

## Chapter Two

### Discovering the Meaning of Your Life

#### Major Chapter Topics

- Purpose: The WHAT and WHY of Your Life
- Process: Learning the HOW of Your Life
- Learning Personal Life Meaning and Transition
- Learning Social System Meaning and Transition
- Learning Personal Development and Personhood
- Personhood and Meaning
- Questions on the Meaning of Your Life
- Wealth Generation and Financial Security
- Implications for Integral Learning and Knowledge Management
- Personal Reflection
- Questions for Discussion
- Insights, Commitments and Skills
- Conclusion

## Discovering the Meaning of Your Life

### Purpose: The WHAT and WHY of Your Life

*I guess the essence of life for me is finding something you really enjoy doing that gives meaning to life, and then being in a situation where you can do it. -- Isaac Asimov.*

### The Meaning of “Meaning”

How strongly is Figure 2-1 a concern for you at this stage of your life? Was it more of a concern when you were younger, or is becoming more present as you grow older?

In the pursuit of discovering what we term our “*meaning*” it is essential that we understand that while “meaning” is often thought to be something dynamic we objectively demonstrate outside ourselves, in fact, “meaning” always begins inside ourselves as our worldview of appropriate beliefs, values, motives and preferred actions before we reveal them to others. Our own pre-programmed and ingrained belief system established in our brain tells us what and who we are – and whether the time has come to share and declare ourselves to others. And, because we all have different brain stores of data, images, beliefs and values it is certain that variations of “meaning” exist even among those who say they are committed to the same “meaning.”

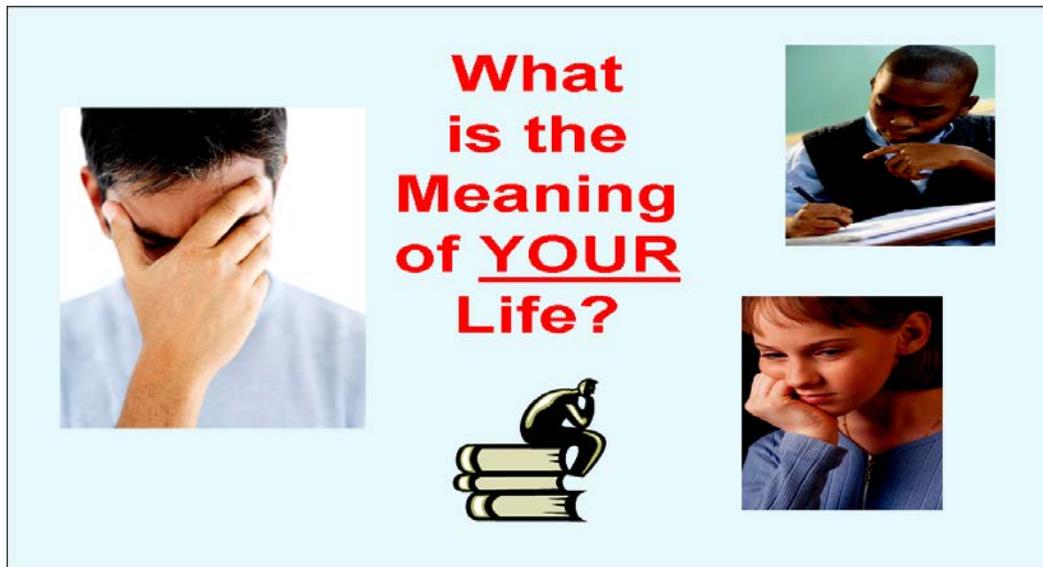


Figure 2-1

In his book *Re-Create Your Life* (1997), author Morty Lefkoe says that our consciousness creates our own realities, and he encourages us to occasionally set aside our beliefs long enough to consider a different way for viewing our lives. In doing so we should apply five well accepted principles:

1. Existence is a function of consciousness.
2. Language is the primary tool we use to make distinctions.
3. There is no inherent meaning (or “the truth”) in the world.
4. When you create a belief, you create your reality.
5. When you eliminate a belief, you change your reality and create new possibilities.

The importance of this cognitive activity is that when we search for, and think about, meanings that are central to our existence; and prioritize them for use of our intellect and resources we should do so in an informed manner. Accuracy, efficiency and effectiveness all matter in accomplishing this fundamentally personal responsibility.

There is a learning process and decision-making activity required for each of us to say with conviction that “this is what I believe; this is my meaning in life; this is how I make my decisions; this is what motivates me; and this is how I

manage myself, contribute to others and impact the world.” Engaging this topic from a variety of viewing points allows us to clarify our personal meanings and make better choices that influence our unique sense of self, vision, mission and personhood.

### Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs and Motivation

Abraham Maslow presented his hierarchy of human needs ranging from *Physiological Needs* at the bottom to *Self-Actualization* needs at the top – with the other three needs *Safety, Love and Belonging, and Esteem*. It is not known whether he ever actually presented that information in a pyramid as illustrated in Figure 1. What is notable is that he referred to the lowest needs as *deficiency needs* with the belief that a lack of physical capabilities and sufficient safety, love and belonging, and esteem – if not corrected over time – would limit one’s ability to achieve self-actualization. A short definition of each need follows: (Figure 2-2)

1. Physiological Needs – These are the physical requirements for human survival. This has to be minimally satisfied for any progress to a higher level.
2. Safety Needs – These needs are also very basic and include personal security, financial security and health and well-being.
3. Love and Belonging – These needs are interpersonal and involves feelings of belongingness. They become more important as the lower two needs are adequately met.
4. Esteem – This need emerges as the three lower needs are met and a person becomes more independent due their lower three needs being met to a reasonable degree.
5. Self-Actualization – This need or desire becomes a greater force as a person overcomes major deficiencies the four lower levels of the hierarchy, and even masters them so at level 5 one can focus on becoming “all that he or she desires to become.”

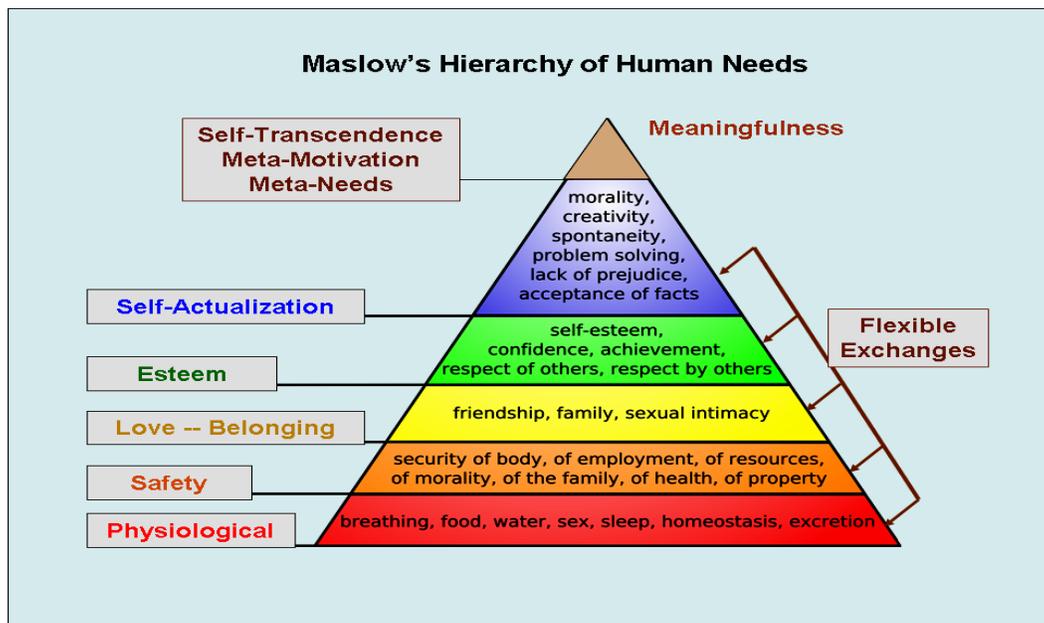


Figure 2-2

Due to his seminal work, Maslow is still highly regarded even though many respected researchers and psychologists have updated or modified his work as they expanded the range of psychology and sociology knowledge using more modern methods and tools. One area of interest concerns obvious differences between people raised in individualistic (self) cultures and those raised in collectivist (others) cultures.

