

The Leap of Faith The Dance of Change



*Written by
Nicholas F. Rayder
and Sandy Fails*

*A 2015 revision of:
"The Life-Planning Workbook
escorts us from the conceptual to the concrete
from getting excited to getting to work."*

The Leap of Faith



The Dance of Change

Some self-help approaches provide direction without inspiration, motivating us about as effectively as math homework; others conjure insights without clear direction, leaving us all revved up with nowhere to go. The Leap of Faith The Dance of Change escorts us from the conceptual to the concrete, from “getting excited” to “getting to work”.

“Life-Planning is a thoughtfully developed self-assisted plan for helping one to quietly awaken inner strengths for easing stresses of everyday life. Advancing contemplatively through the Life-Planning steps, one is helped to identify and develop unexpected reserves of energy.”

*John C. Schmid, Ph.D.,
Professor Emeritus, University N. Colorado*

“This approach to personal growth should be used every few years as a part of a healthy person’s life. It allows you to take time out, survey the landscape, and to charge on with more clarity in life.”

*Garry McDaniels, Ph.D.,
Software Corporation President, Baltimore, Maryland
Director (Retired), United States Bureau of Education for the Handicapped*

“I find the Life-Planning Approach especially valuable as a preliminary to psychotherapy in that it help people clarify their goals, satisfactions, and fears... and most important for therapy, notice at what points they need outside help to overcome obstacles they maintain against their own progress.”

*Richard B. Gerber, M.D., Harvard Medical School,
Psychiatrist and Psychoanalyst, Washington D.C.*

“This approach helps people tap into their inner knowledge and stimulate the growth that is already latent within. It also acknowledges that our ‘life visions’ reach beyond our occupations or daily roles.”

*Nina Kingsdale, M.A.,
Transpersonal Psychologist, Greenwich, Connecticut*

“I developed the Life-Planning Approach to help people, whatever their life styles, situations, or jobs, stop a moment, look closely within, and organize lives to be true to themselves.”

Nicholas F. Rayder, Ph.D.

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Updated, February 2015
by Nicholas F. Rayder, PhD
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ISBN 0-964854-0-7

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*“We
are bound together,
you and I.
If you stray from your path,
I pain.
If we can help each other,
I rejoice.”*

TIBETAN SAYING

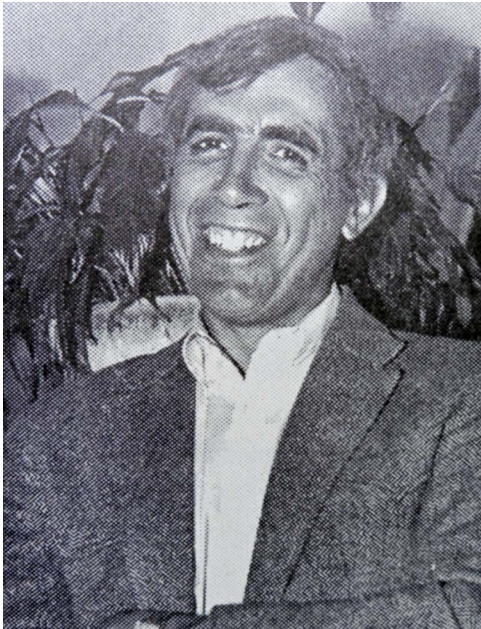
Personal Comments:

Nick Rayder

I know how it feels when I am on the right path. Things come together. If I need friends in my life, they appear. If I need to find a comfortable place to live and social events that complement my personality, those needs are satisfied. If I need a “retreat,” or to “advance,” some workshop or growth flyer crosses my desk.

Not only do the right things happen with little effort on my part, but I know they are right for me. And while the number of these “happenings” is few, the intensity and meaning of each event is profound. So, I learn that the few friends who surface are true. I experience my work as meaningful and through it gain more insight into myself. And I experience a retreat or workshop that becomes a significant event in my life.

This book is a significant event on my life path. It speaks of a technique that I can trace to a discussion in 1967 with Glen Nimnicht, a friend and mentor.



We discussed education revitalization and talked about Kurt Lewin’s ideas on change. I’ve used those ideas from time to time over the last 20 years to assess complex program implementation, to identify causes of employee stress, and to measure corporate culture and work climate. It was natural for me to apply Lewin’s model of change to a friend wanting a more direct path to her bliss. When that application facilitated profound change in her life, I began to develop the Life-Planning Approach (LPA), which is outlined in this book. The process has worked so

effectively with so many clients, I decided to create a means – this book – by which it could be shared with people seeking change, direction or self-renewal in their lives.

Another significant event in my life contributed to the LPA. Many years ago, while I was weathering divorce proceedings and feeling stuck on a professional treadmill, life's stressors manifested themselves through illness; I was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. The impact of this seemingly incurable disease on my life was dramatic. Someone knew I needed a dose of crisis to get my attention. It was a blessing that forced me to move to the mountains toward my true self – to seek inner peace and to offer a way to emerge from life's quagmires and live closer to one's true essence.

--Nicholas F. Rayder, PhD

Crested Butte, Colorado

and Scottsdale, Arizona

Personal Comments:

Sandy Fails

When a psychotherapist friend, Robbie Chula, offered to facilitate the Life-Planning Approach (LPA) for me in 1989, I entered her office with equal parts curiosity and skepticism. An alumni of the “pain begets insight” school of personal growth, I doubted the productivity of spending four hours generating charts and graphs that smacked of those heathen behaviorist-types. Hey, I could wash a lot of diapers in four hours.

Besides, I told myself I didn’t really need it. True, I’d slipped into automatic pilot mode since giving up my newspaper editor’s job, most of my hobbies, and chunk of my identity to become a mom; but I wasn’t stuck, I was just on a multi-year sabbatical.

That afternoon, I left Robbie’s house with sheaves of the aforementioned chart and graphs (all of which I’d generated myself), a smile on my face, and a bounce in my



step. My dreams, not just for my work but for my life as a whole, had crawled back out from under the high chair and become real again. The amorphous “yeahbuts” (as in “yeah, but I don’t have time...”) had also taken form, along with the positive influences in my life, so I understood clearly the forces operating around me. I clutched under my arm an action plan I’d created to take small empowering steps to feel happier, zestier, more involved in my own life – even when scraping strained apricots off the linoleum.

Later, when I wrote a freelance article on the Life-Planning Approach and its creator, Dr. Nick Rayder, I realized again what an eclectic mix the LPA represents. In the years I'd known Nick, I'd considered him educated and enlightened, and I wondered at his behaviorist preoccupation with statistics, procedures, and measurements – things I'd always considered psychological bureaucracy. When I examined the LPA, which validates people's higher yearnings, then provides utilitarian tools for moving in harmony with them, I saw how the two parts of him fit together.

The LPA gave me a little motivational “jump start,” allowing me to see my relationships, finances, spirituality, work, and role as a mother in terms of my larger life vision. Facets of my life polluted by guilt, uncertainty, resentment, or fear felt oddly cleansed. Obstacles were defined, encapsulated, no longer impenetrable. Change began to seem more possible, more exciting, less frightening. Now, with this book, the LPA becomes not only a catalyst for that change, but also part of its content.

I have chosen to help put into book form the LPA not as a new philosophy, textbook, or psychological panacea; it is none of the above. It does not guide people through life so much as provide a format to help them guide themselves. But I do hope this book tempts some individuals to spend a little time with themselves, to bring their dreams from the closet to the open air before mildew makes them unrecognizable. May it also bring both the perceived obstacles and the positive influences in their lives out of shadowy corners to the full light of day. Darkness tends to magnify our bogeymen and lend them monstrous characteristics; daylight shrinks them down to size and returns the color and beauty to all of our lives.

--Sandy Fails

Crested Butte, Colorado

The Pearl of Great Price

He asked me what I was looking for.

“Frankly,” I said, “I’m looking for the Pearl of Great Price.”

He slipped his hand into his pocket, drew it out, and

GAVE IT TO ME.

It was just like that! I was dumbfounded. Then I began to protest:

“You don’t want to give it to me. Don’t you want to keep it for yourself?

But...” When I kept this up, he said finally,

“Look, is it better to have the Pearl of Great Price, or to give it away?”

Well, now I have it. I don’t tell anyone.

From some there would just be disbelief and ridicule.

“You, you have the Pearl of Great Price? Hah!”

Others would be jealous, or someone might steal it. Yes, I do have it.

But there’s that question – “Is it better to have it, or to give it away?”

How long will that question rob me of my joy?

from

Tales of a Magic Monastery

by Theophane the Monk

St. Benedicts Monastery

Snowmass, Colorado

We hope the ideas in this book

help you discover your own

“pearls” of inner peace, joy, and love.

unlike the pearls you can hold in

your hands, these needn’t be guarded

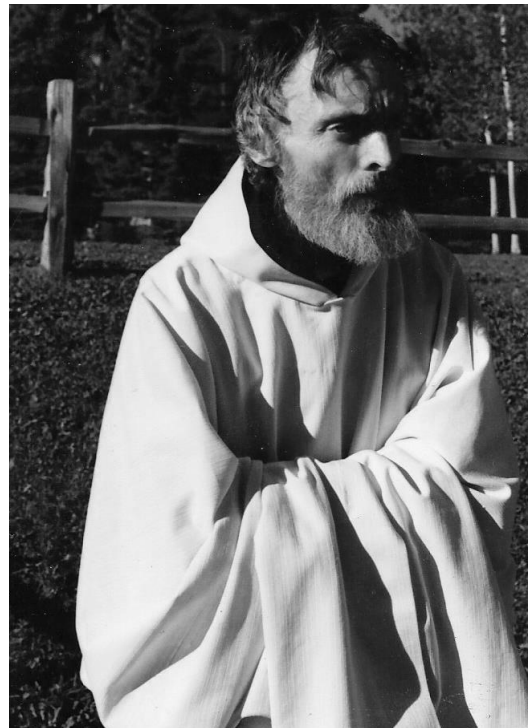
or fretted over, for the more

you give of them – just like that –

the richer you become

Nicholas Rayder

& Sandy Fails



An Opening Note

This book has two authors:
Nick Rayder, the creator and
Developer of the Life-Planning
Approach, and Sandy Fails, a
writer/journalist who is also an
LPA facilitator.

We have both written personal
introductory notes expressing our
reasons for presenting this book

However, in the text of the
book, we stick to the third person
when referring to either one of us,
rather than using “I.”

It’s a little less personal that
way, but also less confusing.

INTRODUCTION

What, Another Book?

Whole library shelves now sag beneath books and manuals written to help human beings live happier, fuller lives. At one extreme, standardized tests categorize individuals' personalities and match them, like computerized dating services, with occupations to fit those characteristics. At the other extreme, poets exhort us to cast aside our earthly bonds and leap upwards 'to touch the face of God'. In between, innumerable authorities advise us on overcoming specific emotional blocks to personal growth – unhealed inner wounds, low self-esteem, addictive disorders. So why on earth write another book?

The complete, ten-step Life-Planning Approach (LPA) described in this book stretches like a rainbow from one extreme to the other. It celebrates the lofty yearnings of the human soul, then hauls out the bricks and mortar to build foundations beneath them. It goes from, "What thumbprint do you want to leave on the earth?" to "What first and second steps will I take?"

Like many other self-directing techniques, the LPA is designed for individuals facing transitions or seeking renewal, But the LPA differs from other techniques in several ways:

- It acknowledges that our "life visions" expand beyond our occupations or day-to-day activities. Aspects such as spirituality or relationships with others or with the earth can be just as important as our careers in creating

truly “successful” lives. With clear and powerful life visions, we make decisions about work, relationships, and other facets of our lives in harmony with a higher directive.

- The LPA presumes we know the solutions for our own happiness better than any outside “expert”; deep within us, we all have the insight and power to create rich, satisfying lives for ourselves. Some may “hear” this inner knowing as God’s voice inside them; others may envision it as tapping into a spiritual center or force. However we express our beliefs, we are each like a seed, unique and self-complete; the LPA merely helps stimulate the growth latent within us.
- The LPA doesn’t pretend we exist in a vacuum; we each live in a unique environment that pushes and pull us. By defining and evaluating internal and external influences, we can create an actual Life-Space Chart to recognize, understand and influence the factors that help shape our lives.
- The LPA doesn’t stop with self-awareness, but moves us to a plan for action. We make actual contracts with ourselves, with specific, realistic, empowering steps, and built-in rewards for the goals reached.
- The LPA is recyclable. We can use it again and again for self-renewal or “course adjustments” as the circumstances and challenges of our lives change. We can share it with our partners and friends or do it with our children.

Some self-help approaches provided direction without inspiration, motivating us about as effectively as math homework; others conjure insights without clear direction, leaving us all revved up with nowhere to go. The LPA escorts us from the conceptual to the concrete, from “getting excited” to getting to work.”

The LPA is neither a psychological model nor a cure-all. It doesn’t dissolve all internal blocks nor solve all external ones, but it does allow us to discover and validate our life visions, to enhance positive influences in our lives, and to effectively identify and address the negative ones. It helps us get inspired, get straight, and get moving.

The LPA was originally created for use with a facilitator and one client. A workbook was also developed and used for group workshops. In this book, we have presented the LPA in a form for individuals to use on their own, by interspersing “growthsheets” with the chapters. Taking time to read, ponder and write may seem like homework at first; but it quickly begins to feel like a gift and a tribute to our inner selves. By listening to the true voice within each of us, we are tapping into the most knowledgeable and qualified advisor we could have.

Remember, the LPA is not a test. It is not standardized; there are no multiple choice questions or incorrect answers. The content comes from each individual who uses it; the LPA is merely a simple, Socratic method to allow us to listen to and follow our own wise advice.

Chapter

1

Hey, What's for Dinner?

“Unless we change
our direction,

We are likely to end up
where we are headed.”

Old Chinese Proverb

Stop and listen. Unless you're in atypical surroundings, the world around you probably resounds with demanding voices – from the blatant (“Hey, Mom, what's for dinner?”) to the insidious (like the accusatory silence emanating from the untyped resume on the desk). How on earth can you sit there reading, various voices demand, when the weeds are staging a coup in the front lawn/mid-terms are next week/the weather is perfect and you really ought to be out there getting some exercise? Indeed, how can you sit there reading with such a cacophony inside and around you?

You might have noticed a propensity for great philosophers and spiritualists to hang out on mountain tops. Do wise souls instinctively seek lofty places, or do lofty heights somehow bestow wisdom? Perhaps neither; perhaps mountains just allow us the greatest freedom and distance (while keeping our feet on the ground) from the everyday voices that nag us. Those infernal voices, like atmospheric interference to a television set, fill us with static and block our receptivity to purer internal and spiritual understanding.

Perhaps we could all be sages and philosophers if we hung around long enough on mountain tops. But, hey, who'd buy the Girl Scout cookies?

No, most of us are firmly planted in the world of leaky faucets, electric bills, and anorexic bank balances.

Expectations, demands, and routines have become the essence of life and the fleeting aspirations of youth have long been moth-balled with letter jackets, love beads, and diaries. Sure, youngsters can write essays about changing the course of humanity; college kids can dream of doing great works; sages and philosophers can aspire to spiritual and intellectual heights. But Joanie needs braces, there's a weird clanking in the radiator, and Bosco's flea population is approaching critical mass. Higher aspirations? Get real.

Except...every once in a while, when the kids are at Grandma's, the mortgage is paid for another month, classes are out for the semester, and we have time to take a deep breath and just sit... we get the strangest yearning to get those old aspirations back out and try them on for size. Maybe we could still squeeze into them.

Or sometimes life serves us up a hefty dose of crisis – death of a loved one, illness or injury or the abrupt loss of a job, home, or other pillar of our sedate lives. Thus freed from the secure bondage of demands, expectations, and routines, we become vulnerable, and those darned old yearnings jump in there like Bosco's fleas.

Let's face it; humans naturally aspire to

**Call
it
oneness
with
God,
oneness
with
the
universe,
or
oneness
with
our
true selves.**

something more than a cellular phone, a 401K and a Sears charge card.

Call it oneness with God, oneness with the universe, or oneness with our true selves. Carl Jung called it, “the striving after your own being.” Joseph Campbell called it, “bliss – where the deep sense of being is from, and where your body and soul want to go.” (No, he wasn’t talking about the Bahamas.)

In *The Search for the Beloved: Journeys in Mythology and Sacred Psychology*, Jean Houston used the term entelechy, “the dynamic purposiveness of the patterns of possibility encoded in each of us...the level most directly related to the Divine Self. The experience of tapping into the entelechy is a purposive and powerful unfolding and recognition of your own potential.” (The Army simply and unintentionally paraphrased Ms. Houston in its successful recruitment ads: “Be All That You Can Be.”)

Many a poet under a star-filled sky has tried to capture the odd feeling of grandeur/humility that seems such a universal by-product of star-exposure. We feel small and humble against such a vast expanse, but also sense we occupy a unique place in it. We are each tiny, but we are each special. (The famous kids’ show host, Mister Rogers, perhaps a stargazer himself, reminded his young television viewers every weekday, “There’s nobody else in the world exactly like you.”)

It’s the fulfillment of that specialness we seek way down inside. We would all (come on – admit it) like to touch the world in some small way, to leave it a little better for our passing. Sometimes this can happen through our jobs – a painter touches the world through images; a scientist through discovery; a teacher through the sharing of knowledge. But often our jobs have little to do with it. Our true “missions” on earth frequently have more to do with our children, hobbies, causes, friends, even the earth itself, than how we earn our paychecks.

Somehow this seemingly natural idea – to live according to our own unique natures and dreams – has become a foreign concept to us Westerners. From our earliest years, we are taught to conform our behavior to external guidelines; by the

time we reach adulthood, those externals have become strong influences in determining our roles, our careers, and even our ways of thinking.

Through many years of working with corporate environments, organizational psychologist Dr. Nicholas Rayder began to realize the magnitude of the problem. As he helped corporations create company mission statements, he was amazed to see how many employees simply adopted the company's mission as their own personal one. As he began to talk with individual employees, he realized just how many people, removed from their own internal voices, simply accepted whatever vision was handed them – out of convenience, habit, or the need for security.

The majority of these corporate employees had drifted into jobs, lifestyles, and routines completely out of synch with their inner natures and dreams. So, their outwardly passive acceptance often masked growing internal dissatisfaction.

As Thomas Merton wrote in *New Seeds of Contemplation*: “How do you expect to arrive at the end of your own journey if you take the road to another man's city? How do you expect to reach your own perfection by leading somebody else's life?”

For many of us, work has become the disproportionate theme in our lives, along with its corollary, the collection of material goods. We strive continually for position, status, power, recognition, profit, and things, things, things, often forgetting our families, friends, and inner values in the headlong pursuit.

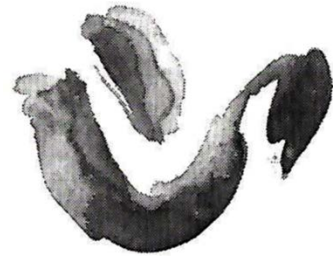
Ironically, the less we find satisfaction in our work, the more we pour ourselves into it, searching for

*How do you
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another man's
city?*

more. When even that isn't enough, we focus on the collection of wealth to fill in the void. We accept other people's admiration of our trappings, and become slaves to the "false selves" we have created.

Henry Nouwen, in *The Way of the Heart*, wrote of our compulsive need for ongoing and increasing affirmation:

"Who am I? I am the one who is liked, praised, admired, disliked, hated, or despised. Whether I am a pianist, a businessman, or a minister, what matters is how I am perceived by my world. If being busy is a good thing, then I must be busy. If having money is a sign of real freedom, then I must claim my money. If knowing many people proves my importance, I will have to make the necessary contacts. The compulsion manifests itself in the lurking fear of failing and the steady urge to prevent this by gathering more of the same – more work, more money, more friends."



Yet, as we rise through the ranks or fill our homes with belongings, the deep-seated discordance doesn't lessen. We are like preschoolers dressed up for a wedding while the mud puddles beckon outside. It's nice being admired, but where's the fun?

Everywhere today we see signs of people wanting to break out. Businessmen are becoming a huge market for the makers of Harley Davidson "freedom machine" motorcycles. Business catalogs advertise, among the gold-plated nameplates and pen, miniature Oriental meditation gardens designed especially for the executive desktop. "Escape" has become the theme for advertisers of cars, ski resorts, cigarettes, airlines, you name it.

So what if we do figure out that we are, as Merton described it, leading somebody else's life"? How do we find our own? (The Classifieds, perhaps?...

“Corporate broker seeks to trade life paths...” First, we’ve got to let ourselves daydream, validate all those half-buried yearnings, listen to that much-maligned true inner voice. Tapping into the inner voice happens differently with each of us. One person meditates; another prays; another runs along the beach. The crucial common element is that we look inward rather than outward.

For some of us, that alone might be a huge challenge; it goes against a lifetime of training in silencing, repressing, and ignoring. But our visions are still alive and wiggling inside us, deprived though they may be of sunlight and nurturing. When we are still, when we take a vacation from the normal roles we occupy (and are occupied by), we will rediscover them, no less vital for their years of solitary confinement.

But tapping into our visions is often the easy part. It’s one thing to dream, but how do we make the leap of faith – and discipline – to do what we truly feel is right for us?

Sometimes when dissatisfaction sneaks in, all we need to do is step away from our everyday existence to rediscover and revitalize the meaning that was there all along. (There’s a reason those television couples always bask in the miraculous glow of parenthood as they gaze down on their children’s sleeping faces; that miraculous glow somehow doesn’t penetrate the consciousness when we’re trying to get eau de vomit out of the carpet or bubblegum out of Susie’s long blonde locks.)

Sometimes we merely need to make minor “course adjustments,” to reincorporate certain goals, activities, people, or endeavors into our routines, to restore balance in our lives.

But sometimes the drift of our lives (determined by the current of society) has taken us in a direction totally at odds with our true course. Turning toward our vision means turning our backs on the paved path with which we’re familiar, but dissatisfied. It means reexamining our fixation on security, successes, and material rewards and looking toward – who know what.

The status quo promises pavement, road signs, and billboards telling us exactly where to go, how to get there, and how to behave. In the other direction, toward our visions, we have to squint to make out the rockiest of paths.

We pause, tempted. But what is that mass up ahead?

It's the hideous, powerful, energy-devouring "yeahbuts" (as in "Yeah, but I don't have enough money/time/experience/chutzpah/dress ties"). There are hundreds, maybe thousands; they're everywhere. The path is rendered virtually impassable by them. Uh, hey, let's turn back, go grab a beer, turn on the tube, and forget this whole thing ever came up.

The "yeahbuts," the obstacles standing between us and our "bliss" or life visions, can seem insurmountable and beyond our control. Some are external – an unsupportive spouse, financial burdens, time restraints. Some are internal – psychological barriers like low self-esteem or a perceived lack of skills or attributes. Put those obstacles all together and it's pretty much a hopeless cause. Give it up, Jack; we're stuck tighter than root bound hydrangeas... So – let's not put them all together.

In the shadowy twilight of fear, the obstacles in our true path might form a seemingly impenetrable mass, blocking forward progress. But look closer; it's not a single mass but rather a pile of debris. Some pieces are truly heavy and unliftable; some are relatively light. We move a few smaller ones and a couple of big chunks shift or even roll off by themselves. Hmmm...there's hope here. Maybe with a little leverage from that branch...And, first thing we know – or maybe the second or third – there's a glimmer of light shining through from the other side.

Hmmm... There's hope here.

