal.

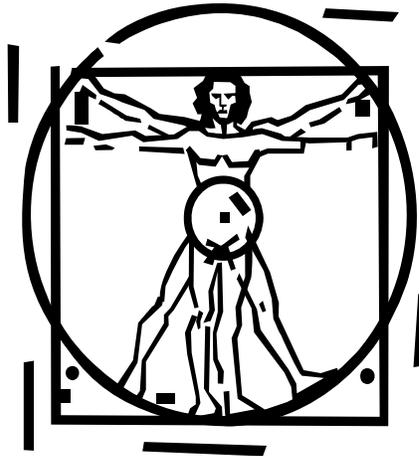
Mind and body

When we think about what we are, the first thing we can confidently say is that we have a body. We have four limbs, a head, a trunk, and all the organs that are inside. But is

that all there is to us? No. We are also aware that we have a dimension that is not physical but is invisible, unseen. This is what we call our "spiritual nature." We have a mind that animates our body, giving our actions meaning and purpose. We appreciate beauty, value truth, and wish to be good—none of which really originates in our physical bodies. Where do these invisible, unseen qualities that we value come from? These qualities come from our mind.

Sometimes people think that the mind is the same as the brain, but while the brain can be seen and operated on by surgery, the mind is invisible. The body may be sitting still, relaxed and immobile, while the mind is darting from one object or thought to another. While our body is fixed firmly in the present, our mind can remember the past, imagine the future, and visit China, Africa, and the moon all within a few moments.

But are the mind (spirit) and the body completely different? How do they interact in human beings? The best way to study a person's character is to observe his or her behavior. When you are with your friends, you can tell something about them by how they act, how they behave. We can certainly tell when our friends are upset because of how they express themselves. Don't they show it through their facial expressions, tone of voice, and body language? Our body becomes the reflection, the visible expression of our spiritual side. But there is — and always will be — an element of mystery. We will never be able to understand completely the complexity of a human being.



What is the human mind?

Let us reflect on our inner nature a bit more, starting with the simple things. Like animals, we all have instincts that provide for the physiological functions of our body, such as digestion, breathing, and a sense of balance. These processes are going on automatically and, unless something is wrong, there is no need to pay much attention to them. Wouldn't it be annoying if we had to remember to breathe? Or if, when riding a bicycle, we had to mathematically calculate the degree to which we should lean over when turning a corner? What if you had to consciously duck a brick flying through the air

at your head? This instinctive aspect of our mind ensures that the physical body's needs — which are expressed through the desire to eat, sleep and be comfortable — are fulfilled. All this is concerned with self-preservation and the support and development of life — not your life as a personality, but your existence as a biological entity.



But people are more than just a bundle of physical needs and desires. We also have desires and aspirations of an internal or spiritual nature. These internal or spiritual desires are the basis of — and the creative force behind — human culture and civilization. Our intellect is active when we study or try, for instance, to solve a mathematical problem. The intellectual function of the mind enables us to analyze information and judge its accuracy. We use our intellectual faculty to draw up and evaluate plans. The intellect naturally seeks truth, and it is this pursuit of truth that has led to the development of science and philosophy.

The emotional aspect of our mind searches for beauty. So, when we see a flower, we feel that it is beautiful and we feel joy. When we listen to an out-of-tune piano being played, we shudder. It is this emotional desire to create and appreciate beauty that is the wellspring of art and music.

Cave Art Gallery – Mind over Body

Three teenage boys were climbing around the rocks and hills of Lascaux, France, when they noticed an opening in a hill where a pine tree had fallen. When they went through the opening, they made what some have called "the archaeological discovery of the 20th century." Painting after painting of horses, rhinoceroses, ibex, cows and bulls covered the cave walls. When scientists got there, they discovered that the paintings were 17,000 years old.

We do not know why primitive humankind drew on cave walls. Surely most of their time was taken up with physical survival. Yet anthropologist Margaret Conkey said, "What's on the wall is probably more about what was on their minds for some cultural or social reason than about what was in their stomachs." Even 17,000 years ago, people took time away from physical survival to express their minds artistically—and the power of their art can speak eloquently to our minds today.



"Margaret Conkey '65: Painting a New Picture of Ancient Life," *College Street Journal*, Jan. 31, 2003, www.mtholyoke.edu/offices/comm./csj/013103/conkey.shtml, accessed 08/29/2005

Human beings have intellect, emotion and will. People naturally want to do what is good. When we must make a decision, we want to make the right one, and when we do not do what is right, our conscience is stricken. In fact, this desire for goodness is so deep that it is very difficult to do something wrong. When we do something wrong, it is because we have convinced ourselves that it is really right, or at least not so bad. Criminals think up all kinds of justifications for their actions and reasons why their deeds are not actually wrong. Still, most people want to know what is right.

If we have a clear idea, through our intellect, of how and why to do something and a strong emotional desire to reach the goal, our willpower will help us persevere through difficulties blocking us. If, however, our emotional desire for the goal is weak, or we don't know intellectually how to achieve it, our willpower will be weakened. That is why it is important that our intellect, emotion, and will be developed in a balanced way.

A person who is dominated by his intellect is likely to be too critical, perhaps incapable of forming close relationships. A person who is too emotional may be overly sentimental, unable to make sensible decisions. A person dominated by willpower may be obstinate and stubborn. These three working together—intellect, emotion and will--make us successful human beings.

Which aspect of human nature is most important?

But what is at the root of the internal nature or spirit? What is the deepest part of our nature, which harmonizes and integrates our intellect, emotion, and will? Do you remember the exercise you did in which you made a list of the values you cherish most? You probably placed love toward the top of your list. Love of family, friends, and pets, among other things, are values that human beings tend to place above all else. Above power, wealth, intelligence, beauty, and all the rest, love seems to be what we desire most in life.

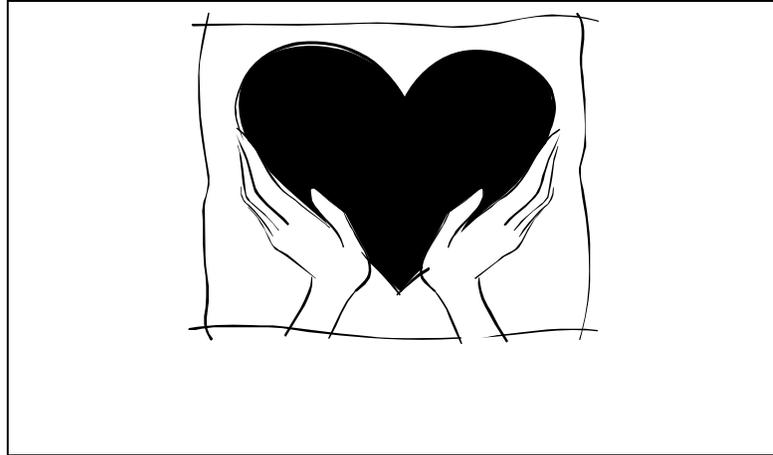


Our desire for love is the deepest and most fundamental spiritual desire of our mind. We all seek to love and be loved. This urge originates from a place deeper than will, deeper than intellect, and even deeper than emotion. In fact, our desire for love often contradicts rational explanation. The desire and capacity to give and receive love originate in the deepest part of our being—the part of ourselves we call the heart. From the heart we have the impulse to seek joy through love. And it is through loving and being loved that we experience the greatest happiness.

Heart is deeper than emotion. We feel joyful if our heart's desire is fulfilled, and sad or angry when it is not. When we are intoxicated with love, life is full and complete. If a person does not grow up in an atmosphere of love, he may try to find joy through other means, such as power, money or fame. But nothing can give him complete happiness if he doesn't have love.

This is because our heart is the core and essence of ourselves.

**Heart is the impulse to experience joy through giving
and receiving love.**



Perhaps you have heard the expression "He's got a good heart." Such a person is kind and compassionate toward others. It is heart that is the motivating force toward harmony in everything we do. The quality of our heart determines the direction and underlying purpose of our actions.

It may be difficult to understand and accept all of these explanations concerning our internal nature, but quite simply what it boils down to is this: *What we think determines what we do, and what we do shapes our character.* Therefore, the development of our heart and character depends upon how much we practice what we believe. Although choosing a profession or career is important, our greatest concern in life should be to become a person who practices unselfish love.

The mere fact that we are born does not mean automatically that we are truly human. On the contrary, we may be lulled into believing that any action committed by a person is human. However, to be human is not a fact, but a task, and a person may need a lifetime to fulfill it.

Questions for Discussion

1. In what ways are humans and animals different?

2. In what ways are they the same?

3. In what ways does a person have the ability to make choices that an animal doesn't?

4. How are the mind and body different?

5. How do the mind and body interact?

6. How does the interaction between the mind and body determine our character?

7. Choose 3 people and describe them in terms of their intellect, emotion and will.

8. Do you agree that the heart is more important than intellect, emotion and will? Why or why not?

9. How are heart and character related?

10. In what way do our actions shape our heart and character?

Exercise: “Two Settlements”

Consider this statement before doing the exercise that follows:

A human being is the only creature that can relate to nearly the whole universe. He can swim, climb, drive, run, fly, etc., while animals are much more limited. An eagle knows nothing about the beauty of the ocean floor, and a fish can never appreciate the majesty of a mountain peak. The human can experience both—and much more. The human face and voice are the most unique and expressive in nature.

Now, the exercise: Imagine that you are a reporter. You have to write an article on two settlements: one of apes, and the other of people. In order to write your article you have to go and observe these two settlements (while hiding in the bushes). Report on the things you observe. What differences are there between the two settlements? What do they have in common?

Reflection Exercise

You probably know that an obituary is a column that appears in the newspaper and tells something about a person who died. Write a "reverse obituary" of yourself. In this case, you are going to write a welcome announcement to someone who is entering the after world: you! What do you want them to say about you? What kind of life on earth do you want them to describe about you? What are your most outstanding characteristics—qualities of the heart, mind and will?

CHAPTER 9

Conscience

Bill needed money badly. That's why for a moment he was tempted to steal the DVD player he saw sitting on the table in the teacher's room. The wind had blown the door half open, and Bill could see that the teacher was not inside. It would be very easy to put the player in his bag and then quickly leave the school. The chances of his being caught were minimal, and Bill wouldn't have to worry about his debts any longer. And yet, a voice in his mind told him not to do it. Bill knew that this voice was his conscience. "Why can't I just steal this," he thought as he kept walking

down the corridor. "Why is my conscience making life more difficult for me? I know many other people who would have stolen the player without hesitation. Why am I different? Where does a conscience come from anyway?"

American Humorist Kills His Conscience!

In his comic story "The Facts Concerning the Recent Carnival of Crime in Connecticut," American humorist Mark Twain explored the ins and outs of having a strong conscience. He claimed his conscience bothered him if he did not give to charity, then bothered him again if he gave too much. His conscience chided him for not giving food to a beggar, then bothered him for feeding one and encouraging begging!

Finally, in the story, Twain rises up and kills his conscience.



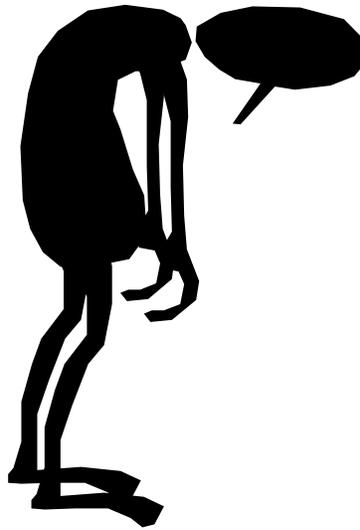
The result is pure bliss. However, Twain then goes on a crime spree that includes killing thirty-eight people and burning down a house that happened to block his view!

What do you think? Troublesome as it can be, is having a conscience a good thing?

What is conscience?

Conscience is the inner sense that enables us to distinguish between right and wrong. It is naturally sensitive to the truth, points us toward the greater good and urges us to live for the benefit of others. It is the inner voice that guides us, on the basis of our general moral views, to make correct decisions in real situations.

We often speak of conscience as a "voice." When we follow our conscience, doing what is right and not doing what is wrong, this voice becomes strong. When we are tempted to do something we know is wrong, our conscience usually stops us. This is why we talk about not being able to go against our conscience. However, once we do violate it, all its moral energy is released and becomes guilt.



The stronger your conscience, the greater the feeling of guilt when you violate it. However, once you violate your conscience, it becomes much weaker because all the energy has been dissipated. So, even though you know what you are doing is wrong, your conscience puts up a weaker and weaker battle each time, and each time you violate it, you feel less guilty.