To appreciate Maslow’s theory completely, Figure 2-2 in this text places emphasis on two additional aspects of his theory. The first is the addition to the model of “flexible exchanges” which is meant to emphasize individuals may be significantly different as to their psychological preferences, cultural upbringing or stage of development in which they currently reside. It may be that we can temporarily subsume certain lower level need in order to

emphasize a higher level need. We can make changes as the circumstances we are in take a dramatic turn. The model depicts a theory for most normal situations, but is not predictive for everyone.

A second added feature of the model is particularly important for use in this book. This is shown as a capstone added here on top of Maslow’s hierarchy. As Maslow’s work matured he recognized that only a minority of exceptional people in any society or nation could achieve a high degree of self-actualization. So what, then, could they expect and experience going forward?

His view was that *meta-needs* would develop, leading to *meta-motivation*, and culminating in *self-transcendence*. He said that once a person had navigated his hierarchy of needs, and substantively accommodated them, they were now willing to travel a new path of their own making to achieve self-directed growth. They would aspire to meta-needs which seem to be generally related to a concept used later in this book entitled: “Universal Ideals.” Maslow’s meta-needs are shown in general alignment with those selected universal ideals in Table 1:

Universal Ideals	Maslow’s Meta-needs
Truth – Honesty	Truth (reality) Simplicity (essence)
Beauty – Goodness	Beauty (rightness of form) Goodness (benevolence) Perfection (harmony) Wholeness (unity) Richness (complexity)
Freedom – Democracy	Autonomy (self-sufficiency) Liveliness (spontaneity)
Justice – Equality	Justice (fairness) Uniqueness (individuality)
Love – Happiness	Playfulness (ease)
Responsibility – Trust	Completion (ending) Meaningfulness (values)

**Table 2-1**

The one Maslow meta-need that jumps into the foreground in the design of this book is *meaningfulness* a term easily seen as having interdependency with *mindfulness*. Something is meaningful when it is valued and relevant, and to be viewed in that manner it would also need to be understood within its specific context. Not doing so would be *mindless* which defeats the concept of meaningfulness as a practical objective. Questions for potential study interest might be: (a) How can we enlighten and empower people to proactively strive towards *human growth and development*? (b) When in life should we expect to experience a level of self-actualization that allows us to witness on the horizon our own opportunity for *self-transcendence*?

**What Questions do People Often Ask?**

Most of us try innumerable times through our lives to answer the following basic questions about ourselves and how we fit in with what our acquired knowledge and experience has given us to work. For many of us we discover that the answers are heavily influenced by situational factors at the time we ask. Chances are that throughout our lives we are on a journey of discovery, and while the questions don’t change, the answers may change significantly.

Contrary to the view that some people espouse, our purpose and meaning is not pre-programmed into us before birth. While DNA and genes inherited through *nature* certainly set the stage for what and who we become, we do know that *nurture* has an immense effect during the whole time of our lives. Beginning in early childhood there are choices to be made even with the smallest amount of knowledge and experience. And certainly before we attain adulthood, the rights and responsibilities that result from both our own decision-making, and that contributed by others, encourages us to define ourselves and to draw maps for our life and career journeys – even if they prove to be only temporary and in need of periodic updating.

At the most fundamental level, research indicates that we humans report the need to discover the *Purpose* and the *Meaning* of our lives. We engage with others in answering a few fundamental life management questions:

1. **What do I stand for?** (*A sense of purpose*)
2. **How do I fit in with what has come before?** (*A sense of history*)
3. **How am I related to other people/events/forces?** (*A sense of order*)
4. **What can I hope for as I take action?** (*A sense of outcome*)

The difficulty some people experience with this list of questions is that they may be too broad a concept for us to understand at a more practical level. Also, even if we have a high level sense of our purpose or meaning, we have little of value because without a sense of history, order and outcome no action is intended – and knowledge without action is socially meaningless.

Initially it may be easier to identify specific day to day concerns for which finding answers will have a timely outcome – and a “to-do” aspect. Some examples in the “finding meaning” through understanding our personal needs or contemplating our occasional aspirations include:

1. **When will I** discover *my true calling*, and begin to live a more integrated and meaningful life?”
2. **How can I** become *more knowledgeable and competent* in a rapidly changing and stressful world?”
3. **How can I** manage my way through these *mid-life/career disappointments*, and have a second chance to succeed?”
4. **How can I** make my *life a memorable event*, and become an example for those in the future?”

And, from a more introspective point of view, we could focus on exploring the *motivation* and *energy* needed to more fully understand human development. Exploration into these topics may be helpful:

1. **Our interest** in developing an *interdisciplinary perspective* on human relationships and events
2. **Our need** to achieve a sense of personal *integration* and *wholeness* in a *differentiated* world
3. **Our aspiration** for a life well-lived on a seemingly *mindful*, rather than *mindless* journey
4. **Our understanding** of the value of *critical thinking* and *authentic dialogue* in communicating more effectively with others
5. **Our belief** in the value of *human progress* beyond our own time and lives

Another avenue for learning and deciding the *meaning* and *purpose* of our lives is to reflect on the issues and problems in our situational experiences, e.g. our physical location, our societal culture, our economic progress, our family safety, etc. What do we expect? What must change? Why?

1. **Education** – Expertise needed (STEM), decline in world ratings, cost increases, lack of degree completion, lack of critical thinking/knowledge/collaboration, cultural resilience/inflexibility
2. **Economy** – Unemployment (6.7%), national debt (17.0 t), foreign trade imbalance, middle class decline, home ownership decline, population/insufficient job growth, immigration rates, white collar scams
3. **Health** – Poverty (15%), obesity/Overweight (65%), addictions, food recalls, diabetes, cancer, heart Disease, HIV/AIDs, veterans physical/mental impairment, suicide, stress
4. **Safety** – Terrorism, urban violence, Incarceration rates, transportation accidents, robbery
5. **Ecology** – Global warming, air & water pollution, fresh water shortage, soil depletion, overfishing, energy production

6. Politics – Gridlock, polarization, demographic shifts, Executive/Congress/Supreme court prerogatives, public scandals

7. International – U.S. role/economy/Involvement, world political/culture/religion/territory conflicts

8. Technology – Explosion in data/Information/knowledge exchange, Identity theft, privacy loss, Internet lies/deception

If any of these societal issue areas are important enough to concern our thinking and emotions, then it might be that we already work to resolve some part of the issue or problem. If not, maybe we need to contribute to a social cause in order that we have the peace of mind that comes from taking action. In any case, should our meaning in life reflect the people, issues and events about which we have learned to care?

## Process: Learning the HOW of Your Life

*Meaning is only valuable if it results in meaningful outcomes.  
A “Learnership” Maxim*

At this point we could comment that finding our “meaning results from a process of learning and discovery followed its application.” Mental activities such as reflecting on the past, observing the present and anticipating the future in a systematic manner are essential to learn relevant information, build new knowledge of ourselves and life, share our insights and intentions with others, and contribute to societal development.

