THE STREN BOOK

THERE IS A GENIE IN EACH OF US WANTING TO BE FREED TO GRANT OUR WISHES!

The Educational Community, Inc.
A 501(c)(3) Nonprofit Corporation
Donald Pet, MD, Director

The animal portion of our brain was designed to survive in a hostile environment where one had to be continuously alert to *eat and not be eaten*. Anticipating danger with a constant automatic red alert response was a valued survival skill. Laughter in such an environment had little survival value. Perhaps this is why animals are not known for their sense of humor, and I'm told that our primitive ancestors weren't at all familiar with laughter.

The way we think influences the way we feel and the way we act. Nature and nurture, instinct and tradition are dictators; they control our life during our immature years when our way of thinking is malleable like putty and they continue to do so if allowed. Strens are the building blocks of mental strength.

Strens are the muscles of our intelligent *self*-organ that free the genie within each of us to grant our highest level wishes and prayers. Like a muscle that grows stronger with each additional strand of muscle fiber, our creative power grows as we increase our understanding of cause-and-effect relationships, what we call *knowledge*. Strens add wisdom to the power of knowledge to transform us to higher levels of civility.

Mental-spiritual wealth millionaires greedily enrich themselves with new strens so they can enjoy paying them forward to create a better world. Each mental-spiritual wealth millionaire adds to our collective force for world peace. The unprecedented power of the hydrogen bomb is due to the rapid explosive energy created by a chain reaction. Let's combine our efforts to create a super bomb of love energy through a human chain action.

The free EC book, The 7 plus 2 Formula offers the quickest, easiest, most enjoyable and effective means to popularize Einstein's solution to the BIGGEST puzzle:

> *Why do we fill our world with fear, hate, scarcity, and war when we want (and need) happiness, love, abundance, and peace?*

The Stren Book's collection of common sense wisdom may be enjoyed both independent of, and as a catalyst to *A Newer Way of Thinking*.

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[*Stren* = mental strength, wisdom, insight]

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1. Seven Word Switches to Happiness, Love and Peace
2. World Peace in Three Years of Less…or Else!
3. The 7plus2 Formula
4. The Stren Book

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Stren #1: The "Strength Stren"

This simple wisdom inspires a quantum leap toward creating *a newer way of thinking*. It is one of the most powerful wisdoms. I acquired it from an individual who overcame the most devastating of life's circumstances.

John is a paraplegic. His broken neck changed his life when he was a teen. It was a game of football turned tragedy. From that day, he no longer had control of his legs or arms. Physically he knew he would be dependent on others for whatever time he would live. Yet, when I met John, he was applying for a job as a senior therapist. A helper took him to classes and literally turned the pages. He earned his doctorate in psychology. He met a woman with shared interests and they married. He and his wife were raising their adopted daughter. He was not simply alive; he was living and loving his life.

How had he turned himself around? What made the difference? I had to ask and I'm so glad I did, for I received the gift of this stren, which I can now pass on to you. Here is his response, as close as I can remember:

> "For several years I was miserable. My thoughts were constant that I didn't want to live. And then one day I had the thought that changed my life:
>
> "As long as I thought about what I'd lost, what I didn't have, or might not attain, I realized I would continue to feel miserable. I began to focus my attention on what I had attained, what I had available to me right now, and what I might yet attain. This simple idea changed everything."

Two recent bestselling books, *Tuesdays with Morrie* and *The Last Lecture,* provide inspirational examples of individuals who made their life experience meaningful in spite of the terrible hardships fate provided: ALS (Lou Gehrig's muscle wasting disease, *amyotrophic lateral sclerosis*) and cancer of the pancreas. Surely, these individuals managed through their way of thinking. What can you learn from such examples? How would you compare your life situation? And how do you deal with it?

Too often, too many people dwell on what they have lost, what they don't have now, and/or what they may never obtain. This is the sure formula to create misery. I have sent this stren to friends at holiday time and received many grateful comments to verify its effectiveness. My most recent letter was from a young woman whose father died recently; she turned her thoughts and feelings around when she began to focus on her happy experiences with her dad and all she had received.

"There were two prisoners looking through the bars;
the one saw mud, the other saw stars." Anon.

When we experience any loss, one of life's many unfairness or setbacks, it is normal to hurt. Why unnecessarily add to the necessary hurt by dwelling on the loss, guilt, or the missing part of our life? Who would go to the supermarket, pay for their food, and then get back in line to pay for the food again? It's hard enough to have to deal with the loss; why compound it? Though it may take time and will not be easy, we do have the resources to get over the blows fate deals us. Keep this in mind and stop the nonproductive negative mental dwelling!

Stren #2: The Most Powerful Self-Endorsement Wisdom
The Secret of Love-creation

Good feelings stir us to continued action. Immediate satisfaction is critical to sustain the work and practice required to attain the natural rewards of virtually every important skill, viz. getting an education, sustaining a relationship, keeping physically fit, playing a musical instrument, growing a garden, and – most importantly – growing our capacity for loving our *self* and others. Emotional endorsement is the main source of immediate satisfaction that allows us to enjoy the work we do now in order to attain more satisfaction later. Knowing we are doing something worthwhile is intellectual endorsement; its satisfaction is usually weaker than emotional joy. Joining emotional endorsement to intellectual endorsement provides the most effective incentive to continue our efforts.

How often have you known what you believed was the wisest and best thing to do, but instead did what felt better at that time? Get the idea? Understanding simply isn't enough!

Few people know how to emotionally endorse themselves. We get little training in this skill. You know how to say to yourself, "I did a good job," or, "That was nice," but after you say those things you go right on to the next worry or problem to be solved. You don't extract all the honey you can from your efforts. Yet you are probably more than well-developed in the opposite of emotional *self*-endorsement, *self*-blame. When you become intellectually aware of a shortcoming, you experience guilt, shame, or embarrassment within every fiber of your being. Most of us are so practiced at blaming-in that the negative feelings come automatically, seemingly without effort or intention. Could you imagine that you can teach yourself to create good feelings with the same ease that you "naturally" feel guilty, embarrassed, ashamed or depressed? You can! ... if you become aware of how to endorse yourself emotionally and practice doing so. Self-endorsement is the secret of love-creation.

Since you know how to emotionally blame yourself, you already have the skills for emotional self-endorsement. The problem is that you direct your emotional endorsement to others. Think of the times you've expressed yourself in such a way as to stimulate a response from a dog -- you know how to get that dog to wag its tail, shake its behind, and get thoroughly excited. You've probably called forth great enthusiasm in doing the same kind of thing with a child. You've even emotionally endorsed food. "Wow! Look at that fantastic, gooey ice cream creation!" Recall the enthusiasm with which you've applauded a great musical performance or cheered for your team at a sports event. You just haven't had much direction and experience in emotional *self*-endorsement, in "wowing" yourself. The skill is there; it simply needs to be directed to yourself. Most people are familiar with directing emotional blame to themselves, but unfortunately they were taught that it's "selfish" to emotionally endorse themselves. One man recalled being told, "Praise only counts if it comes from someone else." (This is one reason most of us become so dependent on what we imagine others might be thinking about us.)

When you do something worthwhile (i.e., your "reasonable best," which is virtually always in your control!!!), imagine a gala brass band marching down Main Street. Two people are carrying a banner that stretches across the whole street with streamers being tossed about, and people are cheering you from their windows. There you are, smack in the middle of the parade, smiling proudly and waving, "Yep, I did it all right. It was me." Such a *self*-endorsement tool in your repertoire is much more likely to call forth your emotions than an intellectual, flat, "That was O.K." Use this image and/or create your own as a regular *self*-endorsement tool.

Some people can use or develop their existing creative imagery and fantasy to initiate enthusiasm. Others find it easier to call forth feelings of joy, inspiration, and enthusiasm from prior experiences. Make a mental scrapbook of times you've felt loved, got a pat on the shoulder, experienced joy, happiness, or enthusiasm. Permit yourself to call these "snapshots" forth to re-create similar good feelings. Combine past experience with the present creative imagery to develop the results you want.

Experiment by creating your own skills in emotional *self*-endorsement. Try it when you wake up in the morning. What do you say to yourself when you first look in the mirror? "What a hot sketch I am!"? Or do you say something else? If you are like most people who are practiced in the art of emotionally *self*-blaming, but are weak in emotionally endorsing yourself, apply your conscious awareness to nurture *self*-endorsement. Your efforts will be amply rewarded. Practice! Practice! Practice!

The next four wisdoms (strens 3-6) will recognize the three masters who govern our life's experience, how we free ourselves from our early dictators, and the powerful tool that enables us to become a powerful creator and make our life's experience joyous and meaningful. Then we'll resume with a number of proven self-endorsement wisdoms.

Stren# 3: Our Three Masters

I am especially excited about the next four wisdom tips because they serve as a foundation for everything that follows. Today's wisdom will identify the three masters who control our life's experience, the first two being dictators and the third being what we call "self-mastery," the exercise of our freed will to personally direct our life experience. The second wisdom will explain the power of interpretation that makes us different from all life on earth; the third reveals the secret means by which we become powerful creators; and the fourth wisdom introduces the important concept that inspires the *newer way of thinking* that enables anyone to lead a joyous, meaningful life.

Without exception, all life is controlled by two dictators that we identify by such labels as *nature and nurture* or *fate and circumstance*. The simplest forms of life are innately equipped by nature to survive at birth. More complex life requires nurturing from external providers such as parents. Only humankind has been gifted with a sufficiently intelligent specialized organ to become a powerful creator through the process we call by such terms as *becoming one's own person*, *mental freedom*, and *self-mastery*. As the portion of our unique human brain that we call the *cerebral cortex* matures we attain the power to program ourselves. We alone acquire, store, share, and grow knowledge by passing it forward to successive generations. Increasingly, we have joined nature and nurture in determining who we are and what we will become. Our recent explosive growth of knowledge has made us so powerful that we can now create the utopia within our imagination and/or we can make ourselves history by unleashing our unprecedented weapons of ultimate destruction.

Let's recognize that both as individuals and collectively as humankind, we are a work-in-progress with a mission. Mental freedom is the power to create both wisely and foolishly. Our unprecedented creative and destructive power makes us responsible for consistently directing actions to constructive outcomes. Our work-in-progress is quite clearly defined – we must urgently develop the wisdom to manage our new weapons of ultimate destructive power. The future of our loved ones and humanity has suddenly become the responsibility of our generation. Our future requires that we teach ourselves *a newer way of thinking* based on *common sense* wisdom where *instinct* and *tradition* have become maladaptive.

We take the beginning step to add wisdom to self-management when we identify the sources that control the way we think, feel, and act. Let's begin today to create an indelible picture in our mind that enlightens our consciousness to the three masters that direct our life's experience. Think of turning a light "on" or "off." If just thinking "Let there be light" worked, you'd probably think you had magic. However, you know the trick of creating light is quite easily accomplished. You simply walk over to a light switch and change its position. Most light switches have two positions, "on" or "off". You know it works "unmagically" because someone previously provided a source of electric power and placed wiring to convey energy to the light bulb. Even though the mechanical action is hidden behind the wall, you make a verifiable assumption that the light switch has such connections.

Now look at another location where there are two light switches. The switches look identical. However, one leads to an action entirely different than the other. Again, we understand why – the wiring behind the wall which we don't see is distinct for each switch. The second switch adds a new option to the first choice.

Let's now consider another location where we see three switches, the third being slightly different than the first two. This newer third switch has a variable slide device that adds the ability to "dim" and "brighten" alongside turning it "on" or "off." Instead of two choices, there are now multiple options ranging from totally "off" to totally "on." This third switch provides us far more variety in determining the light we select. The image of these three light switches provides a powerful analogy to recognize our opportunity for *self-mastery*.

Like the wires hidden behind the wall that we don't see, our brain has very complex wiring that we don't see. We can develop insight into the operation of our brain if we create a simple model like the three light switches, and label the first "nature," the second "nurture," and the third "self-mastery." Each master switch turns "on" or "off" a unique pattern of wiring that influences the way we think, feel, and act. The first wiring, established during the 9 months of our creation, provided us with nerves and chemicals set to automatically carry out vital functions such as regulating our heart rate, body temperature, and breathing. Nature also provides us genes prewired with the proven instinctive behaviors that enabled our ancestors to survive and thrive through the most savage environments. These automatic behaviors have allowed us to reach our advanced state of knowledge and creative power. An innate bias towards *survival of the fittest* and *flight or fight* behavior is prominent among all life including humankind. These instinctive wisdoms have become established through trial-and-error learning to be adaptive to the demands of an uncivilized environment. Instinct links us to our extended ancestral beginnings.

After we are born, the external world becomes a newer master who would control our thinking, feelings, and behavior. Our nurturers, including culture and circumstance introduce a new set of wiring that has different characteristics than our innate wiring. For example, "instinct" and the automatic regulation of our vital systems are quite similar and predictable in each of us and in other species. Indeed, we are so similar that we may exchange many body parts and sometimes even use those of animals. "Survival of the fittest" and "fight or flight" instinct is a quite predictable bias to be found in all species.

The wiring we receive from outside sources, primarily our nurturers, has far more diversity than that provided by our biology. Unlike the internal wiring present at birth, our external creators wire us through repetition. For example, our knowledge of the alphabet, the meaning of words, and our understanding of ourselves and the world is due to our nurturer's perspective. We are not asked and we have limited power to resist whatever *training* we receive. Through our early years we are quite like parrots, mimicking whatever fate and circumstance provide. Our external controllers program us

to think, feel, and act according to the model they provide. The thinking part of our brain that I label our "*freedom organ*," what most call "*the cerebral cortex*," is not fully mature until about the age of 18. Like wet clay or putty, we are easily molded in the design prescribed by our nurturers before our brain cells become fully mature.

During the first decades of our maturing, we have been described as a "tabula rasa," a blank or *unwritten on* tablet. For example, our nurturers may "wire" us Christian, Muslim, Jewish, atheist, Nazi, democrat, republican, or communist. We are prescribed with the specific language we are to think and speak. If we are programmed for perfectionism and guilt, we are prone to go through life demanding more of ourselves than is reasonable resulting is depression no matter how productive we are. If we are programmed for optimism and problem-solving, we are inspired with chronic enthusiasm to become creators and appreciate ourselves and others. At one extreme, our nurturers may educate us to develop wings and fly off on our own to assume personal responsibility for who we are and what we become. At the other extreme, they may keep our wings so clipped that we are inclined to closely adhere to their indoctrination. In this case becoming one's own person may require extraordinary effort and risk-taking. Repetition becomes *habit. Habit* passed on from generation to generation becomes *tradition. Tradition*, like *instinct*, is a difficult master to resist.

Do you recognize that our first two masters, *instinct* and *tradition*, are dictators? They prescribe who we are and what we are to become. Action not in compliance with the perspective of a dictator's way is *the wrong way*. Their demands are supported by the authority of *instinct* and *tradition* and commonly lack common sense logic. Nature and our nurturer's manner of dealing with issues were effective to solve yesterday's issues. They continue to be effective as most of today's challenges remain relatively unchanged. However, *instinct* and *tradition's* predetermined solutions have little resilience to solve today's problems when they are unlike past experience. They are ill suited to deal with new problems such as pollution, global warming, and the depletion of our food supply on land and in the oceans. *Instinct* and *tradition* are especially dangerous when applied to the most immediate threat to our loved ones and civilization, the proliferation of weapons of ultimate destruction to tribes who already state it is their intent to use them.

The Story of Us becomes most interesting when we recognize the third switch and its distinct set of wiring. As our *freedom organ* becomes physically mature we acquire the power to create an original third pattern of wiring. Our human *freedom organ* is our creator's unique gift of intelligence. It provides us the opportunity to become self-programmers. By acquiring knowledge and skill in thinking, we become creators! As we discover knowledge, share it, and pass it forward from generation to generation, we make ourselves more powerful creators. In the last 100 years, our explosive growth of knowledge in every direction is enlightening us with such quantum speed that we can envision creating the utopia of our dreams while at the same time we are making widely available our new weapons of self-extinction. No life on earth, past or present, has ever possessed such power and the freedom to determine its destiny as our current generation. True mental freedom includes the opportunity to create

alternative actions and choose among them. Creative thought in the service of *instinct* or *tradition* or a *human* dictator is not true mental freedom. Our freedom organ, like the third light switch, empowers us to create increasingly constructive and destructive outcomes. My understanding of Einstein's insight is that if we choose to survive and thrive, we must wire our freedom organ with the wisdoms that consistently direct our unprecedented creative power to constructive outcomes. We have already created sufficient nuclear weapons on release ready status to destroy the world for human life many times over. We can no longer tolerate the unleashing of our newest biological and nuclear creations. Our work-in-progress is to make ourselves the wise, humane person to which we aspire.

The three wisdoms that follow are extremely important because they explain the process that we become powerful creators and create the *newer way of thinking* that enables us to continue to make history instead of become history.

Summary: Our Three Masters

1. Nature [Instinct/Fate]

2. Our Nurturers [Tradition/Circumstance]

3. *Self*-mastery [Our mature properly educated cerebral cortex (freedom organ)]

1. Fate
\+ 2. Circumstance
\+ 3. Freed will power
= Who we are and what we choose to become

Only humankind may attain a significant degree of freedom from what fate and circumstance make of us.

Immature ➔ Mature ➔ Super Mature

Stren #4: The Power of Interpretation
The process of Becoming a Powerful Creator with a Purpose

Today's wisdom explains the process by which we make ourselves powerful creators. We survive and thrive because humankind has been gifted with a sophisticated portion of our brain we call the *cerebral cortex*. I call this last to develop segment of our brain our "*freedom organ*" because this term best describes its function. We recognize that other organs such as the heart, lungs, and kidneys have specialized functions to serve the whole system. A specialized function of our intelligent freedom organ is to acquire, store, share, and pass knowledge forward to future generations who perpetuate the process.

Knowledge is the awareness of the universal rules of cause-and-effect. Our early ancestors had little knowledge. To envision the growth of knowledge in my own mind I picture a snowball starting at the top of a mountain, increasing its size and accelerating its speed the further it rolls. ***Knowledge*** is our source of mental power. Unlike our physical muscle power, we continuously increase our mental power as we pass it forward. ***Intelligence*** applied to knowledge provides us the ability to direct its force and focus its power. ***Wisdom*** is our means to consistently direct our power to constructive outcomes.

After 3 ½ billion years of life on earth, only we have created the power to make ourselves extinct by a mechanical error or the erroneous judgment of a single person. We also may use our power to create the utopia that we now can imagine. We increasingly participate with fate and circumstance in determining who we are and what we will become. Our freedom organ provides us with both the opportunity to become powerful creators and the burden to exercise our power wisely. So let's enlighten ourselves about the source of our explosive, still-accelerating growth of knowledge, and recognize our mission as powerful creators.

The ***power of interpretation*** is the means by which we change ourselves and change the world. Here's the series of actions by which we alone make ourselves increasingly powerful creators.

- We invent words and symbols to mentally represent the information our senses bring us.
- We thereby create a personal private reality we call *consciousness*.
- We acquire *self-consciousness* through our sophisticated freedom organ. **We think about our thoughts. We are conscious of our consciousness.**
- We make mental interpretations of the data our senses bring to our consciousness.
- We assign meaning to the interpretations we create. Meaning generates energy. Energy influences our biologic response system, i.e. our chemistry and nerves.
- We apply our power of imagination to create original combinations of our interpretations, what we call "*ideas*" and "*concepts*." We imagine concepts and ideas, picturing phenomenon not previously present in nature.

- We choose from among our private mental creations and then apply the mysterious force we call *will power* to introduce our mental creation into the common reality we share.

Do you get it? Through the use of symbols, we "magically" transform our private mental interpretations and imaginings into the common reality we all share! Our creativity is like someone showing us an empty hat and then pulling out a rabbit.

No life on earth, past or present, approaches the degree to which we use the power of interpretation to make ourselves creators! We alone influence who we are and what we become. Humankind has become king on earth because of our ability to make intelligent interpretations. The more accurately our interpretations correspond with the universal orderly cause-and-effect rules we share in common, the greater our power as creators. When mature and properly educated, our freedom organ allows us to acquire the common sense wisdoms necessary to consistently direct our knowledge to constructive outcomes.

As we grew knowledge and made ourselves more powerful creators we also rapidly increased our population to over 6 billion. Scientists are individuals who spend their lives growing knowledge, and we have more scientists alive today than in all of history. Current technology has shrunk the world; it is making more tribes powerful creators as well as our neighbors. Just 50,000 years ago, when our ancestors created language, we made a quantum leap in our power of interpretation and significantly increased our progress towards civilization.

Most knowledge of our creator's universal cause-and-effect relationships has occurred within a few generations. The discovery of sanitation, antibiotics, the industrial revolution, rapid travel, mass communication, pollution, global warming, depleting the seas, and overpopulation are our recent creations. None, however, pose such an imminent threat to our loved ones as the proliferation of weapons of ultimate destruction within the last 50 years! We must impress upon ourselves the speed at which we now increase our power. Awareness inspires the urgency to teach ourselves *a newer way of thinking* that can consistently direct our power to wise outcomes. If we consider earth's 4 ½ billion year history as one hour, our ancestors initiated civilization in the last mere 1/100th of a second. In 1/1000th of that 1/100th second, we have so rapidly expanded our creative power that we now are in a race between cooperation and catastrophe.

Here's what we each need to understand. Our way of thinking is first directed by *instinct* and *tradition*. Neither is capable of applying *common sense* wisdom to new knowledge. *Instinct* and *tradition* program us to think in two categories: *us or them, good or evil, right or wrong,* and so on. This *either/or* way of thinking is the basis of bigotry, prejudice, and harmful aggression. In most instances it is not our nurturer's intent to distort our understanding of the world by focusing on the differences between people and tribes. They have no choice because our mind remains incapable or limited in logical thinking during our immature years. Logical thinking recognizes both the positives and the negatives of alternatives; it emphasizes our similarities more than our

differences. *Common sense* is not very common. We have a limited amount of time to teach ourselves *a newer way of thinking* that solves today's problems with common sense wisdom.

Our freedom organ provides us a mission and purpose! Humankind alone creates its own destiny. Our work-in-progress is to elevate ourselves above other life by creating the humane, civilized qualities to which we aspire. We need to consistently remind ourselves that freedom is the power to choose both constructive and destructive alternatives. We have become master of the world and are rapidly increasing our mastery of ourselves. Let's create the *newer way of thinking* that frees our will from dictators, and collectively unite our power to make our world a safe and friendly place. We must now choose to what degree we use our power to continue to make history and to what degree we become history!

As we educate ourselves with the common sense wisdoms that create *a newer way of thinking*, we realize that humankind is united in a common purpose. We each want to use our powers to create a joyous, meaningful life experience. We each want to survive in our new era of weapons of ultimate destruction! Each wisdom we discover and pass forward to create wisdom millionaires brings us a step closer to utopia. Each wisdom also slows or even reverses the hands of the doomsday clock.

In the next wisdom tip, I will reveal the secret to creating *a newer way of thinking* (**ANWOT**) that frees us from our early dictators to create common sense solutions to today's problems. See you soon.

These are the four "foundation" wisdoms:

- OUR THINKING, FEELINGS, AND ACTIONS ARE DIRECTED BY **THREE MASTERS**: ***INSTINCT*** (NATURE), ***TRADITION*** (NURTURE), AND ***SELF-MASTERY*** (OUR MATURE FREEDOM ORGAN)
- **INTERPRETATION:** THE SECRET OF BECOMING A POWERFUL CREATOR
- **WORD-SWITCHES**: THE SECRET OF ATTAINING MENTAL FREEDOM
- **STRENS:** THE SECRET OF ANWOT; ADDING WISDOM TO OUR CREATIVE POWER

Stren #5: Word-switches – part A: The Means to Mental Freedom

Our most important tool to *a newer way of thinking* **(ANWOT)**

We have been created as a work-in-progress with a mission. As we continue to acquire more knowledge, it is increasingly apparent we have assumed the responsibility and the task to determine our own destiny and that of the world. Today's wisdom explains the process by which we transform ourselves from a helpless, dependent, needy "taker" into a powerful creator with the wisdom to determine who we are and what we will become. We begin the process with the insight that we must first attain mental freedom from the two dictators who control our early life's experience, *instinct* and *tradition*.

Since there is no word in our language that identifies the process by which we transform ourselves into wise powerful creators, I will introduce two new ones: ***trigger word*** and ***word-switch***. The meanings we assign to these words will empower us to selectively reroute those established ways of thinking that no longer work to newer, more effective solutions to today's issues. *Trigger words* and *word-switches* each turn on energy to activate a specific thinking pathway and its action outcome. Here are two examples of the power of *mechanical* switches that will create an indelible understanding of the power of *word-switches*:

Analogy #1: A train will follow the course predetermined by its track. By altering a single train track switch at one point, we create an entirely new path and destination for the train. By simply flipping that one switch, our action directs energy to the preferred path and destination while simultaneously preventing the outcome that would result without our direct intervention.

Analogy #2: Picture the action of three light switches such as I have described in a previous wisdom tip (see Stren #3). Imagine each switch is wired to turn on one of the three masters that direct our life's experience – *nature*, *nurture*, or *self-mastery*. The first switch was wired prior to birth by *nature* to turn on *instinct*. The second switch was wired throughout our many years of immaturity by our *nurturers* to activate *tradition*. As our freedom organ attains physical maturity and we provide it with appropriate *word-switches,* we become **self**-programmers. Thus, the third switch turns on the wired thinking pathways we *our self* may initiate. By accurately labeling the switches that turn on and turn off *instinct*, *tradition*, and *self-mastery*, we may effectively route the path of energy to our preferred action outcome. We simply select the appropriate *word-switch* as we would select the preferred light switch.

Trigger words and *word-switches* control our thinking with the specificity and power that a mechanical switch uses to alter a course of action. The simple act of wisely choosing appropriate *word-switches* is our means to assume mastery of our life's experience. ***Instinct***, ***tradition***, and ***self-mastery*** each serve us well when we wisely choose the appropriate action switch.

Instinct, the first dictator to our thinking, genetically links us to our earliest ancestors when mindless trial-and-error behaviors determined who survived in a savage environment. *Survival of the fittest* and *fight or flight* behaviors remain prominent. ***Tradition*** emphasizes the tried and true solutions that were effective for yesterday's problems! *Instinct* and *tradition* are reliable and efficient most of the time. However, when confronted with novel problems that require *common sense* wisdom, such as the current proliferation of weapons of ultimate destruction, predetermined solutions often become dangerous. **Recognize that nature (*instinct*) and nurture (*tradition*) are dictators!** They characteristically demand that their perspective be blindly followed based on the authority of past success and habit. *Instinct* and *tradition* are hard-wired. They lack the *common sense* wisdom to consistently direct new knowledge to constructive outcomes.

Here are three examples of critical *word-switches* that free our thinking from *instinct* and *tradition* so that we may effectively deal with new knowledge using *common sense* wisdom. Each of these simple *word-switches* redirects the way we think, feel, and act.

- "*Should*" is a dictator's trigger word. It demands compliance with a prescribed behavior. The word-switch "*could*" invites us to create alternatives and choose from among them.

- "*He, she, it makes me* ..." accurately labels the control others have over us when we are immature. Continued in adulthood, this trigger word leads to blaming, resentment, and harmful action. As we attain maturity, substituting the word-switch "*I allow*..." inspires us to assume personal responsibility for our well-being.

- "*Either/or*" is a *trigger word* that divides the world into two extreme categories such as safe or dangerous, good or evil, us or them. It is characteristic of the thinking demanded by dictators that fosters bigotry, prejudice, and harmful confrontation. The *word-switch* "*both...and*" recognizes the positives and negatives of each alternative. It focuses on similarities more than differences, promotes tolerance for diversity and collaboration towards shared goals.

Let's now define "***trigger word***" and "***word-switch***" to establish a commonly shared meaning:

Trigger words are signals (usually a word, combination of words, or symbol) that turn on imagination leading to a specific concept or idea. *Trigger words* turn on the specific meaning that was assigned by either *nature*, *nurture*, or *our self*, i.e. our mature freedom organ. **Meaning** energizes the thinking, feeling, and action pathways established by its creator, be it *instinct*, *tradition*, *our self*, or some combination. Our first set of trigger words express ***nature's*** perspective, primarily *instinct*. After birth, our *nurturers* provide us a second set of trigger words wired to turn on their perspective, primarily *tradition*. And, with the maturity of our freedom organ, i.e. our intelligent cerebral cortex, we become ***self***-programmers. We ourselves may create a third set of

signals that turn on the newer interpretations and meanings we assign to data by applying current wisdom.

Word-switches are ***trigger words***! They are distinguished from other *trigger words* only by the three characteristics we here assign to them: ***Word-switches --***

1. **have the power to substitute an alternative meaning and *a newer way of thinking*, feeling, and acting for a *trigger wo*rd that is presently dominant.**
2. **are usually the products of a mature freedom organ, i.e. our cerebral cortex.**
3. **are supported by the most current universal *common sense* wisdoms.[2]**

We may design *word-switches* to turn on and turn off the perspective of *instinct*, *tradition*, or those that we ourselves initiate. The meanings we ourselves create, unlike the hard-wired commands of *instinct* and *tradition*, can be based on current knowledge and *common sense* wisdom. We now understand the means by which we become master of our thinking, feelings, and actions. As our freedom organ attains physical maturity and we teach ourselves the wisdoms that create mental maturity, we can create new *word-switches* that selectively turn off the thinking paths previously wired by *instinct* and *tradition* and turn on a newer *common sense way of thinking* available from our mature freedom organ. **We acquire self-mastery, assume responsibility for our life's experience, and become powerful creators through the design and application of *word-switches*!** [Repeat this sentence!]