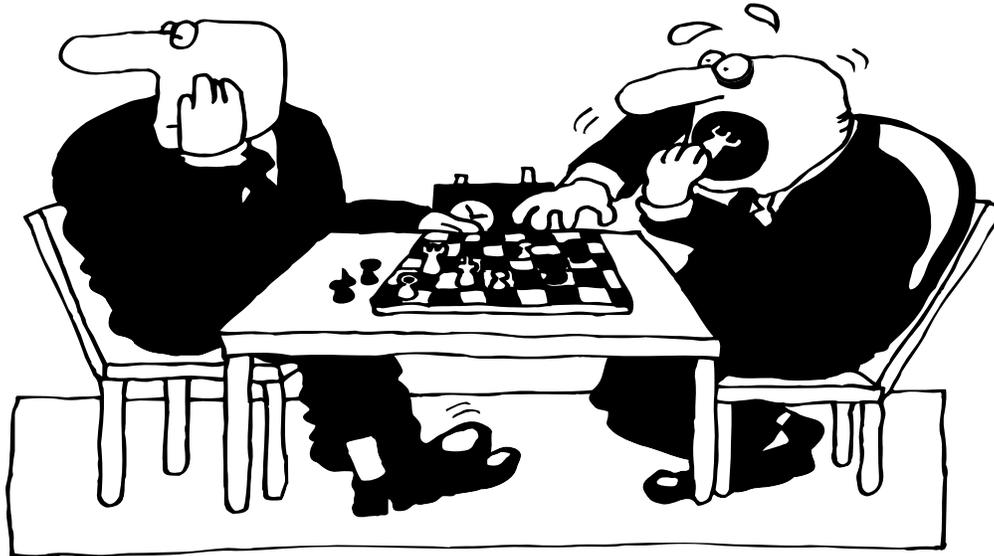
Guilt, then, is often a healthy indicator of an active conscience. If we do something we know is wrong, it is a sign of psychological health to feel guilty. If you put your hand in the fire, you feel pain. The pain tells you to take your hand out of the fire, put it under cold water and not put it in a flame again. Although we don't like to feel pain, it would be very dangerous not to be able to feel it. Guilt is the pain we feel when we do something wrong. A person who has no sense of guilt is very dangerous. He is capable of committing all sorts of crimes without the slightest remorse. In a sense, guilt is our friend because it is a warning that we are going in the wrong direction.

Each of us at some time or other has experienced the pangs of conscience. What is conscience, and where does it come from? Even though conscience is a dimension of our character, is it also, in some sense, a force that is independent of us?

Conscience as a measure of good and evil

Some people think that all moral problems would be solved if people just followed their consciences. However, because the conscience is influenced by the environment, each person's conscience will be different from everyone else's. For example, our values are heavily influenced by our religious beliefs. Thus, because of the dietary requirements of their faiths, it is against the conscience of Jews and Muslims to eat pork, but they happily eat beef that has been appropriately prepared. On the other hand, to Hindus, cows are sacred animals. They cannot in good conscience harm one, let alone eat one. Unlike these religious traditions, Christianity has few dietary restrictions and believers eat any type of food without qualms of conscience.

We should never do something we know is wrong. However, sometimes when we say, “I’m just following my conscience,” we really mean, “It’s OK to do this because I don’t feel guilty about it.”



For example, someone may not feel it is wrong to cheat. In other words, he may be merely justifying doing what he already wanted to do and is not really making a proper moral judgment. The problem of merely following one's conscience is that it may be malformed or undernourished, providing weak signals and insufficient guidance. The conscience will not function correctly if it has not been properly formed by high moral principles.

Distorted conscience

No one's conscience is perfect. However, sometimes a conscience can be badly formed. When this happens, our whole character will be disturbed. Here are some examples of a *distorted* conscience:

Incorrectly formed conscience: Our level of conscience is influenced by the moral standards of the society in which we grow up. Sometimes things that were acceptable at a certain time in history are later understood to be clearly wrong. For example, at one time many people thought that slavery (owning other people as property) was morally justified. They did not have any guilt feeling about owning slaves because of the culture in which they grew up. Now, however, slavery is recognized to be grossly immoral.



Unwarranted guilt: Sometimes we feel guilty when we ought not to. A person who opposed slavery might have felt guilty because he was going against what his parents and society told him was right and natural. There is a lot of pressure involved in going against what one has been told is right if one later comes to recognize it is wrong. Part of this pressure is experienced as unwarranted guilt. Such guilt is telling us that not conforming to society's standards is bad, even when we know those standards are wrong.

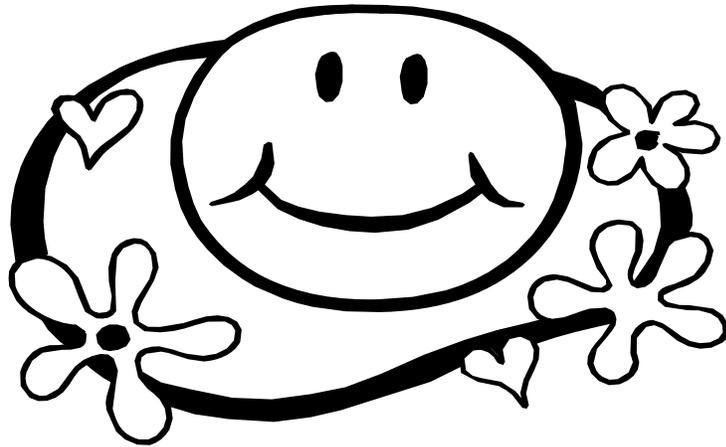
Lax conscience: This occurs when the conscience, due to our failure to heed it, becomes less and less sensitive to right and wrong and we experience too little guilt. This also may be why, when we really want something badly enough, or are desperate enough, we do things like cheat on a test or steal a little bit of money from a relative's purse. Because we have not strengthened our conscience over time by heeding it, we don't feel guilty when we do these things that are wrong.

Legalistic conscience: Sometimes we get so caught up in obeying certain rules that we cannot see the real needs of a situation or the right order of priorities. For example, if we are in a hurry to be at an appointment but see someone who needs our help, what should we do? Is it more important to not be late for an appointment or to help someone? It is easy to become so paralyzed by rules that we cannot follow what our heart is telling us to do.

The conscience should act like a compass, telling us which way to go, or at least which way not to go! If the dial of a compass is not accurate, we can easily be misled. So it is with our conscience. That is why it is important for us to spend time forming our conscience so that it is clear and straight. If we don't, we will not be able to clearly distinguish between right and wrong.

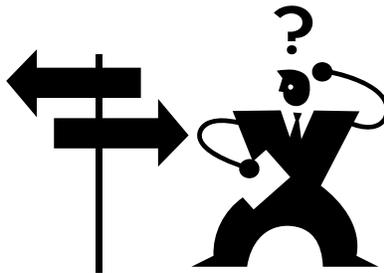
Often a situation arises in which we are confused about what is the right thing to do. This is why we often make mistakes and do things we later regret. A well-formed conscience, then, is our teacher and our true friend. It tells us what we need to hear rather than what we want to hear. Heeding the conscience usually leads to a

feeling of inner peace, a sense of integrity and of being true to oneself. Deep inside we feel good about our decision, and the happiness we experience is the result of doing the right thing.



There are two aspects to relating to our consciences — knowing what is right and doing what is right. Unfortunately, it is often easier to *know* what is right than to *do* what is right.

Who decides whether you make the right choice or not? *You* do! You are the one who has to decide. You are the one who is ultimately responsible and accountable for your decisions.



By carefully and sincerely forming your own conscience, you will find it easier to decide what is right and what is wrong. Sometimes you will make mistakes, and at other times you may intentionally do things that you know are wrong. The development of your conscience takes time, contemplation and effort.

Questions for Discussion

1. What is conscience?

2. Can you think of a situation when you violated your conscience?

3. Can you think of a situation when you followed your conscience?

4. In each of these situations, how did you feel afterwards?

5. How did these experiences affect the development of your character?

6. What is guilt?

7. Did you ever feel guilty about something you did? Why?

8. Is there something that you once thought was okay and now believe it to be wrong?

9. Is there something that you once thought was wrong and now believe it to be okay?

10. What happens if you simply ignore your conscience?

Exercise: “A Matter of Conscience”

Lara was working late at night in the shop. She had been working there for six months and got along with the manager and the other workers well. The shop had a lot of nice gifts, especially perfume and women's clothes. Her best friend's birthday was only a week away, but Lara did not have any money and knew that she would not be able to give her the gift she had planned to buy. She had saved her money for three months so that she could buy a special bottle of perfume from the shop for her friend, but Lara's mother had unexpectedly needed the money, which Lara gave to her. Now she felt terrible.

That night the storeowner left Lara alone to close the shop. He really trusted her, she thought. Five minutes before closing, a lady came into the shop to return a bottle of perfume she had bought that day. Amazingly, it was the same perfume Lara had wanted to get for her friend! The woman received her money and left the perfume. Lara sat alone in the store thinking. If she took the bottle no one would ever know — besides it was only one little bottle of perfume and the storeowner had a lot of money. She deserved it, she thought; she had worked hard. But could she really take it? Even if the storeowner would never know, it was still stealing. Even if her friend would love it, how would she feel if she knew her birthday present was stolen?

Choose a side to be on--that Lara should take a perfume or that she should not--and have a class debate about it.

Questions for Discussion

1. What do you feel Lara would do if she followed her conscience?

2. What would she do if she did not follow her conscience?

3. What considerations does Lara have to make?

4. What if you were in her position? How do you think you would react?

5. If a person's actions do not directly hurt another person, but are still dishonest, is the action any more acceptable?

Reflection Exercise

Think of an experience in your life when you strongly felt your conscience speaking to you. What were the circumstances? Who were the people involved? What did you do and what was the outcome? Did this have a lasting effect on your life in any way?

CHAPTER 10
Honesty

What is honesty?

Honesty relates to many things and affects our life in many different ways. Honesty expresses both self-respect and respect for others. Dishonesty respects neither others nor ourselves. Honesty imbues life with openness, reliability, and candor; it represents a disposition to live in the light. Dishonesty seeks shade, cover, or concealment. It is a disposition to live at least partly in the dark.

Honesty means to tell yourself and others the truth, even if it is sometimes difficult. Honesty is more than simply not lying; it is a sincere devotion to truthfulness. An honest person seeks the truth with an open mind and tries to clearly communicate the truth. Honesty begins within ourselves, is part of our personal relationships, and finally colors and directs everything that we do.



Honest people are trustworthy. They can be relied upon to be who they claim to be, to mean what they say, and to keep their word. The level of honesty we live with influences everything in our life, from our relationships with others to our own self-image. Honesty is a personal virtue possessed by many of the great people in history and by those who are working toward the highest realization of themselves.

Why is it often so hard to be honest? Why would anyone even think to be dishonest?

Honesty in society

In a world in which dishonesty seems almost commonplace and often is expected as part of “getting ahead,” why should a person be honest? Isn't it naive or foolish? Don't people take advantage of an honest person?

If we think about it, honesty is important to everyone. A society based on deception and lies cannot function well. If we cannot trust the people around us to tell us the truth, then our sense of community suffers. Deception and distrust breed conflict and social disintegration.

Of course, hearing the truth isn't always easy. Leaders often surround themselves with people who tell them what they want to hear rather than what they ought to hear. Hearing the truth means we may have to change something we would rather just leave alone. Truth often exposes our selfish side that we don't want others to see. That is why truth is often compared to light. Light exposes the seamier things that go on in the darkness. When these things are allowed to fester, the whole society suffers and

eventually declines.

The Emperor's New Clothes

You have probably heard the Hans Christian Anderson story of *The Emperor's New Clothes*. In this story, a vain and incompetent Emperor, who cares for nothing besides his elegant wardrobe, is swindled by two very clever visitors to his city. Claiming to be master tailors, the swindlers say they make fine material with magical properties: it is invisible to anyone who is stupid.

The power of conformity over honesty is demonstrated as person after person who cannot see the invisible cloth claims that he can. Every minister in the Emperor's cabinet lies about how beautiful the cloth looks to him so that no one will think him stupid. When the Emperor himself puts on the suit of clothes the tailors have made him from the "beautiful" cloth, he too cannot see it, but he dares not let on. He goes so far as to parade through the town naked, thinking perhaps he is the only one who cannot see the fine and magical cloth--the only one who is stupid.

Eventually, a small child in the crowd innocently points out the truth, "The Emperor has no clothes!" and the lying adults are forced to admit the truth.

Whenever people buy into a widespread lie in order to "go along with the crowd" and not be thought stupid, it is good to remember this story of foolishness and dishonesty. Eventually, almost all lies come out into the light and are "laid bare," just like the pitiful Emperor.



Honesty with ourselves

Honest people tend to be honest first of all with themselves. They are skilled at listening to what is really going on inside them — what they are thinking and feeling and why they behave in the way that they do. They recognize what their deeper motivations are. There is little contradiction between what they think, what they feel, and what they

say or do. They have a sense of personal integrity and wholeness. They have a clear conscience and high self-esteem. We sometimes say that they are "a man of his word" or that "her word is her bond."

Sometimes we are ashamed or afraid of our thoughts and feelings. We avoid looking honestly within because to do so would be too painful. Looking at ourselves may mean having to change, which is also painful. It's easier to pretend that everything is okay, or that if there are problems, we are not to blame. It is tempting to fill our time with many distractions so that we never have to face ourselves.

