

The  
**Power**  
of  
**Heart**  
**Centered**  
**Relating**

***The Key To***

***Self-Empowerment***

***Loving Relationships***

***Connecting with Others***



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**BRYAN BOURDON**

# HEART CENTERED RELATING

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# Table of Contents

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## **Introduction**

Page 1

## **Chapter 1**

Page 15: Heart Centered Relating

## **Chapter 2**

Page 28: The New Heart Science

## **Chapter 3**

Page 36: The Creative Power of Our Beliefs

## **Chapter 4**

Page 61: Heart-Centered Thought-Directing

## **Chapter 5**

Page 81: Our Inherent Basic Human Needs

## **Chapter 6**

Page 103: HCR's 12 Life Skills

## **Chapter 7**

Page 145: HCR's Personal Life-Assessment Program (PLA)

## **Citations**

Page 176

# INTRODUCTION

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## HEART CENTERED RELATING

### **What Do We All Deeply Desire?**

What is the one thing that all humanity shares in common?

The one thing we all want? The answer will not surprise you.

*We all want to feel good...*

*...and we deeply desire to feel good all the time, and therein lies the challenge facing humanity.*

Not only do most people not feel good a significant amount of the time, they are also experiencing a lot of emotional pain. When we don't understand the root causes of our suffering, and how to resolve our challenges so that we begin truly enjoying our lives, it can cause a great deal of confusion as to why life feels so difficult, so often. The good news is it doesn't need to be this way, and I promise you this book contains heart-centered solutions to the problems we all face. You will find explanations for the root causes of these problems, and ways of solving your own particular challenges that you have never heard of before, or at least have not seen presented in such comprehensive and understandable ways.

The information in this book will explain why things are the way they are in the world, what is causing the majority of the mental and emotional pain that is taking place in our world; and how you can rise above it. You will learn how you can begin to immediately apply the principles of Heart Centered Relating to access your inner heart-wisdom – *which is how you attain Authentic Self-Empowerment, Develop Loving Relationships* – and how to *Truly Connect with Others* in deeply meaningful and fulfilling ways.

What you will learn from this book you will wish had been taught to you as a young child. You will wish this had been a course in every grade of your schooling – *with an emphasis that no other course was more important than this one.*

My choice for the name of such a course would have been the same as the title of this book: **The Power of Heart Centered Relating**, *The Key to: Self-Empowerment – Loving Relationships – Connecting with Others*.

### **The Key To Authentic Self-Empowerment**

One of the powerful and practical answers you will find in this book explains how anyone can improve the quality of their life whenever they choose – *for this ability is true Self-Empowerment*. When you don't feel good, and you begin to make decisions and take actions that improve the quality of your life, what happens? You begin to feel better. The more consistently you are able to make positive thought/decision/action changes, the more often you will feel better. However, *learning how to consistently make wise decisions, and to take effective actions that will improve the quality of your life – is not easy*. This is the reason **Heart Centered Relating (HCR)** would have been the course of emphasis throughout your education, regardless of your career choice, were the world more aware of the importance of – *listening to and following the guidance of* – your heart-wisdom.

To improve the enjoyment and fulfillment that you experience in life requires learning how to tap both your inner-heart wisdom, and your heart's power. Many people are afraid that if they live from their heart, they will end up making big mistakes, be tossed to and fro by their feelings, and as a result, lose emotional control, or end up being used or taken advantage of by others. However, once you truly come to understand what heart-centered living really is, you will no longer have these concerns, for heart-centered living combines both your heart's wisdom and your heart's power.

Heart-wisdom is knowing the best choice to make at a given time, and Heart-Power is the ability to enact that choice. It is the combination of wisdom and power that leads to true self-empowerment. It's about learning to live from your heart-centered True-Self.

When you truly develop this awareness, you are able to consistently think in more positive and loving ways, and this enables you to be your best self, to put forth your best effort. Heart wisdom and power includes

courageously following your dreams, being kind and compassionate, being strong and principled, being courageous and integral, both within yourself and toward others. It also includes protecting yourself and others from decisions, people, or situations that could put you or others in harms way. It's about learning how to develop true character strength, and the information in this book explains how you can practically accomplish this, how you can grow in this pursuit on a daily basis.

The truth is, people should be much more concerned about not living a heart-centered life.

### **The Message of Life is Heart First**

Few of us realize that the first organ to form in our body was our heart. In fact, your first heartbeat took place just 18 days after you were conceived, *and before your brain had even begun to develop*. There is a clear, powerful Life-Message to be realized because of this: we are designed to be guided in our life by our *heart-wisdom*, not by our accumulated *head-knowledge*. Living solely out of our head-knowledge separates us from our heart. This causes us to think selfishly and negatively, and results in conflicts and lack of connection with others.

Separation from our hearts *is the debilitating affliction impairing humankind*, for it causes disconnection from each other, and this is the reason for every conflict in your life, and every conflict in the world. Our minds were designed to be an amazing tool *directed by our inner heart-wisdom* in the living of our lives, *not the source of direction for our lives*. In the pages ahead, you will learn how to live a heart-directed life, and you will become aware of just how important Heart Centered Relating is in determining the quality of your relationships, and your life experiences.

Throughout human history, the significance of the human heart has been taught and written about: how learning how to *listen* and *follow* the guidance of our inner heart-wisdom is the key to attaining a fulfilling life, and experiencing deeply meaningful relationships. Many of our ancient cultures held the human heart in highest regard, and any credible spiritual teachings will strongly advocate that our hearts should play the *central*

role in governing our decisions and behavior – *it is simply that important*. The information in this book can help you achieve this awareness – *for more than anything else* – the quality of your decisions is what affects the quality of your life, and when you follow your heart’s direction, you will make better decisions.

### **The HCR “Secret” Formula**

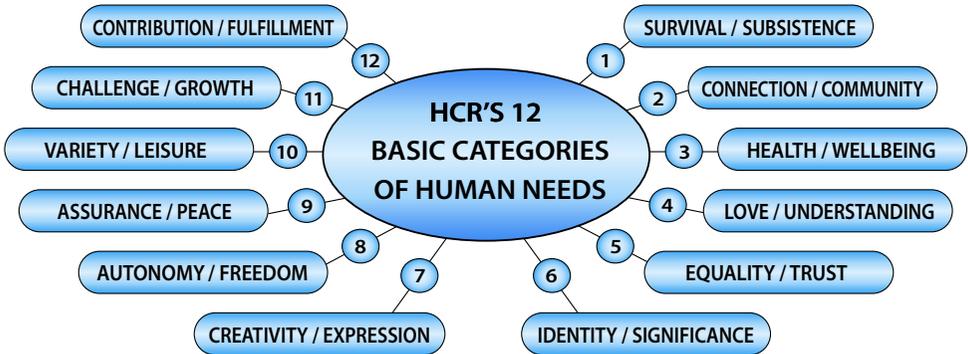
The HCR formula to creating and sustaining a fulfilling life, and lasting meaningful relationships is not really a secret, but it might as well be, because so few of us understand these principles of successful living and relating. This formula is beautifully simple, yet powerfully effective. The challenge, however, lies in one’s ability to consistently apply this formula: *it is not easy* because it requires character development, *and character development is the most challenging of all human pursuits*. Yet, feelings of deep v are only attained through the satisfaction we experience in overcoming significant challenges.

### **The HCR Formula for Fulfilling Living:**



## The HCR Formula Further Explained

Very few of us are aware of this truth: though we all differ in the specifics of what will satisfy our needs, all of humanity shares the same basic inherent human needs. In Chapter 5, I expound on this critically important subject. However, for the purpose of this introduction, the graphic below illustrates **HCR's 12 Basic Categories of Human Needs**.



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Understanding this fundamental human truth – that we all share these basic human needs – is *vitaly important* to coming to a better understanding both of ourselves, and of each other; and here are the reasons: When these needs *are met* in our life in balanced and healthy ways, we feel good, live in harmony with each other, are happy, and live fulfilling lives. When any of these needs *are not met*, we experience, by Divine Design, negative feelings. We were created with this natural negative initial feeling response for our *protection*, because we experience negative feelings *more acutely* than positive feelings. For example, the feeling of hunger is more acutely felt than feeling full. The negative feeling is a signal that if we don't do something to get a need met, we will suffer.

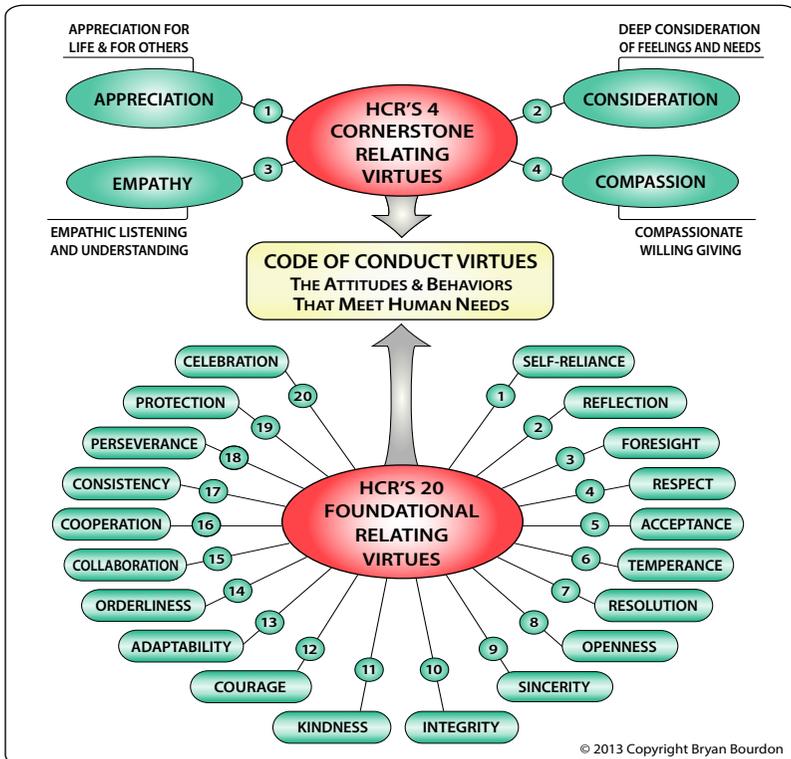
Most of our basic needs can be met in either negative or positive ways. For example, you will survive longer (Needs Category 1 - Survival/ Subsistence) if you negatively fulfill this need by eating junk food than if you don't eat at all – but there is always a cost in other needs categories when you meet a basic need in a negative way. In this example, one of the obvious costs would in be Needs Category 3 - Health/Wellbeing.

Going back to the HCR Formula for achieving a fulfilling, meaningful life, we see that balanced need fulfillment is the result of character development – *and this is the key reason for HCR's 12 Life Skills:*

## HCR Life Skills

- |                              |                                 |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1) Personal Life-Assessments | 7) Daily Exercise / Activity    |
| 2) SPEM-Self Goal Setting    | 8) Body Five Daily              |
| 3) Always Being Appreciative | 9) HCR Memorization             |
| 4) Pivotal Moment Temperance | 10) L-AAB: Leave-No-Messes      |
| 5) L-APO Meditation          | 11) Routine Systems Development |
| 6) Daily Spiritual Practise  | 12) Daily Enjoyment Affection   |

The *life-development power* that is represented in these 12 Life Skills is fully explained in Chapter 6. However, for the purpose of this introduction, these Life Skills were developed as a practical means to put into *daily practice* the carefully chosen HCR Virtues illustrated below.



## HCR's 24 Relating Virtues

You will notice there are two classifications of HCR Virtues – the *Cornerstone Relating Virtues*, and the *Foundational Relating Virtues*. The reason for this classification is fully explained in Chapter 5. What I want to draw to your attention in this introduction are these two points:

- 1) The HCR List of Virtues are called “Relating Virtues”, because living in adherence to these virtues is required to both develop a healthy relationship with ourselves, as well as healthy, high-quality relationships with others;
- 2) In the yellow rectangle of the virtues graphic are the following words: Code of Conduct Virtues – The Attitudes & Behaviors That Meet Human Needs. Only when we relate to each other virtuously can we expect to meet each other’s needs, and thus feel happy and satisfied.

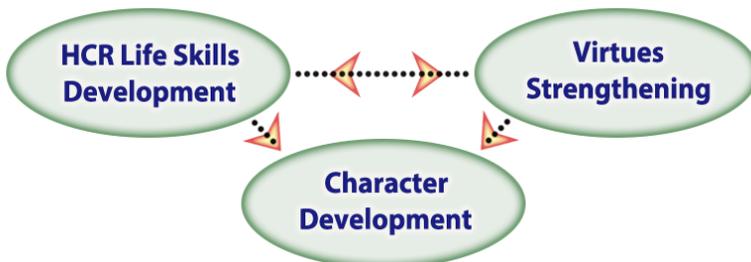
**The outcome of HCR’s Formula in improving the quality of your life is:**

**Experiencing Happiness, Well-being  
Purpose and Deep Satisfaction**

**The only way to achieve this result is to live your life in ways that create:**

**Character  
Development**

The only way that you can develop your character is through strengthening the virtues that lead to character development; and the only way to become more virtuous is through practising, which is the reason for the 12 HCR Life Skills. Hence, the triangular relationship illustrated below:



# The Key to Developing Your Character

## The Power of the HCR Framework

### Why Applying HCR Will Begin Working for You Immediately

What has just been explained is the foundation of HCR's organic framework, and this framework has been dynamically developed in HCR's Personal Life-Assessment (PLA) Program.

I developed the PLA Program because I recognized something fundamentally important. Adhering to Heart Centered Relating requires *daily focus*, for it is very easy to get *emotionally distracted*, and as a result of these distractions, to make unwise decisions that will have a negative impact on your life. In other words, it is very easy to make mistakes and fall back into unloving and negative behavior and relating patterns.

The PLA Program is comprehensive, and its main tool is a sophisticated Excel file/program. However, I assure you it is quite unlike any Excel file you will have ever seen. Though the PLA Program is sophisticated, it is elegantly designed and is very easy to understand and to use. Thus, it requires no experience with Excel to be able to effectively use it. Perhaps it is best described as a well-designed personal website program within Excel.

The PLA program is a highly effective, heart-centered self-guiding character development tool; and I will be coming back to the PLA program shortly, but first it is important that I explain the following:

In Chapter 5, *needs descriptions* define what fulfillment of each of the HCR Needs Categories involves. As well, *virtues descriptions* explain what is required to achieve full development of each of the HCR Virtues in your character.

Understanding the dynamic interplay between *virtuous living* and *needs fulfillment* is essential in comprehending how to begin immediately benefiting from applying HCR to improving the quality of your life, which intrinsically involves the relationships in your life.

## **The Source and Cause of All Conflicts**

The source of all conflicts in our lives is unmet needs, and as explained above, *we are designed* to have a *negative feeling initial response* to unmet needs for our protection, to acutely draw our attention to a fundamental basic need that is not being adequately fulfilled in our life. However, though unmet needs are the source of all conflicts, they are not the cause of conflicts. The cause of conflicts are *negative reactions* to the *initial negative feeling* of unmet needs, and this is *critically important to understand* in order to begin making better choices in your life.

Our inherent basic needs are gifts; they are the “playground” of our human experiences. If we had no needs, we would have no need of each other, *no need to relate at all*. The fact that we have needs “forces” us to relate, for our very happiness depends upon meaningfully relating – indeed, our very survival.

When we relate in *positive, loving, compassionate, giving and caring* ways, we meet our own needs, as well as the needs of others; and as a result, we experience tremendous joy, pleasure, meaning and fulfillment in our lives. When we relate in *negative, unloving and selfish* ways, we fulfill neither our own needs (*at least not in lasting, meaning ways*), nor the needs of others. As a result of this, we experience emotional pain, suffering, and feelings of disconnection, loneliness, depression, guilt, regret and futility.

## **The Divine Purpose of Life**

In order to tie everything together, it is important to address the following: Heart Centered Relating is deeply spiritual, while at the same time highly practical. I believe that if our spirituality does not “show up” in practical applications in our lives – *in being more loving, caring and in contributing to the well-being of others* – then our spirituality isn’t worth much – *it isn’t real*. I also believe that all of humanity is part of a Divine Purpose, and that this Divine Purpose is mysteriously revealed in the Bible (as well as other historical scriptural texts). Though I reference the Bible on many occasions throughout the book, I want to make it clear that I do not agree with much of what mainstream Christianity teaches about the Bible, or the nature of God.

After experiencing decades of religious distorted teachings of the Bible, and after rather extensive research, I have come to believe the Bible was (for the most part) never meant to be read literally, for it is steeped in metaphors and allegory. However, once the deeper meanings and true revelations of these metaphors and allegories are understood, the *true intended meanings* contained within the Bible reveal a much different, complete, and more wonderful meaning than what the majority of people have been taught about the Bible. This book was not intended to provide an exhaustive explanation of this subject, however, I do provide examples of what I have just referred to in Chapters 3 and 4.

I have come to believe that countless people have been lead astray by distorted Biblical teachings, and hurt by “the church”. Thus, it is understandable that any mention of God, or the Bible can turn people off. If this has been your experience, as it was mine, I encourage you not to throw out the baby with the bath water. The Bible has a lot of great insights we can benefit from, none of which have anything to do with an angry punishing God, or that if you don’t live a certain way you are going to an everlasting place of torture. These kinds of teaching are utter distortions of the truth.

What I now believe the Bible does teach us is we are all one human family, and that we have all been created by an unconditionally loving Supreme Being, whom I am comfortable calling God. However, I am well aware that many people have had negative experiences because of the distorted religious teachings I just referred to, and are therefore not comfortable with that name. Thus, because I do not believe the Creator is particular about the name we use, you will often see God/Life/Spirit or Life written when I am referring to the Creator.

The Bible refers to us as God’s children, indicating that we are all being taken through a *spiritual maturation process*; and the primary way we are being matured is in our *interrelating with each other*. As previously addressed, our *basic human needs* are the *driving force* behind our very need to relate. Growing spiritually requires character development, and character development can only be achieved through expanding our conscious awareness: this is what Heart Centered Relating is all about.

The following Bible verse provides clear guidance on what leads to spiritual maturity, and meaningfully relating.

*“Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.”* Philippians 2:4 (ESV)

In HCR, your “own interests” are your inherent human needs. So the Bible is telling us that the key to achieving harmonious meaningful relating is to be equally interested in meeting the needs of others, as you are in having your own needs met. This is a small example of what I previously referred to in regard to the Bible containing deeply useful insights that we can benefit from coming to understand.

### **Achieving Mutual Needs Fulfillment**

The goal of HCR is to impart the knowledge and awareness of how we need to be, and how we need to practically relate – *on a daily basis* – to achieve mutual needs fulfillment, for we cannot achieve true, lasting and balanced needs fulfillment without each other; and therein lies the challenge we all face. It all seems simple enough...meet each other’s needs and we can all be happy. So why is this so difficult for us to achieve?

That we can even experience these challenges at all happens because we all have a Love-Nature, as well as a Fear-Nature. Our Love-Nature is our True Nature – *our True-Self*. Our Fear-Nature is our false nature – *our ego-self*. The spiritual maturation process we are all going through requires accessing our heart-wisdom to develop our character in order to learn how to overcome our fear-based ego-nature. Only through becoming fully aware of your heart-centered True-Self can spiritual maturity be fully achieved. This is the reason heart-directed living is essential to strengthening your character – *and it is character strengthening that leads to true needs fulfillment*.

The challenge for each of us, (especially when we are making an important decision,) is the answer we decide upon *to this recurring question in our lives*: Am I going to listen to my heart-language (my love-nature), or my mind-language (my fear-nature)? When we listen to our True-Self – *our heart-language* – we make wise and loving decisions that

take into account everyone's needs. When we listen to our ego-self – *our mind-language* – we make unwise, selfish decisions that are primarily fixated on fulfilling our own needs, usually at the expense of creating unmet needs in others. Ego-based, selfish decisions *always ultimately back-fire*, because you cannot fulfill your own needs in healthy and/or lasting ways, if you are doing so at the expense of meeting the needs of others. With these fundamental understandings in place, we'll return to the purpose of HRC's PLA Program.

### **The Challenge in Developing Our Characters**

The PLA Program was developed to be a highly effective tool in helping you to meaningfully advance in what I earlier explained is the most challenging of all human pursuits – *character development*. Character development is so challenging because it involves subduing our fear-based ego-nature. The purpose of our ego is to make things difficult for us, in order that we can experience all we need to experience to realize who we truly are – *which is loving, creative beings*. Our ego is that which allows us to experience spiritual and emotional contrast in our lives. For example, we cannot fully know or appreciate the experience of love, without experiencing hate, (which comes from fear). We cannot fully appreciate how wonderful it feels to be connected with others, until we experience disconnection through experiencing isolation and loneliness – just like we could not experientially know hot, if we had not experienced cold, and so on.

Once you understand that this is the Divine Process we are all going through together, you are able to appreciate a whole new perspective of life – *and of the importance of love*. You stop resisting challenges, difficulties, change and even pain itself. You begin cooperating with this life maturing process by realizing that everything that takes place in your life is meant for your good – for both the good times, and the hard times, have enormously valuable life-lessons to impart to us.

The PLA Program is so effective because it reminds you on a daily basis what is required to effectively develop your character – to respond to all life encounter with love-responses, instead of fear-responses. The PLA process helps you to access your heart-wisdom – to recognize precisely

what you need to do to overcome your own personal challenges, how to resolve relationship conflicts, as well as how to live and relate with others in heart-centered ways that prevent conflicts from manifesting. This will enable you to make the most of your opportunities to achieve needs fulfillment, both for yourself, and with others; and we accomplish this fulfillment through growing spiritually, physically, emotionally and mentally, because these four aspects of our humanity are intrinsically connected to our needs fulfillment.

### **Humankind's Heart Condition – The Cure Is Unconditional Love**

When a patient is examined and the results show a dysfunction in the heart, the medical term our society uses to describe heart dysfunction is “*heart condition*”. Right now, humankind has a *heart condition*. The collective human heart, of which we are all a part, is not functioning properly. Why? Because it is love-starved, and we are the ones creating the starvation. Learning to unconditionally love – which is the only healthy love – is often not easy, but it is the only way to truly resolve the challenges before us.

Even when a flowering plant is in good soil, and is adequately watered, if it does not receive enough sunshine, the flower will fade and the plant will not thrive. Unconditional love is to us what sunshine is to a flowering plant. *Our Hearts need Love to live*, to thrive and to allow our human potential to flourish into the beautiful beings we were created to be. When we don't give enough love, we won't receive enough love, and as a result, we will begin, like a neglected flower, to wilt and droop. Since the collective human heart is comprised of individuals, our collective heart becomes whole only when each individual's heart becomes whole, *and only unconditional love can lead us to wholeness*.

Each of us, through tapping into and aligning with our heart-language (which leads and guides us to unconditional love), has to heal and recover from our own heart dysfunction. We also need to help each other accomplish this, precisely through *unconditionally loving each other*. This is the only way we can realize the potential of all human hearts being healed. Each of us is the *keeper* of our *own heart*, and therefore, each of us

is responsible for the condition of our heart. Each of us needs to reflect and ask, *“What is the condition of my heart?... Am I loving to my full potential? Living, giving, receiving to my full potential?”*

Ultimately, we will all realize that there is only one base solution to the challenges and conflicts in our lives – *and it is unconditional love*. HCR was developed to help us develop this unconditional love within ourselves, through the guidance we will receive through deeply connecting with our inner-heart wisdom. This is where the solutions to our personal challenges will be found and then created, and only when enough of us achieve this, will the world’s problems begin to be solved in lasting ways. This is what will lead to the fulfillment of joyous living that we all deeply desire. By applying what you learn in the pages ahead, you will not only achieve greater joy and fulfillment in your own life, but you will also be doing your part to heal our suffering world.

### **A Truly Remarkable Perspective Changing Study**

In 1938, Harvard began a comprehensive, in-depth, on-going study that has now surpassed 75 years. Its purpose was to determine the single most important factor that determines our feelings of true happiness, well-being, and satisfaction. The study tracked the lives of 724 men comprised of two groups of men. The first group were graduates of Harvard, the second, a group of boys from some of the poorest districts in Boston. Although many people think happiness comes from money or fame, in a TED talk given on December 23, 2015, Psychiatrist Dr. Robert Waldinger, who is the 4 director of this profound study, stated the following:

*“People who are more socially connected, to family, friends, and to community, are healthier, happier, and live longer. Period.”*

He further explained that it wasn’t the number of relationships a person had or how socially connected they were that determined health and happiness, but rather, it was the quality of the key relationships in their lives that made the difference. In the pages ahead you will find insights to help you create these kinds of high quality relationships. It begins with improving your relationship with yourself, and then your relationships with others. This is the path of Heart Centered Relating.

# CHAPTER 1

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## HEART CENTERED RELATING THE LANGUAGE OF THE HEART

*The True Solutions to All of Our Challenges Will Be Realized  
Through Insights Received from Our Inner Heart Wisdom*

### **Open Up Your Heart and Let It Begin**

Learning about and becoming aware of the incredible nature of the human heart, both in terms of its effect on our physiology, as well as the spiritual implications associated with the heart, is a life-changing subject. It certainly was for me. The more I researched, contemplated and wrote about the heart, the more insight I received in understanding the role of our hearts in the Body-Mind-Spirit connection that makes up our human experience.

When we come to understand something of true importance with our heart, it changes us in deeply significant and lasting ways. It's not a "big effort" change – meaning, you are not expending a lot of mental energy or physical effort trying to force yourself to do something you really don't want to do. It's change that comes from *awareness*. You naturally want to change because you *deeply feel the value of it in your heart*. Because of this, change becomes more like an enjoyable journey than a struggle to *force yourself to try* to change.

This does not mean that you will always find change easy. Many changes we need to make often do require significant focus and effort, because they require overcoming our fear-nature – *which requires character development* – and character development never comes easily to anyone.

How difficult we find the changes we desire to make in our lives depends on two factors:

- 1) the size and/or complexity of the personal challenges we need to overcome to embed change into our character; and,
- 2) how heart-directed we allow ourselves to be in the process of change.

The more we cooperate with change in heart-centered ways, the easier it will be to change. The more we resist change, the more difficult changing will be. Changes that come through heart awareness can happen in any moment. You could be walking down the street and encounter a homeless person begging for money. You've never given money to "these kind of people" before. But this time, you feel compassion, your heart goes out to them, and you feel moved to help them. It can happen that quickly. You expended little effort in this change; you felt the need to do something in your heart, and followed your heart's direction.

I remember the last time I got really angry with someone. I knew in my heart that getting very angry at someone could lead to very undesirable outcomes, but I acted "out of my mind" and got angry anyway. My ego totally justified it at the time. After the incident, I so deeply regretted what had happened. My heart was aching with remorse, but I learned my lesson for it has been years since this happened, and I haven't even come close to getting that angry since.

I was working with a young man who, as a result of some bad choices he had made, found himself temporarily incarcerated in a psychiatric hospital. He was struggling with regret, feeling his life was a failure; he was worried about the future, and despising the environment he was in. About a week before his release, he was eating supper and thinking of a young woman who was his friend. He imagined what she would be acting like if she were in his shoes. She was a happy person, who he noticed always made the people around her feel better. Then he imagined what he was currently like to be around...morose and depressed – "A downer to be around," as he put it. The realization of how he was being, compared to how he imagined she would be, deeply resonated in his heart, and moved him to tears. This realization came through his heart, and it changed him. It caused him to be more sensitive to the people around him, and to make an effort to make them feel better. Even though his circumstances had yet to change – he changed.

Head knowledge of the need for change *is not enough*, for thoughts neither energize nor motivate us – it's our *feelings* that move us to do something, and it's our feelings that cause us to change. Our feelings

not only move us, they affect the world around us in ways we are only beginning to understand. Our *thoughts, combined with our feelings*, are what ultimately determine both what we decide to do, and our enjoyment level while doing it. This is the reason why living a life that feels fulfilling and peaceful *cannot* be accomplished by our minds on their own – *for our minds do not feel; it is our hearts that feel.*

What our greatest spiritual teachers throughout history have told us, and what heart science is now confirming, is that if our minds do not have an **“online” connection with our hearts**, then our perspective, thoughts, beliefs, feelings and the decisions and behaviors that follow these will ultimately lead to discordant results – *which look like frustration, division, pain, loss and suffering.* Only when our thoughts are being directed by our hearts do we begin to connect to the *inner-wisdom and love that is available to us all, to consistently experience peaceful, enjoyable, and fulfilling lives.*

### **We Live Out of Our Imagination**

We are continually living out of our imagination; it is so automatic we don't even realize it. When we imagine good things will happen, we feel confident and happy. When we imagine bad things will happen, we worry and become anxious. Only when we allow our heart language to guide our thinking (to direct our imagining to be filled with good and loving desires) will we manifest in our lives results that lead to true and lasting inner fulfillment.

The following Bible verse gives us some clear instructions about the kinds of thoughts we should be allowing ourselves to think and dwell upon:

*Fix your thoughts on what is true and honorable and right. Think about things that are pure and lovely and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise.* Philippians 4:8 (NLT)

We all love experiencing an “aha!” insight, when we truly come to understand something of interest to us. “Aha!” moments can create an *awareness shift* in us, and deep awareness shifts can be *life-transforming* – because they *change how we now perceive something.* The following story created a deep awareness shift in me, and started me on an earnest quest to learn more of the incredible nature of the human heart.

This is the inspiring true story about the heart-stirring events that took place in the first 25 days following the birth of twin girls Brielle and Kyrie, who were born 12 weeks premature. Each of the twin girls weighed only 2 lbs. at birth. Hospitals in the United States have a protocol wherein nurses are instructed to place twin babies in separate incubators. Now imagine what this must be like for twins, especially those born prematurely. For the entire pregnancy, these twins have been beside their brother or sister. A fetus has the ability to detect touch from as early as 8 weeks from conception, and can hear from about 20 weeks.<sup>1</sup> So for most of the time in utero, the twins have been aware of each other's presence, hearing the sounds of each other's heartbeats, and the heartbeat of their mother. Then, shortly after being born into the world, they are separated, both from each other and their mother, and placed alone in an incubator. And as the protocol dictated, Brielle and Kyrie were separated from their mother, and placed in separate incubators.

In the days following their birth, Kyrie was doing well, but her sister was not. Brielle was not gaining adequate weight, her blood oxygen levels and temperature were low, she had breathing and heart-rate problems, and she was crying incessantly. On the 25th day, Brielle's condition became troubling: she was obviously very stressed and would not stop crying. Nothing the attending nurse, Gayle Kasparian, did could calm her down. Holding and rocking Brielle didn't help; her father holding her didn't help; increasing the oxygen levels in her incubator had no effect; neither did suctioning her nose in an attempt to ease her breathing. Tiny Brielle was crying so much she was gasping for air, hiccupping, and her heart-rate was racing. Her skin color had also turned from pinkish to greyish-blue as she struggled to breathe while desperately crying. Brielle could not be consoled.

Attending nurse Kasparian had exhausted all she could think of to calm little Brielle. In an interview she said, "You could tell she was completely stressed out." Then nurse Kasparian remembered something, a practice common in some places in Europe called "co-bedding", where twins are placed in the same incubator, so that, like in their mother's womb, they lie close together. She suggested this to the twin girls' concerned parents,

saying, "I don't know what else to do...". All were in agreement they should give this a try. They decided together to break the hospital's protocol of separate incubators, for concern for Brielle's well-being was escalating. So as agreed, nurse Kasparian placed Brielle beside her stronger sister Kyrie in the same incubator. The twin sisters had not been with or touched each other in the twenty-five days since their birth.

What the rest of this story reveals is profound. It tells us something vitally important about an immensely wise and loving language *we all share in common*. It is a language of care, compassion and empathy for each other, and it continually reminds us of our innate wisdom and our connection with everyone and everything. We do not need to learn this language; neither does it require words – *we need only to remember it* – for each of us was born with it. *It is the language of the heart*. Reminding ourselves of our heart's language, and following its wise guidance is truly the only way we can achieve sustainable positive change in our lives, and influence positive outcomes in our relationships. The following conclusion to the twin girls' story reveals the incredible outcome that transpired because of *just one person following her heart language...*

As soon as nurse Kasparian placed the twins together and they touched – *Brielle stopped squirming and crying*. Then, as the lid of the incubator was closed, little Brielle snuggled up to her stronger sister Kyrie. "Brielle calmed right down," Kasparian exclaimed. "It was immediate, it was absolutely immediate!"

Within minutes, Brielle's blood-oxygen levels improved and stabilized, her temperature rose to normal and her pinkish skin color returned. Shortly thereafter, Brielle began to fall asleep, and as she did, Kyrie lifted her arm up around her weaker sister's neck as if to hug and support her, as they lay close together with their faces touching cheek to cheek. From that point on, both twin girls progressed very well, and were able to leave the hospital sooner than expected.

"Can you feel that feeling?" asked visionary scientist and author Gregg Braden, who was sharing this story with an audience. "Can you feel that?" Some in the audience were holding a hand over their heart; some had tears

in their eyes. “Why do you feel that?” Braden asked, and then answered his own question. “That feeling is a feeling that lives inside your body. It is not a feeling that happens in your mind – it happens in your heart.”<sup>2</sup> The feeling Braden was referring to is *the language of the heart*.

### **Language of the Heart**

The language of the heart is growing in the world, and the story of the twin girls demonstrates the incredible power of this beautiful language that each of us was endowed with, even before we were born. This story demonstrates this language’s *awareness*, its “*knowingness*”, and its *intuitive promptings*. It reveals why more and more of us are being drawn to this language that never forces us to do anything. This language seeks only to reveal, to help us become aware of what is truly important to us – so that we *willingly decide to follow its guidance*.

The “Big Conflict” taking place in humankind occurs between the language of the *Mind* (our ego-self), and the language of the *Heart* (our True-Self). The language of the mind is a *separation language*, and therefore it *divides us*. The language of the heart is a *connective language*, and therefore it *draws us together*. The decisions and actions of nurse Kasparian, who was attending the twin girls, show us the vastly different results that are possible when a conflict, or life-troubling situation, is resolved through following the compassionate guidance and inspiration of our heart language.

When the twin girls were born, a *natural* body separation took place. The mother pushed the twin baby girls out into the world, the umbilical cords were cut, and the babies were now naturally separated from their mother. This separation was necessary so that the baby girls could continue to grow and be able to achieve their potential as amazing human life forms. All was fine so far. Then something happened, an *unnatural* separation took place. This unnatural event occurred because of following the *language of the mind* – the separation language.

As a result of following this *mind language*, the baby girls were removed from their mother, as well as from each other, by being placed in different incubators. Imagine the trauma this separation event would have

had for the baby girls! One moment they were in constant contact with each other, surrounded by the warmth of their mother's body. The babies could hear the rhythmic beating of their mother's heart and the beating of each other's hearts. Then, suddenly, that contact and connection was gone. The heart beat sounds were no longer there. There was space all around them, blankets around their bodies, and brightness never before experienced. *The baby girls were in a completely different environment.* The trauma of the separation and change of environment was so great for Brielle that she wasn't developing and growing satisfactorily at all.

Nurse Kasparian, being fully aware of the stress Brielle was feeling, got a message from her heart. The message caused her to consider that the unnatural separation must be playing a part in negatively affecting the baby girl's life. She listened to her heart's message, following its promptings and guidance. She removed some of the separation. Her heart language told her to reconnect the twins as best she could by putting them beside each other...*and the positive and dramatic result was immediate!* So simple a change to make – and such a beautiful demonstration of our heart's natural response to the preciousness of life – *and why Heart Matters.*

Now consider the completely different outcome that the evidence shows us might well have happened if the attending nurse had followed her *mind language*. That language would have told her to “follow the rules: keep the babies apart”. Since in the days following the twin girls' birth, Brielle's condition had been growing increasingly concerning, this evidence suggests that it is highly likely the weaker sister would have continued to struggle for her life, and that her very life may have been put at risk.

Of course, we can't know for sure if Brielle's worsening condition would have led to her dying. However, serious complications resulting from on-going stress could have led to that outcome. Because of nurse Kasparian's decision and actions, all of those risks were avoided. Imagine if they had not been, and Brielle's worsening condition had caused serious long-term complications or even death. Since that is a reasonable possibility, imagine the grief and sorrow that outcome would have caused for everyone involved with the situation: the grief and anguish of the

parents losing one of their baby girls, the sorrow and longing of Kyrie losing her companion twin sister, and the sorrowing effect on extended family and friends, as well as on the hospital staff, when they learned what had taken place.