As we acquire more knowledge of universal cause-and-effect relationships, what we call "science," we increase our power to initiate both constructive and destructive outcomes. The current discovery and proliferation of weapons with ultimate destructive power require that we create newer, more appropriate *word-switches* that consistently direct our power to constructive outcomes. Managing our current explosive growth of power requires using logic and *common sense* wisdom to create original solutions to current issues. Let's recognize that **our native language is heavily biased toward *trigger words* that turn on the wired pathways of *instinct* and *tradition*.** We need to constantly update our language as we expand our knowledge of cause-and-effect relationships. Once we understand the power of specific *trigger words* and *word-switches* to "turn on" *a newer way of thinking* we can proceed to expand our vocabulary of *word-switches* that promote self-mastery.

Word-switches are our means to elevate ourselves to the higher levels of civilization to which we aspire. **Our newest weapon of mass construction is creating and using effective *word-switches* that "turn on" *common sense* wisdom!**

Consider that the 100+ wisdoms that follow are *word-switches* in that they selectively *turn off* the prewired ways of processing information that no longer work and *turn on common sense* wisdom to problem-solve current issues. Next time we meet I'll

[2]The test of universal common sense will be described in a future wisdom tip.

provide part B of the secret of attaining mental freedom: C*reating and applying appropriate word-switches*.

Stren #5: Word-switches – part B: The Means to Mental Freedom

Our most important tool to *a newer way of thinking* **(ANWOT)**

Previously I indicated that we become powerful creators by making interpretations that turn on meaning and action. In part A of this wisdom I created two new words to indicate the way we selectively *switch on* and *turn off* the interpretations and action pathways of our three masters -- *instinct, tradition,* and *self-mastery*. Today we'll expand our understanding of how *word-switches* turn on self-mastery and empower us to replace the demands of *instinct* and *tradition*.

Our creative power is limited by the accuracy of the interpretations we assign to knowledge. Our ancestors were intelligent but they had very limited knowledge to accurately interpret what they experienced. Their interpretations were created using faith-based assumptions that often resulted in inaccurate conclusions. Lacking knowledge, the leap of faith was often beyond reason. No matter how logical our reasoning, if we start with assumptions that misrepresent cause-and-effect relationships, we end up with foolish conclusions. For example, we assumed multiple natural objects or phenomenon had magic; we created an untold number of idols to worship, and performed strange rituals. We believed the earth was flat and the center of the universe. We identified some individuals as "witches" and set them on fire to "save them."

Our early ancestors wandered from place to place in a savage environment seeking edible plants and what they could kill. There was no agriculture. Their valued possessions consisted of family and weapons. As you can imagine, their important trigger words and interpretations were focused on survival, how to eat and avoid being eaten. Words served to create ideas and solutions that triggered a *survival of the fittest* perspective and emergency *fight or flight* action. What *trigger words* would appear in their small dictionary if they had one? We can guess that their vocabulary turned on meaning that favored *either/or* conclusions, that quickly recognized differences, and led to preprogrammed spontaneous action: *my tribe or not my tribe, safe or dangerous, emergency, fight, run, hide, dominate, fuck, protect*, and so on.

Humankind is prone to act on our interpretations even when they are not verifiable by logic. We are reluctant to disobey *instinct* and *tradition*, and so they become automatic and resist yielding their power. As humankind has progressed to its present accelerating growth of universal knowledge, we are rapidly increasing both our constructive and our destructive power. The stakes for foolish acts can no longer be tolerated. To survive and thrive, our work-in-progress is to build our vocabulary of *word-switches* that turn on *common sense* wisdom and selectively switch off those *trigger words* of *instinct and tradition* that have become dangerous.

Our current language remains biased towards the trigger words of *instinct* and *tradition* that take us to destinations that are no longer adaptive. They *turn on* the thinking, feelings, and actions that were necessary for survival in a primitive environment but have become dangerous when applied to today's issues. They emphasize differences more than similarities and divide the world into *either/or* categories that we now recognize support bigotry, intolerance, and destructive confrontation.

For example, in my Western culture, "God," the term for the creator of all things, has commonly been represented as a white male who favors "my tribe" and periodically will magically intervene to punish "not my side." We declare in the name of God that our side is justified in demanding that other tribes comply with our rule or be subject to punishment, even murder. The meanings we assign to a Christian cross, Muslim crescent, Jewish star, or Nazi swastika too often trigger our differences to the exclusion of our similarities. The peace symbol inspires our thinking to imagine our similarities more than our differences. Our work-in-progress is to recognize those trigger words that mislead us, and teach ourselves *a newer way of thinking* that applies *common sense* wisdom where *instinct* and *tradition* are no longer adaptive.

If we are to develop a *newer way of thinking* to manage our new power, to make ourselves more civilized, we need to add *word-switches* that selectively turn on *common sense* wisdom; that turn off those *instinct* and *tradition* trigger-words that new knowledge enlightens us are now ineffective or dangerous.

Other life on earth attains its highest level of maturity automatically and passively, through instinct and role-modeling. Humankind's highest level of maturity is attained by active enlightenment of our freedom organ with knowledge and wisdom to attain mental freedom, what we call *self-mastery*. Freed from *instinct* and *tradition*, our mature freedom organ can acquire and apply the *common sense* wisdoms that elevate us to the most humane levels within our capability.

Our new powerful weapons with ultimate <u>con</u>structive power are *word-switches* that free us from dictators and turn on *common sense* thinking! Now that this secret is revealed, we need to educate our global population to continuously update our *word-switches*. We need to selectively bypass those *instinct* and *tradition* trigger words that once worked but have become ineffective or dangerous when applied to today's explosive and still accelerating growth of knowledge. We elevate our established thinking by adding appropriate *word-switches* that turn on *a newer way of thinking*. Logical thinking creates new solutions to today's problems instead of the automatic directions provided by *instinct* and *tradition*.

The 100+ wisdoms presented in this series have been selected because they each contribute to the *newer way of thinking* that supports interpretations with *common sense* wisdom. In the course of presenting the wisdoms that can make anyone a Mental Wealth millionaire, additional *word-switches* that create *a newer way of thinking*

will be presented and explained. It is important to recognize ***trigger words*** and ***word-switches*** and gradually add to them.

The earliest of the 100+ wisdoms will concentrate on those *word-switches* that turn on three *newer way of thinking* skills because they convey immediate benefits:

(1) The *self-mastery* wisdom tips that free us from blind obedience to *instinct* and *tradition* and allow us to assume personal responsibility for our life experience. I call these wisdoms *The seven Mind-freeing, Life-changing, World-saving word-switches.*

(2) The *self-endorsement wisdoms* that make us our own best friend and provide the patience we require to teach ourselves sophisticated skills.

(3) The universal problem-solving skill that promotes win/win solutions to new problems. The *magical problem-solving sentence* is our most certain means to consistently create successful outcomes in any endeavor.

Summary: The *newer way of thinking* that we require to create a joyous, purposeful life AND create world peace requires newer *word-switches*. *Word-switches* reroute established ways of thinking that no longer work to newer more effective solutions to today's issues. The power of new knowledge turned on by the *trigger words* that worked for yesterday's problems can be very dangerous. The danger is most strikingly apparent in the crisis we have created with our new weapons of ultimate destruction. We most productively direct our life's experience when we create *word-switches* that accurately reflect *common sense* wisdoms that are the product of our freedom organ. We will continue to act foolishly as long as we continue to use *trigger words* that were inspired by *instinct* and *tradition* and have become outdated by new knowledge.

I HAVE PREPARED A BEGINNING GLOSSARY OF *WORD-SWITCHES* THAT INSPIRE *A NEWER WAY OF THINKING*. I RECOMMEND THAT YOU DOWNLOAD THEM FOR YOUR REVIEW. ***CLICK HERE*** (stren #100) TO GET THEM. JUST READING THEM WILL OFFER CONSIDERABLE INSIGHT. THEY WILL BE CONSIDERED IN GREATER DETAIL IN FUTURE WISDOM TIPS.

When we next meet, I will introduce a new *word-switch* that explains how we add wisdom to self-mastery to consistently create preferred outcomes.

Four basic insights create a foundation for all the wisdoms that follow:

☺ Stren #3: RECOGNIZE THE THREE MASTERS WHO DIRECT OUR THINKING, FEELINGS, AND ACTIONS: Nature (instinct), Nurture (tradition), and Self-mastery

☺ Stren #4: INTERPRETATION: THE SECRET OF BECOMING A POWERFUL CREATOR

- ☺ Stren #5: WORD-SWITCHES: THE MEANS WE ATTAIN MENTAL FREEDOM
- ☺ Stren #6: STRENS: THE MEANS TO ANWOT; ADDING WISDOM TO OUR CREATIVE POWER

Stren #6: A New Vocabulary Word-switch – *Stren*

Today's wisdom introduces a new word-switch – ***stren***. **A stren is defined as any word, concept, experience, or wisdom that strengthens our productive thinking.** Once explained, you will understand that strens are the mental wiring our freedom organ uses to create *a newer way of thinking*. Strens are the means we become mental wealth millionaires and create a joyous meaningful life experience. They are the wisdoms we require to bring about constructive outcomes including world peace.

In a prior wisdom tip, I demonstrated an easy way to visualize the three masters who each seek to direct our life's experience. I showed you a light control with three switches, and asked you to imagine that the first switch turns on the wiring of *instinct*, the second turns on the wiring of *tradition*, and the third switch turns on the last-to-be-created *self-mastery* wiring that we ourselves design. Today's wisdom will help you understand how we strengthen self-mastery and lessen our dependence on dictators. The earliest two controllers of our destiny, *nature* and *nurture*, are dictators! They prescribe the thinking, feelings, and actions that comply with their demands when we have little or no power to resist. The labels *nature* and *nurture*, *fate* and *circumstance,* and *instinct* and *tradition* are related in that they each identify the forces that control our early life's experience; they each would have us continue to serve them throughout our life. The third controller of our life's experience is our own freed will power, what we label *self-mastery*.

Here is the story of how the *word-switch* ***stren*** had to be created to turn on constructive thinking when no word already in our language could be found. Some years ago, the famous anthropologist Margaret Mead spoke before a group of mental health workers. She told them our thinking is restricted by our language. She explained that our language is the source of many of our problems. We have assigned meanings to words and symbols that bias our thinking to focus on the negative aspects of information. We innately anticipate the harmful possibilities of our life experience to the neglect of the positive. Here are some examples:

Worry is a single word that means anticipating the most negative aspect of a situation. Is there a single word concept that anticipates the most positive aspect of a situation? The closest such word I've found is *optimize*. ["Hope" is close but lacks the equivalent energy "worry" expresses.] It is relatively common to hear or know of someone who says, "I have been worrying." How often have you heard someone say, "I spent the night optimizing"?

When most people are asked to give a talk before an audience, or get on an airplane, is their thinking more likely to be preoccupied with the anticipated positive or negative outcomes? My experience is that most people think of the worst possible outcomes and rarely emphasize the positive outcomes. Our natural tendency is to exaggerate the negative possible outcomes that create what we identify as *anxiety* rather than the more likely positive outcomes.

We have heard or used such words as *setback* and *putdown.* How often do we hear the words *set-forward* and *pull-up* that focus on elevating ourselves to higher levels of function? The word "resentment" would seem to literally mean re-experiencing a feeling or a sentiment which could be positive or negative (think "re-sentiment"). In actual usage, *resentment* has come to mean a reoccurring feeling of distress due to a real or imagined injustice by a person, act, or situation.

There is a clear explanation for this manner of thinking that focuses on the negative. The older animal segments of our brain were designed to survive in a hostile, savage environment where one had to be continuously alert for life-threatening events. A good part of life was *eat or be eaten*. Anticipating danger and being constantly prepared to make an emergency virtually automatic response was a valued survival skill. Laughter in such an environment had little survival value. Perhaps this is why animals are not known for their sense of humor, and I'm told that our primitive ancestors weren't at all familiar with laughter.

In the partially civilized world we have created now, life-threatening situations at any corner are rare; our ancestors faced danger at <u>every</u> corner! We reasonably expect that whatever endeavor we plan for the day, we will not encounter an immediate confrontation with a life-threatening danger. Real emergencies are relatively rare in most recent human society. We have the opportunity to enjoy the benefits of recreation, humor, and laughter. Yet, our biology, our older brain, has been prewired to deal with the world remaining on "red alert," ready to secrete chemicals and arouse nerves and keep our muscles tense for emergency *fight or flight* action. The automatic, prewired instinctive programs that govern our thinking, feelings, and actions that were once necessary and adaptive have become less helpful. In some cases they are harmful - we see common examples such as road rage and crimes of passion. The most common cause of muscle pain is slight but prolonged tension causing headache, jaw pain, neck and back ache, etc. *Common sense* wisdom makes us aware that there are better ways to process information that replaces what our preprogrammed dictators would have us do.

After Dr. Mead's talk, the mental health workers decided there was no word in our language that adequately represented processing of information to positive outcomes. They created a new word which I would like us to share and use in our journey to Mental Wealth. That invented word is ***stren*. A *stren* is defined as any word, concept, experience, or wisdom that strengthens our productive thinking.** The closest concept to *stren* in our language would be *knowledge* that our freedom organ can use to strengthen our use of wisdom. Think of strens as the muscle of our intelligent freedom organ; they bias the actions we, as masters of our self, design to lead to preferred outcomes. Strens are the *common sense* knowledge that we provide our freedom organ to produce its most constructive products.

The way we think influences the way we feel and the way we act. We become powerful creators because of our ability to assign interpretations with meaning to the

data our senses provide us. We are unique among life on earth by the degree to which we progressively increase our *interpretive* power. That strength can be directed to constructive or destructive outcomes. We teach ourselves to more consistently create constructive outcomes as we add wisdom to strength.

Like muscle that grows stronger with the addition of more individual strands of muscle fiber, our creative power grows as we increase our understanding of cause-and-effect relationships, what we call *knowledge*. ***Strens*** are the building blocks of mental strength. Each new ***stren*** or bit of knowledge we discover makes us a more powerful creator. *Strens* are especially productive when they work together in unison.

By adding the trigger word ***stren*** to our vocabulary, we inspire our freedom organ to continue to add the wisdoms that strengthen our newer way of constructive thinking. Mental Wealth millionaires continuously enrich themselves with new ***strens***. An important reminder: our power as creators can be directed to constructive AND destructive outcomes! Power directed by our earliest masters, *instinct* and *tradition*, commonly includes harmful action. Power directed by the *common sense* wisdom of our intelligent freedom organ is our means to consistently direct our creative power to our preferred outcomes. Each new wisdom presented will be one more ***stren*** to create *a newer way of thinking*, to become a Mental Wealth millionaire and a force for world peace.

Stren # 7: The Seven Mind-freeing, Life-changing, World-saving Word-switches

I am especially pleased with today's stren (mental strength) because it provides, in abbreviated form, all the essentials to update our thinking to modernity, to "use our best to do our best." This stren introduces you to seven critical Mind-freeing Life-changing World-saving Word-switches that powerfully make you master of your thinking as they free you from the demands of the early dictators who would control your life – *instinct* and *tradition.* You will understand the power of these seven easy word substitutions if you envision the way we can redirect a train to an entirely different path and destination by altering one switch at a single location on the train-track. By the simple act of changing the appropriate train-track switch, we not only redirect the train to the preferred destination; we simultaneously prevent the predetermined outcome we don't want. You can dramatically change the course and outcome of your life's experience by practicing these seven simple word-switches.

During our prolonged immaturity, the word meanings imbedded in every native language must first emphasize our helplessness, dependency, and our need for blind obedience to authority. We also acquire the habit of thinking in two *either/or* categories such as *good or bad*, *right or wrong*, *us or them, win or lose.* This misperception of the world is the root cause of bigotry, prejudice, intolerance, destructive aggression, and war. Thereafter, our formal education teaches us to make a living but has yet to include the specific wisdoms needed to make life wonderful. Each of the seven *mental* word-switches, like the train-track switch, is our means to take control of the path and outcome of our thinking, feelings, and actions.

Today's stren identifies these seven simple Mind-freeing, Life-changing, and World-saving word-switches. Each one will be fully explained in the subsequent seven tips:

1. Substitute "I think I can" for helpless/hopeless trigger words such as "why bother," "what's the use," "it's too hard," "I can't," "to Hell with it," "ferk it."
2. Substitute "I could" for the dictator word "I should."
3. Substitute the personal responsibility word-switch "I allow" for common blaming words that express dependency: "he (she, they, it, the world) makes me …."
4. Most important, substitute "both … and" for the "either …or" trigger word programmed into every native language that divides the world into *two categories* and promotes bigotry, prejudice, and intolerance.
5. Regularly apply the Magical Problem-solving Sentence: *Given this situation, what is most likely to make things better for me AND you (*or *us and them), for now AND the future?*
6. Substitute "energy" for "anger" and "anxiety" when possible.
7. Substitute "urgent" for "emergency," then immediately assign "high," "medium," or "low" priority to "urgent. "

Keep in mind how you will benefit from each of these word-switches: Word-switch 1 *Yes, I think I can,* turns-on the energy we require to get results. Word-switches 2, 3, and 4 free our thinking from mental slavery to the *instinct* and *traditions* nature and our nurturers program into us during our immature years. Word-switch 5, the universal problem-solving sentence, is the "magical" tool that, regularly used, creates *common sense* solutions that work. Word-switches 6 and 7 diminish the instinctive anger and the emergency *fight or flight* impulsive responses that are least likely to work in our relatively civilized world and that often get us into trouble.

$E=mc^2$ initiated a new era, a world where multiple tribes will soon possess weapons with ultimate destructive power! For the first time, in our very lifetime, an earth creature has become capable of deliberate self-annihilation. Recognizing the significance of "the bomb," Einstein expressed his most important insight:

> *"The unleashed power of the atom has changed everything except our ways of thinking. Thus we are drifting towards a catastrophe beyond comparison. We shall require a substantially new mode of thinking if mankind is to survive."*

Historically and currently we focus much of our energy and resources on harmful aggression. We have ignored Einstein's admonition about the need to continue updating the way we think. Humans are distinguished from all other earth creatures by the degree to which we create symbols and manipulate them in our mind. Words are our triggers to release powerful energy. Only we have been given the capability to attain substantial control of our life's experience, to free ourselves from the hardwired directions of our *genes* and our *nurturers,* and from *fate and circumstance*. Only we significantly change both our self and the world for our well-being and/or for our own destruction.

The seven simple word-switches presented here start the process of updating our thinking to better deal with the requirements of modernity. The strens to be presented enable us -- anyone, including you -- to assume control of our life's experience. We can take responsibility to problem-solve instead of blaming others and/or our self. We can teach ourselves to act on *reason and wisdom* more than *instinct and habit*. **Most important, PLEASE GET THIS, we can transform our mental energy into a weapon for mass <u>con</u>struction.** The regular application of these seven basic mental skills re-directs the way we process information. Each dramatically strengthens our thinking, more so upon acquiring the additional mental strengths provided in the more than 100 strens that will follow.

Changing the way instinct and tradition have programmed us to think is a self-taught skill that requires five ingredients: faith in one's self to say "I think I can," work, patience, direction, and the willingness to risk giving up the automatic ways we were taught to think that no longer work. <u>All</u> of these ingredients are abundantly available for the asking. Since you have already asked, you will be provided with a new stren every other day. All skills are mastered through application. With repetition, new skills

become automatic, habitual, and effortless. The wisdoms you will receive have been proven to be among those most important to enhance life's experience. They will update your thinking to let you become your own chief executive officer as you free your will from the whims of fate and circumstance. Now, continue on to the *word-switches and strens* that free your thinking so you can become your own person, the *self-endorsement skills* that make you your own best friend and lifelong traveling companion, the *mental freedom control panel* that explains the 8 choices available to your will, and the *collective wisdoms* that will make you a Mental Wealth millionaire and a powerful force for world peace.

Stren # 8: The "I think I can" Turn-on Energy Word-switch

Welcome to the first of the 7 *Mind-freeing*, *Life-changing*, *and World-saving* word-switches. This wisdom provides the energy to acquire all the wisdoms that follow.

Substitute the word-switch "**Yes, I think I can**" for **"why bother," "what's the use," "it's too hard," "I can't," "to Hell with it," "ferk it"** and any other helpless/hopeless *give up* trigger word that shuts down your energy factory. This stren turns energy back *on* that you've turned *off*! If you have forgotten, re-read *The Little Engine that Could* – "I think I can ...I think I can ... I think I can." "I can ... I will ... we will!" If you missed this classic, get the book and learn its great insight. It's a very short read. Remind yourself, until it becomes habit: *The way I think is my powerful resource to become my very best friend, to free my self from control by fate and circumstance, and to make a significant contribution to peace in the world.* This first step will generate the energy to accomplish the next basic steps.

The Little Engine that Could tells the story of toys eager to be delivered to deserving children on the other side of a mountain. The powerful engines who could take the toys to the children claimed they were too busy or too important, and refused to take the toys to the children. The small engine had never gone over the mountain and the task looked overwhelming. Inspired by the tears of the dolls and the thought of the children who would not have any toys, the little engine bravely said "I think I can...I think I can...I think I can" and you know the rest.

The reason so many individuals stay stuck in an unhappy life experience is because they maintain a hopeless/helpless attitude ingrained from the repeated "you can't" statements learned earlier in their life. It only requires a small spark to get enough energy turned on to grow into an energy producing factory. If you lack even a spark of faith in yourself, here are several ways to get one started:

1. Act as if. Go through the motions even if you don't yet experience this faith. Actors know when they get into the role assigned to them that they may not feel the part. However, when they "act as if" they begin to experience the emotion and energy of the character they portray. They first go through the motions, and that soon turns on the desired experience. With repetition, the "act as if" becomes "feel as if" and soon the "as if" disappears. Expect it to feel strange at first when we add or make changes to the way we traditionally think, feel, and act.

2. Learn from the inspiration others offer us. Reread stren #1 about the teenager who became suddenly paralyzed in a sports event. After a prolonged period of despondency he realized from a single inspiring insight that he was miserable because he kept focusing on what he had lost, had not accomplished, or might never attain. He dramatically turned his life around to attain a joyous, fulfilled life experience when he focused his thinking on what he had achieved, what he had available right now, and what he could still do.

3. There are many inspirational stories that worked for others who had equally or worse situations to manage. They are readily available. Two recent bestselling books, *Tuesdays with Morrie* and *The Last Lecture* are such inspirational stories of how two individuals, Morrie with Lou Gehrig's muscle wasting fatal disease, and Randy Pausch with terminal cancer of the pancreas nevertheless make their days worthwhile. What they found, you can also acquire and turn on the small spark that gets you started into an avalanche of life's satisfactions.

4. In my youth, I wished I could flap my arms like a bird and experience the excitement and freedom of soaring into the air. I don't try now because I've never seen that happen. However, if one day I looked up and saw someone flapping their arms and flying, I'd get very excited; I'd look for some directions to get started. You see, I wouldn't need to see a lot of people flapping their arms and flying, or even a few. Just one would do! I've seen many individuals who have hardly imaginable life hardships, but who just the same have created joy and meaning in their life we can envy. Each of us, you included, can generate the spark that turns on enough energy to get started. The succeeding steps get easier once we take the first.

All of us make mistakes. If you are one who turned your energy off and beats on yourself because of past mistakes, consider this wonderful wisdom from Mark Twain:

"***Good judgment comes from experience. And where does experience come from? Experience comes from bad judgment.***"

Do you realize that the 100+ wisdoms you will be receiving are the good judgments that other people have learned and made available to us from their bad judgments? Why learn from our own bad judgments when others gladly provide us the wisdoms they have learned from their mistakes?

Today's wisdom is powerful! Practice and apply "I think I can...I think I can...I think I can." When you spot those helpless/hopeless trigger words that shut down your energy, let them know they have overstayed their visit and give them a good boot you know where.

Stren # 9: The "I could" for "I should" Word-switch

Welcome to stren #9, "I could" for "I should." "I could" is one of three word-switches that is critical to free us from dictators. This stren is quite simple: **Whenever reasonable, substitute "could" for "should."** "I could" inspires us to assume responsibility for our life's experience; *could* redirects the energy we waste on blaming others or "guilting" our self when another or we ourselves fall short of the dictator's *shoulds*.

"Should" is a prescriptive word that conveys there is one proper action; all other actions thereby become improper. "Should" is the favorite means dictators use to express themselves. "Could" is a descriptive word that invites our freedom organ to imagine alternative actions and select an action from any of the alternatives we or others create. Our first masters, *instinct* and *tradition*, program our thinking pathways to lead to the actions they prefer before we are sufficiently mentally mature to resist. We can be grateful for such dictators because we are so helpless for a prolonged period. We survive and thrive according to the protection and directions we receive. As we attain physical and mental maturity, we have a mission to outgrow the hard shell that imprisons us and assume personal responsibility of our life's experience.

We can go through our lifetime as a servant to "the shoulds" and "should nots" that are a necessary part of our early way of thinking. Many people do just that, as do all other living beings on earth because they have no alternative. Humankind is different in that we are given an intelligent part of our brain that I refer to as our "*freedom organ*," what most people commonly call our "*cerebral cortex*." Our freedom organ has the specialized function to acquire knowledge and make us powerful creators. It gives us the opportunity, as well as the burden that goes with freedom, to join *nature* and *nurture* in creating who we are and what we become. Our freedom organ is capable of imagining things not present in the outside world, and using will power to make our imaginings a reality, a part of the common world we all share. Our growth of knowledge has recently accelerated so rapidly that we are like exploding fireworks, instantly creating light in all directions. No other earth creature has such power to change ourselves and the world.

What has become clear is that we are a work-in-progress. We begin our life as a servant to instinct. We reach physical maturity still directed by our nurturers. We make ourselves super-mature to the degree that we assume personal responsibility for our own destiny. The *shoulds* that are first required to protect us become our prison. Descriptive "I could" words empower us to think outside of the box. They free our thinking from the "shoulds" that lock us into fate and circumstance's prescriptions. When we substitute *descriptive* for *prescriptive* words we signal our freedom organ to assume responsibility for what we think, what we feel, and what we do.

Descriptive words inspire meaning and purpose to our work-in-progress. As we acquire the knowledge that increasingly makes us powerful creators, like it or not, we determine to what degree we direct our powers to constructive and to destructive

outcomes. Our recent knowledge of weapons with ultimate destructive power has created the urgency to add wisdom to the power of raw knowledge.

The hardwired demands of ***instinct*** would have us direct our creative power to *survival of the fittest* and the *fight or flight* behavior prescribed by our genes. The hardwired action pathways of ***tradition*** would have us direct our creative power in the successful ways our ancestors and nurturers managed yesterday's problems. Neither ***instinct*** nor ***tradition*** is well-suited to wisely problem-solve the many side-effects that accompany current knowledge. *Instinct* too often assigns blame and demands instant harmful confrontation. *Tradition* too often acts to restrain destructive aggression by teaching self-putdowns, what we call "guilt." Our culture is so indelibly programmed for guilt that we call individuals who act without remorse "psychopaths." Blaming others or blaming our selves is unlikely to problem-solve current issues that require a newer way of common sense thinking.

Recognize that "should" is the most common of a limited number of **prescriptive** trigger-words in our language. Learn these equivalents: *have to, must, ought, it is predetermined, I am compelled.*

Recognize that "could" is the most common of equivalent **descriptive** word-switches in our language. Learn these equivalents: "[I] *choose, am wise when ..., like, desire, wish, prefer, decide, elect, opt, think, fancy, determine, take responsibility, originate, cause, when this occurs then likely ..."*

Summary: **Substitute when reasonable "I could" for "I should"** or equivalent descriptive word-switches such as "*could, choose, prefer, I am wise when …*" for prescriptive trigger words such as "*should, have to, must, and ought*." Prescriptive words convey the dependency of childhood responding to the commands of a dictator. *Descriptive* words stimulate creative thinking.

Stren #10: The "I allow" for "They make me" Word-switch

Welcome to stren #10. Substituting "I allow" for the blaming words "They make me..." is the second of the three critical word-switches that frees us from dictators. "I allow" shifts energy away from blindly obeying authority to assuming personal responsibility for our life's experience.

Substitute the personal responsibility word-switch "I allow" for "he (she, they, it, the world, God, etc.) makes me …." We are naturally prone to blame others (even our self) when the world disappoints us. Others come to no longer provide what we have come to expect during the many years we indeed did require that others take care of us. "I allow" inspires us to assume personal responsibility for our attitude and stop habitual blaming.

During most of our first decades, we are "takers." We depend on others for our needs. We get used to being fed, protected, and having our basic needs provided for. Hopefully, we receive love along with our physical needs. Our life is highly controlled. When we say, "They make me ...." it is usually an accurate statement. We know "they" brought us into the world; "they" nurtured us and usually make sacrifices for our well-being. It's not difficult to understand how we come to expect that the world is here to serve our needs and wants. When our nurturers, or any aspect of the world, do not comply with our expectations, no matter how unrealistic, we experience frustration. Frustration commonly leads to blaming others. Think of the many instances you have observed a child having a temper tantrum when gratification is not provided. All of us are born impatient. A favorite motto is, "I want what I want when I want it."