Another way we can be dishonest with ourselves is in justifying our bad behavior. When we do something wrong, rather than admitting it, we often come up with all sorts of reasons why it is not really wrong at all, or at least not so bad. For example:

- "It's not a big deal if I spend the change from food shopping on a new DVD. My mother wouldn't mind if I did. She'll never notice anyway."
- "I can stay out later than my parents said. I'll just tell them that the buses were running irregularly and we were stuck in traffic. They always believe me, and anyway, I'm not doing anything really bad."
- "It's all right if I tell Margaret about Linda's problem. We're all friends and it doesn't really hurt Linda. She probably already told Margaret herself anyway."



This kind of self-justification is called *rationalizing*. Rationalizing allows us to do or say something that contradicts what we know is right because it frees us (at least at the moment) from the guilt we would feel if we were honest with ourselves. When we do this, even if we don't hurt others, we damage ourselves because we lose our sense of personal integrity. We know deep down that we are being true neither to ourselves nor to others.

Honesty in personal relationships

Honesty generates trust and forms a basis for wholesome relationships at the personal and social levels — in friendships, marriages, parent-child relationships and other close bonds.

Gossip, rumor and slander are sources of hurt known to many high school students. Such talk can ruin a person's reputation and destroy friendships as well as devastate a person's self-esteem. Gossip creates an atmosphere of distrust and meanness while causing pain to the person it targets.

One day after school I was with a group of friends. They all began to talk about another friend from our group who wasn't there. At first it was funny to hear what they were saying. Harmless, I thought, but then something struck me — "What if they were talking about me?" I thought I would feel terrible and I would never trust any of them. Then I wondered, "Maybe they do talk the same way about me when I'm not with them."

— a 16-year-old high-school student



When was the last time you spoke unkindly about someone behind his or her back?

Gossip and lies can quickly destroy even a long-lasting close relationship. But sometimes it is just as harmful when one side simply hides something from the other.

Gina's mother always asked her where she was going when she went out with her friends on Saturday nights. Finding that her daughter had lied about her whereabouts on several occasions, the mother was shocked and hurt. Finally, she asked Gina, "How would you feel if I lied to you about where I was going every

time I left the house?"

"But that's different!" protested Gina.

Is it different? If our parents lied to us, we would be hurt because we trust and love them. We trust that they will be there for us, in full honesty, to help and guide us, because they love us so much. But for love and trust to remain in a relationship, both sides have to be honest and trustworthy, not just one.

While we're still young, it is important to understand the negative repercussions of even small lies. We may tell a lie because we think it is a way out of a difficult situation. However, the consequences can be long lasting and difficult to restore because trust has been broken.

In our personal relationships honesty is a virtue to be contemplated. Have you ever really thought about the level of truthfulness and trust between you and the people to whom you are closest? Do you feel that your friends and family are basically honest with you? How important do you think this is? If you discovered that someone you love had told you a lie, how would you feel?

In summary, we can say that honesty does the following:

- Enables people to live in reality rather than delusion
- Keeps human society functioning
- Forms a basis for personal relationships
- Gives people an inner sense of freedom
- Rewards people with a feeling of integrity

Sometimes we face situations in life that deeply challenge us. Sometimes it takes a lot of courage to keep our honesty. But a person of integrity cannot live a lie, whatever the circumstances. She cannot tell a lie or pretend that something is not the way she knows it to be and feel good about herself. He loves the truth and values his personal integrity even at the cost of his life. She cannot but speak out against injustice. He refuses to participate in lies and pretenses. In a world where lies and injustice are commonplace, such a person may not be popular, because she is not afraid to be honest and straightforward.

Honesty and sensitivity

Is there ever a time in which we should not be completely truthful? Let's say your younger sister made a complete mess while making something special for you to eat. It tasted terrible. Would you be completely truthful with her? Or, because you knew she tried hard to do something for you and you loved her, would you say instead, "Thank you. This tastes wonderful"? Honesty is one virtue among many and should not itself become an absolute dictum. It has to be kept in balance with other qualities such as politeness, loyalty, privacy, sensitivity and patience. There are simple norms of good behavior that "being honest" do not entitle one to violate.

True honesty is an expression of love and therefore shows respect for the person as

well as the relationship. It allows disclosure and prevents secrets and barriers that might hinder the growth of heart. Honesty that does not express care and concern is not authentic.

Honesty is not an excuse for being unkind. It is possible to be both honest and sensitive. Occasionally we must say things that another person may not want to hear. Kindness does not mean keeping our mouths shut in these instances. Rather, it means caring enough about the other person and the integrity of the relationship to express the truth in a respectful way. Speaking the truth does not mean blurting out everything that is on our minds. Discretion, sensitivity, and proper timing are needed.

In fact, when you can be both honest and sensitive, people will be able to accept what you are saying much more easily. Just knowing someone very well (such as your mother, father, sister, brother or best friend) does not give you permission to be cruel. Friendship requires its own artistry in relating well to others. You may help others to see important things that have been ignored, but the way in which you do this means everything. If you can be sensitive, your friends will probably genuinely appreciate your honesty.



Questions for Discussion

1. What does honesty have to do with personal relationships?

2. What does it mean to be honest with yourself?

3. What does self-deception mean?

4. What would it be like to live in a society where no one was honest with each other?

5. How does it feel to be lied to?

6. If someone you know lies to you and then asks for your forgiveness, can you easily trust that person, or does it take time to rebuild trust?

7. How does lying affect your character?

8. What does it mean to “rationalize” something? Why do people do this?

Exercise: “What’s Wrong Here?”

In each of the following situations, try to answer the following questions:

1. What is the problem with this situation?
2. How would you feel if you were in this situation?
3. What would you do?

A. You are promised a job with a certain employer. When you show up for the first day's work, he says he never promised you and has hired his own son instead.

B. After having lunch at a café, the person at the cash register gives you too much change.

C. You need your mother's signature on your progress report to turn in the next day or you'll get in trouble. You forgot to show it to her. You can imitate her handwriting pretty well, though.

D. Kevin said he'd pay you back the money you lent him by Friday. School's almost out for the weekend, and he hasn't given you the money.

Reflection Exercise: “Judy and the Lie”

Read and reflect on the following story:

Judy and Nancy had been good friends for a long time. It was not unusual for them to spend Friday night together with their other friends. Therefore, Judy was disappointed when Nancy told her she had to stay home to watch her three-year-old sister the coming Friday night. That Friday, the snow was coming down in blankets as Judy looked out the window of her apartment. She was home with her mother and father and felt terribly bored. Judy decided that her friend Nancy might like some company. So she called her to ask if she could come over for a visit. However, when she called there was no answer. Judy assumed Nancy and her baby sister must have gone to see their neighbor.

On Monday, Mike, a boy in Judy's class, asked her why she did not come to his party on Friday night with Nancy. Judy felt confused and embarrassed, not sure how to answer. Not wanting to believe that her friend Nancy had lied to her, she decided she had to have a talk with her.

Several days later, Judy was with Nancy, riding the bus home from school. Her stomach twisted in knots at the thought that her best friend could have lied to her and deliberately cut her out of an event. Judy had been thinking about it all day and wanted to know the truth from Nancy.

Hoping that Nancy had a good excuse, Judy asked her about Friday night. Nancy looked uncomfortable and looked away from Judy. She told her that she was home all evening with her little sister, and that she thought Judy knew her better than to question her. Judy said nothing else, but got off the bus at her stop. Now she knew that Nancy was not the trusted friend she thought her to be. Not only was the friendship over; Judy sadly wondered what else she had been lied to about.

Questions for Reflection

1. If you were Nancy, how would you feel if you lost Judy's friendship because of lying to her?

2. Pretend you are Judy. Only two weeks ago you lied to one of your other friends, but that friend never knew. Would this change the way you handled the present situation? Would it change the way you feel about Nancy lying to you?

CHAPTER 11

Why We Don't Want to Change

There is room for change and growth in each of us. However, all of us have some resistance to change, because change threatens our comfort and security. Our resistance to change often stands in the way of our experiencing real freedom and happiness. Only by recognizing our resistance can we overcome it and grow into the persons we want to become.

Am I completely satisfied with myself the way I am?

Before starting on the path of changing our habits or attitudes, we are confronted with the question, “Why should I change?” This question may be answered by yet another question, “Am I totally satisfied with the way I am right now?”

Have you ever wished that you had acted differently in any situation? Are there times when you wish you had acted differently with your parents, brothers or sisters, teachers, friends, or grandparents? Most of us have some idea of how we would like to change. Stop and imagine yourself as the kind of person you would like to be.



Within each person there are many undeveloped facets and talents. If we want to realize the fullest potential of our inner gifts, we must grow out of or change our habits, thought patterns and ideas that may be holding us back.

Try asking yourself, “How could I act differently so that I would feel better about myself and be better understood by others?” This may be something as simple as doing some service for someone; or it may be more complex, like changing the way you look at things by taking another person’s point of view in a conflict. We all need to change somewhat so that we can become the person we were meant to be—a person of good character.

If you have the courage, start with an idea about how you would like to be: more assertive, less serious, more open-minded, less manipulative, more honest, more empathetic. You decide!

If Only—Anonymous Author

A Story of Someone Who Wished She'd Done Things Differently

Lately I take long walks by myself. I think about life and death—things everyone wonders about, I suppose. Sometimes I walk for hours, but I always end up at the same place.

Today it was a crisp November afternoon. Not one person was in sight when I arrived. My feet moved toward the little mound of dirt, just as they had yesterday, and the day before and the day before, every day for the past month.

I took my usual kneeling position beside the small stone inscribed with these sad tidings: "Here lies Timmy Langdon—Born May 23, 1957, Died October 14, 1965." The words sent new shocks up my spine, just as I knew they would. For even after a month I still could not believe it. When I thought of Timmy, I thought of a golden-haired boy hurrying off to school or baseball practice, not a cold form here with all these strangers.

Something else troubled me, and I don't think I will ever forget it. I had come home from school after a long and hectic day. Mrs. Trimble had decided our reports were due tomorrow instead of next Friday. Mr. Johnson was kind enough to warn us of a history test on the last five chapters to be given tomorrow. Anyway, dotted here and there among these big headaches was my usual homework—algebra and bookkeeping. I had come dragging into the house with my "It's been a hard day" look. Mom knew better than to ask about my day.

As I headed for my bedroom I heard two small voices laughing. I opened the door, and there sat Timmy and a little neighbor friend at my desk looking at my lipstick. They weren't making a mess. In fact, they were being very careful not to. Anyway, this was the straw that broke the camel's back, and I lost my temper. I told them to get out and never to come back into my room when I'm not home and to "Stay out of my stuff, you little pest!" I must have called him a pest four or five times. How could I have been so crude?

Tim's face turned beet red, and I know he was sorry and ashamed. He even apologized; but oh, no, I couldn't let him get away with it. I had to be firm.

At the dinner table Tim was unusually quiet and didn't eat much, but I guess I was the only one who noticed, because Mom and Dad were talking about so-and-so and should they go to the reception two hundred miles away. After supper I excused myself and got to work. While I was working, I felt someone watching me. I turned, and there stood Timmy in the doorway.

"Please close the door," I said curtly.

He hesitated, then slowly closed it, with a hurt, puzzled look.

"I'll make it up to him," I thought, then turned my thoughts back to my work.

The next morning was warm, and I felt fatigue as I climbed out of bed. I hurriedly dressed and dashed out to the breakfast table. I had five minutes to eat. Timmy was the only one at the table. Mom was cooking eggs in the kitchen. As I sat down, I felt his warm, brown eyes on me, and I met his imploring gaze with a cool stare.

"Are you still mad at me?" he asked.

"I suppose so." I really wasn't, but I felt he hadn't learned his lesson yet.

"I'm sorry. I won't do it again."

"We'll see," I said cuttingly. Then hurriedly gulping the last of my breakfast, I grabbed my books and ran for the bus stop, purposely ignoring him. But as I hurried out the door, something about the sadness in his eyes brought a guilty feeling, and I remember thinking, "I'll make it up to him later." That was my trouble. I was always in too much of a hurry to get close to him. I was too busy with my debate to go to his baseball game for an hour. I was too busy with algebra to go to his school play. I was always too busy for him, and I could have made time so very easily.

That was the last time I saw him alive—at the breakfast table.

The next time I saw him, he was lying under a white sheet.

I had come home from school as usual with my mind full of my usual thoughts. I noticed my brother's badly twisted bike on the lawn. I suddenly felt panic sweeping over me. I ran for the house, my heart beating in my throat. The kitchen was quiet. There was no dinner cooking. It was too quiet. The living room door was shut, and I was terrified of the circumstances that were happening on the other side; but the silence of the kitchen was too much to bear and I found myself pushing the door open.