Learning is a complex process with the object of knowledge creation and use in virtually all human affairs. And, learners are people with an ability to learn – although the development of this ability and willingness to use it varies widely across the general population. It follows, then, that there should be a term to describe people who are exceptional and influential learners; their capabilities and their influence on others. Learnership is the suggested term, and it is derived from: (1) learner – one who seeks to learn or to gain knowledge through experience or study, and (2) – ship (suffix) – to show or possess a quality, state, or condition. Additionally, learnership captures the essence and skill of leadership in which people are skillful in influencing others’ thinking and behavior. (Reference Figure 2-3)

Learnership is about learning, and about being a learner. More importantly, it’s about the journey or *process* that begins when we learn to become a skilled and purposeful learner and make a lifelong commitment to create and realize our individual potential. Learnership is intended to inspire the same generative perspective towards personal development, higher performance and social contribution expressed in such seminal works as Carl Rodgers’ *A Way of Being* and Peter Vaill’s *Learning as a Way of Being*. The attempt, herein, is to establish a gestalt-like description of how our own cognitive development and personal performance can not only serve our own purposes, but also be an inspiration to others’ growth and achievement as lifetime leaders.

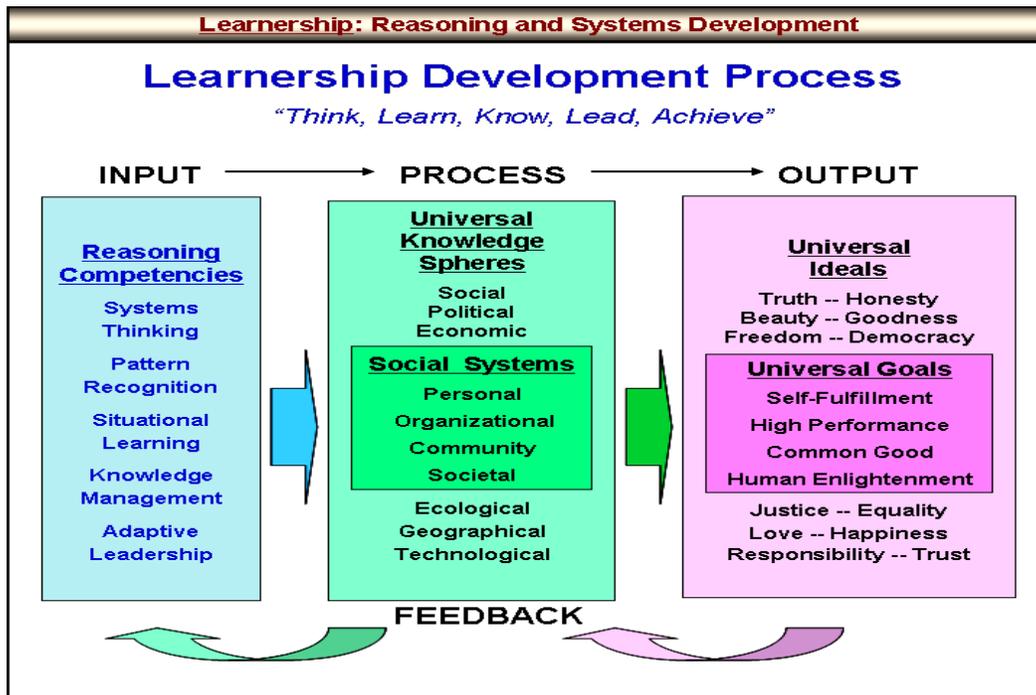
Authentic Learnership (lifelong learning and leadership) Practitioners is the term used in this book to give distinction to a special class of artful learners – those who immerse themselves in a lifelong quest for relevant learning, meaningful knowledge, and personal achievement. These are people who systematically increase their understanding of life’s opportunities and challenges; develop their skills through questioning and learning; and produce products and services of value to themselves and others. Learnership practitioners have historically been contributors to societal development due to their innovation and problem-solving proclivities. They are people who have eclectic learning interests, enjoy rapid learning within both formal and informal social networks, and acquire the skills and technologies to become trustworthy leaders of others toward greater achievement.

## A “Learnership” Architecture and Process Methodology

Figure 2-3 is a high level illustration of the *learnership development process* supported by the perspectives and models presented and advocated in this book. The perspectives, knowledge and skills implicit in the learnership philosophy, the learnership architecture, and the learnership process are available to everyone who wishes to significantly optimize his or her life and career performance across a wide range of topics and issues. The use of a system/process model is particularly germane to the structure and application of this holistic concept.

Figure 2-3 introduces five interdependent human reasoning competencies (*social system inputs*) that enable an integrated development process. Additionally, it illustrates that four integrated *social system processes (domains)* are energized to produce *social system outputs* identified as self-fulfillment, high performance, the common good and human enlightenment. The result is the beginning of a comprehensive human development *learnership*

*architecture* that when complete (later in this book) values personal and cultural meaning, authenticity, integration, inspiration and their reflection in a personal legacy.



**Figure 2-3**

**[Author’s Note:** A detailed list of *Authentic Learnership Practitioner Characteristics* is provided later in this section 1.]

### Universal Goals and Ideals

#### Universal Goals (Human Desires) (Figure 2-3)

1. Self-Fulfillment – Achieving one’s foremost purpose; obtaining major needs, wants and desires; maximizing advancement potential in the cognitive, affective and psychomotor aspects of ourselves; attaining positive recognition.
2. High Performance – Achieving the organization’s greatest efficiency and effectiveness; business and/or mission accomplishment; satisfying constituents, customers, workers and owners
3. Common Good – Achieving community institutional synthesis and consensus; satisfying community members’ service expectations; and providing opportunities for meaningful citizenship
4. Human Enlightenment – Adding to the human capacity for fact-based learning and emotional maturity; improving worldwide thinking, learning, knowing and action; raising the standards of human conduct.

**[Author’s Note:** These four goals are conceived as temporary placeholders for each social domain described below. Each reader is encouraged to define a more specific objective after further reflection and study.]

#### Universal Ideals (Aspirations) (Figure 2-3)

1. Truth & Honesty – Conforming to facts; displaying integrity and sincerity.
2. Beauty & Goodness – A quality that delights the senses; being positive and desirable in nature.
3. Freedom & Democracy – Not bound or constrained; government by the people, and majority rule
4. Justice & Equality – Due reward and punishment; fair treatment and value.
5. Love & Happiness – Deep affection and concern; receiving enjoyment and pleasure

6. Responsibility & Trust – Having personal accountability; reliance on the integrity and ability of a person or thing.

[**Author's Note:** These ideals are representative of the higher order values and behaviors offered by numerous spiritual prophets and cultural leaders over millennia. In this book, these topics are considered to be essential properties of people whom are regarded as being “authentic” with themselves and others. Authenticity is demonstrated when one’s character depicts genuineness, honesty, dependability, realism and trustworthiness.]

### **Reasoning Competencies (Knowledge and Skills) (Figure 2-3)**

Learnership is based on five foundational reasoning competencies. These competencies represent different aspects of how individuals have come to understand and focus on themselves, their social organization, their physical environment, and the situational factors that influence their lives and that of others.

Most often, people are not purposely cognizant of the thinking, learning, and resulting behavior that has become both programmatic and predictable about their selves. However, once aware of the choices that are available, and the relative priority and utility of the competencies that have proven to be associated with better thinking and decision making, most people attempt to acquire and apply these skills:

1. System Thinking (ST) A system perspective on social matters that illustrates the interdependency and mutual support among the personal, organizational, and community subsystems within which we learn, develop, and strive for success.

The system thinking competency helps us develop a broader, more integrated outlook, and to expand the contextual environment of our thoughts and decisions. The use of system thinking inspires us to be integrative thinkers and discover opportunities to synthesize our learning for better understanding. *Systems Thinking (ST) and Pattern Recognition (PR) combine to assure more effective Situational Learning (SL).*

2. Pattern Recognition (PR) By definition, a pattern can be an archetype, a model, an ideal worthy of imitation, a representative sample of something, or a composite of traits or features characteristic of individuals. All biological life forms maintain and exhibit patterns of activity; and, the social development of humankind is inextricably anchored to our thought processes as revealed in our behavior.

The cultural expectations, documented methodologies, and established practices that form our human experience and interpersonal and organizational relationships are the artifacts of inherited tendencies and learned values, beliefs, and experiences previously programmed into our computer-like minds.

