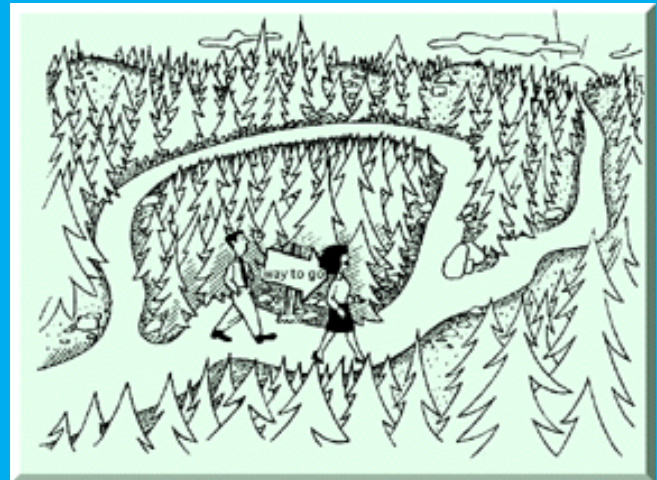

Essays on Personal Growth

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Growing toward inter-Independence



Summary of Winning Ways



Wave of the Future



Growing toward inter-Independence

Truth be had, lots of us have difficulties getting relationships with ourselves and other people right and keeping them balanced and productive for both ourselves and other people. Philosophers have long debated whether “man” was basically good or bad — or both or neither. Certainly our existence and meaning is wrapped up with one another. The problems of becoming oneself start early and cycle through all of our lives.

Psychologists argue with one another about what in the way of personhood exists at the time of birth. Past concerns about ‘humanness’ wrapped up in political controversies, the ‘tabula rasa’ written about by early writers probably isn’t exactly the case. The infant is likely born with sufficient ego to experience anxiety, use defense mechanisms, and to form primitive perceptions and fantasies with impacts on how they relate to their world.

Some kind of bonding and attachment to other people emerges (except in the case of autistic children). Early on the infant feels part of something, though the awareness dawns slowly that there is separateness in these processes as well. Piaget tagged this development of a sense of separation of self from others as taking place shortly after the first birthday. Soon there’s lots of experimenting by



kids about what they can get away with, and fear at risks involved with these new impulses that are getting checked so often.

For some of us, early independence is on the whole rewarded and so we grow curiosity and a sense of self. Some react negatively to well-meaning constraints or unreliable affection and make decisions about how to relate to ‘other’ which lead toward narcissistic selves or destructive orientations. Others react to what they detect as risks of trying things on their own by never fully becoming themselves, but restricting the growth by staying attached. They often walk through life looking for gurus, creating false idols and destroying those who are unlucky enough to get caught in the dramas when the impossible yearnings can’t

be satisfied. Lucky kids tone down their production of thrilling and creative mischievousness and can move toward seeing others as worth working with, accepting the good and bad in the same caretakers.

In growing toward being a healthy adult, the challenge is to be and accept yourself and others free of a lot of guilt and deception. The capacity to accept yourself and others is an on-going challenge for all of us. We're always working our way out of a position of feeling dependent on others and disadvantaged by systems, toward attitudes of self-esteem and constructive engagement which leave us feeling in charge of our fate and healthily involved with others. The process is often messy and full of counter-reactions within ourselves and between people.

Generally, human growth from dependency seems to involve stages of revolution and separation before an adequate sense of sufficiency is attained to support interdependence. This cycle seems to hold as a fair description of the growth pattern whether we're talking about two year olds learning to walk, teenagers trying to grow independent, relationships breaking up, ethnic minorities seeking social equity, or women liberating themselves.

Phase I: Dependency

Dependence may either be a psychological or an existential reality. At the psychological level, dependent individuals often perceive themselves as victims and see others as responsible for their helplessness. They tend to think that things can't change and to exaggerate their needs. They often prefer to be parts of symbiotic relationships which aren't working than have faith that they could somehow stand on their own.