There is a common tendency for us to get stuck in the blaming pattern, which is fostered by both *instinct* and our *tradition*. The easily identified blaming trigger sentence goes something like this: "Someone or something did what they shouldn't have done (or didn't do what they should have done) and therefore deserves punishment." Instinct pre-wires us to secrete action chemicals when we are frustrated, usually signaling us to strike out. Our nurturer's favorite way to curb aggression to others is to teach us to direct it inward. We call these self-putdowns "guilt." Guilt is a human quality not seen in animals, although I've seen dogs taught behavior that appears to mimic our obsession.

As we attain adulthood and mental maturity, we become creators. We have a mission to become givers instead of takers. We are wise when we assume responsibility not only for our physical needs but also our emotional well-being. As long as we fail to assume self-mastery, we continue to deal with frustration by blaming others or ourselves. How surprised and resentful we can get when the world doesn't meet our erroneous expectation that fairness should always prevail! One need only read the daily paper to see

how frequently we engage in non-productive blaming, and the rarity of common sense problem-solving.

"I allow" is the word-switch we can use to turn off the blaming response and turn on *a newer way of thinking*, one that applies common sense. Two strens later, I'll explain the universal "magical" problem-solving sentence. As a preview, it goes like this: "*Given the situation, what is most likely to make things better for me and you, for now and the future?*" We create preferred outcomes with the *one-two* combination: the "I allow" word-switch followed by the problem-solving word-switch.

The "I allow" word-switch is simple to apply. Put it to work and enjoy the benefits.

Stren # 11: The *both...and* for *either/or* word-switch

I consider today's stren not only the most important wisdom of the seven Mind-freeing, Life-changing World-saving word-switches; it is the most important of all word-switches. Recall that word-switches selectively replace established action patterns that are no longer effective or have become dangerous. Word-switches inspire us to apply current knowledge and common sense wisdom to create more effective solutions to today's problems. The actual task is quite easy: **Simply substitute "*both … and*" for our "*either/or*" *two-category* prevalent way of thinking.** This stren explains why the "*both...and*" word-switch is the mature means of processing information. "*Both...and"* recognizes shared interests and goals, and promotes collaboration for mutual gain. It replaces the "*either/or*" thinking characteristic of immaturity that limits our perception to two opposing extremes. *Either/or* thinking is the root cause of bigotry, prejudice, and harmful confrontation. "*Both...and*" works together with the "*I could*" and "*I allow*" word-switches we require to assume responsibility for our own destiny.

All individuals first learn to process data into two *either/or* categories we call "dichotomous thinking." Neither we nor our nurturers have a choice because during our prolonged immaturity we lack the knowledge and common sense wisdom to survive. We require decades to attain sufficient physical and mental maturity, sophisticated use of language, self-worth, and the wisdom required to free ourselves from our first masters, *instinct* and *tradition*. Others label the creative forces that first control us *nature* and *nurture* or *fate* and *circumstance*.

Instinct includes the *survival of the fittest* and *fight or flight* trial-and-error behaviors that were adaptive to the demands of the savage environments our early ancestors faced. *Instinct* is hardwired into our biology at birth. *Tradition* also consists of the behaviors that worked for our ancestors; but unlike *instinct,* we are hardwired with *tradition* after birth. Through repetition, our nurturer's ways become habit. Habit passed forward from generation to generation becomes *tradition*. *Instinct* and *tradition* hardwire our thinking pathways before we are sufficiently mature to resist, before we can assume personal direction of our life's experience. Our freedom organ is not fully physically mature until about the age of 18. Until we become competent in *common sense* interpretations, the way we think remains dominated by two-category *either/or* thinking. Limited in *common sense* wisdom for most of our first decades, we are servants to *instinct* and *tradition*.

We require protection and direction to progress to the stage of maturity when we can become our own person, what we call *self-mastery*. *Instinct* and *tradition* consist of the rules of living that have allowed us to remain among the 2-3% of species that have not become extinct. We benefit from the trial-and-error successes and mistakes of our ancestors. Those who survive gladly pass forward for our benefit the actions that have proven successful. The action pathways hardwired by *instinct* and *tradition* provide quick, relatively effortless, automatic proven responses to danger. They are the mindless behaviors that direct us to survive established dangers. These hardwired action pathways are powerful because they are programmed with emotion.

Let's keep in mind the fatal shortcoming of the action patterns we passively acquire from the first masters of our thinking. *Instinct* and *tradition* direct us to effectively manage yesterday's issues using yesterday's level of knowledge, but yesterday's solutions may no longer work for today's problems. Our work-in-progress is to selectively replace action patterns that no longer work or have become dangerous with *common sense* solutions using today's knowledge and wisdom.

Humankind differs from all other earth creatures by the degree to which we make ourselves powerful creators of our own destiny. Our sophisticated freedom organ creates language, mentally manipulates symbols to imagine original phenomenon, and applies will power to change the world we all share. While our creative power provides us multiple benefits, misdirected knowledge adds new problems such as weapons with ultimate destructive power, global warming, pollution, and overpopulation. Let's consider the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction to multiple tribes who already declare their intent to use them. This is our most imminent threat to our loved ones and humanity. *Either/or* thinking divides the world's tribes into opposing forces, each with a mission to dominate the non-members who also have, or will soon have the power of ultimate destructive weapons. *Instinct's survival of the fittest* and *fight or flight* perspective and *tradition's* repeated use of force through intimidation and war are more likely to result in destruction of the fittest instead of survival of the fittest. When we put the test of common sense to the hardwired solutions *instinct* and *tradition* apply to new problems, we recognize their transparent foolishness.

Einstein told us the one most certain way to prevent catastrophe: "The unleashed power of the atom has changed everything except our modes of thinking..... **a new type of thinking is essential if mankind is to survive and move to higher levels**." The *newer way of thinking,* unlike *instinct* and *tradition,* requires actively teaching ourselves to apply universal *common sense wisdom* to new knowledge to solve new problems. The first and most important step is substituting mature "both...and" processing of information for our established "either/or" thinking. Our work-in-progress is to make common sense thinking common.

The *either/or* manner of thinking we all first learn and habitually maintain biases our interpretation of data. It limits us to two conflicting categories: [either] good or evil; us or them; safe or dangerous; right or wrong; O.K. or not O.K.; win or lose; on and on. If *my way, my family, my team, my values, my religion,* and *my flag* are *good, right*, and *just*, then what is *not me* or *not us* is *bad, wrong, evil, lacks respect*, and may be deserving of harm. Until we change our *either/or* way of thinking, this root cause of bigotry, prejudice, hatred, destructive aggression, and war will persist. Tribes will continue to seek to dominate other tribes. A "tribe" may consist of any political, religious, ethnic or geographic group joined in a common interest. *Either/or* thinking demands that individuals maintain allegiance to local priorities. The shrinking world that makes everyone our neighbor now requires that we become citizens of the global community and contribute to its well-being.

Both...and thinking, by switching ***or*** to ***and,*** recognizes the positives and the negatives of each alternative choice, both right and wrong, good and bad, mine and yours, and the shared interests of us and them. *Both ... and* thinking focuses on our similarities and the power of collaboration. It promotes tolerance and common sense problem-solving; it recognizes values and the pluses and minuses of each alternative.

The persistence of the "either/or" way of thinking that we all learn during our immature years creates this dangerous creed that threatens our survival:

"**My tribe's way is right! Any non-subscriber is inferior, is deserving of punishment, even murder unless they become a member of my tribe.**"

Given the present proliferation of our weapons of ultimate destruction, this outdated belief is leading to our self-annihilation; it threatens our loved ones and all of humanity. Our generation has already created sufficient nuclear destructive power to end humanity 10 times over, has put this power on 24/7 ready release status, and has installed triggers that allow the word of one person or a mechanical error to release its fury by a single act.

On an individual rather than a tribal basis, immature *either/or* thinking leads to the conclusion "***My needs are important; others are not.***" Our innate drive for dominance and physical power is modified in contemporary society to include insatiable pursuit of the **symbols** of power and dominance: these include money, status, immortality, and "*rightness.*" Whereas animals are satisfied with *enough*, humankind creates the symbol for infinity to expand *need* to *greed*. No matter how much wealth some individuals achieve, *enough* is not enough. Emotion overrules common sense intelligence as we observe Mr. Madoff and his many equivalents who enrich themselves without regard for the consequences to others.[3]

Either/or thinking characteristically emphasizes differences; it effectively filters out our similarities. It assigns all "good" to one side and all "bad" to anything "not our side." Our history is defined by its destructive aggression fought for "good" against "evil." During war, "our side" is all deserving while "not our side" is *evil, demonized, sub-human* and therefore O.K. to treat without regard. "If you're not with us, you're against us." A superior being or ideology is often depicted by all parties as favoring "our side." Religions engage in harmful conflict on the basis of *either/or* thinking, even though the areas of agreement are huge and areas of disagreement are so limited. *Either/or* thinking supports harmful ongoing confrontation even within the same religion. Ditto for ideologies such a democracy, socialism, and communism. For example, we now witness Democrats and Republicans automatically opposed irrespective of the merits of any issue. The ubiquitous conflict we see among tribes of every sort is easily explained as the outcome of remaining stuck in *either/or* dichotomous thinking.

[3]Our need to strengthen common sense intelligence by adding emotion is addressed elsewhere in this series of wisdoms that teach skill in self-endorsement.

The most certain way to elevate ourselves to become humane individuals is to unite to popularize *a newer way of thinking*. *Both...and* thinking redirects our mental action pathways to apply the universal rules of logic to create effective solutions to today's issues. We need to make *common sense* common.

The *both...and* word-switch redirects our thinking from dependence on authority to common sense problem-solving. Perception is focused on our similarities more than our differences for a very logical reason: we <u>are</u> far more alike than different! We share interests and goals. *Both...and* thinking recognizes collaboration's power to replace the competitive need to rule others with authority. *Either/or* thinking commonly lacks rational explanation and is supported only by the authority of a dictator. Dictators usually offer what is purported to be common sense justification for their claim of absolute correctness; however, when viewed by non-tribe members, the transparent self-serving motives for power, greed, and the like rarely pass muster. The test of universal *common sense* invariably fails. Dictators, driven by emotions, usually refuse to consider common sense logic.

Use this example to keep in mind how *both...and* thinking differs from *either/or* thinking. When we look at a restaurant's menu we find multiple choices that can be enjoyed; one is not "all" right and the others are not "all" wrong. Decisions are difficult because the real world presents us with choices that have pluses and minuses on each side. Decisions are especially difficult for the perfectionist, who becomes mired in obsessive-compulsive paralysis for fear of making a mistake. It is more appropriate for us to emphasize making our choice "right" instead of obsessing over the "right" choice. The great attraction of immaturity and the *either/or* thinking of human dictators is that life's challenges are relatively effortless and stressless when the "right choice" has been clearly defined. It matters little that the outcome may be catastrophic as long as we believe at the moment we are doing the "right" thing.

Don't overlook this critical insight: *Both...and* common sense processing of information emphasizes mental rehearsal to anticipate the future consequences of actions <u>before</u> choosing among alternative possibilities. This is the basis of prevention. *Either/or* thinking is hardwired to quickly initiate past solutions and resolve undesired outcomes by "cure." We all know that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure! This is especially true when there may not be a cure available, as with the unleashing of weapons with ultimate destructive power.

IN SUMMARY: The *both...and* word-switch is our tool to redirect the action pathways hardwired by *instinct* and *habit* to the newer way of mature problem-solving using universal *common sense wisdom*. *Both...and* thinking switches us from the prejudgments, bigotry, and intolerance towards "not me" or "not my tribe" to recognize our similarities, common needs, and the benefits of collaboration and sharing. It emancipates us from childhood dependency and empowers us to assume responsibility for who we are and what we become. As we proliferate weapons with ultimate destructive power that offer no second chance, the tick, tick, ticking of the doomsday

clock gets louder. The more we substitute *both...and* for *either/or* thinking, the slower the ticking. Working together we can stop and reverse the clock. The alternatives are far less inviting.

Stren # 12: The "Magical" Problem-solving Sentence Word-switch

Today's wisdom is the universal "magical" problem-solving sentence. It is word-switch number 5 of the seven *Mind-freeing, Life-changing, and World-saving* word-switches. It turns on the action pathways that are most likely to lead to constructive outcomes.

Learn and regularly apply this simple sentence:

> **Given this situation, what is most likely to make things better for me AND you (or us and them), for now AND the future?**

This word-switch is effective because it applies common sense wisdom to create intelligent solutions to new problems created by new knowledge. It corrects traditional action pathways that are no longer effective or have become dangerous. Common sense wisdom is universal, discoverable by all tribes, and validated by consensus. Common sense wisdom doesn't favor one side at the expense of another. While not actually "magic," it works so effectively it seems like magic.

This problem-solving word-switch is universally effective because it corrects the two most common causes of resentment and harmful confrontation. First, it emphasizes a "win/win" outcome in which all parties walk away with a sense of accomplishment. Our prevalent manner of thinking still relies on the perspectives of *instinct* and *tradition*. *Instinct* and our dominant *tradition* emphasize that *I* or *we* "win" without consideration of the outcome to "not me or not us." The second important wisdom contained in this problem-solving word-switch is envisioning the long-term outcome. We are naturally impatient. Our early way of thinking focuses on short term gain at the expense of long term pain.

This simple problem-solving word-switch will create dramatic benefits by quickly shutting down the most common mental response that gets us into difficulty, what I call the "blaming" response. Once you know the blaming formula, it is easy to recognize. It goes as follows:

> *He (she, they, it, I, God, etc.) did what he shouldn't have done (didn't do what he should have done) and therefore deserves punishment.*

Blaming others or blaming ourselves, what we call "guilt," is a non-productive skill that becomes habitual in our way of thinking very early. As we regularly use the universal problem-solving sentence, say goodbye to blaming and guilt. Good riddance! Regular use of the universal problem-solving sentence will replace other common pathways first imbedded in our mind that are no longer productive. These include procrastination, avoidance, apathy, worry, depression, substance abuse, phobic anxiety, and stress related physical pain. Consistent use of the "magical" problem-

solving word-switch and self-endorsement word-switches will cause the negative mental response pathways to atrophy from disuse.

Though not “magic,” the universal problem-solving sentence consistently works so well it will seem like magic. Let me repeat it: ***Given this situation, what is most likely to make things better for me AND you (*or *us and them), for now AND in the future?***

This sentence gets results without ascribing blame.

Stren # 13: The "*Energy*" for "*Anger*" or "*Anxiety*" Word-switch

Welcome to stren # 13. Today's stren, substituting the word "energy" for "anger" and "anxiety," and the next stren are word-switch numbers 6 and 7 of the seven *Mind-freeing, Life-changing, World-saving* word-switches. They comprise the two important word-switches that dramatically prevent major problems we bring on our self. I'm referring to the mindless, impulsive, harmful aggression that was appropriate for our ancestors but commonly results in irreversible consequences and punishment in today's relatively civilized world. We commonly observe "road rage," other "rages," crimes of passion, and related impulsive behaviors triggered by a stressful event. Our primitive *fight or flight* behavior, the root of this problem, is hardwired in the first to develop older portion of our brain.

Here is today's stren: **Substitute when possible the word-switch "*energy*" for the trigger words "*anger*" and "*anxiety*."**

Some years ago, I was invited by the Connecticut Commissioner of Mental Health to interview, along with the Commissioner of Corrections, inmates serving the longest sentences in our highest security prison. I was struck by the high percentage of individuals who had lost their freedom because of a single destructive act committed in a fit of rage, often an act of passion. Even though their mindless crime was an atypical deviation from their usual behavior, they could not undo their damage. Have you witnessed the many kinds of "rage" that lead to explosive behavior? Can you recount personal experiences where you reacted to anger or to a stressful situation by taking actions that you now wish you could have handled more productively?

We all start life hardwired to release energy chemicals in response to stressful situations. Instinctive *survival of the fittest* and *fight or flight* primitive physical responses alert us to take quick action. Our ancestors lived in a world where survival depended on instant action. Each turn at every corner required anticipation of what danger lurked beyond. Survival required being on ***red alert*** status and being prepared to strike out or run away. In either response, emergency production of energy was required. Second mistakes are rarely permitted in life-threatening circumstances. This elegant emergency response system designed by nature allowed our ancestors to survive and thrive in a primitive, savage environment.

Constant preparedness for red alert emergency was once critical. The words *anger* and *anxiety* trigger the physical confrontation or emergency flight our ancestors required to survive. Preoccupation with survival explains why humor is not a characteristic of animals and was unknown to our primitive ancestors. Sophisticated, common sense, long term problem-solving and laughter are learned with the help of language.

In today's partially civilized world, we no longer face a life-threatening situation at *every* turn or corner; rarely at <u>any</u> corner. When we experience the frustrations that are a common part of daily living, our body still responds by producing instant changes

in our chemistry and ***red alert*** tension, telling us to take action. We are all born with elegant physical solutions to survive and thrive. We are preprogrammed to automatically repeat the life cycle, to direct our energy to eat and not be eaten, and to procreate. Thirty year mortgages, planning a proper retirement, an eternal hereafter, and preserving the global community were not priorities of our early ancestors. Surviving and thriving today is best accomplished directing our energy to elegant common sense *mental* problem-solving. Fighting or running in a relatively civilized world usually gets us what we don't want rather than what we prefer. Technology has suddenly shrunk our world so that geography no longer separates us from other tribes; so we must learn to collaborate with our new neighbors to accomplish our shared interests, not fight or intimidate others to prove our dominance. We must also plan for the long term as well as the short-term solutions that preoccupied our ancestors. Cooperation and collaboration for mutual benefit is now required to survive and thrive.

"***Anger***" is an appropriate trigger word to activate the *fight* response. "***Anxiety***" is an appropriate trigger word to activate the *flight* response – run or hide. Labeling our automatic chemical response to stress "***energy***" is more likely to turn on a *mental problem-solving* action pathway than a *physical fight or flight* action pathway. ***Energy*** is a more neutral and accurate trigger word than *anger* or *anxiety*. Common sense logical problem-solving is our means to create wisdom-inspired solutions that benefit all parties and secure future benefits in addition to immediate, short term benefits. The simple word-switch *energy* reroutes our thinking to replace our automatic negative *fight or flight* action pathways that are no longer adaptive. *Problem-solving* thinking is now the appropriate substitute for hair-trigger physical reaction. It signals us to apply common sense to plan beneficial action. Physically fighting or running and hiding provide limited short term benefit given today's social expectations.

Most people continue to label the problem-solving energy produced by stress with traditional trigger words such as *anger* and *anxiety*. These labels turn on not only the primitive physical behaviors of *fight and flight* but also many modern day harmful mental equivalents of these behaviors. These negative reactions include blaming others; blaming ourselves through putdowns and guilt; and avoidance behaviors such as procrastination, lying, substance abuse, changing jobs, residences, and spouses. *Worry* is sustained ***pink alert*** thinking. We "what if..." and then anticipate the worst outcome of a situation to the neglect of what is the "most likely" or the "best" outcome. When individuals become excessively anxious about anxiety, they multiply its effect. Common outcomes are panic and phobias to some real or imaginary feared situation. Sustained tension leads to muscle contraction pain in the tensed area such as headache, backache, neck and jaw pain. Getting rid of these negative patterns will be discussed in future strens.

The "energy" word-switch provided in this stren and the next stren effectively prevent the instinctive primitive behaviors that are commonly triggered by our emergency response system and can cause great harm. Each of the prevention word-switches is easy to learn. With a bit of practice and mental rehearsal, they will become habitual and effortless, and enhance *instinct* and *tradition* with *common sense wisdom*.

Stren # 14: The "urgency" for "emergency" word-switch

Welcome to stren #14. This is the last of the seven *Mind-freeing, Life-changing, and World-saving* word-switches. It is the second of the two important word-switches that prevent the problems we commonly bring on ourselves by our instinctive *survival of the fittest* and *fight or flight* emergency reactions to stress. The previous stren introduced the word-switch ***energy*** to bias our thinking towards mental common sense problem-solving; ***energy*** is substituted for ***anger*** and ***anxiety,*** words that traditionally trigger actions that have a harmful outcome. Stren # 13 also explained how nature hardwires us to mindlessly interpret stressful events as emergencies even when our interpretations of events as an emergency are consistently false. Here is the second important *prevention* word-switch:

Substitute "urgent" for "emergency" and immediately assign "high," "medium," or "low" priority to establish the level of urgency.

Real emergencies are rare in our partially civilized world. Our natural tendency to automatically and instantly react to a stressful event instead of applying wise problem-solving often leads to irreversible harm. "Emergency" is a ***red-alert*** trigger word that demands instant reflex action to resolve a life-threatening situation. It is necessary when there are real emergencies, but tends to result in thoughtless action and harm when we wrongly identify an emergency.

By simply substituting the more accurate word-switch "urgency" and assigning "high, medium, or low priority" to the stressing event, we redirect our energy to more effective short and long term problem-solving. Our biology is designed to instantly react to stressful events. Upon reflection, common sense will conclude that most of the challenges we deal with are actually of low priority! Our tendency to automatically and instantly react to stress conflicts with the realities of society's civil expectations.

We are so innately over-wired, as part of our instinctive nature to respond to stressful events as an emergency that it is highly unlikely that we would fail to appropriately respond to a real emergency. In the relatively civilized world that most of us occupy, we manage stressful events far more effectively by applying common sense wisdom instead of a reflexive emotional reaction. Mental problem-solving is our means to create short and long term strategies that benefit all parties. Knowledge guided by wisdom is our most certain means to create a joyous, purposeful life.

As with the other *Mind-freeing, Life-changing, and World-saving* word-switches, you will make substituting ***urgency*** for ***emergency*** more automatic and effortless with repeated use. You will have more energy to further your work-in-progress and make yourself the wise, powerful creator of your aspirations. Upon reviewing these seven mental skills, you will recognize the simplicity of upgrading your thinking. And you'll love increasingly promoting your well-being and that of your loved ones as you diminish

those demands of instinct, tradition, and human dictators that serve themselves at others' expense.

Stren # 15: Putting it together - We are a work-in-progress!

Thus far, we have enlightened ourselves to a number of wisdoms that strengthen our way of thinking. Today, let's create a dynamic image of how *a newer way of thinking* transforms us from helpless, self-centered "*takers*" into powerful creators of our own destiny. Let's understand that we ourselves are the work-in-progress of a powerful creative force. Indeed, we are not only the growing edge of change; we have made ourselves the most significant agent of change. We have a mission and a purpose that began with simplicity and we are continuously growing in complexity and sophistication.

Our life span is characterized by three stages, whereas other earth inhabitants experience one or two. Each stage may be identified with its own master who creates the rules that govern the experience of life within that stage. The most important way that we stand out from other life is that we have been provided a sophisticated portion of our brain that invents language, the cerebral cortex, or "freedom organ." Humankind alone has been given the gift of naming. Naming enables us to collect, store, share, and pass knowledge forward. Knowledge of cause and effect is power. As successive generations collected more knowledge, we have become such increasingly powerful creators and destroyers that we now influence our destiny and we have assumed responsibility for the future of our loved ones and mother earth.

Learning starts with labeling. In prior strens, as a practical matter to convey meaning, I have labeled the first forces that are the masters of the way we think ***instinct*** and ***tradition***, whereas ***self-mastery*** identifies the *self*-programming that frees us from instinct and habit. Some prefer to call the first controllers of our life *nature and nurture*, others *fate and circumstance*, and some identify a supernatural force which is commonly called "God."

Stren #3 identified the three masters who together direct our life's experience:

- ***Instinct (nature)*** consists of the inherited operating system that is predetermined by our genes. Instinct links us to our earliest ancestors. A long chain of adaptations for survival, proven by trial-and-error, have been passed forward over billions of years and innumerable generations. Instinct includes those patterns that were successful in getting us this far by being effective in a primitive, savage environment.

- ***Tradition (nurture)*** consists of the innovations our more recent ancestors have added to nature's perspective and thereafter pass forward. They mainly consist of the common sense solutions that were effective for yesterday's problems based on yesterday's knowledge. We are assigned allegiances: a tribe, a native language, a country, a religion, a political ideology, sports teams, how to dress, what is masculine and feminine behavior, and how to interpret the world. Wow! We get quite a lot from our nurturers.

- ***Self*-mastery** appears in the third phase of our life cycle. It is the most interesting phase because in it we can assume direction of who we are and what we are to

become. It is the process whereby we mentally free ourselves from dictators to assume the opportunity and the burden of personal responsibility. Unlike the passively received inscriptions of *instinct* and *tradition* which we cannot refuse, *self*-mastery is an option that requires our active participation. We attain *self*-mastery by inventing word-switches that create *a newer way of thinking*. Word-switches serve as signals that inspire common sense problem-solving; they replace established trigger words that turn on *instinct* and *tradition*. The rules of *instinct* and *tradition* are not designed to wisely manage the problems new knowledge creates – for example, our discovery and proliferation of weapons with ultimate destructive power. Our current generation has reached such a level of power that we have already assumed responsibility for who and what survives. We are the first and only life to have reached such godlike power.

Instinct and *tradition* are dictators in that they predetermine the way we think, and demand that we conform to their perspective. Our early way of thinking is formed like soft putty being molded according to the whims of its designer. Through our early decades we are physically and mentally immature. Like all life, we lack sufficient mental power to resist *instinct* and *tradition*. Because most of today's issues are unchanged from the past, the rules innately demanded by *instinct* and the acquired rules demanded by *tradition* are usually effective today.

Let's now establish names for the three development stages humankind experience within our life cycle – *immaturity, maturity*, and *super-maturity*:

- **Immaturity**: During the 9 months from conception to birth, ***instinct*** (master nature) directs who we are and what we are to become. After our birth we add our nurturer's traditions to guide us through immaturity, which lasts for decades. Our freedom organ requires about 18 years to reach full physical maturity. Studies of adult development reveal that most of us require an additional 10 years to attain enough mental and emotional maturity to significantly free ourselves from our early masters.

- **Maturity**: Upon birth and through our first thirty years, more or less, ***tradition*** (*master nurture*) adds new instructions to those of instinct to gradually dominate our thinking, feelings, and actions. As we slowly mature and acquire knowledge, we become powerful creators, but continue to be dependent on the "shoulds" of *instinct* and *tradition*.

- **Super-maturity**: The third and most interesting stage of our life cycle develops as we acquire sufficient power to direct who we are and what we become. We call this stage by such names as *self-mastery*, *becoming one's own person, mental freedom,* and *thought control*. I use the label *super-maturity* to signal awareness of this stage.

Please note that we don't jump from one master or one stage of development to another. We progress by gradually adding maturity to immaturity as we'd add milk to coffee, until we eventually create coffee milk. Similarly, we slowly add super-maturity to make our own original common sense perspectives coexistent with those of *instinct* and

tradition. Progress from *instinct* to *tradition* to *self-mastery*; from *immaturity* to *maturity* to *super-maturity,* is "both...and," not "either/or." We can become self-directed in one area, such as family, while we may remain quite subject to *instinct* and *tradition* in other areas such as tribal allegiance and religion.

Simple life like one-celled organisms and bacteria, enter life mature, ready to repeat their life cycle. They have no brain, require no nurturance, and their life consists from birth of only one "mature" stage. More complex life forms may have brains of varying sizes and require nurturing, usually through mimicry, to reach maturity and procreate. Their life cycle is predictably limited to the rules of *instinct* and *tradition*. The time to progress from immaturity to maturity depends on the complexity of the species. Humankind is unique by the degree to which we enter a third *self*-mastery*,* super-maturity stage of the life cycle. Only we significantly acquire and pass knowledge forward to successive generations. Language provides us the creative power of imagination to change ourselves and the world. Our work-in-progress is acquiring sufficient wisdom to consistently direct our godlike power to constructive outcomes.

Instinct and *tradition*, like all dictators, program our thinking to comply with their authority by four identifiable characteristics:

1. **Thinking is processed into two *either/or* categories.** We call this *dichotomous thinking* because it divides our understanding of the world into two extremes – us or them, good or evil, right or wrong, safe or dangerous, friend or foe, and so on. Two-category thinking simplifies decision making but it is a major source of bigotry and prejudice.

2. **Thinking is prescriptive.** Our dictators signify their rules by trigger words such as "*should*, *have to, must*, and *ought*." Thinking out of the box is a violation of our dictator's rules.

3. **Thinking reflects our dependency.** It is factual that we are dependent for many years. Prescriptive trigger words convey meanings that clarify that someone else's judgment is supreme. A common interpretation of the world is, "others are responsible for my experience; therefore, others are blameworthy when I experience frustration." This once accurate interpretation persists, even though it becomes untrue as we acquire physical and mental maturity. We have a mission to acquire *self*-mastery and assume personal responsibility through *a newer way of thinking*.

4. **Thoughts are automatic.** Once preprogrammed as instinct and indelibly established by repetition to become habit, the "*shoulds*" of *instinct* and *tradition* spontaneously pop up without effort or direction. Habits passed from generation to generation become tradition.

Here are the easy word-switch changes that upgrade our thinking for *self-*mastery and super-maturity:

1. **Substitute *both...and* for *either/or*** to strengthen ***common sense wisdom*** and weaken two-category thinking. *Both...and* is our most powerful word-switch to free our thinking from dictators. *Both...and* recognizes our similarities more than our differences, and promotes tolerance instead of bigotry and win/win collaboration instead of win/lose competition.