Luckily, positive change feeds on itself, as any aerobics survivor will confirm. The first class is torture; the fourth is a chore; the twentieth a high point of the day (resulting from a decrease both in muscular pain and in the dimensions of our leotard-clad physiques as reflected in the gym mirror). Change begets self-esteem and confidence, which returns the compliment.

Change is like aerobics or pumping iron for the inner self. We might have to start out slowly. Sure, the inner self's a little weak at first. No wonder – it's been hobbled in the dungeon and called nasty names for so many years. But gradually the inner self gets stronger.

Muscular even. Gradually, it starts sticking up for itself. It talks back to our parents, bosses, kids, society, even the front lawn. We find ourselves moving in harmony with our life visions. We feel strangely content with our lives as wholes, even when they fall far short of perfection. We don't snort or roll our eyes when we hear words like "self-actualization" or "being one with the universe." We move with simplicity, peace and clarity – even when the phone bill arrives.

The Life-Planning Approach described in this book is designed to help us guide ourselves through each step in positive change, from liberating and honoring our unique dreams and visions; to identifying and understanding the "yeahbuts" hindering us along the way; to taking the first steps to move past those obstacles toward our bliss. As you explore your own unique answers, this passage from *A Course in Miracles* may serve as an inspirational reminder:

*"Listen in deep silence.
Be very still and open your mind...
sink deep into the peace
that waits for you
beyond the frantic, riotous thoughts
and sights and sounds of this insane
world.
There is a place in you
where there is
perfect peace.
There is a place in you
where nothing is impossible."*

Chapter

2

How We Get Stuck: The Bummer Chapter

*“The leader is the one who
climbs the tree, surveys the entire
situation and yells,*

‘Wrong jungle!’

*But how do the busy, efficient
producers and managers often
respond?*

*‘Shut up! We’re making
progress.’”*

STEPHEN R. COVEY

The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People

If their quiet isolation helps tune out external static, the mountains offer yet another source of wisdom – powder skiing. You scoff? Read on.

For avid snow skiers, skiing deep powder is just short of Nirvana – effortless, exhilarating, and transformative. But trying to capture that elusive sensation can be cold, wet, and maddening.

If you’re a powder skier, you undoubtedly remember those first attempts, trying to fight your way through the powdery fluff and slamming down again and again, to escalating frustration and plummeting self-esteem. ‘The more you tried to bully, think, or force your way through, the more creative ways you found to stuff snow into your clothing.

You probably also remember that exhilarating breakthrough – that first time you forgot to brace, tense, or instruct yourself. Suddenly, your skis were arcing gracefully from turn to turn like playful porpoises. The snow flowed around your legs as though you were gliding through clouds. Glory was yours.

And then you realized you were picking up speed and tried to force a quick turn. Poof, crater time. Stupid snow.

Ah, herein lies the aforementioned kernel of wisdom, the secret to powder skiing and life. The more we view it as a battle, the more it becomes one. The more

we try to bully our way, the more we meet resistance. The more we tense ourselves up against possible threats, the more we are thrown off-balance by the tiniest of changes in the terrain.

The finest skiers on the slopes are loose, flowing, balanced, and having a whale of a good time. Perhaps the same could be said for the folks off-slope, too.

We adults spend a heck of a lot of time bracing ourselves against the perceived adversities of our lives. This is a conditioned defense that brings us as much satisfaction as swimming in a suit of armor. When we are braced, we are rigid, inflexible, and closed, so we can't fully experience the joyful, loving, wondrous times of our lives. And when times grow tough, instead of protecting us, our rigidity makes us more vulnerable; we're toppled by the slightest breeze of adversity.

Thomas F. Crum presents a powerful example in his book, *The Magic of Conflict*. A master in the martial art of Aikido, Crum illustrates its tenets with the following exercise, called "the unbendable arm." If you extend your arm in front of you and try to hold it as rigidly as possible, another person will be able to bend your elbow after a few moments; the pain of trying to overcome his power will become too much to endure. But if you imagine your arm as a flexible fire hose and envision a stream of water flowing from your center through your relaxed body and arm and out your fingers into the world, you can remain comfortable and relaxed while your partner strains and sweats, unable to bend your arm.

Crum proposes that tension and struggle, our conditioned responses to challenge, merely undermine the greater strength that comes from flowing in a centered way with the forces around us.

In the martial art Aikido, which literally means "the way of blending energy," the energy of attack is accepted rather than opposed, and neutralized or transformed. Crum extends this concept to Aiki, an approach to life where centering, relaxing, awareness, and flexibility replace a rigid opposition to life's perceived "attacks." Life

becomes a joyful energy dance rather than a joyless struggle.

Most of us adults have to consciously switch gears to “go with the flow,” but kids do it naturally. To envision Crum’s “energy dance,” we can reach back to our childhoods, where we experienced it most strongly and where we bid it adieu. Kids dance. Kids flow. Kids grow. To youngsters, making a move implies experimenting rather than risking, because they are not attached to a certain outcome.

To illustrate just how far we’ve come from our childhoods, try projecting your own grown-up fears and negative beliefs onto a young child sometime. Let’s say your little niece Nancy just starts to pull herself up by holding on to the coffee table, then, oops, her grasp slips and down she plops onto her diapered bottom. She looks back up at Mt. Coffee Table looming before her. Now – imagine if your own psychological “defenses” were at work in her:

“Hey maybe this walking stuff isn’t worth it. I mean, I could easily fall and sustain serious injury. Besides, it’s so embarrassing to wobble around when everyone else is so stable. And what if I couldn’t get the hang of it? Mom and Dad would be crushed. They might put me up for adoption. Besides, crawling’s not that bad; it’s safe. I know... I’ll just wait until I’m five or six or so. Then I’ll be stronger. I’ll have better self-esteem. Yeah, that’s it.”

But no. In actuality, Nancy reaches right back out and pulls herself up again. She beams. Then she lets go, sways for a moment, and – plop – she’s down again. But not for long. In the next hour, happy Nancy goes up and down more often than the Dow Jones Industrial Average in heavy trading. In a few weeks, she’ll be walking – to

*Life
becomes
a joyful
energy
dance
rather than
a joyless struggle.*



her own delight and the cat's dismay.

Nancy is what we all were at that age – a genius. A little dynamo changing daily, motivated by pure delight and curiosity. Nancy is an energy dancer.

Now, let's send our imaginations in the other direction. Imagine yourself as an adult, powered by Nancy's happy, unpolluted drive to learn and grow. Say you really want to start a revolutionary day care program tailored for underprivileged, inner city kids. So, while everyone else ponders reasons why you can't do it, you network, fundraise, recruit, plan, build. When one loan officer turns down your proposal, you happily see another. And another. Until you make it happen.

Yeah, nice fantasy, but...you protest silently. Let's be realistic.

Realism. A term invoked in the name of maturity and adulthood. So while Nancy is "unrealistically" propelling herself through some of life's major challenges – like learning to walk – we "realistically" talk ourselves out of even applying for a job we really want, because we probably wouldn't get it anyway.

So when did we lose the flow of childhood? When did we decide life was a battle instead of a dance, and turn our energy from exploring to protecting?

At what point did we adopt pessimism as reality, and scoff at optimism as "pie in the sky"? (It's been estimated that 90% of the things we worry about never happen; is that being "realistic"?)

When did we start telling ourselves, "You're so clumsy," and other unkind criticisms we'd never tell our offspring in this age of self-esteem consciousness?

When did we bury the happy urge to explore beneath fear, self-consciousness, and restricting beliefs?

When did life get so complicated?

Let's go back to Nancy. Just as she's starting to take independent steps, Nancy goes to visit her grandmother, who gasps and grabs every time Nancy starts to sway slightly. And when Nancy falls, Granny immediately swoops her up, murmurs

comforting words, and dashes for the Care Bear bandages.

“Hmmm,” Nancy thinks. “There’s something Mom and Dad have been keeping from me. Falling must really hurt.”

Nancy gets a little older, a little more mobile, until she’s ready to make a grand first ascent of the playground slide ladder. Her loving parents, anxious to protect her from potentially painful experiences, intervene.

“No, no, sweetheart; you’ll fall and get hurt.” The years go by. Nancy excitedly enters the first grade poetry contest.

“Now, don’t get your hopes up,” Dad gently tells her. “I don’t want you to be disappointed.”

The third grade teacher chooses Nancy to lead a “Save the Earth” club.

“That’s great, sweetheart, but don’t let it go to your head,” Mom cautiously advises. “Nobody likes a braggart.”

The explorer in Nancy still mans the controls, leading her in a hundred happy directions. But the going’s getting a little tougher. By now, Nancy is

internalizing a whole collection of beliefs

about herself and the world. “If I try something new and challenging, I’ll fall and hurt myself.” “If I let myself really want something and go after it, I’ll be disappointed and unhappy.” “If I want people to like me, I have to be meek and humble.”

Each year, Nancy adds a few layers of restraint. Her sphere of influencers expands. From her peers, her parents, and other grownups, she learns that approval depends on certain behaviors. And the same warnings that kept the infant

*Bliss
isn’t
just
a flavor
of
ice
cream...*



from crawling off the balcony now lead the adolescent to confiner her reach; she'll enter the school art show, but not the state-wide one. Because the concept of failure has been introduced (with disappointment and disapproval its assumed sidekicks), "trying" now implies "risking."

Ask a four-year-old Nancy what she wants to be when she grows up, and she'll likely answer you immediately, according to the activity that has most recently captured her fancy. Firefighter, dancer, artist, mom, backhoe driver. Each time you ask the question, you'll likely get a different answer, and each will be just as honest, uncensored, and spontaneous. Ask a twelve-year-old Nancy what she wants to be when she grows up, and she'll likely glance around to see who's looking, and tailor her answer to her audience.

What has happened? Nancy has switched her "locus of control" from internal to external. She has tuned into her family's, her friends', and society's beliefs and expectations, and is doing her best to live up to the roles and identity they have bequeathed her. Nancy's unique spark still shines, but external constraints have started to confine its direction.

Then, a few years later, Nancy graduates from school and enters what folks around her call "the real world." Suddenly the question "What do you want to be when you grow up?" takes on new urgency. She figures this time she gets only one answer. It's time to produce. Make money. Make babies. Get with the program,

Congratulations, Nancy has just become a bona fide member of society, with all its privileges, badges, and baggage: credit cards, utility bills, and other people's heightened expectations of her behavior. The pressure and the stakes go up; the tolerance for deviation goes down.

A well-adjusted (well-conditioned) Nancy ponders her job choices. What will look best on her resume? What do her parents and peers expect? What does her boyfriend think? Which job offers the highest pay and status? What should she do?

Far from that internally-driven little dynamo conquering Mt. Coffee Table, Nancy has given up the reins of her own life. Her own internal rallying cries – “Explore!” “Believe in yourself!” “Go for it!” – are barely audible beneath the acquired credos – “Be careful!” “But what will other people think?” She seeks guidance less from her own heart than from external signposts.

Add a husband, a kid or two, a mortgage payment, a stressful job, a few church committees, and Nancy has completely turned her life over to the demands and expectations of other people and society as a whole.

Like Nancy and other females, males are also gradually molded into the image society has created for them. Fear of failure and fear of disapproval become invisible leashes for both genders. However, the pressures are often different. Females gradually learn their value comes from selflessly supporting and nurturing other people; males grow to believe their value comes from protecting and producing. Both genders tend to become unduly focused on their jobs or roles as the primary source of satisfaction, self-esteem, and fulfillment, whether it fills those needs or not.

An LPA client whose life paralleled our theoretical Nancy’s wrote the following poem, which graphically illustrates the feelings she had when she realized how “ugly” her all-American life had become. (Within a few weeks of completing the LPA, she quit the job and happily launched a new, successful endeavor.)

THIS PLACE

*I know this place.
Every morning the pressure
starts at the shoulders,
pushes up to the neck and into the ears and eyes.
It blazes down the back and settles midway,
attacking everything soft and open.*

*Around me my teammates collapse.
Bobbie's skin cracks and bleeds
mysteriously and every day there
are more things she can't eat.
Amelia's shingles are nearly gone,
but the year-long depression
has left her with large, frightened eyes.
Mora skirts exotic accidents,
starting with demolishing the car her husband
gave her last Christmas before filing for divorce.*



*Sharon miscarried this summer.
She waited eight years for this child (she's worked here ten)
Jackie who had two babies on the job runs through her day,
races home to her sick kids, then runs through her nights.
Charlie, newly hired and fresh from his African honeymoon, paces, aware now of
his cage.
The cage built of medical and dental benefits, profit-sharing and pension plans.
This week, Thomas starts a new chapter in the hospital. AIDS,
His quite companion for the last two years, has made her presence unmistakable.*

I know this place.

While we're good and bummed out, let's indulge in a little blatant society-bashing. We are generally raised to consider society as "the common good" for which we must sacrifice certain freedoms. Partly this is true: The world would get a little crazy if we paid taxes only when we wanted to, drove on whichever side of the street we felt like, and showed up for work in the buff. But society has as a major goal not for the common good, but its own perpetuation. Hardly a worthy goal for which to sacrifice our dreams.

Society has suffered a pretty bad rap throughout the ages – from thinkers, philosophers, artists, spiritualists, psychologists, and therapists. As far back as the fourth century A. D., a group of spiritual seekers studied by Thomas Merton (*The Desert Fathers*) called society "a shipwreck from which each single individual man had to swim for his life..."

Recently, Marsha Sinetar, in *Do What You Love, the Money Will Follow*, recounted the conclusions of psychiatrist Robert Lindner, famous for his research on the benefits of "positive rebellion." "Lindner believed that adjustment was a synonym for conformity and that society conditions each human infant away from his or her own uniqueness. Through a variety of mechanism (e.g. the need for love, care, belonging, approval), each child slowly but surely adopts the cultural overlay of perception and thus is schooled away from his own interior wisdom, from his own self."

Finally, Sam Keen, leader in the men's movement and author of *Fire in the Belly*, writes that society leads us, particularly men, to consider and treat ourselves as commodities rather than individuals: "When we live within the horizons of the economic myth, we begin to consider it honorable for a man to do whatever he must to make a living. Gradually we adopt what Erich Fromm called 'a marketing orientation' toward our selves. We put aside our dreams, forget the green promise of our young selves, and begin to tailor our personalities to what the market requires."

When we mold ourselves into commodities...we are certain to be haunted by a sense of emptiness. Especially for me, ours is an outer-directed culture that rewards us for remaining strangers to ourselves, unacquainted with feeling, intuition, or the subtleties of sensation and dreams.”

All this society-bashing sounds like pretty radical stuff. If we do well in school, mind our manners, get a decent job, and/or get married and have a family, we're doomed to a life of slavery and unfulfillment? Bummer.

But don't dump the Volvo, the Magna Cum Laude, or the kids just yet. The problem is not the mortgage, the spouse, or the lawn mower, but the focus we place on such things while relegating our visions to the attic.

Rather than conjuring up external roles we can fill so others will value us, let's think what we want to be for ourselves.

The problem is not society per se, but our willingness to look to it for the locus of control for our lives.

True, society rewards conformity over originality and sacrifice over self-actualization. But we can view society as a landscape, albeit a sometimes rocky one, which we move through but are not controlled by. When we reclaim the control for our own lives, we stop being victims and become self-directed travelers. We can actually pursue our bliss within the context of society, once we learn to trust and empower ourselves and view society as the setting, not the show itself.

But what about those voices we have internalized: Don't rock the boat, you've got to be responsible, don't be selfish, but the Stelmans have always gone to Harvard, what are other people going to think, be careful...those voices, the legacy from our childhood, work hand in hand with society's pressure to conform. The voices portray society as the fount of truth and security; society admonishes us to listen to and obey

the voices. So how do we move the locus of control back to ourselves? First, we've got to remove ourselves, however temporarily, from society's reach and quiet those external noises so we can hear ourselves think.

Then we can ask ourselves..."what do I want to be when I grow up" in a whole different context. Rather than conjuring up external roles we can fill so others will value us, let's think what we want to be for ourselves. For starters, let's try answering in adjectives rather than nouns.

*...Move
not as
a warrior,
but as
a dancer.*

What do I want to be when I grow up? Not "a teacher, a doctor, a parent," but "happy, creative, open, powerful, thoughtful, confident, loving..."

All this "but what do I want?" stuff may sound selfish, like we should all just look out for ourselves and let the rest of humanity go to heck. Or move to a little remote town in the Rockies and sit on top of mountains all day and contemplate our navels. Not so!

Once we tune in to ourselves, we will probably uncover that serving or giving to others is an important part of our bliss. That, in fact, "we are our brother's keeper." And that we are truly happy and fulfilled when we are a contributing part of a larger whole- a family community, church, or other meaningful collective.

So let's get in touch with the direction in which our hearts want to take us. Let's renew our friendship with our true, special, and unique inner selves. Let's get our own two feet firmly beneath us, in contact with the earth, and feel the strength of our own muscles, minds, and wills.

Then let's go back to the "energy dancing" of our younger days. Let's look at the obstacles in our lives – including the roles and patterns into which we feel concreted – as a landscape we can maneuver in, over and around. Imagine not a mine field, but a playground and move not as a warrior but as a dancer.

Chapter

3

Getting Unstuck

*“You
must play
your heart
from
time to
time
to keep it
in tune.”*



By now, you’re getting the idea this book is not about finding the right bus to riches, power, and fame. It’s about getting off the bus and giving up your passenger’s passivity so you can steer and power yourself to your own brand of happiness and satisfaction. You can choose your own route, at your own speed, and maybe stop along the way – to paint a picture, climb a mountain, take music lessons, or just be still for a while. (We’ve all been through that “Stop the world, I want to get off” feeling and sometimes taking a break and stepping outside our routines can help us refresh, re-energize, and redirect ourselves.)

Sure, it’s easier to sit back and let someone drive you around, but it’s not nearly as much fun; you have no control over the ride or the destination.

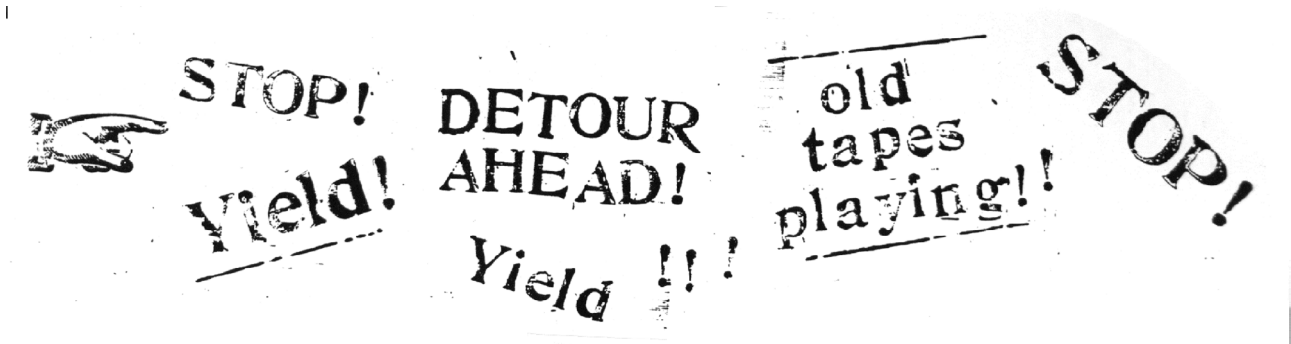
Getting off the bus isn’t easy, especially when it’s still rolling. The steps of change include:

- Acknowledging that you want something different (this often follows a “felt need,” and uneasiness with the same old routine of your life).
- Identifying where you want your life to go (either reaffirming, adjusting, or completely altering your life direction so it truly fits) – regaining your own purposes, goals and visions.

- Taking responsibility for your own life (moving the psychological locus of control from external events to your own internal direction).
- Finding ways to break the inertia and move in your right direction.
- Facing the surprises and fear that sometimes accompany change, and moving past them.
- Embracing change and blazing a path (not necessarily all new) that fits your true essence, tapping into the inquisitive, curious and delighted child within.

The LPA facilitates this renewal process and it acknowledges, but doesn't specifically explore, the emotional and psychological depths of change. So let's look at ways to get "unstuck" at various points along the change process.

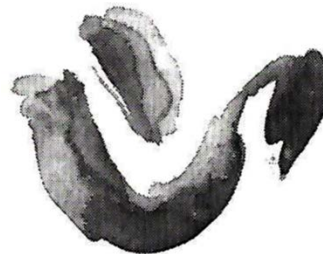
1. Psychological Road Blocks, Detours and Wipe-outs



Psychological counseling has caught a lot of flack lately, probably for good reasons; we can sometimes get so caught up in "peeling the onion" and wallowing around in old hurts that we are virtually paralyzed from moving forward in a healthy and healing way. Finding a counselor whose approach fits us can be a consuming process. But when used in concert with positive moves to shape our futures (the focus of the LPA), counseling can help us make personal breakthroughs.

For some of us, much of our immobility and resistance to renewal is seated in our psychological hang-ups. For example, Nick was controlled (or, more accurately, allowed himself to be controlled) by various “tapes” that were made during his childhood and played constantly through his early adult life. The most challenging was the poem (recited to music), “Good is better, better is best, do not let it rest, till good is better and better is best...” By confronting that tape through counseling, he freed himself from a no-win situation (where no level of accomplishment could ever be good enough) to enjoy whatever level of accomplishment he attained.

Sandy’s obstacles rested in her self-perceived role as a support system for others; if she began listening to her own inner voice instead of selflessly serving the people around her, she would no longer be of value to them, she believed. Once she examined and put aside that belief, she found to her delight that the more she was living her own ideals, the more confidence, self-esteem, love, and joy she had to share with the people in her life.



At some time in almost everyone’s life, counseling fits and can lead to real understanding, insight, and growth. By revealing the underlying beliefs, hang-ups, or shadows that keep us trapped in restrictive or even damaging patterns, we can make dramatic changes.

Besides working with counselors, we can also “unstick” ourselves through support groups and community organization (like Women in Transition, Alcoholics Anonymous or A Course in Miracles gatherings), self-help resources like tapes and books, seminars and workshops. (A word of caution: Choose groups that help you get moving instead of reinforcing you in your negative patterns; a men’s support group whose members meet solely to fuel each other’s feelings of being victims of their

environments won't really support you in making positive changes.) Every bit of healthy input we get helps free us from unhealthy beliefs and gets us charged up to move forward. One-shot boosters like weekend workshops can do short-term wonders; ongoing motivators like support groups may be less dramatic but over time, help keep the positive change going.

2. *Inertia*

Sometimes we are held in place less by deep-seated psychological obstacles than by simple inertia.

Routine can be an invisible captor. Routine can also lull and dull us into automatons. We become less “present” in the moment, less tuned in and appreciative. When you drive the same streets to work every morning, you can forget to notice the fragrance of the apple blossoms, the blazing blue of an autumn sky, or the neighborhood kids' funny lemonade stand on the corner. Barry Neil Kaufman, author of *Happiness Is a Choice* and co-founder of the *Option Institute*, sometimes has his workshop participants do “the gratitude exercise”: first they describe a typical day's routine, then they retell the day from a place of gratitude, expressing thanks for all the positive aspects of their everyday lives. Most participants were amazed how sharply their awareness and feelings about their lives changed from the first, rather bland, description to the second one, which revealed multitudes of positives, big and small, they had forgotten to appreciate.

Sometime, try shaking yourself out of complacency by consciously disrupting your routine. Get up on the other side of the bed – literally. If you cook by cookbook, try the other way. Look in the fridge and come up with a concoction to fit the contents on hand. Name it some exotic word and dress up to match the scene.