The pattern recognition competency focuses on our ability to recognize those preprogrammed aspects of ourselves and others, and on the need for us to better manage our reasoning based on the why and how we think, learn, know, lead, and pursue certain objectives in all our societal endeavors. *Pattern Recognition (PR) combines with Systems Thinking (ST) to ensure more effective Situational Learning (SL).*

3. Situational Learning (SL) A major life activity is dealing with the wide variety of situations we encounter on a daily basis. Some situations are routine and need little attention while at the other end of the continuum they may be significantly life and/or career threatening. What is important to understand is that every situation we encounter requires some amount of information gathering and analysis followed by decision making and action. And, every situation is a potential learning opportunity.

The situational learning competency is a significant element in human capital development and in becoming a learnership practitioner which makes it a foundational anchor in the practice of learnership. *Situational Learning (SL) benefits from the support provided by Systems Thinking (ST) and Pattern Recognition (PR) – and, it is an essential foundation for the practice of Knowledge Management (KM).*

4. Knowledge Management (KM) Human development can only proceed as far as our combined knowledge will allow. Whether we view ourselves as individuals, organizations or communities, we are both empowered and constrained by our current knowledge, and our willingness and ability to acquire additional knowledge. Contemporary studies and writings indicate that knowledge may be systematically created, managed and used to enhance human development and to produce the products and services we need and desire.

The knowledge management competency is the core element in becoming a learnership practitioner. It is the knowledge repository for situational learning artifacts, and in turn, it is the storehouse for the tacit and explicit knowledge used by adaptive leaders in advancing personal and social initiatives. *Knowledge Management (KM) is*

enabled by *Situational Learning (SL)* which itself is supported by *Systems Thinking (ST)* and *Pattern Recognition (PR)*.

5. Adaptive Leadership (AL) No amount of knowledge has practical value until it is applied to human needs or concerns. Someone needs to articulate what is known, show relevancy to the situation or challenge at hand, and propose a course of action that can create a meaningful result. It is the work of leaders to craft visions and futures that inspire others to accept change and become participants in the journey forward.

The adaptive leadership competency is another foundational anchor in the learnership discipline because it moves knowledge into action. Theory is turned into practice, and practice leads to meaningful accomplishment for individuals and social organizations. *Adaptive Leading (AL) applies Knowledge Management (KM) which has been enabled by Situational Learning (SL) which is supported by Systems Thinking (ST) and Pattern Recognition (PR).*

## **Social System Domains and Universal Knowledge Spheres**

### **Social System Domains (Figure 2-3)**

Learnership is a lifelong learning and development process through which people are able to pursue progress and achieve success in terms of their relevant personal, organizational, community, and societal domains of social activity and interpersonal relations. A social system framework is the most convenient and best understood approach for establishing interpersonal concepts and suggesting cause and effect relationships.

1. Personal Systems Development (PSD) PSD is social synthesis at the *micro-cognitive level*, and is the starting point for managing the quality of our individual lives. Priority at this level is focused on continuous improvement of our health, character and ability. The universal goal selected for individuals is *self-fulfillment*, and the key role to be played is that of *fellowship*. Learning, knowing, and leading inform and activate PSD.

2. Organizational Systems Development (OSD) OSD is social synthesis at the *macro-cognitive level*, and uses recognized benchmarks for achieving highly efficient and effective organizational performance. The organizational elements selected for intense management focus are the organization's direction, operations and performance. The universal goal selected for organizations is *high performance*, and the key role to be played is *leadership*. Learning, knowing, and leading inform and activate OSD.

4. Community Systems Development (CSD) CSD is social synthesis at the *mega-cognitive level*, and is conceived as the pathway for experiencing a rewarding community life. The community elements under development at this level are the institutions of government, education and business. The universal goal selected for communities is *the common good*, and the key role to be played is *citizenship*. Learning, knowing, and leading inform and activate CSD.

5. Societal Systems Development (SSD) SSD is social synthesis at the *meta-cognitive level*, and consists of fully integrated reasoning and development across all four levels of social synthesis. SSD strives to capture the spirit of John Sullivan's *To Come to Life More Fully* (1990), and suggests milestones for our timeless journey towards holistic personhood. The universal goal selected for the societal level is *human enlightenment*, and the key role to be played is *statesmanship*. Learning, knowing, and leading inform and activate SSD.

### **Universal Knowledge Spheres (Figure 2-3)**

Learnership builds upon the *social systems framework* within which all human growth and development depends. Since the dawning of the human species people have had to communicate, coordinate, and collaborate with one another in order to secure their own survival and that of their families. Human history indicates that more interdependent arrangements and increasingly complex relationships were created as the evolutionary process of human development proceeded through the centuries.

Learning and knowledge leading to human development has been organized in many ways over the ages. Over the last 20 years, a number of useful approaches for categorizing knowledge have been suggested. One of these is the concept of six knowledge spheres. These knowledge spheres are defined in Learnership in a manner that respects the uniqueness of each sphere while emphasizing the integrative context we all must embrace as we go about our business of life.

1. Technological Knowledge Sphere – The technological knowledge sphere concerns the application of scientific methods and tools to societal activities. Emphasis here is on the study, development, and application of scientific methods and materials to achieve societal objectives. Major focus is on biotechnology, information technology, and materials technology.

1. Geographical Knowledge Sphere – The geographical knowledge sphere concerns the preservation of geographical, physical and continental regions of the entire earth. Emphasis is on international issues and relationships concerning nation-states' territorial boundaries and conflicts, population and immigration challenges, and property ownership and resource rights.

2. Political Knowledge Sphere – The political knowledge sphere deals with the study, structure, or affairs of government, politics, or the state. Focus is on citizenship, governance, foreign policy, political and cultural choices, and national defense.

3. Economic Knowledge Sphere – The economic knowledge sphere concerns the production, development and management of income and wealth. Focus is on the production and distribution of goods and services. Primary emphasis is on business management, financial management, and social systems economic development.

4. Social Knowledge Sphere – The social knowledge sphere addresses the associations and living arrangements among individuals and groups in society. Focus is on the social activity dynamics among individuals, organizations and institutions. Major emphasis is on education, learning, culture, human relations, and interpersonal communication and media.

5. Ecological Knowledge Sphere – The ecological knowledge sphere concerns the relationships between organisms, their environments, and the goal of sustainable habitats. Emphasis is on the life processes and characteristic phenomena of living organisms. Focus is on bio-system management, energy production, population and demographics, and the availability of food and health services.

#### **Learnership Process Feedback (Corrective Action) (Figure 2-3)**

System feedback is an essential process model component that illustrates the need for continuous review and evaluation of performance to assure steady progress. A purposeful effort toward incremental improvement is necessary for societal development. At a summary level, learnership is both a personal and interpersonal capability distinguished by:

1. A synthesis of learning and leadership process skills in which the patterns of reasoning and behavior demonstrated by "learning-leaders" guide and motivate the performance of individuals in their pursuit of personal, organizational, community and societal accomplishment.

2. A focus on the what, why, and how of societal knowledge creation and application so individuals may (a) take responsibility for their own lifelong learning and knowledge creation, and (b) be motivated to achieve extraordinary results by discovering their unique purpose and crafting their journey so as to apply their increasing knowledge toward meaningful personal and social objectives.

3. A desire to participate and lead the development and implementation of a comprehensive strategy for lifelong societal learning, knowing, and leading that leads toward holistic and integrated human social systems development.

#### **Learning Personal Life Meaning and Transition**

Figure 2-4 that follows, encapsulates the fullness of our social development choices, restrictions and opportunities. What is being shown is that all through our respective adult life spans each of us is presented with, and experience, direct and indirect stimuli that influence both our near and longer term development. The rate of our maturation e.g. changes in our growth trajectory, may range from minimal to significant at any point along our pathway.