2. **Substitute *descriptive* words for *prescriptive* words.** *Could* inspires us to apply common sense to create alternatives and choose among them; *should* demands compliance to a dictator.

3. **Substitute personal *responsibility* for *blaming* word**s. *I allow* recognizes our role as powerful creators. It replaces the blaming perspective "*They make me ....*" that we acquire during our immaturity.

4. **Collect strens**, the common sense wisdoms that strengthen our mental power to consistently direct our growing knowledge to constructive outcomes. Each wisdom furthers our work-in-progress to add the global community to our local allegiances. Strens enlighten us to contribute to the well-being of our global community instead of only taking from it, like a cancer cell. Today's stren is only #15 in over 100 wisdoms provided in this series.

Don't miss the critical insight of this stren. Humankind is the only species that significantly participates in the third *self-mastery* stage of development. Language provides us the power of interpretation. As we acquire knowledge and sufficient mental freedom from dictators, we increasingly participate as an active creator and chief executive officer of our own destiny. As powerful creators, we have a mission to design word-switches that elevate our thinking to engage in the common sense problem-solving that frees us from the action pathways hardwired by instinct and tradition. We elevate ourselves as we create word-switches that make common sense thinking common. Recent generations have so effectively enlightened us and changed the world that we have made our generation responsible for everyone's future. Our current knowledge has launched us into a new era where multiple tribes will soon have weapons of ultimate destruction to create Armageddon, weapons with ultimate constructive power to create Utopia, and anything in between. If we choose to survive we must popularize *a newer way of thinking* that consistently directs our power to constructive outcomes. We require sufficient informed citizens to awaken our population to the need for collaboration among all tribes. In short, we have a limited amount of time to unite and popularize *a newer way of thinking*, and to elevate ourselves to the humane, civilized qualities to which we aspire.

A review of the seven *Mind-freeing Life-changing World-saving word-switches* will make clear how each powerfully contribute to our mission.

Stren # 16: The Importance of Self-endorsement

Welcome to today's insight! Stren #16 explains the multiple benefits that place self-endorsement among the most important of all the skills that we require to survive and thrive in today's world. You will appreciate the series of self-endorsement techniques that follow and will eagerly add them to your collection of wisdoms.

Here is the simple explanation of why *self*-endorsement skills are essential for our well-being. *Instinct* and *tradition* hardwire their preferred problem-solving action pathways in the older part of our brain where emotion resides. We create common sense solutions to today's problems applying new knowledge and wisdom using the last to mature intelligent cerebral cortex portion of our brain, what I label our "freedom organ." Emotion usually trumps intellect, so self-endorsement is our freedom organ's powerful means to add sufficient emotion to intelligence to override the established action pathways of *instinct* and *tradition*. Now be impressed as we consider the beneficial power of *self*-endorsement, the opposite of the more common habit of engaging in self-putdowns.

All of us are born helpless and totally dependent on others to survive and thrive. As would be expected, we quickly learn to seek the approval of those "others" who are the source of our well-being. Until we teach ourselves sufficient *self*-endorsement skills to make ourselves emotionally whole, we will continue to depend on others to sustain our well-being. And of course, if others are the source of what *good* we experience, whatever *frustration* we experience must also be attributed to them as well. Blaming others is indicative of immaturity. *Blaming* is a common ingredient of self-serving dictators who remain stuck in the immature belief that someone or something other than themselves is the source of their distress and must be punished. Blaming others, which leads to harmful aggression, is our most primitive and prevalent automatic response to frustration. The greatest instances of today's problems, both global and local, are the outcome of our innate and early-acquired blaming pattern. Blaming becomes habit through repetition during our decades of dependency. *Self*-endorsement is our opportunity to make a quantum leap towards self-mastery, to become our own person. *Self*-endorsement skills are the means by which we assume responsibility to make our life's experience joyous and meaningful. Our skill in self-endorsement serves as a marvelous role model that benefits our loved ones. *Self*-endorsement is the antidote for the more common nonproductive self-putdown skills we learn.

Sadly, a common way our society teaches us to divert our anger and aggression towards others is by redirecting it to ourselves. This process is called "guilt." Guilt is directing harmful aggression to our self instead of towards others; what I call "blaming in" instead of "blaming out." Guilt is a unique human quality we learn from expert teachers. Blaming others and blaming ourselves rarely lead to lasting constructive outcomes. Blaming most commonly results in physical confrontation, resentment, stress disease, depression, apathy, and a host of other maladies.

The complex skills that require work today so that we can reap great benefits in the future require patience. ***Self-endorsement*** is the major source of the patience needed to delay gratification. We all have the experience of intellectually understanding what is best for us but nevertheless doing what satisfies our immediate emotional need or want. "Short term gain, long term pain" is a hardwired behavior pattern that we overcome by the immediate emotional satisfaction we ourselves create through self-endorsement.

Observation and experience both indicate that love, giving something of value to others or our self, is one of the most satisfying of all life's experiences. We are all born "takers." The ability to love unconditionally is an acquired skill indicative of maturity. Loving others begins with the ability to lovingly endorse our self. It is said, "You can't give away what you don't own." Genuine love doesn't depend on the recipient's response. Self-endorsement satisfies our need for immediate reward; it frees us from the instinctive need to "give to get." Individuals commonly offer love and then experience frustration and anger when that love is not adequately returned. Love is an action made complete in itself by self-endorsement. We responsibly create our own reward for the worthy act of giving. Of course we welcome love that is returned, but as a <u>bonus</u>, *not* as a requirement!

We hold forgiveness to be among the most important of all the humane qualities to which we aspire. Forgiveness is a form of love in that we are giving up our animosity towards another or our self and opening ourselves to the possibility for a loving relationship. Resentment to a perceived injustice is a powerful negative emotion that saps our energy and commonly leads to harmful aggression. "Forgive them, they know not what they do" is among the most powerful phrases ever spoken.

When we experience injustice, whether real or imagined, our immediate tendency is to strike out, to engage in some form of harmful aggression. *Self*-endorsement for wisely delaying our impulse to strike out is the immediate reward that allows us to delay mindless harmful action. Self-endorsement is <u>always</u> within our control!

Don't overlook prevention, a critical benefit of self-endorsement. Self-endorsement is our source of patience; patience inspires us to embrace prevention. By delaying impulsive action, we mentally create original common sense problem-solving solutions, rehearse the long-term consequences before committing to action, and then choose from the wisest alternatives. Too often, our instinctive bias to obtain immediate gratification burdens us; we are required to cure the longer term damage that so often follows the actions directed by impulsive prewired action pathways. Mental freedom from *instinct, tradition,* and *human* dictators is the process of emotionally rewarding our self so we may apply universal logic and wisdom instead of mindless blind obedience to authority.

WOW! Self-endorsement strens are the antidote for blaming others, guilt, and dependency. They promote love, forgiveness, and personal responsibility. Self-

endorsement is our major source of the mental strength to free ourselves from dictators, especially those who would direct our behavior for some promised reward that is at another's expense. That's plenty of reason to get in the habit of regularly endorsing yourself. Here's a big bonus! When you learn to regularly and enthusiastically endorse yourself, you will love having a great traveling companion, lifelong.

Love, forgiveness, patience, blaming others and our *self*, and mental freedom from dictators have such importance that each will be addressed in future strens. I do hope this brief introduction has sufficiently enlightened you that you will enthusiastically proceed to learn and practice the self-endorsement strens coming up next.

Stren # 17: The Tape Recording

Here is a great, easy to learn way to teach yourself to become your own best friend. I call this method "the tape recording." You have the ability to listen in on the conversation you mentally carry on with yourself. Imagine you tape record this conversation several times throughout the day. When you play back a sample, how would you describe the dialogue? Does it sound like two good friends speaking with one another? Is there interesting dialogue? Can you detect enthusiasm? Or are there significant periods of criticism, boredom, worry, blaming, self-pitying, and so on? Why not strive to change the quality of that internal conversation so that you make your taped segments become increasingly positive?

You already know the simple word-switches that put you in control. Substitute descriptive "could" words for prescriptive "should" words. Spot the blaming "He, she, they, it make me…" words and turn on self-responsibility by substituting "I allow ...." If you catch yourself in the *either/or* thinking that creates two opposing categories, see if *both...and* can be substituted to recognize the positives and negatives of each alternative. It may be as simple as replacing the word "or" with "and." When you catch yourself worrying and being pessimistic, try out the magical problem-solving sentence: ***What's most likely to make things better for me and you, for now and the future?***

Instead of blaming others or your self you'll be directing your mental energy constructively. That's a great reason to enthusiastically endorse your self. Know that it is an unrealistic expectation that you do your absolute best, but you can always do your "reasonable best." Regularly remind yourself that you don't control what others do and you rarely have the opportunity to change others. And when you determine you aren't doing your reasonable best, really pat yourself on the back for recognizing a shortcoming! The only way to improve a shortcoming is to recognize the problem and then taking reasonable action when you can improve the situation. Get in the habit of putting each of the endorsement skills to work.

What about the negative thoughts we each have that seem to just pop up, even without any prompting or effort on our part? That's easy. Mobilize your anger. Insist "You can visit for a moment, but now get out of here or I'll kick you out!" Don't be hesitant to get angry at your negative thoughts. Treat them like terrorists, as poorly as they treat you. Attack the negative thoughts, NOT yourself. You will hurt no one in the process.

Try the tape recording method! Use it regularly. Your efforts can make it work.

Stren # 18: Act as if

Today's stren, "Act as if," is another very effective method to change and/or create new emotions. Even if you have difficulty experiencing emotional *self*-endorsement, go through the motions. Imagine you had a part to play on the stage. As every actor knows, if you put yourself in the role and go through the motions, the "act as if" gradually becomes "feel as if" and then the "as if" weakens. A genuinely new sentiment is created. What successful actors need to learn, you also can learn.

Remind yourself that the old, automatic put-me-downs ... "stupid," "jerk," "stupid jerk," "you don't deserve ...," "shame," "asshole," and so on call forth powerful emotions that have been thriving many years. What is your favorite put-down word? Recognize that you are wise to get rid of the old "demons" so well learned in the past. Those put-downs now mostly serve as terrorists! In a sense, you'd be wise to kill them off; become a murderer to the useless baggage you carry with you. Yes, it is fun to vigorously attack these intruders ... never attack yourself. You hurt no one in so doing.

So here again, even though you feel the emotions attached to these old put-me-downs, act as if they don't belong, as if they are unwelcome! Take on the role of "good guy" getting rid of the demons; clean out the "bad," make room for the positive invited guests. Whether you are strengthening your "Atta boy/Atta girl" *self*-endorsing skill or attacking the put-me-downs, your use of the "act as if" technique can help your attitude to become more positive. However, I believe it is most productive to emphasize directing your energy to creating positive sentiment. The old demons will wither away if you stop feeding them with your attention and instead direct your energy to creating more muscles of *self*-endorsement.

[Note: Review the stren "Secondary Endorsement" -- it fits right in.]

Stren # 19: The Bookshelf

"It's fun." "It works." "It's given me such creative ideas." These comments are some of the great feedback I've received from individuals who have used today's *self*-endorsement stren. I call this proven mental skill "The Bookshelf."

In your mind, create a bookshelf loaded with books. In distinct print, put a label on as many books as you can, identifying some experience, topic, interest, fantasy, event – whatever you like to think about. Put your titles on the book spine in large, easy to read print. When you become aware that you are dwelling on negative self-talk, the type we each experience and can easily recognize, immediately give yourself a pat on the back for recognizing the old patter. Then, pull one of your books off the shelf and get as thoroughly involved as you can. If you're like most, you'll find it gets easier with practice. Hint: Begin by writing out your list and keeping it where you can easily refer to it.

Some of these titles may get you started: My Favorite Person; Music I Like; My Collection of Fun Times; Funny Stories; When I Win the Lottery; What I Believe (religious or otherwise); My Ideal Romantic Experience; The Perfect Beauty Appointment; Great Athletes; My Next Great Meal; Jobs I'd Enjoy; Great Sexual Pleasure; What Do I Want in Life?; Work I Enjoy Doing; Books That Got Me To Think; Where I'm Happiest; Dreams to Have Tonight; Hobbies That Interest Me; Good Things in Retirement, and so on. Whenever you have an interesting idea to consider, make a new title and add it to your mental bookshelf.

Has life handed you a lemon?

Take it on! Do your *reasonable* best to manage the problem. Use *the magical universal problem-solving sentence – What will make things better for you and me, now and in the future*. Make lemonade! Don't get stuck dwelling on it as many do and let it drag you down unnecessarily. When you get stuck, go to your bookshelf; it's a far better use for your valuable energy. You may need to come back to a problem a number of times before you can make your best bargain with it.

Have an interesting idea you'd like to explore?

Start your own book. Put it on your bookshelf so it's within easy reach when you're ready to pick it up again.

Having trouble going to sleep? Go to your bookshelf.

Would you like some mental stimulation?

You'll find multiple possibilities on your bookshelf.

Get the idea? Your bookshelf will become a faithful lifelong traveling companion. You'll love the conversations you have with yourself. Make your personal bookshelf a source of chronic enthusiasm. **As a special bonus**, you will find you have more really interesting conversations with friends when you have topics at your ready grasp that

you enthusiastically enjoy discussing with others. I hope you add The Bookshelf to your collection of self-endorsement skills. You'll find it will significantly add to your mental wealth.

Stren # 20: Secondary Endorsement

The second most important self-endorsement skill

Once you recognize the value of *self*-endorsement and begin to combine both intellectual and emotional *self*-endorsement, you can initiate the skill of creating good feelings as an effortless habit. Your task will become much easier if you develop the skill I call "***secondary endorsement***." **Secondary endorsement is endorsing yourself each time you engage in the very, very worthy act of endorsing yourself!**

If you're like most individuals, you have either been discouraged from emotionally endorsing yourself or you never received effective education in this powerful skill. Your first experiences with generating emotional *self*-endorsement will be a bit like forging a path through the jungle. Unless regularly cultivated, the new path will soon be overgrown until not even a trace of the hard-to-cut path remains. The long established negligence in taking care of your emotional needs and *self* put-downs re-appear and will, predictably, soon overpower the new.

When you endorse yourself, you are engaging in one of the most constructive acts available to you. *Self*-endorsement inspires immediate encouragement for constructive acts whose natural rewards may not come until far in the future. Self-endorsement is the secret of creating patience, which is a required ingredient for all sophisticated skills. Therefore, give yourself credit each time you endorse yourself.

> ***"Hurrah! Congratulations to me for endorsing myself. That's worthy of a special bonus. I deserve to endorse myself for endorsing myself."***

Here is one of the most common observations: "***Behavior that is rewarded is repeated***." Since self-endorsement is one of the most constructive means to build your mental strength, regularly practice secondary endorsement until it becomes automatic and effortless. You will be pleasantly surprised to discover that *secondary endorsement* will rapidly build mental muscles that you will be proud to own.

Secondary endorsement is the opposite of *secondary blaming.* Secondary blaming is blaming yourself when you realize you continue to put yourself down. It's putting yourself down because you see that you are still putting yourself down and you "shouldn't do that!" Once you recognize this tendency of "shoulding" on yourself, as therapist Albert Ellis described, self-putdowns will become apparent, like a blinking light bulb. By now, you may be wise enough to label instances of blaming-in. You are working to stop putting yourself down when you make an error, when you "do what you shouldn't," or "don't do what you should have." But since you, like most people, are a creature of habit, it will be only a matter of time before you recognize you are still blaming yourself. You say, "I'm so stupid; I should have learned that by now!" *Secondary blaming* is far more persistent than *secondary endorsement*. This is because most of us get more training in putdowns than pull-ups. "Pull-ups," i.e. *self*-endorsements, serve you better than putdowns.

Here's a bonus tip on secondary blaming. When you recognize that you are engaged in blaming or any variety of negative thinking, instead of the usual put-downs because you're still putting yourself down, remind yourself that the very act of recognizing your negative self-talk is worthy of a *self*-endorsement. Instead of pulling yourself down with each act of blaming-in, endorse yourself for the important act of recognizing your negative thinking. Then add a secondary endorsement to reinforce your new behavior. When you endorse yourself for endorsing yourself, you pull yourself up and keep yourself up.

Just as secondary blaming is a variation of blaming yourself, secondary endorsement is a special variation of *self*-endorsement. Teach yourself to become consciously aware of any endorsement you initiate when you do something worthwhile. As soon as you recognize that you're endorsing yourself, enthusiastically call forth images such as blinking lights, musical accolades, and cheers as your signal to automatically trigger the secondary endorsement you deserve for endorsing yourself. This reinforcement can escalate the intensity of the immediate pleasure you experience and create the energy you need to overcome your old, established, negative patterns. Once the patterns of blaming, avoidance, worry, and helplessness/hopelessness are established within you, they cling tenaciously until you substitute the positive pattern of *self*-endorsement.

Practice: Endorse yourself again each time you catch yourself endorsing yourself.

Stren # 21: The Importance of Patience

Although each of the 100+ strens in this series contribute to creating a joyous, meaningful life, today's wisdom, "The Importance of Patience" and the following, "The Secret of Acquiring Patience," are among the most powerful I have to offer.

We require patience to pursue the common sense solutions that are necessary for long term benefits. Patience is critical for teaching ourselves the wisdoms that free us from dictators and for wisely self-managing our creative power. Patience is also the means by which we come to value prevention and thereby spare ourselves the need to repair damage from impulsive actions. Prevention is action we take now to convert a future negative event into a non-event. Since future non-events are seldom rewarding, we require considerable patience to initiate preventive action.

Every newborn expresses the "impatient" motto, "I want what I want when I want it." The immature mind divides the world into two entities, "me" and "not me." A baby is helpless and requires that every need be provided; crying loudly and angrily for as long as it takes to get attention is one of the universal hallmarks of impatience. Our work-in-progress is transforming ourselves from a demanding, self-centered crybaby into a powerful and wise creator.

Patience is the voluntary decision to forgo immediate reward or to tolerate stress because we understand that an alternative action brings us preferable lasting future benefits. Patience involves applying common sense wisdom to knowledge. We imagine alternative courses of action, apply logic to choose from among them, and then devise a preferred course of action to reach the future goal. Patience is the mother of good judgment. ***Resignation,*** on the other hand, implies passively submitting to authority other than our own. For example, *instinct* and *tradition* demand that we automatically follow their directions even when they are not supported by common sense. *Instinct* and *tradition* are powerful dictators because they are hard-wired with emotion. Common sense intelligence is supported by logic; logic is devoid of emotion. This is why *instinct* and *tradition* usually dominate *intellect* until we attach emotion to common sense thinking.

Instinct pre-wires us during the nine months that precede our birth. We inherit a vast repertoire of the trial-and-error behaviors that have survived virtually every test nature has created over billions of years. *Instinct's* pre-wired commands to protect our self and our tribe irrespective of the harm to others, along with our superior intelligence, explains why we are among the 2-3% of earth's creatures that have avoided extinction through the ongoing drama of creation. *Instinct* advocates the mindless emergency *survival of the fittest* and *fight or flight* responses that were successful in a primitive environment.

Tradition consists of the tried and true solutions that our ancestors proved were effective to solve yesterday's problems based on yesterday's knowledge. From birth

through the two or three decades we require to free our thinking from fate and circumstance, we submit to whatever programming our nurturers make of us. Tradition determines our language, which country, religion, and political view constitute "our" tribe, our gender behavior, and even what we are supposed to think.

We benefit from both *instinct* and *tradition* because they provide us many solutions that were arrived at by others' mistakes. They spare us from having to repeat the same poor judgment. Being programmed to benefit from others' solutions and mistakes is a fantastic asset. *Instinct* is programmed in our biology prior to our birth. Our nurturers program their *traditions* during our decades-long journey from birth to maturity. ***Instinct* and *tradition* are very powerful because they live in the older portion of our brain that links them to emotion.** They offer readymade, virtually automatic, effortless, easy to follow directions because *good and right* are clearly distinguished from *evil and wrong*. They don't require common sense wisdom to create newer solutions. *Instinct* and *tradition* are marvelous assets because they are on ready alert to provide us tested and proven solutions to challenges to our well-being. Unfortunately, since effectiveness is based on past success, common sense evaluation of effectiveness prior to action, what we call "prevention," is lacking. It is a tradeoff for having previously scripted automatic reactions to threatening situations. Since most of the challenges we face are repetitions of past challenges, hardwired solutions usually work, but this is not completely so!

New knowledge takes us into inexperienced territory. Novel challenges may require that we bypass or override the demands of *instinct* and *tradition*. Creative solutions to new problems are a primary function of our mature cerebral cortex. Like a lighthouse's searchlight, one function of our freedom organ is to scan the horizon and focus on those areas that need attention. This cortical portion of our brain, when mature, has the ability to make good judgments by applying logic and universal wisdom to current knowledge. Our use of symbols allows us to mentally rehearse alternative actions, apply common sense logic to wisely choose from among them, and then devise the paths that create the preferred outcome. Voila! Eureka! Brilliant! Hurrah for our newer common sense way of thinking.

BUT WAIT. There is a major problem. **Emotion rules intellect!** We engage in mental rehearsal. We clearly understand that the future benefits of delaying immediate gratification are greater and longer lasting, yet we still succumb to immediate emotional satisfaction! How often have you clearly known what was in your best long term interest, but still took action according to what was satisfying or relieving of tension at the moment? Can you think of examples involving food or anger where you gave in to emotions and later regretted your actions? Since *instinct* and *tradition* are hard-wired to emotion, we are innately prone to remain servant to the commands made by these dictators. Yesterday's solutions to new problems often lead to short term gain at the expense of long term pain. Even though our original self-designed brilliant plan offers a more lasting positive outcome, emotion commonly triumphs over good judgment. No matter how much we increase our creative power through new knowledge, our thinking

will remain servant to *instinct* and *tradition* until we teach ourselves sufficient patience to replace hard-wired solutions with *common sense* problem-solving.

Patience is a necessary ingredient to attain mental freedom from *instinct* and *tradition*, what I call *self-mastery*. *Common sense* wisdom, unlike passively acquired *instinct* and *tradition,* is not hard-wired. *Common sense* problem-solving requires the patience to acquire knowledge, collect data, mentally imagine alternative action pathways, wisely select from the alternatives, and then devise and implement a plan to reach the preferred future destination. The secret of adding emotion to intellect to strengthen *common sense* thinking is the powerful wisdom to be provided in the next stren.

Here is a bit of bonus information about the importance of patience. Nature has gifted us its latest model brain. It contains a freedom organ, our sophisticated cerebral cortex that distinguishes us from all other life. **Collectively, humankind is provided with the intelligence to become not only master of its own destiny but also determine the future of mother earth. Individually, we may become master of our self!** We are the growing edge of a work-in-progress by a force that has created all that is about us. Only we have the ability to use symbols, assign meaning to our interpretations, manipulate our mental creations, and apply will power to introduce new phenomenon into the physical world we share in common. No other life, past or present, has such power to acquire and interpret knowledge. We alone collect, store, share, and pass knowledge on to future generations who become increasingly powerful creators.

We introduce new phenomena into the world, like automobiles, libraries, and nuclear bombs, which nature would never produce without the action of our intelligent freedom organ. As we continue to amass knowledge of the universal rules of cause and effect, we increasingly add to both our creative and destructive power. Consider how each successive war introduces newer, more powerful weapons. From teeth, sticks, and stones, that require direct contact and can only injure one person at a time, we have created such ultimate destructive power that one individual can set off Armageddon by the utterance of a word or the push of a button without any personal contact with a so-called enemy. Due to the current explosion of our sciences we have suddenly made ourselves such powerful creators that <u>we</u> now determine who we are, what we become, and who among earth's creatures will survive. We suddenly find ourselves in a race to establish Utopia on earth before we become the first creature to intentionally cause its own extinction. The extraordinary drama of our time is that after 3 ½ billion years of life on earth, our generation has accumulated sufficient knowledge to make us master of all that is about us as we struggle to become masters of ourselves.

Humankind has elevated itself to become the most powerful tribe in earth's long history. We are the growing edge of creation's work-in-progress. The more powerful we make ourselves, the less we remain dependent on fate and circumstance. With our privilege, we assume responsibility, and with it, our burden. With patience, we can

teach ourselves *a newer way of thinking* that applies universal *common sense* wisdom to knowledge. With patience we can claim our will power and elevate ourselves to the limits of our imagination. Without it, we will continue to be dominated by *instinct*, *tradition*, and *human* dictators whose self-serving interests will predictably lead to the unleashing of our new weapons with ultimate destructive power!

In the next stren, I will be specific about how we acquire patience.

Stren # 22: The Secret of Acquiring Patience

Today I want to reveal the secret of creating patience. In the last stren I explained that through our decades of immaturity, *instinct* and *tradition* powerfully direct our thinking because they are hard-wired to emotion. They advocate the predetermined, proven solutions that worked for yesterday's problems. As our intelligent cortex matures, it may recognize outdated behaviors and devise better solutions. We require patience to imagine alternative solutions, to choose the best one, and to create pathways to reach the preferred future goal. However, intelligence by itself is not sufficiently powerful to overcome emotion. So often, we impulsively do what gives us immediate satisfaction or relieves discomfort even though we clearly recognize it isn't in our best interests. We require patience to educate ourselves in the wisdoms that free our thinking from dictators and learn to wisely self-manage our creative power. We create patience by equipping intelligence with emotion. The most effective means to attach emotion to intelligence is endorsement.

Now the secret is revealed! The means we use to create patience is self-endorsement. We are dependent on others for survival and for our emotional requirements throughout our immature years. When we "Do as they say" we are rewarded with approval and we avoid punishment. This is why we obey *instinct* and *tradition*, the early dictators who establish the way we think during our prolonged immature years. As we attain sufficient physical and mental maturity, we can become our own source of endorsement. Self-endorsement, like patience, is an acquired skill! There are many easy to learn self-endorsement methods.

There you have it! The secret of acquiring sufficient patience to become our own person, to free ourselves from dictators and assume responsibility for our life's experience is self-endorsement! Each self-endorsement skill serves as a new word-switch to strengthen our will power. *Instinct* and *tradition* are hard-wired to apply yesterday's solutions to yesterday's problems. They are not equipped to flexibly apply the common sense problem-solving wisdoms we need to create new solutions to new problems. The outcome is often short term gain at the price of long term pain. Self-endorsement is the means by which we create the immediate emotional reward that frees us from *instinct* and *tradition* to pursue long term gain. Self-endorsement skills create the patience to switch a traditional win/lose outcome to a win/win outcome. This is why I have included many easily taught self-endorsement skills in these strens (#2, #16-24). I urge you to continue to seek additional ones from the many resources available.

I have observed that the common *tradition* of most nurturers is to teach virtually every useful skill except those having to do with self-endorsement. We are taught a language, a religion, a political ideology, to whom and what we are to owe our allegiance, how to take care of our body, even what to think. Skills in emotional self-endorsement are not only not taught, we are taught not to do so. One person recalled the specific admonition from his mother, "Saying nice things about your self is bragging, egotistical! Praise only counts if it comes from others." This is the reason so many

individuals go through life as “love junkies,” addicted to others’ approval. They become deeply distressed when approval is not forthcoming.

The self-endorsement methods presented here, along with many readily available elsewhere satisfy our need for immediate reward. They inspire us to pursue the common sense solutions that are necessary for long term benefits.

Nature’s and nurture’s way of thinking become established early, long before we equip our mind to engage in advanced thinking using *common sense* wisdom. Passively allowing our early way of thinking to prevail has far-reaching consequences. Each of our three masters – *instinct, tradition*, and *common sense* (self-mastery) – competes to be our CEO, to determine how our unprecedented new powers will be used. The hard-wired perspectives of *instinct* and *tradition* dictate two-category thinking that divides the world into “us” and “not us,” tribalism, old solutions to new problems, and win/lose confrontation. Each tribe, country, religion, political party, and individual can be expected to advocate for their own interests at the expense of non-members.

Our history of wars, killing for one’s “own” God, and relentless pursuit of power, money, and greed are explained by the persistence of our immature *either/or* thinking. The negative expressions of *instinct* and *tradition* are not limited to terrorists and suicide bombers. They include the greed of Wall Street, our corporate leaders, the Madoffs, our immediate neighbors, and most important to recognize, even ourselves. Our very own way of thinking is at issue. We cannot expect to change “those others” until we recognize the persistence of our own *either/or* way of thinking. Our immediate challenge is to make *common sense* thinking common within. The negative characteristics of *either/or* thinking will persist until we make *common sense* thinking common. Unless we rapidly change our way of thinking, it is only a matter of time before weaker tribes acquire our new weapons of ultimate destruction and confront stronger tribes. The odds are overwhelming that the outcome will be lose/lose. In the worst case, humankind will be extinct within our children’s lifetime. If we confront one another with biological or nuclear weapons, in the best case our world will become so dangerous and damaged that the quality of life will be questionable.

Albert Einstein, among others, has told us our most promising means to survive and thrive as powerful creators. We must teach ourselves *a newer way of thinking* that emphasizes *common sense* problem-solving. *Common sense* is universal. It applies to all tribes and is equally available to all educated minds. It is the basis for *both...and* thinking that recognizes our similarities, and understands that we are members of one tribe, profess to have one God, and mutually benefit by collaboration that emphasizes our shared interests. Patience is required for mature thinking. Self-endorsement is our means to placate *instinct’s* and *tradition’s* need for instant satisfaction and create the patience needed for *common sense* problem-solving, for short and long term preferred outcomes.