The heart-warming wisdom and beauty of what happened in the twin girls' story is inspiring. It wonderfully demonstrates the protection and healing that can take place when two or more people truly care and connect with each other. What happened with the twin girls is beautifully reflected in this insightful Bible passage:

*Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But someone who falls alone is in real trouble. Likewise, two people lying close together can keep each other warm. But how can one be warm alone? A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken.* Ecclesiastics 4:9-12 (NLV)

### **The Human Heart and The Divine Purpose**

For thousands of years, our best literature has emphasized to us the vital importance of heart-directed living, and the discoveries made by science are helping us to better understand why this is the case. In the human body, the heart is the first organ to functionally develop, and the first heart beat of a developing human being takes place just 18 days after conception!<sup>3</sup> At this point, the brain has not begun to develop... *yet, something triggers the heart to start beating.* Scientists still do not know what triggers this first heartbeat<sup>4</sup>, and here I'll explain the basis for a theory I have as to why our hearts are so important to us. When someone has a heart failure, or a heart is stopped for a heart operation, the still heart is electrically stimulated to jolt it into pumping again... *to start it up.* This caused me to think about what actually stimulates the triggering of our first heartbeat.

Is it our "consciousness energy", our *soul energy*, entering our newly developed human heart that jolts our heart to start beating? Might *what enters our hearts* at that time be providing the awareness of why our hearts are so important to us? Is it at this time that our hearts become both

"the seat" of consciousness in our *being-ness*, and "the conduit" to *Source-Consciousness*, to our Creator? Is the human heart the central hub where the spiritual communes with the physical? Would this explain why the stronger twin girl appeared to "know" what her sister most needed in that moment – *the feeling of connection, compassion, and love*?

Who taught the stronger sister the importance of compassion, which she demonstrated so beautifully by placing her arm around her sister? Since this had not been taught to her, then it must be an indication that we are all endowed with the *ability to both feel within ourselves, and to extend outward towards others, the feeling of connection, compassion and love*. I believe this to be the case – that every human being's true nature is pure love and compassion – *and that this is our soul's nature*. One day, perhaps, my theory may be proven: that *it is* the energy of our soul and its loving nature which enters our newly formed heart to stimulate its first beat.

### **Our True Nature**

Babies remind us of our *true authentic nature*, for they are naturally in touch with their feelings. They have yet to learn to judge their feelings; therefore, they are innately responsive to them, and when their physical, and social needs are met, they are naturally happy, loving, playful and responsive to compassion. They are this way because this is our *true-nature*; it is the nature we were born with. We *conditionally "learn"* through our environmental experiences to be otherwise. Since it is our true nature to be loving and compassionate, then any exchanges that we have with each other that *do not feel* to us like love and compassion, simply reveal we have lost our way – *temporarily forgotten our true nature*. Yet, I believe that temporarily forgetting our true nature is part of an incredible Divine Plan, part of a Divine Process that we all must go through and experience in order to spiritually mature.

Losing our way simply means we have become *temporarily spiritually disconnected* from the language of our hearts, and the more disconnected from our heart's language we are, the more experiences of disconnection we have with ourselves and with each other. And this disconnection causes us pain, the purpose of which is to draw us back together with greater awareness of just how important we are to each other.

## **Conceived and Born in Innocence and Also with Ego Capacity**

Though we are born with our *innocent loving nature*, we are also born with the *capacity to develop an ego-nature* – to learn how to think, feel and act *fearfully*. We have all learned how to do this through our societal environment, and therefore we have all experienced the opposite of love – *fear*.

Fear, however, can never be our *true nature*; it can only be our *false nature*. Our true authentic nature is that which is made in God's image. God is unlimited creative power, and unfathomable unconditional love. It is in this image that we are made. Yet, we need to learn how to develop this creative power in unconditionally loving ways, and this is not something that is easily attained – *for it requires character development*. This is the purpose of the spiritual journey I believe we are all on: the journey of continually growing in our awareness of who we really are, why we are here, and what we need to experience, learn, and develop within ourselves to complete this journey.

Our true nature can never be negatively altered, because pure love can never be tampered with, and our True Nature is pure love. *What happens to us is our True Nature becomes veiled, covered by many layers of deception*, as a result of negative societal conditioning, and our ego's influence; and as mentioned above, this cannot be avoided in this world. We all must experience this as a result of the Divine Purpose that is encoded in each of us.

However, as we cooperate in the removal of the deceptions that have veiled our true loving nature, we begin to wake up. This awakening process brings a deeper awareness and understanding of the Divine Process God is taking us through, and as a result, we begin to heal. Each layer of deception veiling our heart must be lifted away, like peeling the layers off an onion. Once the layers of deception are removed, our heart is completely freed to love, our True Nature becomes unbound – and we realize our True Authentic-Self.

Since every veil of deception is based on a *learned* falsehood, to remove each veil we must ask ourselves:

“Is what I have learned true?”

“Is what I believe true?”;

“Is how I'm acting in harmony with my True Nature?”.

Anything that you have learned, or believe, and any way that you think, feel or act that is not in harmony with your true nature, *is a learned falsehood*. Removing the learned veils of deception that are distorting our perceptions can only be accomplished through reconnecting with our hearts – for therein lies our *true-nature*.

### **Living in Harmony with Our Heart Language**

Heart Centered Relating is an exciting approach to living that reveals how we can relate to each other in ways that are in harmony with our natural loving heart language. For when we remain in harmony with our heart language, the fulfilling of our basic human needs is always much easier, and therefore our needs are much more readily met. Physical needs (such as food, shelter, and water) as well as spiritual needs (like our need for connection, love, and understanding) are some of the basic human needs we all must have fulfilled to truly achieve our human potential.

Some of our basic needs can be partially met, and others fully met, through self-reliance – meaning, by taking personal responsibility for doing those things for yourself that only you can do. However, *most* basic human needs require *relating with others* in order to achieve true needs fulfillment. For example, we need connection with other human beings to meet our need for human communing: to experience community, along with the joys of giving and receiving affectionate love, and to feel the deep satisfaction of understanding each other. Identifying our shared human needs is one of the core components of Heart Centered Relating, and we'll be covering this vitally important topic in Chapter 5.

Since HCR is a heart language, this section has been written to *prepare* your heart to *receive* it. My goal is to affect your awareness so that you not only have a strong willingness to learn Heart Centered Relating, but you also envision the life-enhancing experiences you will gain in every aspect of your life by mastering its use. *Take a moment to consider this...* we will all be relating with each other for the rest of our lives; therefore, no skill we develop could ever be more valuable in enriching our relationship experiences – *throughout our lives* – than mastering heart language.

Our language is full of idioms related to the heart. We've all been encouraged to "follow our hearts". We hear people referred to as, "open-hearted", "warm-hearted", "hard-hearted", or "cold-hearted". A selfish decision might provoke, "He's not following his heart". We've all felt, "light-hearted", "down-hearted", "heavy-hearted", and "broken-hearted". When our hearts are despairing, we can feel so much pain that we cry tears of sorrow. However, when we are elated or feeling deeply loved, we say, "My heart is full!". Sometimes our hearts feel so full of joy they overflow. We shout, or laugh, or jump or cry tears of happiness. Clearly "heart" keeps resurfacing in our society, because *it is "us"!* *Heart* it is our nature.

### **Heart Language: Why It's Growing**

There are three key reasons why heart language is growing in the world. First, through our own intuition, many of us are seeing much more clearly that the ways we have been relating to each other just are not working, not only for us, but also for the world at large. Secondly, many great spiritual authors and teachers of our time have *heart-centered principles* at the core of their message. The third reason heart-language is growing is the result of recent remarkable scientific discoveries that reveal the enormous effect our hearts have on us, both *physically* and *psychologically*. Those who are aware of these discoveries are provided with clear logical evidence as to why we need to pay more attention to our *heart-centered-wisdom* when deciding how we want to live our lives.

In the next chapter, you'll read about some of the truly amazing scientific discoveries related to the human heart. You will learn how becoming aware of these discoveries can help you access the power, love, and intelligence that is available to you through staying *spiritually connected* to your heart, and how this can bring enormous benefits into your life.

I end this chapter with two quotations. The first is from Helen Keller, who at the age of 18 months, contracted a disease that left her deaf, blind and mute. Yet in spite of these afflictions, she re-learned language and eventually speech, and went on in her life to become one of 20<sup>th</sup> century's

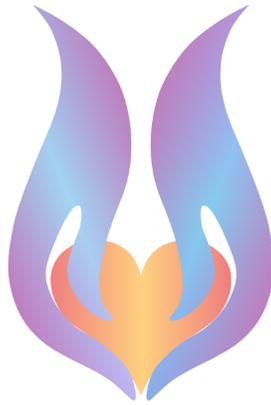
leading humanitarians. The second quotation is from the Bible: the Epistle of Peter. Both emphasize the central message of this book: that heart-centered living and relating are of vital importance to our lives.

*“The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or heard or even felt. They must be felt with the heart.”*

Helen Keller

*“Love each other with a warm love that comes from the heart.”*

1 Peter 1:22 (GW)



# CHAPTER 2

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## THE NEW HEART SCIENCE

### **The Scientific Evidence of Heart Intelligence**

The Institute of HeartMath is an internationally recognized nonprofit research and educational organization that was founded in 1991. The Institute of HeartMath focuses on both scientific biological heart research (how our hearts affect our physiology), as well as the psychological sciences, (how accessing our heart intelligence affects our state of well-being, and our relationships with others). The following are some of the amazing discoveries related to the heart that the Institute of HeartMath and other prominent research institutions have made.

In the new field of neurocardiology (the branch of science that studies the relationship between the brain, heart and nervous system), scientists have discovered that the heart has what they are referring to as the “*heart-brain*”. It consists of a highly sophisticated network of nerves comprised of more than *40,000 neurons*, as many as some sections of the human brain.<sup>3</sup> Scientists say this gives the heart the ability to “independently sense, process information, make decisions, and even to demonstrate a type of learning and memory.”<sup>4</sup> It has also been discovered that the heart actually *sends* more messages to the brain than it *receives from* the brain, and also, that the signals sent by the heart to the brain *influence emotional processing*, as well as *higher cognitive abilities*, such as our ability to perceive, memorize, and problem-solve.

### **The Heart Is a Significant Communication Hub**

In addition to sending signals directly to the brain, the heart also acts like a communication hub, receiving and transmitting biochemical, biophysical and energetic communications throughout the body. Biochemically, the heart produces a number of hormones, including a hormone call ANF, nicknamed the “*balance hormone*”, and this hormone

affects blood pressure, body-fluid retention, and electrolyte equilibrium. The heart also produces and releases dopamine and neurotransmitters that are known to mediate emotion in the brain.<sup>5</sup>

Biophysically, every heartbeat produces a powerful wave of energy that travels faster than blood flow. This energy wave creates multiple positive effects on the body, both in terms of *wave pressure*, and *electrical current changes* that affect larger blood vessels, capillaries, and cells. The pressure waves created by the beats of our heart enhance the brain's electrical activity, and the currents created by this electrical activity enhance the ability of our body's cells to receive oxygen and nutrients.<sup>6</sup>

### **The Heart's Powerful Electromagnetic Field**

Of all the recent discoveries scientists have made about the human heart, perhaps the following one will resonate with you the most. We've all been taught that all the "real" action happens in our brain. However, as we have already seen, the new science of the heart is revealing otherwise, and if electromagnetic power is an indication of "real action", then the heart is *much more powerful* than the *brain* in terms of "*energy output action*". The *human heart* has an electromagnetic field that is approximately 5,000 times stronger than the field produced by the brain. In addition, our heart's energy field emanates at least 8-10 feet beyond our body. Therefore, our entire body is constantly "bathed" in the heart's energy field. It permeates every cell in our body, and because it extends beyond our body, it has also been scientifically proven to register in those who are in close proximity to us.<sup>7</sup>

We have all had experiences of sensing this energy field: people around us from whom we experience a sensation that feels either positive or negative. Emotional feelings do not emit from our heads; *they emanate from our hearts*. So it only makes sense that when we are thinking and feeling positively, those thoughts and feelings are going to be reflected in our heart's energy field. If the opposite is taking place, if we are dwelling on negative thoughts, then negative feelings will be the result, and our heart's energy field will be emanating negative energy. This is the reason why it is so important for us to learn how to consistently stay in

a positive feeling state, both to optimize achieving our own potential, as well as to create the optimal “energy environment” within which we can meaningfully connect and harmoniously relate with others.

### **Everything in the Universe Is Connected**

Developing deeply meaningful relationships is essential to personal growth and needs fulfillment. A key understanding that can help you in these pursuits is becoming aware that *everything in life is connected by energy fields*. Every atom of matter has a positive and negative charge, which means it has an electromagnetic energy field. Therefore, *everything* is affecting the things around it in some way, and this is especially evident in human relationships. In the human body, the heart has by far the *largest* and *strongest* electromagnetic field, and the heart’s energy field affects the energy fields of all our body’s organs. Most significantly, *there is an especially dynamic relationship between the energy fields of the heart and the brain*.

For this reason, the thoughts we dwell on create what we are feeling in our hearts. These feelings then affect the quality of the energy field our heart emanates, which in turn affects how our whole body feels, and consequently, influences how others feel when they are around us. Our bodies, in addition to our sensory organs, have the ability to transmit and receive “signals” much like a radio transmitter/receiver. Most of the time, we are not aware that this is taking place; we think our thoughts and feelings are isolated within ourselves. However, sometimes our energy field connectedness with others comes right into the forefront of our consciousness. The following encounter was a striking example to me of this connectedness, one of many such occurrences that happen regularly in my life.

I was in a large home/hardware chain store, in the aisle that has all the open bulk bins of fastening parts. I needed some nuts and bolts, so I located the bins containing what I was looking for, and proceeded to get the clear plastic bags provided to hold the items. After placing the parts in the bags, I went back to where the plastic bags were to locate the pen (tied to a string) used for writing the part numbers and quantities on the bags.

As I began to write on one of the bags, well...the pen didn't work very well (which had been my experience on several occasions), and I thought, "Next time I do this, I'm bringing my own pen". Immediately after thinking that, a fellow customer came up to me and said, "Here, use my pen – I bring my own because these pens are a hassle." Was it just a coincidence that this customer repeated to me the precise thought I was thinking? That this customer "just happened" to be in the same store, in the same aisle, at the exact time, noticed my situation, wanted to be helpful, repeated the exact thought I was thinking – and then provided a pen for me to use on top of it all?

Were all of these synchronous events simply a bunch of random coincidences? *I don't think so.* The two of us were in close proximity to each other, so therefore our (8 to 10-foot) energy fields were intermingling; but our energy fields hold more than just a bunch of frequencies: they contain our thoughts and feelings as well. The fellow customer didn't just say to me, "Would you like to use my pen?" He mirrored my precise thought, which was, "Next, time I'm bringing my own pen"; he said, "Here, use my pen—I bring my own...". My energy field was emitting that thought; his energy field received that thought, relayed that thought to his brain, and he acted on that received thought. Was this person consciously aware that this was happening? Not likely. I, however, in light of all I have learned about *energy field connection*, realized in wondrous amazement that this was what had taken place.

Throughout human history, our ancient texts and traditions have reminded us of our connection with each other, and with all things. This is something most of us have felt, but now, new scientific discoveries are giving our logical minds solid evidence that indeed, *everything is connected*. We can now prove that what we think and feel, does have implications of influence far beyond what most of us have been led to believe through the traditional education we have received.

Science, as we know it today, is only 300 years old. Though many recent discoveries of the "new science" have proven beyond doubt that assumptions made based on theories of the "old science" are incorrect,

these false-assumption theories (upon which the models of our civilization are based) remain deeply entrenched in our culture, and therefore, greatly affect our thoughts and beliefs about “how things are”. The old science taught that everything is separate, and that the influence of our thoughts and feelings has no effect on anything outside of ourselves.

The new science has provided solid evidence that *this is not the case*. The old science taught that life is but a series of random events, and that any order we see in nature and the world around us is simply the result of chance occurrence. The discoveries of the new science reveal otherwise. These new discoveries are particularly relevant in human relationships, because it is through living our lives through our heart-centered energies – *the thoughts, feelings and behaviors that come from our hearts* – that we have the most positive effect on ourselves, on others, and on all things around us.

My story about my encounter with the fellow customer in the store is a *micro example* of how our individual thoughts and feelings can affect others – how they can influence the events that occur in our lives. The following is a *macro example* of this same effect.

The United States has two satellites in space that measure the magnetic field of the earth: one is located in the northern hemisphere, the other in the southern hemisphere. On September 11, 2001, something extraordinary happened with the earth’s magnetic fields.

Precisely fifteen minutes after the attack on the World Trade Center’s Twin Towers, there was a huge spike in the earth’s electromagnetic field, for which scientists had absolutely no explanation. Nothing in their experience had ever shown a spike of this magnitude, with no known reason for why this might have occurred. But what had occurred? In the first fifteen minutes after the attack on the World Trade Center, the news of the attack travelled extremely quickly throughout the world as a result of modern telecommunications. Through the internet, television, radio, telephone calls, text messages, and emails, people around the world rapidly learned of the horrifying event.

The speed of the news created an incredible synchronistic worldwide *“human-heart-emotion event”*. Knowing our hearts have powerful electromagnetic fields that emanate outside of our bodies, imagine the cumulative *heart-energy-effect* of multiple millions (perhaps billions) of *human heart energy fields* joined together in a shared emotional experience. A collective outpouring of powerful emotional feeling was stirred by the shock and horror of the *human tragedy* that was unfolding before us, and coming into our collective consciousness.

This shared emotional experience created a very powerful electromagnetic force that emanated from the collective human heart, and the satellites orbiting far above the earth registered a huge spike in the earth’s electromagnetic field. Coincidence? Many scientists, such as Gregg Braden, author of multiple books and a popular touring speaker, think otherwise.<sup>8</sup> It was Braden who brought to my attention the phenomenon described above, as well as the experiment described below, which is a stunning example of the interconnectedness of matter. This experiment also reveals the incredible effect human DNA has on the matter that surrounds it, and provides undeniable evidence of the connectedness of all things.

Quantum biologist Vladimir Popopin and Dr. Peter Gariaev published a paper in 1995 which describes a series of very interesting experiments involving human DNA and photons.<sup>9</sup> They measured the locations of tiny photon particles of light in a vacuum tube, and as expected, they were evenly distributed in the tube. Next, they placed living human DNA samples in the tube and witnessed something truly amazing. The photon particles *aligned themselves around and in the spiral pattern of the DNA!* Following this observation, they removed the DNA, and discovered something even more amazing. With the DNA removed, the photon particles *remained in the DNA spiral pattern!* This experiment not only demonstrated the interconnectedness of the quantum particles of which all things are made, but also that human DNA, the material that makes us who we are, has a powerful impact on the particles of life.<sup>10</sup>

The three stories I have just shared illustrate the interconnectedness of all forms of matter – *how our consciousness affects the world around us* – and these are but a tiny sampling of what has been studied and written about on this subject. These examples provide information that is not commonly known, and help us understand the importance of recognizing the connectedness of life, and how crucial our heart’s energy is in guiding us to peaceful living and to meaningful relating.

### **More Heart Matters**

Most of us do not realize that in our fetal development stage, our hearts were already formed and pumping before there was any brain development at all. This puts a whole new meaning on what many of us have felt, if not heard, on many occasions: “*put your heart first*”. It is also interesting to note that the emotional regions of the brain develop first, and the rational thinking parts of the brain grow out of the emotional regions.<sup>11</sup> We are *emotional beings* who are always *feeling something*, and our hearts are actually designed to direct us through our *feelings*. We all know what feels right and what doesn’t. The *feelings* our thoughts create help *guide* the decisions we need to make. We were designed to be guided from our heart-center, and only to use our mind’s thoughts as an effective tool to direct our behavior *to be in harmony with our heart’s wisdom and guidance*. Through paying attention to our feelings, we can learn how to think and act in ways that cause us to feel good, and not to think and act in ways that cause us to feel bad.

### **Coherence: Optimizes Heart, Brain and Body Functions**

Heart researchers now have the ability to measure the effects of our *feelings* on both the quality of our heartbeat, as well as the quality of the frequency generated by our heart. When we are experiencing positive feelings, both our heartbeat rhythm, and the energy field generated by our heart, become more coherent – *meaning, more integrated*.

Think of the difference between talking with a sober person compared to an intoxicated person. The more intoxicated a person is, the more difficult it is to communicate. This is what happens to the internal communications between our *heart, mind* and *body* when we are in a *negative feeling state*. The more negative we are feeling, the more incoherent we become.

We don't need science to inform us of the detrimental effects negative feelings have on us. Science is simply reminding us of this awareness. We have all done things when we have been in negative states that have caused us feelings of terrible regret. We have all had incidents of angry outbursts where we have lashed out at people, and said or done things we desperately wish we had not. And we've all made decisions that in hindsight look foolish to us once we have calmed down, are feeling better, and are thinking more rationally. As well, each of us has experienced enough conflicts to understand how draining the negative feelings caused by these conflicts can be.

Conflicts are *stressful* – *they don't feel good to us*. This kind of stress can only have a detrimental effect on both our physiology and our psychology – *and it is our feelings that inform us of this truth*. Yet, even though we all know this at some level, staying in a positive frame of mind so that we are consistently experiencing positive feelings is often very challenging in today's world. This is what we will be covering in the next two chapters, for there are some very effective ways to overcome this challenge, and in the upcoming pages, you are going to learn precisely how you can do this.

Though we all have basic needs that need to be met to feel fully alive and fulfilled, it is what we dwell upon, and the actions that we take in the pursuit of achieving needs fulfillment that ultimately determine our feelings of contentment and well-being at any given moment in our lives.

*"Very little is needed to make a happy life; it is all within yourself, in your way of thinking."*

Marcus Aurelius (Roman Emperor and Stoic Philosopher, 161-180 CE)

*"Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."*

Romans 12:2 (NIV)



# CHAPTER 3

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## THE CREATIVE POWER OF OUR BELIEFS

*“For As He Thinks In His Heart So Is He”*

*Proverbs 23:7 (NKJB)*

### **How We Think and Feel Matters**

It is estimated that the above verse, contained in the Bible in the Book of Proverbs, was written over 2,500 years ago. But what, precisely, does this verse mean? What are its implications? As mentioned in the Introduction, the Bible is a mystical text, with profound layers of meaning often concealed within its wisdom.

Can a person think in his heart? Can the above Proverb be taken literally? As we learned in Chapter 2, heart scientists have discovered that the heart actually has a “brain” – a network of over 40,000 neurons as large as some sections of the brain. Can a person think, imagine, and feel themselves into abundance and wealth? Do our thoughts and feelings affect the health of our body, and the health of the relationships in our life? Is this verse in Proverbs telling us just how important our heart intelligence is in determining our thoughts, and therefore the quality of our life experiences? I believe it is.

*Think and Grow Rich*, written by Napoleon Hill and published in 1937, has sold over 70 million copies. The premise of Hill’s book is that you can think, feel, and imagine yourself into becoming successful and/or wealthy; that thoughts are actually formed from the same things as material objects. There are countless testimonies from people who attribute their business success to what they learned and applied from reading Hill’s book.

This idea – that our thoughts affect our material world, including our bodies and our relationships – was first introduced to me by my younger sister some 25 years ago. She told me a story she’d read about a husband

and wife. The wife was very frustrated that her husband spent copious amounts of time watching television rather than helping her out around the house. Talking to her husband about her frustration had no positive effect.

Then one day she heard about this idea that we can *imagine* what we desire to have happen in our lives, and that when we do this, and *see and believe* in our imagination the details of what we desire, we can cause what we believe to manifest.

The woman applied this principle. She envisioned her husband no longer watching television, but rather doing things around the house. She would imagine this change in her husband even while he was watching television. She would say to herself, "My husband no longer watches television. I see him in the kitchen helping out. I see him taking care of chores around the house." Some time after she began this practice, her husband started doing exactly as she had imagined!

So many people pray and ask God for their heart's desire. They ask for health, or money to pay the bills, or a relationship to heal, but God doesn't seem to answer their prayers. "Why is this?", people ask themselves. "Why doesn't God answer my prayers?" The following two Bible stories give us a clear answer as to why so many people's desires, hopes and prayers do not manifest in their lives. It has everything to do with what we actually **believe** will happen.

*Just then a woman came up behind Jesus. She had a sickness that made her bleed. It had lasted for 12 years. She touched the edge of his clothes. She thought, "I only need to touch his clothes. Then I will be healed." Jesus turned and saw her. "Dear woman, don't give up hope," he said. "Your faith has healed you." The woman was healed at that very moment. Matthew 20:20-22 (NIVR)*

*As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed him. They called out, "Have mercy on us, Son of David!" When Jesus went indoors, the blind men came to him. He asked them, "Do you believe that I can do this?" "Yes, Lord," they replied. Then he touched their eyes. He said, "It will happen to you just as you believed." They could now see again. Matthew 20:27-30 (NIVR)*

## Thoughts, Desires and the Creative Power of Our Imagination

In the two Bible stories above, we see Jesus was teaching us about the power of our beliefs 2,000 years ago. When the woman who touched Jesus's garment was healed, Jesus didn't say, "I healed you". He said, "*Your faith has healed you.*" When Jesus touched the blind men's eyes, he again didn't say, "I healed you". He said, "*It will happen to you just as you have believed.*"

I did some research on "Law of Attraction" books. The concept behind these books is the same as Napoleon Hill's book referred to earlier – that our thoughts and beliefs affect our reality. According to Wikipedia, books advocating this concept started being written and published around 1860. A Google search on the subject quickly produced a link wherein 250 recently written books on this topic were listed.

A number of years ago, I had a business client with a small staff. I was teaching about this topic – that how we think immediately affects how we feel. I had everyone imagine they were in Hawaii – the warm breeze, ocean, beaches, dolphins, etc. – as well as what they would be doing there. Everyone started smiling, laughing and chatting with each other about what fun that would be. They were all experiencing the same kinds of feelings, as if they were actually there, and therein lies the key to fully believing something. We must believe that we are already there, that what we pray for, ask for, and desire to have happen has already happened. We must make it real in our imaginations, and firmly hold onto the belief that it is just a matter of time before we experience this reality in our lives.

These are Jesus's words to us regarding believing that what we desire to happen will manifest in our lives when we believe this to be true.

*"Therefore I say unto you, whatever things you desire, when you pray, believe that you will receive them, and you shall have them."*

Mark 11:24 (KJV 2000)

Gregg Braden is a popular author and scientist who writes about cutting-edge science, psychology and spirituality. In his popular book *The Spontaneous Healing of Belief*, he writes about the power of belief.

He states it is more about the *intensity of the feelings* our thoughts produce *in our hearts* that creates our reality, than it is about the thoughts themselves (or our words). That *imagining specific details is key*. That really made sense to me. I was single at the time. So I thought, "If I can attract what I truly desire, then this is the kind of woman I desire". I desired a loving relationship, of course, but I wanted the physical attraction as well!

Again, Jesus says in Matthew 7:7 – "Ask, and you will receive; seek, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you." (GNT)

So I "asked". I imagined her with the physical details I preferred and our being in a loving relationship. I *believed* she was "out there" and that I was going to attract her. I talked with her in my imagination, imagined being with her, riding my bike beside her and so on. I shared the idea with my younger brother. "We'll see if it works," he said. Then, two months later, as a result of incredible "coincidences", I met her! We connected in ways neither of us had experienced before and she did have the physical features I had imagined.

Though we did connect in amazing ways and did fall in love, the relationship did not last. This taught me that not everything we believe into our lives will last or work out exactly as hoped. Though we both benefited in many ways as a result of the relationship, over time, incompatibilities surfaced. The main challenge was my belief that relationships should be mutually beneficial – that in order for a relationship to achieve its potential, both people in the relationship need to be as interested in the other person's needs being met as in having their own needs met. She did not believe this. She believed it was more the male's role to meet the needs of the female. After much effort in trying to remedy this incompatibility – through practising patience in communication, and through the ongoing example of my giving to her – when there was still no change, I decided to end the relationship.

Now this "ending" to the story might seem to fly in the face of what I have previously written. Perhaps if I had believed strongly enough it would have resulted in changing her perspective – that it was more the male's role to give, and the female's to receive. However, I had to consider

the possibility that no matter how strongly I believed, God/Spirit/Life had something else in store for us in this life journey, and that the relationship had served its purpose for both of us. Thus, in my experience, believing things into your reality is not a black-and-white issue, and I especially believe this to be true when you are discussing the topic of believing character changes “into” another person.

In the above story about the husband and wife, it is very interesting that the wife believed/imagined her husband into not watching so much TV, but instead, helping around the house. However, did the most important change take place? Did the *husband’s character really change*? Did he become truly aware of how selfish he had been? Of course, without knowing more details, we can’t know the answer to that question.

Personally, I would have been more impressed if the wife had believed her husband “into” deeper communication with her. Had this taken place, the change in her husband would have come about as a result of understanding her needs – *from a deep desire to meet her needs in loving and responsible ways.* I believe a deeper spiritual understanding is not to desire people to “just behave or do what we want”, but rather, to deeply desire for them to understand within themselves the importance of change – of developing their characters in ways that cause them to be more loving and giving.

Returning for a moment to my relationship situation, at the time of writing this I’m single, *but not in my imagination.* This time, however, I am paying more attention to my “character list”. I still desire the physical attraction, but I’m focusing *at least* an equal amount of attention on imagining the character qualities I desire in my life-partner, and I fully believe I will meet her.

### **The Power of Feeling Belief**

In Chapter 2, I explained that heart scientists are able to measure the electromagnetic fields of the organs of our bodies. Though one might think that the brain would have the strongest field, we now know this is not even close to being the case – for the electromagnetic field of our

heart is *5,000 times stronger* than that of our brain. This helps explain why prayers, beliefs and imagined desires that are expressed with deep feelings in our hearts are so much more effective than “hoped for” *mind-prayers*, which are devoid of feelings of belief.

*“Belief is expressed in the heart, where our experiences are translated into electrical and magnetic waves that interact with the physical world.”*

Gregg Braden, *The Spontaneous Healing of Belief*

Here’s an example of how our beliefs can work against us. Many years ago, I was driving my car down a gravel road. Up ahead I saw a truck coming. I thought, “That truck is going to go by me and a rock is going to crack my windshield.” *I really felt this*, and that is precisely what happened! You see... our beliefs work in both ways – both positive and negative. Now, it could be that it wasn’t my “negative” feeling/thought that caused the rock to hit my window, for it could have been an intuition. Nonetheless, there is ample evidence, especially in regards to physical health, that we can make ourselves sick or well by how we are thinking.

As previously mentioned, I don’t believe that manifesting your desires into your reality is a black-and-white topic. For example, a weak belief, either positive or negative, will not be as likely to manifest as a strong belief. Thus, when believing desired experiences into our lives, intensity of feeling is a major factor, as is consistency in continuing to believe when what we desire doesn’t show up right away. As well, vividly imagining specific details of what you desire to manifest is also very important.

The point I want to emphasize is this: there is a *strong and consistent likelihood of manifesting in your life what you are dwelling upon, and feeling intensely about* – whether that be character changes within yourself, relationship improvements, or material objects. Everyone has this creative ability, which I like to refer to as the “law of reflection”, rather than the “law of attraction” – and this is the reason:

Life will reflect back to us what we think, feel and dwell upon (imagine and feel internally) in our material experiences (our outer world). What we imagine with detail, and feel deeply passionate about, not only affects our material world: it is also reflected back to us immediately in how we

feel, which affects how we act and relate. If we imagine loving, positive things, we experience positive feelings, and act and relate in accordance. If we imagine fearful, negative things, we experience negative feelings, and act and relate accordingly.

Why does life work this way? Because each of us has been gifted with creative power. Though it is hard for most of us to accept – that our thoughts, feelings, and beliefs really do affect both our inner experiences and our material world – *it is true*. And God/Spirit uses our life experiences to teach us (like a loving parent would teach their child), how to use this creative ability in loving and positive ways, rather than negative ways. This is how we *eventually* learn how important what we think, feel, believe and imagine is. God teaches and reveals to us life-lessons through the consequences we create (reflect back) in our lives; and these consequences should never be viewed as punishments or rewards. *Man uses punishments and rewards to manipulate behavior. God uses consequences to teach us love and wisdom.* Therefore, there are always consequences to our dwelt-upon thoughts and feelings, and to our behavior.

We are made in God's image and likeness, and we reflect the Creator's nature. "*God spoke: 'Let us make human beings in our image, make them reflecting our nature.'*" Genesis 1:26 (MSG). The Bible isn't talking about our bodies being made in God's image, likeness and nature, (for God is Spirit), but rather, our consciousness. We share the same attributes of God in our ability to *think, imagine and create*. We are here, living, creating and relating with each other, – *learning through our experiences* – about this incredible ability we have to *think, imagine and to create*.

Look around you: everything you see was first imagined by Spirit – *material things were created by unseen energy*. As well, everything you see that is man-made was first conceived in the imagination of man. Yes, what we think about does create our reality. It creates our current reality, and our perceptions of that reality. What we imagine also significantly influences our future reality, and *immediately* affects how we feel.

"...so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible."

Hebrews 11:3 (ESV)

Bob Miglani, author of *Embrace the Chaos*, wrote about “lucky people” in an article I came across in the *Huffington Post*:<sup>1</sup>

*“Sure, we can be born into it and fall into it. But so many successful people I’ve met – from couples in blissful long-term relationships to successful career women to billionaires to profoundly happy people who have very little – became “lucky” because they think differently and take certain actions.”*

Bob Miglani

One of the repeating themes in this book is that our thoughts – *are our imaginings*. It is the things we are thinking about – the things we are imagining that create our feelings – and not just our feelings, but the very material objects and experiences we reflect back into our life. This includes the kind of people “we draw” into our life, *as well as the quality of our experiences in all of our relationships with others*.

### **Can We Always Trust the Feelings in Our Heart?**

All of us have experienced the feeling of being led astray by the feelings in our heart – of being sure of a love relationship, business deal, or any number of other decisions we felt were “right” at the time, but didn’t turn out according to our expectation. We lament, “I followed my heart – why did it turn out so badly?” Thus, I’m not suggesting that we follow every feeling without due consideration of potential error; or that everything we feel “right” about will still feel “right” when events play out; or that everything we feel “wrong” about is actually “wrong”. Most of us have experienced an enormous amount of negative conditioning in our lives, and we need to work our way out of it. Life is a process of learning, of maturing, of becoming wiser.

Some of the best life-lessons each of us has ever learned came about as a result of making a “wrong” decision. So was it really “wrong” if you learned something so valuable? How else would you have experientially learned what you did? What I am bringing forward is that you can always trust that what you are *feeling* is being generated by the thoughts you are dwelling upon, and that our heart continually uses our feelings to bring something of importance to our attention. The more intensely we feel something, the more important is the lesson – *the understanding of something* – our heart’s are attempting to bring into our awareness.

Our perceptions and beliefs are formed by our experiences, and many of those experiences involve a lot of negative societal conditioning. Our perceptions and beliefs cause us to think as we think, and therefore feel how we feel, and consequently act as we do. If our perceptions are askew, and our beliefs based on a falsehood, then our thoughts and actions will lead to discordant results, *which we will feel*.

These feelings reveal that our perceptions and beliefs are out of alignment with what was true (or what is truth). Thus, by paying attention to the results we get – *and the feelings those results create* – we can access our heart-wisdom and use our feelings to guide our thoughts in wiser ways. Learning how to do this effectively is a process of learning, not a black-and-white ideology. There is no substitute for experience. However, as we pay closer attention to our experiences, and to the results and feelings those experiences are manifesting in our lives, we can advance much more effectively. We can learn more quickly how to think and live in ways that truly benefit our personal growth, and help us to relate with others in more meaningful and fulfilling ways.

To become aware of insights that may be of great benefit to us requires an open mind and an open heart. We need to make room for new information to more easily reach our *heart-centered consciousness*, and this requires a *tempered mind-set*. Generally, for most of us, a tempered mind-set means a much lower number of thoughts per minute.

However, it is not just about slowing our thoughts down. Thought temperance is more about awareness of the quality of our thoughts. It's about finding and dwelling upon thoughts that are *hopeful, positive and relevant to the situation*. Towards the end of this chapter, some practical techniques for creating mind-temperance will be explained; however, just stopping for a few moments and focusing on something beautiful in nature (the sky, a flower, or a bird in flight) can be calming. If you're inside, then imagining something picturesque like a waterfall, a bubbling mountain stream, or an inspiring sunset, or thinking of someone you love will have a calming effect on your mind – *and consequently, on your body*.