Clean out your closets. Get a dog. Take a different route to work.

*Try shaking
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routine.*

Go to a concert. Hear Vivaldi or a Souza march. Good classical music can act subliminally to pull you out of the everyday monotony. Or tune in to music you normally ignore or avoid (no elevator music, please!). Finish the sentence, “I wouldn’t be caught dead listening to...,” and then really listen to it.

Go see a thought-provoking play that challenges some of your comfortable assumptions. Read one of the classics, or John Gardner’s book, *Self-Renewal*. Have a long talk with someone who can share a perspective very different from yours.

Give yourself a “surprise” dinner party. Have a date with one of your kids and really tune in to him or her as a new and interesting individual; try to understand his or her life forces (the motivators and barriers).

Of course, taking a trip guarantees your routine will fly out the window. Traveling holds great lessons in letting go of expectations and structures and flexing with surprises and uncertainties. Rather than withdrawing into yourself or getting distraught, consciously let yourself flow with the unexpected and the unfamiliar.

One 115-pound LPA client, hardly a renowned daredevil, felt the strong need to shake herself up and experienced an uncharacteristic urge to try skydiving. So she did it! After a brief training program, she climbed out on the wing of a small plane and jumped tandem – and got 5,000 feet worth of indescribable rush and newfound perspective. The ‘wow’ of that experience jolted her into a new appreciation and openness in her life and she spontaneously made some healthy changes for herself.

You don’t have to be that dramatic, but the more you shake loose from your routine, even temporarily, the more you are free from it and its anesthetic effects. Just

because you always eat out at Taco Casa on Wednesday night doesn't mean you have to keep doing it when your heart longs for manicotti. Life is short; throw caution to the winds; head to Casa Italia.



3. Guilt, Judgments, Confusion External Static

Getting back in touch with our inner wisdom sometimes takes more than shuffling around a few routines; it takes escaping them, at least for a bit.

Writer/philosopher Henry Nouwen referred to “removing the scaffolding of our lives,” getting away from the telephone calls, memos, lists, and calendars that keep us locked up in roles, demands, and expectations. (For those of you calendar-addicts out there, for whom venturing into the world without that briefcase of “thou shalts” strikes terror, confusion, and helplessness... Rejoice! The sun will still rise without that little book in your possession and if something's important, you really will remember it by yourself.)

In silence and solitude, our inner voices will gradually make themselves heard. And when we listen to them long enough and even begin to follow them, we will learn to trust them.

Okay, so you could just move to the Iberian wilderness for a couple of years without telling anyone. With no one watching, reminding, or judging, you could wear, do, think, and dream whatever felt right, and rediscover your uniqueness and visions in a still, non-disruptive, and non-coercing environment.

Yeah, you're right; your toddler, mate, supervisor, and/or parents wouldn't take it well. So we have to do the next best thing; create little islands of silence and solitude for ourselves. If it means staying up a couple of hours after the family's gone to sleep, or leaving Junior with a friend for a weekend, claiming a meditation corner for yourself in your apartment, or stuffing a backpack and trekking the hills for a week without the mobile phone, finding a mode of internal retreat is almost essential to letting internal wisdom be heard.

Nick found this to be particularly true years ago, when he was offered a prestigious job in Washington, D.C., which would have meant leaving behind some places and people that were valuable to him. After interviewing in Washington, he stashed his fancy suits and ties and took an impromptu flight back to California via Puerto Rico, where he hopped a bus with few possessions but the sports shirt and shorts he was wearing. Freed of the "noise" of his everyday surroundings, where prestige and money were given undue importance, he was able to see clearly that the rewards of the new job were not worth the sacrifices it would demand. To the surprise of his associates, he turned the offer down, which proved a wise life-decision. The point here is not that money and prestige are inherently evil, but that society places such inappropriate value on them that they can lure us in directions that don't truly fit us. By switching from external to internal value systems, through solitude and internal dialogue, we make wiser decisions for our lives.

To help stay in tune, incorporate into your life the things that call out to your inner self. Some people play a musical instrument, write, paint, run, pray, meditate. These are not methods to fill up time, but to empty it. These are not mere hobbies

or ways to impress the neighbors (“wouldn’t everybody think I was cool if I ...”), but channels for communicating with the inner self. They open up a little window of expression for the quiet, wise, powerful, and creative part of you. Let no other presence (real or conjured) accompany you: no editors, guilt trippers, judges, or critics.

Also, allow time for complete quiet when you are doing or producing nothing. In this space, see yourself apart from your roles. You are not the sum total of the roles you fill; you are just yourself. No trappings, attachments, judgments. Let your mind and body float around, exploring just you. Try to stay in this place for a while. Surprisingly, being quiet and still can be very difficult “activities”; the mind, like a toddler at a meditation retreat, keeps clamoring for attention. As Nick’s meditation guide reminded him, when the “noise” of externally-directed thought starts to interrupt your meditating, remember the noise is why you meditate.

Getting in touch with yourself may take a few hours or many weeks, depending on how deeply you’ve been schooled away from yourself. Be patient and gentle with yourself, but be persistent. Savor the slow discovery as you would a gradual and romantic courtship or the growth of a flower from a seed.

*Once you put guilt aside
and tune into your
internal wisdom, you
become a much happier,
more satisfied and
creative person who
contributes to the world
and to other people in
special, powerful, and
satisfying ways.*

You may fear some parts of the discovery. One friend, a notorious workaholic, for years resisted taking time off to retreat and look inside himself. Finally, he became so miserable he had to reexamine his life. After some reflective time, he realized that during his childhood, his mother had said things like, “You’re going to turn out to be a lazy man, just like your father.” For his entire adult life, he had been unhealthily obsessed with work, partly to quiet the fear that his mother had imparted. When he stopped and reflected he realized he might not have the driving ambition his mother felt, but he was by no means lazy. Armed with that inner knowing, he became more at ease with his own level of ambition and was able to find a happier balance between work and other values in his life.

Almost universally, the characteristics you are afraid you will find in yourself are either created solely or greatly exaggerated by your fear; once you allow yourself to see deeply, clearly, and without fear, you will find a fascinating and beautiful individual.

Also, as you begin to hear and feel your inner wisdom more clearly, you will grow to trust yourself. Sometimes we feel that acting to fill external roles is selfless and noble, and acting from our own wishes is self-centered and base. Actually, the opposite is true. At our deepest level of being, we are all amazingly wise, loving, and kind. What is truly and deeply good for us individually is also truly and deeply good for the world.

Barry Neil Kaufman has worked with criminal and other individuals basically written off by society – people who had murdered, abused, and tortured. He found these individuals were acting out a convoluted system of beliefs garnered from distorted and twisted influences in their early years; most had been quickly “programmed” to believe they were inherently “bad”. Using the *Option Technique*, Kaufman led these men to reexamine and discard that belief and find deep in themselves the place of wisdom and goodness, a place they had lost faith in. From the

liberating discovery cascaded a rush of positive changes in these men's outlook and behavior; although their life situations (some were serving life sentences) were unchanged, their attitudes and approaches to life underwent revolutionary alterations.

The faith in our own inner knowing and goodness also liberates us from destructive guilt. When you are acting out of guilt, you are not acting out of joy. You are not the best you can be. Once you put guilt aside and tune into your internal wisdom, you become a much happier, more satisfied and creative person who contributes to the world and to other people in special, powerful, and satisfying ways.

... just trust yourself...

4. Mental Clutter: Paralysis by Analysis

Sometimes we can get unstuck simply by unplugging our minds to let our hearts and souls get a word in edge-wise.

In our society, we have been conditioned to make decisions after considerable analysis. Our conditioned decision-making techniques are like millstones around our necks.

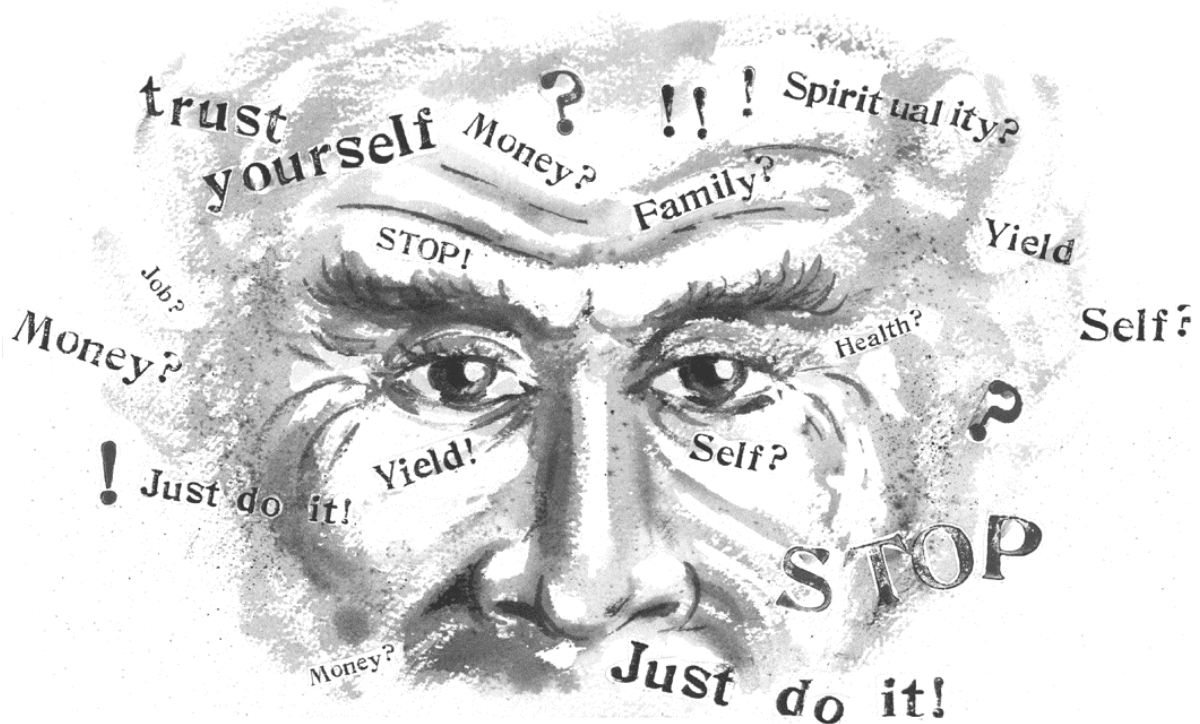
It's true we have a lot more choices these days. In the mall, you can become downright immobilized by the sheer vastness of the choices: eight different brands of ties, in four widths and fifteen patterns, from stripes to paisley to madras. The psychological community, quick to classify our modern maladies, calls it sensory overload.

In our life decisions, we can be equally mesmerized by the vastness of the choices, particularly when we try to make decisions based on endless mental analysis. A client was recently agonizing over whether to accept a proposal of marriage which would require considerable change in her life – a move, change of job, etc. She felt clearly her love for the man, and knew she “wanted to spend her life with him.” But a litany of “yeahbuts” cluttered her mind and turned her decision into a misery rather than a joy.

As Nick listened closely to this fine individual play verbal gymnastics with herself, he noticed a distinct pattern. She would start out speaking from her heart, with clarity: “I really love and respect this man...” followed by a “but what I quit my job and then it doesn’t work out with him?” Every heart-felt message was immediately clouded by a mental doubt. (Oh, beware the right side of the “but.”)

Nick suggested the woman take a sheet of paper and draw a horizontal line

Separate the mental clutter from the soul



halfway down the sheet. He lightly sketched a head and face on the top half and the outline of a body below the line. He asked her to list on the top half of the sheet all the doubts her mind's logical analysis was raising about her situation ("the head trip"). Below the line, she was to list all the feelings conveyed with her body (heart and soul).

The words from her head reflected her indecision with the material belongings she had amassed in her life. Sure, there were serious situations like leaving a job, but most of the words and concepts above the line reflected uncertainty about material goods and logistics.

When she reviewed the feeling words and concepts below the line, she celebrated how she felt in the relationship and, even though she had many logistical hurdles to overcome, she knew her path was with this man,

We've been encouraging you to "read your heart and soul" and to define your bliss. When mental clutter gets in the way, try just separating it out from the soul-deep messages. Then you can acknowledge the logical, rational concerns without letting them obscure the important messages from deeper in your being.

5. Low Self-esteem

By some, self-esteem is spotlighted as the world's key to salvation. Poor self-esteem is fingered as a major component of poverty, hopelessness, cruelty, drug abuse, and crime, you name it. This is true, in part. One of our strongest gifts to children and young adults can be the sense of specialness and empowerment that comes with healthy self-esteem.

But the self-esteem movement inspires outbreaks of victim syndrome. "I can't go look for a job; I have low self-esteem." Ironically, we can use low self-esteem to block ourselves from the very things that would enhance our self-esteem (new friendships, jobs, projects).

Many books now exist with exercises to enhance self-esteem, such as affirmations, listing your own positive attributes (a version of which is incorporated into the LPA process), talking with friends about your strengths, visualization, etc.

We have listed some of these resources and heartily recommend them, but in the final analysis, the best cure for flagging self-esteem is action!

Back in the '70s, a national debate centered on self-esteem and learning, especially with inner-city children. Some said improving the basic skills of the children would help them feel better about themselves and their accomplishments. Others said that self-esteem should be improved first; then the kids would want to learn, feel confident about learning, and achieve much more quickly.

In some educational circles, this debate still lingers, and there is still no clear winner. But as adults, the debate is as relevant as the “chicken and egg” scenario. Growth and self-esteem are so intertwined that to separate them seems absurd.

Meaningful action can be the strongest booster for self-esteem. Just do it! Do something that you feel will make you feel worthwhile, that you know will contribute to and elevate your self-worth. Take small steps (whether you feel confident or not) and have small successes. The more you sit still trying to bolster your self-esteem, the more you sit still. The more you move forward despite nagging self-doubts, the more those doubts begin to cure themselves.

Just do it!

6. *Responsibility*

You are responsible for your own happiness and your own life. This can be either an inspiration or a bummer, depending on whether you're revving your engines to make great changes, or holding tight to the secure prison bars of martyrdom and misery.

You may see your life as a web of oppressive forces holding you in place, and society may support this analysis. You're poor, handicapped, victimized by a hideous childhood or by racial prejudice. There's always somebody out there who seems wealthier, prettier, less burdened, more talented, loved, and pampered. On the other hand, there's somebody out there who has life a little harder.

The fact is, unhappiness is an internal state you choose, not an inherent result of external circumstances. You can be happy under any circumstance. Bizarre as it may sound, in the face of cancer, the death of a child, an abusive spouse, the loss the money or home, you can find joy and gratitude. And, in the same place you find joy and gratitude, you find surprising power in yourself to move toward what you want and positively affect other people and circumstances.

The old truism about the half-empty/half-full glass seems over simplistic, but it's a reminder that we shape our own realities by how we perceive them. There's another simple reminder from childhood: "Two men in prison looked out through the bars. One saw mud, the other stars." Stars or mud: the world is what you see in it.

At the age of three, a young boy and his dad invented their own imaginary magic spell to change rotten moods into happy ones. Although it began as a game, the spell worked – every time. Now that the boy is much older, he's forgotten the exact words of the spell, but he doesn't need them any more. He knows now that he can change his mood just by deciding to change it.

*Choosing to take
responsibility for
your own
happiness and
life will take you
much further in
the long run.*

In this age of sensitivity training, we are paranoid of “hurting someone’s feelings.” We are taught to be so careful, as though we held infinite power over other people’s emotions. The corollary to this, however, is that “they” also hold infinite power over our feelings. To believe this is to give away power and control. In fact, our feelings are our own. It’s never too late to make up our own imaginary magic spells, if that’s what it takes for us to realize we

hold the power to alter our moods and feelings; we are not emotional puppets of the people and circumstances around us.

We constantly hear the vocabulary of victimization, everywhere from our political rhetoric to the nightly newscasts. Black people have been victimized; their rage is to be expected. American Indians have been cheated; it’s natural for them to stew in resentment and anger. But, while it’s a noble goal to be aware of and try to correct unfairness, injustice, and inhumanity, perpetuating the victim model can be insidious. The more we view ourselves as victims or hostages of circumstance, the more we rob ourselves of the power and hope to change. The more we see ourselves as victimized, the more we narrow our choices and limit our reach.

A strong antidote to the chronic victim roles is the book *Happiness Is a Choice*, to which we’ve referred several times. Author and counselor Barry Neil Kaufman may anger us by taking away our handy excuses for misery, but he also inspires with tales of individuals who have completely revamped their lives by deciding to let go of the victimization model and be responsible for their own feelings.

Kaufman isn’t afraid to raise eyebrows.

While awaiting his turn to appear on a national talk show, he overheard a group of women firing each other up with the angry words of victimization and helplessness; the women were about to be interviewed about sexual harassment in their work place. Kaufman interrupted their darkening cloud of indignation: “Excuse me, but I don’t believe in victims.”

After a moment of stunned silence, he told a story of his son (one of several adopted children of various races from severely disadvantaged backgrounds) who was being cruelly teased by some other children at school. Kaufman helped the boy learn that the children’s words were simply reflections of their own misguided programming and that he did not have to be affected at all. That attitude not only took the power out of the teasing, but eventually enabled the boy to be a powerful teacher of fairness and open-mindedness among his schoolmates.

After the discussion with Kaufman, the women were called for their talk show appearance. As Kaufman watched on the TV monitor, the women who had earlier been caught up in ineffectual, whiny anger, were now talking articulately,

*When you are acting from your heart,
where you want to go is right for you.*

convincingly, and constructively about what they wanted for the workplace (and plans to prosecute). They had stepped from being helpless victims; they had reclaimed their own power and moved toward being agents of change.

Adopted the role of victim can have certain payback: you might get sympathy, handouts, and a nice excuse to stagnate. But choosing to take responsibility for your own happiness and life will take you much further in the long run.

7. *Fear*

How do you face the fear of breaking away from the known?

Let's revisit our childhood scenario. Young children have no sense of risk because they are not attached to a certain outcome. Falling for a child is just another experience, with no judgment attached to it. (Eventually, the child learns falling can be a source of sympathy; we've all seen a child fall, then look around to see if anyone is watching to see whether he should cry or not.) Also, young children are not attached to certain beliefs; they are busy soaking up data, not defending their conclusions.

As adults, we become attached to beliefs, habits, roles, relationships, belongings, and judgments. We build our identities around them. To some degree, this is healthy; we do it to keep ourselves safe and sane. But when we get so attached to the trappings of our lives that we are afraid to make needed changes, then we confine ourselves unnecessarily. The banker becomes so worried about maintaining his dignified image that he squelches his secret desire to act with the local community theater group.

To climb a ladder, we have to let go of one rung to reach for the next. That means we have to be willing to let go with one hand and experience that moment when we're not totally connected to the ladder. The more we cling to the rung we're on, and the more we focus on and fear the moment of transition, the less likely we are to go anywhere.

First step: Trust that when you are acting from your heart, where you want to go is right for you.

Second step: Let go of the need to achieve, to win. Let go of any undue attachment to a certain outcome (like "if I don't make the company profitable by December, I will feel so defeated").

The following poem
was cited by Thomas Merton in *The Way of Chuang Tzu*:

The Need to Win

*When an archer is shooting for nothing
He has all his skill.
If he shoots for a brass buckle
He is really nervous.
If he shoots for a prize of gold he goes blind
Or see two targets—
He is out of his mind!*

*His skill has not changed. But the prize
Divides him. He cares.
He thinks more of winning
Than of shooting—
And the need to win
Drains him of power.*



Nick read this poem after an interesting scenario at an LPA workshop. During a snack break, one of the participants tossed an apple core into a trash can that had been placed in the center of the circle of people. He had unerring aim and hit the container dead center. Until... Nick pointed out the man's accuracy and the entire group stopped their separate conversations to focus on the man's next shot. The man paused, concentrated, took careful aim... and missed by several inches. Because he was concerned about not hitting the target, he stiffened up and made a poor shot.

As the poem by Chuang Tzu so eloquently states, the need to win stiffens and undermines us. To free ourselves to do our best, we have to let go of judgments of

failure. We have to focus on “the shooting,” not “the prize.”

Individuals in society have developed such an “I’m number one” obsession that anything else is viewed as failure. We see this most dramatically in sports; everywhere the camera pans, fans and athletes flash the “I’m number one” index finger. But how many people can be number one? That leaves about five billion of us to feel second rate.

One LPA client in his late 30s had been a high school and college athlete.

*Fear
shrinks
naturally as you
hone in on your
visions and power.*

Throughout his time in athletics, the coaches instilled the fear of losing as a

motivator to play well. His team sometimes won, but the members played with tension and without pleasure.

Winning was a relief, not a victory, and it was followed quickly by the reminder that they still had another game to fear. These

days, more enlightened coaches instill a love of the game in their players, so they play with joy and camaraderie. Winning is a kick and an important goal, but losing isn’t a fearful devastation. The athletes play better, get injured less, and have a great time, win or lose.

By moving ahead according to your inner voice, you are succeeding, whether you attain some arbitrary external goal or not. Sure, look carefully at the risks you are taking and act with good judgment; there’s a difference between boldness and stupidity. But when you have plotted out reasonable steps for yourself, move without fear as your shadow. You may have to reexamine some of the beliefs that fuel your fear of not attaining everything you reach for. Remember the skier’s maxim: If you don’t fall every now and again, you aren’t really stretching your limits or learning.

Finally, to counteract the butterflies that can come with any new endeavor, focus on the path ahead, rather than the path left behind, with excitement and openness about where it takes you. As Susan Jeffers advises in *Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway*, when you feel those butterflies, play with them. Don't force your life or struggle with it; flow with it. As *The Magic of Conflict* reminds us, life can be a delightful energy dance if we play with the opportunities it brings.

How the LPA Helps

If you are deeply stuck, you might want to follow up on some of the suggestions given above before or while doing the LPA. When you feel ready to talk with and listen to your true self, you're ready for the LPA process. The LPA first helps you tune into your true self, and identify and honor your life goals and visions. It then provides a format so you can identify what forces around and inside you impede and assist you, and how they work in relation to each other. After identifying which forces pull at you most strongly, you then can plan small, empowering steps to address them, with a celebration built in to reward your effort.

As you use the LPA, you will hopefully find self-esteem and self-trust grow, while fear shrinks naturally as you home in on your visions and power. You can repeat the LPA periodically whenever you'd like renewal, redirection, or affirmation. Or, as we discuss later, you can organize a group to help support, monitor and get feedback on your progress.

Chapter

4

The Life-Planning Approach: Which Foot First

*“Believe that if you
are a good person,
what you seek for
yourself is also good,
providing you
are honest about your needs.”*

DAVID VISCOTT, *Risking*

A lecturing psychologist recently estimated that of 76 million baby boomers in the United States today, nine out of ten are in transition. So it's little wonder current literature abounds to escort them through that transition.

At least part of the way.

Most self-redirecting books and approaches invite us to reach for the stars, reassure us we're doing the right thing, escort us to the edge of the Valley of the Shadow of the Yeahbuts, then give us a pat on the back and a “Well, you're on your own now, Bud,” and back away. Sure, thanks a lot.

Most of us take one look at the seemingly huge obstacles and pitfalls obscuring the new path and figure, what the heck, maybe that old life wasn't so bad after all. Better to be a bored computer programmer than a bag lady. So we turn back to the security of uninspired lives, rather than face the uncertainty of new possibilities. Inspiration, vision, and high hopes don't always survive the transplant to our everyday lives.