My mother was sitting in the rocking chair with Father kneeling by her side, holding her shaking hand. Their faces wore identical expressions—very pale with eyes staring straight ahead. When Mom saw me she stood up and took me in her shaking arms. I expected the worst from that action, and my fears were confirmed as Dad related the events of the last half hour.

Timmy had been in a hurry to get home and start on the new model airplane Mom had bought him. He must not have been looking as he came racing across the street. The driver of the car did not see him till it was too late. I had read of this type of thing many times in the newspaper; but it happened to other people, not to me, not to my family.

The next few days were full of tears. I cried until my eyes were dry and red and tears just wouldn't come anymore. I couldn't eat for days. I couldn't sleep very long. I would always have the same dream of coming home from school that day.

I remember so many small things he had done for me—things like getting me a glass of water while I was studying, polishing my shoes when I was in a hurry, bringing me dandelions, showing me his new baseball bat (which I thought was a

bore). I am sure everyone has thought, "If only I could do it again. If only I had one more chance."

Suddenly I wished more than anything to talk with him if for just five minutes. And when he would ask me, "Are you still mad at me?" with his brown eyes studying my face, I would take him in my arms and say, "No, my darling, I'm not mad anymore, and I'll never be mad at you again."

I slowly got to my feet from the misty grass. My legs were cramped and stiff from kneeling so long. I pulled my coat tighter, because November gets chilly in the late afternoon. Then I started for home.



The lesson of this story is: don't put off being more kind, more considerate, more loving, more patient until "tomorrow." You may regret it if you do.

Now that you're ready — ready to change — you may say again, "But, but, but I ... can't." Why not? Before continuing, let's take a look at the reasons many people give themselves for not changing. Becoming aware of the resistance within is the first step to overcoming it. What are some of these? Perhaps you may recognize some of the following:

Ways that we resist change

Things we say to ourselves:

It wouldn't do any good anyway.

My situation is different.

It will work itself out eventually.

It's better just to leave things as they are and not cause a big problem.

It's not the right time.

If things were different, perhaps it would work out.

I don't have time.

They should change first.
My parents won't let me.
I'm really all right. There's nothing wrong with me.
It takes too much effort.
What if I fail?
They might reject me.
What would my friends think of me?
I'm not good enough.
I might lose my friends.

Things we do:

Changing the subject
Leaving the room
Being late
Getting "sick"
Doing unnecessary work
Procrastinating
Not paying attention
Cutting off a relationship
Looking away when someone is talking to us

Concepts about ourselves:

I'm too "old, young, fat, thin, short, tall, ugly, lazy, strong, weak, stupid, poor, worthless, silly, serious" to change!

The secret of managing your fears

Sometimes we do not want to change and become the person we were meant to be because of fear. We may think, "What if my friends laugh at me?" or "What if I'm no good after all?" Chances are that we fear rejection or failure because we feel we do not "measure up," or we fear that we may find that our worst fears about ourselves might be true after all. Fear often stops us from doing what we know we really should do. So how do we overcome this fear? How do we find the ability to change?

Which person do you respect more: the one who tries to do something really difficult--who stretches himself to the point of his limitations, even though he may not gain complete victory — or the person who never even tries? Trying takes effort, and going beyond your fears takes a lot of effort. In order to change, to grow, to re-create yourself in some way, you have to think: "What do I have to lose? What do I have to gain?"

The benefits

You are actually re-creating yourself when you change. You are the end result of many factors —your genes, the way your parents raised you as a child, the relationships you have made, the cultural environment, the choices you made (and are still making)

concerning school, athletics, the arts, recreational activities, etc. The past cannot be changed, but you can always change your understanding and response to your situation.

Many of the most renowned people in history came from seemingly impossible circumstances. Nevertheless, they found the way to develop their inner potential. To do this takes work, discipline and determination. In history, many people who accomplished great things did so, not despite, but because of the obstacles that life brought to them. They succeeded because of what they became in response to their difficulties.

Helen Keller

Helen Keller was born in the United States in 1880. As a baby, she got sick and became blind, deaf, and mute. She lived in a world of darkness and silence and received no education.

As she grew, her parents couldn't manage her anymore, so they hired a teacher, Miss Anne Sullivan, to try to control her.

Anne Sullivan tried to teach Helen words by spelling them into her hand or letting Helen touch her lips as she spoke. At first Helen did not understand, but one day she did. This breakthrough of communication into Helen's dark and silent world has been immortalized in a Broadway play (*The Miracle Worker*) and in two Hollywood films about the life of Helen Keller.

Helen Keller learned how to read Braille, the alphabet for blind people. She also learned to write, and even to speak. She became the first blind and deaf person to attend and graduate from the famous Radcliffe College. She dedicated herself to helping blind and deaf people all over the world. Because of her inspiring story of overcoming great obstacles to go on to help others, she met two presidents of the United States, the king and queen of England, and many other famous people. She received the highest award an American civilian can receive—the Presidential Medal of Freedom—in 1964. She was elected to the Women's Hall of Fame.

Helen was optimistic, tough, hard-working, kind-hearted, and full of wisdom and willpower. She showed the world that a person could overcome an extreme situation. She is buried side by side with Anne Sullivan, the beloved teacher who opened up her mental world.



In order to change, you have to imagine yourself as a new type of person, someone who responds to a familiar situation in a new way. For example:

Instead of saying, or agreeing with, unkind words about other people when they are not around

You can ...

Refrain from doing this and even defend their reputation when they are not present.

You get ...

Good feelings from your conscience, and you are building a reputation as someone who is trustworthy.

Instead of avoiding new experiences or challenges because of a fear of failure, such as not trying out for the football team or dance group,

You can ...

Get involved in activities and explore new challenges to learn to develop your talent.

You get ...

Confidence from overcoming your fear of failure, and you may make new friends while you are doing it. You may also discover that other people have similar fears.

Instead of constantly waking up later than you would like,

You can ...

Rise in time to do everything you need to do to prepare for the day.

You get ...

A great feeling of control over your body, instead of feeling that you are at the mercy of your body's desires. You may even find yourself with more energy for the day, even with less sleep.

Some people gain strength to change by taking it one day at a time. Each morning when they get up, they remind themselves of how they plan to change one thing about themselves. If you have a problem with talking unkindly about people behind their backs, then you could focus on that point for the day. Then, before you go to bed, go over your day and see how you tackled that one point about yourself. You then acknowledge that you did make a change for the better today and can do it again tomorrow.

Other people get their closest friend to help them change. They ask the friend to support them in their effort to change their attitude or behavior. That way, when they do something they shouldn't do, the friend reminds them of their promise and commitment to change.

These are just some of the things you could do. Can you make your own list? List not only the bad habits, but also the good ones you can replace them with and the resulting benefits. Start out with those habits, which are not too difficult to change. Give yourself time, and be your own friend by letting yourself have success in the beginning. If you try to change too many things at once, you may become frustrated and discouraged. So, just change one habit at a time and enjoy the remaking of you!

One hint—focus on your strengths

Changing requires that you use your strengths to take action to overcome weakness and pessimism. To do this, you must begin by identifying your strengths. What are you good at? What personality traits do you have that are positive? Are you good at listening to others and understanding them? Are you good at taking responsibility for important things and accomplishing your goals? Are you good at remaining calm and level-headed in the midst of confusing or frightening circumstances? Are you flexible, able to adjust easily to new ideas, people and places? Are you reflective and able to understand the motivations behind the actions of others? Are you good at leading groups of people? Can you speak publicly? Where do your strengths and talents lie?

Once you are aware of what you are good at doing, you can start to use those talents to help you grow to your fullest potential. Realizing that you actually have many positive traits may come as a bit of a surprise at first, but it is the key to lasting change and growth.

Questions for Discussion

1. What are some of the reasons why a person might be afraid of trying something challenging?

2. Which of these reasons are real and which are imaginary?

3. Define courage and cowardice.

4. What do courage and cowardice have to do with personal growth?

5. Does being courageous mean not having any fear?

6. Can you think of any examples of people demonstrating courage?

7. Are there ways in which you might be resisting change in your life?

8. If you could overcome your fears, in what ways would you benefit?

Exercise: “A Case of Fear”

That year I had decided I would be on the chess team. My school had just begun a team, and the first tournament was in only a few weeks. The other kids in the class didn't know I could play chess — I never told anyone — but I had been playing with my Uncle George since I was really young and, honestly speaking, I became very good. I had to sign up that week. There was just this paper on the wall to sign up outside the principal's office — no big deal. But every time I walked by to sign up, I couldn't. I even took out my pen a few times and almost signed my name, but every time the same thing would happen — I would begin to think about what the other kids would say when they saw I had signed up. They might tease me, and even if no one noticed or said a thing, what if I couldn't play

once the games started? I always got so nervous in front of other people. But I really wanted to play. How could I be on the chess team? I couldn't even think about it without getting knots in my stomach, and every time I picked up that pen to sign up, my heart would race a little and my palms would start to sweat. I was stuck, I was afraid. I know it seems like such a little thing, but I never did bring myself to sign up for the chess team. Anyway, I decided it wasn't that important, and it would have probably interfered with my schoolwork.

Questions for Discussion

1. Do you think the person speaking in the story was honest with himself?

2. What was he afraid of?

3. If you were his friend, what would you have said to him?

4. Do you think he was afraid of many other things in his life and this was just one way his fear showed?

5. How do you think he could have gotten over his fear?

6. He seems to be speaking from some time later, perhaps 10 or 20 years. What kind of person do you think he became? What do you think he accomplished?

Reflection Exercise: “Love Overcomes Fear”

Have you ever loved something or someone so much that you did not mind facing all kinds of obstacles on their behalf? Describe who or what you loved and the obstacles you had to overcome.

CHAPTER 12
Good and Bad

Often we are faced with moral dilemmas in our lives. What's the right thing to do? How do we decide what is right? Let's examine some ways people use to distinguish right from wrong, or good and evil.

Some people think, "What brings me pleasure is good, and what causes me pain is bad," or "If I get my way, that is good; if I don't, that is bad. A person who helps me to do what I want is my friend, a person who stands in my way is my enemy."

In other words, "I myself" am the sole judge of what is good and bad. My criterion for deciding is how something affects "me." This is the normal way of thinking for most young children, but usually they grow out of it as they get older. If we find this kind of behavior in an adult, we conclude such a person has the maturity of a small child.



Unfortunately, many adults do think like this. They do not make decisions based upon an objective standard of right and wrong, but on whether it will benefit them or their group. If we think like this, it becomes easy to take the position that the end justifies the means: to achieve my goal, any means are okay. A nation often decides whether a policy or an event is good or bad based upon whether or not it is in that nation's interest. This becomes one of the chief causes of conflicts and wars, as one nation's interest comes up against another's. Do "I" really have the right or the authority to decide what is good and what is evil?

Another common criterion is whether an act pleases others. For example, a young child wants to please her parents. What is right and wrong is determined by what makes the parents happy or unhappy. As people grow older, they become concerned about how they appear in the eyes of their peer group and seek acceptance by adopting the values of that group, no matter what their quality. But what if those values lead to the destruction of oneself or others?

Commonly we accept that it is our duty to obey the law. However, even the law cannot be the highest standard of right and wrong, since we appeal to some higher authority when we feel that a law is unjust. Laws should be based on what is right, but

they are not the ultimate determinant of right and wrong. There have been unjust laws, and legal systems sometimes have been used for political purposes to eliminate opposition and stifle dissent. In such circumstances, people who follow their conscience and the moral law within refuse to compromise their integrity by doing and saying what they know to be wrong, despite the suffering they may endure as a result. This is called "civil disobedience."

Civil Disobedience – When Evil Is Written in Law

Slavery ended in the United States in 1865. Still, certain laws, called "Jim Crow laws" in the South, kept black people out of inns, restaurants, swimming pools, parks, and other places whites used, even until the 1960s.

If you disobeyed a "Jim Crow law," you were often beaten up or even taken away in the dark of night and hung to a tree (lynched).

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (born 1929, died 1968) led the challenge to the "Jim Crow" laws. He said black people should be treated equally with white people. Some people accused him of being a law-breaker. He explained:

"There are two types of laws: just and unjust. I would be the last to advocate disobeying just laws. One has not only a legal but a moral responsibility to obey just laws. Conversely, one has a moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws. I would agree with St. Augustine that 'an unjust law is no law at all.'"

Through his non-violent "civil disobedience" to the unjust laws, Dr. Martin Luther King changed race relations in America and won the Nobel Peace Prize.



Good and bad begin inside

Where do good and evil begin? If we are honest we will recognize that we find both good and evil elements within ourselves. This is actually a profound insight, as many, if not most, people are blind to the evil within themselves. We tend to locate our problems elsewhere, blaming others for our bad feelings.

Attempting to change others while we remain unchanged can have disastrous consequences. We are responsible in some way for our situation. By changing ourselves, our situation can change.