There are *three widely recognized life stages* in which personal issues have been well studied and warrant extra attention. These three transition points involve special challenges. However, we do have more knowledge and opportunities today for applying the ALF reasoning concepts, practices and tools presented earlier in this book.

## Personal Benefits from Learning and Development

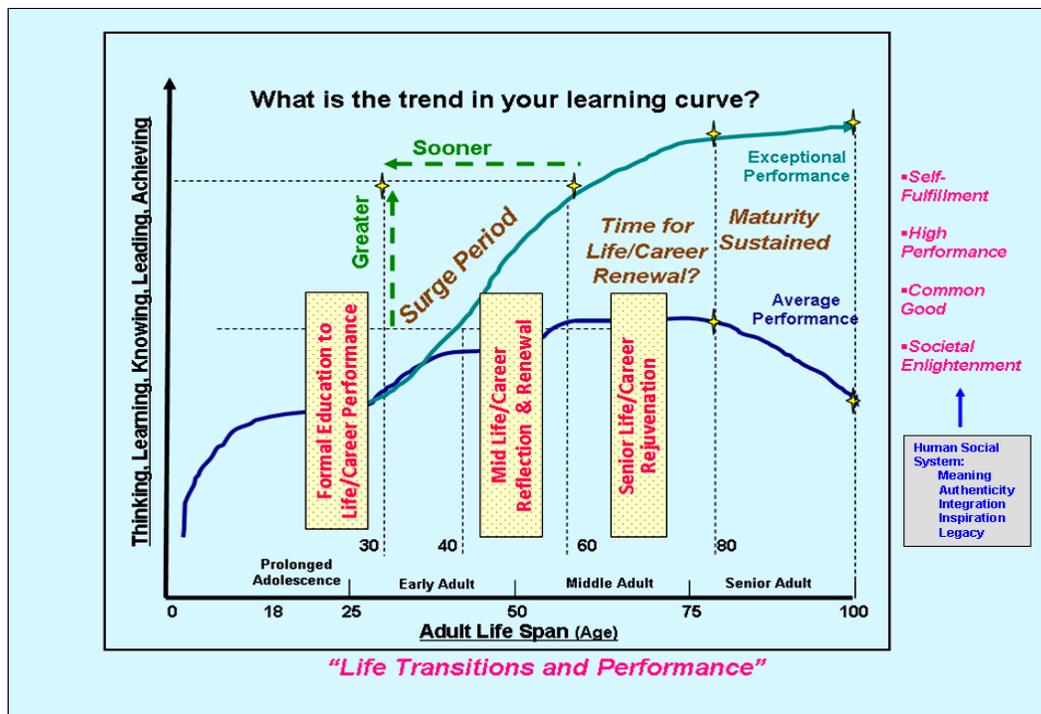


Figure 2-4

1. Formal Education to Life/Career Performance – The period of time during our 20s is a time for making a major investment in ourselves as to the type of adult we will become – but only if we take the time to consider:

- What ideals and values emerge as essential guides to our thinking, learning and behavior?
- What fields of education and career work skills will we need to learn and demonstrate?
- What commitment to marriage and family is appropriate now? Or, may be later?
- What social, political, economic and technological responsibilities and events should we embrace in this early period of adult personal growth and development?
- Can we find the thoughts and words that express the objectives we will attempt to accomplish, the manner in which we will participate in community and society, and the aspirations that loom large at this life stage. And, will our preferred rate of learning, knowledge, leading and achieving follow the Figure 2-4 choice of *growth* curves: AVERAGE PERFORMANCE or EXCEPTIONAL PERFORMANCE as our lives proceed toward completion?

Just knowing that we have this early adult responsibility and opportunity is not sufficient to build a foundation for future life and career growth and development. We also need a comprehensive “*thinking framework*” and a “*systematic learning*” process that together help us reason and take concrete action that we may build upon on a yearly basis. ALF products and services are designed with this foremost in our minds.

2. Mid-Life/Career Reflection and Renewal – The timeframe roughly between our ages of 45 and 65 is often when we find that many of the plans, dreams, aspirations and choices we made earlier in life have not been realized. We also find the events and people we have experienced and trusted have not been sufficiently helpful – and even that our own choices and actions have led to inadequate effort or downright inept performance. When this occurs, a sense of being stalled or suppressed becomes persistent, thereby causing us to become tense, resentful, stressed and sometimes angry at the ties that bind us.

With reference back to once again, we find ourselves in the Mid-Life/Career Transition period of life with questions in mind like:

- a. What has happened to what was supposed to be the best years of my life?
- b. What has gone wrong in my personal life, and my career, and my work life?
- c. What should I have done or not done before now? Is there time left?
- d. Should I make changes in my personal objectives and situation, and in my life purpose and career expectations?
- e. Am I prepared to enter retirement at an appropriate time in the near future?
- f. Am I becoming the person I now realize I really want to become?
- g. How much time do I have, and can I afford to make significant changes in where I now find myself? And, What about the lives and careers of my family?

This transition event is as important to each of us as much as our *Early Adult Life Transition* back in our 20s. In most cases our lives are one-half completed by this time, and what many of us want this time is a chance for a “do-over.”

A glance at the two competing life curve trajectories in Figure 2-4 should be informative. What is shown is that for most people they fail to realize what is occurring to them intellectually, emotionally or physiologically. They are slowing down to cope with what life has so far given them, and they continue to hope for a better situation without knowing what to do. Or, if they do know, the changes indicated may simply be too hard, too costly, or too risky. Their lives, careers, and societal contributions will always be constricted because their minds have been fully programmed to accept life as it is.

For some others (on the higher, “enhancement” curve), they come into their mid-life/career transition phase hoping to understand their current situation. They learned that they need to correct certain attitudes and behaviors; knowledge and skills; and/or family and work relationships that have not been helpful to their life aspirations. These people have learned how to collect relevant information, assess the facts of their situation, determine their choices and preferred changes, and be motivated to take sustained action for their own betterment and social worthiness. Their accomplishments, future potential, and self-satisfaction can be expected to grow more fully for most of their remaining years.

Once again, ALF products and services are designed with this period of life being a major focus. ALF training, coaching and mentoring classes and webinars are designed to unlock the challenges of this period so that everyone can come to understand, plan, take action, and experience personal growth and rewards.

**3. Senior Life Rejuvenation and Legacy** – The last of three periods of adult self-reflection and opportunity for planned life change is the age 65 plus timeframe. Gone are our early adult and mid-life/career adult transition opportunities. Our personal life growth and success has been firmly etched into *who* and *what* we have become in terms of our family relationships (*fellowship*), organizational performance (*leadership*), community participation (*citizenship*) and society at large (*statesmanship*). Questions we might want to ask ourselves, as objectively as we can, include:

- a. Where am I located on the ALF graphic Adult Life Stages (Figure 2-4)?
- b. How have I been doing over the last 50 years? Am I satisfied with the person into whom I have evolved?
- c. What personal, organizational and community system issues and challenges remain obscure or unfinished?
- d. What resources are available to assist me in reflection and future planning as I conduct the remainder of my life?
- e. What aspirations are still unfulfilled, and how can I continue to pursue them?
- f. What expectations should I have in terms of life expectancy? Live until age 80 wherein approximately one-half of us will have died. Or, do I expect to live past age 80 like the other the other one-half who will continue on with growing impairment?
- g. What new opportunities for my personal, organizational or community development still remain? Can I take

action to immediately engage others outside myself and achieve success one more time?

h. Should I take the time to organize and write my own story and legacy for those I want to help, or for those close to me who would appreciate for me to bring closure to matters only I can accomplish?

[Author's Note: The *Learnership: Personal Benefits from Learning and Development* graphic (Figure 2-4) is used as a foundation for emphasizing three major life/career transition opportunities: Early adult, mid-life adult and senior adult periods for reflection and renewal. Our belief is that everyone can benefit from a purposeful life review during these three periods of adult life in order to maximize our own performance, accomplishments and happiness.]