Two decades ago, Nick clearly witness this phenomenon and the need to address the environmental forces that can undermine vision and positive change. In the early '70s, he worked with a team from the Far West Laboratory for Research and Development in Berkeley, California, to develop a new curriculum model for

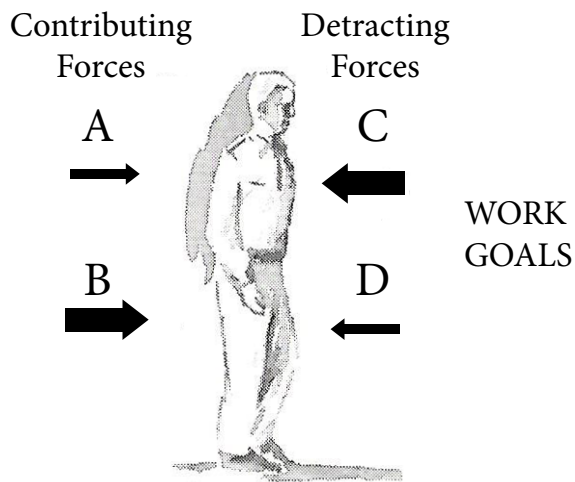
education. This model, later called the “*Responsive Education Program*,” involved having teachers “respond” to children, teach problem-solving skills, and support the children’s self-concept development. It represented a dramatic change from the rather rote lecture format traditionally used to deliver education to children.

Some of the finest public school teachers and administrators from across the country attended the intensive training sessions held in Berkeley and San Francisco. Most of the participants left these sessions well-trained and excited about implementing their new skills in their own school districts. Yet, even though on-site support was available for the teachers, and laboratory trainers followed up with frequent phone calls and visits, the implementation of this new curriculum failed to take hold.

The team spent many hours trying to understand the problem. The teachers, in locations ranging from Lebanon, New Hampshire, to Tacoma, Washington, to New Orleans, had been chosen for their demonstrated competence, motivation, and leadership. Yet even with such strength they found themselves stymied trying to forge the new direction in education. Invariably, they talked of external “barriers” or “situations” in the school districts that blocked implementation – unsupportive school principals, uncooperative fellow teachers, and testing programs that were incompatible with the new curriculum.

In discussing these implementation problems, an associate offered the theory and ideas of Kurt Lewin, who conceptualized a “field” of environment forces that support behavior or restrict behavior. Applying Lewin’s theory to the system implementation problem helped the team understand what was inhibiting change.

As a person works to achieve certain goals, a new curriculum, a company’s mission, or a plan for a new product as examples, that person is affected by certain influencing variables or forces in the environment: Some variables are contributors (A and B) and some are detractors (C and D). Further, some variables are stronger (B



and C) and some weaker (A and D).

From interviews, Nick found that some teachers, as they worked to implement the new program, were supported by their school principal (A strong contributing force 'B'). On the other hand the rigid, incompatible testing program was be a strong negative impediment, (C) for other teachers.

Asking teachers to identify then rate the positive or negative influence of the forces affecting them allowed the developers to build train programs to acknowledge and strengthen the positive forces and to identify and attempt to eliminate or reduce the effect of the negative forces.

This model proved both simple and clear in explaining the classroom environments. Using his background and training in psychometrics (measuring psychological phenomena like attitudes), Nick designed an instrument and conducted studies applying the concept first to public schools, then to other organizations such as day care centers, small and large corporations, and hospitals. These studies supported the model as a valid and extremely useful tool.

Over two decades, Rayder developed and refined a technique based on Lewin's model. The applications include *The Environmental Forces Inventory (EFI)*; *The Work Climate Questionnaire (WCQ)*; and now, the *Life-Planning Approach (LPA)* (for research studies using these instruments, see References in the appendix).

When a friend expressed confusion about the direction and influences in her life, Nick applied the approach to her situation, with doubly satisfying results. As she and Nick worked together to define her life vision, chart the forces affecting her growth, then identify specific actions she could take, she became more empowered

and directed-and the Life-Planning Approach began to take form.

Recognizing the value of the LPA in helping individuals move through times of change and renewal, Nick began focusing more on honing the process. He balanced the more precise utilitarian tools – like ratings and charts – with such diverse sources as Christian poet Thomas Merton, the Dalai Lama, and his own intuition and studies in human behavior and change.

The result is neither a totally-inward-turning counseling technique nor a “get rich quick” or “quick fix” guide to external success. The LPA is designed to help individuals listen to their own “heart speak” to discover or rediscover their unique life visions; also to identify the forces (both external and internal) that help and hinder them in moving small steps toward those life visions; bringing along improved self-esteem, self-empowerment, energy, and joy.

In the past, trained facilitators have used the LPA with clients, ranging in age from 13 to 87 - including corporate executives, home-makers, students, lawyers, dishwashers, artists, the incarcerated – the whole gamut. The results have proven the

LPA a straightforward, strong, and universal tool for self-direction, inspiration, and action.

LPA client Joe W., a retired probations worker, said the process “Isn’t just hand-holding and sympathy. It really helps people get a grasp of their own issues. It’s more bang for the buck, so to speak. It sharpens the focus, stops the denial, and defines the next step. It’s both common sensical and powerful.”

Another client said of the LPA: “For the first time in my life, I mapped out my feelings, my thoughts, my philosophy, and a ranking of



my goals. For the first time, I put into writing some of the things I can do to achieve those goals. I feel much more positive about myself than when I started, much more confident.”

After completed the LPA process, another person took steps to reconcile his long-strained relationship with his son. Other clients have effected outwardly visible changes in their lives; a successful but jaded lawyer shifted job directions; another man returned to school and launched a new career in literature; a elderly woman freed herself from unhealthy family obligations and began pursuing her own interests. For others, the changes have been less outwardly dramatic, but equally important; their daily decisions became more consistent and directed, their goals more focused

The ten LPA steps include:

1. Identify goals; build a vision.
2. Identify contributing variables/forces that contribute to achieving this vision.
3. Identify detracting variables/forces that detract from/are barriers to achieving this vision.
4. Review, refine, simplify – compile a unique set of these forces and name them.
5. Construct a two-dimensional Life-Space chart.
6. Position the forces as they operate today.
7. Position the forces as they would operate ideally.
8. Identify the discrepancy between the “actual” and the “ideal” position of each force and choose specific forces to work on.

9. Develop specific actions, using the “critical difference” technique.

10. Keep the ball rolling on the ‘action plan’ schedule you set.

Perhaps the most unique feature of the LPA, among all the self-help techniques currently available, is that it addresses, head-on, the specific-unique forces that work on each individual’s life. When we know where we truly want to go, but all we see in that direction are obstacles and risks (the point at which most other approaches bid us farewell), the LPA hits its stride. Here’s where the Nick Rayder hypothesis kicks in: When the going gets tough, the tough... make a chart.

Through the LPA, we identify and evaluate the forces in our lives – positive and negative, weak and strong, internal and external – and plot them out on a simple chart. This creates actual visual representation of our “Life-Space,” the force field within which we each operate.

*Strange things can
happen when we
stand back and view
our Life-Space
‘penned down’
on paper.*

Now, strange things can happen when we stand back and view our Life-Space “penned down” on paper. It’s like seeing from a helicopter a land area we’ve known intimately (at ground level) for years. Though we may recognize individual features, the aerial view creates a new overview. Similarly, what we gain from charting our life space is not so much “insight” as “outsight,” a view of our lives from above. We gain a simple, objective understanding of the topography of our lives – the major features and their relation to each other. It is, simply, the big picture.

First, we gain new understanding about the balance of forces working around us. By Jove! There are some positive forces out there, helping us move toward our life visions; we have something to build on after all. Second, by comparing how each force influences us today and how it would influence us ideally, we can see clearly where the largest discrepancies exist; in other words, we see the areas of our lives most ripe for change and growth. Translated to points on a chart, those obstacles become definable, recognizable, addressable. If it exists, it can be graphed. If it can be graphed, it can be dealt with.

Okay, but what about the biggie? We've got inspiration, awareness, understanding. That leaves – gulp – action. Which, in our adult minds, implies risk. Risk is necessary to create, grow, or learn. You have to let go of one rung to reach for a higher one. Okay, but how do you start?

The LPA answer (you guessed it): Make a chart.

Taking one factor we'd like to change, we can analyze it, using the "critical differences" technique. What does the situation feel like now? What would it feel like ideally? What are the critical differences? What steps, tiny or large, would help move the real toward the ideal? What can we do this afternoon, this week, this month? Let's plan it out, write it down, and do it. One step at a time.

By plotting and envisioning our ideals, we have actually taken the first "action" toward attaining them; some theorists propose that just visualizing the ideal begins to bring it into reality. "You have to have a dream to have a dream come true" type thinking.

Each small step we take does two things. It accomplishes the immediate goal (e.g., exercising by taking the stairway instead of the elevator) and contributes to a larger goal (validating the commitment to change, increasing self-esteem, and laying a groundwork for the next step).

We have been taught by conventional wisdom to distrust simplicity. "Life is

complex and difficult. If you want to know, hire an expert. No pain, no gain. If it doesn't cost a lot or hurt a lot, it won't do a lot." But then, conventional wisdom has also brought us Agent Orange, acid rain and tasteless tomatoes; definitely heavier on the convention than the wisdom.

By contrast, the LPA follows the Law of Parsimony – the simpler, the better. Sometimes complex mental constructs merely obscure the simple questions: Where do I want to go? How do I get there? Which foot first?

Similarly, the LPA doesn't overlay any particular philosophy, jargon, spiritual belief, or set of judgments on us. Each individual creates a unique life vision, a unique life space, a unique action plan. Doctors have long admonished us that trying to

*You have to
have a dream
to have a
dream come true...
and, most important,
you have to act on
that dream.*

adhere to some rigid magazine-rack diet plan seldom works as well as incorporating eating and exercising guidelines into our own lifestyles. And, just as those guidelines become second nature, so does the LPA; we can use it again and again until we begin to move past our obstacles and make course adjustments almost automatically. Of course, effective as it

can be as a tool, the LPA is not magic. Following the ten steps of the LPA won't send us directly to Blissland. We still have to move one space at a time. There's still a lot of rolling the dice and a modicum of getting stuck or sent back. But at least we'll be playing on our own game board!

If you find yourself feeling uncomfortable spending time on growthsheets that won't earn you money, reduce your Christmas card list. Remember Sam Keen's assertion in *Fire in the Belly*: "We have a hopeful future only if we stop asking what we

can produce and begin to ask what we want to create.”

Feeling selfish to be spending time on yourself when so many other tasks await your attention? The things left undone are probably much less important than the task before you. Which is: to give the world back a charged, revitalized, and happy participant in its future. Given that – hey, the dishes can wait.

Chapter

5

Charge!

The Dream World Chapter

*“Your dreams are just
as important a part of
you as your fingers.*

*And you shouldn’t
have to put them back on
ice just because it hurts to
thaw them out.”*

BARBARA SHER
& ANNIE GOTTLIEB
Wishcraft

At this point, this book becomes a participatory endeavor; you do the most important writing from here on.

Before launching into the growthsheets, find an oasis of peace to be with yourself. Ideally bring this book and plenty of paper, pencils and markers and escape to the desert, the mountains, the forest (or the Hilton). Or simply create your own “desert” – a den, bedroom, shade tree in the yard, glen in the park, nook in the library. If you live in a New York tenement, confiscate a corner of the fire escape. One friend of ours finds solitude (and superior acoustics for his guitar) in a seldom-used bathroom.

Wherever it is, claim it as your own. Treat yourself to some favorite trappings – posters, music, plants.

Okay, now shut out the world. Unplug the phone. Don’t water the plants, cut the grass, or notice how dirty the windows are. This is neutral territory – no demands or expectations allowed.

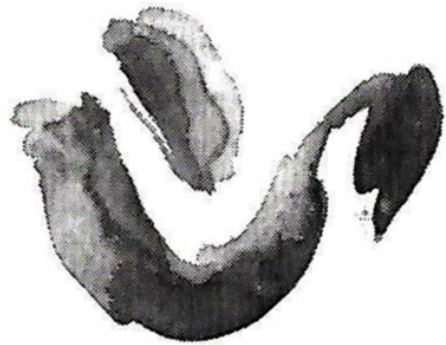
Play host to yourself. Comfortable? How about something to eat or drink? What about some soothing music? Collect around you the things that help you feel tuned in with yourself (some people even use a mirror: staring at their reflections or looking into their eyes helps stimulate self-discovery). Remove anything that whines,

scolds, ticks, or otherwise reminds you of the busy-ness of your life.

When you begin the growthsheets, provide yourself with plenty of paper (big sheets are great) and tape, so you can tape your sheets up to the wall (or shower curtain or tree...) and literally stand back and view them from a distance.

As you create your own LPA sheets, try to let go of judgments about yourself. Be patient. Sometimes distractions or frustrations may begin to block you: simply breathe deeply, visualize yourself letting them go, and try to refocus. If you begin to feel someone symbolically looking over your shoulder, or find yourself answering the way you “should,” step back and try to focus yourself. Take a long look in the mirror. If you need to, take a walk and come back later. Attempting to beat your distractions into submission is as successful as trying to hurry up and mediate; the end is incompatible with the means.

The LPA also works exceptionally well with a facilitator to lead you through the steps and scribe your words verbatim. You might want to ask a friend or mentor (someone trained in to facilitate) to learn the LPA approach and facilitate it with you; or you might learn to be a facilitator and trade off facilitating.



Before you reach for your pen, consciously release any fears or tension you feel; you are embarking on an enjoyable self-dialogue, not a gut-wrenching emotional experience.

Some deep emotional issues may surface while you're using the LPA growthsheets. If so, write yourself a reminder on a separate Rx sheet of anything you want to think about or work on later; then set the sheet, and the issue, aside (out of view) and continue with the positive job at hand.

You can allow yourself to let go of pressures, expectations, and self-consciousness; nobody's looking over your shoulder to scoff or grade your performance. Let go – and enjoy.

This first sheet is a warm-up, to begin the self-dialogue. Fill the sheet in with the first words that come to you – you can let the words flow, without belaboring, thinking, or editing. Remember, no one has to see this but you and no one will correct your spelling! And smile, you're about to start a journey that very few people take the time to do in their life time. Briefly congratulate yourself and get to it.

Warm up

LPA GROWTHSHEET #1

Formal name: _____ Today's date: _____

What you like to be called: _____

Complete the following:

Three words that best characterize you:

That least characterize you:

a. _____

x. _____

b. _____

y. _____

c. _____

z. _____

One thing that really makes me unique and different from most people is my...

Another unusual thing about me that I like is:

People who really know me say that I am at my best when I...

One major thing that I would like to accomplish before I die is...

One thing that really makes me happy and feel warm inside is...

Now, read over your thoughts in the warm-up exercise. It's okay if some statements are difficult to complete. Just write the first words or ideas that come to mind.

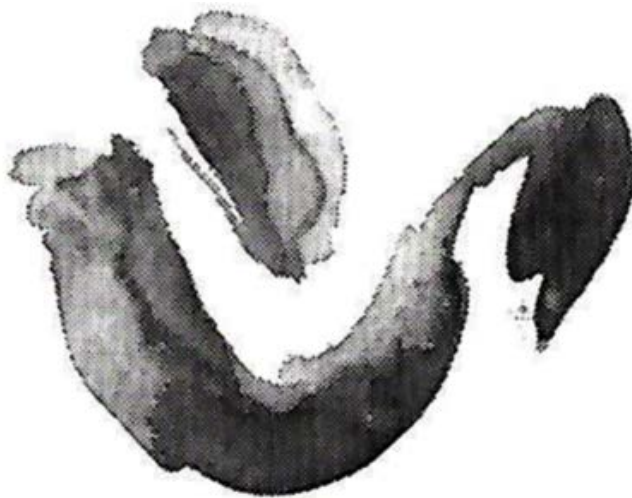
Some people have a difficult time with this activity. After all, the term words ask you to make some fine statements about yourself and many of us were taught “not to brag.” Well, this book is about bragging... bragging of our accomplishments, our strengths, and our dreams. Think of each “brag” as a definition of your true self; the things that make you unique.

Another way to your true self is by drawing who you are, what you represent:

Pick a Symbol

Now, draw a symbol on the following page to represent yourself. This can be an object, like a tree or animal, or a shape or design. Again, no one's looking over your shoulder or rating your artistic potential, so loosen up. If you feel self-conscious or resistant, do it anyway. Draw something.

Think of yourself in a parade where everyone marching has a flag with their symbol ablazing. What color would your flag be? What symbol would be on it?



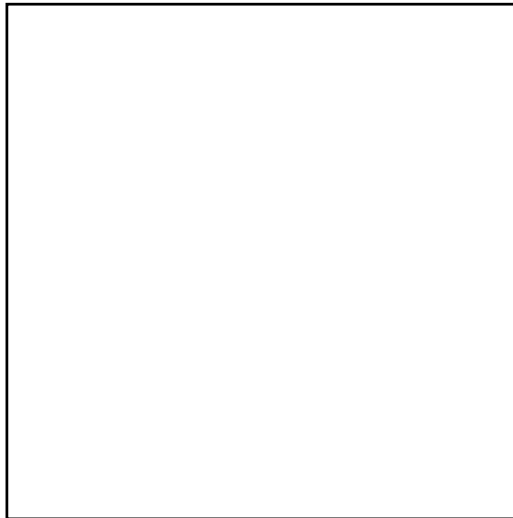
This may have been difficult for you. Too often our dreams have not been acknowledged.

My Symbol

LPA GROWTHSHEET #2

Draw your symbol in the space below and color it in.

IT STANDS FOR:



IT REPRESENTS:

WHEN I SEE THIS SYMBOL I FEEL...

Now, look at the symbol you've drawn and describe it, especially as it stands for you. Write down around the symbol the key words that come to your mind. Try finishing the sentence: "This symbol stands for me because it represents..."

Keep going until you have a half dozen or more descriptive words around your sketch.

This is your symbol. It is important to you; it represents your strength, your uniqueness, your essence. Keep it close and refer to it as you go through the other activities. You can change, color or embellish it any way you want at any time. Some have even constructed a flag with their symbol flapping in the wind.

My Life Vision

LPA GROWTHSHEET #3

After drawing, coloring and describing your symbol, fill in the following, without laboring or critiquing.

Some things I want in my life are: _____

Some things I want to accomplish in my lifetime are: _____

I want to be known for: _____

My bliss is: _____

I am on this earth to: _____

The 'footprint' I want to leave on this earth for people to see is: _____

“Now, come down to earth.

Celebrate what you wrote! If it was difficult, understand and accept the difficulty.

A word here about what you’ve described as your life vision. You may discover you’ve written only about the roles you fill for others. *For example, Newsweek called women in the 40 years and over range “the caretaker generation” – with the strong socialized role of taking care of their parents, children,*

spouses, etc. Serving others is an admirable goal, but remember you will serve best if your needs and dreams as an individual are also being served. If all the above answers are your roles at the service of others – “taking care of my family” or “providing for my children” – then honor these as valid and worthwhile, but don’t stop there. Try to go beyond to what you want just for yourself. This is not selfish; this is designed to make you a more enriched, happy, and therefore effective person in the roles you do choose for yourself.

During a group LPA session, a 65-year-old woman, whose husband had recently died, found herself listing her life goals as taking care of her children (who were long since grown); managing the family business her husband had left her; and taking care of friends and loved ones. The facilitator at the session felt she was blocking out deeper desires for her life. So, during a break in the group, he worked with the woman to move beyond her external, caretaker roles.

*Sometimes
we are
so well programmed
in filling our roles,
we find it difficult
to consider our lives
apart
from them.*

The facilitator had the woman take a large hand mirror and gaze at her reflection. (This in itself can be difficult for those of us taught to be modest and shy away from vanity.)

“First, just look at yourself socially, the way other people see you,” the facilitator instructed the woman. “Notice if your hair is parted straight, if your make-up looks okay, the color of your eyes, any other observations. Get that out of the way first.”

After the woman had spent a few minutes examining her reflection, the facilitator asked her to look deeply into one of her eyes reflected in the mirror (you’ll notice it’s impossible to look yourself in the eyes; you can only look into one at a time). She was told to imagine the eye as “the window of the soul.” As she gazed into her own eye, she repeated after the facilitator, “What I really want for my life is...” At first, the same messages surfaced again and again: to manage the family business, to care for family members. The facilitator had her continue to stare at her



reflection and continue to complete the sentence. After several repetitions, the woman’s face suddenly shifted and she said in a somewhat surprised tone, “What I really want for my life is... to live it the way I want to... to take some classes...to write.”

The open-ended phrase unleashed a flood of realizations for the woman: She actually had very little interest in the management of the business and much preferred

to hire a manager rather than do the job herself. She really wished she could take some courses and learn about new topics; she wanted to paint and write, but she'd always thought that would be "selfish." Although she loved her sons and wanted to continue as a loving presence in their lives, she also realized they no longer depended on her; she was free to live her own life and create her own goals.

By freeing herself emotionally from the long-time roles she'd accepted, the woman was able to create new possibilities for her life.

You might try to "read your soul" using the mirror technique. Or try this: What would you tell a person who comes up to you and says: "We have written a biography about you and want to know what to put on the inside jacket under your picture that will summarize what you stand for, how you led your life, your strengths, things about you that are unique." What would you tell this person?

Don't allow yourself to be vague. If you answer "I just led a simple life," tell why it was simple. Simplicity is beautiful. Some of the simplest art works – by Picasso and Matisse – are the most profound.

If you still have a difficult time defining your bliss or life visions, go on to the next section and come back later.

Visualization:
A Trip
Into the Future

Here's another way to uncover your bliss, your life vision. This works best if you can relax and be quiet and accepting. Try not to "edit" yourself, but allow your deepest responses to come out.

We're now going to take a wondrous train ride. Imagine boarding a luxury train and sitting with your back to the engine (facing the caboose). You sink into the plush, comfortable upholstery and the train slowly starts moving, its soothing rhythm lulling you into a relaxed and open state. This train is unique; it has no crying babies, cramped restrooms, or conductors, and it bypasses Seacaucus, Yoakum, and Wichita and heads straight to Blissland. Out the window, you see (and smell and hear) only the scenes of your dream life, your bliss.

The beauty of the passing scenery and gentle sway of the train relax and soothe you. You're not at all surprised to find you're traveling not only through space, but also through time. The train moves ahead five years, slows and stops. You are in your dream life, five years older. You look happily out the window, get up and step off the train. What a sight meets your eyes...

Just imagine... in rich, sensory detail. Allow yourself to savor the wonder. Then take some time to record your imaginings. Jot down every word or phrase that comes to your mind, whether it seems relevant at the time or not. This is a tapestry of words and ideas; every detail contributes to the whole.

Five Years

LPA GROWTHSHEET #4

Into the Future:

You Are _____ Years Old...

Where are you? What do you see?" What are the surroundings like?

What colors do you see? _____

Someone arrives to meet you? Who is it? Where do you go together? _____

How do you feel? What do you do? _____

Where have you been and what have you been doing? _____

Now you go to your home. What is it like? Who else is there? What does it feel like? What other details do you note? _____

LPA GROWTHSHEET #4a

After a wonderful visit at that juncture, you step back on the train, refreshed and eager to travel on. Once again, you settle into your cozy seat and watch as beautiful scenes pass by outside the window.

Next stop... ten years later. Once again, you happily step off the train into your dream life. What do you find?