Our heart loves a calm mind, for a calm mind opens pathways to the heart – *to meaningfully connecting with our inner wisdom* – our *God-consciousness*. When we become connected with Life in this way, we optimize the potential for *awareness shifts* to take place in our mind.

Awareness shifts are so beneficial because when we become truly conscious of something new and relevant to our lives that we have never considered, this change in awareness not only affects our current thinking, feelings, and behavior, it will also be reflected in our *future thinking, feelings, and behavior*. This is the way we change and become more loving. The Bible tells us how to transform our lives.

*“Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think.”*

Roman 12:2 (NLT)

### **Life-Changing Power Shifts**

Changes in behavior that come quickly after an awareness shift are often referred to as “effortless change” – and *seemingly* effortless change usually follows a significant *awareness shift experience*. These experiences create a realization that results from a *deep feeling* of a *new understanding*, and with this new understanding, you know you will never be the same again. This doesn’t mean you won’t find many of the changes you desire to make in your life to be a challenge – for we all need to be challenged to grow.

Of key importance in handling the challenges we face is to learn how to reduce the amount of time we are in *inner conflict* – *struggling* and *suffering*. Our goal should be to significantly minimize (and eventually to eliminate) the times we allow negative thoughts and feelings to cause us to make unwise decisions. It is so important to realize that the more open we are to our heart-center-wisdom, the more wisdom we will receive. The more wisdom we receive, the more awareness shifts we will experience; the more awareness shifts we go through, the more enriching our experiences with others will be – *and the more fulfilling our lives will become*.

## Thoughts, Senses, Emotions and Feelings

The physical realm is the world of energy in form, and basically our bodies experience the physical realm through our senses – as that which we can *see, touch, smell, taste and hear*. The spiritual realm is not confined or defined by form – for it is the realm of “formless” energy. We experience the spiritual realm as that which we cannot see – our consciousness – which comprises our *thoughts, emotions, and feelings*; our thoughts, emotions and feelings allow us to know that we exist. Thus, we are all both physical and spiritual beings, and it is the spiritual part of ourselves, *our consciousness*, that animates our bodies. The combination of our *thoughts, emotions, desires and aspirations* are what *move us* to make a decision, and then to take a physical action based on that decision.

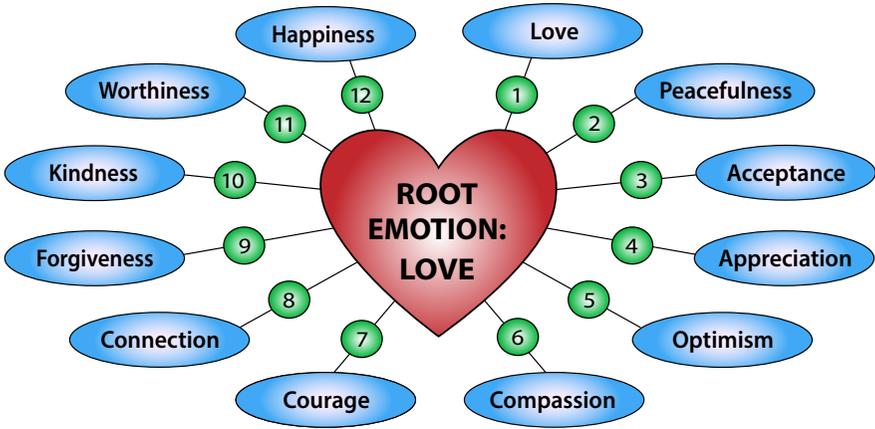
In his aforementioned book, *The Spontaneous Healing of Belief*, scientist and spiritual author Gregg Braden explained the difference between *emotions* and *feelings*. People often wonder, “What is the difference between an emotion and a feeling?” Braden explained that there are actually only two “root” emotions – *love and fear: all feelings are sourced from these two root emotions*.

Therefore, the emotions of love and fear together make up the potential for *everything that we can feel*, both the *positive feelings* and the *negative feelings*. It is how we feel that affects our enjoyment of our life experiences. Positive thoughts and feelings are sourced in the **root emotion love**, such as joy, forgiveness and fulfillment. *Negative thoughts and feeling* are sourced in the **root emotion fear**, such as anxiety, resentment and anger.

*Love and Fear* are the sides of the same “**emotional energy coin**”, and we are the ones who decide which way the flipped coin is going to land. We are the ones who determine whether to focus on life-enhancing positive thoughts or on life-diminishing negative thoughts, and our *feelings about life* will always follow our *thoughts about life*. My older sister had a theatre professor who used to say, “It’s not the mood you’re in, but the mood that’s in you, and whether or not you’re going to let it stay there.” What the professor was emphasizing to the students is that it is our thoughts that create our moods, and that it is our choice whether we allow a negative mood.

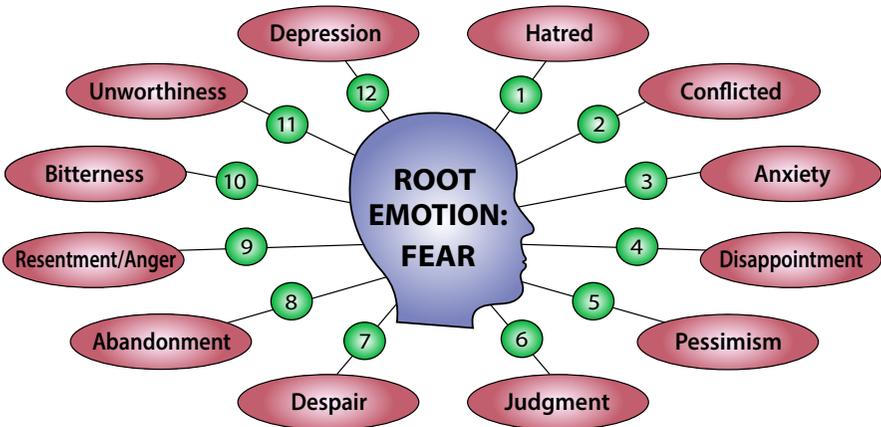
I will be coming back to this illustration to do an interesting thought/feeling exercise, but for now, I simply want to draw your attention to the simplicity of the truth that *every positive feeling* is rooted in the emotion of love, and *every negative feeling* is rooted in the emotion of fear; and also, that every positive feeling has an opposite negative feeling.

## Heart-Generated Feelings



*The Feelings of the Language of the Heart*

## Mind-Generated Feelings



*The Feelings of the Language of the Mind*

As we have learned, positive feelings – because they are sourced in and radiate from the emotion of *love* – create enjoyable, connective, peaceful, and meaningful life experiences. Conversely, negative feelings – because they are sourced in and emanate from the emotion of *fear* – create divisive, conflictive, and frustrating life experiences.

In any given moment, when we are being tempted to think negatively, act unbecomingly, or to make an unwise choice, we actually have only one choice to make: a heart-sourced love choice, or a fear-sourced ego choice. The awareness of this simplicity can be *life-transforming*. This is one of those understandings that once fully realized, will create a *powerful awareness-shift experience in your consciousness*.

Once you fully comprehend that you *always* have a choice, in any situation, between a *love response* and a *fear response*, and once you understand the far-reaching implications of that choice, you will experience a deep feeling within you – *a realization* – that you truly do want to learn how to choose love *in all life encounters*. You will come to this realization because you will understand why choosing fear always leads to more chaos and conflict. Because of this understanding, choosing love will become the deepest of your heart's desires – *the only thing that could ever really matter*.

Our *human journey* always takes us through countless *love-feeling*, and *fear-feeling* experiences. The fear-feeling experiences are “required human learning”, for these experiences reveal to us – *by how we feel about them* – that these are experiences we *don't want to repeat*. Understanding what you do want to experience in your life requires understanding what you don't want to experience. However, knowing what you don't want to experience is only a first step; it is not enough to evoke change. To optimize expediting positive-loving change you must become fully aware of three fundamental understandings:

- 1) You must become passionate in your desire to feel more positive and loving experiences in your life;
- 2) You need to prepare yourself for this change by developing specific heart-centered thought and action strategies to counter negative feelings when they surface;

- 3) You must tap your inner strength – *your passion to change* – and courageously and lovingly encourage yourself to consistently practise these thought and action strategies on a daily basis. Each of us has the ability to consciously choose to recondition ourselves: rather than defaulting to negative-fearful responses to challenging situations, to choose positive-loving responses.

### **The Proof Is Within Us**

As covered in the last chapter, it is certainly of great interest to know that science can prove the benefits of positive feeling states. However, our *own feelings* are all the “*proof*” we should ever need that living out of love will always be life-enhancing (*both physically and spiritually*), and living out of fear will always be life-diminishing.

By identifying both our feelings and the source emotion of our feelings (whether love or fear), we sensitize our “*feeling awareness antennae*”. We become more aware of what we are feeling more immediately, and the reason we are feeling as we are. This allows us to engage negative-feeling counter measures when we are feeling negative beyond the initial feeling “message” of an unmet need. This awareness allows us to be able to make a heart inquiry as to the reason we are feeling afraid – and you will find the base answer to this question will always be the same. We are afraid that a need we have will never be met, and because of this, our negative feeling will stay with us. In other words, we are afraid there may be no solution to our current situation. However, this is never true. There is always a solution.

### **Our Small Fears Are Sourced in Our Big Fear**

Our “small” fears are that our needs will not be met. We are afraid of this because unmet needs hurt, and we are afraid of pain; we are afraid of suffering; we are afraid of failing. In order to overcome our fears (which is required to fully develop our character) it is essential to understand that there are only two forces “at play” in the world/universe. We categorize these forces using many different words. However, the four main combination of words we use to describe these two forces are: love/fear, life/death, positive/negative, and success/failure. Without the opposing force of fear-death-negative-failure, we would not be able to experientially understand the force of love-life-positive-success.

What we are really afraid of, regardless of the situation we are facing, is death-negativity-failure, *all aspects of fear*. In order to fully overcome our “small” fears (our current needs not being met), we have to believe with absolute certainty that ultimately everything is going to work out – everything will be “redeemed”. The Bible assures us of this truth with these three words: “Love never fails.” 1 Peter 1:22 (BBE)

To fully benefit in the *here* and *now* from these three words – love never fails – requires faith. Faith is best described as absolute belief, trust, confidence, and assurance that something hoped for is going to happen. The Divine Purpose is that all will be redeemed; *that is the macro truth*. *The micro truth* is that you are part of the macro plan, and you are involved in your own *love never fails* experience. This is what is being “worked out” in each of us, and it is through this process that we are spiritually matured through the development of our characters. Faith is a character quality. By “exercising” faith, you learn who you are and what you are capable of; you learn through your own experiences that *love never fails*.

We all know that our earth-journey is temporary, for we all realize we will eventually die. So ultimately, our big fear is: “What will happen when I die?” Earlier, I explained that it is the unseen realm of spiritual energies – our thoughts and feelings (our consciousness) – that animate our bodies. When our consciousness fully leaves our body, our body is no longer animate, but we will still be fully aware of ourselves.

No one can remember when they became aware – *conscious of themselves* – when they could first say “I am”, because we have *always been*. Perhaps not as “individual I am’s”, but always part of the “Great I Am”, part of the Creator – of all that is – the Source of All. Since the Source of All has always existed, and we are part of Source Consciousness, then we have always been, and therefore we will always be. Consequently, our awareness of ourselves, our True-Self, cannot die. Death in the spiritual realm does not exist.

Since death of consciousness does not exist, then we have nothing to fear. If death does not exist, then negativity does not exist, and if these do not exist – *then fear does not exist* – except as a temporary illusion to

provide contrast. All of these aspects of fear are simply temporary states that we must go through in the physical realm to spiritually mature. Thus, the only “thing” that truly exists is Love, or “Life”, for Life and Love are one and the same. Thus, all of us are Life and Love, all part of God/Life/Love/Spirit/Source. All of these terms are describing the same “thing”, and there is no other – there is only One Spirit in endless variety.

While most of us have not been taught this truth, the truth is: there is only Love, being experienced in endless ways. We have been taught that fear, death, pain, suffering, punishment, separation, damnation...that all of these things are “real” and do exist, and that they are eternal. However, these are but false religious teachings. All of these are simply aspects of fear that were actually conceived by the Creator for the purpose of developing us all. People will say, “The Bible says all these attributes of fear are real, that hell really exists, and that eternal punishment really exists.”. Actually, the Bible does not say any of these things.

Most people do not realize that the Hebrew Bible (the Old Testament), the foundation of Christianity, never uses the word “hell” or the word “everlasting” – ever! As well, the teaching of an everlasting place of torture (hell) did not become Christian doctrine until the 4<sup>th</sup> Century; and it is all based upon deliberate mistranslations of the original Bible text – *for the purpose of controlling people* – both religiously and politically. No other false teaching has more power to manipulate people than telling them if they don’t listen to “God’s orders” – to the leader’s interpretations of the “requirements” of God – they will be cast into everlasting torture. If you can get people to believe that, then you can manipulate people to do almost anything, and in some cases, to carry out even the most diabolical of acts.

Many new translations of the Bible are now eliminating these mistranslations. There is no place for punishment in Love, for there is nothing redemptive about punishment; no truly useful purpose for it at all. Temporary negative consequences for our negative behavior, yes – to teach us how to become who we were created to be, and how to relate with each other in truly loving ways. If there were no consequences for unwise choices, we wouldn’t be able to learn how to mature as spiritual beings.

Once you come to fully understand what has just been described, you are finally free to live *without fear – of feeling fear*. In other words, when you feel fear, you will recognize it for what it is – *simply a temporary feeling*. Therefore, when you feel fear, you will know that you can overcome it by accessing your heart-wisdom. And your heart will always remind you *that there is truly nothing of which to be afraid*, for all will eventually be resolved – everything will in time be redeemed. Living with awareness of this truth is one of the most liberating of all understandings.

I'm going to explain the purpose and the hope intended in the following three verses from the Bible, (Romans 8:22-25), that verify God's Divine Plan for redemption of all of creation. Many people feel a lot of confusion about why there is so much conflict, pain and suffering in the world, and therefore ask, "Why are things as they are?". Coming to understand the answer to this question is vital to living with true inner peace and meaning – *now*. Therefore, I want my readers to see what the Bible verses I just referred to were truly intended to reveal to us.

I use different translations of the Bible, because there is so much variation in how the many editions of the Bible are translated, and the *original intended meaning* can easily be lost and/or misconstrued, depending on the skill level, and agenda, of the scholars who translated the original texts. I have also underlined those parts in the verses I will be referring to below each verse. I want to present my readers with the most accurate understanding of what the Bible tells us is happening in the world (and within us) and why, as well as what will take place as a result of what is happening (the Divine Plan).

Many people think, "If there is a God (or a loving God), then why does the Creator allow all of this suffering in the world?". These three verses from the book of Romans reveal the Divine Purpose that is behind that question.

*"For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now."*

Romans 8:22 (WNT)

This verse is presenting the metaphor of the whole of creation suffering as a woman giving birth suffers. In other words, since the time our world began, something bigger, something of grander scale was planned – and is now in the process of happening – beyond what we can now see and/or fully understand. Creation is being prepared for “another birth”. We also see these words “childbirth together”. All of creation, which includes all of us, is going through this process.

*“The difficult times of pain throughout the world are simply birth pangs. But it’s not only around us; it’s within us.”*

Romans 8:22 (MSG)

This verse is clearly telling us these are “difficult times of pain throughout the world”...but they are “simply birth pangs”. In other words, this time will end, the birth will come, and the pain will end. It is also telling us this is not only going on around us (in our outer world), it is going on within each of us as well. The conflict we see going on in the outer world is a reflection of what is happening within us. Thus, when we resolve our own personal inner conflicts, it begins to affect our outer world, especially our immediate environment; and most importantly, it affects the people we love and relate with the most who are within that environment.

*“...though we possess the Spirit as a foretaste and pledge of the glorious future, yet we ourselves inwardly sigh, as we wait and long for open recognition as sons through the deliverance of our bodies.”*

Romans 8:23 (WMT)

This verse reveals more confirmations of our true security: because “we possess the Spirit”. In other words, God’s Spirit – the Creator’s own Consciousness – is within us, providing a “foretaste”, as well as a “pledge” (a promise) that a “glorious future” lies ahead of us.

Yet, even though God’s Spirit is within us, we still inwardly sigh, longing for “deliverance” from these current bodies. Why do we sigh? Because though these bodies provide us with pleasure, they are also the source of much pain and suffering, and ultimately we know that no matter how well we take care of ourselves, these bodies will die. Our

bodies are created to be born, live, age and die; and it is within these bodies that we experience so much – so much love, so much fear, so much pleasure, so much pain. All of these experiences have been, and continue to be, given to us for the purpose of truly being able to appreciate our glorious future selves. Without these experiences of contrast, which will simply become part of our experiential history, there could not be a glorious future *we could truly appreciate*, for we would have nothing non-glorious to compare it to. Without experiencing contrast, there can be no experiential understanding of anything, and therefore no true appreciation of anything.

*“That is why waiting does not diminish us, any more than waiting diminishes a pregnant mother. We are enlarged in the waiting. We, of course, don’t see what is enlarging us. But the longer we wait, the larger we become, and the more joyful our expectancy.”*

Romans 8:24-25 (MSG)

I believe this verse is talking about preparation. We don’t see all that is “going into” that which prepares us for what is coming – *that which develops our character*. We see and understand more about “what is enlarging us” the more aware we become, but we never see it all, which is why faith is required. So all of Life is about character development; about the process of being matured – being “enlarged” – into the fully loving creative spiritual beings we were created to be...and only because of experiencing this process can we have joyful expectancy that in the future we will experience – *in full measure* – that expectancy.

With this understanding of the Divine Purpose, we begin living more willingly. We become more accepting and cooperative of whatever we need to go through to complete the process. The more capable we are of doing this, the less pain and suffering we experience.

Once we realize the dynamics of our choices – that we only have the choice of cooperating with, or resisting, whatever is happening in our life (the choice of love or fear) – we can access our heart-wisdom to direct our conscious thoughts. By doing so, we can “*flip the emotional energy coin*”. We can choose positive acceptance by focusing on thoughts that cause feelings energized by the emotion of love.

## Accessing Love's Energy

*When we access love's energy, we calm our mind, balance our body's energy, and grow in heart awareness.* Love's energy improves our conscious well-being, allowing us to more easily hear, understand, and appreciate the pure love language of our hearts. When we follow our heart's direction, we get much better at responding wisely to challenging life circumstances.

To get an experiential understanding of what has just been explained, flip back to page 44 and peruse the illustrations of the Love/Fear feelings graphics again. Start with the fear feelings. Read each of the listed feelings 1-12. You will likely notice that just reading the words describing the negative-feelings will cause a subtle corresponding negative feeling reaction in your body. When you read the positive-feeling words, you will notice the opposite; each positive-feeling word will create a corresponding positive feeling in your body. When we dwell on either negative or positive thoughts, the feelings created by those thoughts grows – *because we expand what we focus on.*

To give yourself a deeper experience of this truth, focus on the word “despair”. Think of something that has, or would, cause you to despair. Then allow yourself to dwell on those thoughts. Notice how the feeling of despair grows in intensity within you, how it negatively affects your whole body. Now do the same with a positive-feeling word, such as kindness, or courage. Notice the positive effect this has on you. The longer we dwell on a thought, whether positive or negative, the more energized by emotion that thought becomes. In other words, the stronger we will feel whatever we are feeling. This fundamental truth – that we expand what we focus on – provides us with the motivation to be carefully attentive to the quality of thoughts we allow ourselves to dwell upon.

It is also important to be aware that our bodies tend to automatically assume the posture of the negative feeling we are experiencing, *which further intensifies the feeling.* You can easily demonstrate this to yourself. Assume the posture of a despairing person: slump, look down, bow your head, furrow your brow, or frown. Notice how it intensifies the

feeling. Now do the opposite – assume the posture of optimism: look up, straighten your posture, *smile* or pretend you are waving hello to someone you love. You will immediately notice this creates positive feelings. You can use this knowledge to your advantage when you are feeling negative. You can consciously override your body's defaulting to a negative posture by assuming a positive-feeling posture. This act, combined with heart-directed thinking, will help you overcome the negative feelings that have been caused by your negative thoughts.

### **Mind-Body-Spirit Coherence**

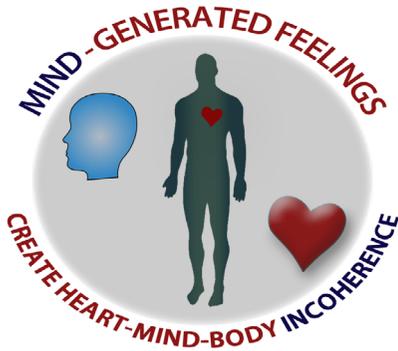
From the brief thought exercise just explained, it is easy to recognize how dwelling on negative or positive thoughts affects our feelings. Life reflects back to us what we put out to Life. In Chapter 2, we learned about the science behind this life-law, and the graphics on the following page illustrate this law: mind-language generated feelings (such as anger, judgment or despair) cause *incoherence* between our heart, mind and body; this happens because these feelings are toxic to our system. We can *feel the toxic effect of these feelings*, both physically and psychologically.

When we are experiencing prolonged negative feelings, we are under the control of our mind's dysfunctional language. When in this state, we are operating out of one of the veils of deception covering our True Nature – a covering created by our mind, which is believing a falsehood that distorts our perception. As a result, the clarity of our True Nature is no longer being experienced. Our lives become *clouded* and *intoxicated* with the negative energy created by feelings of criticism, blame, hate, inadequacy, frustration, division, regret, and worry. Negative feelings are dangerous, for they often cause us to act irrationally; and intense negative feelings, if left unchecked, ultimately lead to a life devoid of meaning.

All of us are aware that we are much easier to get along with when we are feeling good, for we know that we exude a completely different energy towards others when we are feeling good, as compared to when we are not. Our own hearts reflect back to us what we are feeling, and often responses from others reflect back to us how we are feeling as well. This is especially true if we allow our thoughts and feelings to lead us into dysfunctional, disturbing, or violent, behaviors when relating with others.

Heart-generated feelings, like appreciation, compassion and kindness, create heart-mind-body *coherence*. A vibrant and healing energy emanates from within us, and extends out towards others when we are experiencing positive feelings because they are sourced from the emotion of love.

### **MIND Language: Ego-Self**



**Creates Inner Conflict**

### **HEART Language: True-Self**



**Creates Inner Peace**

### **Quantum Nutrients**

There is a “world” of energy behind the solid forms we see. This world has been brought to our attention through the new science of quantum physics. In the world of quantum energy particles, there is no single point where something ends and another thing begins. This is true both in terms of the relationship between physical objects (form), as well as the relationship between the energies of form, and the energies of the formless. For example, psychologically, we all understand the concept of “I”. We understand that there is a “me” inside of our body. But scientists can’t find an “I” place in our bodies. There is no place where the conscious intelligent energy that allows us to be aware of ourselves and our surroundings *ends*, and where our physical body *begins*. Rather, it appears that our form (our body) and the formless (our spirit) are inextricably connected in the quantum realm. This is the mystery of the Body-Mind-Spirit connection that is our human experience.

Now here’s how we benefit from this awareness: positive feelings provide vibrant energy to our body, and negative feelings deplete energy from our body. We all experience this on a daily basis. Just think of the

difference in your body's energy when you hear great news that causes you to feel elated, compared to when you hear something disappointing that causes you to feel discouraged. The boost in energy we feel when we hear news that makes us feel great has little to do with what we've recently had to eat or drink, or how much we've slept. Consequently, the scientists at the HeartMath Institute call the energy we receive from positive feelings "quantum nutrients". Positive feelings provide our inner body with quantum nutrients that immediately infuse our physical bodies, and this exchange positively affects all of our physiological systems – literally, it affects every cell in our body.

This is a key reason why it is so important for us to become more sensitive to what we are feeling, so that we become *more quickly alerted* to negative feeling states that are *depleting our energy*. **Think:** negative feelings mean a major energy leak. With this awareness, we are able to direct our attention to become heart-centered, so we can identify the thought patterns negatively affecting us. Then, with continued heart-directed focused attention, we *redirect* our thoughts to *loving, positive words* and *imagery* – to that which we desire to experience – which will *create positive feeling states*. Not only does this stop the energy leak, it also boosts our body's energy supply and its energy reserves.

The faster you catch yourself feeling negative, the easier it is to redirect your thoughts so that you experience positive feelings. *Don't allow negative thoughts to gain momentum*. It is up to each of us to take the best care of ourselves we can, so that it is as easy as possible for us to feel good within ourselves – which *greatly enhances* our ability to live in harmony with others.

A key purpose of Heart Centered Relating is to bring to your attention the following:

- 1) the incredible nature of the human heart physiologically (the science of the heart); and
- 2) the realization that connecting with our inner heart-wisdom (the spiritual aspect of the heart) is the only way we can reliably receive insights we need to truly resolve our challenges.

It all comes down to this simple understanding: *you are the one responsible for you*. No one can develop your inner awareness and relating skills but you, and connecting with your heart, *your God-Consciousness*, is the only way this can be effectively accomplished.

***Within each of our hearts has been placed the ability to access all we need to know to guide us to resolution of whatever personal or relationship challenges we may be facing.*** However, staying connected with our heart's guidance system requires mind-temperance. We must guard against allowing our mind's language (our ego) to "gain control" of our emotional center through thought patterns that trigger and entrench negative feelings. Remember, our hearts love a calm mind, for when our mind is conflicted with negative thoughts, it blocks access to our heart's wisdom – which always desires to direct us to being peaceful within, and to peacefully relate with each other.

To relate to others peacefully, *you must be peaceful*, and understanding the power of this simple truth can dramatically improve your relationships. For how can you possibly relate to others peacefully, if you are not being peaceful yourself? And you cannot be truly peaceful if you do not have a calm mind. Calming our mind is more easily attained once we understand why doing so is fundamentally important to peacefully relating. This understanding provides the deep desire required – *the motivation to learn how* – to only allow yourself to dwell upon loving, positive thoughts, rather than negative, fearful thoughts.-

Heart Centered Relating was developed to help us get in touch with our heart's language. It points to the way of the heart. However, in order to optimize HCR as a useful guidance tool in your relating with others, you need to do regular *heart-to-mind thought maintenance*. This is required in order to make sure you keep your *heart-mind connection* in *good spiritual condition*. This will prevent negative thoughts from gaining momentum and becoming entrenched in your mind. As well, through regular *heart-mind thought maintenance*, you will rid yourself of negative thought patterns that are currently impairing growth in your life.

Changing your “thought life” from negative to positive will prevent you from falling prey to all kinds of debilitating behaviors, including relationship-damaging *negative communication patterns*. For repetitive negative communication exchanges are always caused by repetitive negative thought patterns. Negative communication exchanges are very frustrating and harmful to any relationship’s health, especially when they are frequent.

Changing your thinking, and imagining positive outcomes, are vital in healing a relationship, and then to maintain the health of that relationship. HCR reveals what works, and what doesn’t, in regards to peacefully relating with each other. And one of the core messages of HCR is that without a *heart-directed calm mind*, you will find it impossible to consistently think and act in ways that work to enhance your life.

Therefore, knowing that you will face challenges in your journey to becoming more heart-centered, in the next chapter, a heart-centered, mind-calming meditation exercise is explained. If regularly practised and employed, it will help make you “*challenge hardy*”. Challenge should never be seen as a negative thing, but rather as an opportunity for you to grow spiritually by developing your character through heart-wisdom. We all have enough life experience to know that we will face challenges regularly throughout our lives, so it is just common sense to prepare ourselves for them.

The single most important thing we need to be aware of when dealing with potentially stressful challenges is *to allow our heart-wisdom to keep our mind’s language in check*, and you will learn a very effective way to accomplish this in the upcoming pages.

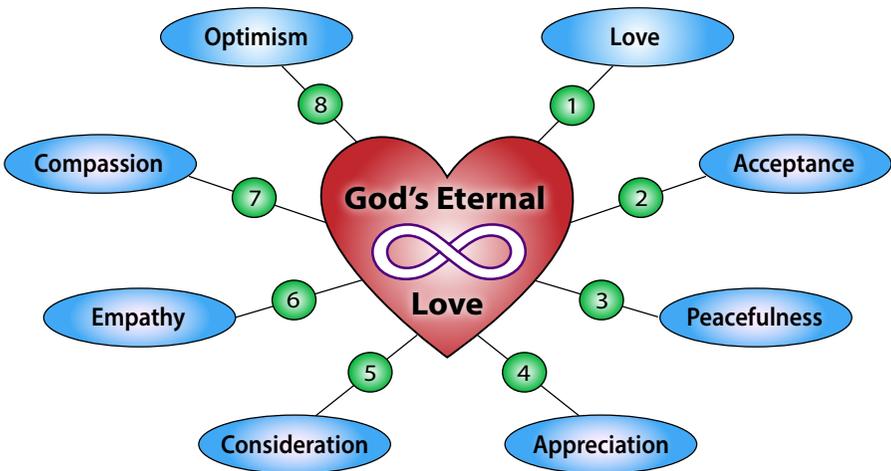


# CHAPTER 4

## HEART-CENTERED THOUGHT-DIRECTING

### HCR'S 8-STEP BODY/MIND CALMING MEDITATION EXERCISE

The graphic below was designed for HCR's 8-Step Body-Mind Calming Meditation Exercise. As previously covered, whenever you are experiencing a prolonged negative feeling, you are tapping the emotion of fear, and the counter to the emotion of fear is love. Therefore, regardless of the negative feeling you are experiencing, following the 8-step practice explained below will effectively help you reconnect with your heart, or strengthen that connection. This practice will help you consciously become adept at heart-centered positive thought-directing, which will change how you feel, and therefore calm your mind.



This meditation exercise can become a regular practice that you can do anywhere and at any time. It can be done in a very short period of time (one to two-minutes), or up to 20 minutes. Remember, life-challenges will come to you, and they can "arrive" at any time, so preparing for them through mind-temperance meditation practice just makes sense.

When you practise this heart-mind meditation throughout your day, you sensitize yourself to early negative feeling signs; and this increased sensitivity alerts you to the fact that your mind requires some heart-mind thought-maintenance. When you realize this, having easy memory access to this heart-directed practice will allow you to more easily counter the dysfunctional thinking patterns that are disturbing your peace. This quick heart-mind focus-shift can greatly help in bringing you back into a functional mind-set of heart-directed positive and loving expectations.

Calming and preparing your mind before you start the day, and before you retire for the evening is very wise use of your time. As well, practising this exercise when you are finding yourself challenged anytime throughout the day will significantly help you deal with the challenge in ways that optimize your learning whatever you need to learn (which is the purpose of the challenge). All challenges are meant for our good, to be seen as opportunities to help us grow and spiritually mature. Remember: without challenge, we cannot spiritually grow.

### **HCR'S 8-Step Meditation Memory Aids**

To help you easily remember the steps of the meditation practice, I developed acronym memory aids. Of course, it will take a few read-throughs of the instructions (and some practice) for you to understand the significant meanings of the acronyms, as well as to become familiar with how they were designed to help you. So don't expect to fully understand the following instructions the first time you read them. However, after studying the instructions (and practising the meditation exercise a few times), the instructions will become clear, and you will find the practice to be an immeasurable benefit.

At the beginning of each explanation of the 8-steps that make up the meditation practice, you will notice bold type. The words and letters in bold have been placed there as effective memory aids to help you remember both the specific order, and the meaning associated with each step.

The order of the 8-steps is important, as each step has been set up to create a smooth mental flow. There are two main parts (and two 4-letter acronyms) that make up the memory aids. The first part is the acronym "LAP-O", and it represents 4 steps (steps 1-3 and step 8).

# LAP-O

1) **L**ove, 2) **A**cceptance, 3) **P**eace and, 8) **O**ptimism

**Note:** Below, I explain why the LAP-O acronym is divided into LAP-O (1-3 & 8).

LAP-O is actually a rare masculine name. Its origin is Hebrew, and its main meaning is “God Protects”. Associating the meaning “God Protects” with the LAP-O acronym is a great memory aid and mind-set. For as we set our minds to transform ourselves (and therefore our lives) through controlling our thinking and imagining, then in effect – we will receive the blessing and protection of God. This will happen simply by following the high-ground of God’s established spiritual laws, which are explained at the end of this chapter.

The second part of the 8-step memory aid is the acronym/motto “Ace Compassion”, and it represents the middle steps 4-7;

## ACE Compassion

4) **A**ppreciation, 5) **C**onsideration, 6) **E**mpathy and, 7) **C**ompassion.

The significance of the “ACE Compassion” acronym/motto is further explained at the end of the next chapter. But for now, **Ace Compassion** stands for the four key Cornerstone Relating Virtues which are part of HCR’s Relating Virtues List. Thus, this eight-step exercise is designed not only to help you maintain a peaceful state of mind, but also to reinforce (on a daily basis) just how important these 4 Relating Virtues are to optimizing love and harmony in relationships. (This topic and the full HCR Virtues are covered in detail in the next chapter.)

The reason **LAP-O** (1-3, then 8) “brackets” **ACE Compassion** (4-7) is that the first three steps of the meditation practice are designed to bring you to a calm mind, and the last ends your meditation time on an optimistic note. Often we need to engage the practice of ACE Compassion when a relationship is challenging us. Thus, calming your mind before going through the ACE Compassion (middle 4) meditation steps, optimizes the benefits of exercising those 4 specific ACE Compassion steps. Then, ending the meditation with thoughts that create an optimistic mind-set

(Optimism being the 8th and last step) helps you use your imagination to bring about positive results that go beyond your behavioral influence in a relationship. In effect, the entire meditation practice is a prayer of positive expectation and belief (that good will come from your positive thoughts and imagining).

This is how we pray effectively. This is how we demonstrate to the Creator of the universe that we understand (in part) the gift of our ability to create and influence change through our imagination – a gift imparted to us when we were made in the Creator’s image. The more we practise this type of meditation the more aware we become of the power of our imagination to effect change in our lives, as well as in the lives of others. To emphasize the vital importance of understanding that this kind of thinking and imagining is a very effective way of praying, I’m repeating the verse below which quotes Jesus’s words to us on the power to effect change through our desires and beliefs.

*“Therefore I say unto you, whatever things you desire, when you pray, believe that you will receive them, and you shall have them.”*

Mark 11:24 (KJV 2000)

Now, to help you remember there are 8-steps, the heart in the graphic at the beginning of this section features the figure “8” (on its side ∞), which symbolizes infinity mathematically, and the eternal spiritually. This is both interesting and appropriate because we are, in fact, currently on an eternal journey. Also, within the name LAP-O, is the word “lap”.

Combining the thought/word “lap”, with the figure 8 is a natural concept to remember, for as you “lap” (spiritually run) around the course (symbol ∞), you are practising the spiritual exercise of the 8 steps. As this is a spiritual exercise that you will greatly benefit from if you practise it daily, the memory link between physical and spiritual exercise is also an important motivational thought. Just as regular practice of physical exercise is the most beneficial, so is regular spiritual exercising.

## **LAP-O: Connect With Your Heart To Improve Your State Of Mind**

LAP-O was developed to be used as a regular daily spiritual meditation exercise, as well as when you are being particularly challenged by a difficult circumstance. Whether working towards resolving a personal challenge, or a relationship conflict, the more heart-centered and peaceful you are, the better off you will be. The more trusting you are that a challenge you are facing is meant for your good (that you have something valuable to learn), the sooner what you need to learn will come into your awareness, you will learn what that something is. The more consistent you are in adhering to this attitude, the more effective you will be in overcoming personal challenges, as well as in resolving relationship conflicts

### **LAP-O: When Being Challenged By Negative Feelings**

Whenever you notice a negative feeling, start the LAP-O practice by identifying the feeling. Simply become aware of it, without judging it. Then recognize that although this feeling is rooted in fear, your heart desires to use this feeling to bring something of importance – something you need to learn – into your awareness. Then say, “I am love, and my true-self, which is always connected to God/Spirit within, desires to deepen my awareness through what I am going through. Then begin the meditation.

### **God’s “Name”**

Our spiritual beliefs are personal. Therefore, if you are not comfortable with the name God, then change it to what you are comfortable with. I don’t believe the Creator is particular about the name we use. Here are example names you may be more comfortable with; “Life”, “Creator”, “Spirit”, “Nature”, “Universe”, or, as mentioned, any other name that resonates with you.

### **Breathing**

Take two or three cleansing breaths before beginning the meditation. Take one cleansing breath between each of the steps. Begin each step by breathing in, and breath slowly, fully, and comfortably throughout the mediation. The first word and sentence of each step is in bold. When your time is limited, you can recite only these words for a shorter version of the meditation.