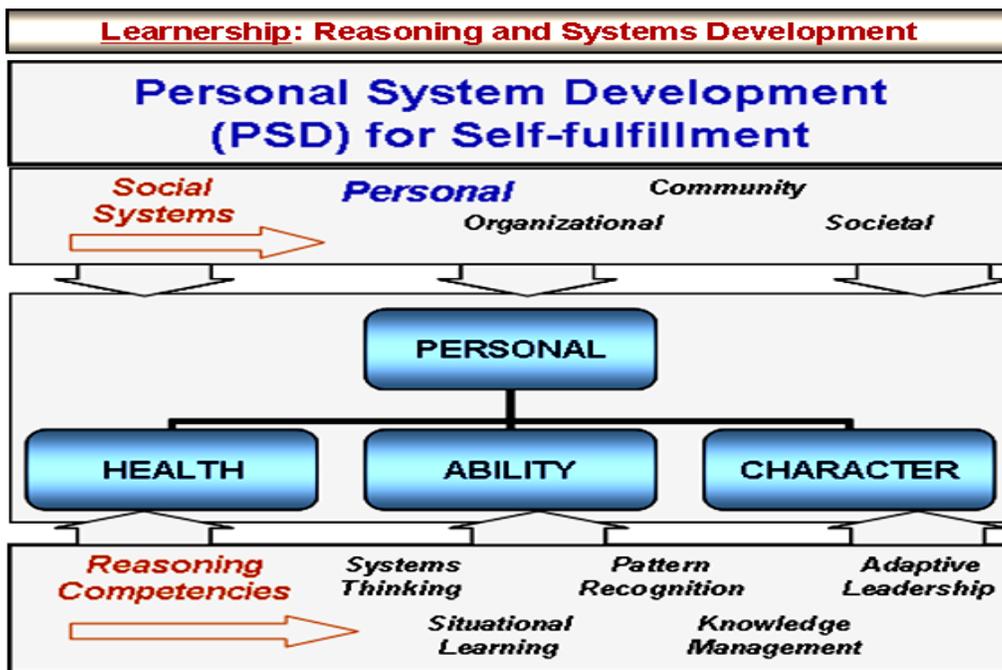


Figure 2-5

## Learning Social System Meaning and Transition

As we have learned, all of us are part of system-of-systems with at least four domains of interdependent rights, responsibilities and activities. And, during our lifetimes there are intensive timeframes in which we may need to stop, reflect and redirect our interests and efforts to refine our purpose and ultimate legacies.

The section that follows suggests a four model set of graphics, one for each social system domain in which we need to have a clear understanding of the social system purpose, functions and people we need to consider and embrace during periods of continuous change.

### 1. Personal Systems Development for Self-Fulfillment (Figure 2-5)

On the *Personal Level*, this is the time to learn all about *Learnership Reasoning Competencies* as they relate to your own personal system development in the primary areas of Health, Character and Ability. What does self-fulfillment really mean in your life? And, can you regularly gather updated information for analysis and modify your developmental strategy for adaptive growth?

Can your *social system* engagement and performance include multiple perspectives and open-minded analysis; critical thinking and dialogue for interpersonal effectiveness; the building and use of fact-based knowledge without overly emotional bias; and the application of *fellowship* and *leadership* skills adapted for the events and people with whom you are involved – throughout your whole life experience? Are you becoming a *lifelong learner*, and maybe even a *learnership practitioner*, in pursuit of a *mindful way-of-being*?

### 2. Organization Systems Development for High Performance (Figure 2-6)

On the *Organization Level*, this is the time for considering and selecting employment locations, identifying key professions and supporting productive industries. Learning organizational objectives and capabilities in terms of the firm's Direction (Strategy), Operations (Processes), and Performance (Requirements) are significant functions you will need to learn and apply to demonstrate your competence and commitment to organizational goals and results. What does *high performance* really mean in your organizational life? And, can you regularly gather updated information for analysis and modify your developmental strategy for adaptive growth?

Your personal domain knowledge and contributions (from above) will now need to be continuously developed as you progress up the organizational ladder, or move occasionally to new positions with greater responsibilities and remuneration. *Leadership* and *citizenship* will become primary development concerns as you move to higher organization levels. However, your personal knowledge, skills and abilities applied on the job will need to expand as you expand your circle of professional contacts. Are you becoming a *lifelong learner*, and maybe even a *learnership practitioner* in pursuit of a *mindful way-of-being*?

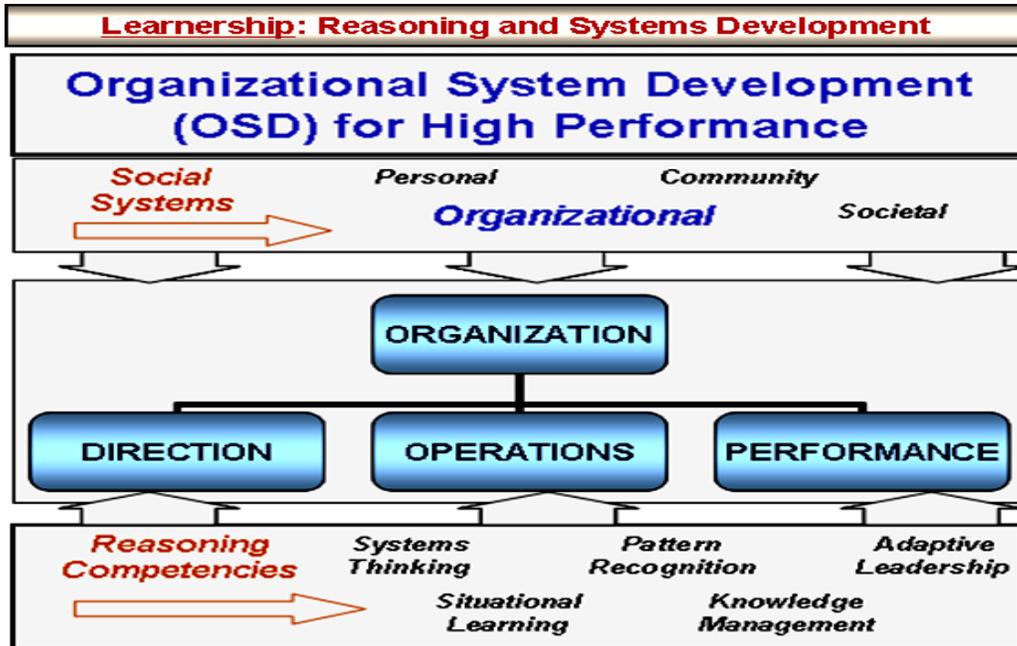


Figure 2-6

### 3. Community Systems Development for the Common Good (Figure 2-7)

On the *community level*, this is the time for participation in your local community in such areas as charitable fundraising, community service projects, and other not-for-profit activities that demonstrate your interest and willingness to assist others as well as enhance your personal and professional citizenship. What does working for the *common good* really mean in your community life?

Your personal and organizational perspectives and skills will continue to serve you well in this domain. It could have a reverse synergistic effect on your "*Being and Presence*." Your knowledge, skills and abilities applied for the benefit of your community might need to advance as you expand your circle of social contacts. Are you becoming a *lifelong learner*, and many even a *learnership practitioner* in pursuit of a *mindful way-of-being*? And, can you regularly gather updated information for analysis and modify your developmental strategy for adaptive growth?