Ten Years Later:

You Are _____ Years Old...

Where are you? How are you dressed? What is your color? _____

Who meets you? Where do you go? What do you do? _____

You are sitting at a desk, or some other special place where you think and can 'be' with yourself. There is a letter there for you. From the return address you can tell it's from someone very special in your life. You open it and what you read makes you smile and feel warm inside.

Who is it from? What does it say? _____

LPA GROWTHSHEET #4b

You write an answer. What do you say in your reply? _____

Describe where you are as richly and with as much detail as you can. Envision the surroundings, the people, the sensations and feelings. Remember – life is wonderful. Why is it? _____

You go back to the train and board it. As it starts moving, the familiar sensation and clickety-clack of the wheels on the track carry you smoothly ahead through time. Gradually, the train slows. It is now twenty years later. You are older. Your life has changed. Your steps as you leave the train are perhaps a little slower now, but your happiness is just as complete. What awaits you here?

Twenty Years Later:

You Are _____ Years Old...

Again, where are you? Is there someone there to meet you? _____

LPA GROWTHSHEET #4c

Where do you go? What do you do? _____

Someone asks you what is important to you at this point in your life. How do you answer this person? _____

There's a mirror at the train station. You glance at it as you pass. What are you wearing? What are you like? How would others describe the way you look and carry yourself, and the qualities you possess? _____

Now for the final outward-bound leg of the trip. You re-board the train, settle in and relax until the next stop. As the train slows, imagine you are now 95 years old. Not quite so spry, perhaps, but content and happy. You step carefully off the train. Ah, feels good!

*You Are
Now 95 Years Old...*

LPA GROWTHSHEET #4d

Where are you? Who is with you? What does it feel like? _____

A friend meets you to take you to a celebration in your honor. As you are walked onto a stage, people break into applause. In addition to many dignitaries, all your close friends and family are here. The applause increases. A standing ovation!

What are you being honored for? They present you with a plaque to recognize your accomplishments. What does it say on the plaque? What have you accomplished? I'm honored for my..._____

The plaque says...._____

Looking back on your life, what have you enjoyed? What are you proud of?

What are you known for? _____

The moment is rich, but at last it's time to get back on the train. Time for the return trip back to the present. You have now traveled through a span of your possible future, savoring the finest aspects of it along the way. Now that you are back home, take a quick glance at your life, your bliss. Scan the words you have written. What are the themes that repeat or continue? What qualities, characteristics, people, surrounding, activities and values follow you into your future? What are the most prominent colors, sounds, and smells in your life?

Now, let's go back to the questions you answered before, and see what you come up with.

Ah! Bliss!

LPA GROWTHSHEET #5

Some things I definitely want in my life are: _____

Some things I definitely want to accomplish in my lifetime are: _____

I really want to be known for my: _____

I would describe my bliss as: _____

I realize that my true self can be described as a person who: _____

Review what you've written and let the words soak in. Does this feel true? Does it feel complete? Add anything that is missing; change the words until they feel true and right to you. You should feel proud!

Make a Proclamation

So all this doesn't get lost in the shuffle, summarize your words into a proclamation. Take two or three of the main themes that describe your true self, your true purpose in life, and rewrite them as a mission statement, your own personal banner.

Here are some examples. The first is a proclamation by an 72-year-old woman, the second by a 13-year-old boy

PROCLAMATION FROM A 72-YEAR OLD RETIRED WOMAN

"I am happy to be as well as I am"

"I open my arms out and I feel something beautiful"

*"I experience spiritual feelings with music, flowers and color...
and people in my life"*

*"One of my goals is to find someone compatible to live with...
to really have a quality life with"*

*"I want to be remembered for something positive or good...
such as caring for people that I don't even know"*

*HERE'S ANOTHER
FROM A 13-YEAR-OLD BOY*

"I am healthy and I feel good about myself"

"I have a good relationship with my friends and family"

"I'm interested in what my goals are"

"I'm intelligent"

*"The things I want most in my life are:
A wife and two children, happiness,
and to accomplish everything"*

*"One of the things people know about me is:
that I am kind"*

(You might want to have someone put your words into type or calligraphy).

*Many people have famous sayings
scattered throughout their houses;
taped to bathroom mirrors, tacked to walls,
placed under magnets on the fridge.
YOU are another important person to listen to.
Acknowledge your beliefs; speak from the heart...*

A FINAL EXAMPLE FROM A 55-YEAR OLD, MALE LAWYER

*“I will be remembered as someone who
made a difference”*

*“I have some understanding
of where I fit into the universe”*

*“I have accomplished a belief system that assists me in
how I lead my life on a daily basis”*

*“I have achieved some faith that there is a God beyond
that governs the universe”*

*“My dream is that I achieve inner peace...
that I’m doing what I was meant to do...
something that’s uniquely mine”*

Some people hang their proclamations on the wall of a favorite room, or even on the refrigerator door so they’ll get double nourishment when they hit the fridge. You are another person to listen to. Acknowledge your beliefs. They speak from your heart!

Be sure to date your proclamations; while the essence may change, your future proclamations may contain different words as you expand or bring clarity to some concepts. Use these periodic proclamations (every three to four years) as benchmarks of your life.

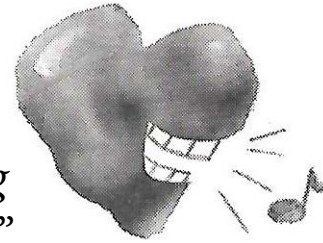
As you continue the LPA growthsheets, keep your proclamation visible. In the words of the famous game show host: *“This is your life”*.

Chapter

6

Living in the Real World

*“Your
heart
sings
the song
of truth”*

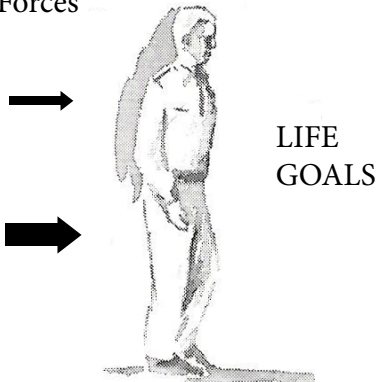


The good news is that you have an inkling of what you want for your life – your bliss. The not-so-good news is that you still live in the real world, and there’s no “beam me up” option on your daily control panel.

Going back to the LPA model, let’s see what makes up your particular “real world.” What forces inside and outside of you interact to make up your unique environment? (These things acting on your life can be called variables, factors, forces, contributors or detractors.)

Recalling the simple design of the person on a path toward his life goals, let’s start with the contributing forces in your life, the things that help propel you toward your life goals, your bliss.

Contributing
Forces

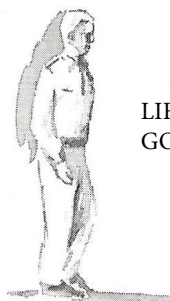


In the following steps, we will look at the variables acting in your life, now at this exact moment. As you go through these next steps, keep your other “bliss” sheets or proclamation around you, visible at all times. If you get stuck or distracted, look back over what you’ve written. It can help you stay focused and on the right track.

Internal Contributors

LPA GROWTHSHEET #6

Contributing
Forces



LIFE
GOALS

First, think about yourself, your internal attributes and characteristics (i.e. intelligence, friendliness, spiritual faith, perseverance, particular abilities) that can contribute to achieving your bliss, your life visions. Put aside modesty and concentrate on your

personal strengths; make a list in the space below. If you need, complete the “stem” sentences below or create others to help you tune in to your positive traits. Also, you can look back at the sheets you’ve already completed to get little reminders. Be thorough; list every characteristic you can think of, big or small, that can be considered a contributor. Try to come up with ten or more positive internal contributors.

This is a time to brag about yourself. It's okay!

Celebrate your strengths.

The things/characteristics about me that contribute to achieving my life goals are my:

LPA GROWTHSHEET #6a

My friends say that strengths I have are:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Other positive attributes I have that can help me move toward my life vision are my:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

A Little Help if You're Stuck:

If you have trouble getting past your programmed modesty, try this game (recommended in the book *Wishcraft*): First, list three or so of your favorite heroes or heroines. These can be friends or people you know, political figures, movie stars, community leaders, whatever.

Now, take the first person. Create a fantasy where this person is describing you in glowing (but true) terms. What fine things would he or she say about you? Beside that person's name, jot down some key words he or she would use in your honor.

Do this for each of your chosen heroes or heroines. Finally, review the compliments of your imaginary fan club, bask in their praise for a moment.

back to answer the questions above.

External Contributors

LPA GROWTHSHEET #6b

Now step back and look at your daily life. Think about the variables in your life – outside of you – that help you move toward your bliss or life vision.

These may include supportive friends or family members, beneficial circumstances, background factors such as education, etc. Again, take a little time here. Sometimes we tend to overlook contributing factors because they are invisible; they don't "hassle" us or force us to deal with them. Think about all aspects of your life, personal and professional. Thoroughness now will translate into a more realistic and complete Life-Space and Action Plan in the following steps.

*The external variable in my life that help me
move toward my life goals are:*

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Detracting Variables – Barriers

LPA GROWTHSHEET #7

Ah, we come to the bogeymen. The barriers that stand between us and our life visions. The forces that distract, confuse, intimidate, consume, or discourage us from heading down our true path.

Internal Detracting Barriers

Again, let's start with internal factors. What attributes or characteristics inside of you keep you from achieving your goals (for example, shyness, fear of failure, lack of motivation)? Take time to think thoroughly and jot down the key words or thoughts. Some examples: my inability to control my temper, my drinking problem, my fear of risk, my self-concept, my inability to communicate and tell how I feel, my fear of...

(Note: You might name the attribute as both a contributor and a detractor. Sensitivity, ambition, and other internal traits may be double-edged swords, helping in some situations and hindering in others. Just list them under both headings if they fit under both.)

The things or characteristics about me that hinder or block me from moving toward my life goals are:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Or try: I could move so much more quickly toward my life goals if only I weren't so...

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

External Barriers

LPA GROWTHSHEET #7a

This part often comes quite easily. The negative forces around us – we gripe about them, use them as excuses, cry, worry and rail about them. These external barriers can include circumstances (lack of money, burdensome responsibilities); people (unsupportive friends, co-workers, or family members); or events (death, illness) – anything outside of you that you feel holds you back from reaching your goals.

Remember, listing something as a detractor isn't necessarily a judgment about it. A well-loved member of your family may be acting as a detractor at this stage of your life; listing him or her as detractor doesn't negate your love for this person at all. You are simply looking at your life in terms of forces or impediments at this time in your life.

The external barriers (thing, people, events outside of me) that are keeping me from achieving my life goals are:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Or try: I could achieve my life goals much more easily if only I didn't have to deal with...

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

After you have completed the preceding growthsheets on your own, take a quick look over the following “prompts” to help remind you of any factors you may have overlooked. These are forces people sometimes identify as influencing their lives, either as contributors or as detractors.

Possible Internal Forces to consider

Spirituality – God, spiritual development, the power in the universe, karma, the source within, etc....

Self-Esteem –self-concept, self-image, personal self, how you feel about yourself, etc.

Health –how you care for your body, your eating habits, diseases, disabilities or a medical condition you might have, etc.



Possible External Forces to Consider

Finances- security, money, resources

Family- spouse, father, mother, grandfather,
grandmother, uncles, aunts,
children, close friends, etc...

Society- the environment where I live, work and socialize

Spouse- my mate, significant other, roommate
family-in-laws, parents, extended family

Finished with this part? Sit back and stretch. Take a quick, appreciative look over all you've written. You have now done a self-examination of the factors/forces that operate in your life. This is the first step in understanding how this complex of forces/factors influence you as you work to be true to yourself.



Chapter

7

The Chart Chapter

In chapter five, you were a dreamer. In chapter six, you switched to reporter. Now you become a cartographer.

Remove yourself a bit from the writings you've generated so far and deal with them for a few minutes as a body of information. We will now do a quick "content analysis" of what you have generated and make a summary list of "influencing forces." These will be used to create your Life-Space like the one shown.

Listing the Core Set of Factors that Influence You

The steps here are: review, refine, simplify, and restate in neutral terms (i.e. “lack of money” becomes “*money*”; “bad feelings about myself” or “low self esteem” becomes “*self*”, etc.)

Look back over your lists of forces. Group the forces that are similar under a neutral heading. What are the key words? “My job takes too much time” and “I don’t think my career is taking me where I want to go” and “I get lots of strokes from my work” could be grouped under the simple factor title of “*job*” or “*work*.”

“I’m too impulsive,” “I care about people” and “I’m a good person” could be grouped under “*self*.”

“My wife is afraid of me changing” and “my wife and I have a great relationship overall” would be listed as “*wife*”.

Go through and come up with general, non-judging terms to cover the significant factors you have listed. Use scratch paper and trial and error to compile words that work for your factors. You will probably end up with a dozen or more overall key umbrella factors, perhaps including terms like: money, health, time, job, self, and spirituality.

This “evaporating” and combining influences into neutral, non-judgmental titles or names may seem like a strange process, but it allows you to rate the direction and amount of influence each force exerts on your life, as you will see.

Spirituality?

Family?

Money?

Health?

Self?

Job?

A Few Hints on Naming Forces

- Be careful of listing inanimate objects like “home” or “car.” These objects are the result of larger forces like “money” or “financial security.”
- Try to be objective. Be careful of listing attributes that are hard to objectively define, like “love” or “sensitivity,” as forces. In naming the force “a loving relationship with a person,” call it “a relationship.” If it is “love of self,” then list “self.”
- Try to come up with a neutral, non-judging word for each factor. Don’t use terms like “the need for...” or “the lack of...” Later you can judge how strong or weak, positive or negative the force is.
- When in doubt, list the forces. If one force is a particularly strong one and yet a subset of another, list it separately. For example, “fears I have” could be grouped under a general factor called “self.” But if your fears are one of the major forces in your life, list that separately. If two factors are closely related, they will just tend to cluster when you plot your Life-Space. If you want to list family members separately, go ahead. One person even listed her “dog” as a significant force in her life, which he was.
- It is not helpful to list forces for which you have no influence, like “the stars,” or “the weather,” or “the stock market.” Try to end up with a list of 5-10 forces you can directly influence by your actions or indirectly influence by the way you think about them or the attitude you hold toward them. (Some factors, like a spouse, may seem at first like they are beyond your control. But there are actually ways to influence those factors by altering your own behavior or beliefs).

My List Of Forces

LPA GROWTHSHEET #8

Once you've got a pretty solid list of simple terms to represent your factors, look it over. Is it accurate? Is it complete? Write them here, and assign each a letter. Don't worry about the order of your list. The alphabetical letters are only used to identify them, not to rank them from high to low.

(Use as few as you like: add more letters if you need.)

A _____
B _____
C _____
D _____
E _____
F _____
G _____
H _____
I _____
J _____
K _____
L _____
M _____

If your list of forces only goes to G or H, don't worry. It's amazing how few factors are really play a major influence in our lives. Also, when we start rating these factors you might remember others you want to include. If you have more than 13 forces, see if there is a logical way to combine two or more. For example, as we discussed before, different aspects of your personality can be grouped under "self."

Form A Rating- Importance

LPA GROWTHSHEET #9

Now rewrite your factors on the rating form below.

FORCE	LESS IMPORTANT			AVERAGE IMPORTANCE						VERY IMPORTANT	
A _____	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
B _____	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
C _____	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
D _____	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
E _____	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
F _____	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
G _____	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
H _____	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
I _____	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
J _____	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
K _____	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
L _____	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
M _____	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11

All of these forces are, to some degree, important to you or they wouldn't be on your list. But some are more important and some are less important. Using a pencil, circle a number to indicate how important each force is as you move toward your life goals today.

Rating Your Forces - a suggestion

First, choose one of the most important forces on your list (a force that seems to exert the strongest influence on your life). Using a pencil (pencil is best, so you can make changes as needed) circle the number that represents how important an influence that force exerts on your life *today*. If it is the most important influence in your life, you would probably circle 10 or 11; if it is not very important, it will fall among the lower numbers. Again, say the force you list as “A. *money*” is one of the strongest influences in your life right now, you might want to rate that force by circling ‘9’, ‘10’, or ‘11’. If, however, “A. *money*” is merely part of your background circumstances, with little importance, you might rate it ‘4’ or less.

Remember, this rating is for the force as it influences you right now. Forces in your life are constantly changing; we want to capture them at this moment.

Now, go back to the top of the list and rate each force on the list. If you get confused in rating forces according to their importance, just start at the mid-point (5) and ask yourself, “how strongly does this factor influence my life?” Then, move in the “very important” (11) or “less important” (1) direction accordingly. Erase and make changes anytime to get as accurate as you can.

All the forces on your list are important but try to use the entire range of numbers from 1 to 11 to show their relative importance.

Now... On to Rating Form B

First, copy your list of forces on Form B below, exactly as you list them on Form A. Be sure that the same force on Form B is written next to the same letter as it is on Form A.

Next you will be asked to rate each force according to how 'positive/contributing' or 'negative/non-contributing' the factor is today in your effort to move ahead toward your life goals, your bliss. When you begin, pick a force that has a very high positive influence on supporting your efforts to live a life that moves you in a direction toward achieving your life goals. Then go through and rate all other forces trying to use all the scale from '1' to '11'. After you have circled one or two factors you may decide to adjust/change the numbers you circled. Erase and change any of the circled ratings. Using all the numbers from '1' to '11', reflect how each force is positive/contributing or negative/non-contributing in your effort to live your life goals.

Form B Rating- Affect

LPA GROWTHSHEET #10

Below, use a pencil and circle a number to rate each force on how positive/-contributing it is in your life today. If the force is 'very negative/non-contributing', circle a '1' or '2'. If it is 'very positive/contributes in all ways', circle a '10' or '11'. Try to use all the numbers from '1' to '11' when you rate your forces.

FORCE	VERY NEGATIVE DOES NOT ALWAYS CONTRIBUTE			NEUTRAL NEITHER VERY NEGATIVE NOR VERY POSITIVE				VERY POSITIVE CONTRIBUTES IN ALL WAYS			
A _____	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
B _____	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
C _____	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
D _____	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
E _____	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
F _____	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
G _____	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
H _____	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
I _____	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
J _____	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
K _____	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
L _____	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
M _____	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11

Review your ratings, change any to reflect your true feelings on how positive the force is today.

Some forces are easily rated along this scale; others are less clear-cut. “Money” would be easy to rate if you were desperately broke or had just come into an unexpected windfall. “Job” would be easy to rate if it were extremely rewarding, enjoyable, and lucrative, or if it were an ill-paying, oppressive, unsatisfying nightmare. But most forces fall somewhere in the middle.

For example, let’s say the force you rated most important on Form A was “self.” When you rate “self” on Form B (very negative to very positive) scale, you might have to stop and consider: If you were very comfortable with who you were, always felt good about yourself, and consistently dealt successfully with your fears or imperfections, you would rate “self” by circling a higher number(‘9’, ‘10’, or ‘11’). If, on the other hand, if you had many doubts about yourself, sometimes got severely depressed, and were not at peace with who you were, you would rate “self” toward the lower numbers ‘1’, ‘2’, or ‘3’. If you felt you have grown a lot in working on yourself, but still had things to work on, you might rate “self” in the middle.

After rating the first force, go back and repeat the process for the others on your list. As you rate them, you might want to change some to get the right relationships between them. Take your time doing this.

After all your forces are rated, we’re ready to construct your Life-Space.

Before we transfer your ratings on Form A and Form B, it will be easier to have those separate ratings on one sheet. This intermediate step isn’t totally necessary, but it will simplify the procedure. So, just do it!

Form C Rating- Summary Sheet

LPA GROWTHSHEET #11

On Form C, below, again list your set of forces as you did on Form A and Form B. Then, write in the two separate ratings (numbers) you circled for each force. For example, if force "A (money)" was rated a '5' on Form A and a '3' on Form B, write those two numbers, 5 and 3, on the summary sheet.

FORCE	FORM A IMPORTANCE RATING	FORM B POSITIVE/NEGATIVE RATING
A _____	_____	_____
B _____	_____	_____
C _____	_____	_____
D _____	_____	_____
E _____	_____	_____
F _____	_____	_____
G _____	_____	_____
H _____	_____	_____
I _____	_____	_____
J _____	_____	_____
K _____	_____	_____
L _____	_____	_____
M _____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Now, let's plot your forces on a Life-Space Chart. Remember in Algebra class when you had to plot two scores on a grid? Thought you'd never use that knowledge? Here it is! If you didn't take Algebra or have no idea of the process, the directions below will help you walk through the process. It's straight forward and can be fun.

Constructing a Life-Space Chart

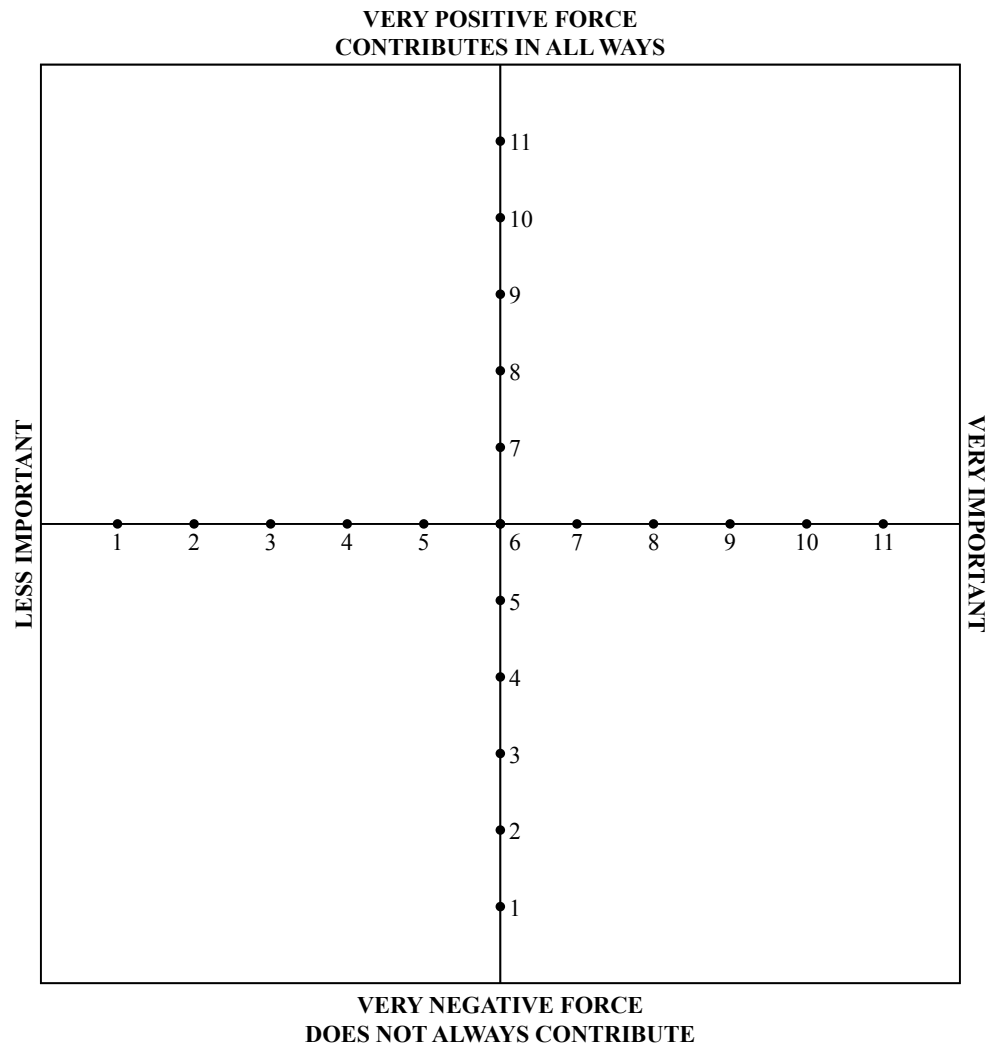
You can use the chart already drawn on page 99. If you do, be sure to write small! Or, on the largest sheet of paper you can find (ideally the size of a chart pad), draw the largest square possible, leaving just enough margin along the sides to label the dimensions. If you use a large (27"x 34") chart pad, your square can be 22"x 22". This square will become your Life-Space Chart.