Dependent individuals respond to their situations with compliance, accept limited options, and usually find ways of manipulating their social system for whatever attention (positive or negative) that they get. They hide behind stereotypes and don't challenge them, stick to sanctioned social roles, complain of lack of motivation, depression, boredom, and despair at not being able to make friends or please other people. They may pity themselves and look for strokes which won't help them, complain a lot, or reconcile themselves to their situations by trying to keep their standards low.

There are plenty of "Mommies boys" (and girls) around, people expecting government to solve all of their problems, Asians who keep quiet, Mexicans who mess things up for themselves, distrusting Blacks who reject those who don't want their anger spilled all over them, well dressed women who read McCalls and feel "OK" only when their

OKness is conferred on them by their men. Dependency may be existential, or situational, rather than reflecting the interpersonal games and psychological scripts which arise from poor parenting or ethnic norms of socialization. Women and minorities as groups earn far less, are less likely to be promoted, and face strong obstacles to equal opportunities of self-expression.

Phase II: Counter-dependence

Individuals and groups on the way to health and change often go through periods of anger, hostility, and blaming as they reject those upon whom they have been, are, or felt themselves dependent. Some tactfulness is called for, and some protection for expression of feelings called for by those who would facilitate good outcomes. When the dependency is situational, the anger can often be channeled in healthy ways by searching for information, clear analysis of shortages or injustices, and effective political action to change systems.

On the psychological level, “freedom from” is often earned through sullen withdrawal, passive aggressiveness (setting things up to fail for the other without ever having to take responsibility), or more overt persecution of others in the environment. The process has more constructive outcomes where the person going through it gets handles on what it is that they’re rejecting or running away from.

Often people at this stage get into provoking roles and prefer negative strokes from their past environment, and may be smart enough at the same time to find new environments where they can find support. At the psychological level, the individual is often running away from some injunction real or imagined deep within their character; “Don’t think”, “Don’t Grow Up”, “Please me”, etc. — and substituting it with some new driving creed such as “Be Strong”, “Be Me”, or (too often among adolescents) “Be Them”.

Depending on how loose the surrounding culture is, the rebel can often find new roles which are at least somewhat socially sanctioned... “Gang Member”, “New Wave”, “Women’s Libber” or “Sloppy Housewife”, “Confirmed Nerd”, etc. These are usually shaky and often superficial identities, and participants at this stage experience a great deal of conflict in their lives and short term relationships and life commitments. Among the most constructive developments of this phase is the recognition that those on top

have feet of clay, authority isn't always right, etc. This shift from an "I'm not OK/You Are" position to an "I'm OK/You're Not" isn't always pleasant, but is a sign of movement.

Phase III: Independence

If people are lucky, the independence phase is one of personal growth through experimentation; reconsidering values and options, re-deciding about values which one was socialized to, developing longer ranged commitments closer to one's heart and ultimate contributions to humanity, etc.

Independence deals with the dawning recognition of how unique each of us is from one another, and pursuing paths of personal interest, commitment, and ability. This is a long search of approaches and life styles which were previously judged and rejected as inadequate, and calls for a spirit of openness.

People can get off the path through needs for support and reliance on crutches during this phase, but it is an opportunity to organize life around "Be Strong", "Try Hard", and "Respect Me". Over-enthusiasm about being on the 'right new path' can slow progress — as with "holier than thou" and "crusading" identity crutches, but independence is a phase where people learn to be able to be alone, provide and allow themselves positive strokes. It's a phase of thinking, reading, fantasizing, asking all kinds of questions, talking, creating, and deciding.