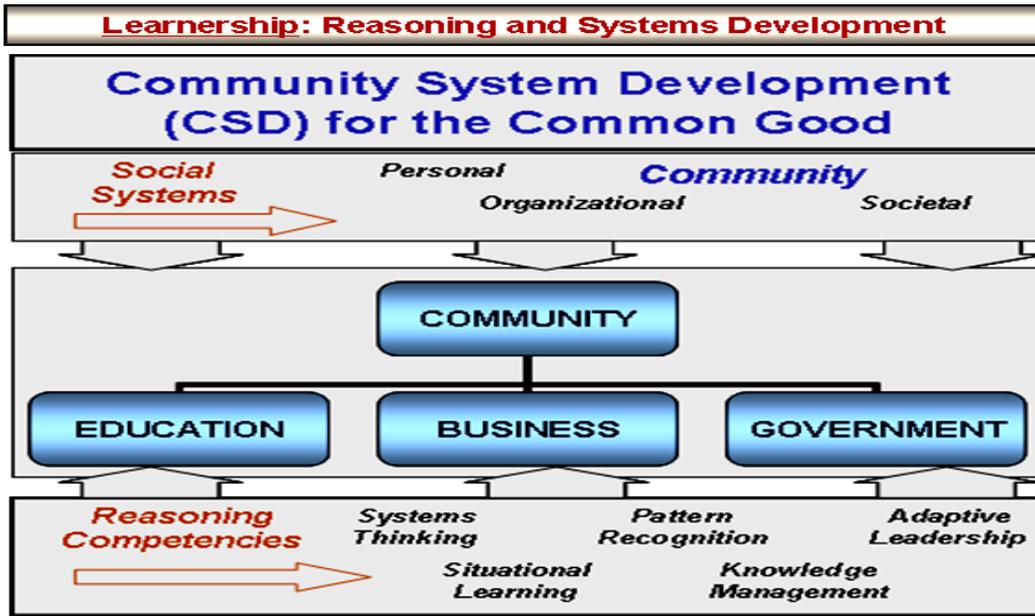


Figure 2-7

4. Societal Systems Development for Human Enlightenment (Figure 2-8)

On the *societal systems level*, this may be the time for each of us to consider whether our life philosophy, acquired knowledge and personal experience, transcends our own nation into the international system of nations and cultures. And, is it grounded in empirical knowledge and intellectual common sense.

Our sense of *citizenship* and even *statesmanship* is bound to our personal worldviews, which in turn are based on our learning and knowledge. Open-minded and flexible lifelong learners are most likely to attain “grounded knowledge” that serves us well with the myriad of tasks, relationships, responsibilities and opportunities we must engage with equilibrium and balance. What does human enlightenment really mean in your societal life? Are you becoming a *lifelong learner*, and many even a *learnership practitioner* in pursuit of a *mindful way of being*? And, can you regularly gather updated information for analysis and modify your developmental strategy for adaptive growth?

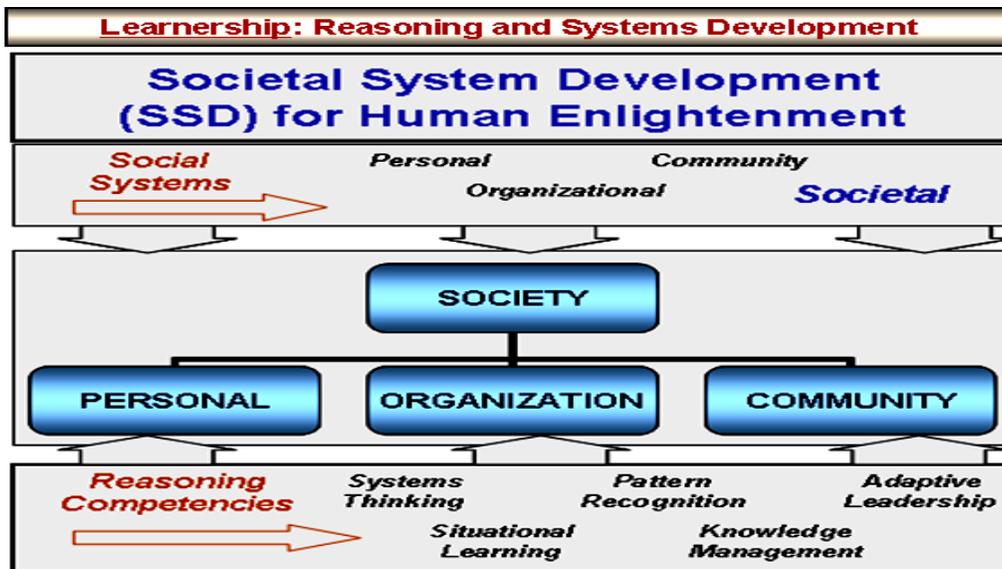


Figure 2-8

**As the previous sections have shown, the challenge in our lives is not to quickly think about a convenient, short-hand way to understand and express the “*Meaning of our Lives*” and then mindlessly go about our regular business and activities like a locomotive on a pair of railroad tracks. Our lives are constantly accumulating new knowledge, skills and motivation to discover the next trail to explore in hopes of discovering a rewarding experience. While uncertainty and change abounds, we still engage and take action toward greater meaningfulness, self-actualization – and even, maybe, toward self-transcendence.**

**Personal Development and Meaning**

Being in search of an “actionable meaning of life” entails having a foundation of beliefs and values, knowledge and skills, and motivations and goals that lead toward real outcomes for us and others with whom we live and work. In this pursuit of meaningfulness the researchers, educators and leaders in the discipline of personal development have been prolific in suggesting the procedures, attributes and skills that enable higher versus lower satisfaction and performance.

A useful reference is Steve Pavlina and his book entitled “*Personal Development for Smart People: The Conscious Pursuit of Personal Growth* (2008). His approach was to create a set criteria of desirable qualities; qualities that were universal, complete, irreducible, congruent and practical. Next he indentified seven seminal principles, supported by the criteria, and which would have significant influence on basic areas of life management, these were truth, love, power, oneness, authority, courage and intelligence. The principles, in turn, were essential factors in optimizing positive outcomes in six practical areas of applications: habits, career, money, health, relationships, and spirituality. (Table 2-2)

**Personal Growth and Development**

<b>Fundamental Principles</b>	<b>Practical Application</b>
<b>Truth</b>	<b>Habits</b>
<b>Love</b>	<b>Career</b>
<b>Power</b>	<b>Money</b>
<b>Oneness</b>	<b>Health</b>
<b>Authority</b>	<b>Relationships</b>
<b>Courage</b>	<b>Spirituality</b>
<b>Intelligence</b>	

**Table 2- 2**

In summarizing the core message of his book, Steve Pavlina suggests:

1. “Seek truth with open eyes. Courageously accept your discoveries and their consequences. Rid your life of falsehood, denial, and fear of what is. Make truth your ally, not your enemy. This isn’t easy, but it is correct.
2. Share your love openly. Connect with yourself and others by tuning in to the connection that already exists. The risk of rejection is overshadowed by the rewards of loving connections. Whenever you feel disconnected, reach and connect with another human being. Remember that you’re always loved.
3. Fully develop your human abilities, and use your power in honorable service for the highest good of all. False power corrupts, but true power elevates. The more you resonate with truth and love, the greater your ability to wield power wisely. No one is served by your refusal to shine.
4. Embrace your unique path of growth. Use your intellect and emotions to guide you in the conscious pursuit of truth, love and power. Invest in creative expression, service and contribution and you will suffer no scarcity. Your greatest gift to the world is to share who you really are.

5. Enjoy your incredible human journey. Accept the highs and the lows as equally valuable. Recognize that your deepest sorrows reveal your greatest joy. Share your stories with others, and know that you're not alone. Be grateful for your time on earth."

## Personhood and Meaning

*Personhood: The Art of Being Fully Human* by Leo F. Buscaglia. "If life's meaning is to be discovered, it is intrinsic in each stage that we assume the challenge of actualizing every moment of every day as we live it."