Everyone has some good and some bad inside. Can anyone look back on his life with a completely clear conscience, without shame or regret for wrongs done, or for good deeds left undone? No people, nation or race can claim to be totally good. At the same time, no people or race has a monopoly on wrongdoing.

Is evil natural?

Sometimes people believe that it is not possible for goodness to exist without evil. They think, "You can't recognize goodness without the presence of evil." However, let us consider this. A baby intuitively knows his mother is kind. He doesn't need to be abused to recognize this. Children assume that all is good until they painfully learn by experience that evil exists. We recognize a delicious meal when we taste and smell it. We don't make our taste buds more appreciative of good food by eating dirt before sitting down to lunch. Obviously, we can recognize and enjoy something that is good without evil. Good and evil are not complements like light and dark, male and female. Instead, they actively oppose each other because they have contradictory purposes. They cannot co-exist forever, since they work for each other's destruction.

Furthermore, evil appears to be limited to the human race. It is not a feature of the universe itself. One of the qualities distinguishing human beings from animals is the capacity for good and evil. People have the potential to commit not only extraordinary acts of altruism and self-sacrifice, but also great evil. Man is perhaps the only being who fights and kills members of his *own* species. In the animal world, members of the same species do not generally fight each other to the death. The struggle within a species, such as a contest between stags, is for the purpose of deciding which is to be the leader of the herd. Once this is established, there is order again until the next challenge. They do not try to kill each other. The main struggle in the animal world, the battle between predator and prey, results from natural instinct. Animals usually kill other animals (which are almost invariably of a different species) for food, either for an immediate meal or for a future one.

How do we tell good from evil?

In today's world it often is very difficult to distinguish between good and evil. What appears to be good sometimes turns out to be evil, and what seems to be evil sometimes is actually good. People have become adept at concealing their true motivations or are able to convince others that the evil they do is really for a good purpose. Many will say

that there is no absolute good and evil, but that it all depends on your point of view. For instance, most religious believers would consider sex outside of marriage morally wrong, but for others this is just another lifestyle choice.

This doesn't mean that everything about good and evil is a matter of mere opinion. If this were so, we would have no right to judge others on anything, which is what some would have us believe. However, the fact is that there have always been certain attitudes and actions universally considered moral. There has never been a society that affirmed cowardice as a virtue, or rape, murder and theft as noble deeds. Although courage and honor may take different forms in different societies, both are universal virtues.

Throughout history, civilizations have sought a standard of good and evil that transcends personal opinion and can be recognized objectively by everyone. Civilizations that fail to do so, or whose standards disintegrate, soon wither and disappear. Although different cultures recognize different standards of good and evil, they all have recognized some standard.

Can we come up with a universal criterion for good and evil? It seems to come down to a question of unselfishness and selfishness. Most people would agree that goodness is equated with unselfishness while evil is expressed by selfishness. Goodness is doing something for another person without expecting to be rewarded. If we have some expectation of getting something in return for our efforts, if it fails to materialize, feelings of anger, resentment and complaint can creep in. This is evidence that when we gave to the person, we were not primarily concerned with his benefit. If we had been, we would have been satisfied with his happiness alone. Goodness is its own reward.

Being good means that you must act more for the sake of others than for your own sake. If you found anyone like that, you probably would want always to be with that person and would feel great affection toward him or her.

We have discussed different approaches to understanding what is good and what is evil. Perhaps the most important conclusion is that evil is neither natural nor relative; also both good and evil begin within ourselves and not somewhere "out there." Evil is that which is selfish; goodness is that which is unselfish—that which is for the benefit of others, even at a sacrifice to the self.

Finally, it is up to us, to the extent that we are able, to overcome evil and to multiply goodness. This is the way to overcome evil — first within myself and then by my example to the world around me.

Questions for Reflection

1. Are there such things as absolute good and absolute evil?

2. Please define good and evil.

3. In deciding good and evil, what should be the determining factor: the action itself, motivation or consequences?

4. What kinds of things do you think would be considered good in any culture?

5. What kinds of things do you think would be considered evil in any culture?

6. Since it seems that evil has always existed, is evil a natural part of human existence and there is nothing we can do about it? Why or why not?

7. Is it possible to have good without evil?

Exercise: “The Main Motivation”

1. Jane and Mary had become good friends over the last several months. Jane was so happy to finally have a friend. She had lived in this small town almost a year and a half and had not made any friends at all. She and Mary spent a lot of time together and had fun talking and working on their school work together. However, one day Jane was walking through the school hallway when she accidentally saw Mary talking to another girl. She heard the other girl say, “How come you’re such good friends with Jane all of a sudden? No one else likes her.” And Mary replied, “I know she’s a little weird, but her father is the head of the university I want to go to next year. My grades are not so good, so by visiting her house I’m trying to get in good with her father. I think it’s starting to work.”
2. Ted was doing terrible in math class. The girl who sat in front of him was a top student, although she was quite plain and quiet and had no friends. Towards the end of the school year, Ted began to panic. He knew he had to find some way to pass math. He began to bring the girl in front of him little presents. He even wrote her a card and gave her flowers on her birthday. He talked to her in the hallway and made her laugh with his funny jokes. The girl had never felt accepted before, but now she felt like someone honestly liked her. During the final exam she let Ted copy all her answers. As a result he received an A.
3. Lisa was a sophomore in high school. She had a lot of friends and liked being one of the popular kids. Lisa often spent time in the evenings tutoring other students. She hated tutoring, but she knew this was the only way she could get out of watching her little brother every day after school. Her mother really needed her help, but her father insisted that Lisa should have the opportunity to help other students. All of the kids looked up to

her for volunteering her time, but sometimes Lisa did not feel good about what she was doing.

Questions for Discussion

1. Can you identify the motivation behind these students' actions?

2. Does it happen that sometimes what appears to be good behavior is actually not so good?

3. Does it ever happen the other way around, that is, what appears to be bad might actually be good? Give some examples.

Reflection Exercise

Think of the evils that we see in our world and reflect on the following: What would happen if these evils were to disappear? Would human life stagnate? Could human progress take place without any evils to overcome? Are there natural challenges in human life without evil? Envision a world without evil.

- I may wish to be a famous and highly talented artist, musician or gymnast, but my freedom is again limited. It may not be physically impossible for me to achieve these things, but it requires a sustained investment of training in order to develop natural ability. Therefore, my chances of achieving what I want are limited to the quality of training that I can acquire.
- I may wish to take all the money in a bank, but I am likely to be arrested.

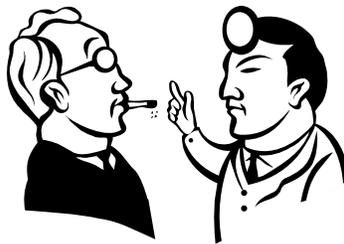
These are some examples of the way that freedom is limited, whether by physical law, natural ability, or legal and social constraint.

Freedom of will

There is an important dimension to freedom that is often forgotten: freedom of will. Although our freedom may be constrained and our choices limited, in the moment when we choose, we experience freedom. We understand that we could have made a different choice. But how free are we really?

If you decide to do something but then give up, are you free? If you find yourself doing something you know you shouldn't do, and you know you will regret it later, but still you cannot stop yourself, are you free? Do you have the freedom to follow your conscience? Do you have the freedom to forgive someone, or do you sometimes say, "I cannot forgive that person"? Do you have the freedom to apologize?

True freedom is closely linked to self-control. Only a self-disciplined person can decide to do something and accomplish it. A person who cannot control his desires is blown all over the place by impulses, spurious thoughts and feelings. For example, is an alcoholic free? In one sense, yes, because no one is forcing him to drink, but in another sense he is a slave to his insatiable desire for alcohol. How about a person who wants to give up smoking but cannot? If we cannot redirect our desires, our will is not free.



A person who has freedom of will is naturally creative. He is always growing, creating and developing in every dimension. Such freedom can never be taken away.

True freedom is the freedom to follow one's conscience and maintain one's personal integrity. This is freedom of will. It sometimes involves struggle, and it takes a lot of courage. Yet it leads to more and more of a sense of liberation and fulfillment. The joy of freedom is not only to be able to choose, but to be able to choose well—to choose the right and the good.

Viktor Frankl - A Free Man even in Prison

Viktor Frankl was a brilliant psychiatrist who was Jewish. When Adolf Hitler came into power, he sent Jews to "concentration camps"--camps where Hitler's Nazis murdered, tortured and starved Jewish people to death. Viktor was sent to Auschwitz--the most infamous camp of all.

Conditions in the camp were horrible. Yet Frankl observed that even here, prisoners still had the freedom to choose how they would act in those terrible circumstances: some chose to be good and kind, some chose to be evil and mean. It was each man's choice and each man's responsibility.

Frankl said, "Everything can be taken from a man but...the last of the human freedoms - to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way."



When the United States Army liberated the camps in 1945, Viktor Frankl became a free man. He wrote over 30 books and started a new form of psychotherapy.

(Source: Frankl, Viktor E., *Man's Search for Meaning*, Washington Square Press, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1963, p. 104.)

True freedom is not the freedom to do evil and be selfish. That is called license. For instance, one cannot defend being rude and doing whatever one wants without regard for others as an expression of true freedom. When we use freedom to make bad choices, the eventual result is less freedom, less joy. An example might be a person who engages in "free sex"—meaning that the person has sex with whomever the person wants to, whenever the person wants to. This may seem like very liberated and free behavior—but that person will wind up less free when the consequences of such actions fall. An unwanted pregnancy, a serious infectious disease—and/or the psychological burden of uncommitted yet bonding relationships—will sooner or later make that person feel less free and joyful than someone who chose to behave within the limits of morality.

Freedom of action

Besides freedom of will, freedom also includes freedom of action. As social and political freedoms developed, the opportunity for free action was expanded. Often this was due to the efforts of people who wanted the freedom to worship God in their own way, to hold beliefs different from those of a powerful majority, to pursue truth and

spread that truth through freedom of speech and the press. Freedom of will and freedom of action should go hand in hand. However, when there is freedom but people do not follow their conscience--in other words, when they use their freedom of will to make the wrong choices--the result is crime, social collapse and anarchy. A free society in which people have few morals soon collapses. There cannot be a genuinely free society that is not at the same time a moral society, one made up of mature and responsible people.

Freedom and responsibility

People like freedom because it gives them a sense of mastery over things and people. They dislike responsibility because it constrains them from satisfying their desires. Yet they do not understand the relationship between freedom and responsibility. The two go hand-in-hand. Everyone wants to be free, but there are times when we are terrified by the responsibility freedom brings. We feel relieved (or at least part of us does) when someone else takes responsibility and makes a decision or when circumstances decide for us. In these situations, we try to escape from freedom. Then, if something goes wrong, we can blame someone else.

Yet freedom cannot be separated from responsibility. When we are young, we have little freedom, and thus little responsibility. As we become more responsible, we gain more freedom and can make more and more of the decisions that affect our lives. We also need the freedom to make mistakes and to learn from them. If a person interferes with our responsibility, we feel violated, because it is freedom and responsibility that make us human. This means, however, that we have not only the opportunity to make choices, but also that we bear the consequences of our actions, both good and bad. We can choose what we do—we have that freedom. Yet we cannot choose the consequences of what we do. They are set in natural and moral law. Therefore, we do well to make responsible choices.

Viktor Frankl once proposed that in addition to the Statue of Liberty on the east coast, the United States erect a Statue of Responsibility on the west coast.



A Statue of Responsibility?

We are answerable not just for the things we do but also for the kind of people we become. Every thought, word and deed in our lives shapes our character. We create our own character through the decisions we make. If we establish the habit of making the right choices in given situations, we create the foundation for a good character. Poor choices, on the other hand, lay the groundwork for developing bad character. In this way, we determine to a great degree our destiny through the quality of character we develop. As the philosopher Heraclitus said, "Character is destiny."

Freedom and law

Obviously, in many ways our freedom is limited by laws. Many people think that since human beings are meant to be free, they should not be restricted by any laws or norms. However, if everyone could do whatever he pleased without law and order, the inevitable result would be that the strongest would rule and the weakest would be oppressed or destroyed. In reality, freedom cannot be maintained without law. These laws should apply in the same way to everyone, regardless of who they are. Freedom and equality are thus related.

Freedom exists only within a framework of rules. Imagine playing a game of chess. Are you free to move the chessmen wherever and however you want? Is it possible to play a game with no rules? Rules prevent any arbitrary moves by either player. They establish a common understanding by which everyone plays.

How about society? If there are laws against stealing or murder that apply to everyone, we all can feel safe. Without such laws, no one is safe, and no one has the freedom to walk the streets without fear. So the purpose of laws is to protect people's freedom. A train, as long as it remains on its tracks, can run rapidly or move slowly, go forward or move backward. In other words, the train has freedom only insofar as it remains on the tracks. If it is derailed, it will be damaged and may also cause damage to people and property.

Hence, a human being's conscience and moral law restrict freedom, but they also work to protect people from going in a self-destructive and evil direction. They do not restrict or disturb us in the development of our goodness. We are free to be as good as we can be.