## **LAP-O “GOD PROTECTS” (Steps 1-3 & 8)**

(Smile and take two or three cleansing breath...)

**(L) LOVE:** (Slowly breathe in...) Feel the love God has for you, the love He has placed in your heart. Say, “I am loved; I am loving. I love myself; I love others. Love is the essence of who I am, my Soul, my True-Self. Love balances, heals, restores, makes whole, causes to grow, completes. Complete love vanquishes fear. God loves through and with me.

**I always act and respond lovingly – Love is All.”**

(Smile and take one cleansing breath...)

**(A) Acceptance:** (Slowly breathe in...) Feel acceptance in your heart for all that is happening in your life, both for what feels good, and for what feels difficult or challenging. Say, “I am accepting, trusting, assured. God is kind and compassionate. All that is taking place in my life is for my good, is benefitting me now, and is teaching me what I need to learn to spiritually mature through the development of my character. I am open to, grateful for, and cooperating with this process.

**I now bless every person and situation in my life – Bless All.”**

(Smile and take one cleansing breath...)

**(P) Peace:** (Slowly breathe in...) Feel peace in your heart. Feel your heart becoming more peaceful. Say, “I am peaceful, present, and patient. I speak peace, persevere and progress. I am a peacemaker, an instrument of God’s Peace. Blessed are the Peacemakers. **Peacefulness is Loving Presence.”**

(Smile and take one cleansing breath...)

## **ACE COMPASSION (Steps 4-7)**

**(A) Appreciation:** (Slowly breathe in...) Feel deep appreciation in your heart for your life, and for the people in your life. Say, “I appreciate my life. I am grateful for all situations, things and especially for the people in my life. I always see the good in myself, in others, and in all Life situations; I recognize the many benefits the people and all my Life experiences are bringing into my awareness. **I am Abundantly Blessed.”**

(Smile and take one cleansing breath...)

**(C) Consideration:** (Slowly breathe in...) Become aware of those you love and relate with the most. Say, "I am always kind and considerate to all. I am sensitive to the feelings and needs of others. I am **Swift** to listen, **Slow** to speak, and **Steer** away from becoming irritated, frustrated or angry. **Consideration = Connection and Harmony.**"

(Smile and take one cleansing breath...)

**(E) Empathy:** (Slowly breathe in...) Say, "I am aware of the loving nature of my listening heart; I am one who loves to listen. I love to listen to the language of my heart. Say "I love to hear and follow my heart's messages. Listening is a precious gift I give – to myself, and to others. I listen, so I receive. I listen, so I learn. I easily hear what's alive in my heart, and also in others. I see, hear and understand the feelings and needs that are behind other's words and actions. **Love, Listen, Learn = Heart.**"

(Smile and take one cleansing breath...)

**Compassion:** (Slowly breathe in...) Feel compassion for those you love and relate with the most, and for the world as a whole. Say, "I am compassionate; I am understanding of the difficulties of the human condition. I always respond compassionately to my feelings and needs, as well as to the feelings and needs of others. Everyone does the best they can based on their awareness, and perception. **Compassion = Caring Responses.**"

(Smile and take one cleansing breath...)

### **LAP-O (Step 8)**

**O) Optimism:** (Slowly breathe in...) Feel optimism in your heart. Feel your heart's desires fulfilled, your challenges resolved. Say, "I am realizing my heart's desires manifesting now, my challenges and fears being overcome. This is happening through and with me according to the conviction and power of my belief. I feel the power of my belief in my heart. **I Believe in My Dreams.**"

(Smile and take two or three cleansing breaths while doing full-feeling-belief, positive-loving-imagining – of fulfilled desires)

The 2 or 3 cleansing breaths taken at the end of your meditation, as well as the few moments to imagine – to believe with feeling and while smiling – your challenges resolved, and your desires fulfilled are important concluding steps. Smiling is a powerful mood-lifter, and an affirmation of your belief.

## **The LAP-O practice is very customizable in four distinct ways:**

- 1) The specific words you use;
- 2) The length of time you do it;
- 3) The number of breaths you take; and,
- 4) How you recite the words of the practice in relation to your breathing.

The various options for each of these four categories are explained below:

### **Word Customization**

As mentioned earlier, our spiritual beliefs are personal. Therefore, if you are not comfortable with the name “God”, then change it to what you are comfortable with.

### **Time Customization**

**Note:** the guidelines below are meant to show you the overall flexibility of the various time/word customization options of the LAP-O practice.

Depending on the amount of time you have to do the LAP-O practice, it can be:

- 1) Very short: (1-2 minutes) wherein you simple cycle through 8 breaths, and for each breath just focus on the title word for each step, i.e. Love, Acceptance, Peacefulness, etc., or recite a few key words/sentences for each step that feel especially meaningful to you.
- 2) Short to medium: (2-5 minutes); wherein you take 16-24 breaths (2 or 3 breaths for each step)
- 3) Shorter: (approx. 2 minutes); focus on words or phrases that especially resonate with you at this time in your life;
- 4) Medium: (approx. 5 minutes); recite the steps as currently worded at a regular to slow pace;
- 5) Long: (10-20 minutes); wherein you do the practice very slowly, and meditate in a deeper way on all that is contained in each step, taking as many slow deep breaths as required over that time period.

## **Breathing/Reciting Customization**

When doing the longer LAP-O version, prior to beginning, take two or three cleansing breaths. For the shorter LAP-O version, this can be reduced to a single cleansing breath. Breathe in slowly through your nose to near full lung capacity (don't force it), and then exhale more slowly through your mouth. Allow the breaths to calm you, to slow you down. Between each step, take at least one breath, breathing in and out as just described.

Then follow the instructions for each step, inhaling slowly, and while slowly exhaling, read or recite the text for each step (aloud or silently in your mind). When breathing, it is a good practice to comfortably pause between each breath.

**Note:** When reciting, you may find it more comfortable to recite only when exhaling, or when both inhaling and exhaling.

## **LAP-O: The Changing Power of “I Am” Statements, Positive Loving Affirmations, and Believing with Feeling**

You will notice in each of the LAP-O steps the words, “I am”, as well as other life-changing positive and loving affirmative statements. “I am” prior to any statement is one of the most powerful statements you can make, and one of the most life-changing beliefs you can hold. The LAP-O practice is designed to tap the conscious creative power each of us was endowed with by our Creator, and positive affirmations are part of a potent creative process in remaking yourself.

When we continually affirm something, whether negative or positive, we are, in fact, giving instructions to our subconscious mind, which in turn communicates those instructions to what is often referred to as God's Divine Matrix, from which everything, including all form (physical matter) is sourced. The more consistent we are in affirming something, the more we strengthen the draw power, (or more accurately,) the power to reflect (from within ourselves,) that something into our reality, and therefore, the sooner we are likely to experience that something in our lives. Thus, even if you don't think or feel you are, for example, as appreciative, kind, wealthy, or courageous, etc., as you would like to be – by stating that you are, feeling that you are, and by imagining and believing that you are, the more you experience that which you are affirming, feeling and believing.

This creative principle applies to all aspects of our lives: spiritual, physical, emotional, and mental. If you desire to improve your character, deepen your spirituality, improve a relationship, grow your business, get better at your job, or improve a life-skill, positive affirmations will help you achieve these results in remarkable ways. This is one of the main reasons why the LAP-O meditation practice is so beneficial, and why I encourage you to take it seriously, and to commit to making it a regular part of your daily practices.

Now, I know all the LAP-O descriptions by heart, but in the beginning, I needed to read the description while doing the 15-20 second breathing practice. Even still, I began to see it change me in remarkable ways. Consistency and repetition are key, for we need to weed out our habitual dysfunctional thought processes, and the LAP-O practice is an excellent way to accomplish this.

### **How To Memorize and Master The LAP-O Spiritual Practice**

As mentioned, the LAP-O spiritual exercise takes about 2 minutes, and though short, it is a very powerful meditation when regularly practised. Practising LAP-O is so beneficial because it reinforces everything that is basic to Heart Centered Relating. A long, slow, deep breath, and a slightly slower exhaling, takes the average person approximately 15-20 seconds. So spending 15 seconds on each step will mean a total of two minutes of meditative exercise time. Not much time for so much benefit!

Don't make the mistake of not recognizing the super-effectiveness of mini-meditation times. Remember, it's all about keeping mind temperance through allowing our heart's direction to keep our minds calm. Therefore, I highly encourage you to take the time to memorize the above exercise using the memory aids described above. If you memorize and master just one step a day, in eight days you will have all eight steps in your memory. Then practise the eight steps 3 times a day for a month, (in the morning, at mid-day and at night), and if you do so, you will have it for life.

Memory training coaches teach that you will remember anything you desire to easily recall more much easily when you create vivid images

in your mind that are linked in some way. Though this does take some time and effort, you regain the time and effort with quick and accurate recall.

### **The Benefits of Slow Deep Breathing To Calm Body and Mind**

The autonomic nervous system in our bodies comprises both the sympathetic nervous system, and the parasympathetic nervous system. When we respond negatively to a life circumstance, it triggers the “fight or flight” sympathetic nervous system. In other words, our bodies respond the same way to a real physical danger (wherein we might need to fight or run away to protect ourselves,) as they do when we respond negatively to any other life circumstance. Thus, the sympathetic nervous system responds whenever we feel over-stimulated, excited, or experience a negative feeling. The “rest and digest” parasympathetic nervous system has a calming effect on our bodies, and it remains in control of our bodies during normal daily activities, or when we are resting.

The problem, for most of us, is that the sympathetic nervous system is being triggered in our bodies far too often, not because of excitement or real physical danger, but because of negative responses to life circumstances. The sympathetic nervous system will always override the parasympathetic system in a stressful situation. Deep slow breathing, even when done for a short period of time, will cause the sympathetic nervous system to relax, so that the parasympathetic nervous system can resume our body’s normal state of functioning.

It is very difficult to respond lovingly and positively to a troubling life circumstance when our sympathetic nervous system has been triggered. And because it can be triggered very quickly, and takes a while to calm down, deep breathing exercises can expedite the process of allowing our parasympathetic system to resume its normal calm control of our bodies.

We cannot truly relate with others peacefully when we are in a heightened negative state. When you combine deep breathing with positive thoughts, feelings and imagery, it has a powerful calming effect

on our mind and body. When doing deep breathing exercises, make sure to breathe in deeply through your nose, and always take longer to exhale than inhale, for this has the most calming effect on the body.

### **The Law Of Resolution**

All of Creation seeks to – and eventually does – resolve itself. Everything in the universe, and everything in nature, is based upon this principle, which is the reason why truly resolving a conflict feels so good to us. Because we are alive and therefore part of Creation, resolution is what God/Spirit seeks to have happen through us. We simply do much better when we cooperate with Spirit's process in resolving creation.

HCR was developed to help us cooperate with God/Spirit's natural and super-natural resolution process – to keep us in touch with the language of our heart, which gives us the ability to keep our mind's ego-language from taking over our thoughts, and therefore causing us to react negatively to life circumstances. Once you come to understand that so much of what is being said (both about God's nature, and His eternal plans for each of us,) are highly distorted teachings which are not Biblical at all, you begin to see the purpose of life much differently. This Biblical verse reveals God's all-inclusive resolution plan – a plan that includes everyone, and everything.

*“...and through him [Jesus] God reconciled everything to himself. He made peace with **everything** in heaven and on earth...”*

Colossians 1:20 (NLT)

As I explained in the introduction, though I reference the Bible, I do not agree with mainstream (especially fundamentalist) Christian's Biblical interpretations, nor of their view of God's nature, especially as this relates to an “angry punishing God”.

I do not believe you have to believe a certain way to be loved by God, or to have your eternal future be secure. Thus, I don't believe you have to believe in the persona of “Jesus” a certain way, or anything else in a certain way, in a certain amount of time. God/Spirit's Divine Purpose is not within the confines of **Time**. God does not exist in time, therefore our

True-Self our Soul/Spirit does not exist in time either. As I have previously mentioned, the Bible is deeply mystical, and therefore the whole of its purpose/message cannot be understood if read literally.

We are all going through a period that includes both pleasure and pain, joy and suffering (sacrificing), and God's Spirit within us is sacrificing too. I believe this ultimate communion, between God and humankind, is represented in the Bible as the personality of Jesus (the God/Man)...but we are all God/Men/Women. The "cross" is the symbol of what is taking place within us, it is that which represents the contrast of who we really are, and from that which we came into awareness (pure-love-naïve-innocent perfection). We are all being "crucified" (suffering), we will all rise out of this (the resurrection). That, I believe, is the ultimate message of the Bible. Thus, none of us is going through any of this alone – nor will anyone – when all is said and done, have had it any easier than anyone else... Then, when this era is complete – this time of experiencing contrast has served its purpose– we enter a glorious future, which we cannot yet even imagine...but I assure you, we won't be sitting on clouds playing harps!

When you begin to truly understand that you are not alone in your struggles in life, that your life struggles are part of the human experience, and that everyone is/has/or will be experiencing the same things you are, and that everything has a purpose, and that all will ultimately be reconciled, it changes your perspective. It causes you to become more considerate and compassionate towards others – and as importantly – more compassionate with yourself; for if we cannot be gentle, kind and compassionate with ourselves, we will not be able to fully be this way with others.

### **Rising Above the Contrast – Living Harmoniously**

It is becoming increasingly obvious to many people as they awaken to their spiritual potential that we are here on Earth to learn and grow in experiential understanding; and if we are here to learn, grow and experience things, then there must be things we do not yet know, and have yet to experience. This realization is what is popularly referred to in many spiritual circles as "waking up". At some point, we simply wake

up to the fact that we are here, dialoguing and feeling within ourselves, and relating with each other, to learn some pretty amazing things about ourselves, God/Spirit, and Life in general.

Everything that I write about in this book can be defined in one main focus: rising above the contrast experience of fear, the illusion of everything that does not appear to be Love – the pain, suffering, conflicts, lack, negativity, failure, physical death – so that we can live peacefully within, and peacefully with others. Through cooperating with this experiencing/learning/growing Divine process, we are able to fulfill our purpose of contribution – we are able to meet each other’s basic needs – and as a result, lead lives that feel abundant, deeply meaningful, and truly fulfilling.

To personally accomplish this, you must learn how to temper your thinking – learn how to improve the quality of what you allow yourself to dwell upon. This requires increasing your sensitivity to what you are feeling, and connecting with your heart-wisdom to discern the thoughts that are creating your feelings – both your positive feelings, and your negative feelings. This is how you learn how to only allow yourself to dwell upon – to engage the gift of your powerfully creative imagination – on heart-directed thoughts, which lead to loving feelings, and positive outcomes.

Heart Centered Relating provides the spiritual theory, in combination with the practical application of that theory, to guide you in achieving these deeply fulfilling results.

**Feelings Sensitivity + Thought-Discerning Wisdom = Life-Harmony.**

This is what I believe we are here to learn how to do – to create **Life -Harmony** through our thoughts, imagination, feelings and behavior.

Now, coming to understand the amazing truths of the Divine Process we are all going through means experiencing – working your way through – some very challenging and difficult times. We are all familiar with these difficulties, for no one is exempt; however, waking up means taking on a different perspective toward these challenges. Expanding our God-Consciousness means rising above the fearful anxious thoughts we often succumb to as a result of the difficulties we face.

Though it is hard for us to accept this, the truth is: unless we are dealing with a mental disorder, circumstantial difficulties cannot cause fear, worry, anxiety, anger, or any other negative feeling. Only our thoughts – *specifically our perspective* – can create these kinds of feelings, not a circumstance, no matter how disturbing the situation appears to be.

Author and teacher Byron Katie (known as Katie), tells a personal story that illustrates this truth. She was in the delivery room when her daughter was giving birth. When the baby was born, there was a problem. The baby wasn't breathing, and the normal procedures to stimulate breathing were not working. The hospital staff were showing obvious signs of stress and concern. Katie, however, fully understanding what was happening, that the baby might not live, observed everything peacefully. Her daughter looked at her with deep distress, and Katie responded with a loving smile. At that point her grandbaby began to cry, and all was well.

When events in our life don't turn out to our liking – and we choose to respond negatively to those circumstances, that negative response will create an internal conflict, and give rise to deeper/more intense negative feelings. It is very important to emphasize that negative feelings in and of themselves are not “bad”. On the contrary, they are necessary, because negative feelings reveal we have something to learn. This is very important to understand and to truly come to realize.

It is not about avoiding negative feeling states: it is about getting the message your heart is trying to convey to you as a result of a negative feeling more quickly, so that you avoid needless pain and suffering. A negative feeling is your heart sending you a message. Your heart desires you to become aware of something important you need to learn to return to peace. Hearing the message, however, is much easier when your mind is calm. This is why during Step 1 in the above exercise, you become aware *first* of the negative feeling you are experiencing. You don't necessarily try to solve it, for it is more important to first become aware of it. Then after the meditation practice, once you are calmer, you can revisit “the why” behind that negative feeling, and be in a much

better state of mind to hear the message from your heart related to the thoughts you were having that caused that particular negative feeling.

For example, if you are feeling guilty, ask your heart: why? Were you inconsiderate to someone? Were you impatient with someone (even yourself)? If you are hurt, irritated, frustrated or feeling angry, ask your heart: why? Are you angry with yourself because of something that you did, or did not do? Are you angry with someone else for the same? Are you believing something that isn't true?

Whenever you become aware of an initial negative feeling, your heart is trying to get your attention through what you are feeling, and it is prompting you to inquire. When you process this stage of a negative feeling in positive-loving ways, you will benefit immediately from the experience. This is what HCR Life Skill #4, Pivotal Moment Temperance (explained in Chapter 6) was developed to help you accomplish.

When you respond negatively to the initial negative feeling you are experiencing, this means judgment is involved in your thought process. Judgment is a reaction of resistance. Basically, it means that you are convincing yourself that whatever is happening should not be happening. However, if whatever is happening should not be happening, *it wouldn't be happening.*

This is one of the hardest concepts to grasp and understand, because there is so much going on in our society that is obviously immoral. So immoral things, people hurting other people – *should not be happening right?* That seems simple enough, except for this: either God is in total control of the Divine Process or not. If God is not in control, then we are in big trouble. But I believe God is in control – *so we can never truly be in big trouble.*

However, if we believe there are no ultimate controls in place, or we feel we have to “fix” something, we will lose our inner peace. When we lose our inner peace, it makes it basically impossible to respond to a negative encounter in loving ways that will help heal whatever the problem is that we are observing, or experiencing.

It's not about doing nothing to make your life, or the world a better place, *quite on the contrary*. It's about accepting whatever is going on as that which is perfect for us to experience whatever we need to experience in "the contrast" to learn how to overcome that contrast. This is how we spiritually mature through the development of our characters. This is how we learn how to respond in positive-loving, compassionate ways to whatever is happening in our lives – and we cannot accomplish this when we are in a state of judgment.

Judgment is a feeling that is rooted in fear, and it is the most self-damaging and relationship-damaging mind-language program we can allow to entrap us; for judgmental thoughts always cause negative feeling states, and therefore inner-conflict.

### **The Universal Laws of Life**

The universe we live in is governed by physical and spiritual laws. These are not laws of man, but rather, the universal laws of God. The laws of man are actually rules, and when people are caught breaking them, punishments are used to teach a "lesson" to the rule-breakers. The purpose of these punishments is to create fear to dissuade people from breaking the rules. It is a highly ineffective and spiritually immature way for people to be governed, for punishment cannot internally change anyone, and punitive governing systems always produce more negative results than positive ones. The laws of the Creator are not rules; they are laws, and they cannot be broken. When a society lives in accordance with the laws of the Creator, that society will be harmonious.

To benefit from God's universal laws, whether these be physical laws or spiritual laws, we must cooperate with them, for there will always be negative consequences if we don't. For example: if you respect the law of gravity, it will serve you; if you do not, you will harm yourself. Similarly, to benefit from the spiritual laws, such as "you reap what you sow", you must cooperate with them. If you resist and argue against spiritual laws, you will always reap negative results. For example: If you are selfish, you will be "caught", for every selfish act will eventually reap a negative

consequence. If you cooperate and work with the spiritual laws, you will always ultimately produce positive results, for we always eventually reap what we sow.

All universal laws, whether physical or spiritual, are designed to teach us, never to punish us. God imparts experiential awareness in us through consequences, never punishments. The universe – all that is seen, and all that is unseen – is ultimately governed by just one law. All laws branch from this one root law – the Law of Unconditional Love.

Jesus was teaching his disciples about the importance of loving each other. I like how the verse below was translated by the Complete Jewish Bible, for it says: “keep on loving each other”. In other words, this isn’t a one-time thing...keep doing it: keep loving each other.

*“I am giving you a new command: that you keep on loving each other. In the same way that I have loved you, you are also to keep on loving each other.”*

John 13:34 (CJB)

In the Bible verse below, I’m providing three different translations, each with a slightly different emphasis.

*“Here is a simple rule of thumb for behavior: Ask yourself what you want people to do for you; then grab the initiative and do it for them!”*

Luke 6:31 (MSG)

*“Do for other people everything you want them to do for you.”*

Luke 6:31 (GW)

*“Treat others as you would like them to treat you.”*

Luke 6:31 (TJB)

Otherwise known as “the Golden Rule”, the precept revealed in this verse, “*treat others as you would like to be treated*” is found in every major religion in the world. Such is its universal importance. Do a Google search for “the Golden Rule” and you will see this for yourself.

## **Chapter Summary**

The key points to be learned from this chapter are that our thoughts create our reality. Our thoughts run like a movie in our mind. If the imagined scenarios we create in our mind with our successive

thoughts are primarily negative, we will feel negative, act negatively, and therefore create and experience a fear-based negative reality for ourselves. Conversely, if we dwell upon positive thoughts, and believe that imagined positive scenarios will happen in our lives, we will feel positive, act positively, and therefore produce and experience a love-based positive reality for ourselves.

Right now, our societal conditioning has us defaulting primarily towards the negative, especially when we are feeling overwhelmed with many challenges. Thus, we have to choose to consciously override this negative tendency. Our God-Consciousness, which is the source of our inner heart wisdom, desires us to live in the Present Moment, to be thankful for all we experience, and to believe in loving-positive outcomes – *regardless of outer circumstances*. Each of us, in order to create positive change in ourselves, and influence positive change in our relationships, must choose to cooperate with this God-Process through conscious heart-directed thinking and imagining.

Initial negative feelings reveal our hearts drawing our attention to an unmet need, to make a heart inquiry as to what that specific unmet need is, and then to follow our heart's direction in thinking, imagining, and taking action to move in the direction of creating fulfillment of that need.

The LAP-O meditation practice is a very effective way to consciously prepare for the daily challenges that will surely come. As well, engaging LAP-O when you are in the midst of being challenged by negativity is very effective at helping you replace negative thoughts with loving positive ones, and to imagine with *feeling belief* desired outcomes manifesting.

The LAP-O practice will make even more sense to you after you complete the next chapter, wherein you will be encouraged to return to the LAP-O section in this chapter with the new knowledge you will be attaining.

In the next chapter, we are going to cover one of the truly unique aspects of Heart Centered Relating: **Our Shared Basic Human Needs**, and the **Relating Virtues** we must live by to meet each other's needs. The information in this chapter clearly reveals to us how we demonstrate the Golden Rule toward each other: *"do unto others as you would have them do unto you"*.

The only way we can develop our characters – so that we do treat others as we would like to be treated – is by learning how to respond to life circumstances with sensitivity, loving-kindness, and a positive outlook. And the only way this can be achieved is by having the courage and commitment to subdue our ego’s negative mind-language. There is only one way to accomplish this: we must allow our heart-wisdom to direct our thoughts, and thus, gain control of the thoughts we allow ourselves to dwell upon. It is in our relationships with others, and when dealing with challenging circumstances, that our characters are most put to the test.

What you will learn in the next chapter are the Relating Virtues we must consistently live by to meet each other’s needs. This is where “the rubber meets the road”, so to speak. For Heart Centered Relating must “look like” adhering to the Relating Virtues that lead to the meeting of each other’s needs.

In the next chapter, the foundation for the HCR framework is explained – the inherent needs we all share, and the virtues we need to live by to both meet our own needs, as well as the needs of each other.

The purpose of Heart Centered Relating is to awaken within our awareness – deep appreciation and consideration for the life God has given us; and this life includes: ourselves, others, and everything around us. The virtues of *appreciation*, *consideration*, *empathy* and *compassion*, when adhered to, are keys that can unlock a Power for Change we have only begun to tap. Relating to each other in these ways is what our heart language is drawing to our attention. Therefore, let us begin to demonstrate this awareness through Loving-Kindness – in everything we do, and towards everyone with whom we relate.

Let us together, through kind consideration of each other, deeply contemplate – *and then decide* – how we would like others to relate to us; then – let us use this awareness and relate to others in this way.

# CHAPTER 5

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## HEART CENTERED RELATING

### Our Inherent Basic Human Needs and the Vital Importance of Virtuous Relating

#### Understanding Our Inherent Human Needs

Most of humanity has little awareness that we all share the same Inherent Basic Human Needs. Therefore, it is no surprise that few of us know what these needs are. This lack of awareness is a primary reason why there are so many people suffering from unmet needs, and why there is so much conflict in the world. Without understanding our needs, we fail to relate to each other in ways that would ensure the meeting of each other's needs in loving and compassionate ways.

It was through the impressive work of Marshal Rosenberg, PhD, the founder of NVC (Non-Violent Communication), that I first was introduced to the vital subject of our Inherent Basic Human Needs. Becoming thoroughly familiar with our basic human needs will provide you with unique knowledge and insights into how to attain a more fulfilling life – *as well as better relating skills* – you could not otherwise acquire.

After 40 years of teaching his methods of Non-Violent Communication (NVC), Rosenberg became convinced that all conflicts *arise* from unmet basic human needs, and are *caused* by ineffective strategies for getting our needs met. Rosenberg discovered that when basic human needs are met, people are naturally happy and content. This is the reason why becoming very familiar with, and understanding our shared human needs, are so important in learning how to live and relate in ways that meet your own needs, as well as the needs of others, especially those whom you love, live and work with.

HCR explains the cause of conflicts in a similar way to NVC, but uses different phrasing. In HCR, all conflicts are **sourced** in unmet needs, but **caused** by negative reactions to unmet needs, and/or pursuing unhealthy choices to get a need met. Each time we negatively react to an unmet need, or make an unhealthy choice to get a need met, it always creates even more unmet needs.

### **Basic Human Needs**

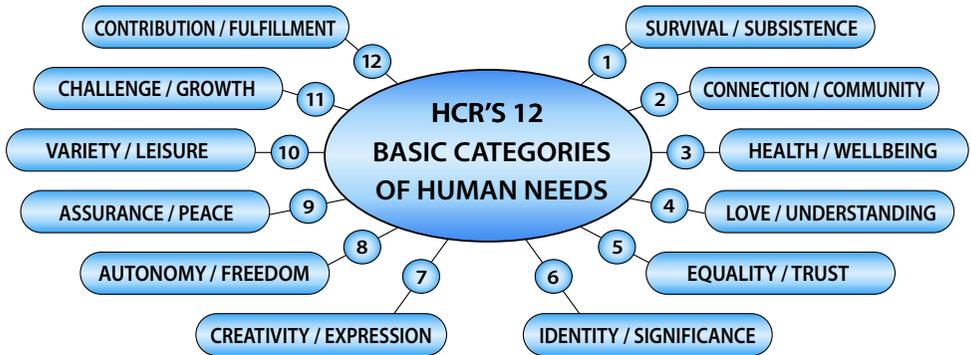
When I researched basic human needs, I discovered that many models have been developed by various individuals and institutions to establish benchmarks – from what the poverty line should be, to what is required for people to feel happy and fulfilled in life. **HCR's Basic Human Needs Categories** were determined with the latter goal in mind, and are based on the work of both Manfred Max Neef, an award-winning Chilean economist, environmentalist and humanitarian, and Tony Robbins, a world-renowned personal development coach, author and teacher.

Neef's model is *economic in nature*. The purpose of his model was to help nations develop economic systems based on governing policies designed to meet what he determined were the 9 basic categories of needs of all citizens. The Tony Robbins model identifies 6 basic categories of *psychological human needs*, the purpose of which is to help people understand the mental and emotional factors motivating human behavior.

The HCR model is unique, for it combines the implicit intent of the Neef and Robbins models, using two different but related words to describe each of HCR's 12 Categories of Basic Human Needs, (as illustrated on the following page). This strategy provides a complete, more descriptive list of humanity's basic human needs (spiritual, physical, emotional and mental) that are inherent, and therefore fundamentally shared by everyone. This background information provides you with assurance that the HCR model of Inherent Basic Human Needs is well-researched and substantiated, and therefore provides vital information in the pursuit of our coming to a better understanding of ourselves, and our relationships with others.

## HCR'S 12 CATEGORIES OF BASIC HUMAN NEEDS

Though the *specific ways* our needs are fulfilled *vary between us*, all of humanity shares the same inherent needs. The following graphic illustrates HCR's list of our Basic Human Needs.



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Listed below are descriptions of HCR's Categories of Basic Human Needs. These descriptions clarify what specifically is meant by the two words identifying each Needs Category. Awareness of these Inherent Human Needs is *fundamental* to Heart Centered Relating in four ways: 1) understanding your own basic needs, and the basic needs of others; 2) understanding what causes conflicts; 3) learning how to truly resolve conflicts; and 4) learning how to relate with each other in ways that lead to needs fulfillment, and therefore, harmonious meaningful relating.

### BASIC HUMAN NEEDS DESCRIPTIONS

- 1) **Survival/Subsistence:** Our desire to live, and that which is required to sustain life. Ideally, the availability of clean air, pure water, nutritious food, sufficient clothing and shelter; adequate physical activity, adequate sleep/rest – essentially all that is required to maintain a healthy life.
- 2) **Connection/Community:** Our need for friendship; companionship; teachers (a well-rounded education). A group or place of belonging; people in our lives who provide a sense of connection and shared goals with whom we can meaningfully interact, and where care, giving, and aid happen with mutual-willingness; in essence, access to others we trust who are willing to both receive and to give, in times of abundance, and especially in times of need.

- 3) **Health/Well-being:** Our need to feel well. Ideally, a mental and physical state of being and feeling healthy, with healthy functioning of mental faculties being more important than physical functionality. Health/Well-Being as a basic human need is especially important in being able to care for yourself, and when incapable of doing so, having access to those who will.
- 4) **Love/Understanding:** Our need to be deeply loved by others, and to deeply love others – expressed through physical care, appreciation, consideration, compassion, respect, affection, and intimacy in touch and communicating. Understanding is closely related to love, but has key distinctions: it is the deep feeling and experience that how we feel, what is important to us, and what happens to us matters to others. Understanding also describes our need for empathic connection (to feel heard and understood), as well as our need to understand the “why” behind anything we are asked to do, are doing, or feel required to do.
- 5) **Equality/Trust:** Our need to trust others and to be trusted; to be told the truth and to tell the truth; to be able to rely on others, and to be reliable. To have all concerned in any matter be treated honestly, fairly, equitably, and consistently – with the basic human right of equality.
- 6) **Identity/Significance:** Our need to feel unique, important, special, and respected; our desire to feel needed; our sense of personhood, how we feel about ourselves: our confidence and our self-esteem. Though we need to feel connected to a community or group, we also feel a need to be different in some unique way from the whole, and to feel that we are thought of in high regard (that we are significant) within that whole. We also need to feel valued in our personal relationships, with co-workers, friends, family members, and with our significant other or life-partner; essentially, we need the people in our lives to relate to us in ways that cause us to feel that we are important to them, that our beliefs, way of life, and choices are accepted by them; and to have those with whom we feel closest relate to us in ways that cause us to feel appreciated, considered, respected and loved.

- 7) **Creativity/Expression:** Our need to use our skills, gifts, and talents to express our creative potential through innovative, original, or artistic personal works; to create something of our own making. Creative expression affects our identity and feelings of significance (see above). We also have a need to express our thoughts and feelings through conversation about what is important to us at a given time, especially to those who are closest to us, and to be assured through their responses of our significance in their lives.
- 8) **Autonomy/Freedom:** Our need to decide for ourselves; to live and to be able to move about without fear, oppression, undue constraints, restrictions, or unreasonable limitations. Ideally, to have access to the resources we require to feel unconfined (both physically and mentally), in order to be able to choose our own way of life, and to pursue our dreams.
- 9) **Assurance/Peace:** Our need for certainty in our lives, such as the feeling of security that we associate with a person's love, friendship, or trustworthiness; feeling secure in the availability of food, shelter, safety, orderliness and reliance on others; a feeling of sustained absence of conflict and danger in our immediate and wider environment. The level of certainty required in various areas of our lives in order to feel secure and peaceful is different for everyone, but we all have a need for it. Society, however, requires a safe, orderly environment to optimize functionality, commerce and interrelating, which includes our need for protection from any form of violence, whether psychological or physical.
- 10) **Variety/Leisure:** While we all have a need for a level of certainty, we also have a need for a level of uncertainty, or variety. This includes our need for stimulation, excitement, challenge and surprise. Without this variety, our lives become mundane and boring. Just as the level of assurance needed is different for everyone, the level of variety required also varies with each person. Leisure time is a basic need in and of itself, and it also serves as an important element in meeting our need for variety.

- 11) **Challenge/Growth:** In life, if something is not growing, it is dying, which is why challenge and growth are basic human needs, vital to feeling personally fulfilled. Growth requires overcoming challenges, either challenges we choose for ourselves, or those that come to us via life-circumstances. In order to feel full satisfaction and meaning in our lives, we must regularly experience that we are growing in each of the four aspects that make up who we are as individuals – the spiritual, physical, emotional and mental. Therefore, when considering the fulfillment of this needs category, we must ask ourselves if we are growing in each of these four aspects of our humanity. Challenge, and the personal growth that comes from overcoming challenges, also ties in with meeting our need for variety (listed above).
- 12) **Contribution/Fulfillment:** To feel fully alive, we need to feel deep gratification (fulfillment). True gratification can only be attained from knowing and feeling that our life matters – that our service to Life is making a positive difference in the quality of others’ lives. Only when we are able to overcome our own personal challenges can we achieve our potential to attain the highest possible contributions to others. Thus, the fulfillment of this needs category is dependent on: 1) personal character development; 2) growth in our spiritual maturity; and 3) contributing to the well-being of others through the giving of our time, skills, and/or resources.

### **The Power of Understanding Our Shared Inherent Human Needs**

Awareness of the importance of basic human needs provides *powerful insights* into understanding *human nature and human behavior*. This knowledge is vital in understanding the reasons you are feeling as you are, whether positive or negative, and why others are feeling as they are. If you, or others, are feeling negative, you can use this knowledge to determine specific thought/action strategies to improve a situation, whether personally or in a relationship. This will help you to increase the quality of your own life experiences, as well as deepen the closeness and connection you feel with others, especially with those you love and relate with the most.

Take a few moments to carefully review the HCR Basic Human Needs Categories you just read, and then consider if there is any need listed that you (or anyone you know) could feel just as happy or satisfied in living without. This consideration will very likely draw you to the conclusion that there is no superfluous need listed. When you consider that the source of conflicts is *unmet basic needs*, and the cause of conflicts is *negative responses to unmet needs*, it becomes quite obvious how much more enjoyable and fulfilling everyone's life would be if our basic needs were consistently met.

Though this may seem inconceivable in today's world, it should not keep us from moving in this direction. To achieve the dream of greater needs fulfillment for everyone, we must begin with having equal concern that the needs of others be met, as well as our own. This shift is what will create peace and harmony – not only in our closest relationships – but also within our families, in our places of work, our communities, and ultimately, throughout the world.