Using a pencil and a ruler, draw in a line dividing your square in half horizontally. Number the line from 1 - 11, with the number 1 being the far left, 6 in the middle, and 11 on the far right side of the square (see example on next page).

This horizontal axis will represent the *Importance* value of each factor. Label the two sides of the square to remind you of their meaning: "*not important*" on the left and "*very important*" on the right.

Now, draw a vertical line dividing the square in half. Again, number the line from 1 - 11 where 1 is at the bottom and 11 at the top. You can label the top and bottom of the square to remember what they stand for: "*very positive/very supportive*" at the top and "*very negative/unsupportive*" at the bottom. Now, plot your life forces.

Look at your list of forces on the *Form C Rating Summary Sheet* and the rating numbers you have determined for each force. Look at the first force on your list. Find the number of its *Importance* rating and locate that number on the horizontal line. Lightly write the letter of the force on that number



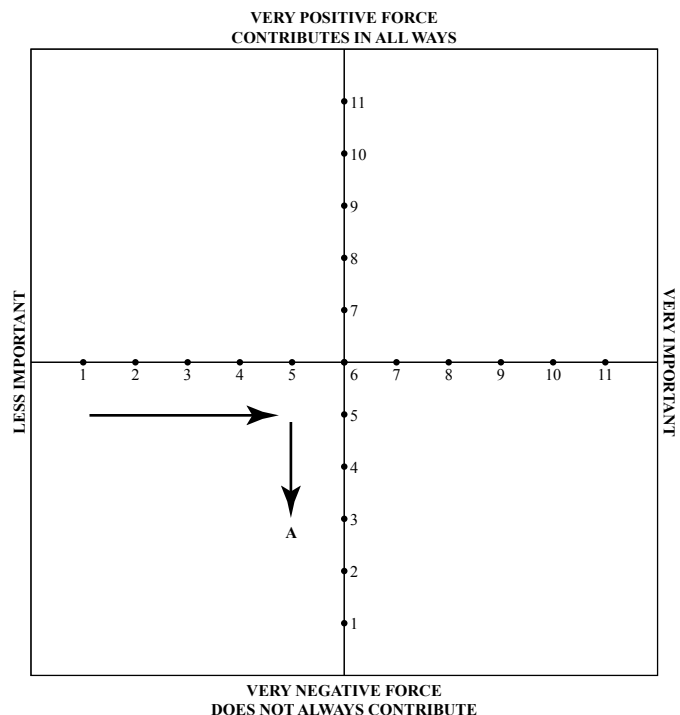
Next, find how you rated that force on the *very positive/very negative* vertical line of your Life-Space Chart. Lightly write the letter of the force at that point (this is also a guide letter, to be erased). Now draw lines from the two letters to find the point on the Life-Space where the two ratings intersect. At the intersection point, write the letter of the force. After you find the intersection point, you can erase the guide letters you wrote on the horizontal and vertical lines.

After you have completed that step for the first force, repeat it for each force on your list. If this feels complicated, take it slowly. Some people are graph-oriented, others aren't. Some people have cowlicks; others don't. Here's a step-by-step example with pictures that might help.

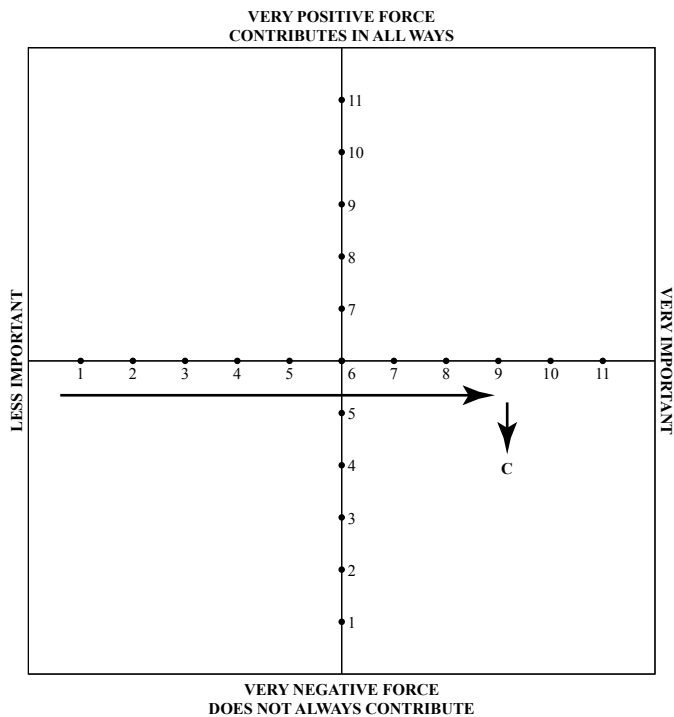
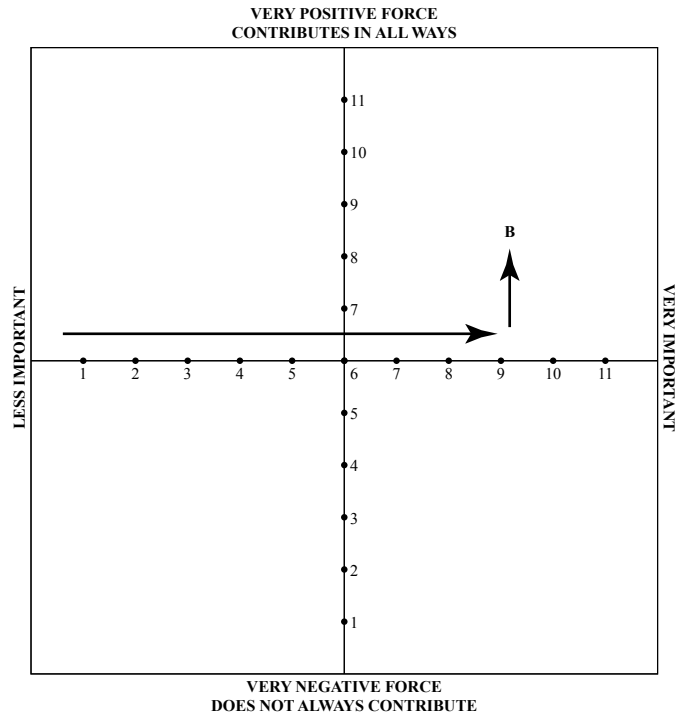
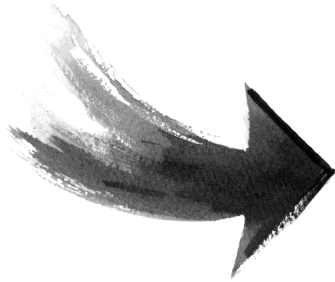
Say you have rated the forces below...

FORCE	FORM A IMPORTANCE RATING	FORM B NEGATIVE/POSITIVE RATING
A <u>Money</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>3</u>
B <u>Self</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>8</u>
C <u>Job</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>4</u>

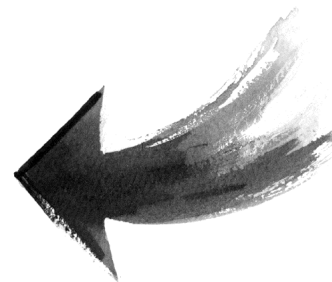
So you rated force A. *money* '5' on Importance and '3' on very negative/very positive. To locate "A. *money*" on your Life-Space Chart, you would go over to 5 on the horizontal (Importance) line then go down to level 3 on the vertical (very negative/very positive) vertical line like this:



And to plot “self” (B)
you would go all the way to
10 on the horizontal
(importance) axis, then go
up 8 like this:

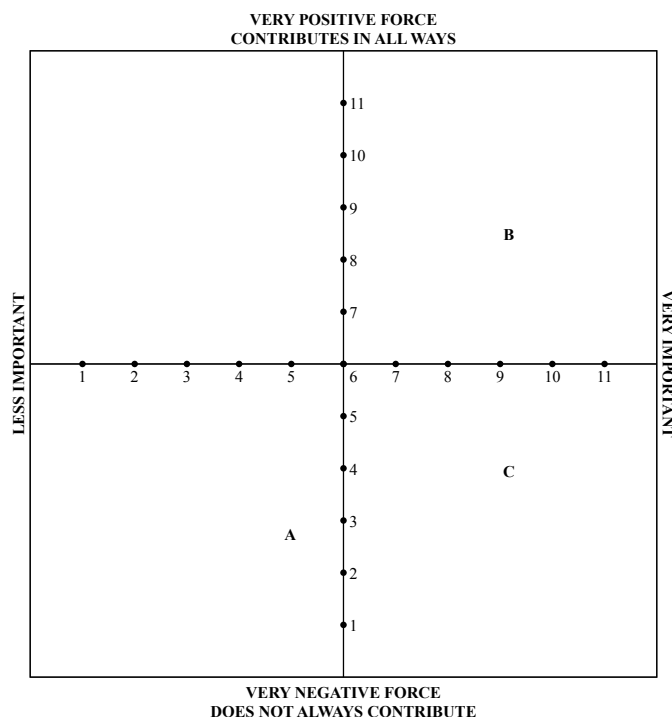


To locate force “job”
(C) you would go to 9, then
down to 4.



After you had plotted these three forces, your Life-Space would look like this:

Now, it's time for you to chart your own forces, one at a time.



By now, you should have plotted each force vertically and horizontally, circled them and written their names next to their locations. You should have erased the lightly penciled-in guide letters on the horizontal and vertical lines if you needed to use them.

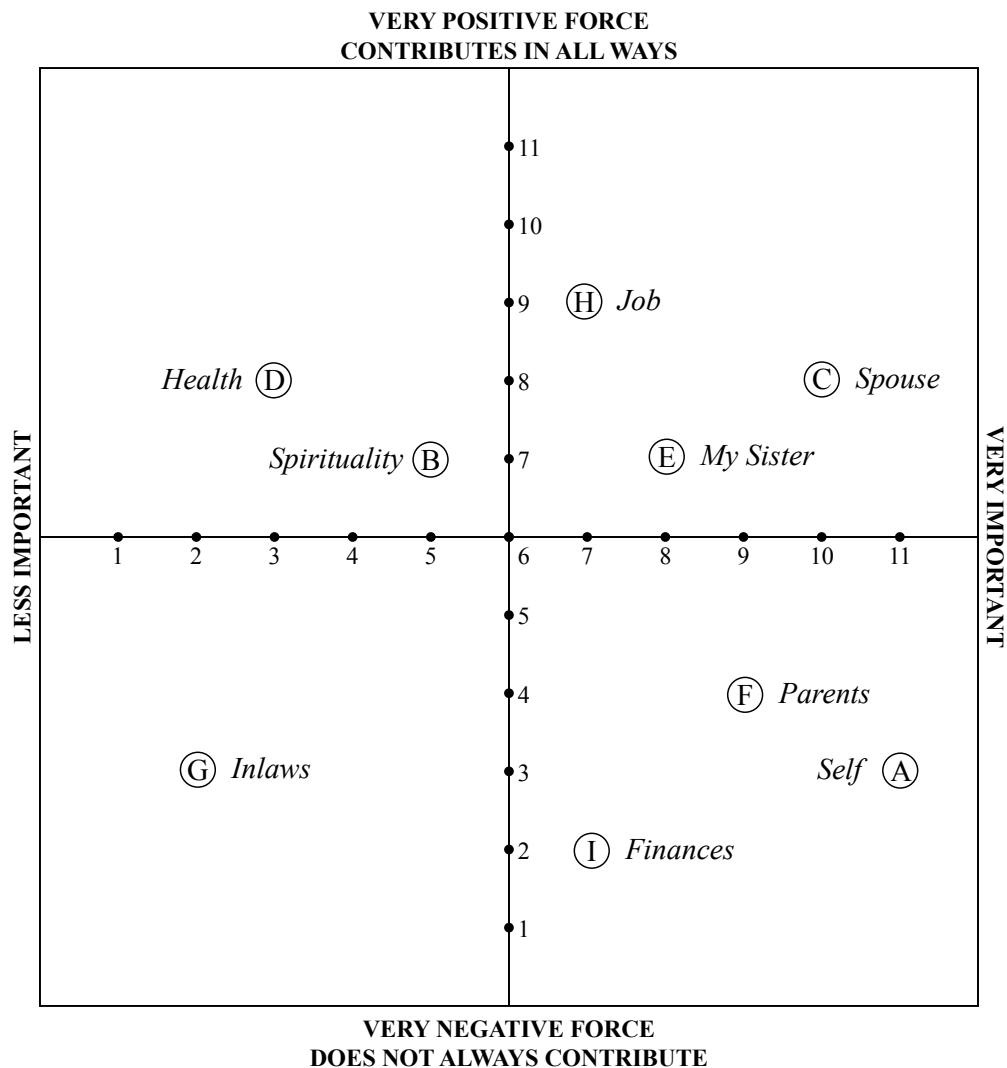
Stand back and take a look. Do the factors relate to each other accurately (is your “father” really less important to you than your “job,” etc.)? If you’re satisfied with how you positioned your list of forces on the chart, take a colorful pen and ink in the letters of the forces. This Life-Space Chart now represents the factors in your life as they operate, at this moment.

As you plot one factor, you may decide to change the location of a factor you have already plotted. For example, some people are quick to put the force “A. money” at the highest rating (Very Important). When next they rate “self” or “spirituality” or “family,” they quickly are aware that those factors are more important than “money.” Others may keep “money” in the most important position and that’s OK if they feel that way. Remember there are no correct or incorrect ratings. Your ratings and

Life-Space Chart will be as unique as you are. We've facilitated over 300 charts and no two are the same. It's why this approach is unique and valid. You are unique and the forces you identified and plotted are uniquely you at this time in your life!

When you finish, look at the rankings as a whole. Make sure the overall relationship of forces feels right to you; that the *most important forces* are toward the right hand side and the *most positive, supporting forces are toward the top*. Adjust as you like so the positions of forces make sense to you.

Here's Mary's complete Life-Space Chart that shows the forces that influence her the day that she plotted her forces.



Mary rated “*self*”(A) as being very important but relatively low on the very negative/very positive dimension. Her *spouse* (C), on the other hand, is rated a ‘Important’ and ‘positive’ support in her life. Mary located *Spirituality* (B) in the middle, not too important nor too positive. ‘*Finances*’ (I) is rated low and, her “*Parents*” (F) are located near “*self*,” and suggests that she receives a low degree of support from them as she works to live her life goals. *Force G* (*in-laws*) was rated as the least important force. She feels relatively positive about her “*job*” (H) and her “*health*” (D).

Take a minute or two to “see” where you are today. What does your Chart tell you about yourself? What forces are important and positive?. Which ones aren’t? Write two or three of your insights:

My Life-Space Chart shows that today I:

You've just constructed your existing Life-Space. Good work! No simple task! It may not have told you what you what you didn't already know or feel. For some people it reveals a lot. It did, however, lay the groundwork and provided a sort of benchmark for your work to live more consistent with and move closer to your life goals.

The best is yet to come, but take a nice, deserved break here.

Chapter

8

Charting a Course

*“Just live your bliss and
don’t worry.
Wonderful things, that
you can’t possibly
imagine, will happen
to you.”*

JOSEPH CAMPBELL

By itself the Life-Space Chart is a novelty, an interesting construct, but so what? How do we turn it into a useful tool to help us move toward our life goals, and live live our daily lives closer to our true self?

After taking a breather, go back to your Life-Space Chart. Now that you’re such a whiz at this charting business, let’s not waste that expertise. You charted the ‘*actual*’ position of how the forces operate today. Let’s chart another dimension, the ‘*ideal*’ location for each force, of *how you would like the force to influence your life*.

This time, imagine if your life is just the way you want it to be, with each force on your list contributing totally toward attaining your life visions and goals. If, like

magic you could change the position of each force.

Each force would have an ‘ideal’ position. With all the forces in this “ideal’ position you would be living your bliss, would be achieving many of your life goals. You would, so to speak, be true to yourself.

We’re now ready to plot each of your forces in its ideal location on your Life-Space Chart.

*Happiness
is not about
having what
we want,
but wanting
what we have.*

Locating where the factors would be if you were accomplishing many of you life goals and were living closer to your your true self...

Choose a particular force. If you had made super progress to living your bliss and accomplishing many of your life goals, would it be more important or less important than it is today? For example, ‘*Money*’ might become less important if a person became more financially secure and finances required less attention; a ‘*spouse*’ might ideally become more positive as a more enduring relationship were fostered.

You may want to have forces like ‘*self*’ and ‘*spirituality*’, in the upper right-hand corner of the chart. This location represents the highest level of importance, and highest positive degree of support – one person called this upper right hand corner his “bliss box.”

Before you position your forces as you ideally want them, we want to share some thoughts with you.

Much of our uneasiness and discomfort in life comes from a feeling that we aren’t moving ahead or aren’t moving fast enough, or aren’t achieving any of our goals, even though the pace of our daily life feels like it’s speeding. Many of us feel like we are on a treadmill, trying to get somewhere with the treadmill increasing in speed. “Stop the world, I want to get off” seems to be a more common cry. What we go through to look correct, to be seen at the correct social functions, and to amass the most things and achieve financial independence is taking its toll. Our leisure time has decreased and the increase of stress in our lives can be sky-rocketing.

In his book, *Going Nowhere Fast*, Kinder talks about the dilemma of today’s treadmills and writes: “*We are blindly and dangerously pursuing happiness without, perhaps, understanding what that is. Happiness is not about having what we want, but wanting what we have.*”

Kinder talks about goals we set and our frantic pace to reach them. Goals that we set for external reasons – to meet the requirements of the job, or expectations laid on by parents, or just to keep up with the Joneses.

The problem, Kinder states, “*is that nobody tells you to consult with yourself before you decide on these new goals. Most of us just latch on to whatever seems trendy or appropriate at the moment.*”

So, when you reposition your forces (again, using a pencil), try to visualize where they would be if you were totally happy. If you had peace of mind. If you were living your ‘true self’ every day of your life, not just meeting others’ expectations. It may mean that some of the forces would stay exactly where they are. It may mean that those forces closest to you like ‘*self*’, ‘*spirituality*’, and ‘*family*’ would be squeezed together in the “most important, “most positive” portion of your chart.

Now, be daring, and reposition each force where it would be if you were completely happy; if all your dreams, wishes, and life goals came true.

Don’t rush, but do trust your instincts. After you’re finished, review how the *ideal* location of forces relate to each other and adjust them as you need.

When the forces all seem to be in their right ‘*ideal*’ place, ink them in (use a different color ink from the color you used when you first located the forces as they operate today). By placing a square around the forces in their *ideal* positions it’s easier

*“Life is either
a daring adventure
or nothing.”*

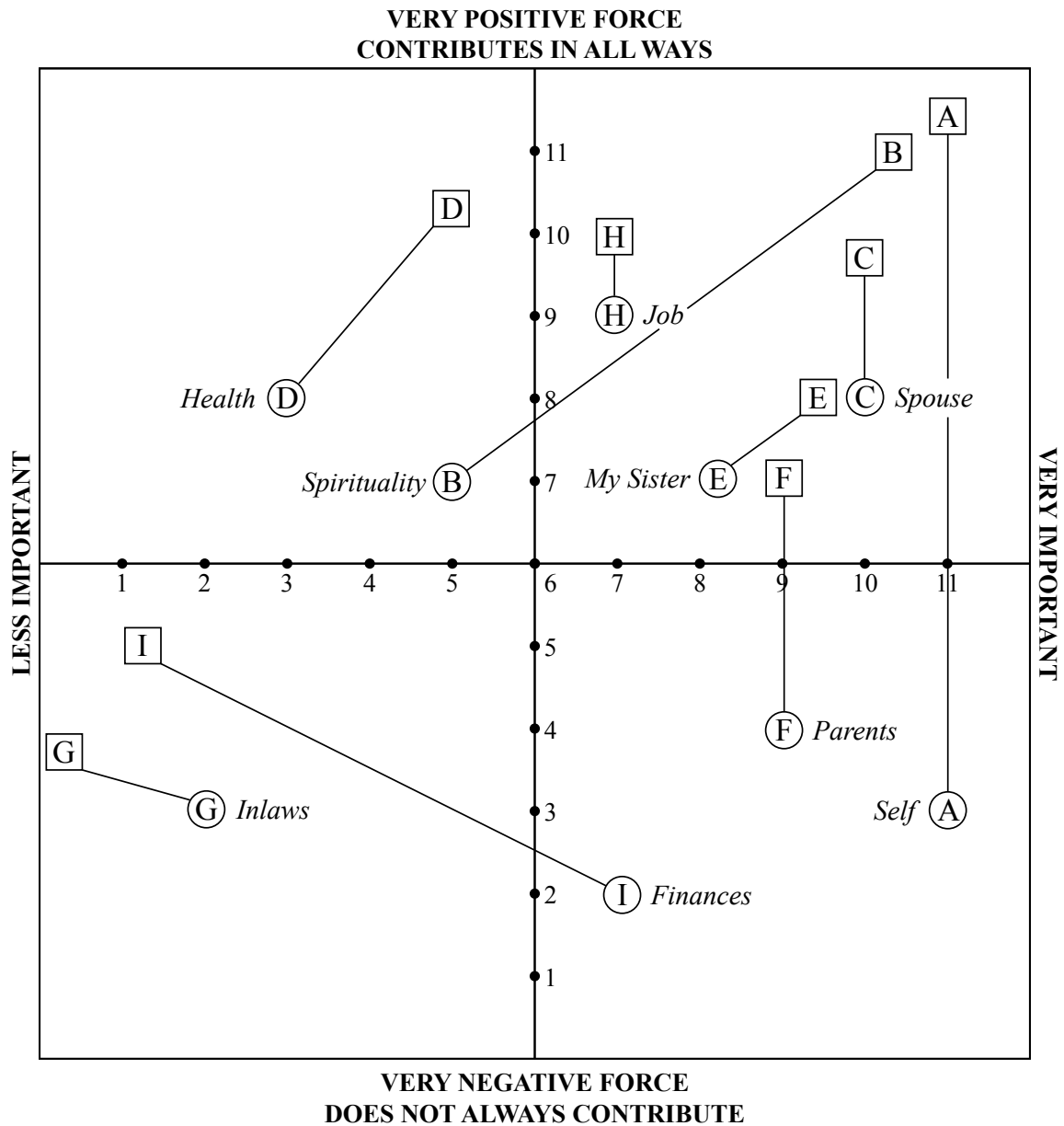
HELEN KELLER

to identify them as *ideal*. And drawing a line to connect the two locations of each force (*actual* and *ideal*) brings another important aspect into play: The *difference* between the two locations on the Chart. Or put in another way, the length of the line shows the *difference* or *disparity* of the force.