Only by following the way of love and goodness can we become truly free.

Questions for Discussion

1. Have you ever made a decision that was entirely your own? Describe it.

2. Is freedom necessary to live a good life in a good society?

3. How free are you? What are the chief restraints on your freedom?

4. What is the difference between freedom and anarchy? Freedom and license?

5. Are there any freedoms that you are willing to die for? If so, what are they?

6. At what point do people become responsible for their actions?

Exercise: “Freedom and Responsibility”

1. Comment on the following statement: “As we get older we naturally desire more freedom. With that freedom comes greater responsibility. However, many people want freedom without the responsibility.”

2. Now make three columns in your notebook. In the first column write the decisions you were able to make as a small child. In the second column write the decisions you are presently able to make. Finally, in the third column, write decisions which you plan to be able to make as an independent adult.

3. To be truly free means to be completely responsible for your life. You determine the outcome of your life--no one else. If someone else takes responsibility for you, to that degree you are not free. Discuss the following statement with another student and prepare a response to the class: “Freedom and responsibility are tied together. A truly free person makes his own decisions and accepts the results of those decisions, whether good or bad. A person who is not free allows someone else to make the decisions that will shape his life and is bound by those decisions.”

Reflection Exercise: “Inner Freedom”

Imagine that you are unjustly accused of a serious crime and put into prison. You have no one to talk to and your freedom is restricted to your cell. How could you make yourself free within the space of your own mind?

CHAPTER 14

Self-Control

One of the main characteristics of being human is the ability to be self-reflective. As we have said, as we grow physically, our inner selves should grow as well. A critical component of spiritual growth concerns learning self-control.

We know that, as infants and toddlers, we have a hard time controlling our bodies. When we are hungry, we cry until we are fed. When we are tired, we go to sleep, even right in the middle of the living room floor. And when we need to defecate, we just do it, no matter where we are; thus, the need for diapers. A sign of our maturity is our ability to control these and other bodily functions.

Another part of the body we have to learn to control is our tongue! Although it is small, it can be very unruly. Often we can't control it and we brag about ourselves, gossip about others, shout and curse. No matter how much we may regret saying certain things, once said it is impossible to take them back. Words may be invisible but they are very powerful and can outlive their speaker.



A Few Simple Words

Marjorie was the teacher's assistant in 9th grade girls' gym class. She had many duties, including maintaining the attendance and grade records. The gym class was doing dance routines to their favorite recordings. It was also Marjorie's job make sure the recordings were returned to their rightful owners.

Carla, a "popular" girl, had brought in a CD for her group's dance routine. When her group was finished, Carla came up to Marjorie. It made Marjorie a little nervous to talk to Carla. Carla was the leader of a very powerful "clique."

"So where's my recording?" Carla asked.

In the noise of the gym, Marjorie thought Carla said, "record" instead of "recording." She thought maybe Carla wanted to see her gym scores. She began flipping through her record book. Then she realized Carla wanted her CD back.

"Oh!" Marjorie cried. "You want your *recording*. I misheard you. Sorry." Marjorie looked through the stack of CDs. "Here you are," she said, giving it to Carla.

"Boy, is she cool," said Carla sarcastically to her friend as the two of them walked away from Marjorie. The friend laughed.

Marjorie felt crestfallen. She had made an honest mistake, and Carla had made her seem like a fool. Marjorie kept her head down all that day in class. Carla's sarcastic words, "Boy, is she cool," cut into her heart like a knife, making her feel like she was stupid and inferior. She avoided Carla from then on and gave up any hope of belonging to the "in" crowd.

In addition to controlling our words, we need to learn to exercise emotional self-control. Perhaps you know some people who are extremely sensitive and emotional and burst into tears easily. Others are short-tempered and can turn violently angry. People who lack emotional self-control are usually difficult to get along with. Our emotions are the source of our energy and motivation. Just like horses, they have to be tamed and disciplined if they are not to run wild. Bridled, they will take you where you want to go.

Self-control in the area of sexual behavior is obviously a mixture of both bodily and emotional discipline. Both are especially challenging to teenagers. With the onset of puberty, large quantities of sex hormones start to be produced, which affect both our body and emotions.

When we have learned to control these new factors introduced into our life, this is a good indication that we've made it to adulthood. From this definition, it is obvious that a great many physical adults are not really adults in the true sense.

Self-control is not about suppressing or repressing desires, or pretending that they don't exist. Becoming aware of and being attracted to members of the opposite sex is part of the process of growing up, both physically and spiritually. It is not bad, but these feelings need to be channeled into constructive activities.

There are lots of ways that sexual energy can be directed and harnessed before it is finally consummated in marriage. Some examples are sports, art, music, drama, voluntary service, spiritual exploration, and many other activities.

Our sexual energy can be channeled into tremendously creative activities. Like any power, it can be useful if understood but can destroy you if treated casually. Think of it like electricity. Electricity is indispensable and very helpful, but it can kill you if you are careless.

People often regard self-control as limiting. The opposite is the case. For instance, an experienced pianist can sit down at a piano and play any piece of music she chooses. If you watch her, you may notice that her eyes may be closed as her hands move across the keyboard effortlessly. Her body may sway as she lets the music flow through her. She is obviously enjoying herself immensely. Reaching this level of accomplishment takes years of practice. The first time you sit at a piano and try to play, it can be a very frustrating experience. Your fingers won't go where you want them to and it takes all your effort and concentration to play even a few notes correctly. Gradually you learn a few simple tunes and practice the scales again and again. As your fingers become disciplined, you no longer have to think about them. They just go where they should. Ironically, the more disciplined you become, the more freedom you have.



In the same way, spiritual self-control gives a person great confidence and joy. A person in control of himself can trust himself because he knows that he will do and say what he intends. The same applies to giving love. We must have self-control in order to truly love others.

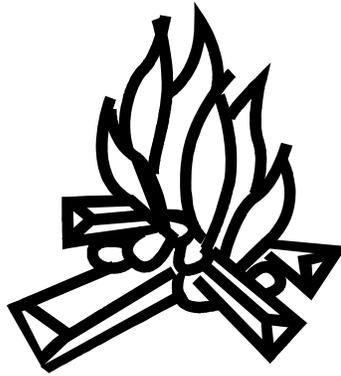
Self-control is the channeling and controlling of our drives and impulses—whether biological, emotional, or intellectual. Unfortunately, this is not a popular concept in our modern world. After all, doesn't restraining yourself mean possibly missing out on something special? Teenagers especially do not want to miss out on any exciting experiences. According to many voices in our society, self-control sounds like the opposite of living passionately.

Is there something you need to learn to control?

An analogy may help to clarify the meaning of self-control and its relationship to living passionately. If you ever had experience with campfires, you know the difference between a fire made from wood and one made from paper. Think about each type of fire:

- Which type of fire is easier to get going? Looks more spectacular in the beginning? Goes out more quickly?
- Which type of fire takes more tending and careful preparation to build?
- Which fire provides more warmth? Might last through the night? Can be used for cooking?
- Which one is more likely to go out if a little wind comes up?

Self-control means "tending the fire within." We are all blessed with the "fuel" of life's energy within us—our emotions, our drives and urges, our longings for pleasure. We have to resist the impulse to get an instant big blaze going with this fuel, or it will burn out like a newspaper fire. We have to learn self-control—not giving in to our passions on demand. Then we will be able to build up our inner fire, tending it carefully and patiently. We will become persons of depth whose passion, like firewood, gives warmth and light for a lifetime.



Learning to practice self-control makes a lot of sense when we look at our life as a long-term project of character-building. As discussed throughout this book, the key question for every human being is: “What kind of person do I want to become?”

Questions for Discussion

1. What types of things do you find difficult to control in yourself?

2. How does this affect your state of happiness? Your character? Accomplishing your goals?

3. What can you do to gain more control over your desires?

4. What are you willing to sacrifice for the sake of a long-term gain?

5. Are there things more difficult to control in yourself than five years ago? Why?

6. Are there things easier to control in yourself than five years ago? Why?

Exercise: "Self-control"

The aim of this test is clear and simple--to find out how much self-control you have. Do you tend to be frugal or spendthrift? How you are will no doubt affect your relationship with your future spouse.

1. Do you take on 2 or 3 jobs at the same time?
 - a) seldom
 - b) often
 - c) never
2. After receiving your paycheck, would you buy expensive things that you really want knowing that later it will be difficult to make ends meet?
 - a) never
 - b) always
 - c) sometimes
3. If you see clothes that you really like, would the price stop you from buying them?
 - a) sometimes
 - b) never
 - c) always
4. If some household device (such as a coffee maker) breaks down, would you prefer to buy a new one or repair the old one?
 - a) prefer buy to buy a new one
 - b) depends on the price of the repair
 - c) try to repair it myself
5. If there is a hole in your stocking or sock, what would you do?
 - a) mend it
 - b) throw away together with the second one
 - c) keep the second one, for it may come in handy
6. Do you turn off the light in a room when you leave it?
 - a) rarely
 - b) sometimes
 - c) always
7. Do you use the telephone only when it is necessary, or more freely?

- a) only when necessary
 - b) I like to talk on the phone
 - c) it depends
8. Are you able to do several things well at the same time?
- a) yes
 - b) no
 - c) it depends
9. If there are a lot of old newspapers in the home, what would you do?
- a) throw them away
 - b) recycle them
 - c) leave them
10. Do you buy more bread than you need?
- a) yes
 - b) sometimes
 - c) never
11. Do you eat everything on your plate or do you leave a bit sometimes?
- a) leave food sometimes
 - b) never leave anything
 - c) always leave some
12. Do you take care of your clothes and shoes?
- a) yes
 - b) no
 - c) not always
13. Are you careful with other people's things?
- a) no
 - b) yes
 - c) even more careful than with my own things

Reflection Exercise

Does practicing self-control limit or expand your sense of freedom? Reflect and comment.

CHAPTER 15

The Teenage Years

What is happening to us? And what is happening to those around us?

Why do we feel ourselves to be grown up, but our parents and teachers still treat us like little children? Why does nobody seem to understand? Why don't our parents trust us?

And, what is love? A classmate invites me to the movies. Is it love? A girl, who before did not pay any attention to me, starts speaking to me during breaks between classes and invites me over to her house. She's in love with me, right? What about me? How do I feel about her?



Often, when we are searching for answers to these questions, we are only thinking about our own feelings: *I feel a certain way; I am not being understood; somebody likes me.* But what about those around us? How do they feel? Are they also suffering because they don't feel understood either?

A time of changes

You are probably aware that you have gone through a lot of changes during the past few years. First of all, no doubt your appearance has changed drastically. You have also discovered new desires and interests. The people you were friends with before now don't seem to be so interesting. Why are these things happening? It's all part of the process of changing from children into adults. It is natural that as we grow older our attitude towards people and the world will change. It's a process we all go through.

What do we know about this peculiar period known as the teenage years—a time when the adult emerging out of us is trying to oust the child still in us? In trying to understand what is happening, we shall begin with the biological and physical changes taking place.

The teenage years: a physiological viewpoint

From the perspective of physiology, the teen years are characterized by tremendous growth, increased changes in the body's cellular structure and greatly intensified activity of the internal glands. Often, due to individual peculiarities of development, social and psychological maturity lag behind sexual maturity, which causes disharmony and discomfort in relations with other people.

Except for the first two years of life, never does a person grow so quickly as during adolescence. A teenager's height may sometimes increase by 3-5 inches per year! Girls grow most actively around the age of 11-12, while the most intensive growth for boys occurs around 13-14. Thus, boys, who at first are lagging behind, by 15 are overtaking girls in height.

Ron, a ninth grader, says, "The hardest part for me was that my hands and feet outgrew the rest of me. I couldn't control my hands very well, they'd gotten so big. I was always dropping things and being clumsy. And I seemed to be tripping over my

own feet. The up side of it was that I could finally grasp a basketball well. Now I'm waiting for my height to catch up so I can make junior varsity."



In the brain, the activity of the *sub-cortex* is increasing, causing greater *nervousness*, lack of restraint and unstable emotional reactions. The brain itself is growing, especially around the forehead (*frontal lobe*). This gives a teenager increased possibilities in his thinking: perception is becoming sharper and focused attention is more deliberate. In plain language, a teenager is becoming cleverer.

But the greatest changes take place in the area of hormonal regulation. The internal secretion glands are being entirely reconstructed. Under the influence of hormones produced by these glands, turbulent physical growth occurs. The sexual organs are developing, along with *secondary sexual features*.

While teenagers easily become agitated and emotional, they also easily get tired and bored. Thus, their reaction to events can be quite extreme, leading to problems in communication with adults who are trying to understand and support them.

Within the span of a few years, intellectual, moral and social growth takes place along with the physical. The sprouts of adulthood are appearing everywhere. The physical is changing rapidly; one's self-concept is undergoing profound transformation; relationships with adults and peers are changing; interests shift and intellectual activities become richer. Everything is in motion at this time: some features are gradually disappearing while others are emerging. All this is accompanied by many unexpected surprises, since the developmental process has such an uneven character. Personal problems may manifest themselves in various forms, especially with respect to parents, and come out in rudeness, hostility, stubbornness, resistance and secrecy.