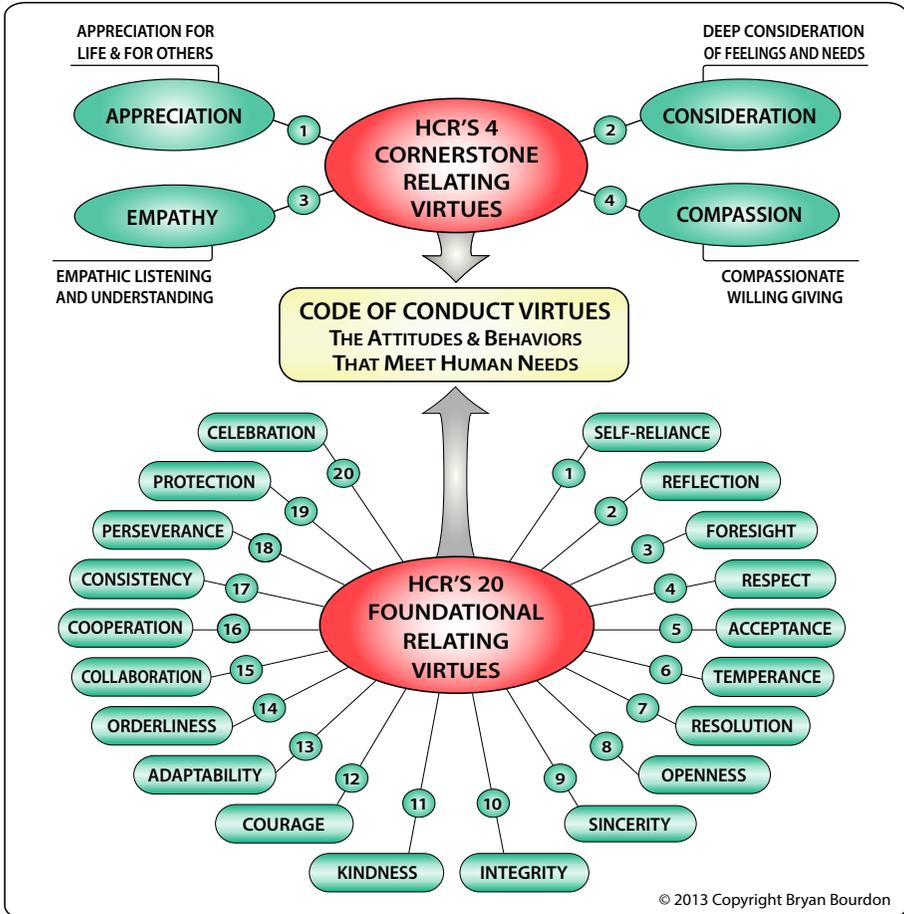
Now that our Basic Needs have been explained, we'll cover HCR's 24 Key Virtues – for it is Virtuous Living that leads to Needs Fulfillment.

Since the meeting of each other's needs is what will lead to fulfilling and peaceful living, it follows that committing to learning how to accomplish this would be one of the most rewarding pursuits we could ever undertake. It is for expressly this reason the *HCR Code of Conduct Virtues* were carefully chosen. These *Virtues* define how we must live, and relate, to meet both our own needs, and the needs of each other.

On the following page is a graphic illustration of HCR's **24 Code of Conduct Virtues**. These include the **4 Cornerstone Relating Virtues**, and the **20 Foundational Relating Virtues**.



# HCR'S 24 CODE OF CONDUCT VIRTUES



## HCR's Key Virtues: Powerful Knowledge in Effective Relating

Careful study of HCR's Relating Virtues will help you to understand why living in accordance with them will have such a powerfully positive impact in your life, and therefore, in the relationships in your life.

Each HCR Code of Conduct Virtue was carefully chosen, and each has a *specific role to play in meeting our Inherent Needs*. Thus, living in accordance to these Virtues creates harmony, and greatly helps people achieve their potential, both individually, and in their relationships.

As each of the HCR Needs Categories has a specific description, each of the HCR Virtues also has a specific explanation as to what that virtue "looks like" when it is applied in your life, and in your relationships.

## THE HCR VIRTUES DESCRIPTIONS

### The 4 Cornerstone Relating Virtues

The 4 Cornerstone Relating Virtues of Appreciation, Consideration, Empathy and Compassion have been *identified apart* from the other Relating Virtues due to their *sheer importance* in assuring peaceful and kind relating. If everyone began appreciating the people they encounter in their lives, treated them with sincere consideration, listened to them empathetically, and interacted with all people compassionately, then every other HCR Virtue listed would more naturally fall into place, and human needs would start being met at levels we have yet to experience in our lifetime. As you carefully read the following HCR descriptions for each of these 4 Cornerstone Virtues, contemplate how much better all of our lives would be if we consistently related to each other in accordance with these four virtues, which hold such promise to improve our relationships.

- 1) **Appreciation:** An attitude of being grateful for your life – especially for the people in your life. To demonstrate appreciation, *you need to acknowledge people – in particular, those you relate with the most.* You need to express to them how much you value what they do for you, and what they mean to you. Appreciation is also demonstrated by recognizing the admirable qualities in others, and expressing this recognition. To live with full appreciation means being grateful *for all of your life* – for the ups and the downs; for the joys and the pains; for the successes and the mistakes; for those who are easy to love, and for those who are not; for the things we find easy to do, and for the challenges that we face – because challenges *are gifts* that allow us to learn and grow, and therefore to become more than we currently are.

*Appreciation for others is demonstrated through “ARC” acts of:  
Acknowledgement, Recognition and Consideration...*

- 2) **Consideration:** Sincere thoughtfulness towards others; sensitivity and attentiveness to the effect of your words, tone, actions, and inactions on people’s feelings and needs fulfillment; kind relating; collaborating with and making requests of others, rather than being demanding or imposing one’s will. When making a request of someone, taking the

time to explain to that person the need you have which requires his or her help to fulfill (the why behind your request). Key to consideration is courtesy – gracious, polite, respectful and responsive behavior.

This is manifested in myriad ways: responding to the communications from others in a timely and considerate way; saying “please” and “thank-you” for deeds done for you; being on time; putting shared items back in their place, cleaning up after yourself; returning borrowed items on time, and in the same or better condition than when received; making relevant information known in a timely way to those it will affect; explaining, and making alternative arrangements before-hand when commitments cannot be followed through, or cannot be fulfilled in a timely manner; respecting people’s personal boundaries; acknowledging and apologizing for insensitive or selfish behavior when you have been so; and making up for, or compensating in some way for the distress, loss or suffering incurred as a result of insensitive or selfish words and/or actions, or neglectful inaction.

To be truly considerate of someone’s feelings and needs, requires being sincerely willing to empathically listen to them – to make a heartfelt connection – in order to find out what their feelings and needs are. You need to be willing to listen to find out what is important to them and why.

***True Consideration of others requires Empathic listening...***

3) **Empathy:** Heart-centered and fully present listening. Truly empathizing means you are listening to someone with your heart wisdom, and not with your head knowledge. Our heart is caring, humble, and curious, urging us to inquire to understand; our head knowledge tempts us to pre-conclude and to judge. Being both loving and effective when empathizing is often challenging, for it requires:

- 1) Being fully attentive, and deeply considering what is being shared without judging the “rightness” or “wrongness” of what someone is thinking, believing or feeling.
- 2) You must listen to what someone is saying in an open-minded/open-hearted way, so that you do not take what is being said personally.

- 3) Your primary focus needs to be on connecting to a person's feelings and needs, not on the words being used.
- 4) You need to connect with what is "alive" in another; in other words, become aware of what they are truly feeling and needing – what is most important to them in the present moment – regardless of what that is, or whether you agree with their perspective.
- 5) When important matters are being discussed, you must give to someone the most precious gift you possess – your undivided attention. Your full presence is required, for you are seeking to understand the true feelings that are behind the words being shared – which can always be traced to and reveal a Basic Human Need.

When someone has expressed to you something of importance, and afterwards fully feels that you understand their feelings and needs, as well as the importance to that person of what they have revealed to you, then you have truly empathized. Empathizing in this way creates deep understanding, healing and human-connection – it creates a positive, loving, heart-centered environment within which problems can be solved and/or conflicts truly resolved. When our needs for love and understanding are being met, relationships can grow and achieve their potential.

*Empathic discovery of needs leads to Compassionate responses...*

- 4) **Compassion:** An attitude of unconditional love for others, regardless of their beliefs or the situations they find themselves in. It is sensitive, conscious awareness of the many challenges of the human experience, and the distress someone is feeling as a result of an unmet basic need. For this compassionate awareness to effect positive change, it must then be coupled with a sincere desire to alleviate that distress – through finding a heart-centered solution which will meet that person's need in an appropriate way. Compassion is willing-giving; it is an expression of loving-kindness. When a person's basic human needs are met in this way, both individuals' lives are enriched in immeasurable ways. When

this type of compassionate, kind, willing-giving is ongoing, two-way, and mutually beneficial, the enriching experiences created are even more fulfilling. This is one of the primary goals of Heart Centered Relating.

***Compassionate responses to others' needs creates fulfillment***

The following verse in the Bible particularly characterizes HCR's "ACE Compassion" motto:

*"Post this at all the intersections, dear friends: Lead with your ears, (be quick to listen) follow up with your tongue, (slow to speak) and let anger straggle along in the rear (slow to get angry)."*

James 1:19 MSG (parenthesized additions from CJB translation)

This biblical verse clearly encourages us to be very careful in how we communicate with another – ***we should always be ready to listen first.*** This demonstrates **Appreciation** for others. Then, we should be slow to speak. This shows **Consideration** for what is being said. Relating in these ways emphasizes the importance of listening with **Empathy**, of truly listening to someone with an open-heart and with undivided attention. This is how we put forth our best effort to understand what someone is ***really saying***, so that we ***respond wisely***, not ***react carelessly***, as a result of misunderstanding what was said. And of equal importance, we need to be ***slow to anger***, especially in conversations. We must be very careful to not allow ourselves to easily become annoyed, irritated or angry, for when we allow these feeling states, we easily fall prey to our ego. Rather, we need to be compassionate in our responses to others, to place ourselves "in the shoes of another". This combination of virtuous relating not only demonstrates strength of character, but also genuine care about what others are feeling and needing.

Most of us would agree we do not follow this sound advice, especially in emotionally challenging exchanges. In most cases, if you have just interrupted someone, it's a clear sign you haven't really been listening.

As author and motivational speaker Stephen Covey says,

***"Most people listen with the intent to reply, not to understand."***

In other words, most of us are neither good listeners, nor particularly empathetic – we would rather be heard and understood, than listen to and understand another. However, if we desire to improve our relating skills, we must reverse this tendency. It is in listening, especially in tune with the “**ACE Compassion**” motto, that we are much more likely to learn and grow – *not in speaking*.

## **The 20 Foundational Relating Virtues**

As mentioned above, in order for any relationship to achieve its potential, it is most important that the 4 Cornerstone Relating Virtues be consistently active. The 20 Foundational Relating Virtues are actually “under the umbrella” of the Cornerstone Virtues. For example: when people are practising the Cornerstone Virtues – if they are being *appreciative, considerate, empathetic* and *compassionate*, then they will naturally be *respectful, honest, kind, patient*, etc.

Therefore, in order for a relationship to be strong and healthy, and to optimize its potential for growth, the Cornerstone Virtues must be continually in place as the supporting base, the *key role* virtues upon which the relationship is built. The 20 Foundational Virtues are the building block virtues. They play an integral part in the health of a relationship as the *supporting cast* virtues – they add tangible definition to what healthy relating requires in terms of practical application.

As previously mentioned, each HCR Virtue has been specifically chosen, and each one has a specific role to play in helping us meet both our own needs, and each other’s needs – *consistently*. The following descriptions for HCR’s 20 Foundational Relating Virtues will reveal their importance in the specific circumstances and situations that make up our daily lives.

- 1) **Self-Reliance**: In HCR, Self-Reliance is the virtue of developing your relationship with your True-Self, which encompasses your conscious-connection with God/Spirit/Life. Self-Reliance means making heart-centered decisions, and taking heart-directed actions to develop your character. It is through character development that you grow in your spiritual awareness. This growth is vital in order to be capable of overcoming identifying with and succumbing to your ego (our fear nature), which is the core challenge all of us face.

Optimizing your growth in Self-Reliance depends upon becoming more virtuous, and becoming more virtuous requires investing time in reflecting on your life – in studying, learning, and putting into practice what you learn – so that you grow in awareness from your mistakes, as well as from your successes.

Self-Reliance does not mean selfishness, isolation, or lack of relating. On the contrary, it means developing your character, spiritual maturity, and interdependent relationships, and accomplishing these goals by doing the best you can with what you know, and what you have – right now.

- 2) **Reflection:** The act of carefully examining your life, and of considering results to determine how your thoughts, beliefs, decisions and behaviors are affecting your life-experiences, as well as those with whom you relate. By regularly and thoughtfully reviewing your recent experiences, you gain valuable insights into your life.
- 3) **Foresight:** Looking ahead: visualizing successful outcomes; planning and formulating action strategies for the purpose of utilizing time and resources effectively to best meet the needs of an individual, family, business, organization, etc. Using your imagination to consider effective strategies for how to overcome personal challenges, how to appropriately express yourself when preparing to resolve a conflict, or how best to present your ideas of how to implement something you desire to have happen where you need the willing cooperation of others.
- 4) **Respect:** Treating others, and the environment, honorably and with dignity; careful consideration of how you present yourself (i.e. body care, speech, your manner of dress, appropriate behavior, and maintaining an orderly living environment); as well, responsible care of your belongings. Sincerely encouraging free will, while providing wise guidance to those under your care or authority; allowing others to do things their own way, and to make their own choices, except when those choices infringe on personal or civil freedom, would cause harm to themselves or others, would result in mistreatment of creatures of nature, or cause irresponsible damage to the environment; demonstrating graciousness towards others viewpoints, even if you disagree.

5) **Acceptance:** The attitude of respecting the choices of others, their beliefs, and their way of life, without feeling the need to try to change them. Tolerance for the differences in others, and patience in the process of people's learning and growing in awareness in their own way. The ability to accept people and situations as they are without negative feelings of judgment or resistance. Acceptance of situations is especially important in difficult circumstances – when things are not turning out the way you had hoped or desired. Acceptance also includes forgiveness, recognizing that no one would ever do something to harm or hurt another – if they were truly fully conscious of the negative consequences of their actions, both to themselves and others. Thus, forgiveness is actually a realization of the lack of awareness in another. Never the less, acceptance, does not mean an "anything goes" attitude, when decisions and behaviors of others have resulted, (or could result) in harm.

6) **Temperance:** Self-restraint, patience, and thoughtful attentiveness when communicating, especially in difficult or challenging situations, or when circumstances have developed undesirably. Being calm and open in allowing others to restate themselves if words or behaviors have been misunderstood, or misperceived, causing hurt. Demonstrating moderation in behavior. Avoiding violence in any form (verbal, physical, emotional, or psychological), e.g. yelling, angry words, sarcasm, name-calling, angry mannerisms, hitting, lashing out, "silent treatment", criticizing, blaming, shaming, or guilt-tripping. Refraining from retributive justice in any form, (i.e. punishing for behavior).

**Note:** Restorative justice (explained below in the Resolution description) replaces retributive justice as a much more effective way to resolve conflicts and restore harmony and peaceful relating.

7) **Resolution:** The process of peacefully and compassionately resolving conflicts without criticism, blame or punishment (restorative justice). Those involved in restorative justice conflict resolution engage in peaceful, compassionate, open, and honest communication. The goal is to resolve the conflict lovingly, fairly and satisfactorily; making amends.

The time, effort, and topics that need to be discussed to achieve this goal will depend on the severity and/or complexity of a conflict, in addition to the maturity of the individuals involved, and their desire to resolve the conflict. More severe and complex conflicts will generally require more time, openness, and mental effort to resolve. In these cases, achieving the above goal may require familiarizing yourself with Restorative Justice Principles (see resources page ?).

- 8) **Openness:** Sincere, open-hearted and truthful communication. The transparent sharing of one's feeling and needs. Being willing to consider alternative actions or solutions beyond one's own ideas; this is especially important in challenging situations.
- 9) **Sincerity:** Only agreeing with each other, relating to each other, and doing things for each other, when doing so with heartfelt willingness. Being honest in one's responses to and communication with others.
- 10) **Integrity: Within Yourself:** being true to yourself; determining how you can best serve humanity with your talents, gifts, and experience, and following through with whatever you need to do, and whatever commitments you have made to yourself , to develop your character to the best of your ability in order to achieve your potential.  
**Toward Others:** following through with your commitments, and being honest and honourable in all you say, and in all you do.
- 11) **Kindness:** Gracious and thoughtful speech and action towards each other, especially in difficult situations. Considerate and compassionate treatment of others, regardless of their attitude or behavior toward you.
- 12) **Courage:** Acting upon your convictions, and doing what feels right in your heart, in spite of feeling fear or opposition; the strength of character to face your weaknesses, fears or vulnerabilities. Willingness to do your best, and accept an uncertain outcome (rather than not act to improve yourself), or confront a situation you feel needs to change (especially when to do so will be difficult).
- 13) **Adaptability:** Openness to constructive changes as situations warrant. A teachable spirit. The courage to face challenges. The ability to be flexible, and the capacity to adapt to new, different, or

changing requirements, for the betterment of one's self, as well as for the good of the whole. When circumstances change, to be able to welcome the opportunity to learn something new and develop your character. When undesirable outcomes become apparent, to have the ability to go within yourself to see if there is something you missed, perhaps a change you need to make, such as approaching the matter differently – with a different perspective – in order to change the results you are getting.

- 14) **Orderliness:** Establishment of efficient systems that demonstrate respect for a unit's members and resources, and that meet the needs of those dependent on the unit's systems. Established agreements on timeliness, as well as standards of order in shared spaces (e.g. kitchen, bathroom, car, office, staffroom), or shared objects (e.g. tools, cleaning supplies, equipment). After using systems that involve shared objects, or shared spaces, returning those systems to the agreed-upon standard of order, or reporting/arranging for required replenishment of supplies. This demonstrates consideration and respect for others who rely upon those systems.
- 15) **Collaboration:** Openness in working with others and including them in decisions that will affect their lives; listening to the ideas of others with an open-mind, and incorporating these ideas when appropriate to do so; teamwork – working together toward shared goals, or for a common good.
- 16) **Cooperation:** Equal interest and desire in meeting the needs of those with whom you are relating, as in having your own needs met; demonstrating this desire with your suggestions, decisions and behavior. Doing your part for the common good; being helpful.
- 17) **Consistency:** In HCR, consistency means harmony of conduct: to always be a positive influence in how you relate and in what you do. Positive behavior consistency creates reliability, which builds meaningful trust. Consistency is closely related to integrity in terms of following through with what you say you are going to do to the best of your ability, both in terms of your commitments to yourself, as well as to others.

- 18) **Perseverance:** The ability to persist and stay positive in difficult circumstances. When you encounter challenging life situations, or when conflict resolution attempts are not going as hoped – to have the ability to remain tempered and optimistic – to believe and imagine that continuing efforts will lead to desirable outcomes. Perseverance is the opposite of quitting or giving up prematurely.
- 19) **Protection:** Keeping someone or something safe. Wise guidance to those under your care or authority. Protective force, only engaged when intervention is required to safeguard a person who is in danger of harm, or when neglect or aggressive behavior or actions by someone threatens harm to human life, nature’s creatures or the environment.
- 20) **Celebration:** Recognizing, honoring and taking the time to celebrate personal, individual or group accomplishments.

Celebration is closely related to the virtue of appreciation; however, celebration has *positive motivational energy that is unique, for it includes enthusiasm and joy*. Appreciation is an all-encompassing life character quality to develop, whereas celebration is a specific decision to truly joyously celebrate a worthy accomplishment. Thus, celebrating *stimulates and inspires* you to keep going to complete what you have set out to do, or to fully realize the achievement of successfully completing a meaningful endeavor. The act of celebration can also motivate you to take on other meaningful challenges, because of the successful feelings of fulfillment realized through completing something important to you, or to a group of which you were a part.

Celebration replaces rewarding others for “good behavior”. Celebration can include gifts, though not as rewards. Gifts have a more meaningful effect when given in recognition of accomplishment, or acknowledgment of appreciation.

Rewarding people for behavior and accomplishments can easily foster misguided intentions, causing people to do things for the reward they will (or may) get, rather than for the growth and character development that will naturally result from their actions. Celebrating accomplishments and successes is a much more sincere, beneficial and fulfilling relating act than rewarding people for their accomplishments.

## **HCR's Code of Conduct Virtues Summary**

Earlier in this chapter, in the paragraph after the HCR Basic Human Needs list, I asked you to carefully consider if there were any needs listed which you thought your life did not require to truly feel fulfilled. I then asked you to consider how much more enjoyable and fulfilling everyone's life would be if our basic needs were consistently met.

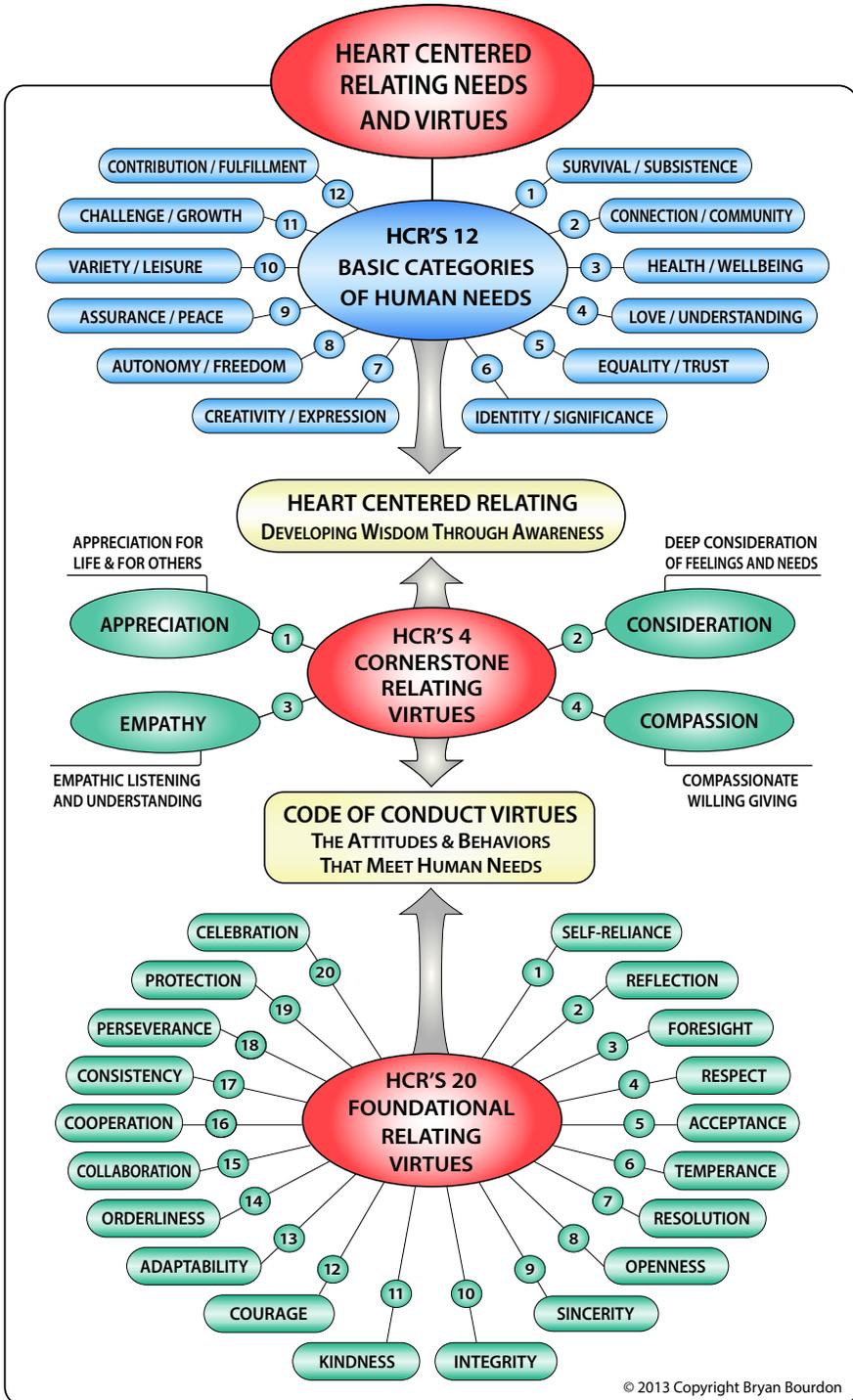
I am asking the same consideration for the HCR Code of Conduct Virtues list. As you do this, is it not easy to recognize that if you began consistently living in adherence to these virtues, the quality of your life, and your relationships would improve? Consider what would happen in the world if everyone related to each other in accordance with these virtues: imagine how different the world would be! Imagine this beginning with you.

### **Putting It All Together**

On the following page, a full graphic illustration of the HCR Relating System reveals how the Code of Conduct Virtues work in combination with our Shared Inherent Human Needs. This illustration helps us become aware of why intimately understanding these two fundamentally important topics is necessary for the relationships in your life to be consistently harmonious, and to achieve their potential.



# HCR's Basic Human Needs & Relating Virtues



## **The Powerful HCR Need/Virtues Synergistic Effect**

The illustration on the previous page provides a bird's-eye-view clearly revealing why living in accordance with HCR principles leads to such effective relating. Key to this realization is the awareness-shift that takes place when one comes to understand the powerful synergistic interplay between our *inherent Human Needs*, and the *Relating Virtues* we must live by to have our needs met. When we consistently relate with each other in ways that meet each other's needs, it creates the mutually beneficial and deeply fulfilling relationships we all truly desire.

This understanding of HCR dynamics creates a powerful awareness effect: if we relate with one another in accordance with the listed HCR Virtues, then we will meet each other's needs. If we don't, we won't. This awareness causes us to desire to cooperate with each other in compassionate relating and willing-giving; for if we fail to do this, it will always lead to creating unmet needs, and consequently – costly negative outcomes.

Maintaining peaceful relationships with everyone you regularly relate with is one of the greatest challenges of modern day living; for most people experience a significant amount of pressure and stress every day – because many of their basic needs are not being sufficiently met. As a result of this current human condition, we must consciously choose to respond wisely to unmet needs, for we have all been unwittingly conditioned to default to negative responses to unmet needs – and this always creates more problems.

Because most of us will experience unmet needs (usually on a daily basis), each of us must live in ways that meet our own need to live virtuously. This includes being able to handle our own unmet needs with a positive-loving mind-set, so that we don't dwell upon thoughts or engage in negative behavior that pulls us into a negative vortex, and thus creates even more unmet needs in ourselves and others. In addition, we need to be able to lovingly and positively respond to others who are negatively reacting to their own unmet needs. Yet, how does one get

from the theoretical understanding of the truths just described, to using this knowledge to change – so that you stop being part of the problem, but rather, part of the solution?

Due to the fact that modern day life often feels so pressure-filled and overwhelming, we often neglect to do the very things that would change us, that would strengthen our character, and develop our spirituality, so that we could rise above the pressures of life to which we far too frequently succumb. There is a heavy cost when we don't take the time to invest in ourselves in order to be able to handle the stresses of life wisely. For unwise reactions to life circumstances take a life-draining toll on us personally, and can wreak havoc in our relationships

To remedy this significant challenge, I committed to making HCR more than just a theoretically sound book, by developing HCR's Personal Life-Assessment (PLA) Program. What has been explained in this chapter is the foundation of HCR's organic framework, and this framework has been dynamically developed in HCR's Personal Life-Assessment (PLA) Program, which I will be covering in detail in the following two chapters.

### **Chapter Summary**

Heart Centered Relating reveals to us that in order to feel truly fulfilled, we must pay attention to all **12 Categories of Our Inherent Basic Needs**, as well as to the **24 Code of Conduct Virtues** we must live by to meet both our own needs, and each other's needs. Though many of our own basic needs can only be fulfilled by our own choices to live virtuously, to achieve complete, balanced, and healthy needs fulfillment in all needs categories requires developing deeply meaningful and fulfilling relationships. This is the reason relating to others in ways that are in harmony with the 24 HCR Code of Conduct Virtues is of such key importance. If we fail to relate to others in ways that meet their Basic needs, many of our own Basic Needs will not be met at all. Understanding this truth is what creates the desire for willing-giving in our relationships with each other.

Consistent willing-giving to each other is the result of the awakening of our God/Life-consciousness: *it is truly the manifestation of Heart Centered Relating*; and it is this kind of living and relating that we all truly desire.

# CHAPTER 6

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## HCR's 12 Life Skills

### Daily Practices That Lead to Virtues Mastery and Needs Fulfillment

*"For the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them."*

Aristotle (Greek philosopher and scientist, 384-322 BCE)

*"Practice creates the master."*

Miguel Ruiz (author, teacher, speaker)

#### **Improving the Quality of Your Life**

In the introduction, I wrote that the one thing all of humanity shares in common is that we all want to feel good, and that the information in this book could help you learn how to feel better more often. I explained that HCR had a "secret" formula, that when followed, would help you to create a fulfilling life that included meaningful, lasting relationships. I shared that once you understood this formula, you would wish you had been taught the principles of heart-centered living and relating starting from your childhood.

Chapters 1-4 explained the concepts, principles, and guidelines of Heart Centered Relating – the basic theory of the reasons why heart-directed living is so vital to a fulfilling life. In Chapter 5, I began unveiling the foundation of the HCR *formula framework*, by introducing you to humanity's inherent shared basic needs, and the virtues we must live by to meet both our own needs, and the needs of one another. In this chapter, I'm going to continue building upon that framework by introducing you to the **12 HCR Life-Skills**.

#### **HCR's 12 Life Skills: Key Daily Practices to Develop Your Character**

I developed the HCR Life Skills because I recognized something fundamentally important. To optimize living in heart-directed ways requires *specific daily practices*, for it is very easy to get *emotionally distracted*, and as a result, to make unwise decisions, or to make mistakes that will have a negative impact on your life.

## **The Principle of Practice**

To improve at any skill requires practice. For example, if you want to play a musical instrument, you will not achieve this through learning music theory alone. *Music theory*, and *playing technique theory* are required, but to actually learn how to play, you must engage with the instrument you want to play well, and invest time in practising. The more dedicated and consistent you are in practising, the faster you will advance in your ability to play that instrument. Over time, this methodology will lead to mastery, as well as to the deeply fulfilling feelings that not only come from achieving mastery – *but also from the journey to mastery*.

The same principles apply in learning how to live a more heart-directed life. The material contained in this book, and in the Personal Life-Assessment Program (covered in part in Life Skill #1, and fully explained in the next chapter) contain both the theory, and the practical application framework of Heart Centered Relating, but you are the instrument – you must “*pick yourself up*” and practice.

Here, the HCR Life Skills come into prominent play – *and this is the reason*: If all you do is read this book, but never put into practice the heart-centered principles it explains, then it will be like reading over music theory, but never playing an instrument. For without practising the Life Skills, it will be difficult to effectively advance in heart-directed living.

However, if you dedicate yourself to coming to truly understand the purpose behind the HCR Life Skills – *that they are designed to help you to develop your character* – so that you can achieve and experience greater needs fulfillment, then you will be highly motivated to practise the Life Skills – *daily* – until you master them; and I assure you that if you do this, it will create positive-loving outcomes in your life.

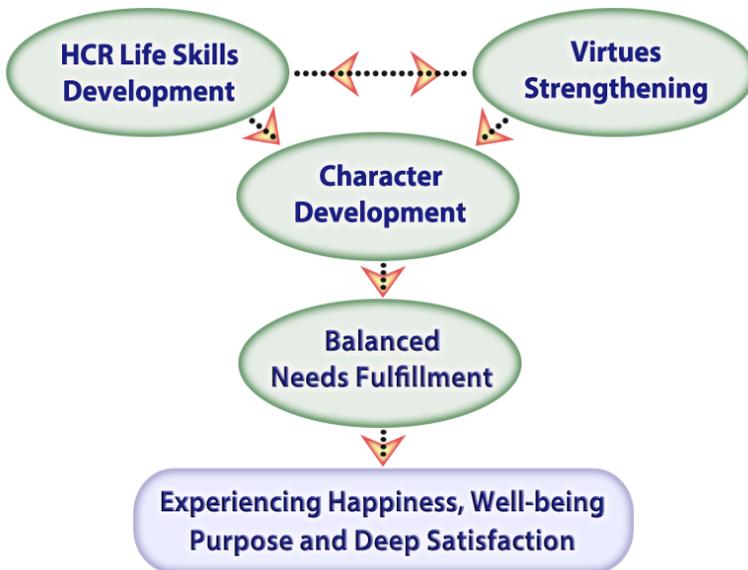
The HCR Life Skills are called Life Skills because that is exactly what they are: skills that will guide you in mastering your life. The greatest masters throughout history mastered both the theoretical understanding of the discipline they were pursuing, and the practical application of that theory. This is what the 12 HCR Life Skills and the PLA Program are all about – mastering the theory of Heart Centered Relating, through its practical application in your life.

## Revisiting the “Secret” Formula

At the beginning of this chapter, I briefly mentioned the HCR “secret” formula for attaining a fulfilling life, and in the introduction, I wrote that it really isn’t a secret, but it might as well be, because so few of us understand these principles of successful living and relating. The HCR formula for successful living and relating (illustrated below), is beautifully simple, yet powerfully effective.

Clarity on the specifics of how you achieve a certain outcome is vital in order to effectively advance in the development of that skill. Competitive sports teams are a great example of this principle. Professional sport coaches and players know there are specific fundamentals they must invest time in practising, if they want to advance in their skill level, and/or stay at the top of their game. It is the same with attaining a high skill level in heart-directed living: the 12 HCR Life Skills contain those specific fundamental practices required to advance and eventually achieve mastery in heart-centered living.

## The HCR Formula for Attaining Balanced Needs Fulfillment



**Heart Centered Life Skills Development = Virtues Strengthening  
= Character Development = Balanced Needs Fulfillment  
= Experiencing Deeply Felt Meaningful Purpose and Fulfillment in Your Life.**

This is the reason why, in the above graphic, the HCR Life Skills Development and Virtues Adherence are at the top. As you practise the Life Skills, you will become more virtuous; as you become more virtuous, you will become better at the Life Skills. In ratio to your advancement in these two areas of your life, you will be developing all four aspects of your humanity: the *spiritual, physical, emotional, and mental*. The natural outcome of this growth is character development. The natural outcome of character development is balanced needs fulfillment; and the natural outcome of balanced needs fulfillment is experiencing meaningful purpose and deep fulfillment in your life. If you take practising the Life Skills out of that formula, none of the natural outcomes that eventually lead to needs fulfillment will happen.

### **The Challenge of the HCR Formula**

The challenge is, however, that consistently applying the HCR formula in your life *is not easy*, precisely because – it requires character development – the most challenging of all human pursuits. Yet, as the quotation from Aristotle at the beginning of this chapter stated, “...*the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them.*” This wise principle of learning applies to character development as well – for we learn to develop our character by regularly engaging in practices that develop our character. So in your personal pursuit of character development – remember – feelings of deep fulfillment are only attained through the satisfaction we experience in overcoming significant challenges, and this is especially true in achieving growth in your character development.

### **The Importance of Self-Care**

We all know that there are certain vital things we should be doing on a daily basis to manage our lives responsibly – to strengthen and maintain ourselves – to keep ourselves healthy and fit in all four aspects of our individuality – the **S**piritual, **P**hysical, **E**motional, and **M**ental. The HCR acronym for this is “**SPEM**”; your SPEM-Self – the all of you. Optimizing your life requires paying balanced attention to your SPEM-Self.

The problem is: we often don't do what we know we should. By committing to developing and incorporating the 12 HCR Life Skills into your daily life, you will overcome this human tendency to neglect the key things most of us truly desire to do, but often lack the discipline to do, or the ability to create the efficient routine systems in our life that will allow us to accomplish *more* with *less stress*.

The Life Skills are the action steps within HCR's practical application framework. When these Life Skills are adopted and adhered to on a daily basis, their combined synergistic effect will have a profound positive impact in your personal life, your relationships, and in your business/career. In other words, when each of these practices becomes a daily habit, each one will not only strengthen one aspect of your life, but all four – the total you – your SPEM-Self.

Here are examples. If you adopt a spiritual practice, it will not only help you spiritually (S), it will also help you physically (P), emotionally (E) and mentally (M), because you will experience more inner peace, which naturally makes you feel and think better. If you adopt physical exercise, it will strengthen your body, increase blood flow, as well as provide many other health benefits. This will cause you to be more spiritually in tune (S), mentally alert (M), and more emotionally stable (E).

When you set goals and efficiently plan and execute your day, you are able to accomplish practical tasks more efficiently, which allows you to accomplish more with less effort. This creates momentum, *which is motivating*, and positively impacts your SPEM-Self. The synergistic combination of the 12 HCR Life Skills provides *purpose, strength, clarity, efficiency*, and thus, expedites achievement of your goals. Each of the 12 HCR Life Skills was specifically chosen precisely because of its synergistic, positive effect on all four aspects of your life.

### **Learning “Readiness” & Understanding the “GHOM It” Learning Curve**

There is a principle in effective learning called “readiness”. Ideally, readiness means being in an optimal state for learning, or at least being in a state where you *can* learn – not being too tired, for example. Now, you can aid yourself in readiness in a number of ways:

- 1) As mentioned, make sure you are not too tired, especially when learning something new;
- 2) Make sure you turn off all distractions, e.g. TV, radio, phone (if you can);
- 3) Focus your energy on alertness; and
- 4) Understand the natural learning curve that takes place when you are learning anything new.