Common sense thinking is the last of our three masters to develop, both historically and individually. Historically, humankind has come a long way in elevating

ourselves from our ancestors. Though far from perfect, we have established an enduring, civilized society. On an individual basis, it is quite apparent that instinct is sole master at birth, then *tradition* gradually *dominates instinct.* Sometimes they become powerful partners. Our ability to really free ourselves from our early masters does not reach its peak until our late twenties or early thirties. Our most important work-in-progress is popularizing *a newer way of thinking* that applies universal *common sense* wisdom to new knowledge. Our generation is the first confronted with a ticking doomsday clock, warning us that we must take urgent action to prevent self-annihilation. We need to "hurry up" growing our patience to popularize *Einstein's solution.* We need to selectively replace the problem-solving solutions of *instinct* and *tradition* that are dangerous when applied to new knowledge. We have no viable equivalent choice, so let's not waste time. Become one of the *each one, teach one* leaders to spread *a newer way of thinking* and create as many Mental Wealth Millionaires as we can.

Stren # 23: The "Reasonable Best Test" of Self-worth – Part 1

Today I offer you one the most effective and consistent strens to help you become your own lifelong best friend and free yourself from dependency on dictators. Apply what I call *the reasonable best test*: in any situation simply recognize when you're doing your reasonable best and endorse yourself for doing so. You will create and maintain positive feelings about yourself.

What is the reasonable best test?

Most people evaluate their self-worth by the "outcome" of what they do. *The reasonable best test* is an "input" measure of *self*-worth. It emphasizes your efforts, not the results of your efforts.

In every situation in which you're trying to achieve a goal, you only have control of your input. The outcome is usually influenced by many factors that you can do little or nothing about. Unless you're a magician, it's unrealistic to expect that you can control the outcome of what you or others do. Yet most people have been taught since childhood to regulate their feelings about themselves by asking themselves the inappropriate outcome question, "Did it work out O.K.?" As a child, you didn't have the mental resources to apply the reasonable best test. You had no choice but to be dependent on others for your *self*-worth.

Do you still depend on the outcome of your efforts as the primary measure of your *self*-worth? Consider these outcome measures that create a positive or negative emotional response:

I'm OK if:

I won
My efforts worked out
They accept me
I got an "A"
He/she loves me
My salary is increased
The audience applauds
You understand
They think I'm attractive
I own a _____
The kids do well
I didn't make a mistake

You're utilizing healthy, realistic criteria to create positive feelings about yourself whenever you answer, "Yes," to the question, "Am I doing my reasonable best?" even if you don't attain the outcome you desire! Yes, there may be necessary hurt and trauma because of the outcome. We can almost never control the consequences of events, but we can control how we deal with them. We worsen and sustain the effect of an

undesired outcome by attacking our *self*-esteem. We often become our own worst enemy. The above is worthwhile reviewing a number of times; what follows will help clarify the key aspects of the reasonable best test.

But isn't it only natural to feel bad when things don't work out?

Of course! Most people feel appropriately disappointed, sad, or hurt when the outcome of their efforts doesn't work out the way they had hoped. Maybe you didn't get back the love you so desired from that special someone. Or you didn't get that raise. In fact, you just lost your job after years of dedication to the same company. Or you recently discovered that your son is involved with drugs and is "hanging out" with friends that you consider undesirable.

It's appropriate to experience discomfort and diminution of your spirits when things don't work out the way you would have liked, or when you've been treated unfairly. These feelings are normal and healthy, but you are designed to stand the hurt that comes when "the world doesn't cooperate." Applying *the reasonable best test* balances your pain or disappointment. By creating a sustained level of positive feelings about your *self*, you become confident that you can manage your discomfort while facing the issues and attempting to resolve them.

How do I know what my reasonable best is?

Your reasonable best is the best you can do in a situation considering your limited resources. Your intelligence is far from perfect. You have time restrictions and commitments to other obligations. Note that your reasonable best isn't your absolute best. For instance, suppose you want to win the annual bonus at work for obtaining the largest number of new accounts. You work at achieving this goal eighteen hours a day, seven days a week for several months. In this situation, you are doing your absolute best – at the expense, by the way, of your spouse, children, friends, and even your health. This is more than most rational people would expect of you and it's more than is wise for you to expect of your *self*.

If you're in doubt about what your reasonable best is, discuss your efforts and expectations with other people. Seek the views of others to enhance your own critical appraisal. Others' opinions may be helpful in shedding light on your blind spots. Some people, characteristically perfectionists, set such unrealistically high standards for themselves that they think they are never doing enough. They continually feel inadequate, even though they do far more than their reasonable best. Others feel good about their *self* although they put forth little effort and accomplish almost nothing. Moderation in all things is usually the wisest course to pursue. Discussing with others what you believe is your reasonable best can provide valuable guidelines for your use in setting realistic goals.

The next time we meet, I want to answer a commonly asked question:

Suppose I'm not doing my reasonable best? Don't I deserve to feel bad about myself? You'll love the answer. You will learn how to make "The Reasonable Best test of self-worth" a win/win skill that is 100% in your control.

Stren # 24: The "Reasonable Best Test" of Self-worth – Part 2

In part 1 of the stren on *the reasonable best test of self-worth* you were urged to endorse yourself each time you made your *reasonable best* effort in any endeavor. Because you always have control over your input and rarely control the many factors that determine the outcome, you can consistently fulfill your needs for emotional satisfaction. Now let's consider how to maintain our positive energy when you recognize you aren't doing your reasonable best. The question invariably pops up:
Suppose I'm not doing my reasonable best? Don't I deserve to feel bad about myself?

Certainly not. You'll always be less than perfect at doing your reasonable best. Improvement requires practice and patience; setbacks are to be expected along the way. Each time you recognize you aren't doing your reasonable best, you create an opportunity to improve in your endeavors until you reach the level of your reasonable best. Your appropriate response is to say,

> "I didn't do my reasonable best, but I'm recognizing the fact that I could be doing better. Only by recognizing an imperfection can I take the positive step of calling forth more effort and teaching my *self* to do better. I deserve to feel good about my *self* for facing my shortcoming." (Most people beat on themselves when they discover they aren't the way they "should" be. Such *self*-putdowns lead to avoiding facing faults.)

Becoming aware of shortcomings, imperfections, or mistakes is your reasonable best! It is one of the most productive things you can do because it affords you the opportunity to discover a better way. The *reasonable best measure of self-worth* prepares you to apply problem-solving and learn from each of your mistakes.

Teach yourself that earning the approval and love from others is one of our most worthwhile endeavors, but as a bonus, not as a dependency requirement to sustain our own self-worth. We have all that it takes to fulfill our own requirement of love and have plenty that spills over to add to the world. As you consistently endorse yourself to fulfill your requirements for love and approval, you will genuinely offer love to others without the "giving to get" that is a common source of disappointment.

There is no benefit to putting our *self* down because we are less than perfect, less than we would desire to be. This is a negative response that uses our valuable energy without correcting the situation. The most miserable people I know are often perfectionists. As it is, **the mistakes we make or our occasional poor judgment will probably lead to unpleasant consequences. Why pay twice by attacking our *self*-worth?** Once we pay for something, is it wise to keep going back to pay again and again? Would you pay for your groceries and then get back in line to pay again?

Applying the reasonable best test as a measure of *self*-worth may feel awkward at first, just as mastering any new skill would. Learning to walk, talk, write, or play a musical instrument all require practice. Merely understanding the reasonable best test

won't provide you with good feelings about yourself. You'll need lots of practice to become adept at using this input measure of *self*-worth. Think how often and how long you have been practicing being controlled by the outcome of your actions. Every person spends years, even decades, acquiring sufficient mental strength to assume responsibility for their own self-endorsement. In my observation, most people have difficulty getting themselves unstuck from our early addiction to others' approval. Instead of becoming our own person we continue to let our mood be dependent on the weather, which team won the game, whether the stock market went up or down, or preoccupation about what others think. We are like heroin addicts – we are love junkies constantly seeking our next fix.

Make the *reasonable best test* stren a habit by asking yourself frequently during the day, "Am I doing what I reasonably can?" If the answer is "yes," immediate, enthusiastic self-endorsement is in order. [see the strens on self-endorsement, especially Stren #2 on "Emotional Self-endorsement"] If the answer is "no," congratulate yourself for finding an opportunity to improve in your efforts. Ask yourself, "What can I do to act more wisely now or in the future?" Turn the answer to the question, "Am I doing my reasonable best?" into a *self*-endorsing, problem-solving response. Whether the answer is "yes" or "no," you will have created a win-win situation for growth and *self*-worth.

As you gain proficiency in this stren, you'll gradually free yourself from depending on others or on outside circumstances to maintain your *self*-worth. You'll consistently feel good about your*self* because you can learn to do your reasonable best virtually 100% of the time.

Stren # 25: Challenging automatic thinking

This stren provides insight into the automatic negative thoughts that pop up regularly in our conscious awareness. Like an underground spring that bubbles water to the surface, our brain is continuously active and multitasking. Much of this underground activity has to do with the perspectives of *instinct* and the *traditions* of our nurturers. *Instinct* is hard-wired by our genes over the nine months prior to our birth. Our nurturers have their way with us through our prolonged years of immaturity. We don't pick our genes and we don't pick our nurturers. Fate and circumstance make us what we are until we acquire the mental strength to become what we choose to make of ourselves. Here's the wonderful news: you can become the third source of power to manage your thinking, feelings, and actions. You have reached the *self-mastery* stage of your life where you can learn to tune out bothersome automatic thoughts as easily as changing a radio station or switching to a preferred TV channel. Here's what you need to know.

Brains, like all specialized organs, are hard-wired at birth to work automatically without our direct conscious effort. We call the pre-wired inherited programming of the brain *instinct*. More complex species need additional direction before they are ready to manage on their own. Sources outside our self, mainly nurturers, add a second set of directions. Through mimicking and repetition, our nurturer's commands also become hard-wired into our brain, which means *instinct* and *tradition* are ready to direct action automatically and relatively effortlessly. The "mindless" responses of *instinct* were necessary for survival in a primitive, savage environment. The programming we receive from our nurturers equips us with *tradition*, the behaviors proven to work for yesterday's challenges. *Tradition* is most useful when today's issues are unchanged from those our nurturers faced. Since many of life's challenges repeat themselves unchanged, most directions from *instinct* and *tradition* serve a valuable purpose.

Unfortunately, the hard-wired solutions of *instinct* and *tradition* are poorly equipped to solve new problems, especially those posed by the rapidly growing knowledge and technology that make us powerful creators. ***Common sense wisdom*** is our means to manage the power of new knowledge. We create flexible, *soft-wired* innovative solutions to new problems. *Instinct* and *tradition* don't die a natural death; they linger on until we selectively single out those responses that have become bothersome or dangerous and replace them, or we teach ourselves to ignore them.

Can you imagine the automatic *instinctive* thoughts that were important when our ancestors lived in a primitive, savage environment, when instant response was key to managing emergency situations? Our ancestor's survival required constant anticipation of life-threatening emergencies to protect their tribe. And of course, any tribe where a powerful *instinct* to reproduce was lacking would soon become extinct. Automatic thoughts arising from *instinct* therefore might be expected to include aggression towards outsiders, blaming, worry, preparation for fighting or running away, primitive sexual thoughts, and a total lack of concern for the well-being of anyone or anything not directly

related to oneself or one's tribe. *Instinct* is ever ready to urge immediate action for whatever pleases at the moment with little regard for the future.

While automatic thoughts directed by *instinct* are pretty universal, the automatic thoughts our nurturers program to comply with their traditions have considerable variability from tribe to tribe. Much of our nurturer's hard-wiring includes an overdose of commands to restrain *instinct's* primitive desire for immediate pleasure and avoidance of any discomfort. Common favorite words are "*no, should, have to, must*, and *ought*." They prescribe how we think, feel, and act. Nurturers are notoriously a source of *guilt*, *self-putdowns*, and the *automatic negative thoughts* that make us a poor traveling companion to our self.

When the more civilized perspective of our nurturers or the *common sense* thinking of our intelligent brain confront our primitive automatic thoughts, there is conflict. The conflicting thoughts of *instinct, tradition*, and *common sense* create anxiety, worry, and other harmful consequences until we learn to recognize that even the most outrageous negative thoughts are natural. They can easily be managed once we understand their source. We can teach ourselves to understand that while their *popping up* is not in our control, we can certainly choose to ignore them. We can also amuse ourselves by viewing them as no more than a curious aberration, something like a bad dream or a bit of garbage for our disposal.

Now comes the practical application of *a newer way of common sense thinking* (**ANWOT**) to teach yourself to challenge your negative automatic thoughts. Experience *feeling better* and *doing better* through *self-endorsement*. Enthusiastically reward yourself each time you spot and label any automatic negative thought: "Atta boy/Atta girl! Hurrah for me!"

Learn to say to your automatic negative thoughts:

> ***You got in but you are no longer welcome. No more attention for you. Get out now or I'll kick you out. I've got more interesting ideas to direct my attention.***

When people engage in negative thinking, they often totally overlook the greater number of positives in their lives. This creates a distortion. Most people distort habitually. Your written list of positives can serve as a resource to balance your negative thinking.

For daily practice: Write out some of your biggest negatives and current worries on paper to keep near your list of positives. Every time you spot a negative idea, balance it with positives.[4] With regular practice, this will become habitual and so automatic that it will require little effort. Once you start to realize the power and control you have over your automatic negative thoughts and feelings, you will find that you will practice *tuning-in* to the positives even more frequently. You will develop your "*thought*

[4]For example, review Stren #19, *The Bookshelf*

control" muscles for *feeling well* in addition to *doing* well. You will increasingly grow joy and fulfillment in your life. You will love having your*self* as your best friend.

Stren # 26: An attitude of gratitude

Welcome to Stren # 26, that addresses one of our most important mental skills. ***Gratitude*** is appreciation for what we have received. To gratify is "to please or satisfy." It is also from the obsolete word "*grate*" meaning *agreeable.*[5] ***Gratitude*** is a powerful force to grow our skill in ***self-endorsement***. ***Creating an attitude of gratitude*** offers an effective way to become our own best friend. ***Gratitude*** is an antidote for *automatic negative thoughts*; that is, the self-putdowns and guilt that make us our own worst enemy. I've received many comments on the effectiveness of today's stren.

Make a written list of all the important positives for which you can be grateful. Review your positives regularly so that you can easily call them to mind. Whenever you identify a new positive, add it to the list. Grow your list! Remind yourself of these positives frequently throughout the day, especially when your automatic putdowns or worries pop up. With repetition, you will make the addition of these positives to your thinking a habit. Your new *attitude of gratitude* will replace your automatic negative thoughts. Eventually you'll find that you will no longer need your written list.

Watch out for "yes buts." "Yes buts" are almost always the unwelcome voice of your *automatic negative thoughts* resisting extinction. Spotting these "yes buts" and vigorously attacking them is fun, a marvelous outlet for your innate harmful aggression that hurts no one!

Consider this example of a list of positives offered by one person who made it work:

☺ I have life.
☺ I have the capacity to think, to teach myself, to grow, to fulfill myself.
☺ I have the ability to smile, laugh, and feel good and inflation doesn't raise the price of a laugh.
☺ I recognize others who have far less health, wealth, or opportunity than I, yet they seem to genuinely enjoy themselves and live with enthusiasm. If others can, I know there's a way!
☺ I have the capacity to engage regularly in interesting dialogue with myself and with others.
☺ I have reasonable security from physical harm.
☺ I live at a time and place in the world where I have better than ever opportunities for personal freedom, health, education, travel, work, and physical comforts.
☺ Important parts of me work well: my ability to learn, my vital organs, and much more.
☺ I have people in my life who love me or would help me. These people include my wife, my children, family, my family of friends, and a number of people I can yet develop as support people.
☺ I have people in my life who can enjoy what I have to offer - family, friends, and humanity.

[5]American Heritage dictionary.

- ☺ Even if I reach a place in my life where I don't know anyone, there are fellow humans who are more than willing to help (clergy, professional counselors, or lay people who are self-sufficient or supported by the community). My government is available to offer me care if I need it and when I ask for it.
- ☺ I possess skills: reading, writing, expressing myself, and I could go on quite a bit here.
- ☺ I have work skills such as conscientiousness, expressiveness, formal education, and I could add many more here. I am capable of teaching myself new skills, AND there are vast human and material resources available to me, free for the taking.
- ☺ I have made the following accomplishments: I like myself, I have good friends, I have developed adaptation skills, and I can add many more.
- ☺ Positive qualities others have told me about myself include warmth, patience, empathy, an interest in people, and a number of others.
- ☺ Positive qualities I have include the willingness to work, to love, to laugh at my mistakes, and other qualities.
- ☺ **Most important, what I lack that is really important, including becoming a good friend to myself, I can attain.**

Personally, I find it helpful to remind myself that I, and most of us, live better today than the kings of recent times. We have a greater selection of healthier foods; libraries, mass media, and technology that provide educational opportunity; greater comforts in our home, work, and environment; a more welcoming bed (ah!); unprecedented sanitation, medical and surgical means to improve the quality and quantity of life; and so much more.

Here are two blockbuster insights among many others that I sustain my constant attitude of gratitude.

1. I am on the growing edge of a creative process set in motion over 3 ½ billion years past. I have received through my genes the proven *trial-and-error* wisdoms that make me among the 2-3 percent of species that have not become extinct. I have been gifted with the latest model brain. Through the specialized function of this freedom organ, I can join fate and circumstance to become a powerful creator and director of my own destiny. "*I can choose to create a joyous, meaningful life experience or I can choose to make myself miserable. I'm not a fool!"* [A statement often repeated by positive thinker Norman Vincent Peale.]

2. Giants that have preceded me have shared their wisdom that lead to success so that I can learn from it. Their collected knowledge and wisdoms to create a joyous purposeful life are available to me free for the asking. I have the five needed ingredients available to me right now: the will to learn, work, patience, direction, and willingness to risk letting go of old ways that no longer work. What I lack in these five skills is abundantly available from role models, willing teachers, and books. What a combination! Dynamite genes and the opportunity to teach myself the wisdoms from giants who have preceded me.

Whoever you are, wherever you are, you can create an ***attitude of gratitude***!

Stren # 27: Why we are pessimistic

Today's stren, #27, explains why we are biased to think negatively and what we can do about it. We are by nature's design prone to distort events towards pessimism. There is no corresponding inherited tendency to think optimistically. The earliest function of conscious awareness (consciousness) in animals and humans is to anticipate what we need and avoid danger. Our biology is ever ready to release emergency chemicals to set into action our defense from harm, and our primitive, innate way of thinking has been preprogrammed with what we call the "*fight or flight*" response. All life is powerfully driven to repeat the life cycle; failure to excel leads to extinction. Humankind is among the estimated 2-3% of species that prevailed.

The concerns of early thoughts are generally physical, such as food, warmth, and other biological needs that provide for our life and safety. These innate patterns for self-preservation direct us to focus on "the empty part of the glass." Worry, *anticipating the worst*, is natural because it has survival value. We preoccupy ourselves with thoughts about aggressors that may cause harm. We are prone to get stuck in such negative thinking. Animals are not known for laughter and I have read that primitive humankind did not laugh at all. In evolution, humor is a relatively recent human invention that many contemporaries still scarcely engage in. Ditto for optimism. How often have you heard someone say "I've spent the night worrying" (anticipating the worst) as compared to "I spent the night optimizing" (anticipating the best)?

In addition, and perhaps more important, we are taught to be "civilized" and curb physical aggression ("you shouldn't fight") by becoming *mentally* aggressive. We acquire skill in blaming, dominating, winning, being "right," competing, wanting, and surviving using mental means. We are expected to "succeed" at a high level. When we don't meet the expectations of others, or fail to be as good or nice as we "should," we attack ourselves quite skillfully. This human invention is called "guilt." In my observation, we commonly become "our own worst enemy." We demean and criticize ourselves. We engage in self-putdowns like no other creature. We attack ourselves with words and thoughts, make ourselves depressed, and may even physically attack ourselves. In the extreme, we call this "*murdering oneself*" or suicide. Perfectionists tend to make themselves especially miserable using advanced skills in self-blame. The results are anxiety, worry, depression, apathy, and related attributes of a difficult life experience.

For these reasons, we are wise to teach our *self* the skill of calling forth both positive thinking and positive feelings, or ***self-endorsement*** (see earlier sterns, particularly Stren #2 and Stren #16). The highest level of our adult brain (the cortex) is sufficiently complex and sophisticated that we can attain a level of joy and well-being not available to other creatures. We need not remain dominated by our innate, automatic pessimism and the acquired thinking patterns of blaming others and ourselves. We are capable of developing our own personal, creative, *problem-solving* action patterns. Through role modeling and human creativity, most people reading this

stren (you included) have already gone beyond attending to their (your) immediate physical needs.

Mature human consciousness need not continue to be dominated by our physical needs and our innate programming. Rather than being limited to focusing on the immediate moment, we can use language to scan *past, present*, and *future* time. We deal with reality through mental rehearsal (i.e. thinking). Our intelligent human consciousness can readily be taught and we can teach ourselves to recognize past positive accomplishments, present achievements and acquisitions, and goals yet to come. We can generate appreciation and positive feelings. The ability to keep the positive in focus and not to simply dwell on the negative, on what is missing in our life, is a basic skill for maintaining positive feelings. To make misery, simply dwell on what you have lost, don't have now, or may not get. **Teach yourself to focus on what you have achieved, have now, and can yet accomplish.** Wow! That is the wise choice available to each of us.

Self-endorsement is the process by which we teach our *self* to become our own best friend. We are wise to correct our natural bias to dwell on what is missing. We can control our distortion of reality that creates pessimism. Our primitive thinking has limited capacity to dwell on what we've accomplished, what we have now, or what we can attain in the future. Self-appreciation, gratitude, optimism, enthusiasm, and love are skills some of us have been fortunate enough to have been taught by our nurturers. More productively, we may now teach our *self*.

In sum, worry and negative anticipation are strongly biological. To what nature provides, we soon add skill in habitually directing aggression inward, in blaming, *guilting*, and demeaning ourselves. *Self-endorsement* will remain in its natural feeble state until we nourish it to dominance. Too often, the conversation we engage in within is our major source of unhappiness. The characters that carry on a dialogue within our thoughts and thinking will remain poor lifetime traveling companions unless we develop the skill of *self-endorsement*.

Our efforts to elevate ourselves, humanity, and civilization are among the best investments we can make. Can you think of a more worthy mission and meaningful purpose for our existence? We are most effective when we combine intellectual "knowing" endorsement and emotional "feeling" endorsement skills. Together, they work great.

Stren # 28: Ten Reasons You'll Love Becoming a Mental Wealth Millionaire

This is stren #28. It will inspire you to become a Mental Wealth millionaire. You will learn why Mental Wealth millionaires create a joyous, meaningful life experience and be inspired to become one of the teachers we require for world peace.

What is *Mental Wealth*? ["*mental wealth*" is the equivalent to "*spiritual wealth*" – the nonphysical concepts that provide meaning to our life experiences beyond material wealth]

Simply stated, *Mental wealth* consists of those wisdoms most certain to lead to success in any endeavor. We have become the supreme rulers on earth because of our ability to acquire knowledge, store it, share it, and pass it forward to continue the process of growing our power. It is said that we stand on the shoulders of the knowledgeable giants who preceded us. We become increasingly powerful creators as we uncover more secrets. Power may be applied constructively AND destructively. *Mental wealth* is our means to consistently direct power to the beneficial outcomes that fulfill our needs and wants. *Mental wealth* also equips us to weather the storms we all experience. True wealth grows as we acquire those wisdoms that equip us to use our best to do our best.

Any individual who is willing to study, practice, and risk freeing themselves from the dictators who first determine our way of thinking, specifically *instinct* and *tradition*, can become a *Mental Wealth Millionaire*. We do so by acquiring the *common sense* wisdoms that have been proven by others to work. Our mental wealth grows one wisdom at a time. Collect enough and we eventually free ourselves from fate and circumstance, what nature and our nurturers have made of us. ***Mental wealth*** is our means to become our own best friend and our own person, i.e. attain ***self-mastery***. We must continue to create the new wisdoms we require to adapt to the revolutionary changes brought on by the explosive growth of our new technology.

Compare these ten benefits of Mental Wealth (*MW*) with the benefits of *material* wealth:

☺ ***MW* is the true source of happiness!** Every *MW* millionaire creates a meaningful life experience, even in the absence of physical health. Two recent bestselling books, *Tuesday with Morrie* and *The Last Lecture* document how individuals with the worst illnesses were still able to enthusiastically enjoy their life's experience. Many individuals who have few of life's toys are quite happy, while others with all the silver spoons are among the most miserable. Materially wealthy millionaires are highly represented among those who commit suicide. The most "got rocks" person I have ever met was in my opinion (and his) among the most miserable.

☺ We own the wisdom we acquire and create for the rest of our life; the cleverest schemer will not take it away.

☺ Owners of material wealth commonly spend considerable energy protecting it. They worry about how to keep it and fret when they lose it. Most people who lose physical wealth allow their spirits to be diminished in addition to their pocketbooks. People love giving away *MW*!

☺ When the government creates more money, it devalues what others have earned; not so with *MW.* There is no limit to the amount of *MW* one can accumulate and there is no limit to the number of possible *MW* millionaires! Each new *MW* millionaire enriches the world.

☺ The five ingredients needed to acquire *MW* are available in abundance to everyone – ***faith*** in oneself, ***work, patience, direction***, and ***risk taking*** – letting go of old patterns that no longer work. The traditional "silver spoons" such as money, good health, status, titles, connections, good looks, unusual intelligence, the "right" religion, skin color, one's gender, geographic location, and so on are not required.

☺ The more *MW* we give away, the more our own *MW* grows! The transfer of wisdom is a win-win-win event. The giver experiences one of life's greatest satisfactions. The receiver(s) increases his/her *MW* and the global community is enriched. The transfer of *physical* wealth is commonly a win-lose event: the receiver is enriched and the giver's wealth is diminished. More often than not, the "taker" is already materially wealthy and the "*giver"* isn't.

☺ We see a dramatic benefit when we correct a deficiency, even in a small way, to a physical need, such as B vitamins or thyroid hormone. Since our formal education stresses how to make a living and has yet to emphasize how to live, we can predict that providing even a small amount of *MW* will dramatically uplift our spirits.

☺ Wisdoms that make us *MW* millionaires, proven by successful individuals to work, are plentiful and readily self-taught. They have already been created by wise people. They are attainable from mentors, in books and other media, but are inadequately applied! They are free for our taking *if* and *when* we choose to embed *MW* wisdoms into our basic education. For example, The Educational Community pledges to provide its *MW* curriculum via electronic media forever FREE to anyone, anywhere, anytime! The mass media is capable of rapidly educating our population when and where its subscribers prefer at little or no cost.

☺ THE SAME *MW* WISDOMS THAT ARE MOST CERTAIN TO HELP US SUCCEED IN ANY ENDEAVOR ARE THE VERY SAME SKILLS THAT CREATE *THE* ***NEWER WAY OF THINKING*** WE REQUIRE TO MAKE THE WORLD A SAFER, GENTLER PLACE.

☺ What better feeling can we experience than that of helping our loved ones become a *MW* millionaire and promoting the most certain way to create permanent world peace?

Please understand that highlighting the importance of *mental wealth* in no way suggests material wealth and physical health are unimportant. Given a choice between being a *have* or a *have not*, always choose the former. However, to my knowledge, with respect to money, power, and pampering our body, we are the only species that does not recognize the meaning of "enough." Our kind seems to have substituted "greed" for "enough." Would you agree our society already concentrates its energy on the pursuit of material wealth and perfecting our body to the neglect of *mental wealth*? Yet, *mental wealth* is more certain to consistently fulfill our wish for a marvelous life experience. How would human life change if we create the insatiable desire for wisdom above the greedy pursuit of material wealth?

Why do we need to become *Mental-Spiritual Wealth millionaires*? Understanding this is the important wisdom in this stren. Please give it your greatest consideration.

The most imminent danger to our loved ones, to our self, and civilization, is the likelihood that weapons of mass destruction (**WMD**) will be unleashed. Virtually every scientific group, peace group, and informed citizen agrees.[6] Congress mandated a high level Commission[7] to study, report, and make recommendations to our new President regarding WMD. Their report, ***The World at Risk***, was released December, 2008. After interviewing more than 250 experts, the Commission concluded that we can expect the use of WMD before the end of 2013 "*unless the world community acts decisively and with great urgency*" (p. xv). In spite of our current efforts, "*our margin of safety is shrinking, not growing*" (p. xiii). The actions of our government and others, which include attempts to secure loose nukes and the materials needed to produce WMD, negotiation, deterrence, and intimidation may be appropriate and necessary but none promise a lasting solution.

So, here's the pitch. Oddly enough, the person who told us the one solution most certain to create permanent world peace is also considered *the father of the problem*, Einstein. He told us if we choose to save ourselves from ourselves, **we must create *a new mode of thinking***. We now have the knowledge and the means to achieve that end. Every concerned citizen who wants their loved ones to enjoy the benefits we have experienced will want to give priority to what they can do. Let's make ourselves wisdom millionaires and populate the world with as many mental-spiritual wealth millionaires as we can. We'll revisit Einstein's solution for world peace in stren #71 when we'll explain our plan to popularize *a newer way of thinking*.