Mark Twain: "When I was a boy of 14, my father was so ignorant I could hardly stand to have the old man around. But when I got to be 21, I was astonished at how much the old man had learned in seven years."



Question: Who really changed over the seven years? Mark Twain's father or Mark Twain?

A psychologist's viewpoint

Psychologically speaking, the main features of the teenage years involve the search for one's identity and an intense desire to be considered grown-up. The onset of puberty--that stage of life when our sexuality emerges--makes a teenager appear more like an adult physically. These years are marked by a growing independence as reliance on parents decreases.

The vision for our own adulthood becomes more concrete as we look at the adult world and find much of interest and in common. We begin to search for a professional and social identity. This demands a reorientation from old norms and values to new ones—from childish to adult ones.

We also want to claim new rights. These claims are directed mainly at our parents. What do we desire most of all? We want our parents, and adults in general, to treat us as equals. What gives them the right to tell us with whom we may be friends or when we should come home? Why should they have the right to such authority?

As teenagers, we want to be trusted, respected as adults, and independent. But are we ready to accept greater responsibilities as well? The mark of true adulthood is being responsible.

Idealism, absolutism and relativism

The teenage years are a time of great contradictions. As we look toward the future, we are filled with hopes and dreams and anxieties. We wonder what our future will be like. What has life prepared for us? Although we may have quite different ideas about our future life, most people want their life to be significant. We dream of doing something great. At the same time, we know that big dreams often break into pieces as they meet the reality of life. Still, deep down inside, we harbor an irrepressible desire that in spite of everything, one day our dreams will come true. We hope that our lives will never become humdrum and dull.

Another feature of adolescence is the categorical and straightforward voicing of judgments. This kind of frankness is often accompanied by a reluctance to accept any opinion that differs from ours, especially when it comes from our parents. Whereas previously we accepted the viewpoint of our parents without question, now it no longer carries the same weight. In the process of growing up and becoming independent, questioning authority is a natural expression of one's moral and intellectual quest. However, if in the process we are not developing our own set of values, we can easily adopt an attitude of moral relativism and begin to justify all kinds of questionable behavior. We fluctuate back and forth between being absolute and being relative.

At times we are tempted to analyze, criticize, judge and condemn everything around us pitilessly. This is typical of teens as they come to realize that those they once looked up to and respected are not infallible and that the world has many problems. It is easy to be critical of those who have brought the world to its current state. However, we must seriously think: "Will I be able to do better than those before me?"

The new communication style

Of course, our relationship with our friends has always been important to us. As the years pass, however, friendships change and evolve, so that certain ones acquire a special place in our lives. Why are these friendships so important to us? The reason is simple. In contrast to our relationship with our parents and other adults, our peers are those with whom we are passing through life together. We share similar experiences. They seem to understand us. We have a common language. These friendships are evolving along with our own maturing. As our personality and interests develop, solitude becomes unbearable. We feel the need to share our perspective on life as well as new feelings and emotions as we experience them. With our friends we are taken seriously, which often seems not to be the case with adults.

Age of love?

In our changing relations with others there is one more dimension that cannot be ignored. Until recently, you probably communicated and made friends exclusively with those of your own *gender*: boys with boys, girls with girls. Now your circle of friends is changing. Every once in a while you notice a boy and girl about your age talking a walk, sitting on a bench or going out to the movies together. They may claim to be just friends. But this is a special kind of friendship based on a new feeling called *romantic* love.

The development of such love is in part related to the advent of puberty, which marks gaining the biological ability to become a mother or father. This happens naturally and does not depend upon our desire. It comes with age and can be neither hastened nor postponed. It is also quite personal; for some the time comes earlier, for others later. Its early coming is not a merit, and its late coming is not a fault. Everything depends on the physical constitution of the person. However, the feeling of love is not simply the result of the physical changes taking place in our bodies. It is primarily a spiritual phenomenon, connected with the desire for deeper communication.

Jasmine, now graduated from high school, told the story: "Tom and I were good friends in ninth grade. Because of the alphabet, our desks were always next to each other in class. We talked about everything—what we'd watched on TV the night before, what we'd done with our families over the weekend, everything we were interested in. If I got my hair cut, he'd notice. If I brought in a book or CD, he'd ask about it. For me, it was more than friendship, though. I had a crush on him. Then a girlfriend of mine told him I liked him as a boyfriend. I was so embarrassed. After that, we couldn't look at each other, and we stopped talking before class. I didn't talk to him again until senior year, and then it was just to ask him what universities he was applying to."



Perhaps for the first time you are asking yourself seriously, "What is love? How do I recognize it? How will I know when I truly love someone?" All these are valid and important questions. The difficulty in finding answers to these questions has been the cause of much heartbreak and pain for countless teenagers, not to mention adults. Many young people have suffered from premature efforts to find the answers before they were ready to handle such relationships.

It is natural to be interested in love, to seek to understand and experience its fragrance. But love, like happiness, is not easily grasped. In the turbulent teenage years, we are experiencing so many changes that we must devote our energy toward our own personal growth. It is a time when we can learn about our individual uniqueness and discover our talents, as well as develop our ability to love. At this stage of life our emotions and feelings are usually very close to the surface. Because of this, infatuation and physical attraction can often be misinterpreted as love. We should not confuse love with infatuation. If we can learn not to act on the first feelings of attraction and instead dedicate these years to our spiritual and moral growth, we will undoubtedly experience in the future a deeper and more authentic kind of love on the foundation of the development of our heart. At that time, a heart that wasn't thrown away on previous so-called love relationships will be ready to give and receive a more profound and genuine love.

Questions for Discussion

1. Is a teenager an adult, still a child, both or neither? Support your viewpoint.

2. What are some of the changes--physically, emotionally, mentally, etc.--that you have been experiencing for the past year?

3. How are you different today from five years ago? Two years ago? One year ago?

4. How has your relationship with your parents changed over this time period?

5. What new interests have you developed over the past year?

6. Do you think your parents have the right to set limits on your activities? How do you feel about these limits?

7. Who do you feel closer to--your parents or your friends? Who do you feel understands you better? Who do you feel cares for you more?

8. What are your ideals and dreams for the future? Are they realistic?

9. What is the difference between love, attraction and infatuation? Have you experienced these things? In what context?

10. How are your priorities changing as you develop into an adult?

Exercise: "Role Play"

Role play the following situations:

1. You want to go to a party that will last until the early morning hours. Your parents are opposed.
2. You feel a special attraction towards someone of the opposite sex. How do you approach this person and develop the relationship in a healthy way?
3. You have been long-time friends with a certain person, but now you find your interests are going in different directions. What happens to your friendship?

Reflection Exercise

Imagine that you are a celebrity. You are 30 years old and have thousand of fans, especially among teenagers. You have been asked to give an interview for a teen magazine. What you say will influence the minds of many young people. Remembering the problems you faced when you were a teenager, you can use this opportunity to give guidance to the readers of this magazine. What are some of the things you would talk about?

CHAPTER 16

Peer Pressure: Smoking, Drinking and Drugs

No matter how much we like to think we are independent or different, we cannot avoid the fact that we care about the opinions of other people. That is natural. The more important a person is to us, the more his opinion matters. During childhood, our parents'

opinion is the one that we value and that affects us most. Because we want to be loved and accepted by our parents, we try to do as we are told, conform to their mores, fulfill their expectations and make them happy.

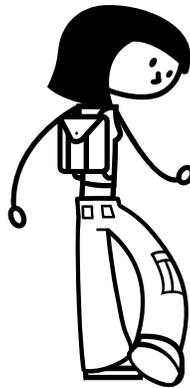
As we grow older, we come to value the opinions of our peers — that is, those who are in the same age group as ourselves. It is then that we start to experience "peer pressure" to conform to the values, fashions, opinions, and behaviors of our peers. Furthermore, the values of our parents and those of our peers are often in conflict. We ask ourselves, "Which values shall I adopt: those of my parents or those of my friends?"

What is peer pressure?

The reason why peer pressure exists is that individuals within a group set a standard to which all the members of the group are expected to *conform*. Without *conformity* there would no longer be a group, since its members would no longer have a common identity.

Peer pressure can be either good or bad. Good peer pressure may push us to conform to a higher standard than we might otherwise. Bad pressure, on the other hand, may push us to do something we feel is morally wrong.

Peer pressure may affect us in different ways. On the simplest level, we experience peer pressure in the way we dress. In every culture there are certain expected standards of dress for men and women. Sometimes these standards are very strict. In other cases the standards are looser but nevertheless they exist.



The same applies in other areas. There is pressure to use a certain kind of language or to hold certain opinions in order to be accepted. This is where we are most challenged. Do we remain silent because we are afraid to contradict the views of our peers? How can we keep our integrity and not end up feeling one thing, saying another and doing still another?

Good peer pressure

Good peer pressure helps to maintain a functioning society. Within a community, people are expected to treat their neighbors in a certain way without being told, reminded or asked outright. Imagine that a family blasted their radio at an intolerable volume every night from midnight until three in the morning. What do you think would happen? In what way would they be pressured by their neighbors not to behave in such a selfish manner? Should it be necessary to call the police, or do you think that this behavior could be corrected within the community? This is one of the ways that peer pressure is good. It keeps people from acting as they please in ways that harm the community, and thus in many cases such pressure restrains people from hurting one another. Without such pressure, society would quickly disintegrate into complete anarchy.



Bad peer pressure

Often we may feel pressured by friends or associates to conform by doing or saying things we know to be wrong. We may be expected to smoke, drink, treat certain groups of people disrespectfully, or keep quiet when we know that something wrong is going on. Bad pressure often is exerted by people who are insecure. They know that what they are doing is wrong, but they feel that if they can persuade others to behave in the same way or implicate others in their activities, they will be justified. A person who refuses to "play the game," however, is seen as a threat because he will not compromise his principles. This makes those involved in a questionable activity feel judged.



Although people of all ages have to deal with peer pressure, it is felt especially strongly by teenagers. An important thing to remember is that all teenagers are in similar circumstances. No matter how confident or secure one's friends and peers may appear, inside they are probably at least a little unsure of themselves. Everyone wants to look good in front of others; no one wants people to think that he or she is weak or insecure.

How should I handle peer pressure?

Like many people, you may be wondering how best to handle negative peer pressure. The exact response will depend on the situation and people involved. However, you may find the following ideas useful.

The most important thing is to know yourself, who you are, what your values are, and be determined to maintain your personal integrity and self-respect. Next is to recognize what is happening when you are being pressured. When we can see what is going on, it becomes easier to resist peer pressure. These points are illustrated in the following story.

Fourteen-year-old Carmen tells of a personal incident: "My friend Tricia from school had invited me to stay overnight at her house. She was living with her older sister and brother-in-law named Larry. Larry was about twenty years old. I thought he acted kind of mean, but then he offered to take us to the park, so I thought maybe he was nice.

When we got to the park, a friend of his was waiting there, another guy about twenty years old. I guess Tricia and Larry and this guy, Joe, had arranged it in advance. When it got dark, Larry and Joe put their arms around us and started getting romantic. Tricia went along with it, but it didn't feel right to me at all. They were much older than us. My parents had told me not to hang out with older guys. And Larry was married. I believed married men should be loyal to their wives.

Luckily, Joe was a nice guy. I told him that I was not comfortable with this and that I wanted to go home. He told Larry and Tricia and then Joe drove me home.

When I was home safe, I told my mom all about it and I burst into tears. I guess I had really been scared. My mom was scared too when I told her. When I finished

telling her, she said she was glad it hadn't gone any further. She said I couldn't go to Tricia's house anymore. I was glad. I didn't want to!"

Not getting into tricky situations in the first place is the best way. If you feel that your friends may pressure you to do something you're not sure about, you may want to take time and think about your true feelings and beliefs before going somewhere with them. For example, if some of your friends have invited you to a party where there will be alcohol, it would be good to analyze how you feel about drinking before deciding to go to the party.

For example:

- I hate the taste of liquor and beer.
- I hate it when one of my relatives comes over for dinner and gets drunk.
- I don't like the way other people act when they are drunk.
- I think people use alcohol because they don't think they can do without it.
- I want to be able to remember all the things I say and do so as not to feel unsure and embarrassed about my behavior.

What are the possible consequences of my actions?

You should also consider the consequences of your actions. You can ask yourself: How will this affect me later? How will it affect someone else? What will happen if I don't go along with everyone else? Will my actions hurt any of my close relationships?

Thinking ahead is often difficult, especially when you are in a new or unexpected situation. You may feel awkward and not know what to do, or you may not know how to reply immediately. However, you should take the time, even if only a few seconds, to think clearly about the implications and possible results of your actions.