Understanding point #4 is so helpful that I developed an acronym to describe it that I call “GHOM It”.

**G** = Gist of it; **H** = Hang of it; **O** = Own it; and **M** = Master it.

In any skill that you can now do very well in your life, first you needed to get the **Gist of it** – the general idea of something, how it works, or what you need to do or learn to make it work. Then, by practising what you learned, there is a point where you begin to feel you’ve got the **Hang of it**. You’ve become more comfortable both with what you have learned, and how to apply what you have learned. Then, through continued dedication to practising – simply consistently doing what you have learned – you begin to “**Own**” what you have learned, which means you have become very comfortable with your understanding of the new skill and feel proficient at applying what you have learned. The skill you are learning begins to become something you find really worthwhile, and therefore rewarding. Once this takes place, you begin to feel “it’s yours” – you “**Own it**”. Once you feel you own a skill – then through continued study, practice and application – you begin to “**Master it**”. You are confident in its use, and employing it becomes “automatic”.

This is what will take place if you commit to the HCR PLA process, which includes learning and then mastering the HCR Life Skills. First you will get the **Gist of it**, then the **Hang of it**, then you will **Own it**, and if you are consistent, you will **Master it**; as a result, you will cause dramatic, positive-loving change to occur in your life. In short order, you are going to become very comfortable with your PLA program, and it will become like a friend guiding you along the way. And the cool thing about it is, you will be guiding yourself. You will be the one assessing your life, and you

will be the one deciding what you need to do to achieve greater needs fulfillment. Your PLA will become like your personal compass that you access frequently to make sure you are on the course you have decided you want to follow in your life.

## **HCR's 12 Life Skills - Daily Practices**

The following descriptions of the HCR Life Skill practices explain why each of these Life Skills are so important to personal growth – *to developing, strengthening and maintaining your total **SPEM-Self**.*

As you are reading this Life Skills section, do not allow yourself to get into overwhelm by thinking you have to completely understand and/or master these Life Skills right away. Mastery of any truly worthy skill takes time and practice. Rather than taking time away from you, mastery of the HCR Life Skills will not only cause you to use your time more effectively, it will all significantly add to the quality of your life experiences.

### **Life Skill #1: Personal Life Assessments (PLAs)**

The PLA is a comprehensive, completely unique, and a very effective self-guiding Personal Life-Assessment Program. I used Microsoft's Excel program to develop the PLA's main tool because not only does Excel have powerful calculating abilities, it also allows you to embed hyperlink buttons, add pictures and graphics, and write in it much like Word. The PLA program within Excel is sophisticated, elegantly designed, and highly organized, and specifically designed to allow anyone with basic computer skills to do PLAs, daily reviews, set goals, write affirmation statements, and do journaling exercises effectively and efficiently.

Basically, the PLA is like having your own Personal Life-Assessment Program website within Excel, which is the reason anyone can easily use it. I will be explaining the PLA Program in more detail in the next chapter, and I have also developed a 35-minute instructional video which demonstrates precisely how it works, and why it will be so beneficial in helping you advance in heart-directed living. However, for the purpose of explaining the PLA Life Skill in this section, I will only be providing brief descriptions.

## What the PLA Process Involves:

### Weekly:

Minimum time commitment: approx. 60-75 min.

- 1) LAP-O Meditation (approx. time 2-5 min.)
- 2) Reading: HCR's 8-Step Positive-Loving Communication Practices, and the Heart-Centered Thought-Directing Key Phrases (approx. time 15-20 min.)  
Self-scoring HCR's 3 Life-Assessment Charts: Chart 1: Needs Fulfillment; Chart 2: Virtues Adherence; Chart 3 Life Skills Development (approx. time 25-35 min.)
- 3) Analyzing Chart Score Results (approx. time 2-3 min.)
- 4) Setting 10 Quick Goals for your 10 lowest scores (approx. time 10-15 min.)

**Note:** Your 10 lowest scores will be automatically highlighted by the PLA Excel Program as follows: Your 3 lowest: a) Needs Categories; b) Foundational Virtues; c) Life Skills, and 4) your lowest Cornerstone Virtue:  $3 + 3 + 3 + 1 = 10$

### Daily Reviews:

Minimum time commitment: approx. 10 min. (5 min. each review time; morning and evening).

**Daily review times consist of one or a combination of the following:**

- 1) Reading/scanning one or more of the description/s of your 10 lowest chart scores.
- 2) Reviewing your goals (either your 10 Quick Goals, or your goals for one or more of your 10 lowest chart score items.
- 3) Reviewing your affirmation statements.
- 4) Reviewing your journal writings.

As mentioned, the complete PLA Program, and the Life-Assessment Charts scoring process is explained in more detail in the next chapter. As well, I have made a comprehensive instructional video demonstrating in detail how to use it; but basically, this is what the chart scoring process involves:

- a) The 12 HCR Needs Categories make up the first chart;
- b) The 24 HCR Virtues, the second chart; and
- c) The 12 HCR Life Skills, the third chart.

Each of the listed items on each of the charts is scored from 0 to 10. The descriptions contained in this book for each of the 12 Needs Categories, the 24 Virtues, and the 12 Life Skills are also part of the PLA Excel file.

Each of the charts is scored by reading the description for the chart item you are scoring, and then entering a number from 0-10 in a scoring cell. The Needs Categories are scored on your feelings of *fulfillment*, the Virtues on your feelings of *adherence to the virtues*, and the Life Skills are scored based on your *development* of the Life Skills, as well as on your *consistency* in practising them.

Higher scores indicate greater Needs Fulfillment, Virtues Adherence and Life Skills Development. Because of how the PLA Program was designed in Excel, the scoring process is easy to do, flows readily, and is very automated. The PLA Program automatically calculates individual chart scores, combined chart score averages, highlights your 10 lowest scores for goal-setting purposes, and tracks your results on a Summary Page, over 12 individual PLA sessions (12 weeks). Therefore, the PLA Program provides both highly useful short-term *and* long-term feedback on your Needs Fulfillment, Virtues Adherence, and Life Skills Development progress.

### **The Vital Importance of Regular Personal Life-Assessments (PLA)**

There is an important reason why the PLA is the first HCR Life Skill listed. HCR Personal Life-Assessments, and the second HCR Life Skill, SPEM-Self Goal Setting, are key to converting your knowledge of the principles and practices of **Heart Centered Relating** into real and positive results being manifested in your life. Because regular PLAs and Daily Reviews are so beneficial to personal growth, I highly recommend you schedule a regular day and time to do your weekly PLA. It is so important to your personal growth to keep the universal principles of successful living and relating that HCR is based upon consistently at the forefront of your mind. The consistent positive-loving focus that Weekly PLAs and Daily Reviews provide, will help you to overcome the negative conditioning that permeates our society; for it is this negative conditioning that holds us back from being all we can be, and thus, feeling free and fully alive.

As mentioned, it is best to do your PLA on the same day every week, and as well, (when possible) to set a regular time (and to “block out” that time on your agenda or calendar). Make the commitment to *invest in your self-development* by making your Personal Life-Assessments a high-priority weekly practice.

The first and second HCR Life Skills (*Personal Life-Assessments* and *SPEM-Self Goal-Setting*), go hand-in-hand, for your goals will be based upon your Life-Assessment results. The benefits of PLA Daily Reviews, and how to do them efficiently (5 minutes each morning and evening) are also explained in more detail in the **PLA Instructional Video**.

Just like highlighting words on a page draws your attention, regularly Weekly PLAs, and Daily Reviews (of your most recent Life-Assessment, your goals and your affirmation statements,) will highlight in your mind the objectives you want to achieve, and the character changes you desire to make.

The PLA Daily Review practice is like looking at your “personal life-compass”, and will result in you navigating your life more effectively, by helping you make wise that are aligned with your goals – *with what you truly desire to manifest in your life*. This will help you avoid distractions, and thus stay on the course you have mapped out for yourself. You will be amazed at how the PLA weekly and daily practices will help you to become more effective at managing all aspects of your life, and thus, improve the quality of your life, and your ability to meaningfully connect with others.

## **Life Skill #2: SPEM-Self Goal-Setting**

When setting goals for any area of your life, whether personal, family/relational, business/career, or group/organization, the principles of heart-directed SPEM goal-setting are the same.

Every individual is comprised of the **S**piritual, **P**hysical, **E**motional and the **M**ental (the **SPEM**); these four aspects also make up “units”, whether a couple, company, group, organization, community, city or country. Learning how to effectively set and achieve goals is one of the most important mental development skills you can attain.

## **ESPER Goal-Setting:**

“ESPER” is an acronym often used in goal-setting. It describes a very effective 5-step framework for achieving goals. How to specifically apply this framework to your Personal Life-Assessment is explained throughout this section.

### **The ESPER Goal-Setting 5-Step Framework:**

Note: The bullet point subheadings are Memory Tips.

- 1) **E**stablish: Set the goal, Envision (imagine) it accomplished. Begin with the End in mind. a
  - ▷ *Triple E: Establish, Envision, End*
- 2) **S**trategize: Identify the objectives you will need to accomplish to achieve the goal. Make a complete list of what will be required.
  - ▷ *SIL: Strategize: Identify, List*
- 3) **P**lan: Break the strategy down into “bite size” Steps based on your strategy list. Organize the steps according to the principle of effective efficiency. You can be efficient (short-term) without being effective (long-term). To be effectively efficient, you must carefully detail your step-by-step plans with the end in mind. This is often referred to as “design down” planning: starting with the goal, you plan “backwards” to ensure all your objectives and ensuing actions are aligned to the goal’s achievement.
  - ▷ *PSO: Plan: Steps, Organize*
- 4) **E**xecute: Act and Accomplish the plan – step by step.
  - ▷ *EAA: Execute: Act, Accomplish*
- 5) **R**eview: Reflect upon results on a regular basis to make sure you are on track and adjust your plan as required.
  - ▷ *RTA: Review: Track, Adjust*

## **The History and Meaning of ESPER**

Research on the origin of the word/acronym “ESPER” reveals that it is a root word derivative meaning “hope”, – a particularly apt foundation for heart-directed goal-setting. The *Merriam-Webster* definition of hope is: *to cherish an outcome with anticipation, as well as: to desire with expectation of obtainment*. Another meaning associated with ESPER (in both gaming and science fiction writing) is one who has unusual powers. In a nutshell, that’s what goal-setting does for people. It gives them “unusual powers” to accomplish, as compared to those who do not set goals.

There is a key reason for this, especially in today’s society where there are so many “attractions” that can distract us, so many things we can do that don’t lead to accomplishing what we really desire. This is the reason using the ESPER goal-setting framework in combination with setting heart-directed goals will be so effective in helping you to achieve outcomes you truly desire. If your goals are not heart-directed, then achieving them will not be truly fulfilling. For example, many people have set and achieved lofty career goals, only to “discover” that when they achieved them, their lives felt devoid of meaning.

This happens because their goals were not in alignment with their unique potential for contribution to others – *with their True-Self’s purpose*. This is the reason determining your unique potential life-purpose before you set your career goals is so vitally important to meeting your need for feeling your life has deep meaning and purpose (HCR Needs Category #12, Contribution/Fulfillment). Therefore, if you have already determined your main life-purpose, and written a life-purpose statement that accurately reflects your life-purpose, then you are ready to start setting heart-directed goals. If you have yet to do this, then it is vital that you read Chapter 8 (Determining Your Life-Purpose) before establishing your main life goals.

## **The Power of Focus**

Employing an effective goal-achieving framework like ESPER will focus your attention, and therefore your life-energy – *on decisive outcomes* you truly desire to manifest in your character development, and in your life.

I remember as a kid playing outside with a magnifying glass on sunny days. That magnifying glass was like magic! The sunlight in its natural state could not burn anything. However, once that sunlight was focused through the magnifying glass, it had transformation power – *it could ignite stuff!*

Why? Because the magnifying glass was capable of focusing the sun's energy, intensifying it into a small spot, and because of this, I could focus that energy to accomplish results that would not otherwise be possible. This is what goal-setting does for us. It causes us to focus and intensify our mental and physical energy. Instead of our energy being diffused, effective goal achievement strategies focus our energy into a smaller diameter – a tighter range of possibilities, and there is a lot of power to accomplish what we desire when we are targeting our actions toward a precise outcome.

### **Your PLA Benchmark**

Your first PLA Chart Scores are your benchmark – your goal-setting starting point. Your Chart Scores reveal to you in a tangible measurable form, your own assessment of your current Needs Fulfillment, Virtues Adherence, and Life Skills Development. From this starting point, you can set into motion thought/action strategies to achieve higher Chart Scores, and thus, improve the quality of your life.

### **The HCR Life-Improvement strategy is based upon:**

- 1) setting specific goals to achieve higher Chart Scores;
- 2) establishing plans to achieve your goals; and
- 3) taking consistent actions that are in harmony with your goals.

You start your SPEM-Self goal-setting by focusing on your 10 lowest Chart Scores. This strategy is based upon the principle that you are only as strong as your weakest links, and your 10 lowest Chart Scores are your weakest links. Though effectively setting complete and comprehensive SPEM-self goals is ultimately required to make the most of your opportunities to progress in your life, you don't need to master this skill to begin immediately benefiting from setting goal. Very few people have

been adequately trained in comprehensive goal-setting, so don't think you need to have it all figured out from the start. Like the development of any skill, comprehensive goal-setting has a GHOM-It learning curve, and if you are consistent in practising goal-setting, *over time you will master it.*

Part of HCR Life Skill #1 (Personal Life-Assessments) includes spending 10-15 minutes setting 10 Quick Goals for your 10 lowest Chart Scores. Setting these 10 Quick Goals right after your PLA Chart Scoring gets your goal-setting momentum going right from the start. This also helps prevent you from thinking you need to have it all figured out before you can make advancements (achieve small goals) that will have a positive impact on your Chart Scores, and therefore in your life.

### **Know Thyself**

As explained in Chapter 4, though we all share the same inherent human needs, what fulfills our needs is different for everyone. For example, we all need variety and leisure in our lives (HCR Needs Category #10). However, one person may enjoy hiking and camping, while another prefers biking and canoeing. In HCR Needs Category #12 (Contribution/Fulfillment), one person may decide their unique potential life-purpose is to teach children; another, to build amazing self-sustaining homes.

Therefore, to achieve full needs fulfillment in any Need Category you are currently scoring at less than 10 (which would be complete fulfillment), you need to identify the specific reason why you now feel you cannot score that Needs Category at 10. As will be further explained in the next chapter, and demonstrated in the PLA Instructional Video, each HCR Needs Category, Virtue, and Life Skill has a dedicated page in the PLA Excel Program; and each Needs Category and Virtue page has goal-setting template spaces in the Analysis and Goal-Setting section of that page, that you can use to determine and write out your goals.

The purpose of these goal-setting templates is not to detail your entire ESPEER goal-setting, planning, and execution strategy, but rather, to determine the following:

- 1) what you need to manifest in your life to achieve higher needs fulfillment, (your broad-based goals) ;
- 2) your reasons why you are passionate about achieving these goals; and
- 3) the main objectives you need to achieve to realize your goals.

By answering these three questions, you set your goal-setting foundation in place to achieve greater fulfillment in a Needs Category, or strengthen your adherence to a particular Virtue. Once you have established a goal (or a set of goals), you will be accessing the HCR PADs Excel file (introduced next) to detail your ESPER 5-Step goal-setting framework for achieving your goals.

“PADs” stands for **P**ractical **A**pplication **D**ocuments. How to use the PADs file and benefit from doing so is explained in the PADs Instructional Video. But here is a brief explanation: the PADs file is set up in a similar way to the PLA file. It contains many highly useful Excel-based document/pages to help you plan and organize your life. For example, it contains a daily planner, a weekly time budget page, pages to develop daily, weekly, and monthly routines, a web links page where you can easily organize frequently visited websites, a phone and address page, and much more.

### **Effective Planning and Executing**

A year is divided into months, a month into weeks, a week into days, and days into hours. It is the accumulate effect of positive-result “*action hours*” that will ultimately produce significant positive outcomes in your life. Once you have established your goals, making the most of your opportunities to achieve your goals requires daily, weekly, monthly and yearly planning; and ideally, a 3-5 year plan.

Each significant goal you attain is a step-by-step process, which requires effective daily planning. To plan your day effectively, you not only need to list what you desire/need to accomplish that day, but (in most cases) when you are going to do it. If you don’t plot on your daily planner, (as well as on your weekly/monthly/yearly planner) when you are going to do something, you significantly decrease the odds that you will actually do it. If it is truly important for you to do something, you will schedule the time to do it.

## **Put First Things First: Use Your Time Wisely**

For most people, the morning hours are their most productive. This may not be true for you, *but perhaps it is*. If you say, “I’m not a morning person”, you may well be mentally programming yourself in a negative way. What we think does affect both our expectations of ourselves, as well as our energy levels. However, the main point I want to make is this: determine the times when you are at your best, and do the most important things you must do to achieve your goals at these times. However, do pay special attention to becoming productive as early in your day as possible.

Each of us has the choice to squander our time, or to use it wisely. When you eat a healthy breakfast, do your spiritual practice, exercise, and plan your day before all else, you are practising *putting first things first*.

What you do in the morning sets the stage for the rest of your day. If you use your morning time wisely, you increase the likelihood that you will use your time wisely for the rest of your day. Even if the rest of your day’s plans don’t work out (perhaps due to circumstances beyond your control), you will still have the satisfaction of a productive morning.

In addition, when circumstances don’t allow you to precisely follow your plan, a well-planned day will maximize your opportunities to adjust, and still accomplish most, or even all of your day’s goals.

## **Review Your Results**

This taps the HCR Virtue of Reflection. At the end of the day/week/month/year, look at how you did. What were your successes, and what were your shortfalls?

Reviewing results and reflecting upon outcomes is vital to personal growth and achieving desired outcomes. This is a key aspect of the PLA Process. While at a seminar, I heard a speaker talk about how important reviewing results is in achieving goals. He explained that jetliners are off-course most of the time, but the onboard computers make slight adjustments so often that it doesn’t matter. Frequently reviewing your results allows you to be your own “onboard computer”, allowing you to see little (or big) changes necessary to stay on target to achieve your goals more efficiently.

## Life Skill #3: Always Be Appreciative

**Outline:** Frequently throughout your day, think, feel, and express (from within to God/Life, as well as to others), appreciation/gratitude for what is being done for you, and for what is taking place, (both the good and the challenging). Also, write out 10 things you are appreciative/grateful for every day. This is best done as part of positive, cognitive journaling/writing. (explained ahead).

As covered in the Introduction, I believe that each of us is part of a Divine Purpose unfolding before us. Each of us is here, figuring out our part, and we all experience both good times and hard times. Yet, whether in good times or bad, the practice of cultivating a mind-set attitude of being appreciative and grateful – and expressing these virtues – will cause you to feel better no matter what is taking place in your life.

Though we all know how good it feels – both when we are appreciated, and when we express appreciation to another, as well as when we feel gratitude for something – the challenge each of us faces is that it is easy to forget the powerful positive effect living in a state of appreciation and gratefulness can have on our life.

To strengthen my own understanding of why these virtues are so important, I researched the topic and discovered some very credible reasons why this is so. I came across a website article<sup>1</sup> written by Robert Emmons, PhD, who is a professor of psychology at the University of California, Davis. He has been researching the effects of gratitude for over 10 years, and his research results are inspiring.

In the article Emmons' writes: "We've studied more than one thousand people, from ages 8 to 80, and found that people who practice gratitude consistently report a host of benefits."<sup>2</sup>

### Physical

- Stronger immune systems
- Less bothered by aches and pains
- Lower blood pressure
- Exercise more and take better care of their health
- Sleep better and feel more refreshed upon awakening

### **Psychological**

- Higher levels of positive emotions
- More alert, alive, and awake
- More joy and pleasure
- More optimism and happiness

### **Social**

- More helpful generous, and compassionate
- More forgiving
- More outgoing
- Feel less lonely and isolated

The first virtue listed in the HCR Virtues is Appreciation. Here is part of the HCR description for Appreciation (contained in Chapter 4):

*“An attitude of **gratefully** acknowledging the people in your life, and appreciating the rich, diverse experiences you are able to have because of the people in your life. Appreciation is being aware of the admirable qualities in those you relate with, and expressing recognition of those qualities. Living with an attitude of appreciation means being **grateful** for your life, and for the beauty, wonder, and challenges of life.”*

This description is consistent with dictionary definitions of appreciation, for example: Dictionary.com defines *appreciation* as: *gratitude; thankful recognition*; and Merriam-Webster defines it as: *a feeling of being grateful for something; an expression of admiration, approval or gratitude*.

Traditionally, the focus of this HCR Life Skill has been called “the practice of gratitude”, as described by the Emmons’ research referred to above. However, in HCR, the slight but important additional emphasis is – specifically – *on appreciating the people in your life with whom you have relationships*.

*Everything that happens to us becomes an experience*, and this is how we learn, mature, and grow. Contemplate for a moment your experiences with appreciation. How does it feel when someone appreciates you? How does it feel when you express appreciation to another? What do your life-experiences reveal to you about this vital virtue? Appreciation, received and given, feels really good, doesn't it? A number of years ago I asked my younger sister if she felt appreciated enough (in her life in general); she replied, "No, I don't". I've asked a number of people the same question. Everyone said, "No". Do you see the life-clue there? If the majority of people do not feel appreciated enough, then the majority of us must not be expressing enough appreciation – for our lives, to each other, for everything we have been given, for everything we give to each other, and for everything we are able to do because of our abilities.

One of the greatest fears we have is feeling isolated, of being abandoned. When we are grateful for something, when we appreciate someone, it has a feeling of a benefit or blessing coming to us from the outside – in other words, not from ourselves. In the first video featured on the website referred to earlier, Dr. Emmons asks the audience, "Who are we grateful to?" And then he answers the question, "To other people, and/or if you are of a spiritual mind-set, to God, a Higher-Power or a Supernatural Being." So being grateful – *and expressing this appreciation* – causes us to feel connected, because we are expressing it to something (or someone) that is "outside of ourselves", which counters our fear of isolation, of feeling alone.

Now, it is one thing to be appreciative to someone or grateful in a given moment, for a gift, or an act of kindness received from a loved one. But the most powerful benefits of these virtues are received by those who live in a constant state of an attitude of appreciation and gratefulness for all of life – all of the time. The problem we face is that this attitude does not come naturally to most of us because of the negative conditioning of our society. Thus, we have to cultivate an appreciative/grateful heart ourselves. We have to make a conscious effort to build this spiritual muscle. This is the reason why writing out 10 things you are appreciative/grateful for every day is part of this HCR Life Skill.

Following are the four main benefits Emmons discovered from his extensive research on gratitude:

- 1) Gratitude allows us to celebrate the present. It magnifies positive emotions.
- 2) Gratitude blocks toxic, negative emotions, such as envy, resentment, regret – emotions that can destroy our happiness.
- 3) Grateful people are more stress-resistant. There are a number of studies showing that in the face of serious trauma, adversity, and suffering, if people have a grateful disposition – they recover more quickly.
- 4) Grateful people have a higher sense of self-worth.<sup>3</sup>

I conclude this section on this powerfully life-enhancing HCR Life Skill by including this excerpt from the website featuring Dr. Emmons' article:

*Research on emotion shows that positive emotions wear off quickly. Our emotional systems like newness. They like novelty. They like change. We adapt to positive life circumstances so that before too long, the new car, the new spouse, the new house—they don't feel so new and exciting anymore.*

*But gratitude makes us appreciate the value of something, and when we appreciate the value of something, we extract more benefits from it; we're less likely to take it for granted.*

*In effect, I think gratitude allows us to participate more in life. We notice the positives more, and that magnifies the pleasures you get from life. Instead of adapting to goodness, we celebrate goodness. We spend so much time watching things—movies, computer screens, sports – but with gratitude, we become greater participants in our lives, as opposed to spectators.<sup>4</sup>*

### **Positive-Loving Cognitive Gratitude Journaling**

As covered in the outline description for this Life Skill, practising this Life Skill 3 involves writing out 10 things you are appreciative/grateful for everyday. Now, you could just list 10 things. However, it is more effective to write out “gratitude sentences” that include “snapshots” of your life. For

example, “I am grateful for my kitchen because it allowed me to cook a great supper for Char’s birthday party”. This method of gratitude writing strengthens the reason why you are grateful for something, as well as makes a “historical” journal entry as to what was taking place in your life on that day. Your second entry could be a continuation of the “the story” started with the first entry. For example, “I am so grateful for my family because we all had such a great time celebrating Stacy’s birthday”. You can also add other details to whatever you are writing about as part of your journaling.

Positive-loving journaling, however, is not just about writing about the “good” things that happen in your life, for scientific studies have verified that cognitive journaling is very beneficial in helping people make sense of, and draw meaning from their experiences. This is the reason strategically organized template spaces, as well as additional approaches to positive-loving journaling are provided in the PLA Program Excel file itself: to work through various exercises related to Needs Fulfillment, and Virtues Adherence.

If you do gratitude journaling as I’m suggesting, you can make thoughtful “bite-size” entries on challenging experiences/feelings that will help you draw meaning from these experiences. In other words, your journal writing don’t always need to be extensive to be beneficial. For example, “I am grateful this happened (write what happened) because it taught me this (write out what you learned)”.

Journaling, especially positive-loving mourning is very therapeutic. If you have done it, you’ll know what I’m talking about. If you haven’t, I highly encourage you to make it a daily practice so that you can experience for yourself the many “awareness” benefits you will realize.

## Life Skill #4: Pivotal Moment Temperance

**Outline:** Developing the alertness and character strength required to be capable of responding to all situations with acceptance, calmness, and positive/loving expectation, so that you are able to never react negatively to an unmet need.

In Chapter 5, I shared that it was through the work of Marshall Rosenberg that I was first introduced to the importance of understanding Basic Human Needs. This happened as a result of being introduced to one of his books titled, *Speak Peace In A World Of Conflict*. The sub-title to the book is, *What You Say Next Will Change Your World*. That subtitle got my attention.

What I believe Marshall was communicating in that subtitle is that anytime we say anything, it has power to change how we will “next” experience our world. I’d like to take that thought a level deeper, and say, “*What you think next has the power to change your world*”. Therefore, it is the quality of our thoughts that determine whether we will have Pivotal Moment Temperance, or not – for what we say or do is always preceded by what we think. The *pivotal moment* is your *initial decision* when facing the feeling of a negative feeling of an unmet need. Your choice being: is how I respond to this *negative feeling of an unmet need* going to change my world for the better, or for the worse? Is it going to create more harm, more unmet needs, or is it going to meet needs and heal?

To reiterate one of the core messages of this book, all negative feelings are sourced in unmet needs. How you initially respond to your negative feelings of unmet needs will determine how much internal conflict you will experience in your life. If you respond to an initial negative feeling wisely, the negative feeling you are experiencing can be diminished, and then dissolved – before it becomes an internal conflict.

Pivotal Moment Temperance is not just about remaining calm; it is about understanding the three-fold purpose in maintaining temperance:

- 1) to remain calm, so you will not create more unmet needs through intemperate behavior, either in yourself, or in those who would be negatively affected by your intemperance;

- 2) to make a heart inquiry as to the unmet need you have that caused the initial negative feeling; and
- 3) to hear/understand what the unmet need is, and to follow through with the heart-message you receive on what you need to do to move in the direction of having that need met.

When you react negatively to the initial feeling of an unmet need, your negative feeling will increase and become an *internal conflict*, and also, you will increase the likelihood that your internal conflict will spill out of you and cause a *relationship conflict*.

Thus, the cause of any conflict is a negative reaction to an unmet need, and when this happens, it always creates more problems. For every negative reaction to an unmet need will always create more unmet needs, both in the individual that negatively reacted, as well as for anyone who is negatively affected by that reaction. This is the reason why this Life Skill emphasizes the importance of developing the strength of character required to never respond negatively to an unmet need.

Of course, developing this kind of spiritual muscle power does not come easily. And just as a child learning to walk falls down many times before actually being able to walk, it is highly likely that you will find yourself “falling down” many times on your way to learning how to achieve consistent temperance. As with any valuable character development or skill, it takes practice, and it is *practice that makes permanent*.

Pivotal Moment Temperance, however, is not always about maintaining a demeanor of “complete calm”. Rather, it is about never losing emotional or physical control. There may/will be times, for example, when expression of anger or passion may be required, such as if someone is assaulting someone, your kids are fighting, or you want to emphasize how strongly you feel about something that happened, to fully emphasize a point. However, times where this type of expression is necessary should be rare, and if you feel you need to express yourself using frustration, irritation, anger, or deep sadness, you should be completely aware of what you are doing, and why, and thus be able to stop this passionate expression at any time.

In most cases, becoming impatient, irritated, or angry is simply an intemperate negative reaction to an unmet need, and therefore makes matters worse. Normally, these reactions cause others to get angry as well – to get defensive, or to shut down – all of which block meaningful communication. This is the reason Pivotal Moment Temperance is such a vital Life Skill to master.

## **Life Skill #5: Body Five Daily**

**Outline:** 1) Deep breathing practice; 2) Drinking enough water; 3) Eating healthily; 4) Getting adequate Rest/Sleep; 5) Maintaining good posture, (optimistic countenance), and facial expressions, (smiling).

In order to optimize your relationship with yourself, and therefore, relate to others from a place of being your best self, you must ensure that you are making decisions that meet your body's basic needs for health. Consider how much easier it is respond to life challenges positively, and to be optimistic and productive when you are feeling good, as compared to when you are not. Though physical exercise is vital to maintaining a healthy body, so are the five other key factors which comprise the HCR Body Five Life Skill that are explained next. Your body simply cannot function optimally if any of these basic body “practices”/needs are not fulfilled on a daily basis.

### **1) Deep Breathing:**

Think of your body as having fire inside of it; this “fire” is what energizes us, and what produces body heat. Without oxygen, a fire will go out immediately. Without breathing, our “life-fire” will go out too, in as little as just 3 minutes! When starting a campfire, blowing on the little flame will “inject” oxygen into it, increasing the size of the flame. We have all witnessed a flame being “fanned”, which immediately increases the intensity of the fire. This, in effect, is what deep breathing does in our body. When we breathe deeply, we provide our body with adequate oxygen, allowing our internal flame to burn effectively, and this improves our body’s ability to metabolize – in other words, to perform all body functions more efficiently. This efficiency reduces negative stress and has an energizing effect on our body.

A newborn child breathes deeply, and if you watch a baby breathe, you will see his or her belly expanding and contracting with each breath. We should all be naturally breathing this way as well, but the stress of our lives causes us to breathe shallowly. Therefore, we have to make a conscious effort to reverse this unhealthy modern-day breathing trait by practising deep breathing.

We have all heard the wise advice: “take a deep breath” when we are feeling anxious. However, it is not only when we are stressed that we need to breathe deeply; deep breathing is always the better way to breathe. It draws oxygen deep into our lungs where it is best absorbed. Deep breathing is the most effective way to regulate our body’s physiology in any given moment, for it counters the “fight or flight” reaction to non life-threatening situations that are so prevalent in our stress-ridden society. The more deep breathing you do, the more relaxed, yet alert, your body becomes.

Therefore, begin to consciously consider your breathing. Breathe in through your nose, filling your lungs, and feel the satisfaction of this simple practice. This is another reason the LAP-O meditation practice (HCR Life Skill #5) is so helpful, because it involves deep breathing.

## **2) Adequate Hydration:**

Every metabolic process that takes place in your body requires water; and understanding this will help you know why optimizing your body’s cellular hydration (by drinking enough water) is so important to your health. Not only is water the most utilized compound in your body, it is also the most abundant. Thus, it only makes sense that if you optimize the water in your body, cellular function will improve and you will feel better.

We are water beings! There is so much water in us that it comprises approximately 70% of our body’s weight. However, by *molecular percentage*, water is almost everything. Biologists discovered that in a properly hydrated person, water will account for an astounding (98.5% +) of the total molecules in that person’s body! This leaves just (1.5% -) of the molecular total for all the other elements and compounds that make up the human body!

Studies and research into water-therapy have provided convincing evidence that the primary condition triggering cellular dysfunction (resulting in disease) is varying severity of dehydration. *This means dehydration is by far the most common root cause of all bodily dysfunctions and diseases.* Therefore, the most common sense base-remedy for cellular dysfunction should be providing cells that are failing to function properly with adequate hydration. Being aware of this is imperative to understanding how illness can be consistently avoided.

Once you develop the habit, drinking enough water every day is one of the easiest, yet most beneficial daily practices you can do to attain and maintain health. Few people realize that it is the hydrogen in water that is our body's main fuel, not the food we intake. In simply terms, hydrogen is our body's main fuel, and the oxygen we breathe ignites that fuel. Thus, adequate hydration, and deep breathing go hand-in-hand in helping you be at your best.

So make sure to drink enough water – not in beverages, but just water, and preferably, high-quality water. The average-sized person needs to drink an 8-oz. glass of water every 2 hours to stay adequately hydrated, and it is most important to drink a glass or two of water first thing upon awakening; for our bodies are always in a dehydrated state after a night's sleep.

### **3) Eat A Healthy Diet:**

As previously explained, few people realize the food we eat is not our body's primary energy source. Our body's primary energy source comes from hydrogen, mostly consumed from the water we intake. The primary role of the food we consume is to build and maintain our bodies. In order for the body to build and maintain itself, it requires essential nutrients in adequate amounts.

Therefore, it is imperative that we eat foods that provide our bodies with these essential nutrients, and avoid foods (especially junk foods) that do not provide our body with the nutrients it needs. Not only do low quality foods not provide the nutrients we need – they create stress – for our bodies have to work especially hard at removing toxins we

intake by consuming low-quality foods, some of which should not even be called food at all. In the Resources section of the book you will see recommended readings where you can learn for yourself the essential nutrients you need and how to consume them in foods, with recipes that are both easy to make and good-tasting.

#### **4) Get Enough Sleep/Rest:**

In order to heal and rebuild itself, our bodies require adequate rest and sleep every day. Without enough sleep, our bodies suffer – and we feel it. We are not as sharp, we are not as efficient, we make more mistakes, and we are more irritable.

Since dealing with the ordinary challenges of life is more difficult when we have not adequately rested, this is even more true when facing bigger and emotionally challenging situations. Give yourself permission to get enough sleep. Plan your days to ensure this happens to the best of your ability. If you do this, you will feel so much better, do so much better, and be more enjoyable to be around.

#### **5) Optimistic body posture; facial expressions (smiling):**

In chapter 3, the importance of posture was introduced: that when feeling negative, our body posture and facial expressions begin to mirror how we are feeling. Thus, to counter negative feeling, you can do the opposite of what the body would normally do, and by doing so you can begin countering those negative feelings. However, maintaining an optimistic body posture, standing or sitting up straight, looking up and around when walking, instead of looking down, will always help you to feel better, or to maintain feeling good. When my youngest son was still small, I learned about these posture/facial expression techniques. If he started crying at the table (for example) I would jingle my keys, or wiggle my fingers above his eyes and have him look up. He couldn't keep crying and look up at the same time. That's how impactful body posture and facial expressions can be.

When you do a web search on the benefits of smiling, a number of sites will be listed. The following health benefits of smiling come from an article written by Dr. Stibich, Ph.D., on the [abouthealth.com](http://abouthealth.com) site. In the

article, other benefits of smiling were also listed, (e.g.: smiling makes you look younger, more attractive, etc.); however, I'm just listing the health benefits that were included in the article:

**The health benefits of smiling:**

- 1) Smiling relieves stress.
- 2) Smiling changes your mood.
- 3) Smiling boosts your immune system.
- 4) Smiling releases endorphins, natural pain killers, and serotonin.

We all know that we are easier to get along with, and are able to provide a better service to others when we feel good. And in order to feel good we must breathe deeply, drink enough water, eat a healthy diet, get adequate sleep, and maintain an optimistic body posture, which includes lots of smiling. This is the reason adhering to this HCR Life Skill is so vital, not only to feel well, but also to optimize your potential in being *the best you can be to those with whom you relate*.

**Life Skill #6: Daily Spiritual Practice**

**Outline:** 15 - 20 minutes per day of prayer, meditation, or any personal practice that strengthens your spiritual connection with God/Life.

Though being consistently grateful and appreciative is in itself a spiritual practice, and indeed, a strong indicator of spiritual maturity, more is required to deepen your awareness of the importance of spirituality. It is in growing spiritually that we discover and grow in our specific purpose in life – and ultimately, to fulfill our potential in what we feel drawn to accomplish in our life.