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[6]Check these examples: The Union of Concerned Scientists (ucsusa.org), an alliance of more than 250,000 concerned scientists and citizens, the Board of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists (the bulletin.org), which includes 18 Nobel Laureates and has created a Doomsday Clock to symbolically tell us *not if, but when* we reach midnight; The Physicians for Social Responsibility (psr.org); and Ploughshares (ploughshares.org)

[7]*World at Risk: The Report of the Commission on the Prevention of WMD Proliferation and Terrorism*; December 2008; Vantage Books.

Stren # 29: You Need Emotional MDRs

Welcome to stren #29. Today's stren offers a case study illustrating what I call **our** *minimum daily requirement [**MDR**] for approval***.** Most people are aware of the term "minimum daily requirement" because we see it on food and vitamin labels: "*One serving has 50% of the minimum daily requirement of vitamin C*." Just as our body has minimum daily requirements of thyroid hormone and certain vitamins, we require a minimum daily dose of emotional satisfaction to sustain our mental vigor. Today, we are very aware of our physical need for food, vitamins, warmth, sunshine, etc. and we know where and how to get them, but few of us recognize that we have a minimum daily requirement for approval to sustain our enthusiasm or how to provide for those needs. Are you such a person?

Caroline was having an especially difficult day. Before she left for work, her husband complained that she never showed any interest in his career. At the office, her boss rejected the proposal she'd put extra effort into, and her secretary quit, telling her she was impossible to work for. Caroline sat at her desk, took a deep breath, and closed her eyes. She pictured herself marching down Main Street, the VIP in a parade. A brass band playing, "The Most Beautiful Girl in the World," marched behind her. Two young women dressed in colorful costumes walked along in front of her, carrying a banner that stretched across the street. The banner read, "Hurrah for Caroline!"

After a few minutes of engaging in her "pick me up" fantasy, Caroline returned to reality with renewed energy and enthusiasm. She took problem-solving actions. She put in a requisition for another secretary, phoned her husband saying she wanted to discuss his complaint, and began revising her proposal.

Six months ago, if Caroline had been confronted with only one of the circumstances she found herself in, she would have dwelled on her shortcomings, mentally beat on herself, become depressed, and considered herself a failure. Now, she is able to look at criticisms from others objectively, without putting herself down.

Caroline came to see me because of her recurring bouts of depression and a variety of physical complaints, including headache, stomach queasiness, and insomnia. I soon discovered that Caroline's mental and emotional state was usually dependent on others' reactions to her. If people praised her or otherwise showed their approval, she felt good about herself and remained in a cheerful frame of mind. She seemed unable to cope with critical comments, however. Whether or not the criticisms were valid wasn't the issue. Because she didn't possess the skill of providing for her self-esteem, Caroline reacted to the criticism with a depression that was often incapacitating, causing her to stay in bed or lie down with a headache.

Caroline was an intelligent young woman who was well informed about physical fitness and nutrition. It appeared to me that she pampered her flesh, but neglected and even abused her mental well-being. She obtained at least the MDR of her physical

needs, such as vitamins and minerals, so one day, I asked her if she paid any attention to emotional MDRs.

"No," she smiled weakly. "I've never heard of such a thing."

"Could you imagine that just as your body has minimum needs for certain physical substances, your emotions also have daily requirements?"

"I'm not sure what you're getting at."

"I'm saying that you can feel better about yourself and suffer far less from depression by taking responsibility for giving yourself your MDRs of emotional nutrition."

"What do you mean by MDRs of emotional nutrition?"

"Your emotional MDR is the minimum daily requirement of positive feelings about yourself that you need each day to sustain your well-being."

"How can I give these MDRs to myself?"

"By substituting positive statements for the negative, demoralizing statements you usually make about yourself. Look in the mirror first thing in the morning and tell yourself, 'I'm lovable. I'm a hot sketch.' Or sing about your accomplishments while you're in the shower, walk proud, as if you know you're somebody. Recognize and let go of self-pity, blaming, and 'what-if' worrying; use your newfound energy to develop an attitude of gratitude. Assign yourself a unit every time you think or say something positive about yourself until you reach, let's say, at least ten a day. You can add up the units in a notebook or just do it mentally."

Caroline was skeptical, but she agreed to try what I suggested. Like many depressed individuals, at first she had difficulty thinking of anything positive to say about her self. With a bit of effort, however, she began to list some qualities that led her to believe that she was just as worthwhile as anyone else – for instance, that she was friendly, neat, and a hard worker. By focusing her attention on what she had, her accomplishments, and what she might attain, she had less time to put her self down. Her mood improved. One day, she decided to jot down the units of approval she received from others. At the end of the day, her total was two. "If I depended on others for my emotional MDRs, I'd be depressed most of the time," she said.

Caroline, like most of us, was far too dependent on what others thought of her. She let her mood be controlled by people and events that were, predictably, unpredictable. It is appropriate for all of us, including Caroline, to depend on others for our emotional MDRs when we are children. Children don't have the mental resources to create their own feelings of self-worth. As adults, we don't have to continue to react in the same way; indeed, we are unwise to remain so dependent.

We are encouraged to do more and more for ourselves as we continue to mature. We dress ourselves, take care of our personal needs, choose our lifestyle, and learn to support ourselves. In virtually every area of life, we are taught, and expected, to take care of ourselves, except where our emotional well-being is concerned.

Wouldn't you be insulted if, at this stage of your life, someone tried to brush your teeth for you or feed you? Yet not only are you not taught to provide for your emotional well-being, but you are even taught not to be kind to yourself. You are admonished if you say good things about yourself, especially if you share your self-satisfaction with others.

Larry, an engineer with an interest in technology, was pleased with the original software he'd created for his computer. He took a great deal of pride in showing it to his friends. One evening, his mother took him aside and told him he was acting like a braggart. "She always told me that praise only counts if it comes from someone else. She says I'm selfish, vain, and an egotist if I say anything good about myself or what I've done."

Larry had worked hard at providing for his emotional MDRs. His tech ability was near the top of his list. Larry's mother didn't recognize that he was simply attempting to share his accomplishments with others, not lord it over them.

We are so strongly taught not to provide for our emotional MDRs that most people find it very difficult to do so. We understand that it's healthy to use our energy for self-encouragement rather than self-blame. Yet the lifelong repetition of self-putdowns such as, "I'm stupid," "I'm a jerk," or, "I should've known!" are so ingrained and so natural that making positive statements about our self feels awkward. Don't become discouraged if you don't get immediate results with your emotional MDRs. Think of the units of self-put-downs you've been giving yourself daily. With lots of practice, the way you would gradually strengthen a muscle, the positive statements can catch up with, challenge, and overtake your habitual, negative mental put-downs.

Just as we don't know the exact number of vitamins, minerals, amino acids, and other requirements we need to enjoy optimum physical health, we don't know the exact number of MDRs we need to satisfy our emotional well-being. As we increasingly create more of our emotional MDRs, however, we'll sustain our well-being more confidently. As you experiment with this idea, you'll discover the number of MDRs you need to give you "fuel" to carry you through the day. Ten units was Caroline's starting point. You can also start with ten and increase the amount up to twenty, thirty, or as many more units daily as you need. You'll know that you have created sufficient MDRs when you're able to maintain your well-being on a consistent basis, and face life's challenges both energetically and enthusiastically.

Taking responsibility for our self-esteem doesn't imply that it's inappropriate to welcome and enjoy the approval of others. Approval, recognition, love, and support are

worth working for. But when we take responsibility for our own emotional MDRs, what we get from others becomes a bonus, rather than a necessity. And you'll find that when you're less needy, it is easier to be a lover than a love "junky."

Take time each day to provide for both your physical and your emotional well-being. After you exercise, or while you're eating breakfast, take a few moments to consider your emotional MDRs. You can give yourself MDRs anytime and anyplace, but if you become accustomed to doing so at certain times of the day, you will form the habit quickly. Make a short, positive statement to yourself; "Atta girl! /"Atta boy!" Or use detailed imagery, such as Caroline's brass band fantasy.

As you begin to feel consistently good about yourself, you'll notice that people will enjoy being with you and seek out your company more often. People are attracted to a person with an upbeat attitude. The friends and popularity everyone desires are far more likely to develop when you no longer need others to reassure you that you're O.K. And you can add your new, upbeat attitude to your list of emotional MDRs.

Stren # 30: We are Human Becomings

Today's stren introduces a new *word-switch* whose meaning will change the way we understand ourselves. By now you understand that a *word-switch* is a signal to turn on *a newer way of thinking* that reflects our present state of knowledge and wisdom. In doing so, it switches off the more established mental pathway that was based on our previous state of knowledge. ***Trigger words*** generally direct our attention to concepts established by *instinct* and *tradition*. ***Word-switches*** modify our way of thinking by replacing the "mindless" prewired authority of *instinct* and *tradition* with *common sense wisdom* based on new knowledge. Let's update our thinking to today's knowledge by creating the *word-switch* "***human becomings***." We must understand that we are a *dynamic* work-in-progress, not a *static human being*.

Let's consider the evidence. Perhaps we'd be wise to begin with our knowledge that creation is itself a work-in-progress. I will be addressing this in greater detail in a book I am working on, ***The Story of Us***. Here are a few highlights.

- We now understand our sun is an infant in the universe, one of billions of stars in one galaxy among billions of galaxies, including some so far away that it takes untold light-years just to reach us. A solar light-year is 9.46 trillion km/5.88 trillion miles. Instead of being the center of everything as we once believed, science indicates we are a relatively small piece of change from a first cause that is yet beyond our comprehension.

- Recent knowledge indicates that life on earth began about 3 ½ billion years ago. Science indicates that humankind is the growing edge of the gradual progression from simple to complex life. We remain among the 2 or 3 percent of life on earth that has not become extinct. We are not only the growing edge of creation, we have become powerful creators and destroyers of all about us. Unlike other life, we continue to enlighten ourselves to modify what *instinct* and *tradition* make of us.

- Our generation is the first on earth to create the power to annihilate ourselves within minutes, 24/7, by the word of a single person or a mechanical error. Within our lifetime or certainly our children's lifetime, our ability to create weapons of ultimate destruction will be available to multiple tribes, including those who already indicate it is their intent to use them. Some invoke "*God's will*" but others, such as Hitler, Stalin, and Mao, among many others, justify their motives based on a godless ideology.

- As we grow our knowledge, we continue to modify the faith-based beliefs that determine our actions. Our ancestors created and worshiped idols. They devised rituals to placate them that we now consider foolish. For 200 years of Crusades, Popes offered indulgences, including escape from eternal Hell, in return for killing Muslims – acting with the *infallible* inspiration of God. Some Muslim leaders today justify killing those who fail to accept the specific views of their God. Yet, the idea that there is one first cause who has created all is more common than not. Allied soldiers during WWI were baffled to discover that every German soldier had inscribed

on their belt “Gott mitt uns” (God is with us). How could that be when we knew God favored “our side”? Most people have the conception of a personal almighty force that favors “our side’s” beliefs against “not our side,” and periodically intervenes to take care of *the bad guys*. Were it not for the emotional power of *instinct* and *tradition, common sense* wisdom would indicate the transparent, self-serving nature of such assumptions. These examples are not meant to denigrate religion. They are offered to indicate we all progress in our mission to elevate ourselves by making mistakes and replacing *instinct* and *tradition* with *common sense* management. The state of our world indicates we have much unfinished work to do to make *common sense* common.

- Our recent scientific knowledge that creation is a work-in-process suggests we reexamine the creation stories of our ancestors, which were based on limited knowledge. The prevalent religious view that God created all we see in 7 days belies common sense unless we interpret God’s “day” as the equivalent of billions of years, or *timeless*.

The force that set creation in motion distinguished humankind from all other life on earth by the gift of a sophisticated cerebral cortex, what I call our “*freedom organ*.” We discover, store, share, and pass knowledge forward to future generations to make ourselves powerful creators. Knowledge is the discovery of the universal rules of cause-and-effect. Knowledge provides us an understanding of the process of creation and enables us to become creators. The greater our collection of knowledge the more powerful we make ourselves. Our ancestors were intelligent but they lacked knowledge. Consider the godlike power created by our most recent generations as we accelerate the speed at which we accumulate knowledge. We have learned to facilitate conception and increase the likelihood of multiple births. We are teaching ourselves to create life “our way” through cloning. We now decide which species will live and which will become extinct. We have made ourselves rulers on earth and now determine the fate of earth itself. We continue to extend our life span. Our most dramatic current feat is creating a race between Utopia and Armageddon. The U.S. Congress mandated study (***The World at Risk***) concludes, after interviewing over 250 world experts, that we can expect the use of biological or nuclear weapons, i.e. weapons of ultimate destruction, before the end of 2013. They conclude there is time to prevent the imminent threat if we take urgent action.

Our understanding of the progress of creation from simple to sophisticated inspires us to update the assumptions we make about ourselves. *Interpretations* influence the way we think, feel, and act. We now see humankind as a work-in-progress beginning with nature’s gift of its latest model brain. Like other organs, it has a specialized function. It is our means to free ourselves from *instinct* and *tradition* to assume responsibility for who we are and what we become. **Historically and collectively**, humankind is elevating itself well above animals. We still have quite a way to go before we teach ourselves the humane goals to which we aspire – kindness, mercy, and compassion, among others. **Individually** it is quite apparent we are born as servants to instinct. We then benefit or become victimized by our nurturer’s influence to

become some combination of nature and our nurturer's influence. Through our slow progress towards physical and mental maturity, we transform ourselves from helpless, dependent crybabies to powerful creators. We may manage *instinct* and *tradition* with *self-mastery.*

Common sense knowledge and wisdom lead us to the understanding that we are a work-in-progress with a mission. Mental freedom is the power to create alternatives and choose wisely or stupidly from among them. Our explosive growth of knowledge is providing us with creative and ultimate destructive power before we have sufficient wisdom to consistently direct our energy to beneficial outcomes. Our rapid progress towards godlike status has created the urgent need to collaborate in popularizing wisdom, in making *common sense* common. We have all the intellectual, physical, and technological resources that we need. We only lack sufficient will! Our most urgent work-in-progress is to mobilize our collective will to fill our world with *wise creeds and good deeds*. If we don't succeed and there are survivors, we will be remembered as the generation of *greed and speed*.

Let's now signal our freedom organ to recognize that we are *human becomings*. We have progressed beyond the stage of animals and that of our earliest ancestors who could more accurately be described as "*beings*" rather than "*becomings*." Like it or not, the forces that have made us powerful creators have made us responsible for determining our own destiny, that of our loved ones, and even that of Mother Earth. The word-switch "*human becomings*" can help us recognize our task, inspire us to create a joyous meaningful life for ourselves and our loved ones, and preserve the world for humanity. Can you think of a more important mission? How does this compare with your current priorities?

Stren # 31: A New Word-switch – Mentogenous

Today's wisdom introduces a new *word-switch,* ***mentogenous****,* to improve our understanding of the most important power that controls our destiny, ***self-mastery***. We have the word ***endogenous*** that identifies the source of the *biological* and *instinctive* action pathways created by nature. We have the word ***exogenous*** that identifies the thinking pathways external sources make of us, primarily our nurturers. *Endogenous* means developed from within. *Exogenous* means developed from an external force. Our language lacks a complimentary trigger word that switches on our attention to the third powerful controller of our life's experience, ***personal responsibility***. ***Mentogenous*** is hereby assigned the meaning "***originating from a mature mind that is educated in common sense, out of the box thinking***." We, individually, and humankind collectively, have a mission to become the wise and powerful ruler of all around us and the director of our own destiny. We do so through the newer common sense thinking pathways we ourselves mentally initiate to free our will power from the authority of dictators.

- ***Endogenous*** **action pathways are designed by nature to faithfully express its predetermined biological and *instinctive* behaviors.** Our genes were designed and refined through *trial-and-error* adaptations over billions of years to equip us for survival from birth. We each begin life with the automatic, mindless *survival of the fittest* and *fight or flight* behaviors that sustained our chain of ancestors through savage times.

- ***Exogenous*** **action pathways** are the source of a second set of hard-wired prescriptions established by external forces to faithfully express *their* perspective. We identify these external forces by such labels as *nurturers, tradition, culture, fate,* and *circumstance*. Our nurturers hard-wire our thinking to make us loyal to the traditions of *their* tribe. We are prescribed with *their* native language, and which family, religion, flag, and other groups we are to owe our allegiance. Our assumptions, beliefs, and interpretations of the world initially mimic *their* present state of knowledge.

Endogenous and ***exogenous*** forces, notably *instinct* and *tradition*, determine who we are through our early years. *Instinct* and *tradition* are dictators! Dictators characteristically divide the world into ***the right way*** as prescribed by the dictator, and the ***wrong way***. Alternative ways must automatically be characterized as *wrong, evil, unacceptable, and therefore subject to punishment for non-compliance*. Nature and our nurturers initially make us what we are. We require many years before we reach the stage of maturity where we can assume responsibility to wisely direct our own destiny. Freeing our thinking from dictators deserves our special attention. Let's now invent the *word-switch* ***mentogenous*** to recognize the creative force that we ourselves must initiate to free us from domination by *instinct* and *tradition*.

- ***Mentogenous*** **action pathways** are those we our self design and implement as our cerebral cortex, what is better labeled our *freedom organ*, becomes mature.

Mentogenous action pathways are original "out of the box" strategies to manage the power of knowledge through *common sense* wisdom. **The trigger word "*mentogenous*" will hereafter designate the source of the newer action pathways our freedom organ originates as it attains physical maturity and *common sense* wisdom. We assume responsibility for who we are, what we will become, and the fate of all about us through the *mentogenous* common sense action pathways we initiate.** As we increasingly make ourselves the powerful rulers of earth through knowledge, we can no longer allow ourselves to uncritically accept the hard-wired action pathways of *instinct* and *tradition*. ***Mentogenous*** action pathways are our means to consistently direct our creative power to constructive outcomes.

We are a work-in-progress. We start life as helpless, dependent crybabies, and we have a mission to make ourselves powerful creators who wisely rule ourselves. The source of our progress, our *freedom organ*, does not reach full physical maturity until about the age of 18; most individuals are not sufficiently mentally and emotionally mature to direct their life's experience until their late 20's or early 30's. We are prone to remain stuck, servant to the hardwired demands of our *endogenous* and *exogenous* masters who make us what we are.

Our language lacks a symbol complimentary to ***endogenous*** and ***exogenous*** that clearly identifies the mission of our mature *freedom organ* to assume personal responsibility for our destiny. We obtain powerful benefits by introducing the word-switch "***mentogenous***" and assigning it a specific meaning pathway. Our most important work-in-progress is to elevate ourselves to the level of civilization where diverse groups collaborate to advance the well-being of the global community. Our loved ones depend on us to survive and thrive in this new era where multiple tribes will soon be capable of ultimate destructive power. *Instinct* and *tradition* restrict our way of thinking to the two-category *either/or* action pathways that bias our thinking to harmful confrontations.

You likely have heard the question, "Which is more important, nature or nurture?" It's unlikely you have heard, "Which is more important; nature or nurture or personal responsibility?" "***Mentogenous***" adds a third category of action pathways that direct our thinking to a higher level of data processing that we call ***self-mastery***. ***Mentogenous*** "on the fly" original action pathways are the means by which we apply *common sense* to solve the contemporary problems created by new knowledge. *Instinct* and *tradition's* action pathways are hard-wired to solve yesterday's problems based on yesterday's knowledge. We require the new *word-switch* "***mentogenous,***" through its assigned meaning, to turn on our creative problem-solving ability using universal *common sense* wisdom. We must address new life-threatening challenges as we make ourselves ever more powerful through new knowledge.

Have you got it? Do you understand our need for newer ways of thinking? Can you recognize the need for newer *word-switches* that turn on new "out of the box" *problem-solving* and *switch off* the older established ways we process information? You

will dramatically elevate your thinking when you distinguish those trigger words that favor *instinct* and *tradition* from those that substitute today's *common sense* wisdom to address today's new knowledge. As you strengthen your "***mentogenous***" self-programming "muscle" with new *word-switches* created using *common sense*, you will free your will power from *instinct, tradition,* and the human dictators who would have you blindly do their bidding. More important, you will consistently direct your power to assume personal responsibility for your life's experience. Let's become our own person and assume our responsibility to create a joyous, meaningful life for our self, our loved ones, and all of humanity!

Stren 32: From Victim to Wise Creator + A Bonus Summary

Today's stren, #32, considers the process by which we transform ourselves from victim of fate and circumstance into the wise creator of a joyous life experience. In stren #31, I introduced the new word, "*mentogenous*," to recognize the source of our critical third phase of development – when we have the opportunity to assume personal responsibility for who we are and create what we are to become. The existing words "*endogenous*" and "*exogenous*" limit our thinking to the first and second phases of our life cycle. The *mentogenous* third phase of development, *self-mastery,* begins as our cerebral cortex attains sufficient physical, mental, and emotional maturity to free our will power from *instinct, tradition, and human dictators, i.e.* our *endogenous* and *exogenous* controllers. We assume personal responsibility by selectively identifying the predetermined action patterns that no longer work, creating original common sense solutions using current knowledge, and then substituting the new solution for the established action. Humankind, individually and collectively, is a work-in-process. As we apply new knowledge to make ourselves increasingly powerful creators and destroyers of our future, we must teach ourselves *a newer "out of the box" way of thinking* if we choose to continue to have a future.

In today's stren, I want to convey an important second benefit of creating the word-switch "*mentogenous.*" During our years of immaturity, the trigger words that comprise our native language are strongly biased to *turn on* the action pathways created by *endogenous* and *exogenous* sources, primarily *instinct* and the *traditions* of our nurturers. The perspective of *instinct* and *tradition*, like the perspective of human dictators, leads to processing information into two ***either/or*** categories. This "*dichotomous*" way of thinking divides the world into two opposing sides. Bigotry, prejudice, win/lose confrontation, and war can be explained as getting stuck in the hard-wired *either/or* way of thinking we all first acquire. *Self-mastery* requires redirecting our established *either/or* thinking to more accurate *both...and* processing of information. This *newer way of thinking* takes considerable mental initiative because our early two-category thinking becomes automatic and effortless through repetition.

For most individuals, the soft-wired problem-solving *mentogenous* action pathways inspired by *common sense* are not fully developed until our late 20's or early 30's. It is important to recognize that we commonly acquire the constructive AND destructive power of knowledge before we acquire sufficient *common sense* wisdom to consistently direct our actions to beneficial outcomes. **We remain guided by *instinct* and *tradition's either/or* action pathways until we actively upgrade our *mentogenous* creative skills with *both...and common sense* thinking.** Recall that ***both...and*** thinking makes us aware of our similarities. Collaboration for the mutual benefit of all tribes is critical for our survival in an era where we are making weapons with ultimate destructive power commonplace. *Either/or* thinking emphasizes our differences; it sustains the inherited "red alert" *fight or flight* instant reaction pathway that was critical for our ancestors to survive in a primitive environment.

As we strengthen our *mentogenous* action pathways using *common sense wisdom*, we empower ourselves to substitute "*both...and*" processing of information for the "*either/or*" way of thinking that has become tradition through our immature years. Most of us require decades of education before becoming sufficiently mentally equipped to wisely master our power. **Our transition from immature "*either/or*" to "*both...and*" thinking progresses slowly with each *common sense* wisdom we add to our knowledge.** The newer *common sense* problem-solving frees us from the immature thinking that prejudges what is "good" in the world and denigrates all else as "evil" or "bad." The *mentogenous*-inspired "on the fly" logical thinking of our matured freedom organ is our means to replace the innate *either/or* thinking dominant in every native language. Given today's weapons, we must popularize the *both...and* thinking that consistently directs new knowledge to constructive outcomes.

The following analogy will create a more accurate image of how *instinct, tradition*, and *self-mastery*, i.e. the three masters of our action pathways, work together. These masters of the way we think have a ***both...and*** relationship, not an ***either/or*** relationship:

Imagine starting with a few ounces of pure coffee. Now alter the pure coffee by slowly adding milk. As you continue to pour, you will be creating an infinite number of alternative combinations. The milk progressively changes the *coffee* to *coffee milk* until you have *milk with a bit of coffee*. We could then add sugar, a third ingredient to further modify our mixture. This process is similar to our life beginnings when *nature* stood out as our director. Our *nurturers* gradually added new action pathways faithful to *their* perspective. The more they programmed us with their traditions, the less dominant instinct became. As our freedom organ matures and becomes equipped to design its own action pathways, we may add a third set of *mentogenous* action pathways without removing the first two. *Self-mastery* may become the dominant but not the exclusive controller of the way we think. Our thinking will continue to be guided by a combination of *instinct* and *tradition* and *self-mastery*.

The three influencers of our thinking gradually shift from domination by our inherited instinct to the traditions commanded by our nurturers, and then to the self-initiated "out-of-the-box" newer way of thinking we design. The three phases progress from *endogenous* to a combination of *endogenous* and *exogenous* controllers, and then, some combination of *endogenous, exogenous*, and *mentogenous* controllers. Humankind is unique in that we can add a third *self-mastery* phase as we attain maturity. The progression goes from *immaturity* to *maturity* to *super maturity* as follows:

In Phase 1: endogenous or inherited behaviors dominate
In Phase 2: exogenous or acquired behaviors are added to our endogenous instinctive behaviors
In Phase 3: mentogenous or self-initiated *out-of-the-box* thinking is added to our endogenous and exogenous programming

[***bold*** = the preferred dominant force as we progress from immaturity to super-maturity]

nature ➔ nature + nurture ➔ nature/nurture + self-mastery

instinct ➔ instinct + tradition ➔ instinct + tradition + mental freedom

Note that our thinking, feelings, and actions are not the product of *endogenous* **or** exogenous **or** *mentogenous* forces; they are some combination of these powerful controllers, i.e. *instinct, tradition,* **and** *self-mastery*. We can expect that the hard-wired ***either/or*** thinking pathways that lead to action designed by *endogenous* and *exogenous* dictators, primarily *instinct* and *tradition,* will continue to dominate our way of thinking. We make the ***both...and, common sense*** *newer way of thinking* dominant only when we educate first ourselves and then our population with sufficient *mentogenous* common sense wisdom.

Upon birth, nature's *endogenous* design rules supreme; our action patterns are relatively pure. Nurturers begin their *exogenous* wiring after birth, until *tradition* gradually comes to dominate *instinct* (nature). As our cortex matures, it adds a third set of *mentogenous* action pathways, which originate from our intelligent cerebral cortex. *Endogenous*, *exogenous*, and *mentogenous* pathways, i.e. what we inherit, what others prescribe, and what we initiate, persist throughout our life. It is their nature to compete with one another for dominance, often leading to harmful consequences. Once mature, our intelligent cerebral cortex may persuade this Board of Directors to cooperate instead of compete. Collaboration is the source of our amazing accomplishments. Cooperation and collaboration is strengthened as we substitute ***both...and*** *common sense* management of knowledge for our early ***either/or*** two category way of thinking.

Educating ourselves to *switch off* our early ***either/or*** way of thinking and *switch on* mature ***both...and*** thinking is such a basic wisdom that I re-emphasize it in this stren. I urge you to review the need to upgrade dichotomous thinking with *both...and* thinking until you "get it." Strengthening our *both...and, common sense* processing of information will make a huge step towards peace of mind and peace in the world.

A Bonus Summary of *A Newer Way of Thinking*

Let's review the insights that make it easier to update our way of thinking for maturity and super-maturity:

In stren #3 we recognized that three masters design our life's experience – *nature, nurture,* and *self-mastery*. *Master Nature* is represented by *instinct*. *Master Nurture* is indicated by *tradition*, the thinking pathways external sources wire into our brain after birth. *Self-mastery* is the process of becoming our own person by applying *common sense wisdom* to influence our own destiny.

I explained that we inherit the first master, the *instinct* that nature has preprogrammed into every newborn. For our first decades of life, we passively acquire

the *traditions* determined by our nurturers. Traditions usually include our language; a set of local allegiances such as our immediate family, tribe, nationality, and religion; our sexual identify, customs, and even how we think. As the cerebral cortex matures, the last portion of our brain to do so, we may learn to engage in advanced thinking using sophisticated language. *Common sense wisdom* allows us to participate in designing our own destiny.

Stren #4 explained the power of interpretation. We are unique among life on earth by the degree we acquire knowledge to make ourselves powerful creators. We create symbols, usually words, to mentally transform knowledge of the common world into our private reality. We make interpretations and assign them meaning to generate energy, and use imagination to design new combinations. We then apply the mysterious force we call *will power* to introduce original phenomena into the common world which was not provided by nature or nurture.

We become powerful creators by discovering the universal cause-and-effect rules that we call science. When our ancestors created language 50,000 years ago, they provided us with the power to acquire, store, share, and pass knowledge forward to successive generations. Over the years we have become so powerful that we now rule earth. We determine who shall live and who shall become extinct. If we continue to act stupidly, we shall create our own extinction. Our current urgent *work-in-progress* is teaching ourselves to solve problems created by the power of knowledge. We do so using *common sense wisdom* to replace the hardwired mindless authority of *instinct* and *tradition*. We will not survive if we don't get ourselves unstuck from the *endogenous* and *exogenous* dictators that first program our action pathways.