Although it is difficult in pressing situations, you should try to be honest with yourself and others about your feelings. Here are some suggestions for what you could say:

- "I feel really bad about doing this."
- "I don't feel good about this."
- "I don't feel comfortable doing this."
- "If I do this, I know I'll be sorry later."
- "I don't think this is right."
- "No, thanks."

There may be others in the situation who don't want to go along with the crowd either. You may find others echoing you as soon as you speak up. You may find unexpected support.

Other words that may help you get out of a tough situation are:

- "My parents would kill me if I did that."
- "No, thanks. I don't want to get grounded (or in trouble)."

A true friend helps you to be your best

If what you value is different from what your friends value, you may want to stop and think about why you are friends with them. Can you really trust them? Can you talk to them about what's important to you? Do they respect what you value? What do you actually have in common? Are they really friends?

Friendship is important to almost every person regardless of age, and so it deserves serious consideration. In many cases, people have achieved great things because of their friends. They have found inspiration, support, understanding and closeness that cannot be found in solitude. But many good people also have been corrupted because of their friendships. What kind of friends do you think you have — the kind who help you to be the best you can be, or the kind who always seem to be pulling you to do things you don't feel good about?

A true friend is someone who has your best interests at heart. If you are getting involved in something that you have doubts about, a true friend will speak up and try to stop you from doing it. In some cases it takes only one person expressing himself honestly to prevent a whole group of people from doing something harmful. Your other friends may just be going along because they are afraid of being rejected or ridiculed.

A true friend is more concerned about you and how things will affect you than they are about what other people think, so don't be afraid to be honest. Those people who are true to you will respect what you feel and not pressure you to go along with something you know is wrong.

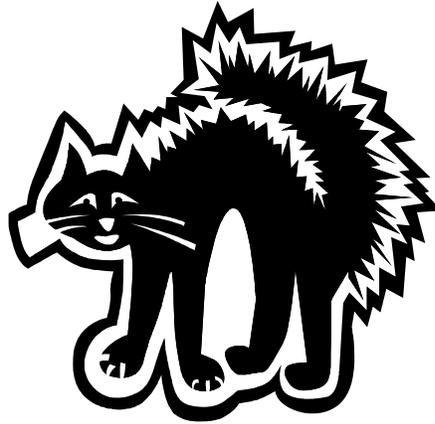


Reaching your greatest potential

As we face life's challenges and temptations, it is important to have a vision of the future, of who we want to be or what we want to do with our lives. Sometimes life is not easy, and we may find ourselves faced with seemingly insurmountable problems and pressures from every direction. It is at these times that we are the most susceptible to behaving in a way we normally would not, including smoking, drinking or using drugs.

Sometimes we only want to "try" these things in order to experience what people are talking about. However, this curiosity can also rapidly lead to problems.

A wise old saying is: "Curiosity killed the cat!"



When you are being tempted by others, try to keep focused on the vision of who you are and the person you want to become. The potential that lies within you is not easy to develop and requires an exercise of will. You need to persevere through difficulties. All great people in history, without exception, faced difficult problems and temptations, and yet, by maintaining their personal integrity and using the challenges of life to grow, they became known by later generations as good and righteous people.

You also have the potential within to reach the same level of greatness as those whom you admire. Armed with the vision of the kind of person you want to be, you can even help your friends who are facing their own challenges.

Questions for Discussion

1. What is peer pressure?

2. Give some examples of both good and bad peer pressure.

3. Why do you think people sometimes try to pressure others to do the wrong thing?

4. What can you do if your friends try to get you to do something you don't feel is right?

5. What do you have in common with your friends?

6. What is the basis of your friendships?

7. Why do you think people smoke, drink or use drugs?

8. How do they get started doing these things?

9. In what way could you exert positive influence on others to do good?

10. How do you feel about someone who stands up for what he believes, even in the face of opposition?

Exercise: “What Should I Do?”

The following are situations in which you may be influenced by the words or attitudes of your peers. Try to use your imagination to picture yourself in these situations even if they do not seem like ones in which you would actually find yourself. After each situation there are three possible reactions listed. Read carefully and try to pick the reaction that comes closest to what you might do. After you have circled this, you may write another reaction if you choose to do so. Think very carefully! Answer honestly, and do not write what you think you should do, but what you think you really would do. You do not have to show your responses to anyone, so do not worry about other people reading them.

1. Your parents give you a fur hat for your birthday which you really love. You know that your dad worked extra hours and has been saving money for a long time to be able to purchase the hat. You are excited about your new hat; it's not like any other you have seen, but when you wear it to school the next day one of your friends says, "Where did you get that awful thing?" and another friend says, "Wow! That hat looks like it was made out of your dog's skin. You're not really going to wear that thing, are you?" If this happened to you what would you do?

- a. Decide that you think the hat is really out of style, that you don't like it anyhow and you start to wear your old hat again.
- b. You still like the hat, but you don't wear it in front of your friends anymore, only around your parents and other adults.
- c. You really like the hat, and you don't really care what your friends say. Too bad if they don't like the hat! You keep wearing it to school and when you go to visit your friends.
- d.

2. There's a very unattractive pimple-faced boy in your class. This boy, Larry, acts like a real nerd. He gets on everyone's nerves, including yours. Sometimes he brags about his academic honors, his father's foreign car or how well off his family is. He also does not get along with many of his teachers but often complains to them about how the other students treat him. One day you and a group of your friends are talking. Larry's name comes up, and they start to make mean jokes about him. Everyone is laughing. You begin to feel badly, knowing that one of the reasons Larry acts the way he does is because he has no friends and because all the kids treat him terribly. You do not like the jokes, and you feel really bothered that everyone is laughing about him, even though he is not your friend. What do you think you would do?

- a. You laugh along with everyone else. You do not feel good about it, but you do not want the others to think you like him.
- b. You don't laugh at the jokes, but you don't say anything against the jokes the others are making.
- c. You don't laugh, in fact, you tell the others to quit picking on Larry.
- d.

3. You are a very conscientious student. On Monday you have a big test in algebra class. You know you can get an "A" on the exam if you study all weekend. You don't really mind staying home because your grades are important to you. Then your best friend calls on Saturday while you're studying and invites you to a party. He tells you that only the most popular people are being invited. If you stay home and study your friends will really look down on you. "Come on," your best friend says, "Who cares about the

stupid test? The only thing that universities care about is your final exam grades!" What do you do?

- a. Forget the test. Your friend is right; it doesn't really matter. You go to the party with your friend.
- b. You go to the party, but the thought of not doing well on the test is really nagging you. You leave early, even though your friends act like you're an idiot when you do.
- c. You don't go to the party, and do well on the test on Monday.
- d.

4. Your English teacher has asked for opinions on a story you just read as a class. So far, everyone basically has the same viewpoint. You have a different opinion, and so does Bob, the class nerd. He is wildly waving his hand and wants to share his viewpoint, which is always different. He acts like a real know-it-all, and usually makes everyone feel irritated. After he shares his idea, the teacher calls on you. Although you agree with Bob, if you say what you really think everyone will look down on you. What do you do?

- a. No way are you going to say what you really think. You give an opinion that is acceptable and similar to the rest of the class.
- b. You straddle the fence, giving part of your real opinion but mixing it with the general viewpoint of the class so it doesn't appear that you agree with Bob.
- c. You give your real opinion. You don't make the other classmates ideas look stupid, but you clearly state how you feel, even though it is the same opinion Bob has.
- d.

5. One day you go over to a friend's house where a bunch of your buddies are hanging out. Your friend's parents aren't home, and your friends begin to drink. They are passing around a bottle of beer, and there's plenty more of it when this one's finished. You don't want to drink it; you don't even like beer. You feel really uncomfortable because everyone else is doing it. You whisper to your best friend that you don't want any, but he just laughs and says, "Give it a try; don't be a baby." What do you do?

- a. You drink the beer because everyone else is and you don't want them to laugh at you or talk about you behind your back.
- b. You make up an excuse to avoid drinking the beer like, "I'm taking medication for the flu and it would be bad to mix the two."
- c. You just say, "No, thanks," or "I don't really want any."
- d.

CHAPTER 17

The Value of Life

Each of us is a human being. If you are reading this, you are a live human being. What is the value of human life? What determines our value? Does it depend on the amount of good we do in our family and society? Or is it related to something more?

Of course, it is wonderful to make scientific discoveries, create new medicines, raise happy children, and contribute to our society. But these things do not determine our value. If they did, people with disabilities that limit what they can do would be less valuable than everyone else. Suppose a healthy young man has had a car accident and has become disabled. Though he goes on living, he is never able to have a family or do work. Has he lost his value as a human being? What about a very old woman who can do nothing but sit in bed and swallow pills?

There are many examples of people who cannot do much. Should we just do away with such people? Of course not. They have the same rights as everyone else, based on their value as human beings. Society believes that every human being has a great deal of value, even though their situations may be very different from one another.

A "Special" Child



Thirteen-year-old Jeffrey had Down's Syndrome. He wasn't like other children. In some ways, he was hard for his parents to take care of and sometimes other children made fun of him. Sometimes his parents wished they had a "normal" child. At the same time, they sometimes wondered if a "normal" child would have given them as much joy as Jeffrey did.

Jeffrey was very sensitive to love. If he sensed a person was kind and gentle, he would go right up to that person and hug him or her. Jeffrey did not understand that this was not "proper" behavior. But usually the person would just smile and hug Jeffrey right back. His parents would apologize for him, but mostly people said, "That's all right. I needed a hug today!" And they would all laugh, strangers brought close together for a moment by Jeffrey's love.

Jeffrey never stopped smiling. He was gentle, crying out with joy at the soft touch of an animal's fur and crowing with delight at the other children's games. He did not understand the teasing of other children; he was just happy that they paid attention to him. Jeffrey really put the "special" in "special needs child."

Is Jeffrey's life valuable? You decide!



What is the value of a human being?

These examples raise a very fundamental question: What is the value of a human being? Does it depend on what he does or who he is? The fact is that human life is extremely precious and should never be treated lightly. Every culture in the world considers the murder of another human being a terrible crime, because people everywhere realize that human beings are precious and valuable. Here's why human life is valuable:

Each person's life has unique value

Generally speaking, something that is unique or rare is more valuable than something that is common. Diamonds and gold are highly valued compared to glass and copper because they are far more rare.



Even though there are more than six billion people on the earth today, no two are exactly alike. Each person is unique, both physically and spiritually. Each person has his or her own unique set of fingerprints and characteristics. No two personalities are alike. Nothing on earth is more unique than a human being.

This means that each person can make his or her own unique contribution to human existence in a way that no one else can. Each person can make us happy or sad in his own way. Can you imagine how dull the world would be if people were all alike? We should respect and value the uniqueness and individuality of others and help them to fulfill their potential.

Each person's life has cosmic value

Imagine a machine with millions of parts. If each part is unique, with no replacement in the whole world, then even the most simple part in the machine will be equal to the value of the whole machine, because if it is broken or lost, the machine will stop functioning and cannot be fixed. In the same way, each person is irreplaceable, so each life has a value equal to that of the whole universe.

Each person's life has divine and eternal value

In what way is human life more valuable than that of animals? How can we say that the life of a tiny human baby weighing six pounds is worth more than a cow that weighs 500 pounds? A religious person might reply that it is because we are God's children, created in His image and likeness. However, in order to fulfill our potential for divine value, we need to follow a path of moral and spiritual growth. Most religious people also believe that as spiritual beings we live on after our physical death. Because of this, they feel life has eternal value and that we say and do in our physical life will affect us in some way for eternity.

The value of life and human responsibility

If we understand the value of human life, we will be ready to give ourselves to help nurture the seeds of beauty and goodness existing in every human soul. If we do not help nurture others, that person's potential for goodness may be lost to the world.

If we treat human life as something sacred, then we will be less likely to remain indifferent in situations that threaten the lives and dignity of other people. We won't condone or encourage the humiliation of those who are not like ourselves, be it a classmate who is bad at mathematics, an old drunkard on the street, or someone whose ideas or skin color are different from ours. If we are consistent in our beliefs, we won't take part in any activities that threaten the human dignity of other people, whatever their race, nationality, religion, social group or gender.

Your Value

What does all this mean for you? It means that, like every human being, you are valuable. So always treat yourself and others with respect and consideration. You are unique, irreplaceable, and of infinite value!

Questions for Discussion

1. What determines the value of a human being?

2. Explain the meaning of "unique value."

3. Explain the meaning of "cosmic value."

4. Explain the meaning of "divine and eternal value."

5. What is our responsibility in treating others?

6. How would the world be different if everyone recognized these values in themselves and others?

7. Why do you think it is difficult for people to recognize their value or the value of others?

8. What is the connection between value and love?

Exercise: "Reason Versus Heart"

With your fellow classmates, discuss the statement "People can use reason to justify, especially to themselves, almost anything they do." Is this true or false? Present your conclusion backed by arguments to the class. What would happen if people followed their heart rather than reason?

Reflection Exercise