Jesus said, “You see, the kingdom of God is within you.” Luke 17:21 (GWT); I like the Wycliffe translation of the verse, “*For lo, the realm of God is within you*”. Luke 17:21 (WYC), “*Realm*” is the key word I want to draw to your attention. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines *realm* as: *an area of activity, interest, or knowledge; as well: sphere, domain: within the realm of possibility*.

I'm confident that Jesus was imparting to us an understanding that the “*realm of God*” is something of which we are all a part, and which includes our relationship with God and His “*Kingdom*”. Jesus was revealing

to us that God's Kingdom (realm) is not something on the outside; i.e. *not* palaces, armies, power and wealth (the things of this world), but rather, God's Kingdom (God-consciousness) is something that is within you, and from that "within-ness", all things are possible (even in our world).

The Apostle Paul wrote this to the people in Corinth: "*Don't you know that you are God's temple, and that God's Spirit dwells within you?*" 1 Corinthians 3:16 (GWT). Each of these Bible verses reinforces that we are spiritual beings, and that we have an ever-present connection with the Source of all Life. The more aware of this we are, the greater the benefits we will receive as we navigate our lives.

So, whatever daily spiritual practice you choose, it should expand your awareness of this truth. Spirit is within you, and your sense of purposeful living must begin and be sourced from within you in order for it to be "real" and stable. You can pray; you can read scriptures; you can meditate; you can spend time in nature. There are many practices such as these that you can decide to make part of your daily spiritual development.

The LAP-O spiritual practice, though presented as a 2-minute spiritual exercise, can easily be expanded to 5-20 minutes. The concepts and reminders it contains are powerful truths. When these truths are dwelt upon, you will deepen the effect of their influence upon your awareness, and this will have a positive, deepening impact on your life. The same holds true when you cultivate an attitude of Always Being Appreciative. For this Life Skill practice will expand your awareness of all you do have to be appreciative of and grateful for right now – the people in your life, the things you have, nature all around you, and all you can do.

The important thing regarding your spiritual practice is this: whatever you do, it should strengthen your awareness of God-within-you, and bring you to a greater appreciation of the realm of God within – *the realm of love, trust, compassion, and healing*. Your spiritual practice should cause you to become more heart-centered. It should lead to *ever-increasing sensitivity to heart-directed thoughts* – to compassionate relating – and to greater trust, faith, and belief in love felt, and acted upon. Ultimately, it should lead to you experiencing desired results – to greater awareness and peace within you – as well as to manifesting your heart's desires on the "outside" of you.

## Life Skill #7: Daily Physical Exercise/Activity

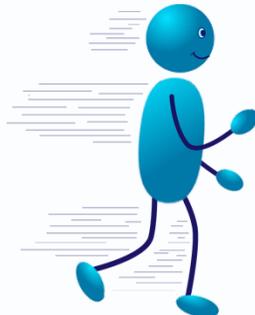
**Outline:** 15-20 minutes per day of exercise; preferably an exercise regime that strengthens both your muscles and cardio/aerobic capacity.

Our bodies are designed to move, and when they don't move enough, our muscles begin to atrophy, our body fluids don't flow as they should, and our bodies begin to break down prematurely. Just 15-20 minutes of exercise a day is all that is required to keep your body fit, and to realize many physical and psychological benefits. And it doesn't need to be complicated. A 20-minute brisk walk will do wonders for you! Or invest the same amount of time doing a yoga, or pilates practice.

Not all beneficial body activity needs to be in a category normally called "exercising". Any physical activity that works the body, such as raking leaves, shoveling snow, hiking, aerobic sports, dancing, yoga, etc., can be considered very healthy exercise. What's important is that the activity raises your heart rate, targets and puts a healthy demand on major muscle groups, *and* that you do an activity like this every day.

Achieving optimal benefits from heavy workouts, like body building or muscle toning, requires in-between rest days to allow muscle groups to recover. Therefore, these exercise routines are best done no more than 3 times per week, or every other day; on the in-between days, a 15-20 minute outdoor activity is ideal, like a brisk walk, cycling, swimming, or gardening.

Or invest the same amount of time doing a yoga practice. If you spend a lot of time in front of a computer, then stand up and stretch every 20-30 minutes as well. It doesn't matter as much how you exercise; it *matters that you do*, and it *matters that you do it on a daily basis*.



## Life Skill #8: The LAP-O Meditation

**Outline:** This practice involves doing the LAP-O 2-minute breathing and positive affirmation exercise 3 times per day (morning, mid-day and evening), as well as any time you feel you are being challenged by negative feelings of unmet needs.

Full details of the LAP-O meditation practice are contained in Chapter 4 (page 62). Also, because the LAP-O practice is the first step recommended as part of each weekly PLA, the PLA Excel file has a page dedicated to the LAP-O practice (which contains the majority of the explanations provided in Chapter 3). I suggest that you practise and re-read that section until you become very familiar with it, and experience for yourself why the LAP-O meditation is so beneficial. Once you understand this, a short time investment (approximately 2-minutes) for each practice, (three times a day) amounts to only 6 minutes per day. You will find this practice will return to you increasing benefits for the time you invest.

Because the LAP-O practice contains many reminder phrases and positive-loving affirmations, regularly practising it will strengthen your ability to be consistent in living in heart-directed way. It is especially helpful in strengthening adherence to HCR Life Skill #3 (Always Being Appreciative) as well as Life Skill #4 (Pivotal Moment Temperance).

As mentioned in the outline description, I encourage you to use the LAP-O practice whenever you feel a negative feeling manifesting. For this will help you respond in a loving-positive way to the challenges you are facing, and thus, strengthen your ability to process initial negative feelings positively, rather than negatively.

You will always respond more virtuously – *with greater wisdom* – when you are peaceful, present and alert. Daily consistency with the LAP-O practice will increasingly help you achieve greater moment-to-moment heart-awareness, and thus, calm attentiveness.

## Life Skill #9: HCR Memorization and Connection

**Outline:** This Life Skill has two parts. Part 1 is HCR Memorization, and entails memorizing the HCR's Needs Categories, Virtues, and Life Skills Practices. Once memorized, you recite/contemplate these lists once per day to strengthen your Needs, Virtues and Life Skills awareness, and vocabulary. This practice will help you become increasingly aware that it is living Virtuously that leads to Needs Fulfillment, both in terms of your relationship with yourself, and in your relationships with others.

### **The key reasons why this Life Skill is so vital:**

It will enable you to:

- 1) Easily identify an unmet need you are feeling, for this will be the source of any initial negative feeling you are experiencing about something that is disturbing you.
- 2) Naturally default to Life Skill #4 (Pivotal Moment Temperance) to help you to positively and lovingly respond to initial negative feelings of an unmet need.
- 3) Quickly recall a particular virtue, or group of virtues that will help you remain tempered when being challenged by a negative feeling. This will make it much easier for you to respond thoughtfully, and wisely to a challenging life circumstance, rather than losing emotional control and reacting to, or becoming debilitated (overwhelmed) by the negative feelings you are experiencing as a result of the challenge.
- 4) Efficiently identify the unmet need that was the source of a conflict, whether within yourself, with another person, or between others, and the particular virtue, or virtues that were violated (the negative reaction) that caused the conflict.

To know something "by heart" is what we were taught in school whenever the value of memorizing something was being advocated. In this case, knowing the 12 HCR Needs Categories and the 24 Relating Virtues "by heart" will help you identify (much more quickly) *the heart of any matter of importance*. Whether contemplating your own thoughts, engaged in a meaningful conversation, or attempting to resolve a conflict, being able to access the Needs and Virtues list from memory will significantly improve your *day-to-day relating skills, as well as your conflict resolution abilities*.

**HCR emphasizes the following two key principles of understanding:**

- 1) All negative feelings reveal an *unmet need*, and the source of all conflicts (whether internal or between two people) is *unmet needs*; and
- 2) The only way conflicts can be avoided, and Basic Needs met, is through *virtuous living* (virtuousness within ourselves, and virtuous-ness in our interrelating).

Understanding these two principles in combination with having quick memory access to our inherent basic needs, and the virtues we need to live by to meet those needs, will allow you to efficiently identify what caused any conflict, and how best to proceed to resolve it.

The quality of our lives, (specifically our overall feelings of enjoyment) are affected by one main factor – *how we feel about ourselves*. And how we feel about ourselves is intrinsically connected with how we feel about the relationships in our lives, especially those we relate with the most.

Because what we focus on expands, by daily contemplating the HCR Needs Categories, Virtues, and Life Skills, you will expand these fundamental understandings “of life” in your awareness. By doing so, you will begin to automatically relate to others in more meaningful and understanding ways. This will take place because our Basic Needs, the Virtues we must live by to meet each other needs, and the Life Skills we must practise to maintain and improve ourselves, are truly the fundamental understandings of what makes the “gears of life” flow – *both meaningfully, and harmoniously*.

These heart-directed ways of thinking, living, and relating will increasingly help you come to a better understanding of yourself – and coming to a better understanding of yourself is fundamentally required in order to be capable of understanding others better as well.

By focusing on our Inherent Needs, and on the Virtues that lead to needs fulfillment, we will naturally expand the meeting of our needs through virtuous living – *precisely because we expand what we focus on*.

Now that you understand why this Life Skill is so vital, and to counter thoughts you may be having of how difficult remembering those Needs, Virtues, and Life Skills lists will be, let me assure you; it is not that difficult

once you learn some basic memorizing techniques. I explain these techniques in the HCR Memorizing Instructional Video. You can request an email providing a link to this video through the contact page on our website, [heartcenteredrelating.com](http://heartcenteredrelating.com). Watching that video will make it considerably easier for you to remember those lists than you (likely) ever thought possible. Within approximately 30-40 minutes, you will have the initial memorizing in place. Then, with a little practice (practice makes permanent), you will embed the HCR Needs, Virtues, and Life Skills lists in your memory for life.

However, to get the most from this HCR Memorizing Life Skill, you need to do more than just recite the lists; rather, you need to contemplate the Needs, Virtues and Life Skills as you recite them. The more you do this, the more connection you will see between them, and the more you will begin to value the knowledge of successful heart-directed living this Life Skill will impart to you.

### **Life Skill #10: L-AAB - Leave No Messes Behind**

**Outline:** L-AAB is an HCR acronym (explained ahead) that is a syntax thought-process practice developed to help embed the habit of completing what you start, cleaning up after tasks, and putting all things you have used away (in their rightful place) immediately upon finishing with them.

Most of us have this tendency: we cook something, do paperwork, rake the leaves, do the laundry, etc. ...and then leave a little (or big) mess behind. *We neglect to finish the job.* We don't put the tools we were using away. We don't do the dishes, or we leave dishes in the room where we ate the food. We use a shared household item, but neglect to return it to its rightful place, so the next person who needs to use the item can't locate it.

We do the laundry, but don't put the clothes away (sometimes for days, or even longer). We pay the bills, but don't clean up the empty envelopes, or update our records, etc. These "bad" habits cause many frustrations, both to ourselves, and to the people we live with, (who rely and depend upon us to do our part so that everyone can live in a peaceful, orderly environment). As a result, messes left behind cause much irritation/ frustration, and therefore, many avoidable relationship conflicts.

I developed a very helpful little thought-process practice many years ago called “**L-AAB**” (explained in the next paragraph), for I began to recognize the negative cumulative effect of “little messes left behind”. For example, just 10 minutes of “little messes left behind” (meaning, it would only take 10 minutes to clean up) for 30 days will accumulate into *at least four hours of cleaning up in just one month!*, (and likely 5 hours, because it almost always takes more time to deal with messes “later”.) Better work habits will prevent this from happening. It is true that sometimes circumstances don’t allow you to finish up something. Life happens! There are appointments to keep and so on. It’s the habit I’m addressing here, and little changes you stick with will have a very positive net accumulative effect in your life.

**L-AAB** is an acronym that stands for the following: “**L**-ook **A**-head”; “**L**-ook **A**-t”; and “**L**-ook **B**-ack”. So each stage of the L-AAB practice begins with “**Look**”. You begin with “Look Ahead”: think through the task you are about to do and prepare for it. Make sure of the following three things:

- 1) You have what you need to do the task at hand.
- 2) What you need is where you need it to be.
- 3) The space you need to work in is prepared and clear of clutter.

Once you begin your task, “*Look At*” what you are doing. Focus your full attention on the task at hand. Most of the mistakes we make are due to allowing our mind to wander from what we are doing: we allow our mind to “take us” into the future, or into the past. When we are in the *future* or in the *past* with our thoughts, we are not in the *present moment*.

When we *really focus our attention* on what we are doing, we *stay in the present*, and because we are paying attention, we not only do a better job, we do it more efficiently. In addition, present moment focus helps us develop a clearer memory of what we’ve done.

Then, once you are finished doing something, (and I’m not just referring to the whole of a task, but to each small task that makes up a larger task,) “*Look Back*” to make sure you have *left no mess behind*: i.e. put the rake away, clean up the counter, finish the laundry, put the food away, file or recycle the paper, etc. In other words, leave the space in as good or better condition than you found it.

This little (but powerfully effective) L-AAB practice began with my mother, who said to us countless times: “Always look back before you leave a room”. Over time, I refined that practice to: Always look back before you leave the “space” (or area) where you were working. It is easy to recognize the value of the L-AAB practice; however, doing it consistently is what I have found to be quite a mental challenge. Yet, the more I follow the practice, the more consistent I become, and the more value it adds to my life. Commit to developing this mental alertness practice, and I’m certain you will experience the same.

The L-AAB Leave-No-Messes-Behind Life Skill taps the HCR Virtues of *Consideration, Self-Reliance, Reflection, Foresight, Respect, Orderliness, Cooperation* and *Consistency*. It is my hope that this impressive list of virtues, that are all part of the L-AAB practice will encourage you to master this Life-Skill.

## **Life Skill #11: Routine Systems Development**

**Outline:** Development of routine systems (through documentation) and the maintaining of these routine systems for the regular daily, weekly, and monthly tasks you must do to maintain efficiency and orderliness. Also, being consistent in doing these routines. This Life Skill is an extension of the L-AAB practice Life Skill.

We all know that there are practical things we need to do on a daily basis to keep things in order and to create flow in our lives. Now, everyone operates out of a certain development of routines; however, very few people have systemized their routines. By this I mean – really thought through the best ways to organize their lives, as well as the best ways to accomplish daily tasks in order to effectively stay on top of those aspects of their lives that matter to them most. Life Skill 11 is about how to accomplish this, and why doing so will be so beneficial to you.

As a life-coach and business consultant, and through my own personal experiences, I know that most people’s personal lives, as well as most businesses, are under-systemized. The telltale sign for this is repeating mistakes. We all make mistakes, and that cannot be avoided. What I’m addressing here is the number of times we make the same

*mistakes*. For example, “Where are my (keys, wallet, purse, jacket, phone)? Where did I put that tool I used the other day? I forgot to pay that bill! Where (in this parking lot) did I park the car?” etc.

When you are adequately systemized, you not only dramatically cut down on repeating mistakes, your whole life or business runs more smoothly. You stop needless waste, which cuts down on expenses; you become more reliable, which builds healthy trust. The benefits of adequate systemization are enormous.

Here are a few well-known companies that have mastered their systems: FedEx, UPS, and Amazon. All of these companies provide top-notch customer service at affordable prices.

You can start to mirror the results of these three companies in your own life by doing the following:

**Develop routine lists for:**

- 1) Regular *daily* tasks,
- 2) Regular *weekly* tasks; and
- 3) Regular *monthly* tasks.
- 4) Determine the most efficient *order* to do the tasks on the list.
- 5) Determine the most *efficient way* to do the tasks.

Once I completed developing these documented routines, the *efficiency, orderliness, and peace* this created in my life was very fulfilling, so I kept refining the process. I found attention to detail added *interest* to daily tasks that can often become mundane. This attention to detail also created efficiency, giving me more time to do the things I really enjoyed doing. This provided me with the feeling of being “on top of things”, and in this hectic society, that is a *significant accomplishment* – especially for people like me, who are not naturally inclined to orderliness.

You see, I am a very creative person. I love to create, invent, and solve problems with innovative solutions. The counter to this (I realized) was I despised cleaning up. Yet, eventually, I found I despised (even more) feeling disorganized, misplacing things, being late for an appointment

because I couldn't find something, or outright losing things. Each of us has our strengths and weaknesses, and it seems to hold true that people inclined to creativity (like artists, writers, musicians) tend to be more disorganized than those who are more analytical and task-oriented (such as accountants, lawyers, stock brokers).

To shore up my weakness, I made routine development, and task analysis a creative process. This kept my brain interested in what I was doing, even though this was not my natural strength. I became so good at it that it became part of the platform for my consulting business. This practical skill development allowed me to use my natural creative ability to come up with innovative ideas, that included both time-and-money-saving practical applications, and as a result, I was able to offer a very unique service to my clients.

Make the wise decision to develop your own daily/weekly/monthly routines. If you are already an organized person, see how you can improve. Use your own creativity to make routine creation more fun. Though your goal should be to become more efficient and disciplined, *don't make adherence to routines something that becomes inflexible*. In fact, the more *organized* you become, the more *flexible* you can be. You begin to learn what is truly critical at a given time, and what is not. This helps you to better know whether to say yes, or no, when something comes up that will interrupt a routine. Developing documented routines also allows you to know exactly where to pick up should you decide to override completing a routine when you become aware of something urgent or more important that requires your attention.

We all know people who never (or rarely) seem to be able to show up on time. Maybe you're a person like this, or maybe you find yourself consistently rushing to get out the door on time because you under-estimated how long it would take to get ready, or you can't find something you need at the last minute. When you develop documented routines, you will be able to determine precisely why this happens, and be able to put in place solutions that provide greater flow in your life.

We all seem to have this tendency – of thinking we can do things faster than we can, or that finishing projects we undertake will not take as long as they ultimately do. Sure, things are going to happen that we can't foresee, but as mentioned earlier, how many times do we keep repeating the same mistakes? Routine creation, and being attentive to what you are doing, will help you break the pattern of continually repeating the same mistakes.

When you document your routines (e.g., morning routine, evening routine, weekly grocery shopping routine) think through the best order of the steps required to complete the task; this can save an enormous amount of time. This principle is called "efficiency of motion". Also, put estimated times beside each task in your routine, leave time for the unexpected, and then set the best time to undertake each routine. Some of your routines will be "time-dictated". You need to be at work at a certain time; you need to get the kids off to school, the bathroom needs to be free for someone else, etc. Some routines can be accomplished more efficiently when you pay attention to details like: off-peak power usage times, emptier grocery stores and banks, and off-peak traffic times. Most of us already follow routines; we just haven't adequately thought them through. However, when you do, you will naturally develop more complete routines, and as a result, you will not only find yourself becoming more efficient in your daily tasks, you will also leave far fewer messes behind.

**Note:** The PADs Excel file (referred to in Life Skill #1) provides templates to facilitate developing adequate systemization of your life.



## Life Skill # 12: Daily- Enjoyment/Play/Affection

**Outline:** Everyday, do something you really enjoy; play (have fun); and be affectionate.

Engaging in activities that you truly enjoy, that calm you, or excite you, activities that make your heart sing, are fundamentally important to a fulfilling and happy life. Variety/Leisure (HCR Needs Category 10) is a Basic Human Need, and one that each of us must take personal responsibility to fulfill. Without enough *variety* and *leisure* in our lives, life becomes less interesting (we get bored), which causes us to be less interesting and enjoyable to others. Therefore, make sure you “play” every day. Do not neglect the things you love to do, and do not neglect playing with your loved ones. Our brains require fun and leisure to function properly. So give yourself the healing and restorative qualities that can only come from doing things you really enjoy, and encourage those you love to do the same.

In addition, to be truly fulfilled, our Basic Need for Love/Understanding (HCR Need Category 4) must include affection – intimacy in touch and communicating. The following list of benefits reveals why affectionate exchanges (including intimate, caring and loving words) between those we care about and love is so important to our overall feelings of well-being:

- 1) **Physical affection releases feel-good hormones:** One of the reasons why hugging, holding hands, and touching feel good to us is that these behaviors elevate our level of oxytocin, a hormone that reduces pain and causes a calming sensation.
- 2) **Trust Building:** People who are more affectionate, trust each other more.
- 3) **Increased Feeling of Being Loved:** Those who are affectionate feel more love for each other.
- 4) **Feelings of Satisfaction:** Those in relationships who are more affectionate feel more satisfied in the relationship.
- 5) **Communication Affection:** Studies have shown that intimate, caring and loving word exchanges also release feel good hormones in our bodies.

None of us needs scientific studies to verify what has just been listed. We've all felt these positive-loving feelings in our bodies when those we feel cared for by (such as caring nurses or health-care providers), and those we love and care about the most relate to us in these ways.

### **HCR Life Skills Summary**

Now that you have completed reading this section, and have familiarized yourself with the 12 HCR Life Skills, you can begin practising them on a daily basis. Some of these practices you may already be doing; for example, daily exercising, daily planning, or eating healthily. However, some of the HCR Like-Skill practices will, of course, be new to you, and therefore, the PLA Life Skill Assessment Chart will not become completely relevant until your second Life-Assessment. When you begin the HCR Life Skill practices, do not be concerned about "being perfect"; rather, focus on advancing – *on getting better on a daily basis*. This is what leads to mastery.

It would be difficult to over-emphasize the importance of the daily practising of the HCR Life Skills to your personal growth. As I emphasized earlier, the HCR Life Skills are all about how to practically apply the principles and practices of HCR in your life. When we don't practise what we learn, it is quickly lost to us, or at least our retention is greatly diminished. According to memory experiments done by the respected German psychologist Hermann Ebbinghaus, we forget approximately 65% of what has just been learned in one day, and approximately 80% in a month. (Forgetting is much more rapid at first, and then slows down.)

Engaging the HCR Life Skills will prevent this forgetting, and embed in your heart and mind the vital truths of heart-directed living and relating that are contained in this book. If you *do not* do this, you may remember "this is a good book", but you will forget most of the fundamental principles of HCR living and relating that you learned, and thus, not reap the benefits in your life and relationships that you otherwise would.

Consistently practising the HCR Life Skills will result in ever-expanding clarity on the benefits of heart-directed thoughts and actions. This clarity will help you to develop your character, and character development leads to the ability to more consistently make wise choices – and it is wise choices that lead to living and relating in ways that meet our needs.

Is it easy to change? Often it is not. However, I can share from personal experience that not changing doesn't lead to ease either; and in the long-term, not changing makes life much more difficult than it would have been had we decided to change, and taken action to improve ourselves. If we don't change, if we don't learn from our mistakes, the same problems keep surfacing in our lives, and there is nothing easy about that!

Positive change is enormously fulfilling, for experiencing yourself growing leads to deep feelings of satisfaction. Positive change leads to overcoming challenges. To overcome challenges we must grow, and when we grow, we begin contributing a greater service to Life. We begin to increase our positive influence in people's lives, and all of this leads to the fulfillment of our deep need to feel our life has purpose and meaning. Dedicating yourself to mastering the HCR Life-Skills will help you to effectively accomplish this outcome in your life.



# CHAPTER 7

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## HCR's Personal Life-Assessment (PLA) Program

*Those who desire to make the most of their lives, regularly listen to their heart's promptings to examine their ways. They long to know where they can improve, and are courageous in doing so. They persevere to fill their deep need to be all they can be.*

### **HCR's PLA Program: Powerful Self-Guiding Character Development**

The PLA Program was developed and carefully designed to help you attain true, lasting, and healthy needs fulfillment in all 12 HCR Needs Categories, and to be able to accomplish this in interesting, engaging, and time-efficient ways. This is so important because *full needs fulfillment* is required for anyone to experience both:

- 1) *fully feeling* their life is on track with their specific purpose, and
- 2) *fully feeling* their life is deeply meaningful.

Yet, this presents a seeming contradiction, because how you feel is not dependent on anything *outside* of yourself, but rather on how *you are perceiving* what you are experiencing. It is the power of your choice in how you are perceiving anything – *that ultimately controls how you feel*. This is vital to understand, as well as a big challenge to believe – *for we are not conditioned to think in this way*. Rather, we are conditioned to believe that if things go “our way” we should feel good, and if things don't, we should feel bad.

To truly live heart-centered, you must re-condition yourself to never think of anything as being “bad”, but rather, to view all experiences as meant for your good, that there is something very valuable you need to learn – which is precisely why you are going through whatever you are experiencing.

This is the true knowledge “map” that leads to inner peace. But you must walk the path of this knowledge by practising believing that everything you experience is meant for your good – that both the things that feel positive, and the things that feel negative, are required experiences that teach you how to attain deeper more meaningful needs fulfillment. Only when you truly believe this will you be able to consistently respond to initial negative feelings of unmet needs in positive-loving ways.

However, to attain this ability takes considerable spiritual maturity, which can only be attained through the development and strengthening of your character; and the only way to develop and strengthen your character is to actually go through enough of these “lack of needs fulfillment” experiences to fully mature you as a human/spiritual being.

This understanding solves the apparent contradiction, because both attaining full needs fulfillment, and attaining the ability to perceive all things that happen to you as being good for you – *requires significant character development*. The key understanding required that will enable you to respond in positive and loving ways to all life-circumstances is knowing the difference between these two “events”:

- 1) what is happening on the outside of you, and
- 2) what is happening on the inside of you (or how you are feeling).

The difference we must come to realize is that the first “event” does not control the outcome of the second “event”. You do! You control how you feel precisely by how you are interpreting/perceiving whatever is happening in your life. Becoming fully aware of this difference will enable you to remain positive, loving and optimistic – *in spite of the conditions of your life*, (meaning: even when you are experiencing initial feelings of unmet needs).

In fact, if you don’t develop the character strength required to consistently perceive all your experiences as being good for you, you will never attain lasting, true needs fulfillment, because you will always be susceptible to being dependent on external circumstances for how you feel.

So while it *is true* that fully enjoying your life requires needs fulfillment, it is *not true* that you need to continue feeling negative beyond the initial feelings of recognition of unmet needs. For after recognition of unmet needs, you can make a choice to respond in ways that will move you in the direction of having your needs met, which will cause you to begin feeling better. The very interesting similarity between attaining needs fulfillment, and responding positively when your needs are not being fulfilled is this: it takes the same strength of character, the same measure of virtuous living to attain true and lasting needs fulfillment, as it does to effectively respond to the challenge of unmet needs.

What I have just described is at the “heart” of the PLA Program, for regularly engaging in it will:

- 1) Continually remind you of the heart-centered *theory* that lead to true needs fulfillment;
- 2) Guide you in determining the *practical specifics* of what will lead to healthy, balanced needs fulfillment *for you*;
- 3) Provide the *framework* within which you can practically apply HCR theory to achieve the outcomes you desire;
- 4) Impart the awareness (the thought/action strategies) required to make the most of your opportunities to achieve needs fulfillment, which includes: learning how to respond to unmet needs in positive and loving ways.
- 5) Expand your awareness of how applying the HCR's 12 Life Skills on a daily basis will help you become more virtuous, and how this combination will lead to greater needs fulfillment.
- 6) Provide ongoing highly valuable feedback on your progress through filling out HCR's 3 self-scoring Life-Assessment Charts: (Needs Fulfillment, Virtues Adherence, and Life-Skills Development).

Next, I will begin explaining how the PLA Program was designed and developed to help you accomplish this.

# The PLA Program Excel File

Though some of what follows was explained in the previous chapter, it bears repeating here:

The PLA (Personal Life-Assessment) is a comprehensive, completely unique, and very effective self-guiding program. I used Microsoft's Excel program to develop the PLA's main tool; however, if you have experience using Excel, you can see from the screen capture picture below of the PLA Home Page, (reduced in size to fit the width of this book page,) that the PLA Excel file is quite unlike what people familiar with Excel are used to seeing.

**Personal Life Assessment Program**

**Introduction**

As covered in my book, *The Power Heart Centered Relating*, your life will take on a new depth of understanding, purpose, and meaning when you increase your awareness of humanity's Inherent Shared Human Needs, the Virtues that lead to Needs Fulfillment, and the HCR Life Skill Practices that lead to becoming more virtuous. This **HCR Personal Life-Assessment Program (PLA)** was designed to help you facilitate this awareness through the use of the highly effective framework that is contained in this PLA Program.

The instructional videos on the right were created to help you learn how to effectively use your PLA Program with just a small investment of learning time. You will find this PLA Program to highly organized and therefore easy to use. If you are consistent in doing PLAs, you will change your life through the character development and strengthening the practice of weekly PLAs and Daily PLA Reviews will cause to happen within you.

**Instructional Videos**

- 1** HCR's Personal Life Assessments  
**Introduction**  
The Why Behind HCR's PLA
- 2** HCR's Personal Life Assessments  
**Overview**  
General Instructions & Chart Scoring
- 3** HCR's Personal Life Assessments  
**GAJ Pages**  
Goal Setting, Affirmations & Journaling
- 4** HCR's Personal Life Assessments  
**Memorization**  
HCR Memorization Techniques & Practice

**NAVIGATION LINKS**

- LAP-O Meditation
- HCR's 8 Relating Practices
- Heart-Centered Thought-Directing
- Score Your Charts
- 10 Quick Goals
- GAJ Pages Instructions
- Daily Review Instructions
- Size Window
- Summary Table
- Full Track Table
- HCR Needs and Virtues Graphic
- Life-Assessment 12 Session Charts

S1 S2 S3 S4  
S5 S6 S7 S8  
S9 S10 S11 S12

I used Excel to develop this main program tool of the PLA Program because not only does Excel have powerful calculating abilities, (which allows easy Chart Scoring, and very useful Summary results, automatically,) Excel also allowed me as a designer/developer to embed hyperlink buttons, add pictures and graphics, and write in it much like Word; as well, I was able to provide template spaces where users can also write.

The PLA file was carefully designed, organized, and developed, so that anyone with basic computer skills can do PLAs, Daily Reviews, set goals, create personal affirmation statements, and do writing exercises effectively and efficiently. Basically, the PLA is like having your own Personal Life-Assessment Program website within Excel, which is the reason anyone with basic computer skills can easily use it.

The purpose of this PLA chapter is not to fully explain how to use the PLA Program, for as mentioned, I have developed a 35-minute Instructional Video which demonstrates precisely how it works. Rather, this chapter expands on the information contained in the description for HCR Life Skills 1 (Personal Life Assessments) in the previous chapter – further explaining why fully engaging in the PLA process will be so beneficial in helping you advance in heart-directed living.

### **Using Your PLA to Develop Wisdom**

Our human experiences include successes and failures, wise and unwise decisions, doing things correctly and making mistakes; and all of these are an important part of our human/spiritual journey – for each of these experiences teach us something. However, when we are *paying attention* to these life-lessons – *we learn more quickly*. The goal of the PLA process is never about achieving perfection, but rather – about *consistent improvement*. The PLA increases your awareness of how to make wise decisions, and helps you learn more quickly how *not* to make unwise decisions. Very often, this will mean learning how not to keep repeating the same unwise decisions and mistakes we have made in the past. Two of the ways the PLA Program will help you accomplish these outcomes are by continually focusing your attention on who *you have decided you want to be as a person*, and on what *you want to achieve in your life*.

### **What Fulfills Our Basic Needs Is Similar, but Different for Everyone**

As explained in Chapter 5, though we all share the same basic needs, what will fulfill someone's needs varies from person to person. Therefore, to achieve more satisfying feelings of needs fulfillment necessitates coming to know yourself better – particularly the *unique details* of what will fulfill your needs – and the PLA Program will help you to discern these unique aspects of yourself.

Not only will engaging in the PLA process help you to come to know yourself better, *but as importantly*, it will help you determine the *specific* ways you need to think, and the *specific actions you need to take*, to consistently optimize your opportunities to have your own basic needs met, as well as meet the needs of others – especially those you love and relate with the most. The continual understandings you will gain about yourself, and others, from the time you invest in your PLA, will help ensure that your life develops in deeply meaningful and fulfilling ways.

### **To Improve Your Life and Your Relationships, You Must First Improve Yourself**

Because we often find that change does not come easily, the heart-centered theory, principles and concepts contained in this book, combined with the framework of the PLA (which includes greatly expanded definitions of the HCR Virtues) will help you to effectively make positive changes in your life.

When you want to improve the *quality* of your life, *you must be prepared to change*; as well, when you want to improve the *relationships* in your life, *you must be prepared to change*, and both of these require *first improving your relationship with yourself*. Because feelings of fear are often associated with change, you must love yourself enough – and be courageous enough – to confront the challenge of change. You must *desire* this *deep within your heart*, so that your passion for self-change provides the ongoing motivational fuel you will require – *the determination and perseverance you will need* – to follow through with whatever will be required to firmly embed the changes you desire to make in yourself *deep within your character*.

The following verse quoting Jesus’s words holds profound insights into what I believe may be the most important factor in determining the quality of your life, and the quality of your relationships:

“Love your neighbor as yourself.”

Mark 12:31 (NIV)

I believe this verse has two powerful messages, and when you carefully consider the wording – a third: *first*, the extent to which you love yourself (your True-Self, not your ego-self) will determine your *true ability* to love others; *second*, do not neglect your neighbor’s needs: *love (be kind and caring to) your neighbor, as you love (are kind and caring to) yourself*, and *third*, the literal translation of this verse *is “love thy neighbor as thyself”* (YLT). Was Jesus saying love your neighbor as yourself because your neighbor is (part of) yourself? In other words, my supposition is that Jesus was reminding us that we are all One, so when you love your neighbor, you are also (literally) loving yourself.

### **How the Remaining Parts of This Chapter Are Organized**

In order to help you get the most from the information provided in this chapter, it has been divided into *three sections*. Each section covers a complete part of the HCR PLA Life-Assessment process, as follows:

**Section 1:** Mind-Set and Preparation for Change (following page)

**Section 2:** The Life-Assessment Charts (page 165)

**Section 3:** Specific reading material containing highly relevant heart-mind thought-directing principles and insights, to be read prior to scoring your Life-Assessment Charts (page 168)



# Section One

## Mind-Set and Preparation

*“Give me six hours to chop down a tree and I will spend the first four sharpening the axe.”*

Abraham Lincoln

The above quotation sets the stage for the validity of preparation. Abraham Lincoln is a highly prominent historical figure because he was a man of *exceptional character* and *accomplishment* who demonstrated extraordinary leadership ability. He preserved the Union in spite of America’s devastating Civil War, and he is also responsible for starting the process that led to the end of slavery in the United States. Coming from humble beginnings, he endured many personal defeats, yet persevered to attain America’s highest-ranking office. Therefore, when a man such as Lincoln says *that given six hours to accomplish something, he would spend two-thirds of that time preparing for what he wanted to accomplish* – we should pay careful attention to this wise statement. In essence, Mr. Lincoln was saying that if you desire to succeed at something of substance, you must invest time in adequately preparing.

Therefore, this section is about preparing you for change, to aid you in developing the mind-set – *the attitude* – that change requires; and it is about explaining to you how the processes involved in the PLA Program will help you to realize ongoing, positive, and meaningful change in your life.

*The very nature of life is change.* Life is always changing, and as you are part of the great fabric of Life, you are always changing as well. While this is obvious all around us, we humans have a tendency to resist change – to be afraid of it, or suspicious of it, even if it will lead to a more fulfilling life. To resist this kind of change is to resist growing as a person – *it is to resist Life Itself* – and if something is not growing, it is dying. Rather than *fearing change*, we should be more concerned about *not cooperating with change*, for this is what leads to frustration, creating unmet needs in ourself and in others, and therefore to avoidable suffering. Careful attention in how we change is wise; but resisting change, *simply because it is change*, is not.

## **Personal Life-Assessment: Preparedness**

As previously mentioned, the information in this section of the chapter is to help you understand the reasons *why* the PLA Program will be so beneficial to you. You will receive the most benefit from it if you commit to and trust the process. And it is *especially important to be highly motivated to do so* – to deeply desire to learn more about the specifics of what is truly important to you – for this is key to achieving true needs fulfillment.

The continual knowledge you will gain about yourself as a result of doing regular weekly PLAs, combined with the practical application strategies for positive self-change covered in the pages ahead, will reveal to you how to consistently move your life in the direction of healthy needs fulfillment. Once you begin to recognize this, you will easily see why everything that is involved with the PLA Program will continue to strengthen your ability to live a heart-directed life, and thus maximize your opportunities for personal growth.