In stren #5 we learned that specific words turn on specific action pathways. We created the labels "***trigger words***" and "***word-switches.***" We made them powerful concepts by the meanings assigned to them. A ***trigger word* is a signal we use to turn on an established action pathway**. A ***word-switch* is a signal that substitutes a newer action pathway for one previously established.** In general, *trigger words* turn on hardwired solutions that were effective for yesterday's problems. *Word-switches* apply *common sense wisdom* based on current knowledge to introduce more effective solutions to today's issues. They also selectively switch off the hard-wired automatic outdated solutions **that worked in the past but have become ineffective or dangerous when applied to new knowledge.** We continue to elevate ourselves above our ancestors as we add new *word-switches* that redirect established action pathways to newer ones, leading to preferred outcomes.

In stren #6 we introduced the invented word "stren" to signal any word, concept, wisdom, or experience that strengthens *mentogenous* problem-solving thinking. We recognized that our vocabulary is biased with *trigger words* that dictate that we follow the action pathways designed by *nature* and our *nurturers* to solve yesterday's problems, many of which favor destructive confrontation. We learned that we must continue to expand our language with a glossary of new ***word-switches*** that signal our

intelligent freedom organ to apply today's knowledge and wisdom to create solutions effective for today's issues.

In stren #31, we added the word-switch "*mentogenous*" to provide a clear signal that wisdom and will power can assume dominance over *instinct* and *tradition's* hardwired action pathways. The new *word-switch* "*mentogenous*" complements the established trigger words "*endogenous*" and "*exogenous*."

Upon our birth, ***exogenous*** forces both add to and modify the *endogenous* action pathways hardwired into our biology during nature's 9 months creative process. We mimic our nurturers like parrots. We are molded like putty in their hands. What we are made to become through the process of maturing is largely influenced by *exogenous* forces, notably our nurturers, *fate* and *circumstance*. We may acquire the *mentogenous* ability, i.e. self-mastery, to resist *instinct* and *tradition* as we slowly acquire the mental skills that transform us from the helpless dependent crybabies we are at birth. Knowledge is our means to increasingly participate as creators of our own destiny and rulers of the world.

Today's stren (#32) will strengthen our progress in substituting mature *both...and* thinking for the immature, *either/or* two-category "dichotomous" thinking demanded by *instinct* and *tradition* to comply with their pre-determined action pathways. We remain vulnerable to human dictators until we acquire the skills of *self-mastery* and assume responsibility for our own life's experience.

Stren #33 will introduce the word-switch "*super-maturity*" to emphasize that we have a mission to elevate ourselves with the humane qualities to which we aspire. Our work-in-progress will succeed if we continue to add to the glossary of *word-switches* that upgrade our thinking to direct the power of new knowledge with *common sense* wisdom.

Stren # 33: A New Word-switch: *Super-maturity*

To satisfy a lack in our language, in stren #31 I created the new *word-switch* ***mentogenous*** to direct our thinking to the essential source of power we rely on to assume responsibility for our life's experience, our mature cerebral cortex or "freedom organ." We have the word *endogenous* to label the biology and *instinct* we inherit, and the word *exogenous* to identify the external forces that determine our life's experience. *We have no complimentary word that directs our thinking to our source of personal responsibility. Mentogenous* serves us by recognizing that the prized *self-mastery* and mental freedom we seek from fate and circumstance, from nature and our nurturers, is an active process of our own doing.

Today's stren, #33, introduces another important *word-switch,* ***super-maturity****,* to recognize that we have a stage of development beyond ***immaturity*** and ***maturity.*** The label ***super-maturity*** serves us by directing our attention to our most important work-in-progress, teaching ourselves the civilized, humane qualities we profess but have only partially succeeded in attaining.

Learning starts with labeling! Accurate labels are the handles by which we grasp concepts. Concepts *turn on* meaning, release energy, and incite action. We have a mission to elevate ourselves beyond "maturity." Adding the *word-switch* "***super-maturity***" enables us to think more accurately by distinguishing three progressive stages of our life cycle*.* Our present language constrains our thinking by distinguishing only two stages, *immaturity* and *maturity*. Surviving and thriving require that we recognize and strengthen the third ***super-maturity*** stage of our development.

Our early ancestors were intelligent but, like all other life, their knowledge was quite limited. Only humankind has been gifted with a significantly sophisticated *freedom organ,* the cerebral cortex that lets us initiate a *super-mature* stage of our life cycle. We acquire, store, share, and pass knowledge forward to make ourselves increasingly powerful creators. Within the last hundred years, we have acquired so much power from knowledge that we rule all life on earth. We now even influence the fate of earth itself. We have made ourselves responsible for which species shall be allowed to live and which will become extinct. We apply our power of knowledge to influence our own destiny. In doing so, we override *fate* and *circumstance*. We have made our own extinction possible by the push of a button, a single person's word, or even a mechanical error. We are rapidly making this power available to multiple tribes and individuals. Our generation has created a race between Utopia and Armageddon, and the outcome may well be determined by ***super-maturity*** or its lack.

Consider the three stages of humankind's progression through our life cycle:

Immaturity ➔Maturity ➔ Super-maturity

Stage 1: Immaturity is greatest at birth when we are helpless, dependent, self-centered crybabies. For approximately 9 months from the time egg and sperm meet, our biology and genes are programmed by a creative force we call by such names as

nature, fate, and *instinct*. The actual design of what we are extends back billions of years. We are in awe when we recognize the complexity of our organ systems. This may be why some attribute the marvel of our creation to a force commonly labeled "God." Whether you prefer *nature, fate, God*, or some other term, we can agree that we each begin life servant to the programming prewired within our biology and genes.

Stage 2: Maturity is a process of acquiring sufficient knowledge and discipline to transform our self from helpless dependency to become a powerful creator. Our nurturers, culture, and circumstance, i.e. *exogenous* forces, add their influence to our inherited *endogenous* biology and genes. For simplicity, I label the product of the inherited and acquired forces that make us what we are *instinct* and *tradition*. As we acquire knowledge and strengthen our skill in *common sense* thinking, we create a third master of our life's experience that is of most interest to us, ***self-mastery***.

Throughout our immaturity, we are prone to obey the hardwired commands of *instinct* and *tradition*. As our *freedom organ* attains maturity, we increasingly (but never completely) empower ourselves to overrule *instinct* and *tradition* and direct our own destiny. **It is critical to understand that we usually become powerful creators before we acquire significant mental freedom from *instinct* and *tradition*.** Our power remains servant to the ***either/or*** two category thinking that supports bigotry, prejudice, win/lose confrontation, and harmful aggression until we teach ourselves to direct our power with *common sense* wisdom.

Maturity is characterized by the ability to delay *instinct* and *tradition's* demand for immediate emotional gratification. Patience is required so that our intellect can acquire *common sense* knowledge. Knowledge of cause-and-effect added to intelligence is our means of making ourselves powerful creators and assuming self-mastery.

Physical, mental*,** and ***emotional maturity progress at different rates. We passively reach ***physical*** maturity as it slowly unfolds according to nature's plan. Our cerebral cortex, what I call our *freedom organ*, is our source of ***mental*** maturity. It takes about 18 years for our cerebral cortex to attain full *physical* maturity, longer than any other organ. The process of attaining ***mental*** maturity is more complex than attaining *physical* maturity. *Becoming our own person*, what we call *self-mastery*, requires actively freeing our cerebral cortex from domination by *instinct* and *tradition*. We do so by teaching ourselves *common sense* thinking. Evaluating what our early dictators have made of us and then challenging their authority is a difficult task. Studies of adult development indicate most individuals don't reach their peak of ***mental*** freedom from *instinct* and *tradition* until their late 20's or early 30's. Development of ***emotional*** maturity depends on some combination of *physical* and *mental* maturity.

Stage 3: Super-maturity is the self-taught skill of recognizing when *instinct, tradition,* and *self-mastery* become maladaptive, thereby inspiring us to create better solutions. We become ***super-mature*** as we collect the *common sense* wisdoms that enable us to consistently direct the power of our knowledge to constructive outcomes. *Mature*

individuals, lacking *super-maturity*, direct their newfound creative will power to both constructive AND destructive outcomes. With unprecedented power, they are as likely to create Armageddon as Utopia. Our most important ***work-in-progress*** is to popularize ***super-maturity* to** consistently direct our knowledge to constructive outcomes.

Acquiring super-maturity

Maturity and ***super-maturity*** are both acquired skills. We have an advantage if our nurturers and mentors provided us with a liberating education that emphasized *common sense* wisdom. World events and my own observations indicate that nurturers are more likely to demand that we remain faithful to the same *traditions* that they were taught by *their* nurturers, even when *common sense* wisdom would suggest otherwise. Even with an advantaged upbringing, most ***super-mature*** skills are self-taught, learned by seeking the wisdoms (strens) proven by others to direct the power of knowledge to constructive outcomes. The wisdoms that make us *Mental Wealth millionaires* are abundantly available to anyone who is willing to teach themselves patience and engage in the satisfying work of self-enlightenment. I know of no better way to popularize ***super-maturity*** to those who are disadvantaged and less receptive to education than first making ourselves and those closest to us *Mental Wealth millionaires*. **Creating a domino effect is the most certain means to reach and teach the global population *super-maturity*.**

I hope you get the power of this stren: With maturity, we become powerful creators. ***Maturity*** isn't enough. Our new weapons of ultimate destruction are so powerful that we can no longer tolerate their consequences; they offer no second chance. We must replace *cure* with *prevention*. We require ***super-maturity*** to selectively redirect those hardwired directions of *instinct* and *tradition* that favor destructive action. ***Super-maturity*** is the advanced state of our work-in-progress to elevate ourselves to the civilized, humane qualities we aspire to achieve.

Super-mature individuals understand we are a part of a larger system whose well-being depends on the contributions of its members. Each of the organs that comprise our body must make its specialized contribution to the total system to preserve its own well-being. On the other hand, cancer cells take but do not contribute to the whole. Cancer cells seal their own demise when they cause the larger system to fail. Until we popularize *super-maturity*, we remain a cancer cell in the system. We will continue to divide the world into *us or not us*, and advocate that our tribe "*win*" irrespective of the consequences to the other side. We will continue to excessively pursue *material wealth* and our *physical health* and *appearance* while we neglect *Mental Wealth*, i.e. those wisdoms most certain to lead to a joyous, meaningful life experience.

We presently lack enough ***super-mature*** individuals to support our global well-being. Most people remain primarily invested in local priorities to the neglect of the larger system. As technology shrinks our world and makes everyone our neighbor, we

have an urgent need to add global allegiance to our local allegiances. One reason we lack ***super-maturity*** is that our language does not have a simple *word-switch* that clearly *turns on* the understanding, meaning, and thereby the energy required for appropriate action. So let's now create the *word-switch* "***super-maturity***" to inspire the *newer way of thinking.* Let's choose to survive and thrive in this new age of weapons of ultimate destruction.

Stren # 34: A Newer Way of Thinking (ANWOT)

When Einstein discovered the power of the atom he told us "***a new type of thinking is essential if mankind is to survive and move toward higher levels."***[8] Today's stren compares four characteristics of ***a newer way of thinking*** (**ANWOT**) with four that historically and currently dominate our way of thinking. The characteristics of ANWOT are typically present in those individuals who create a joyous, meaningful life experience. They do so regardless of unkind treatment by fate and circumstance.

Updating our thinking is accomplished by the use of *word-switches,* symbols, usually words, which redirect information to newer action pathways.[9] They switch the way information is processed from the preprogrammed action path to an alternate route leading to a different destination. *Word-switches* and *trigger words* convey meaning. Meaning releases energy. By wisely choosing our *word-switch* we may selectively *turn on* the preferred mental action pathway and prevent the no-longer-desired outcome. Think of a *word-switch* as our means to control mental action as we would use a light switch to cause a desired *physical* action. The acquisition of the newer language of *self-mastery* is attainable with mental maturity. By expanding our glossary of *word-switches* and originating new ones, we strengthen ANWOT. We update our established way of thinking to better manage today's issues. Since a limited number of appropriate *word-switches* will hugely strengthen ANWOT, *self-mastery* is easily taught and readily learned.

Let's begin by recognizing four dominant characteristics of our mind's operating system through our prolonged period of dependency. Our genes and nurturers embed their prescribed software programs into our biology and our native language when we are unable to resist. Our established early "native" language way of thinking has these characteristics:

1. Native language thinking is *dichotomous*. It categorizes information into two distinct ***either/or*** categories: *me/not me, us/them, good/bad, right/wrong, O.K. /not O.K., safe/dangerous, friend/enemy, like/dislike*, and so on. Two-category thinking is what an immature mind can best understand. Reality is distorted when thought processing is so limited. Dichotomous thinking is the basis of prejudice, intolerance, hatred, resentment, discrimination, and most of the conflicts we create. The "*bad*" category is to be eliminated. *It deserves physical and/or mental harm.* We can easily learn to recognize the ***either/or*** trigger words that turn on two-category thinking.

2. It is *prescriptive*. The orders for the conduct of our life express the perspective of nature and our nurturers, here referred to as *instinct* and *tradition.* Orders are conveyed in characteristic *trigger words* like ***should*, *have to*, *must***, and lesser used words like *demand* and *require*. The orders are prejudiced, i.e. *pre judged* and *pre-determined*.

[8]The New York Times; May 25, 1946.

[9]Think of a *word-switch* or *trigger word* as we think of a light switch. It turns on and/or turns off the direction and destination of energy's flow. We merely flip the light switch and the previously placed wiring, hidden behind the wall, turns on a predictable outcome.

When prescriptive *trigger words* are disobeyed, ***blaming*** and physical and/or mental harmful aggression often follows. Independence, choice-making, and mental freedom are restricted.

3. It conveys our *dependency* on others. Our native language manner of thinking reflects the many years of immaturity and helplessness when our needs must be provided by others. This is the basis of "addiction" to endorsement from others. Too many individuals remain a *love junkie,* ever depending on the approval from others that maturity empowers us to better provide for ourselves. Although most of us easily learn to take care of our physical needs, we fail to sufficiently endorse and love ourselves. Frustrated, we then blame others when we don't get enough endorsement from them. Look for the ***blaming*** *trigger words*, "***He, she, they, it, God, etc. makes me ....***"

4. It is *automatic*, guided almost effortlessly by the hard-wired prescribed action pathways of *instinct* and *tradition.* Through thousands of repetitions, as with our alphabet, the *meaning*-pathways become imperceptibly habitual and effortless. Our first manner of thinking persists within our native language virtually unchanged, unless we introduce words that switch our mental action pathways to newer, preferable outcomes.

Consider the characteristics of *a newer way of thinking* (ANWOT) suited to adult maturity:

1. ANWOT is *analog*[10], i.e. it relates alternatives rather than biasing our interpretations into oppositional categories**.** It substitutes ***both…and*** for the ***either/or*** two-category thinking that is characteristic of dictators. ***Both...and*** links the positives and negatives of each alternative choice. Meanings that lead to action are based on *common sense* instead of prior judgment. Both *we* and *they, the present* and *the future* may be considered. Weighing the positives with the negatives of each alternative greatly expands our accuracy and flexibility in understanding reality. ***Both...and*** processing of information frees our will from mindless obedience to the *right* choice; it inspires us to mentally evaluate and rehearse infinite alternative outcomes prior to directing information to action.

2. ANWOT is *descriptive*. The orders for the conduct of our life are *self*-initiated. Characteristic ***descriptive*** words such as ***could, prefer, would like, choose,*** and ***select*** are *word-switches* that direct the processing of information to choice-making among alternatives. Descriptive words *turn on* creativity, initiation, and *self*-mastery. Prescriptive words such as *should*, *have to*, and *must* may also turn on creativity and initiate new alternatives, but they do so in the service of *instinct, tradition,* or *human* dictators according to their perspective.

3. ANWOT substitutes personal responsibility for the dependency and blaming of immature thinking. The *word-switch* ***I allow*** promotes *self-mastery and mental*

[10] The following example helps distinguish between analog and dichotomous. The hands of an analog watch move continuously around the dial. Nothing is missed. The hands of a digital watch jump from one number to the next, missing what is in between. It is dichotomous, showing either 1 or 2 or 3 and so on.

freedom. We make our choices "*right*" instead of obsessing over making the "right choice" demanded by ***either/or*** thinking. When you're frustrated, substitute "***I allow***" for the common dependency words that lead to ***blaming***: "***They (he, she, it) make me ....*" *I allow*** inspires us to assume personal responsibility. A freed will is among our most cherished goals.

4. ANWOT must be learned with self-initiated effort rather than being acquired passively. Challenging an established habit requires *work, patience, direction*, and *risk-taking*, i.e. the application of willpower to risk challenging *tradition.* The skills to update our thinking are easy to teach and easy to learn. However, rebelling against emotionally rooted tribal demands is quite a challenge for *common sense* intellect. Emotion does not easily yield, even when there is intellectual awareness that the established way has become ineffective or dangerous.

Our society has yet to establish sufficient educational resources to popularize ***a newer way of thinking*** that transforms immature *either/or, prescriptive, dependency* thinking to mature *both...and, self-mastery, personal responsibility* thinking. Our society's dominant education and marketing is biased to promote *material wealth, power, physical health, attractiveness, titles, status*, *longevity* in this life, and an *eternal hereafter*. We create sound bites that direct us to attain these ends through greed and magic instead of perspiration and inspiration. These goals are modern expressions of what *instinct* and *tradition* value. We have many institutions that teach greed, speed, and warfare. How many teaching resources can you name that specialize in teaching peace and mature thinking? Our work-in-progress is to make *common sense* common. Time is limited; the doomsday clock is ticking. The payoff of ANWOT education will be huge. I urge you to join the Mental Wealth Academy. Working together we will be unstoppable.

Stren # 35: The Mental Freedom Control Panel (MFCP)

Today's stren introduces you to the most powerful tool I have found to free our will from domination by *instinct, tradition,* and *human* dictators. I label this resource ***The Mental Freedom Control Panel*****.** Its use will empower you to recognize when you are directing your will power constructively and when you are being your own worst enemy. The MFCP identifies eight word-switches available to your will power to direct energy to a specific action pathway. Two of these choices consistently create positive outcomes. The remaining six commonly take you on paths that get you where you'd best avoid. As you teach yourself to recognize these eight choices, you will have a powerful tool to invest your energy in the action choices that consistently lead to happy returns, while the harmful choices atrophy from disuse.

Learning starts with labeling! Accurate labels are our handles for thought control. Labels whose meaning turns on accurate understanding are the means to direct our thinking and will power to make preferred change. Some words are symbols for concepts. Concepts are mental motion pictures that serve our mind to problem solve. Labels that create accurate understanding are often all that we require to energize constructive management of an issue. I have chosen the following eight labels to reasonably include each of the mental choices available to us. The labels that *switch on* each action pathway are worthy of considerable attention. Thus, I suggest you first familiarize yourself with all eight *word-switches* and then consider each as an individual stren to be studied, understood, and applied over time. With practice, you will be able to integrate them into your "mind control" with little effort. By labeling and recognizing these alternative action pathways, you can make yourself master of your life's experience. Learn the simple formulas that identify the common responses that bring dramatic results.

Think of ***The Mental Freedom Control Panel*** as your switchboard through which you control your life's experience. Simply teach yourself to *switch on* the preferred choices and *turn off* the others. We no longer need to remain controlled by *instinct*, *tradition*, and *human* dictators. Consistently select the ***Problem-solving*** and ***Self-endorsement*** switches. You will learn how they complement one another and lead to the additional wisdoms that are provided in *the newer way of thinking* series.

Today's introduction will prepare you for our next eight meetings, where each choice will be explained in greater depth. You will acquire a clear understanding of the origin of the limited action pathways and how they work.

Here is the list of action choices available to your will:

1. Blaming-out
2. Blaming-in and secondary blaming
3. Avoidance
4. **Problem-solving**
5. **Self-endorsement and secondary endorsement**

6. Worry
7. Helplessness/hopelessness
8. The Mind/Body connection

Numbers 1 and 3, ***Blaming-out*** *and* ***Avoidance****,* are today's equivalent of the primitive *fight or flight response* prominent in instinct. *Number 2,* ***Blaming-in****,* is commonly the outcome of our nurturer's efforts to have us conform to their rules by programming us with guilt, self-putdowns, and the like. *Numbers 4,* ***Problem-solving*** *and 5,* ***Self-endorsement****,* work together to get us what we want; they avoid what we don't want using *common sense* wisdom. *Number 6,* ***Worry****,* is today's way of expressing the "red alert" behavior our ancestors required to survive in a savage environment by anticipating the possible danger that lurked at every corner. *Number 7,* ***Helplessness/hopelessness****,* is the devastating "give up" response that shuts down our energy factory and leads to depression and apathy. *Number 8,* ***The Mind/body connection,*** is the source of many areas of muscle contraction pain we experience, such as headache, backache, jaw pain, etc. It is also the source of sustained excess or lack of production of stress chemicals that influence heart rate, blood pressure, and our physical body functions.

The most common mental action choices are the "primitive responses." These consist of ***Blaming-out*** and ***Avoidance***. They are considered primitive because they arise from our inherited biological automatic "fight or flight" instinct. The remaining mental response choices rely more on our ability to think, on the more recently developed cerebral cortex portion of the central nervous system. The MRFP strens will show you how to recognize these action pathways. Once you can "spot" them, you can make the substitutions that convert the harmful patterns to helpful ones. The ***Problem-solving*** and ***Self-endorsement*** patterns are consistently beneficial; the other six, with few exceptions, are the source of most unhappiness.

Recall the basic wisdom of two great philosophers! *Peanuts*, a cartoon written by Charles Schultz, advised "*Happiness is a state of mind*." Epictetus, a 1st century Greek philosopher told us, "*Men feel disturbed not by things, but by the views which they take of them*." Many individuals have wealth, status, good looks, connections, and health; yet they are quite miserable. We see others lacking these assets; yet they face their life situation with enthusiasm and joy because of their mental attitude. I am not suggesting it is better to be without material assets. Given the choice, better to be (and strive to be) "a have" rather than a "have not". However, these assets do not replace attaining the mind control that is the most significant contributor to our well-being.

The huge benefit in learning to recognize these eight alternative choices is the ability to direct our will power to consistently create wise outcomes. Once you teach yourself to master the individual switches on your Control Panel, we'll go on to the even bigger payoff of seeing how they are interrelated, how we benefit by recognizing patterns instead of individual actions. You will be provided a simple way to measure the degree you use each of these patterns of behavior. The self-evaluation tool will show you how you can strengthen the positive patterns and dramatically improve your well-

being. I recommend that you post in writing the eight word-switches that comprise the MFCP until you create a sufficient mental picture that you no longer need to refer to it.

I look forward to our next meeting where we'll get started with the most primitive and easy to recognize pattern, "***Blaming-out***."

Stren # 36: The Blaming-out Response

This stren identifies the first of the eight mental choices available to our will power to transform information into action. I label this first alternative "***Blaming-out***" because we direct energy to punish some "other," a person(s), situation, or object, when we experience frustration.

Blaming-out is the most primitive, common, and easy to identify mental action pattern. The ***blaming-out*** response is so instinctively preprogrammed into our mental action pathways that it pops up virtually automatically and effortlessly. ***Blaming-out*** is easy to recognize because it conforms to the following "a + b" sentence:

(a) He (she, they, it, the world, God, etc.) did what he should not have done, or He did not do what he should have done, and therefore,
(b) He deserves punishment.

The blaming formula leads to a common action pathway: *Someone or something is deserving of harm because an expectation was not met*. The expectation may or may not be reasonable. *Common sense* intelligence, by itself, is usually not sufficient to overcome the powerful emotion that *instinct* links to the ***blaming-out*** harmful aggression response. This is why earlier strens emphasize the self-endorsement skills that empower us to attach emotion to intellect.

I consider *blaming out* the most popular of our eight choices for several reasons:

1. The *fight* part of the innate "*fight or flight*" *instinct* that nature pre-wires in each of us is among our most persistent survival skills. Animals and our early ancestors, living in a savage environment, needed to be automatically prepared to instantly fight or run. In a relatively civil society, however, physical aggression is usually punished. The most ready substitute for our innate reaction to physically strike out, which is no longer acceptable, is mental aggression, some form of blaming. As intelligent individuals, we soon learn that blaming others is a more tolerated, less often punished, and sometimes even a rewarded substitute for physical aggression.

2. In our society, blaming others has come to be the way we persuade others to support our instinct for harmful aggression. Attributing our frustration to an outside *evil, bad, blameworthy* source is an effective means to get others to carry out our destructive instinct.

3. In addition to instinct's natural bias to strike out, as we acquire intelligence we also learn that blaming others is a fabulous excuse to avoid punishment for our own unacceptable acts.

4. Through our immature "magic" years when we are helpless and dependent, things just happen! We come to believe that whatever we experience is due to someone or something other than our self. When we experience frustration, we naturally

conclude "some *other* didn't do what should have been done." Once we get into the habit of blaming our frustration as the failure of some "other," emotion sustains this way of thinking. Even when our intellect is sufficiently mature to tell us we are no longer helpless, that we need to take responsibility for our well-being, blaming persists because emotion trumps intellect. How often do we choose to do what is emotionally satisfying at the moment even though we know through common sense that alternative action would provide greater long-term benefit?

5. The most palpable evidence that ***blaming-out*** is the most common of our mental choices is direct observation of current events. Simply listen to the news or read the paper. Nations, governments, religions, and neighbors persistently blame one another. Yes, there *is* lots of evidence of *common sense* action for shared benefits, but we have yet to make *common sense* sufficiently common to elevate our society to sustain peaceful win/win cooperation. Too many too often remain stuck favoring instinct's prewired ***blaming-out*** action pathway.

Animals and primitive humans, past and present, primarily deal with danger by physical attack and/or running away. Road rage and crimes of passion are examples of physical aggression creating short term gain at the expense of long term pain. Our nurturers and societal rules teach us relatively early in our lives to convert our fighting energy into more tolerable symbolic means of aggression. We learn we are more likely to get what we want by substituting mental for physical aggression. *Blaming others* includes resentment, shunning, prejudice, labeling others "evil", "bad," "wrong," "inferior," and so on. We claim dominance symbolically by winning in competitions, superior status, wealth, and social, economic, and religious "superiority." ***Blaming-out***, like the five other negative choices, rarely gets us what we want in the long term.

Here are some reasons why *blaming out* is rarely productive:

1. It wastes valuable energy that could be directed to constructive outcomes.
2. It commonly leads to punishment more than learning to correct the problem.
3. The assumption of "the culprit" being wrong or "bad" is often unfounded. Our early *either/or* two category way of thinking commonly distorts our thinking to identify ourselves as "*all good* "and to dehumanize the other as "*all evil*."
4. The "blamer" commonly experiences unpleasantness such as tension, resentment, and bodily distress, and is subject to any of the many physical symptoms resulting from prolonged stress.
5. Most important, punishment commonly inspires a similar response from those blamed: retaliation, increasing levels of destructive energy, physical and/or symbolic harm to all parties, and sometimes all-out war. We call this tit-for-tat "*escalation.*" Appropriate limits, education, and *common sense* problem-solving are more likely to result in cooperation for mutual benefit.

By labeling and recognizing the ***blaming-out*** response, you can make a huge difference in your own well-being and that of the global community. To diminish your ***blaming-out*** mental action pathway, first learn to recognize when you are "shoulding"

on others or your*self*. Look for the prescribing words, viz. *should*, *have to*, *must*, *and ought*. Enthusiastically endorse your*self* for spotting *the blaming response* in your thinking. Remind your*self* that you are now in a position to take constructive action. Substitute descriptive words such as *could*, *prefer*, *would like, I am wise when....* Substitute the personal responsibility word-switch, "*I allow* …" for "*he/she/they/it makes me*." Apply the *problem-solving* mental response pattern. Periodically review *the Mental Freedom Control Panel* (strens 35-43), and others that strengthen patience and redirect our destructive energy to constructive outcomes.

Join me for the next stren when we'll consider the ***Blaming-in*** action choice.

Stren # 37: The Blaming-in Response

Stren #37 explains the second of the eight choices available to our will power to transform information into action. I have labeled this action choice "***blaming-in.****"*

The ***blaming-in*** response, like the ***blaming-out*** response, is among the easiest to recognize and change. Here is the formula to learn:

Blaming-in:

(a) I did what I should not have done or didn't do what I should have done, and therefore,
(b) I deserve punishment.

Stren #36 identified the first of our eight alternative action choices, ***blaming-out***. Nature pre-wires each of us with the universal *fight or flight* survival instinct. The *fight* portion of this innate action pathway biases us to engage in destructive confrontation. When we have an unsatisfied need, our body creates energy to incite motion. One label for this emotion is "frustration." Harmful confrontation is a common primitive natural reaction to whomever or whatever we perceive to be the source of our frustration. We are trigger-ready to immediately satisfy our needs to relieve the frustration they create. However, survival of any tribe is unlikely if its members attack one another. As Abe Lincoln said, "*A house divided against itself cannot stand."* Nurturers are required to teach individuals to control ***blaming-out*** energy when it is directed to members of their own tribe. This is why we are assigned a flag, a religion, a political ideology, and related means to identify "our team," while preserving the harmful ***blaming-out*** energy for "not our kind." The symbols of allegiance are often not sufficient to prevent the expression of instinct's self-serving actions. Our nurturers have devised other powerful means to control harmful aggression that is directed to one's own kind. Switching ***blaming-out*** energy to ***blaming-in*** punishment is a favorite. ***Blaming-in*** is simply *blaming* energy that is directed to our self.