### 1. The Fully Functioning Mature Person

"Mature persons have a sincere desire to be productive and to give of that production to others. They desire to create and share their creations. They accept their lives and work with satisfaction and joy. They live their lives as an artist of life. They put their talents into each endeavor and their imagination into recreating their lives each day. The mature artists of life are spontaneous, accepting, flexible, receptive to new experience, suspicious of reality. They are harmonious with external forces, but autonomous, busy with the processes of inventing their own lives. They see existence as a series of choices, the selection of which they must determine, and for which they are singularly responsible. They care about, respect an appreciate t he world and society in which they live and the others who cohabit it, even though they may not wholly agree with them." Leo F. Buscaglia

### 2. The Fully Functioning Old Person

"Fully functioning old persons do not have the time to sit back and wait for death. They are faced with working through and actualizing two new stages – their old age, and their personal death. They must build confidence and give their limited time on earth purpose; they must make peace with the knowledge that some day they will be outgrown or even forgotten, but that the experience with life will have been enough. To ignore this task is to miss the opportunity for personal continued life in dignity through the pursuit of experiences which only old age can offer. They can choose themselves as unrealized potential, and in so doing, they can choose actualization." Leo F. Buscaglia

### 3. The Meaning of Your Life

An initial process for thinking, learning and committing to specific capabilities a person might consider in gaining a clear focus on who we are, and who we think we are, is at Figure 2-9. This handbook proposes that every reader and personal life project manager commit considerable time discovering their emerging selves. And, that readers understand that while it is human nature that the personal and organizational system domains may be given priority everyone has a responsibility to be an informed and contributing member of the community and societal domains.



Figure 2-9

How do these surrogate goals work for you right now? (Figure 2-9)  
Can you venture a guess as to what might evolve as you continue to reflect and learn?

**Author's Note 1:** An important take away from this section is that when we seek to understand “*the meaning of our lives*” we should think in terms of a set of definable objectives or outcomes that can occur as the result of our purposeful decisions and actions. In our personal domain we can use a placeholder such as *self-fulfillment*, in the organizational domain *high performance*, in the community domain the *common good*, and in the societal domain *human enlightenment*. We recognize that each person, in time and learning, may want to choose more specific objectives in place of these temporary placeholders, Parts II, III, IV of this book provide frameworks for continued life and career learning, wealth building and legacy creation.]

**[Author's Note 2:** At this juncture, an open-ended question might be useful. How well does the lifelong learning personal and social assessment process described in this section align with Maslow's higher order self-actualization and self-transcendence needs listed back in Table 1? Is this information potentially helpful as you continue your lifelong learning journey?]

## Wealth Generation and Financial Security

While the previous topic emphasized human “qualitative aspirations” it is essential that financial or “quantitative aspirations” be given equal consideration. This chapter is the first of many following chapters that consider the importance in everyone's life of earning money and acquiring wealth. For some, this is the overarching purpose to which they are committed and the one that assists them in measuring and quantifying the ultimate value of their lives. However, significant research on the lives of the most successful and wealthy people does not show that having significant wealth negates the desire for success -- and the happiest people are most often people of ordinary financial means.

How we think about financial security, acquired wealth, and their importance in achieving prosperity is significant in much of our personal and work lives. Our conscious and unconscious attitudes which were learned from early experiences with family, community and culture establish how we deal with others and make choices when acquiring and managing money. If we have thought about our purpose, success and happiness in terms of our personal, organizational and community relationships we are likely to maintain a balanced perspective in which money and the ownership of property and assets are mutually desirable but with due respect for the interests of others the larger social system.

In the *Psychology of Wealth* (2012), author Charles Richards PhD advises people to review their principles and values to assure that their personal beliefs and behaviors demonstrate the positive side of wealth instead of the negative side of wealth:

1. The Negative Side of Wealth is illustrated when fear, insecurity, anxiety and stress make us appear to be miserly, arrogant, self-serving, restrictive and judgmental towards others.
2. The Positive Side of Wealth is depicted when higher human purpose is on display in the form of generosity, proficiency, creativity, and discerning or considerate behavior.

According to Dr. Richards the psychology of wealth is, in fact, a psychology of self-esteem and self-respect. And, it is a mistake to pursue wealth believing that first acquiring wealth leads to those important psychological objectives. Each of us should invest in ourselves by pursuing meaningful things, assuming self-responsibility and maintaining integrity similar to those illustrated in this text in Figure 2-9. Dr. Richards advises that personal development leads to high self-esteem versus low self-esteem:

1. Having *high self-esteem* includes: being open to other points of view, learning from mistakes, accepting others' differences gracefully, and living in the present.
2. Having *low self-esteem* includes: being hypersensitive to criticism, blaming others for your circumstances, fearing change and avoiding taking risks, and having difficulty in making decisions.

Dr. Richards advises that “The psychology of wealth is a simple and pragmatic call to nurture the qualities and attitudes within ourselves that will create a prosperous life,” and that “We expect the best of ourselves, and we recognize that the golden path to true prosperity, to a life of happiness and fulfillment, begins by showing up and putting one foot in front of the others.” (pp. 224-5)

**[Author’s Note:** This topic on Wealth Generation leading to adequate Financial Security (Figure 2-9) begins in this chapter and is developed in greater detail, as appropriate, in Personal Project Management (Chapter 3) Authentic Branding (Chapter 4), Personal Development (Chapter 10), Organization Development (Chapter 11), and Community Development (Chapter 12) In each chapter, the theme of earning financial returns from productive activity serves to remind the reader that lifelong learning, knowing, leading, and achieving is a multi-functional responsibility in human progress.

**Implications for Integral Knowledge Management.** This handbook uses a “social system-of-systems” perspective for understanding the thinking and behavior of human beings. Doing this recognizes the artifacts and relationships among the four principal social domains of personal (family), organization (business), local community and society (largest) that includes them all. Each of these domains creates a psycho-social set of accepted understandings or culture that defines them each as both individual entities and intergroup collaborators. The goals, boundaries, plans, resources and activities of are based on the human needs, wants, and desires of all members. The thinking, learning and knowledge capabilities established within these groups are both interdisciplinary and integral. Knowing this truism encourages all of us to improve our reasoning and decision-making to obtain more meaningful outcomes.

**Personal Reflection.** This topic appears at the send of each chapter and is meant to serve two purposes: (a) be a reader’s guide to main points and “takeaways,” and (b) to encourage everyone to take a moment to engage their mental cognition and intuition on what the chapter means to them – especially at this time in their lives. Questions for chapter reflection follow immediately below; and for those readers inclined to maintain a self-assessment, your thoughts may be recorded in your *American Learnership for Life, Work, Wealth, Health and Legacy Success form* which is located at *Appendix B*.

### Questions for Discussion

1. Can you make a comparison between people who have a sense of purpose and meaning in their work and life and those who have not determined this for themselves?
2. What are some of the ways people might determine whether they have achieved self-fulfillment?
3. Are there some examples of local community activities where working toward achieving the “common good” is evident?
4. How would you rate the goal of wealth building as compared to other personal and social objectives?

### Insights, Commitments and Skills

If you plan to participate in the *American Learnership Life, Work, Wealth, Health and Legacy Success* self-development project, it is suggested you record your Insights, commitments and skills to be developed here in this chapter, and again in Appendix B:

My learning in terms of new insights, changing priorities, new commitments or skills I want to acquire:

1. Insights (Example): Remind myself that ...
2. Commitments (Example): Continue to ask myself ...
3. Skills (Example): Apply my knowledge and skills to ...

### Conclusion

This chapter may be the most important to you, our reader. It follows Chapter One in which the foundational American Learnership architecture and process models were described, and where a meta-level mental model was offered as a comprehensive, integral and interdisciplinary approach for human learning and development. Having done that, Chapter Two makes our commitment to you that this handbook will provide the basis for your expanded thinking, reasoning and action so that a quantum leap in your personal life management and professional performance will be your experience.

The American Learnership Forum, Inc. believes that only a modest commitment on your part to the learning, knowledge and legacy topics in this Handbook will return significant value to your life and success. If you do not find that to be the case, please contact the author, Dr. Garrity at [www.alforum.org](http://www.alforum.org), for a prompt return of your cost for this book.