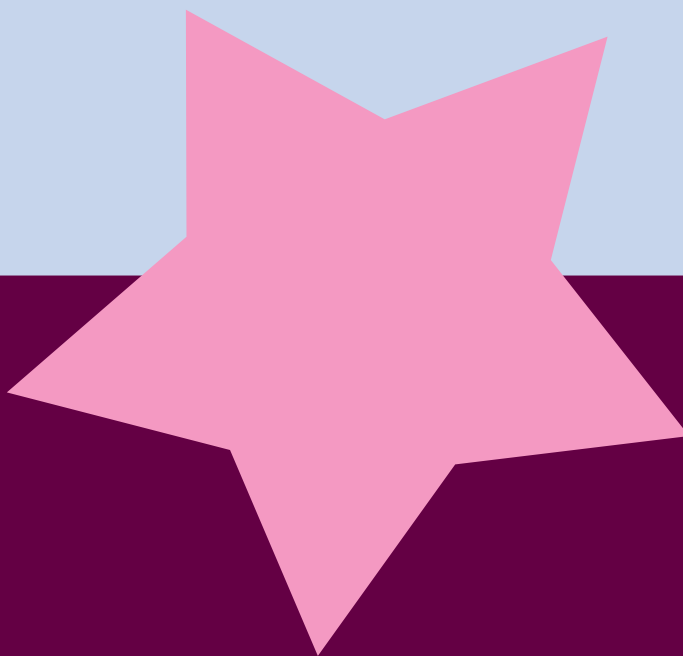
People in this phase are often concerned with uncertainty about careers, with value conflicts related to their stages of moral development, about loneliness, or a sense of separateness from their peers. Asking and learning what one wants isn't easy work.

Phase IV: Inter-independence

People need the alone time of the independence phases of their development in order to reconsolidate themselves and develop depth as individuals. Entering new relationships "on the rebound" without working through the hurt and learning of the last failure is usually not good personal policy. I use the word "inter-independence" rather than "inter-dependence" quite consciously. The goal should not be to fall back to another "Please Me" (but "Don't be You") relationship, but one in which there is freedom and choice. Healthy relationships involve both "freedom from" and "freedom to".

It's only with genuine personal development and a more solid sense of self that one can re-enter relationships with those upon whom he or she was dependent. Relationships which are described as "inter-independent" involve strong acknowledgment of differences, a strong sense of options, assertiveness regarding how one chooses to be treated by others, independent and genuine giving and taking, and

thus a fuller intimacy and stronger celebration of the bliss that's earnable to human beings through trust and caring. Inter-independence should be approached slowly and carefully, and only after realization that the choices of withdrawal or rejection involved in hard-earned independence are limiting, just as dependency once was. It's only when we're secure in what we want and don't want that we can choose to relate to others through strength and competence — as equals.



Summary of Winning Ways

All of us want to do more than survive. We need to understand what is or could be going on in the world in order to have something to offer. We all try. Some succeed. We all start from some place and aim forward in the terms of our limited understanding. Always on guard, our instinct is nonetheless to give. People want to be generous. (The root derivation of 'generous' is creation.) We're ultimately solitary for all of our aspirations at connection. Becoming truly useful is our task. We grow towards union along our own paths, at our own time, in our own ways. We are each of us unique and incredibly beautiful, and shy about dancing on behalf of humanity. We all have capacities for leadership with each other. We wonder how to go about it. Here's one version of the process.



Be Proactive:

We're all born dependent and experience years of solid effort at getting us to do what others want us to do. Most still carry a mental map which puts them below the powerful and truly capable "other people" of our real or fantasy lives. The habits of self-acceptance and listening to our internal drummers are hard to develop, but critical for full living. Self-confidence is where it all starts. It's not an "act" — but it is a "decision" which one can make and struggle to live with. Self-confi-

dence comes from experience at taking risks to try things out, and giving yourself some credit for doing so.

Self-confidence comes from abolishing guilt, putting fear on the shelf, and telling yourself every moment of your life that you are o.k. It comes from habits of listening to, and going with, one's heart and desire, rather than being cowed by the fears which one can always apply to circumstances. When things could go either way, Winners get in the habit of describing the glass as 'half full' rather than 'half empty'.

Winners don't delude themselves; they choose to give themselves the benefit of doubt when there is no way to tell which is right. Health, creative, proactive people exercise freedoms to choose their responses to any given internal or external state. They don't blame others or circumstances for what happens. They don't blame anybody, or anything, including themselves. Out of the forsaking of guilt and self-rejection comes a quiet sort of liking of self. People who don't basically like themselves can never come to like or be genuinely interested in others.