By the time you do this for each force, your Life-Space Chart should begin to look like a navigation

document for the Star Ship Enterprise.

Let's go back to Mary's Life-Space Chart we presented as an example. Below is how Mary located the 'ideal' position of her forces.



Notice what Mary wants to happen in her life.

And focus, for a minute, on the length of the lines in Mary's Life-Space Chart. The distance between today's position of forces (circles) and ideal positions (squares) is seen as congruence and discrepancy. In Mary's life, there is very little discrepancy for *H-job* and *C-spouse* and relatively low discrepancy for *D-health*, *E-sister*, and *G-in laws*. These are areas that seem to be working for Mary. She wants some change, but it's not dramatic. The biggest changes that would allow Mary to live closer to her true self are with respect to *A -self*, *B-spirituality*, and *I-finances*.

Another observation about Mary's Life-Space is the actual and ideal positions of *I-finances* and *G-in laws*. Mary's finances need help. But as she becomes more successful in her earnings and budgeting, she feels that her finances will become less important in her life. With regard to her *G-in laws*, Mary wants a slightly more positive relationship with them, but ideally sees them as having less importance in her life. When asked, Mary described her in-laws as "very confused and into themselves." She said that: "when they come over to visit, they find all kinds of faults with how her husband treats her and seems to be jealous of how well they get along."

We can analyze Mary's chart ad nauseam and maybe send her some suggestions on what to work on. But the most value for Mary would be for her to interpret her own Life-Space Chart. Self-evaluation is generally the most powerful form of evaluation.

Interpreting Your Life-Space Chart

LPA GROWTHSHEET #13

You now have a pictorial representation of your life situation, and have spent time “reading” what messages it’s sending to you. It can be used like an X-ray of your mind and an MRI of your aspirations. Most important, by interpreting this representative chart, you interject some degree of objectivity into your assessment of your own life. Also, you are the best one to understand yourself. But don’t be too critical of yourself and your present situation. Be gentle with yourself, smile, be a bit joyous and use the chart to help you understand where you are and where you want to grow.

Here are some prompting questions to help you draw conclusions from your Life-Space Chart. Try to be specific in your statements.

My Life-Space tells me: _____

Which forces have small discrepancy lines, indicating you are not so far from your ideal? Yea! Take a moment to affirm these positive aspects of your life. Come back to celebrate them later when you need a picker-upper or want to affirm how far you’ve come already.

LPA GROWTHSHEET #13a

Which forces have longer discrepancy lines, indicating a clarion call for change and growth?

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Which forces seem to be the most meaningful and important to you?

_____	_____
_____	_____

Which forces seem to have the least importance?

_____	_____
_____	_____

What conclusions do you draw from the relationships of the forces in your life? Do some forces cluster together? Are there any aspects of the Life-Space chart that surprise you?

By now, you probably have a clearer vision of what you want in your life, an idea of where you are today in relation to that clearer vision, and several areas you need to work on.

Altogether, this forms the skeleton for your life's journey. Now let's add the muscle, ligaments, and grist to get you moving.

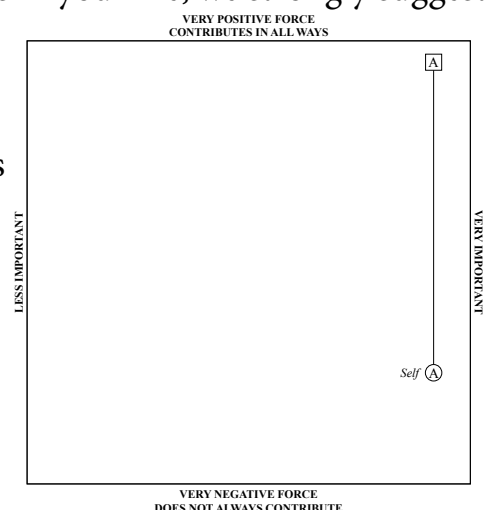
The Critical Difference Technique

Now we want to bring all this theoretical work back into the everyday world and design some small, realistic, but empowering actions to get you moving in a positive direction.

Let's apply the Critical Difference Technique to Mary's work. Based on her interpretation of her own Life-Space Chart, Mary chose to work on force *A-self*. Her choice was a good one. It has a long discrepancy line and any action she decides to take on 'self' will have immediate results. If, for example, Mary chose to work on 'family' or 'in-laws', her actions would be limited, to a large extent, to her attitude and disposition toward those forces. It would be unrealistic to expect her actions to significantly and quickly change others.

More important, in all the reading we have done and with the knowledge we've gained in working with people, 'self' and 'spirituality' (or some notion of the 'power in the universe' however it is defined or named) seem to surface as the cornerstone forces to self-renewal, peace of mind, true happiness and self-realization. So, if either of these forces show "moderate" to "high" discrepancy on your Life-Space Chart, or if either is not rated as one of the most important forces in your life, we strongly suggest you pick one of these two forces.

This is our observation and suggestion. But it's your choice. Work with any force you want that is very important and has a very long discrepancy line. Now, we will show you how to use the "*critical difference technique*" to help you sort out where you are now with the force you choose: how to shorten the discrepancy line and move toward the 'ideal'.



Mary identified to work on force *A-self*. We asked Mary to quickly write words or phrases that depict how the force '*self*' feels as it operates today in the left-hand column of Growthsheet #14. We asked her to include words that describe feelings, physical or emotional, also to use colors, emotions, attitudes, or relationship descriptors, whatever words describe what the factor feels like *today*.

LPA GROWTHSHEET#14	
Actual & Ideal Descriptors Force: <u>Self</u>	
ACTUAL: HOW I FEEL ABOUT THIS FORCE TODAY	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>dull</i>• <i>ugly</i>• <i>unhappy, sad</i>• <i>stupid</i>• <i>murky (all colors mixed up)</i>• <i>depressed</i>• <i>slow</i>	

Here's another example of what words another person who was working on the force "health" generated:

LPA GROWTHSHEET#14	
Actual & Ideal Descriptors Force: <u>Health</u>	
ACTUAL: HOW I FEEL ABOUT THIS FORCE TODAY	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>sluggish</i>• <i>tired</i>• <i>sickly</i>• <i>overweight</i>• <i>not alert</i>• <i>dull</i>• <i>grey</i>	

On the space to the right of the growthsheet, we asked Mary to envision herself in the future when force 'Self' is 'ideal'. We asked her to stay with that vision and generate words or phrases that reflected that "ideal" state. Here are the "ideal" words that Mary generated on.

LPA GROWTHSHEET#14	
Actual & Ideal Descriptors Force: <u>Self</u>	
ACTUAL: HOW I FEEL ABOUT THIS FORCE TODAY	IDEAL: HOW I WOULD FEEL IDEALLY
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>dull</i>• <i>ugly</i>• <i>unhappy, sad</i>• <i>stupid</i>• <i>murky (all colors mixed up)</i>• <i>depressed</i>• <i>slow</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>grounded</i>• <i>happy, joyous</i>• <i>self-assured, purposeful</i>• <i>yellow</i>• <i>willing to risk</i>• <i>warm inside</i>• <i>energized</i>• <i>beautiful</i>

And here's the 'Ideal' words generated by the man working on 'Health':

LPA GROWTHSHEET#14	
Actual & Ideal Descriptors Force: <u>Health</u>	
ACTUAL: HOW I FEEL ABOUT THIS FORCE TODAY	IDEAL: HOW I WOULD FEEL IDEALLY
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>sluggish</i>• <i>tired</i>• <i>sickly</i>• <i>overweight</i>• <i>not alert</i>• <i>dull</i>• <i>grey</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>spirited</i>• <i>slim</i>• <i>healthy</i>• <i>alert, sharp</i>• <i>happy</i>• <i>clean and attractive</i>• <i>bright orange</i>

Determining the Critical Differences:

Looking at the two sets of words Mary generated on Growthsheet #14, we asked her to come up with a topic or area that differentiates the two sets of words. That's the critical difference. One area was 'How she feels', another is 'Color', a third might be called 'How she views herself'.

For the man working on the force 'Health', the areas or topics that differentiate his two sets of words might be labeled 'How he looks', and another would be 'His physical body' (from his words 'Overweight' and 'Slim'). And like Mary "Color" is another critical difference between the mans actual and ideal set of words.

Note: Looking for 'Critical Differences' between a person's current state of living as expressed in words or ideas and his or her ideal way to live as expresses by a different set of words is a step in the Life-Planning process that Nick inserted as a 'situational analysis' technique to help define 'categories' of activities that can to be

considered in the change process. For Mary one ‘category’ for change in her life might be labeled ‘Building Self-esteem’ another ‘Risk taking’. For the gentleman working on ‘health’ two categories might be ‘Exercise’ and ‘Diet’. Nick took the idea from his work studying and using the Critical Incident Technique discussed by Flanders and others as a way to differentiate and understand individual and group behavior and behavior change. If this topic interests you refer to the topic in Wikipedia or reference the work of John C. Flanagan.

Back to you, the reader. Look at the empty Growthsheet #14 below.

Now, please do the same thing Mary did. First, choose one of the forces which shows much room for change (a long discrepancy line). Also, try to choose one you feel you can control easily. (You can actually effect a strong influence on how every force works in your life, even seemingly unchangeable factors like other people, or undefined influences like “spirituality”; but let’s start with an easy one and build up confidence and momentum first. Remember, too, that all these forces are linked together in you and as you make positive changes in one aspect of your life, it has an effect on all of the other forces in your life. It really doesn’t matter how you ‘title’ or what you ‘name’ the critical differences. Any ‘name’ or ‘title’ that puts you in the ballpark of what to work on works!

Put yourself in the ‘now’ and think about how you feel about how this force is affecting you. What do you feel? What colors do you see? What words would you use to describe it? Write these words, phrases or ideas in the left hand space on Growthsheet #14. Now, as Mary did, think a bit of how you would feel if this force totally supported you in your quest for living on a path toward your life goals. What words or phrases would you use to describe the feeling? What colors do you see? Write these words in the right side of Growthsheet #14.

LPA GROWTHSHEET #14

Just let the words and ideas flow like a deluge of water. On the left write words to reflect feelings for the “actual” influence of the force today. Then close your eyes and put yourself in an “ideal” state with regard to the force. Let it all hang out, dream a bit then write some in the right side.

Actual & Ideal Descriptors

Force: _____

ACTUAL: HOW I FEEL ABOUT
THIS FORCE TODAY

IDEAL: HOW I WOULD
FEEL IDEALLY

Brainstorming... and Doing Something

So far, you have constructed and interpreted your Life-Space Chart and noted some discrepancies between where you are today and where you want to be. So what? Ahhh, actually you've accomplished a milestone! You have located the seeds of your discontent, grabbed hold of the tag chafing your neck, found the scoundrel cat that keeps despoiling your sand box. Now to repair the situation.

You have also identified two "states of being" for a particular force – its "actual" state and an "ideal" state. To some extent that ideal state is familiar to you; see, you can use words to describe it, you can also imagine it. Now, let's use your mind and brainstorm all the activities you could possibly undertake to take small steps to approach it. Feel free to list everything that comes to your mind. Think of yourself as a popcorn machine full of kernels, heating up, exploding with ideas.

The client who was working with his force ,*'health'*, listed these possible activities:

For Exercise I Could:

- walk the stairs to work
- ride a bike, swim, run or pump iron
- get pictures of me doing various activities and meditate on them.

For Diet I Could:

- read a book on nutrition
- cut out drinking alcohol
- eat healthier food, cut out snacks, cut down on eating meat, give up desserts
- laugh more



Mary came up with all kinds of activities she *could* do to move toward her “ideal” place with regard to ‘self’.

*What I Can Do
To Move Toward My “Ideal”
for the Force: Self*

- make a list of my strengths and accomplishments
- place cards around the house extolling my positive qualities
- attend a workshop on building positive esteem
- read literature on the subject
- talk with or visit a good, supportive friend when I feel down
- work on the topic with my therapist
- do something that makes me feel worthy – like volunteer at a soup kitchen
- wear my favorite colors
- get my hair done
- meditate on the purpose of life and how I fit in
- write a letter to a close friend
- take a walk and just be in the moment

Above, Mary and the Man have listed things they *CAN* do. The active word is ‘CAN’. Do some brainstorming and on Growthsheet #15 list some things you CAN do.

What Can I Do...

LPA GROWTHSHEET #15

Now, looking at your priority factor and thinking about the “ideal” state you envisioned, you answer the question.

There are specific things I can do to move closed to the ideal, to take one small step, to head down the yellow brick road, to light up my life, to continue the self-renewal process I started when I began this _____ (use adjectives like ‘wondrous’...here) process.

Things I Can Do: To Move Factor () Toward the Ideal

This step in the Life-Planning Approach should be enjoyable and open. “Gee, I forgot I could do that!” “Doing that would be fun.” “Well, I’ll be... I’m already doing some of that.”

Come on! Really let your mind bubble over with ideas. This is a good time to involve a friend to help your brainstorm. Sometimes our close friends can really help us move closer to our true selves. Don’t forget that we are on this life path with others. No one person is an island!

The Nitty Gritty

Time for action, to make some tracks. Now you've got a list of what you *CAN* do to move your priority force in the right direction. Now for the Action Plan – identifying what you *WILL* do; the first step toward the rest of your life.

Your brainstorming list is your starting point. Of the actions you've listed there, what are some specific steps you are willing to do during the next two weeks? Be realistic rather than overly ambitious. Sure, you want to get the ball rolling. But go easy (“chill out!”); build realism and success into your Action Plan, so you actually complete it and continue with confidence and satisfaction. List small activities well within your reach, and commit only for a two-week period. Also, include activities you are already doing, so you can celebrate them as well.

In filling out the Action Plan, be specific. For each activity, state how many times or how often you will do it, and when. It's not “I'll look for a book,” but “I'll go to Keepler's Bookstore on September 3rd and purchase a book on the topic...”

After listing all the activities you will do, end your list with a celebration activity that fits with and affirms your goals (i.e. don't inhale a two-pound bag of M&Ms to celebrate two weeks of a healthy diet; maybe bring a loved one to a favorite healthy restaurant instead). This celebration can be anything from buying yourself a book, to going skiing, to getting a new hair style. If your Action Plan includes a landmark activity (such as a tough heart-to-heart talk with a loved one, or a major decision about your job or career), you may want to build in a major celebration after that specific activity, like taking a vacation to “clear the air” or watching the sunset.

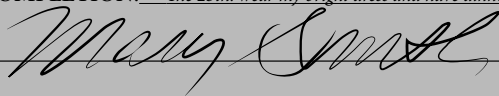
Here's Mary's Action Plan to work on 'self'. She will start on the 12th of the month and this Action Plan will end two weeks later on the 25th. The she'll take a break and do another one for the next month.

Action Plan For: Self

LPA GROWTHSHEET#16

Activity I <u>Will</u> Do	Date Begun and/or Completed By:
<u>Get my hair done</u>	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31
<u>Walk and be in the moment 3 times</u>	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31
<u>List my strengths & accomplishments</u>	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31
<u>Write Beth (strengths & accomplishments)</u>	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31
<u>Focus on :self" with therapist</u>	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31
<u>Meditate on self</u>	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31

HOW I WILL CELEBRATE COMPLETION: The 25th: wear my bright dress and have dinner with Bob

YOUR SIGNATURE: 

Mary's going to start working on "self" by doing something for herself (getting her hair done). Then, between the 12th and 25th, she will take at least three short walks and make a sincere effort to "be in the moment." Between the 14th and 23rd, she will come up with a list of her strengths and accomplishments and share them in a letter to Beth. Mary already has appointments with a therapist on the 15th and 23rd and she'll use those sessions to focus on "self-development." Mary also meditates two or three times a week and she will use that time to reflect on her true self and to "understand her purpose in life."

Mary plans to celebrate the completion of her Action Plan by taking her friend and confidant Bob to dinner at her favorite restaurant, Joseph's; and she'll wear that dynamo dress.

Looks simple and inviting! Right? Your Action Plan should be do-able and easy. It's designed to acknowledge what you may be already doing and to push you a little bit further in a direction you may already be heading. (And perhaps give you a reason to get back to your favorite restaurant!)

You can now go back to create Action Plans for each of the primary factors you want to address. Remember – keep your plans realistic.

Again, your Action Plan may seem simple, almost anti-climactic. Not so. Remember, you are taking the first steps to give positive direction to your life. You have already taken a major step by getting this far. The activities listed, if you complete them, will lead you incrementally toward your bliss and your true self. Knowing that, and succeeding in the first small steps, you can then build on that success and move ahead ever more boldly and confidently.

By creating Action Plans, you can also easily measure and celebrate your accomplishments. Keep them for reference; a friend of ours looked at hers after a year and was astounded at how far on her journey she had progressed. Often we are so critical and guilt-ridden about what we haven't done, we fail to give ourselves credit for what we have accomplished. The Action Plan replaces such nebulous, destructive self-criticism with a healthy, vision-oriented technique for self-assessment.

We've included an extra Action Plan Growthsheet so you can make copies.

In the beginning of this book we mentioned that the LPA is not an attempt to have you 'peel your onion' to identify or solve deep-seeded psychological problems you may have. Also, the LPA is not designed to address or solve problems of a critical nature in your life that, if not attended to, may have serious consequences. If such problems or situations exist or have surfaced, we highly suggest that you make a separate Action Plan to address them directly by scheduling a meeting with a psychologist or other appropriate professional, or professional organization. And we send you our wishes and caring that those issues get resolved.

Action Plan for: _____

LPA GROWTHSHEET #16

ACTIVITY I WILL DO

DATE BEGUN AND/OR COMPLETED BY

_____	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31
_____	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31
_____	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31
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_____	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31
_____	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31
_____	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31
_____	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31
_____	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31
_____	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31
_____	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31

How I will Celebrate Completion: _____

Your signature: _____

Action Plan for: _____

LPA GROWTHSHEET #16

ACTIVITY I WILL DO

DATE BEGUN AND/OR COMPLETED BY

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31

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1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31

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1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31

How I will Celebrate Completion: _____

Your signature: _____

Chapter

9

Final Thoughts: Don't Stop Now...

*"He not busy being
born is busy dying."*

BOB DYLAN

We started this book with some fairly lofty ideas about honoring our yearnings for specialness, fulfillment, and self-actualization. But you finished the LPA with a piece of paper containing such uninspiring items as, "Eat low-fat yogurt instead of Haagen-Dazs on Tuesdays and Thursdays." Did something get lost in the translation?

True, such earth-bound activities may seem a terribly unpoetic beginning for such a noble quest as self-actualization and moving toward your life goals. But starting off on the earth is precisely the point. Remember, the tiniest achieved step is more valuable than the loftiest unachieved ideals. We told you that the LPA approach is not a 'quick fix'.

Now that you've completed the LPA process and have your obligatory sheaf of papers and two-week self-assignments, let's revisit our original ideas and reaffirm the importance of your journey.

First, a little reminder. Society and its various spokespeople may not be the heartiest cheerleaders on your path. As Sam Keen put it in *Fire in the Belly*, the world basically has two kinds of people in it – *pilgrims* and *homesteads*. Pilgrims explore and seek; homesteaders maintain civilization and uphold its values and standards. Society is of, by, and for the homesteader-types. The pilgrims may lead a civilization

into the future, but it's the homesteaders you'll see modestly accepting the gold watches.

But the world's getting a little tougher for homesteaders. Political, environmental, economic, and gender-role upheavals are downright unsettling. While some values are being reaffirmed as constants - - family, trust, honesty - - plenty of others are being unveiled as simply not worth the protectionism society has invested in them. The crumbling of the USSR's "evil empire" mocks our war obsessiveness. The men's movement encourages men to no longer think of themselves as fodder for war or commodities whose value derives from money earned or goods produced. Women, for so long regarded as support systems for others, are beginning to reclaim their own strength, freedom, and value. The earth itself has begun demanding that humans reassess their domineering attitudes and wanton consumption of the planet's resources.

Keen writes, *"In untroubled times, only extraordinary men and women radically question the consensus reality. However, in troubled times the number of people thrown into psychological turmoil and radical questioning increases. And that, of course, is our present condition..."*

We are entering the era of pilgrims, the ones forging new paths for themselves and for a shaken up world that is changing, let's hope for the better.

Hopefully, the LPA has helped stir in you some spirit of the pilgrim, despite the fact you've probably, to some extent, been praised, manipulated, and pounded into being a homesteader most of your life.

"Once a vision is clear, processes organically form which lead to the accomplishment of that vision."

ROBERT FRITZ

By doing the LPA process, you have acknowledged and honored your own life

vision, as opposed to society's script for you. You have written down what you want your life to become, which is, in itself, a powerful first step in attaining it.

Robert Fritz, in *The Path of Least Resistance*, wrote, “*Once a vision is clear, processes organically form which lead to the accomplishment of that vision. This means that, in the creative orientation, process is invented along the way.*”

How do you follow up on that powerful first step? First, acknowledge it. Look over the words, phrases, images, and overall vision you have created on paper through the LPA process. Does anything surprise you? Does anything scare you? Good – if it doesn't make you a little jittery, you're probably not reaching far enough. Does it make you proud? It should.

Next step: Draw a few gems out of what you've written here. If you didn't take time to do a *Proclamation* for yourself, take the time now. Or, if you started one, add to it. This is your personal mission statement, what your life can be. You might also want to make yourself a separate affirmation sheet, reminding you of your most positive characteristics and strengths. Although we've talked a lot about change, we are not implying there is something “wrong” with you as you are now. A green shoot emerging from the ground is no more or less perfect than a plant in full bloom or spreading its seeds, just at a different point along its continuum. As you look forward to the continued unfolding of your life, take time to share who and what you are right now. Then, you can move forward, not out of discomfort, but out of curiosity, joy, and eagerness for new discoveries.

Once you've affirmed your mission to yourself, do you dare put it on the refrigerator, that place you go for daily sustenance? If you're really committed to changing, you might want to post your proclamation, affirmations, and two-week action plan on the refrigerator door, or bathroom mirror – any place where you'll come face-to-face with them each day.

Once you've made space on your refrigerator door, make a little space in your life. Hectic though your calendar might be, schedule in some solitude. Take a significant break from your routine, to whatever extent you can. Take off for a year in the desert or a meditative hour on the fire escape. Try to break away from demands to free your mind from clutter and let your heart have time to speak.

Solitude is crucial, but we are also social animals many people find they hold on to their enthusiasm and commitment best when they have support groups to help keep the fire going. You might want to form your own LPA support group, or incorporate LPA ideas into a support group you already have. We've done it and it works well. (See appendix for some ideas on how such a group might work.)

After you've made space on your refrigerator and in your social calendar comes the trickiest task of all – make space in your mind. Albert Einstein stated, *“The significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them.”*

To be true pilgrims, we have to go forward along our paths with open eyes and open minds. We have to let go of beliefs we may think of as truths, but which are actually forms of our own invention. The more we cling to rigidly-held belief systems, the less we are open to discovering what else the world has to offer us. As Thomas Crum wrote, *“There are fresh and new perspectives to everything in life if we let go of the filters of our past and the blinders of our expectations. To be able to embrace all of life as an opportunity to discover brings forth magic, growth, and aliveness.”*

The ability to open our minds to new perspectives becomes even more

*“The significant
problems we face
cannot be solved at
the same level of
thinking we were
at when we
created them.”*

ALBERT EINSTEIN

important when we realize our minds determine our reality. Barry and Suzi Kaufman, founders of the *Option Institute*, discovered that profound personal change can happen in hours, not years, when individuals are able to alter their thinking. Through a Socratic dialogue system, “option facilitators” guide “seekers” to examine and release restrictive and damaging beliefs, freeing themselves to recreate their realities and their lives.