## **Personal Life-Assessments: Insights That Will Lead to Positive Change**

The uniqueness and the power to initiate self-change that are built into the PLA Program come from its continual focus on increasing our awareness of *humanity's inherent human needs* – *and the vital importance of living virtuously*. Though I have repeated this theme in many places throughout this book, I have done so because it is just that important. For it is only through virtuous living that we are able to achieve satisfying feelings of personal needs fulfillment, as well as relationship needs fulfillment. Thus, to live truly meaningful lives, we must continually grow in our awareness of the following truths:

- 1) We must be diligent in paying attention to living virtuously (within ourselves) to meet our own needs;
- 2) we must consistently conduct ourselves virtuously toward others (to meet their needs); and
- 3) we must accomplish this in balanced, mutually beneficial ways.

These “awareness outcomes” are what the PLA Program will help you to achieve. This will happen as a natural result of practising the 12 HCR Life Skills – *because the Life Skills engage you* – through both practical action, and heart-mind thought-directing – in what matters most in attaining peace, personal success, and harmonious relationships. This consistency will optimize your heart-mind thinking-feeling processes – and therefore help you to effectively take actions that will lead to optimizing your life-opportunities to progress – to develop your character, to overcome challenges, and as a result, to achieve your dreams and desires.

When you honestly score your PLA Charts, and deeply consider the results, you will gain valuable insights into what is working in your life, and what is not. Undertaking this process will provide you with *highly relevant* and *useful* self-assessment feedback, and this information will provide you with the following key and comprehensive benefits:

- 1) your Needs Fulfillment health;
- 2) your Virtues Adherence health; and
- 3) your Life Skills Development health.

Though your Needs Fulfillment, and Virtues Adherence Chart Scores will be based on *your feelings*, it is very important to understand that you have those feelings for *identifiable reasons*. Your Chart Scores *begin the process of identifying those reasons*. Here’s how this works:

Each of the HCR Needs Categories, Virtues and Life Skills has a dedicated “Description Page” within the PLA Excel file. I’ll use the Needs Category 2 Description Page (Connection/Community) for this example. Again, the purpose of this explanation is not to provide the full details on how to use the PLA Excel file, but rather *to explain the concepts of how it works, and why “working it” will help to increase your awareness*.



## Scoring the Life Assessment Charts

The screen capture picture below shows only the left half of the Connection/Community *Description Page*. Underneath the Needs Category title on each description page is the HCR description for what fulfillment of that need requires. In other words, what it would “look like” in your life if this need were being completely fulfilled. Just ahead, I’ll be asking you to return to this page to read the following Connection/Community description.

### *Connection/Community*

Our need for family, friendship, and companionship; our need for teachers and other accomplished individuals who take interest in us, helping us to grow, mature, and attain a well-rounded education.

In addition to these more intimate relationships, we also need to belong to a larger group, a place where people gather in fellowship, and where care, giving, and aid happen with mutual-willingness.

In essence, we need people we feel connected to actively involved in our lives; others we trust and can meaningfully interact with who share common goals; access to others who are willing to give and to receive, both in times of abundance, and especially in times of need; and an overall life-environment where we can access (in both tangible and intangible ways) the resources we require to grow, to achieve our potential *spiritually, physically, emotionally, and mentally*.

|     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| S1  | S2  | S3  | S4  | S5  | S6  | S7  | S8  | S9  | S10 | S11 | S12 |
| 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |



On each page, underneath the Needs Description, are the “Session” link buttons from 1-12. “S1” = Session 1 = Week 1; “S2” = Session 2 = Week 2, ect. Clicking on any of the session link buttons will take you to the actual Needs Category, Virtues and Life Skills Charts for that session number. Underneath the Session link buttons are the scoring cells.

(**Note:** Ahead, I show a Needs Fulfillment Life-Assessment Chart.)

One of the items on the right side of each description page is the Scoring Guideline Table shown below.

| Guidelines: Needs Fulfillment Scoring |                   |          |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------|----------|
| Score                                 | Qualifier         | Percent  |
| 0                                     | Unmet             | 0%       |
| 1 to 2                                | Rarely Met        | 10 - 20% |
| 3 to 4                                | Sometimes Met     | 30 - 40% |
| 5                                     | Half the Time Met | 50%      |
| 6 to 7                                | Generally Met     | 60 - 70% |
| 8 to 9                                | Almost Fully Met  | 80 - 90% |
| 10                                    | Fully Met         | 100%     |

You score each Needs Category by reading the description for that Need (Note: For context, please read the Connection/Community description on the previous page before continuing). You then take into account all that is described in the description, and choose a qualifier from the Scoring Guideline Table by asking yourself if this need is Unmet; Rarely Met; Sometimes Met; Half-the-Time Met; Generally Met; Almost Fully Met; or Fully Met in your life. If you choose Half-the-Time Met, you place "5" in the scoring cell underneath the session link button you are scoring. So on your first PLA session, you would be placing your (#5) score in the cell under the "S1" Button (Session 1/week 1). As you will see in the Chart Scoring Instructional Video, Excel will automatically "duplicate" that score on the actual Scoring Chart for whatever session you are scoring.

For each Needs Category and Virtue you are scoring, you will be asking yourself a number of questions. For example, for Connection/Community you ask:

- 1) Do I have enough quality friends? Are there people in my life who fill my need for family?
- 2) Are there people in my life helping me to learn and grow?
- 3) Are there people in my life that I am helping to learn and grow?
- 4) Do I belong to a larger community group that fills that need?
- 5) Do I have access to all I need: food, water, shelter, supplies for the things I need and desire to do?

So, based on your overall feeling of fulfillment for this Needs Category, you choose your qualifier, and score this need.

Once you complete scoring Needs Category 2, you click the right arrow button beside the N2 “page identifier” (N2 = Needs Category 2), and then score Needs Category 3, then 4, etc., to Needs Category 12, going through the same self-questioning, choosing a needs fulfillment qualifier, and then placing your score in the scoring cell for each Needs Category. You then go through the same procedure for scoring the Virtues and Life Skills. Once you have completed this scoring process your score results provide you with very valuable Life Assessment feedback that you will be using to set goals. Here’s how this works:

If you score a Needs Category at 5 (for example) you are identifying three very important things:

- 1) your needs fulfillment health level (explained ahead);
- 2) what you feel *is* taking place in your life that is *partially* fulfilling this Needs Category; and
- 3) what you feel *is not* taking place in your life (or not taking place sufficiently), that would need to manifest in your life in order for you to feel you could score this Needs Category at 10.

After you have scored your Charts, adopt the positive-loving mindset of taking responsibility to begin thinking and taking actions that will lead to attaining greater needs fulfillment.

To accomplish this effectively, you need to go within, to access your heart-wisdom – your God-consciousness – to seek guidance: for example, if you were working on Connection/Community, you need to ask: What do I need to do to develop more friends, or better friendships? What do I need to do to become part of a community, a fellowship group of some kind that shares common interests and goals with me– *where meaningful exchanges could take place* – that would meet my need to both give and receive?

To make advancements in needs fulfillment, first you need to set heart-directed broad-based goals. If you were working toward increasing your Connection/Community needs fulfillment, and had identified that you desire more friends, then one of your broad-based goal would might be: I will meet three people who will become close friends within the next (and then set a time-frame). Then you set objectives; for example, to accomplish this goal I'm going to: (take a course, enroll in a cooking class, join a book club, participate in a community sports team, etc.) so I can meet people I may want to befriend.

Achieving this objective would not only cause you to meet new people who might become your close friends, you would also be doing something that would be a Variety/Leisure activity, so that would also help to fulfill an additional need at the same time. When you have healthy needs fulfillment goals, a cumulative effect begins to occur. For example, learning new skills, and attaining more knowledge (which would take place in a cooking class, or reading club, or through developing yourself physically via a sport activity,) adds to your uniqueness as a person, and thus would help fulfill your need for Identity/Significance.

This is the synergistic effect that taking heart-directed action on achieving one healthy goal can have in your needs fulfillment. In the example goal above, I have identified three needs categories that would be positively impacted, and the PLA process causes you to be more aware of this positive impact. This, in part, is what adherence to the first HCR Foundation Virtue (Self-Reliance) looks like. It means taking responsibility for your life, and increasing your awareness of how to develop yourself in positive-loving, heart-centered ways.



## The PLA Analysis and Goal-Setting Section

Underneath the description section on each **Description Page** is the **Analysis and Goal-Setting Section**. This section contains template spaces where you can identify and write out the following:

- 1) what your dreams and goals are;
- 2) what your plans and objectives are to achieve your goals;
- 3) personal affirmation statements; and
- 4) positive-loving cognitive journal writing/exercises that you will find to be enormously helpful in drawing meaning and insights from your experiences.

Thus, over time, your PLA file will contain enormously valuable information on YOU:

As explained in Chapter 5, the 12 HCR Basic Needs Categories are Inherent Basic Needs that we all share in common. In other words, they are built into us: we don't get to choose what our basic needs are, for we are hard-wired with these inherent needs. However, each of us is unique in regards to what will specifically fulfill our needs, and this is where we do have choices. We can choose what we need to do to fulfill many of our own needs, and we can choose the people with whom we want to relate: others who are willing to be in mutually beneficial relationships with us, wherein we can relate in ways that optimize the opportunities to have everyone's needs met in healthy and balanced ways. The PLA process not only helps you to identify what needs to take place in your life to experience this, but also, *how to use your creative abilities to manifest these experiences*.

One of the main purposes of the PLA process is to – *set in motion* – carefully determined specific goals that will lead to greater (and sustainable) needs fulfillment; *and as importantly*, to keep you on track with following through with your action plans. Yes, this takes work; *but it is good work*. After all, what is more important to you than yourself and those you love – *than learning what you need to do to continually improve your life and your relationships?*

In Chapter 5, I pointed out that peacefully relating to others requires being peaceful yourself. Since so many of the challenges we face in life have to do with our relationships, and because our own sense of peacefulness can be profoundly influenced by our relationships, I want to emphasize that relating peacefully is very challenging when we are struggling with inner conflict. This is one of the key reasons why Personal Life-Assessments are so important, for PLAs will help prevent you from allowing yourself to be in states of inner conflict.

Challenges and problems in and of themselves are not inner conflicts; nor are any of the unpleasant feelings that naturally accompany unmet needs. How you initially respond to these feelings is the *pivotal moment* that determines whether you are going to allow yourself to enter a state of inner conflict, or not. Thus, by resolving your current inner conflicts, and then being very careful to not allow yourself to enter into inner conflicts in the future, you are able to interrelate with others from a place of calm and serenity – *an internal place of spiritual peace and strength*, even when confronting challenging situations.

### **Personal Growth: The Importance of Character Development**

We'll return for a moment to the HCR "Secret Formula": to improve the quality of your life you must develop your character. The only way to improve your character is through *virtuous living*. When you combine virtuous living with deep awareness and sensitivity to both your own needs and the *needs of others*, you will make tremendous strides in improving the quality of your life. Your life will begin to **feel** more meaningful, you will **feel** happier much more often, and as a result, your life will **feel** more fulfilling. All of these feelings are related to having your Basic Inherent Needs fulfilled. These are the reasons why being consistent in doing regular PLAs, and practising the HCR Life Skills daily are so important, for these practices will help you achieve these very desirable outcomes.

### **The Vital Importance of Service and Relationships**

Our service to Life, (what we contribute to the well-being of others) and the relationships in our lives are so important because *without contribution to others, and satisfying relationships*, the full range of our

inherent needs cannot be fulfilled. This is an essential truth we must all come to fully understand. Though people can be happy for a time by themselves, ultimately, personal happiness and fulfillment are *intrinsically dependent* on the quality of our service to Life, and the quality of our relationships with other people.

As mentioned previously, you cannot improve your quality of life, or your relationships, without first improving yourself. This requires personal growth, which can only be attained through *courageousness* to confront personal challenges, *adaptability* to determine what you need to do (or change) to overcome the obstacles those challenges present, and *perseverance* to see your commitments through to achievement.

Coming to understand both the *source* and *cause* of our *personal conflicts and challenges* brings increased awareness of how these internal conflicts *spill out into our relationships*, as well as thwart our own potential to grow. This is the reason regularly assessing your life (doing an internal “examination”) is necessary if we desire to expedite growing in our awareness of how to overcome our personal challenges. Each of us must reflect upon our life so that we *can see for ourselves what we need to change* to cause this to happen. Regularly scoring your *Life-Assessment Charts* provides a very effective way to consistently go through this life-examination process.

### **Determining Your Total Life-Health Utilizing the Life-Assessment Charts**

Though I covered this topic in the last chapter, I’m going to revisit it here in order to expand on its significance in determining your overall PLA Life-Health. Depending on how much psychological or spiritual reading you have done, you may or may not be aware that we actually have four “bodies” that comprise us as human beings; in HCR, this is referred to as your SPEM-Self: the 1) Spiritual, 2) Physical, 3) Emotional, and 4) Mental which comprise your individuality. However, even those who are aware of this, rarely give adequate consideration to its importance in coming to understand themselves.

Here is the point I want to emphasize: the extent to which we properly take care of each of these “bodies” of our lives in balanced ways ultimately determines our overall life-health, and this health-level will be reflected in your Life-Assessment Chart scores. If you score high on the first two Life-Assessment Charts (Needs Categories and Virtues Adherence), then it is very likely that you are taking care of all four aspects of your SPEM-Self. This will mean you have strong character development and spiritual maturity. If you score low on these Charts, then it shows imbalance in your life, and that you have some character work to do. The HCR Life Skills were chosen and developed to help you accomplish this character work.

However, even if your Needs Fulfillment and Virtues Adherence Chart scores are low, or not currently satisfying to you, realize that most people in the world right now are in a state of imbalance. If this were not the case, the world would not have the enormous amount of conflict we are currently seeing and experiencing. This is the reason why the HCR Life Skills are so important, for these daily practices will provide the guiding framework to help you grow in all four aspects of your life, and as you grow, your Chart scores will increase. This is one of the key reasons why your Chart scores will be so valuable to you, for the feedback they provide reveals to you whether you are moving your life in the direction of greater feelings of needs fulfillment, or not.

### **Singular Identity Needs Fulfillment vs. Plural Needs Fulfillment**

Understanding the effect of the *totality* of your life experiences (the plural), versus the effect of a *single* thing or relationship in your life (the singular), is important for maintaining stability and balance in your life; for no single thing, activity or person can fulfill all of your needs.

To further clarify, the following is what determines your *plural needs fulfillment*: the sum total (and quality) of all your thoughts, beliefs, activities, and all active relationships in your life. In comparison, *singular needs fulfillment* is the effect of a *single activity in your life*, or the *relationship you have with a particular person*.

For example, under **Needs Category #2 (Connection/Community)**, a single activity (like your involvement in an organization, or with your family), or a single relationship with someone (such as a friend, your

spouse, or a romantic relationship) can only partially fulfill this needs category. However, if you were involved in an organization that provided a sense of community, *and* if your family life was fulfilling, *and* you also had multiple friendships, (and felt meaningfully connected to all these), then it is likely that you would feel fulfilled in this needs category, and would therefore score it high.

Without enough plurality in your life, (meaning multiple meaningful activities and relationships), you leave yourself vulnerable to becoming too dependent on a single activity or person to meet your needs. This can lead to *unhealthy co-dependency*, rather than *healthy interdependency*. We all need people with whom we can relate to have our needs fulfilled, but we never need only one particular person to have our needs fulfilled. If we believe that we do, then should that person be lost to us, we can easily “fall apart” because we have become too dependent on a singular relationship. For example, if you have only one good friend, and you lose that friend for some reason, that loss will cause greater trauma for you than if you had three friends, and lost only one. For in the latter case, at least you would still have two other friends with whom you could relate, instead of no friends at all.

Understanding this concept is crucial if you desire to maintain balance in your expectations of what another person can (or should) provide for you, and what you can (or should) provide for another person regarding needs fulfillment. If expectations get out of line with what is reasonable (and healthy), then those involved in the relationship will either separate, or it will become a co-dependent relationship.

Co-dependent relationships are unhealthy, for they always have a stunting effect on both people in the relationship. Co-dependency causes one, or both individuals to desperately hold on to that unhealthy relationship. This desperation prevents those in the relationship from breaking free of the mind-set that is causing the co-dependency. Thus, co-dependent people consistently experience unhealthy relating patterns that negatively impact both people in the relationship, as well as everyone affected by the relationship.

Co-dependency will stunt a person's potential to grow in his or her own way. If you are in a co-dependent relationship, you will not be able to effectively engage the person with whom you share co-dependency in true conflict resolution, for you will always be attached to results that will maintain the relationship, even if it is dysfunctional. True needs fulfillment in all 12 Categories of our Inherent Human Needs requires *multiple* healthy and meaningful activities, as well as *multiple* healthy interdependent, mutually beneficial relationships.

### **The HCR Life-Assessment Charts**

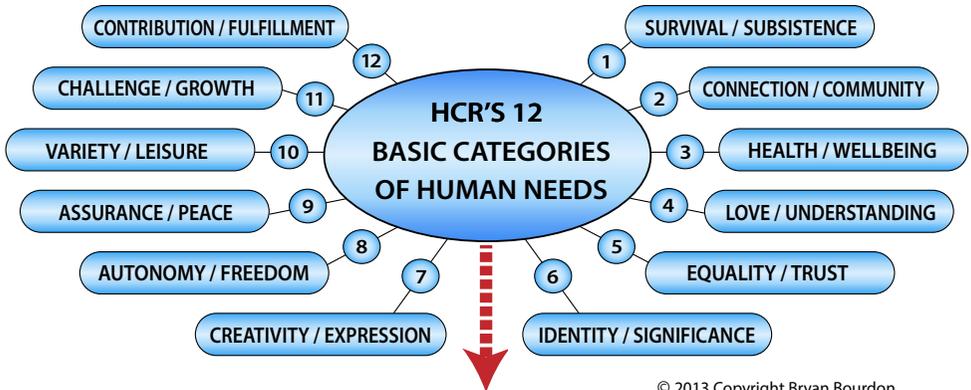
Now that the many beneficial reasons for doing PLAs has been covered, we'll begin Section Two, which explains the first of the three Life-Assessment Charts – the Needs Fulfillment Chart.



## Section Two: The Life-Assessment Charts

Note: I cover all three charts in detail in the Chart Scoring Instructional Video. Therefore, in this section, I will only be showing a Needs Fulfillment Chart, because the Virtues Adherence, and Life-Skills Charts have the same design.

Below is an unscored Needs Fulfillment Chart, and on the following page, a sample scored Chart. The Chart has 12 rows, 1 row for each Needs Category.



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|  <b>NEEDS FULFILLMENT CHART</b> |   |              |
|--|---|--------------|
| HCR's 12 NEEDS CATEGORIES  |   | Score 1-10   |
| 1) Survival / Subsistence  |  | 7.0          |
| 2) Connection / Community  |  | 5.0          |
| 3) Health / Well-being   |  | 8.0          |
| 4) Love / Understanding  |  | 6.0          |
| 5) Equality / Trust  |  | 7.0          |
| 6) Identity / Significance   |  | 8.0          |
| 7) Creativity / Expression   |  | 6.5          |
| 8) Autonomy / Freedom  |  | 8.0          |
| 9) Assurance / Peace   |  | 7.0          |
| 10) Variety / Leisure  |  | 8.0          |
| 11) Challenge / Growth   |  | 6.8          |
| 12) Contribution / Fulfillment   |  | 7.0          |
| <b>TOTAL</b>   |   | <b>70.3%</b> |

Here is a sample **Needs Fulfillment Chart** that has been scored. The arrows point to the three lowest scores which are highlighted. The PLA file has been programmed to automatically do this, for these will be the Needs Categories you will be setting goals in first. This is further explained in the Instructional Video, but this strategy is based on the principle that you are only as strong as your weakest link, and your lowest scores are your weakest links.

| <b>NEEDS FULFILLMENT CHART</b>   |   |                   |
|----------------------------------|---|-------------------|
| <b>HCR's 12 NEEDS CATEGORIES</b> |   | <b>Score 1-10</b> |
| 1) Survival / Subsistence        |    | <b>7.0</b>        |
| 2) Connection / Community        |    | <b>5.0</b>        |
| 3) Health / Well-being           |    | <b>8.0</b>        |
| 4) Love / Understanding          |    | <b>6.0</b>        |
| 5) Equality / Trust              |    | <b>7.0</b>        |
| 6) Identity / Significance       |    | <b>8.0</b>        |
| 7) Creativity / Expression       |    | <b>6.5</b>        |
| 8) Autonomy / Freedom            |    | <b>8.0</b>        |
| 9) Assurance / Peace             |    | <b>7.0</b>        |
| 10) Variety / Leisure            |    | <b>8.0</b>        |
| 11) Challenge / Growth           |  | <b>6.8</b>        |
| 12) Contribution / Fulfillment   |  | <b>7.0</b>        |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                     |   | <b>70.3%</b>      |

| <b>HCR Life-Health Assessment Levels</b> |                           |                |
|--|---------------------------|----------------|
| <b>Level</b>                             | <b>Health Description</b> | <b>Percent</b> |
| 1  | Critically Unhealthy      | 0 - 19%        |
| 2  | Very Unhealthy            | 20 - 39%       |
| 3  | Unhealthy                 | 40 - 49%       |
| 4  | Moderately Healthy        | 50 - 64%       |
| 5  | Healthy                   | 65 - 79%       |
| 6  | Very Healthy              | 80 - 89%       |
| 7  | Exceptionally Healthy     | 90 - 100%      |

The above table (which is included on each of the 12 Session Chart Pages in the PLA file,) is used for determining your Needs Fulfillment, Virtues Adherence, and Life-Skills development health levels. There

are seven HCR health levels ranging from: (1) *Critically Unhealthy*, to (7) *Exceptionally Healthy*. These health level scores provide you with a tangible understanding of your “Life-Health”, both for your individual chart scores, as well as for your combined chart scores. Using the sample Needs Fulfillment Chart, the total score (which is the average score of all Needs Categories) is 70.3%. That total falls into Needs Fulfillment Health Level 5, (66-80%).

| PREVIOUS | Totals & Last Session Comparison | CURRENT |
|----------|----------------------------------|---------|
| 60.0%    | NEEDS FULFILLMENT                | 70.3%   |
| 72.3%    | VIRTUES ADHERENCE (ALL)          | 80.0%   |
| 49.6%    | LIFE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT          | 64.5%   |
| 60.6%    | AVERAGE SCORE                    | 71.6%   |

In addition to the PLA file having a full-page Summary Scores Tracking Table, (that automatically tracks your progress over a 12-week period), each Chart Session Page also has a mini-summary table (shown above). This table automatically populates your Needs Fulfillment, Virtues Adherence, and Life Skills development total scores for both your current session and your previous session. This allows you to conveniently see your progress from one week to the next on each of the 12 Session Pages.

In the above table, the previous Needs Fulfillment score was 68.0%, the current score is 70.3%, showing a 2.3 percent improvement. The Virtues Adherence score improved by almost 3% (from 72.3% to 75.2%); the Life Skills Development score improved by 2.5% (from 62.0% to 64.5%); and the average improvement of all 3 chart scores is 2.6% (from 67.4% to 70.0%).

These might not seem like significant improvements, but in fact, they are. For improvements in any of the 3 chart scores require character development (which does not come easily). To illustrate this point, consider that if a person improved just 1% per week (overall), then in 12 weeks this would be a 12% HCR health-level improvement. This would take the 3 Chart average score from 70% to 82%, and result in a health-level jump from Healthy (level 5) to Very Healthy (level 6). This would reveal a significant advancement in character development, needs fulfillment, and therefore life enjoyment.

# Section Three

## Heart-Centered Thought-Directing Principles and Insights

At the beginning of this chapter, I explained that it takes the same level of character development to attain healthy, balanced needs fulfillment, as it does to consistently respond to initial feelings of unmet needs in positive-loving ways: to come to experientially know – *to believe* – that all life experiences are meant for your good: that everything that happens in your life is meant to aid you in the development of your spiritual maturity through the development of your character.

This section delves deeper into this subject, explaining the heart-centered thought-directing principles and disciplines required to actually develop the strength of character to be able to respond to initial feelings of unmet needs with love – with optimistic expectations of learning something very valuable. This attitude/belief is not something that is easily attained, and therefore requires consistent practice, over an extended period, until you firmly embed this heart-centered mind-set in your character. This is the reason the following is part of each weekly PLA session:

There are three spiritual/mental steps that are part of each PLA session that you do prior to scoring your Life Assessment Charts, and each has a dedicated page in the PLA file:

- 1) The LAP-O Meditation practice;
- 2) HCR's 8 Relating Practices; and
- 3) Reading/contemplating the heart-centered thought-directing key phrases that are condensed from this section.

Once you come to fully understand the concepts and insights contained in this heart-centered thought-directing section, you need only read the key phrases in order to trigger the full understandings contained in this section, in your mind. This is much more efficient than having to read over the entire section to remind yourself of these truths, and it is part of the time-efficiency that is built into the PLA Program. This ensures you get the most benefit from the time you invest in your weekly PLA.

## How to Consistently Respond Positively to Life

In order to be capable of consistently responding to life situations positively, and thereby gain the most from your life experiences (*regardless of external circumstances*), you need to remember – and thoughtfully focus your attention upon – two very important truths:

- 1) when being challenged by a negative feeling, *that negative feeling is your heart-wisdom drawing your attention to an unmet need*; and
- 2) your True-Self (your Heart-Centered-Self) desires to use this experience as a “gift of learning”; *an opportunity given/provided to you by God/Life for the purpose of becoming aware of something vital you need to learn in order to grow in your awareness.*

What has just been described is a *heart-language attitude*, and it is this attitude that will allow you to lovingly and positively respond to unmet needs. When you don't respond to an initial negative feeling wisely – *in a heart-directed way* – it will become an *internal conflict*, and this happens very rapidly. As first explained in Chapter 5, if you are experiencing an internal conflict, it is not being caused by unmet needs. *Your unmet needs are simply the source of your initial (and potentially ongoing) negative feelings. The cause of your internal conflict is created by how you are thinking about an unmet need.*

Prolonged negative feelings always create dysfunction, both *mentally* and *physically*. Dwelling upon thoughts that continue to produce negative feelings *reveal you are caught up in your ego's mind-language*. This does not serve you; for if you continue to think negatively about an unmet need, you restrict God/Life from bringing into your awareness a heart-centered solution – *that will require growth and change*. A Heart-centered solution will always resolve your internal conflict, and ultimately lead to your need being met.

It is very important to understand that how you respond to life circumstances is determined entirely on your perspective in that moment, for it is from our perspective that each of us forms our *beliefs, processes our thoughts, and then makes decisions*. *If you are dwelling upon negative thoughts – if you are afraid, irritated, angry, depressed, impatient, judgmental, etc. (for prolonged periods) – it means you are processing your*

thoughts from your ego's distorted perspective. In any given moment, if these are feelings you are experiencing, it is a clear indication that you are listening to (believing) your *ego's mind-language*, not your True-Self's heart-language, and this will create a negative perspective. When our perspective is askew, we will react to unmet needs in dysfunctional ways. In other words, we will not make wise decisions.

Thus, to counter the above-described major life-challenge of ego-based negativity that we all regularly face, there are four core points of emphasis within HCR's Life-Assessment Process:

- 1) to *consistently* draw your attention to the *vital importance* of thoroughly understanding our Inherent Basic Human Needs;
- 2) to *acutely* and *consistently* focus your attention on the Virtues that lead to Needs Fulfillment;
- 3) to *strongly encourage* you to commit to the HCR Life Skills daily practices – for these virtuous practices will develop your spirituality through the strengthening of your character, and therefore consistently move you in the direction of greater needs fulfillment, improved relationships – *and consequently to a higher-quality of life.*
- 4) to help you become aware of the *limitless potential opportunities* to have everyone's needs met in *mutually beneficial ways.*

HCR teaches that everything happening in your life is meant for your good – that you have something valuable to learn as a result of what you are going through, even if what is happening appears to be overly challenging, and therefore very “bad” (to you) at the time. For example, it never feels good when you are experiencing one of your basic needs not being met. So let's say you are feeling negative because your need for Assurance/Peace is not being met due to a life circumstance. This feeling is your heart-wisdom (your True-Self) drawing to your attention that *you need to change something within yourself* to resolve the inner conflict you are feeling. Another way of perceiving this is: *God/Life is knocking on your “awareness door”.*

## **The Pivotal Moment When Challenged by a Negative Feeling**

There is one key understanding that you can develop which will have a very powerful effect on improving the quality of your life: *it is your initial response to a negative feeling*. At the moment you notice a negative feeling to what has just occurred, or to what you are thinking about, become fully aware of that feeling. This is how you respond, instead of react to a negative feeling. You must then take a moment to pause – to recognize – *this negative feeling is your heart knocking on the door of your conscious awareness*. Your heart is attempting to use what you are experiencing to bring something you need to learn into your awareness. Therefore, do not resist this process – rather, be open, grateful, and cooperate with it – for this is how you expedite your character development and spiritual maturity. When you respond to your life experiences in these ways, you will grow in wisdom, and choices based on wisdom will benefit you in so many ways, including protecting you from preventable harm.

If you resist a negative feeling – if you resent it, hate it, judge it, become angry at it, try to avoid it – *it will persist*, which is not what you want. Resistance (the opposite of acceptance) will cause the negative feeling to stick in your mind, and you will find yourself dwelling upon it – *which will expand it*. To effectively counter this resistance, you must allow yourself – through self-discipline – to become fully aware of the negative feeling: take a moment to feel it, recognize it, name it, accept it – then begin to immediately process it.

To effectively process a negative feeling *requires careful heart-direction of your thoughts*, for there are two ways a negative feelings can be handled:

- 1) fearfully (which will magnify the negative feeling),
- 2) or lovingly (which will ultimately replace that negative feeling with a positive feeling).

Your ego wants to keep you in fear, and will use that negative feeling to separate you from your heart's consciousness so that it can maintain chaotic control over you. Your True-Self desires to use that negative feeling to strengthen your conscious connection with your heart-center, so that you become aware of what you need to learn to be free from your ego's selfish control and ambitions.

Your heart desires for you to know the *purpose* behind the negative feeling – *which is to draw your attention to the message being delivered through the feeling of an unmet need*. Your True-Self desires for you to cooperate by responding *peacefully to feeling that unmet need*, rather than succumbing to your ego's will.

Your ego desperately desires you to resist hearing your heart's message by (consistently) having you react negatively to your unmet needs, *and will tempt you to do so*. This is how the ego stays hidden from your awareness, how it diverts your attention away from itself – *so as not to be exposed*. The ego knows if it is exposed, it will mean loss of control, so it hides in the darkness of your unawareness. Therefore, to optimize your opportunities to make the most of your life experiences, *it is absolutely key that you learn how, (as consistently as possible) – to not react negatively to any unmet need*.

It is precisely because developing the ability to stay tempered (regardless of circumstances) is so important to the quality of your life experiences, that "Pivotal Moment Temperance" was chosen as one of the 12 HCR Life Skills.

Instead of reacting negatively to life circumstances, you need to become heart-centered so that you can hear the message your heart is offering to you concerning your unmet need. Hearing your heart's message requires calming your mind. This is what HCR Life-Skill Pivotal Moment Temperance reminds you to do. Once you realize you need to calm yourself, then you can engage two other HCR Life-Skills to help you accomplish this: HCR Life-Skill 8, The LAP-O Meditation, for it contains many heart-directed thoughts and affirmation statements that will have a heart-centering and calming affect on you; and also, HCR Life-Skill 5, Body Five Daily, specifically breathing deeply, and consciously changing your body posture to "optimistic" (standing or sitting straighter, looking up and smiling).

Because all of these conscious choices are heart-centered, they will help calm you. When you are calm, it is much easier to recognize your ego's mind-language (and to stop listening to/believing it), and then, it

becomes possible to focus your attention on your heart's language, so that you can learn and grow from your experiences – learn how to make wiser choices. Remember, it is in the stillness that God most often speaks to us – through our hearts.

When you are feeling negative about something, and you become heart-centered, your heart-language will direct your thoughts in ways that will change how you are feeling, by providing insights you are not considering. Listening to your heart's language will always bring into your awareness thoughts that will invite you to reframe your current perspective of a negative experience. Your heart-directed True-Self will guide you to look for, find, and then dwell upon the positive aspects you can gain (or are already gaining) from the experience, rather than dwelling upon the negatives.

Your ego's agenda will be the opposite. It will attempt to manipulate you into dwelling upon the negative aspects of the experience (the pain, disappointment, suffering, and/or loss you are enduring), and these feelings are the ego's playground. For example, if you lose your job, *your heart* would have you imagine and believe that there is a purpose for this, and that Life is leading you to a job which will be better for you. *Your ego* would have you dwell upon negativity: every "bad thing" that happened (which caused the job loss), and that is "going to" happen, or "could" happen because of this. If you experience a conflict in a relationship, *your heart* desires you to know that you have something important to learn from that conflict. *Your ego* would have you dwell upon what is "wrong" with the other person, or what is "wrong" with you, and then to succumb to either judgment or self-pity (or both).

It is critical to understand that if you are feeling negative about something, *your heart desires* to have you inquire – *to ask* – "What is the reason behind this feeling?" While there could be many reasons why you are experiencing this feeling, *it is the core reason – the main issue* – you want to uncover. This is the reason why deep inquiry is so important. The one constant you can count on when experiencing a negative feeling is that your True-Self, in cooperation with God/Life, is attempting to bring into your awareness the need for you to change something about yourself.

Until you change yourself, no external change can be trusted to bring you the peace, assurance, and lasting fulfillment we all desire. This could be a big change, like a paradigm/awareness-shift, or a change as simple as how you are perceiving a particular situation. Perhaps you are basing preliminary (negative) conclusions on inaccurate information, like “Oh, I thought you said this,” or “I thought you meant that,” when in fact a person said or meant something different. It may also be you are overreacting to something simply because you are tired and need to sleep, or you need to drink water, or eat, or take a break from work. In other words, heart-messages are not always “earth-shattering”. Sometimes, they are just common sense, like “Hey, slow down a bit – you need some rest,” or “stay present; focus on the task at hand.”

When you have truly accepted this *heart-directed perspective* as your “default response” to all life circumstances, it is a significant indication of spiritual maturity. For this attitude allows you to override your ego by welcoming every situation that causes you a negative feeling as an opportunity to learn something valuable – the “hidden lesson” that is meant to strengthen your character and further your spiritual maturity. In other words, each time you practise this heart-directed mind-set in a difficult circumstance, you will always find the good the situation was meant to bring into your awareness. You will come to understand the benefit you were meant to receive when you allow your heart-wisdom – *your God-Within-Consciousness* – to reveal it to you.

However, do not think that a one-time heart-directed attempt to change your thoughts will always dispel a negative feeling, or that you will get your heart’s message right away. Remember, the ego does not give up easily.

When negative feelings persist, don’t give up: *persevere* – keep focusing on heart-directed thoughts. Realize that the ego feeds off negativity, and when its “food supply” gets cut off, over time, the ego loses its strength. When this happens, not only does it become easier to override negative feelings (because they will become less intense), you will also find yourself having to confront negative feelings much less often.

You will also find that when you respond peacefully to a troubling situation, the “hidden lesson” will be revealed to you more quickly. You may read, hear, or see something that catches your attention; or you might have a serendipitous conversation with someone about something you are trying to figure out. As a result, you gain a key insight applicable to your situation; or a spontaneous revealing thought will come into your mind that causes you to say, “Oh, that’s why that happened! Now I understand.”

When making heart inquiries about a troubling situation, exactly when the “hidden lesson” will be revealed is always unknown. It may be revealed to you immediately, or you may only come to fully understand it years later. Also, there could be multiple lessons/insights that come to your attention. The important character quality you are looking to develop is being *peaceful* and *patient* in the process of learning whatever it is you need to learn. This, in itself, is one of the most important life-lessons we can ever receive – *to learn to be peaceful and trusting* – no matter what is occurring in our life.

### **Conclusion**

That brings us to the end of this book...but the journey can continue for you through purchasing a copy of the totally unique and super-beneficial PLA Program. There are three ways you can do this. Check out the options below to see which one suits you best at this time:

- 1) **Purchase the HCR PLA Program:** this includes four PLA training videos, and one 1-hour life-coaching session. Click the link below for more information:

[HCR PLA Program](#)

- 2) **Purchase my HCR Life-Coaching Starter Package:** this includes the PLA Program, four PLA training videos, and four 1-hour life-coaching sessions, click the link below for more information:

[HCR Life Coaching Starter Package](#)

- 3) **Purchase HCR’s Better Together Live Seminar Program:** includes all that is contained in #2 above, plus twelve 2-hour live seminar sessions: Click the link below for more information:

[HCR’s Better Together Live Seminar Program](#)

# Citations

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