Taking responsibility for our attitudes and actions is a forward-looking and life-long quest of sticking close to our feelings, thinking about what happens, and developing values to live by. Proactive living involves a strong personal commitment to avoid entropy — coasting along on moods and situations as they happen.

Clarify purposes:

A learner of life is an observer, constantly reflecting and integrating assessments of our momentary experiments at action with who we are. Taking the time to hear and answer the questions emerging in one's internal experiences are part of the process. Expanding the boundaries of the perceptions we allow ourselves is the route to becoming less blinded by our egos and our long start at sucking breasts.

The more we make our own decisions, the more proactive we become. The goal is to develop an integrated sense of who we are and where we're going, rather than be the subject of media campaigns. Personal development is nothing but a series of daily victories to take back our personal power and use our energy carefully in directions that are consistent with our best long-range vision of where we want to go.

Anger only helps when we learn to use it constructively. We need to share our vision rather than judge others, be models rather than critics, feed opportunities and starve problems, keep promises rather than make excuses, and focus on doing what little good we can in the situations we find ourselves.

Knowing ourselves and clarifying values are required if we're ever to carry a sense of mission about our lives. A clear sense of mission, purpose, and goals doesn't come from nowhere. We need to be close to people who can help us shape our dreams by talking with, and mainly listening to us, in very authentic ways. Loneliness and superficial relationships are not prescriptions for success.

Nothing substitutes for a sense of direction, even with the start is along a path which asks us to reconsider our choices. Goals may need to be set in various parts of our lives — in fact, for each of the important roles we play which have consequences in the lives of others. We need to wake up in the morning and look forward to days; we can't without knowing where we're going.



First Things First

Albert Gray in his essay, “The Common Denominator of Success,” says, “Successful people have the habit of doing the things failures don’t like to do. They don’t like doing them either, necessarily, but their disliking is subordinated to the strength of their purpose.” Managing time and doing the few things that will count, compared to the many which might be more enjoyable, are the gut level disciplines required of winners.

Effective people clarify values and set priorities before they establish goals and go about managing their affairs. They actually plan and do what they want to do. They think ahead, prepare, and prevent problems and closed doors. They know what they have to do and come to enjoy the process of applying themselves. They develop the habit of being realistic and avoid taking impossible journeys.

Winners get tired of working in a crisis mode and put their talents to getting ahead of the curve. They plan. It’s not only that they ‘plan’ generally — they organize their efforts against all kinds of time frames. They can tell you what they currently hope they will be doing at most points in their lives, including the long run, next year, this week, and today. They change and grow as they strive toward the many goals in their lives. They balance the aspects of their lives as they can, and do “social repair work” when they’ve mistakenly over-extended themselves. They absorb the implications of paradoxical experiences in various roles and avoid burnout. They may use time-wasters creatively, but generally become masters at true re-creation.

Individualism ain't enough:

Strong individuals are a sight to behold. Firm in their independence, they know where they stand and have direction. They can give a lot of direction too, if there's somebody around who cares for it. Cowboys didn't. John Wayne rode tall in the saddle, but mainly his stealth was protection from bad weather and certifiable bad guys. His relationships weren't models of synergy and coordination. He might have been o.k. had he taken up football, but he'd have been lousy on a basketball team.

All human relationships are interdependent realities. Always try to think through the matter from the point of view of the other person. Approaching relationships with an independent mind-set is like playing golf with a baseball bat — the wrong tool for the job. Ultimately, in a free society, leadership goes to those with the 'goodies' to allow for progress in the specific circumstances. In a cooperative society, this implies caring for the success of others as well as oneself as a first matter. The swallowing of egos and undeserved privilege are the unfinished tasks in the transformation of American industry — if there is to be one.

Seek First to Understand:

We see the world as we are, not as it is. Our perception comes out of our experiences, usually at guarding ourselves from fear or the need to learn. Bringing a capacity to perceive freshly and be open to new realities requires constant vigilance and genuine effort to "hear". Putting 'egos' on the shelf is a first task for those who would be leaders.