In his seventh book, *Happiness Is a Choice*, Barry Kaufman used a study by the National Institute for Neurological and Communicative Disorders and Stroke (NINCDS) to illustrate the powerful psychophysiological element of change. In the NINCDS study:

- One woman with three distinct personalities had three menstrual periods, one for each personality.
- A man exhibiting multiple personas required completely different eye-glass prescriptions for each one; his clinical diagnosis changed with each.
- Another man, with nine distinct personalities, suffered a severe and at times life-threatening allergic reaction to citrus fruits. Any ingestion of citric acid would cause eight of his nine personalities to have hives, convulsions, and seizures. The ninth personality had a fetish for citrus fruits. While assuming that persona, he could consume enormous quantities of oranges and grapefruit without the slightest bodily disturbance.

Our beliefs control our realities; change the first and the other changes just as rapidly. As long as we think of ourselves as being bound by our finances, roles, skin colors, or other circumstances, we are. As soon as we can free our thinking, we can

begin to free ourselves.

For most of us, however, change happens more slowly. Little steps lead to bigger ones until we gain confidence and momentum. So be patient with yourself, tolerant of diversions and backslides, gentle with the criticism. You have begun to change yourself, which will, in turn, change the world.

In closing, we'd like to quote Robert Muller, former assistant secretary general of the United Nations:

*Use every letter you write,
every conversation you have
every meeting you attend,
to express your fundamental beliefs and dreams and to
affirm to others the vision of the world you want.*

*You are a free, immensely powerful source
of life and goodness.*

*Affirm it.
Spread it.
Radiate it.
Think day and night about it.*

*And you will see a miracle happen...
the greatness of your own life.*

*And, as Nick put it:
Go forward and 'let the FORCE(s) be with you'!*

Appendices

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- D. LPA Support Groups 146**

A. *Selected Resources*

A COURSE IN MIRACLES: The whole *Course in Miracles* contains more than 1,000 pages of inspirational verse-like text in three volumes, dealing with the major personal issues confronting the human heart and mind: understanding anger and pain, learning forgiveness, giving and accepting love, and attaining a true and lasting peace of mind. Two smaller excerpts (*Accept This Gift* and *A Gift of Peace*, edited by Frances Vaughan and Roger Walsh, distributed by St. Martin's Press, New York) highlight some of the most powerful, thought-provoking and evocative selections.

DO WHAT YOU LIVE, THE MONEY WILL FOLLOW: DISCOVERING YOUR RIGHT LIVELIHOOD, by Marsha Sinetar. Dell Publishing, 1987. A down-to-earth and pep-talking book about putting aside the unhealthy “should be’s” and figuring out our own right livelihoods. Strong encouragement for “uncovering the false rules by which we emotionally imprisoned.” Also, some inspirational words for moving past the confusion and indecision that keep us paralyzed, so we can tap into our own wisdom and act on it. (“The fear of knowing is directly connected to the fear of having to do something about what we know. We come up against the fear of being responsible.”)

FEEL THE FEAR AND DO IT ANYWAY, by Susan Jeffers. Ballantine Books, 1987. A very common sense approach to acknowledging and transforming fear, indecision, and anger into power, action, and love. Includes both dynamic prose and practical exercises. The hypothesis: “The inability to deal with fear may look and feel like a psychological problem, but in most cases, it isn’t. I believe it is primarily an educational problem, and that by reeducating the mind, you can accept fear as simply a fact of life rather than a barrier to success.”

FIRE IN THE BELLY: ON BEING A MAN, by Sam Keen. Bantam Books, 1991. Keen challenges traditional stereotypes of masculinity and offers liberating insights into new roles, attitudes and ways of being for men. Keen encourages men to escape the roles of emotionless producer and fodder for the war machine, to rediscover their own vitality, souls, and values.

HAPPINESS IS A CHOICE, by Barry Neil Kaufman. Indigo Press, 1991. Our unhappiness stems from beliefs that we ourselves have fabricated. By following the “Option” dialogue technique, we can let go of restricting or burdensome beliefs and set out lighter, happier, and more powerful ones on our life journey. This is an easy to read, anecdote-heavy book; one of Kaufman’s older books, *TO LOVE IS TO BE HAPPY WITH*, offers additional information about the Option Process.

THE MAGIC OF CONFLICT, by Thomas F. Crum. Simon and Schuster, 1987. An Aikido master, Crum applies “the energy dance” concept from the martial art of life in general. He invites readers to dance with the flow of life rather than stiffen up in perceived opposition to it. Foreword by musician John Denver, very nice prose, and some Aiki body-mind exercises. This book can provide a powerful “paradigm shift” if you’re open to it.

PASSAGES, by Gail Sheehy. E. P. Dutton Co., 1974. Sheehy documents the landmark stages humans grow through, making them less frightening and more understandable.

RISKING, by David Viscott, MD. Simon & Schuster Pocket Books, 1992. Viscott inspires and challenges us to move beyond our misguided clinging to security (generally “false” security), then gives practical criteria for taking risks. “If you do not risk changing when the time is right, you will probably be forced to change when you are least prepared for it,” he notes.

THE SEARCH FOR THE BELOED: JOURNEYS IN MYTHOLOGY AND SACRED PSYCHOLOGY, by Jean Houston, Jeremy P. Tarcher Publishing, 1987. A deeper look at the return to our true selves. “If you watch a flower, a fish, a puppy, a kitty, the sun, the moon or the wind whipping around you, you know the state of bliss is innate and natural to the order of being. One reason we love nature is that it causes us, however briefly, to release the cramping hold of our local self and to relax into that natural state. The amplifying of bliss tolerance acts as a tonic for the whole system; it gives us the vital charge to continue in the work of self-transformation. Otherwise life is reduced to putting one foot in front of the other, day after day after day. The grace of bliss is as natural as breathing, but because we’ve forgotten this, we act as if we have no breath. We need to recover the sense of being breathed into union, which provides the impetus for us to do what we need to in the world.”

THE SEVEN HABITS OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE PEOPLE: POWERFUL LESSONS IN PERSONAL CHANGE, by Stephen R. Covey, Simon & Schuster, 1989. Advice for identifying the basic paradigms, maps or assumptions in our heads, reexamining and shifting those to be more in tune with ourselves, and moving forward effectively. Also exercises to do in our lives. Our favorite quote from the book: “*Efficient management without effective leadership is, as one individual has phrased it, ‘like straightening deck chairs on the Titanic’.*”

WISHCRAFT: HOW TO GET WHAT YOU REALLY WANT, by Barbara Sher with Annie Gottlieb, Ballantine Books, 1983. A very practical manual to help you move past all those excuses—“but I don’t have enough self-esteem,” “but I don’t even know how to go about it,” etc. – and take one step at a time toward your goal. Includes tips on everything from giving yourself a little self-image boost to making contact lists and following through on specific tasks.

NEW SEEDS OF CONTEMPLATION, by Thomas Merton, 1961. New Directions. A masterpiece to be hung in your heart and referenced over and over when on a spiritual journey. Franciscan Thomas Merton writes in poetic form and with uncanny clarity about the path to living a more spiritual life and getting in touch with the “true self.” His passages are as prayers: *“Every moment and every event of every man’s life on earth plants something in his soul. For just as the wind carries thousands of winged seeds, so each moment brings with it germs of spiritual vitality that come to rest imperceptibly in the minds and wills of men.”* A must read!

LEGACY OF THE HEART - THE SPIRITUAL ADVANTAGES OF A PAINFUL CHILDHOOD, by Wayne Muller. Simon & Schuster, 1992. Muller provides insight on how the pains of childhood can be gifts in life. Each chapter is followed with suggestions for meditation. This book talks about listening to your heart and has fine work on being still. (*“Who are we? Desperate for an answer, we rush to discover and define ourselves through analysis, therapy, activities, accomplishments, and successes. Yet, when we allow ourselves to be still, we invite a different kind of knowing, we allow our intuition to uncover those small and secret truths that lie deep within us.”*) Also on understanding our fears. (*“We may discover that we actually feel safer when we move toward those things that frighten us, not when we move away.”*) Another must read.

SELF RENEWAL - THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE INNOVATIVE SOCIETY, by John W. Gardner. W. W. Norton Publishing, 1981. John W. Gardner was the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare from 1965 to 1968. He then became chairman of the National Urban Coalition and later founded Common Cause. In this book, John Gardner speaks about the inescapability of change and self-renewal are critical for a healthy society. He points to the individual as central for renewal to occur and points to characteristics of a renewing person: One is knowing thyself: *“More often than not, we don’t want to know ourselves, don’t want to depend on*

ourselves, don't want to live with ourselves. By middle life, most of us are accomplished fugitives from ourselves." Gardner suggests we "know thyself" and quotes George Herbert: *'By all means use some time to be alone. Salute thyself: see what thy soul doth wear';* and Josh Billings: *'It is not only the most difficult thing to know oneself, but the most inconvenient one, too.'*

RALPH WALDO EMERSON – FROM THE COMPLETE WRITINGS OF RALPH WALDO EMERSON, Wm. H. Wise and Co. Publishing, 1929. Emerson was born in 1803, graduated from Harvard, taught school, was a pastor – then resigned, traveled far and wide throughout the world, someone said to him: *"There is a sublime serenity that shines through Emerson's features."* When he was taken to meet President Lincoln, Lincoln instantly recalled something he had heard Emerson say 19 years before! This massive work is rich in concepts that contribute to the highest level of human development. Some examples include: *"A man should learn to detect and watch that gleam of light which flashes across his mind from within, more than the luster of the firmament of bards and sages," "The characteristic of heroism is its persistency. When you have chosen your part, abide by it, and do not weakly try to reconcile yourself with the world. Adhere to your own act, and congratulate yourself if you have done something extravagant and broken the monotony of a decorous age," "Women are the civilizers of mankind. What is civilization? I answer, the power of good women."*

THE WAY OF CHUANG TZU, by Thomas Merton. New Directions Publishing, 1969. Chuang Tzu was a great Taoist writer who lived during the classic period of Chinese philosophy (550 to 250 B.C.). Merton spent considerable time translating and offering interpretations of these works. He speaks of Chaung Tzu as a "subtle, funny, provocative" writer who is "not easy to get to." The book is an anthology of the thought, humor, gossip, and irony that were current in Taoist circles. Merton felt that the "way" contained in these anecdotes, poems and meditations "is characteristic of a certain mentality found everywhere in the world,"

THE WISDOM OF THE DESERT – SAYING OF THE DESERT FATHERS OF THE FOURTH CENTURY, by Thomas Merton. New Directions Publishing 1960. In the fourth century A.D., a group of Christians fled to the deserts of Egypt, Palestine, Arabia, and Persia in the quest for “salvation”. These men did not want to be ruled by men but wanted to find their true self, in Christ. “*They sought a way to God that was uncharted and freely chosen, not inherited from the others who had mapped it out beforehand.*” Merton translated sayings of these first “hermits” for us to enjoy and contemplate. One translation goes: “Abbot Pastor said: If you have a chest full of clothing and leave it for a long time, the clothing will rot inside it. It is the same with the thoughts in our heart. If we do not carry them out by physical action, after a while they will spoil and turn bad.”

THERE ARE MEN TOO GENTLE TO LIVE AMONG WOLVES, by James Kavanaugh, Harper Row Publishing, 1984. A collection of poems that reflect one man’s reflections about life and God brought down to everyday living. Kavanaugh, once a priest, is a searcher who started and runs an institute for other searchers.

OWNING YOUR OWN SHADOW – UNDERSTANDING THE DARK SIDE OF THE PSYCHE, by Robert A. Johnson. Harper Publishers, 1991. Following the teachings of Jung, Johnson talks about how our shadows develop and influence our behavior. He offers a way to understand and “own” one’s shadow. Failure to own one’s own shadow is “to fail one’s own sainthood and to miss the purpose of life.” This book clearly explains how the pearl of great price is to be found in our everyday conflicts and tensions.”

DO I HAVE TO GIVE UP ME TO BE LOVED BY YOU?, by Drs. Jordan and Margaret Paul, Complare Publishing, 1983. The authors present another model for mutual respect, harmony, and growing intimacy in relationships. In this Evolving Relationship, partners “engage in a process that leads to individual freedom and

integrity while increasing intimacy.” The central theme in building a healthy Evolving Relationship for the Pauls, is conflict, how it is handled, and more important, exploring and understanding the underlying problem.

TALES OF A MAGIC MONASTERY, by Theophane the Monk. Crossroads Publishing, 1981. A wonderful series of short, witty stores from a Trappist Monk who beams with humor and a deep, spiritual caring for humanity. At this writing, Father Theophane lives at St. Benedict’s Trappist Monastery in Snowmass, Colorado.

LIVING WITH WISDOM – A LIFE OF THOMAS MERTON, by Jim Forest, Orbis Books, 1991. This is the story of Thomas Merton, a prolific writer and one of the finest spiritual beings placed on the earth. The book shares Merton’s inner thoughts on his quest for knowledge, wisdom, peace, and serenity. Replete with Merton’s timeless words of meaning, such as his thoughts about war (WWII). Merton wrote “That knowing a person’s date of birth, his address, his height, his eye color, and his fingerprints will help you put the right tag on his body... But if you want to identify me, ask me not where I live, or what I like to eat, or how I comb my hair, but ask me what I think I am living for, in detail, and ask me what I think is keeping me from living fully the thing I want to live for.”

THE WAY OF THE HEART-DESERT SPIRITUALITY AND CONTEMPORARY MINISTRY, by Henri J. M. Nouwen, Harper, San Francisco, 1981. This powerful little book reflects on what the desert fathers and mothers of the fourth century have to say to people who want to become ministers and pilgrims. It speaks of the importance of how silence teaches us to speak from our hearts. Solitude, for Nouwen, is “the furnace of transformation” and the “prayer of the heart... which gives us the eyes to see the reality of existence.”

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B. *About the Authors*

When he was 16 years old, Nick Rayder received his first official diploma – from the Bower Barber College in New York. He squeaked into college, after a dismal high school career, and there discovered his “right livelihood.” Six years later, Nick held a Bachelor’s Degree in psychology and art and a masters in industrial psychology. He then earned a Ph.D. in psychometric measurement and research methodology from the University of Northern Colorado.

Nick has written many articles on early childhood education, special education, measuring work climate, implementing organizational values, and other aspects of organizational development. He loves to teach and has done so at several major universities across the country. He now lives with his dog Charlie in Crested Butte, Colorado, where he paints and works to promote Life-Planning and other human growth activities.

Sandy Fails is a writer and editor living in Crested Butte, Colorado, with her husband, Michael Garren, and son, Christopher. She writes for the Crested Butte Chronicle & Pilot newspaper (of which she is part owner) and several national publications, edits the Crested Butte Magazine, and has authored two other non-fiction books, *Crested Butte: The Edge of Paradise* and *The Seasons of Paradise*.

Raised in Texas, Sandy earned her Bachelor’s Degree in an interdisciplinary honors program at the University of Texas 1979, focusing on journalism, literature and psychology. She began writing about the Life-Planning Approach in 1990 and became an LPA facilitator in 1991.

C. *Acknowledgements*

Many thanks to my husband, Michael, for more than a decade of unflagging support. Much love to that little scalawag and teacher, Christopher, and to Robbie and Nick, who introduced me to the LPA and started this ball rolling.

- Sandy Fails

When you're on a blissful journey in life, you find pearls of great worth. Barbara Brown, who lives in Palo Alto, California, is such a pearl. Not only has she typed, formatted, and edited to produce copy of initial thoughts and ideas, but, more important, she has been a close friend, delivering unlimited encouragement and trust throughout.

Another major pearl is a place. Saint Benedict's Monastery in Snowmass, Colorado, has, over the past twenty years, provided me with a place to retreat (which usually results in an "advance"). I am thankful to brothers Raphael and Theophane, who reviewed my work and provided profound critique, spiritual direction and, most important, encouragement. My thanks also go to the monastic Brotherhood of Saint Benedict for their prayerful celebrations of life and goodness that continue to enrich my life, attitude, and thinking.

Along the way, other pearls of support were offered by my long-time friends Georgia Roberta Chula, Garry McDaniels, Jack Schmid, Jeanne Napora, and Jim Hunt. I'm also appreciative of Carol Nosko and Bonnie Eddy, who saw merit in the Life-Planning Approach and who chose to become trained as the first LPA facilitators, and to my LPA clients who worked hard to identify visions of their bliss, then developed plans to approach that bliss.

I am thankful to Sandy Fails for her patience and writing prowess, to Carolyn Avery-Schichtel for translating my chicken scratches into well-formatted script, to Neal Murdoch for his fine tuning, to Larry Nader for his patient typesetting, and to Channing Rudd for his great drawings and book design.

Finally, I acknowledge the loving support from my sister Rose Marie Christie, my brother Edward, and my daughter, Tara Zoe Rayder, a strong and gentle soul who is a major part of my bliss.

-Nicholas F. Rayder

D. *Life-Planning Approach Support Groups*

*“We are bound together;
you and I. If you stray
from your path, I pain.
If we can help each other;
I rejoice.”*

TIBETAN SAYING

This section explains the function of Life-Planning Approach Support Groups and suggests the content and process for meetings.

Introduction:

We are never alone. Even in the most remote parts of our country, we can be startled by another seeking the same seclusion. Sometimes these spontaneous meetings seem more than chance occurrences, and well they might be in some “larger plan.” Even if we do get physically isolated, our thoughts can quickly change the peaceful flow of a mountain stream to memories of the roar of commuter traffic. In addition, we are never alone from the forces that influence our lives. The recurring influence of strong, positive things that continuously help us brave barriers, can propel us to a new and meaningful place in life.

All people, who are engaged in pursuing their life bliss and life goals enjoy a unique commonality. This commonality is a belief that through discernment and stretching (including risk-taking and commitment), a person can live a more fulfilled

life. People are somehow bound together through this process. We started this manuscript with a Tibetan saying:

*“We are bound together, you and I. If you stray from your path, I pain.
If we can help each other, I rejoice.”*

These two concepts, of never being isolated from people and being bound by the act of searching, suggest that people, in quest of a life closer to their ideal, can make more progress if they actively work together and support each other. This section explains the function of the Life-Planning Approach Support Groups and offers some ideas on how such groups can function:

Goals & Objectives

- To motivate individuals and to offer a degree of accountability (as desired) for the individual's achievement and growth.
- To help identify resources and activities that can be accomplished for inclusion into Action Plans.
- To help assess the degree of internal consistency between a person's life goals and his or her Action Plans.
- And most important, to offer support and encouragement to each member and to deliver congratulations on individual accomplishments and growth.

Suggested Organizational Structure/Process

A. GROUP SIZE/COMPOSITION: LPA support groups can be as small as two people, although, the ideal size is five or six participants. All members should have experienced the individual four-hour LPA process, attended a group workshop, or read this book and completed the Growthsheets.

B. THE INITIAL MEETING: Identify goals and objectives for the meeting, set dates for meeting (ideally, once every two weeks (for no more than two hours), and identify locations.

Suggested Meeting Agenda

OPENING THE MEETING: One person reads a passage (no more than five minutes) from the LPA reading list or from similar material.

SHARING: Each person then shares progress and/or insights since the last meeting (no more than four minutes each) using Life-Space charts to show growth.

CLOSING: Each person can evaluate the meeting and make one pledge to accomplish for the next meeting. Ideally these pledges are recorded on a large sheet of paper for reference in subsequent meetings.

Agenda for Subsequent Meetings

WELCOME: Have someone share a special reading.

OPENING: Each person can read his pledge aloud and report on progress (no feedback from others.) This is the “bring and brag” or ‘show and tell’ part of the meeting.

SHARING: Each person shares concerns or insights and obtains suggestions or input from others.

TOPIC DISCUSSION: New ideas are presented and discussed.

CLOSING: Each person states a New Pledge.

Facilitation:

- Meetings should be facilitated in a gentle manner.
- Insure that each person has his or her fair share of time to speak and give/receive feedback.
- Keep on target with the goals and objectives of the meeting. Keep to a time schedule.
- Record on a large sheet of paper what is pledged and write it in the person’s own words.
- The facilitators should rotate. This is an excellent opportunity for people to learn how to facilitate meetings (an important skill). The book, *How to Hold Meetings* by Deal and Strauss offers excellent information on the facilitation procedures.
- Facilitators should have a large chart to record pledges.
- A small donation could be collected for snacks, tea & crumpets and materials.

A Final Thought:

The LPA Support Group meetings are not designed to provide an arena for individuals to voice serious psychological problems nor as a place to get psychological advice. Further, meetings do not operate to make judgments or “tell you what you should be doing.” Meetings should focus on each individual’s life goals and Action Plans.

Support Group meetings should offer each individual periodic motivational support in an atmosphere of trust, respect and frolic.

Besides helping to provide feedback for an individual, two other criteria for successful LPA Support Group Meetings are:

- the number of ‘a-has!’ or insights members have, and
- the number of sincere smiles and laughs that occur.

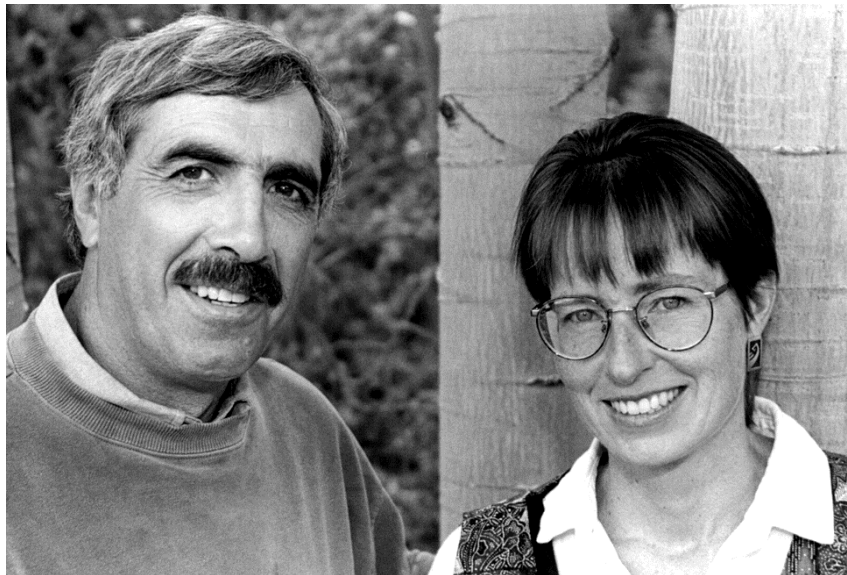
*Thank you for reading our book.
We hope it provided you with some insights and meaning for your life journey.
We want and welcome your feedback.
Your comments will help us build and or modify The Leap of Faith, Dance of Change so
it can be useful for more people who want to change their lives and direct their energy
toward living their true self and approaching their life goals.*

*We would like to see some of the Growthsheets you completed, particularly your
Proclamations, Life-Space Charts, and Action Plans. If you email us copies and give us
some background on yourself, we will be happy to share with you our comments and
critique of your work.*

*You can print the Growthsheets and provide comments from our blog
TheLeapOfFaithTheDanceOfChange.com*

*If you are interested in becoming a facilitator or learning about the special applications
we have for schools, the incarcerated and groups please email me at*

nikorayder@yahoo.com



PEACE TO YOU - AND LET THE FORCE(S) BE WITH YOU!