For all of their fear, winners put into play positive assumptions about 'other people' in order to create self-fulfilling prophesies of hopeful outcome. They steal the excuses many of us use in limiting ourselves — the prejudice and fear we've imported to our "not o.k." selves.

Winners understand the language of feelings as well as that of facts. They generate personal resolves on the order of not speaking negatively of others not present, etc. Empathetic listening helps those around us lower their defenses and share realities rather than games. If you want influence, be a credible person who focuses on gaining trust. Draw people to the vision of what you see as possible rather than trying to push.

Think Win-Win:

Avoid win-lose situations whenever it is possible to do so. Reconstruct them in your mind by searching for common goals or benefits to be derived for the other. Win-win is the attitude of seeking mutual benefit. It is not learned early in life or in most families.

Win-win thinking begins with a commitment to explore all options until a mutually satisfactory solution is reached, or to make no deals at all. It begins with a commitment to stop producing losers — it involves a belief that there are pieces enough for everybody.

People with scarcity mentalities assume that there's only enough for the best. Though that assumption might fit cultures in survival circumstances, it constantly precludes the search for higher social values.

The future belongs to those synergists capable of sharing and building intelligence; slave-mastery is a fading art.

Give yourself:

Leaders everywhere show a voracious commitment to get something done which has little to do with themselves. They put themselves to discreet opportunities for serving higher goals which they only learn about through the process of “going for it”. They may be serving an evolved construct of “computing power for the masses”, “benefit to their people”, “the name of God”, etc.

Money and good living may be results, but they aren't the cause. Causes and opportunities to serve are as abundant as life itself, but they can only be found inside of oneself through the on-going experience of pursuing the growth paths described above.

Personal development is always a spiritual quest involving the derivation of unique meaning from the process of coping with fear and exploring man's capacity to love.



Wave of the Future

Cultures around the world are in an epochal transition. The Industrial Revolution, born in the West, transformed not only economies, but life nearly everywhere. The post-capitalist culture which is emerging is world-wide and it is marked above all by the imperatives of knowledge generation and its creative application through individuals.

All the forms of traditional status and power are fading away as we move toward a society of loosely structured organizations (learning systems). Most large organizations are disintegrating — or devolving to smaller, faster, more personal forms. No more is “bigger” “better” — no more is salvation to be sought from the state or the corporation. The locus of knowledge power is the face to face creative problem-solving team.

Five stages have marked the history of organizational forms. Some lives are still stuck with the focus and fears of autocratic forms. Others expect handouts and more support and cushioning than the future is likely to hold.

Consultative forms of leadership are new in the scale of things — perhaps less than fifty years old in most organizational settings past the size of ten. Participative management wasn't even conceptualized until the 1950's — it's since infected most cultures of organiza-



tional excellence, while many other firms, churches, cultures, and classroom instructors try to catch up.

All the talk is about ‘empowerment’, and it’s a step far past the leader-guided involvement of the past. The massive step we’re taking is toward absolute leaderlessness and autonomy — an age of egalitarian interdependence we can barely envision. It’s an age of temporary involvement and multiple careers — an age calling above all for self-management, self-awareness, interpersonal competence and qualities of character of the highest order.

Human Systems:

Theme function focus fear

I Autocratic

Provides order & structure, reduces known dangers. Features obedience, status, control, imposed morality, jealousy, anger, dread, guilt, punish & be punished. Major fears and danger of the system are rebellion, ambiguity.

II Benevolent

Provides nurturing & security. Features warmth, reward & punishment, parental feelings, obligation. Major fears involve loss of dependence and felt obligation on the part of others.

III Consultative

Expands reason & data bases. Features rational advice, vision, validity of data, truth. Major fears involve conflict, lack of action.

IV Participative

Increases involvement & group strength. Features persuasion, membership, loyalty, consensual choice. Major fears are leaderlessness & lack of felt responsibility.

V Leaderless Autonomy

Reduces dependency & obligation. Features freedom, emotionality, sharing, temporary, self-determining part of whole, creativity, searching. Many fear lack of opportunity, non-rational, unrootedness.