Blaming-in is the champion of what we call "*guilt*." ***Blaming-in*** includes various forms of self-blame, putdowns, and mentally or even physically attacking our self. In the extreme, an individual will even murder him/herself, what we call *suicide*. ***Blaming-in*** is a common way we create depression and make ourselves our own worst enemy. ***Blaming-out*** and ***blaming-in*** both lead to damage and harmful outcomes. By recognizing when we are "guilting" ourselves, we can switch ***blaming-in*** energy to a far more productive *common sense* problem-solving action pathway. Switching from *blaming* to a *common sense* problem-solving pathway consistently leads to preferred outcomes while it simultaneously prevents the harmful aggression of ***blaming-out*** and ***blaming-in***. *Common sense* problem-solving is described in stren #39. We may empower ourselves to substitute *common sense* for the two *blaming* choices as we attain *physical* maturity and teach ourselves the skills of *mental* maturity.

Animals show little evidence of *guilt.* In our youth, before ***blaming-in*** is learned from our nurturers, humankind also directs harmful aggression to others. Since it would be impractical for our nurturers to be constantly present to punish behavior that deviates from their preferred rules and traditions, they apply a far more efficient method of control. Discipline to their rules is hardwired with emotion by the process of ***blaming-in***. Guilt, once hardwired into our thinking, insures that <u>their</u> expectations become <u>our</u> expectations. Emotionally linked self-putdowns powerfully inhibit the impulsive self-serving aggressive behavior that instinct demands of us. Our earliest lessons include implanting the prescriptive "should" and "should not" trigger words that establish the rules of our nurturers and their culture. Creating guilt for engaging in physical aggression or even thinking about it is an important way the prohibition is enforced. Though harmful aggression within one's own tribe is usually strictly forbidden, when "blaming-out" suites their own needs, tribes commonly encourage physical aggression towards non-members. Perfectionism occurs when blaming-in is overdone, when expectations are set beyond what is reasonable. Perfectionists are among the most miserable of all humans. No matter how highly others would evaluate their performance, the perfectionist finds the slightest blemish and turns on self-putdowns.

Here's how *blaming-in* works. Imagine a child pushes his sibling; has his hand in the cookie jar; carelessly runs into the street; or wipes his nose on the curtain. He is caught in the act and is about to be punished. You can think of the many ways parents punish their children. The child would like to say "Scram! Get out of my life!" but he looks up at the giant that is about to inflict discomfort and realizes he is no match. Children quickly learn. "Aha, I can talk my way out of this. Confess. Seek mercy." He confesses: "I did bad, I know it. I won't do it again. I promise." "Not good enough" says the parent. "You don't look like you really mean it." The parent must be convinced the child really looks and, more important, really <u>*feels*</u> guilty. The child complies. He does his best to be convincing. With many repetitions of going through the guilt motions, the child not only is able to convince the parent; he has created the real thing. Can you count the number of "should" and "should not's" you heard through your childhood? Was "no" a favorite word in your upbringing? After hundreds of such encounters, the child becomes an expert in *guilting,* in ***blaming-in***. He not only talks the talk; he has learned to walk the walk. Now, he has skillfully learned to zap himself with the customary putdown when he errs or even just thinks about the mischief he'd like to get into. Guilt and other forms of ***blaming-in*** serve to keep the immature mind obedient to the dictators who set the rules.

There is a variation of ***blaming-in*** so common that I assign it the special label, "*secondary blaming.*" Having a special label makes this common type of ***blaming-in*** easy to recognize and thereby effectively manage.

<u>Secondary blaming</u> is "*blaming yourself for blaming yourself*." Once we learn that ***blaming-in*** is non-productive and to be avoided, we begin to have some success in directing our energy to *common sense* problem-solving instead of "guilting" and other forms of self-punishment. Invariably, we find we slip back and repeat the ***blaming-in*** pattern. Then, we are likely to say, "I put myself down again! I *should* have learned to

stop that by now! I'm so stupid, blaming myself again." We are prone to continue to blame ourselves when we catch ourselves blaming ourselves. We tend to have unrealistic expectations of our ability to do what we know. Getting rid of established habits is accomplished by learning from our mistakes, not by continuing to *guilt* ourselves for *guilting* ourselves. Each time you can recognize you are engaging in *secondary blaming*, reward yourself with a powerful emotional self-endorsement. This will provide the energy to quickly pick yourself up and engage in problem-solving instead of putdowns.

To diminish your blaming mental responses, first learn to recognize when you are "shoulding" on others or your*self*. Look for the prescribing words, for example, *should*, *have to*, *must*, *and ought*. Remind yourself: recognizing a blaming response is one of your most productive acts because it opens the door to learning. Enthusiastically endorse your*self* for spotting that you are engaged in blaming. You are now in a position to take constructive action to improve your response. Substitute descriptive words such as *could*, *prefer*, *would like*. Substitute the personal responsibility word-switch, "*I allow* …" in place of "*he/she/they/it makes me*." Apply the *problem-solving* mental response pattern. Periodically review earlier strens. It is vital to understand the part of this stren on *secondary blaming*.

Stren #38: The Avoidance Response

Today's stren considers the third of the eight choices available to our will power to transform information into action. I have labeled it ***the Avoidance response*** because it has its origin in the primitive *flight* part of our *fight or flight* instinct.

The *Avoidance* mental action pathway is so powerful because it has been hardwired into our biology throughout our history. This primitive automatic innate "flight" pathway is our emergency action to run or hide from life threatening danger. In animals, it is a favored means of survival! For example, it has been shown that some species instinctively distinguish the distant shape of a predator bird from that of a safe silhouette, automatically releasing "red alert" chemicals that signal the need to run. In our (relatively) civilized society, physically running away is seldom effective. First, modern technology makes it easy to find people. Second, physical life-threatening stress is uncommon. Most people constantly face symbolic danger and "pink alert" chronic psychological stress. Thus, we learn to substitute mental means of avoidance for physical ways to "run away." (Running away to escape a mugger is actually a *problem-solving* response, rather than *avoidance*!)

Our intelligent mind creates ingenious alternative ways to avoid discomfort. Most preserve short-term pleasure at the cost of a longer-term harmful outcome. Present feelings are often innately more powerful than objective reason. Reason lacks the force of emotion unless we teach ourselves the endorsement skills that link emotion to the intelligent action choice. The ***avoidance*** mental response pattern is discouraged because the longer-term (and sometimes the shorter-term) outcome no longer works and often is dangerous.

Here are some readily observed ***avoidance*** patterns our mind substitutes for physically running:

procrastination: finding another activity to escape an unpleasant task
"socially running": changing jobs, spouses, friends, residences, and so on
substance abuse: inappropriate use of alcohol, drugs, and food
telling lies: "It was my brother who did it."
withdrawal: isolating oneself physically and/or emotionally
***self*-deception**: the mind is so effective, deception is accepted as truth. For example:

denial – "I can stop drinking whenever I choose."
rationalization – Excuses believed by the individual but no one else. "The traffic makes me late." "It's because my biorhythms are off."
paranoia – projecting our uncomfortable ideas/feelings on another. "They don't like me because I have pimples."
substitution/displacement – Angry with his boss, he kicks the dog.
regression – We revert to an inappropriate pattern that previously worked. A four year old wets himself when a new sibling gets more attention.

physical and/or psychological "illness" – Feigned or exaggerated physical and/or mental illness may excuse one from facing a stressful reality. Becoming Napoleon or some other powerful person is more satisfying than being "a nobody."

Most common expressions of the ***avoidance response***, such as substance abuse and procrastination, are easily spotted. Patterns involving mental *self*-deception are among the most difficult to manage because individuals believe their distorted thinking. I would like to consider in greater detail the various means of self-deception our mind uses to replace the hard-wired instinct to *physically* run or hide. However, my priority is to first provide you with the most crucial ANWOT wisdoms that popularize Mental Wealth and establish a substantial grass roots movement of Peace leaders. I hope to revisit the more difficult to recognize self-deception means of avoidance at some point, but in the meantime there are many books available that address these mechanisms our mind creates to avoid discomfort.

Negative action patterns are our major source of unhappiness and danger. The most effective ways to control ***avoidance*** behavior and the other five negative patterns is to learn and practice the *common sense newer way of thinking*. Focusing on the two universal positive mental responses, *problem-solving* and *self-endorsement,* often brings about the desired change without even having to directly challenge the ***avoidance*** mental response pattern. The negative responses tend to atrophy or "melt away" as the *problem-solving* and *self-endorsement* action pathways are more regularly practiced. In addition, developing the positive responses often motivate the individual to directly attack their negative patterns.

Many additional methods, such as love, education, counseling, religious healing, relaxation training, yoga, meditation, medications, and a supportive environment, are effective. Individuals who rely on the mental *self-deception* ***avoidance*** behaviors often lack motivation and resist giving up their "defense" against discomfort. They are more difficult to persuade to engage in the self-education that inspires better alternatives. In addition to the various interventions here indicated, social pressure and strict limit setting may be required to control anti-social and harmful behavior. I have learned not to "give up" on resistive individuals because of my prior work with lifestyle drug addicts and anti-social individuals. There are many ways to encourage, sometimes "bribe" even the most resistive individuals to come around.

Please don't miss the next stren, the universally powerful ***common sense*** **Problem-solving** mental action pathway. Here's wishing you tons of Mental Wealth.

Stren # 39: The Problem-solving Sentence

Today's stren considers the fourth of the eight choices available to our will power to transform information into action. I have labeled this stren the ***problem-solving sentence*** because it is supported by common sense and our acquired knowledge of the universal law of cause and effect. It is the most certain choice among the alternative actions available to our will to bring about what we want and avoid what we don't want. **The "Magical" *problem-solving sentence*** is our powerful mental resource to wisely manage our life's experience. I urge you to regularly use this sentence:

> **Given this situation, what is most likely to get what I want, for both my and your benefit (or both our and their benefit), for both now and in the future?**

While not actually "magic," this simple, elegant, easy to learn sentence is so effective, it seems like magic. Notice, no one, no "something" is being blamed. Energy is directed to resolving and/or making the best deal with the challenging issue. With repetition, we make the universal ***problem-solving sentence*** habitual, virtually automatic, and effortless. This *common sense* problem-solving *newer way of thinking* will gradually displace the six negative action pathways. Even if we don't actively work to get rid of the negative action patterns, they will gradually atrophy from disuse.

The ***problem-solving sentence*** applies ***both...and*** processing of information that promotes *common sense solutions* to the challenges we face. ***Both...and*** replaces the *either/or* thinking we all first learn when our brain lacks the maturity and experience to use *common sense* wisdom. *Either/or* processing of information distorts reality into two opposing categories such as *good or evil, right or wrong, my side or not my side*, and so on. Such "dichotomous" thinking biases us to focus on our differences. Two-category thinking is hardwired into our mental action pathways by *instinct* as determined by nature, and *tradition* as determined by our nurturers. Once *either/or* processing of information is programmed into our intelligent brain through repetition, it persists. Two-category thinking remains our dominant action pathway until we attain physical maturity and teach ourselves sufficient *common sense wisdom.*

Either/or thinking is characteristic of instinct, tradition, and human dictators who demand that there is a right way – naturally their own – and therefore all others are categorized as unacceptable. We can hardly expect that nations, religions, politicians, or neighbors will peacefully collaborate for their mutual interests when stuck in *either/or* thinking. Bigotry, prejudice, destructive confrontation, and war will persist until we attain a preponderance of the *both...and* thinking that applies *common sense* to recognize our similarities and shared interests.

The essential elements in *the universal* ***problem-solving sentence*** are as follows:

1. It emphasizes the long-term as well as the short-term consequences of today's actions. Getting into the habit of addressing future consequences causes us to consider alternatives. Thinking before acting is most likely to create *common sense* solutions instead of the older solutions that are hard-wired by *instinct* and *tradition* for immediate or automatic response. Applying universal common sense replaces impulsive harmful action with prevention.

2. The ***problem-solving sentence*** addresses benefits to others as well as to one's self. When each party has a sense of accomplishment there is a foundation for future collaboration and progress for mutual gain. Traditionally, individuals think they have done well when they attain a distinct advantage, when they've "beat" the other party. Short-term gain often results in longer-term pain when one or more parties walk away dissatisfied. Win/lose confrontations often come back to haunt us. In win/win solutions, all parties feel they have accomplished what is reasonable given the circumstances.

3. By focusing on what might work to bring about a mutually desired outcome, each party can rely on ***universal common sense***. The ***common sense* test** simply asks if reasonable people of different backgrounds and interests would come to similar conclusions regarding fairness. The bullying and self-serving interests of individuals usually will be readily exposed when a consensus by different groups can be reached regarding fairness.

Our world is in trouble because most people look at life's challenges through the immature *either/or* way of thinking that focuses on differences. Who will be the winner? What is in the best interest of <u>my</u> local priority regardless of the consequences to the global community? As you become more familiar with the strens in this series, you will see how they mutually support and strengthen effective *problem-solving* outcomes.

Even if you don't understand the importance of making ***the magical problem-solving sentence*** a routine way of dealing with life's challenges, by using it, you will experience huge benefits. It is so easy to learn and to apply. Here it is again. Plant it in your mind.

> **Given this situation, what is most likely to get what I want, for <u>both</u> my <u>and</u> your benefit (or <u>both</u> our <u>and</u> their benefit), for <u>both</u> now <u>and</u> in the future?**

I look forward to our next meeting when I want to share more about another action pathway that you will love: *self-endorsement*.

Stren # 40: The Self-endorsement Response

Today's stren considers the fifth of the eight choices available to our will power to transform information into action. I have labeled it ***the self-endorsement response*** because it is the means by which we generate the emotional energy we require to assume responsibility for our destiny.

Endorsement means *to approve and/or support*. This "becoming your own best friend" mental skill, though vital, is one of the most neglected. Helpless at birth, we depend on others for many years. Most of us learn to provide for our own physical needs and would be offended if some "other" tried to attend to our feeding, dressing, bowel care, and so on. Yet, I observe that those adults who regularly provide their own minimum daily requirement (**MDR**) of *self-endorsement* are in the minority. Do you know individuals who are overly sensitive to what others think? Those I call "love junkies," individuals who remain dependent on others' approval for much of their *self*-worth? Approval is the major source of the mental energy that powers our mind. It is the basis of what we call "will power."

Unlike *blaming,* which we express quite instinctively and effortlessly, we only learn *self-endorsement* through willful mental action. With the intensification of approval, we generate increasingly higher levels of energy as follows:

approval → endorsement → enthusiasm → love

Love is an intense, affectionate concern and enthusiasm for a person, object, or belief. *Self-endorsement* is so critical because the ability to love another grows from our skill in loving our *self*. How do you understand "Love your neighbor as yourself"? Love is not to be confused with sex. Our sexual organs contain receptors that receive and relay messages, usually pleasurable, to older, more primitive areas of the brain. I find it interesting that the brain's pleasure area is closely related to the area that deals with aggression. Love, on the other hand, is a willfully created and expressed activity of the latest to evolve portion of our brain, the cerebral cortex. Love and sex often go well together but they can also be quite unrelated.

Here is an easy way to evaluate if you are providing your minimum daily requirement (**MDR**) of endorsement. Imagine you could tape your thinking, the conversations you carry on with yourself in your head. Replay segments of it. Does what you hear sound like a conversation between best friends? No putdowns or blaming? How much endorsement, support, warmth, friendliness, problem-solving, and good feelings are expressed? How often do you hear, "I like what I did," "Good job," "I'm such a hot sketch," and sustained enthusiasm for your life's experience?

Secondary endorsement is an important, special expression of ***self-endorsement***. Since endorsement is one of our most important mental acts, **we are wise when we reinforce the skill of self-endorsement by *endorsing our self for endorsing our self*.** "Atta boy! (Atta girl!)" Congratulations to me for remembering to endorse myself."

How can we endorse our *self* when we make a mistake, when we've used poor judgment, when "we've done wrong"? Simple! Keep in mind that the most useful way to manage a mistake is to learn from it. We already experience harm as a consequence of our error and/or misfortune. Why add to our hurt unnecessarily by blaming our *self* with various forms of putdowns? By acknowledging our shortcoming and applying the *problem-solving sentence*, we apply our energy to best deal with similar situations now and in the future. *Blaming* gets us nowhere, and punishment predictably makes things worse; it applies heat but no light! Stamp out blaming! Consistently endorse your *self* for recognizing and dealing with your shortcomings. I have found it helpful to recall how we learn to walk. We fall many times as we teach our self the skill of walking. As a child, we simply ask, "Did I lean too far to this or that side? What can I do to correct it?" We often show more wisdom as a child than as an adult when we have been taught to become "blamer-inners." When Edison was asked how he could continue to make a reliable light bulb when he "failed" in over 5000 experiments, he replied, "Every one of these experiments taught me something. ... I failed my way to success."

The most important wisdom in this stren is to recognize the importance of habitually engaging in ***self-endorsement***. Consider some of the benefits:

1. You engage in conversation with yourself most of your waking life, far more than anyone else. Why not make yourself your lifelong friend and traveling companion?

2. One of life's greatest satisfactions is giving something of value to others. It's hard to give away what you don't have. When you fill yourself with love and positive feelings, you will have an abundance of value to give away.

3. ***Self-endorsement*** is the secret of patience and prevention. The emotional reward we provide now is the source of energy that enables us to pursue skills that have great payoffs in the future.

4. Most people go through life as "love junkies," dependent on others for their self-worth. As children we require others' support, but as adults we are responsible for supporting ourselves. It <u>is</u> certainly worthwhile earning others' approval and love, but as a bonus, no longer as a requirement to make life worthwhile.

5. Among our most harmful characteristics is a tendency to blame others or guilt ourselves. When we teach ourselves to provide our own requirement of endorsement, we no longer get so distressed when others don't respond as we'd like. *Blaming* will become a thing of the past as we replace it with the *problem-solving* mental action pathway.

6. One of the highest achievements we can attain as a human being is skill in forgiveness. Forgiveness is a difficult to learn form of expressing love. ***Self-endorsement*** is a key source of strength to allow us to forgive.

Self-endorsement promotes love, forgiveness, patience, and freedom from dependency on others. It enables us to assume personal responsibility for our life's experience. ***Self-endorsement*** is the antidote for blaming, guilt, and dependency. A substantial number of the strens offered in this series are various methods to teach ourselves the skill of ***self-endorsement***. Each method will add to your Mental Wealth. Don't walk; run to the ***self-endorsement*** strens. I urge you to acquire a wide variety of ***self-endorsement*** methods. Practice them until they become habitual and effortless. There are few better addictions.

Stren # 41: The Helpless/Hopeless (H/H) Response

In today's stren you will understand the sixth and most devastating of the eight mental action choices available to our will power to transform our interpretations into action. I have labeled this action pathway the ***Helpless/Hopeless* (*H/H*) *response*** because it shuts down our energy factory. The ***H/H response*** is the means by which we become our own worst enemy. The outcome of the ***H/H response*** is apathy, depression, suicide, or some combination of these destinations.

This stren is critical because it shows us how easily we can prevent the ***H/H response.*** The ***H/H response*** is one of the easiest to recognize and, thereby, switch it off. Begin by learning to recognize the favorite, easy to spot trigger words we use that *turn on* ***H/H***:

- **I can't. I give up.**
- **What's the use? Why bother?**
- **Who cares?**
- **It's not worth it. I'm not worth it.**
- **It's hopeless. I'm helpless.**
- **To hell with it. Ferk it.**

Those "give up" trigger words signal our energy factory to shut down. They are the opposite of the trigger words which I identified in stren #8, that turn on our energy: "**I think I can. I think I can. I think I can. I will**."

No other species besides our own makes itself depressed and apathetic, and commits suicide to the degree we do. I explain this because we alone have the sufficient *power of interpretation* to make ourselves powerful creators and destroyers. Our power to assume personal responsibility was explained in strens #3-6 and may be summarized as follows:

1. **Stren #3** told us that besides *instinct* and *tradition* – i.e. nature and nurture, fate and circumstance – we may create a third manager of our life's experience that we call *self-mastery*. Our three masters therefore are ***instinct, tradition***, and the degree of ***self-mastery*** we create for ourselves with maturity.

2. **Stren #4** explained that we become powerful and assume responsibility for our destiny because we have a specialized, sophisticated *freedom organ*, our cerebral cortex. We have ***the power of interpretation***. Our *freedom organ* acquires language, applies imagination to knowledge, and introduces new phenomena to what nature has created. We make ourselves powerful creators and destroyers through the power of interpretation. The more knowledge we acquire of cause-and-effect relationships, the more powerful we become, and we are accelerating our growth of knowledge at an explosive rate.

3. **Stren #5** showed that we *turn on the power of imagination* by the meanings we assign to specific words. ***Trigger words*** are any combination of words that turn on yesterday's preprogrammed solutions to life's challenges. ***Word-switches*** are newly created trigger words (or new meanings assigned to established trigger words) that substitute more effective action pathways for older, ineffective or dangerous ones. Word-switches apply current *common sense* knowledge and wisdom to solve today's issues.

4. **Stren #6** emphasized the importance of collecting strens. ***Strens*** are the wisdoms and the word-switches we must teach ourselves to wisely direct our growing power to beneficial outcomes. ***Strens*** empower us to selectively turn off those action paths of *instinct* and *tradition* that worked for yesterday's challenges but have become harmful today. ***Strens*** are the *common sense* solutions we create to effectively manage new issues.

Through our power of interpretation, we have made ourselves directors of our own destiny and that of our loved ones. As human *becomings*, we are so rapidly expanding our knowledge that our generation (!) has suddenly entered the era where multiple tribes possess ultimate power. Ultimate power has created the race we now observe between making the peaceful world we seek and self-annihilation. **We can't afford to turn our energy off or even down. We must sustain our energy to direct our knowledge to beneficial destinations.** We are in a timed race and the clock is tick-tick-ticking away.

Our task is clear. Let's prevent ourselves from drifting into the ***H/H response***. Like a whirlpool, once we are caught in it, it is nearly impossible to free ourselves without outside help. Teach yourself to recognize the ***H/H*** words. Prepare yourself to vigorously attack them before you get into the whirlpool. Create in your mind a red alarm box like a fire alarm box. As soon as you see, hear, or smell any of the *H/H* words, sound the alarm. You will thus prepare yourself to *run, not walk to the nearest exit*. It's so easy to build your mental muscles for prevention now rather than wait until a cure is required.

Here is an additional important insight about the ***H/H response***: None of us are born with it. We create the pattern by preceding it with other negative responses. We have identified the five alternative negative action pathways that precede and lead to ***H/H***: *blaming-out, blaming-in, avoidance, worry,* and *the mind/body response*. Are you beginning to see how our eight action pathways are interrelated?

Clearly "an ounce of prevention is worth more than a pound of cure." Prepare yourself in advance to vigorously and aggressively attack the ***H/H response***. Nip it early in the bud. Prepare to substitute, "It may be damn difficult, but I can do my reasonable best!" As you strengthen your skills in *the newer way of thinking* and increase your *problem-solving* and *self-endorsement* mental action pathways, the ***H/H response*** will weaken and disappear.

Stren # 42: The Worry Response

Today's stren considers the seventh of the eight choices available to our will power to transform information into action. I have labeled it ***the worry response*** because it is characterized by our inappropriate preoccupation with the worst outcomes of our action.

The ***worry*** action pathway is the major source of excessive anxiety, fear, and phobias, and the reason physicians are excessively consulted about "heart attacks." In stren #43, coming next, the *Mind/Body* action pathway, I'll identify the myriad of physical disorders that are the outcome of prolonged stress. Understanding is a powerful step towards managing the ***worry*** response.

Worry* is anticipating the worst possible outcomes of a situation.** Because our body responds to our mental interpretations in a similar manner to actual material events, inaccurate interpretations result in inappropriate outcomes. Once you learn the formula, the ***worry response is easy to recognize: We tend to "***What if***." We anticipate and create images of the worst outcomes of a situation. *What if … the airplane engine fails … the elevator breaks down … they can't stand my pimples*.... *What if.... What if.... What if....* "*Oh my God, my heart is racing; what if I'm having a heart attack? I can't stand it.*"

The anxiety escalates as our images trigger our physical "emergency response" system to turn on muscle tightness, increased heart rate and breathing, and release of chemicals that signal our body to go into a "red alert" state. Learn to recognize the "*What if*" and substitute "*Most likely*..." "*Most likely … the airplane will get me where I want to go … I haven't heard of anyone being permanently stuck or starving in an elevator … people are more concerned about their own appearance than my pimples*." Every time you "*What if*," give at least equal time to thinking of the very best, most positive, happy outcomes of a situation, even if they are as unlikely as the negative "*What if's*" you create. Smile and enjoy the positive "*What ifs*." Various techniques of desensitization training – gradually facing the feared situation, often with some support – are very effective. So is relaxation training, using such techniques as Progressive Relaxation, a method popularized by Edmund Jacobson at the turn of the century, and biofeedback. Medications are commonly used to relieve symptoms. In my opinion, understanding the cause of most worry and anxiety, and teaching ourselves *a newer way of thinking* to accurately interpret our experience, are the most powerful means of dealing with worry.

Our ancestors lived in a savage, primitive environment where life-threatening danger could occur at every turn. Survival required anticipating danger and being prepared with the emergency response that would preserve their life, usually "*fight or flight*." Both *fight* and *flight* action pathways require emergency release of the chemicals that produce hyper alertness and extra energy, raise our heart rate and blood pressure, tense our muscles for action, and determine whether we'd eat or be eaten, survive or die. As brilliant as this emergency system was in its design, we rarely have need for

this emergency pattern of response. In today's relatively civilized world our challenges are almost always symbolic, created by our mental power of interpretation. Immediate survival is replaced by such desires as material wealth, social status, physical appearance, self-worth, love, and the values we assign great importance. Our political, religious, and tribal allegiances and ideologies are commonly a source of conflicts that create worry and anxiety. They can certainly result in life-threatening outcomes, but they usually do so gradually, over a period of time, instead of being an instant source of peril.

Yes, sometimes it is difficult to identify the specific "*What if*" ***worry*** statement. Just as some individuals are sensitive to poison ivy or peanuts, it makes sense that some individuals have super-sensitive emergency action pathways that are set off with little provocation. Such individuals need not continue to suffer; they can learn to label the emergency response a "*false alarm*." Even though the fire alarm goes off, when we conclude it is a false alarm, we no longer need to panic and run to the exit. Relaxation methods, learning to maintain and restore calm, and various treatment methods can alleviate our excessive self-stressing reaction.

Our language is biased to words that create worry; *worry* has survival value in a savage environment because anticipating the worst warns us prepare for emergencies. *Optimizing* or *hoping*, the opposites of *worry*, have less survival value in the face of real emergency. "I spent the night worrying" is more familiar than "I spent the night optimizing." Humor and laughter is absent in animals and was unknown to our primitive ancestors. *Resentment* has a sixteenth-century usage which literally means re-experiencing any sentiment, but it has come to refer in our modern language only to feelings of anger or hurt over a real or imagined injustice that result in tension. The word *doom* once referred to any type of fate or destiny, good or bad, but now it means only a terrible one. Review stren #6, which explains why our work-in-progress is to continuously update our language to signal better ways to deal with the stresses brought on by modern living.

If you are a worrier, I urge that you regularly substitute "*Most likely*" for "*What if*". *Concern*, the least amount of energy required to address stress, is preferable to sustained *worry*. Every time you anticipate the "worst" outcome, practice imagining the most optimistic "best" outcome, no matter how outrageous it seems. Seriously practice applying the *common sense problem-solving* sentence and *self-endorsement* mental action way of thinking that is explained in strens throughout this series of tips. You will learn to control the negative mental action patterns which we <u>all</u> use to varying degrees. You'll love the results.

Stren # 43: The Mind/Body Response

Today's stren considers the last of the eight alternative action pathways available to our will power to transform information into action. I have labeled it ***the Mind/body response*** because the mental energy we create powerfully influences the state of chemicals and nerves that are responsible for our physical state.

The way we think is directly linked to the way we feel and the way we act; thinking, feelings, and actions are interconnected. It is also the reason why "stinking thinking" is the source of most of our life's unhappiness and physical maladies. This is the very reason why *the newer manner of thinking* is our opportunity to become director and producer of our life's experience. Mental strength, like physical strength, requires regular exercise for a big pay-off.

Consider just a few of the huge list of physical conditions that are influenced by the way we think. These ***Mind/Body*** responses include:

- *skin* … rashes, hives, blushing
- our *vascular system* … high blood pressure, heart irregularities, stroke and heart attack;
- *intestinal system* … vomiting, diarrhea, constipation, heartburn, appetite change
- *genital and urinary system* … frequency, incontinence (inability to control urine), impotence, frigidity
- *muscles* … common muscle contraction pain that includes headaches, backaches, jaw clenching, fatigue, twitches
- *lungs* … rapid breathing, dizziness, asthma
- *endocrine system* … hormone irregularities, thyroid, obesity, sugar management, menstrual irregularities

Accidents are more likely when our thinking is unhealthy. There is recent evidence suggesting that even cancer and immune disorders may be associated with our manner of thinking. Various terms have been used to identify the influence of the mind on the body such as "stress," "somatization," and "psychosomatic." This is why I label this action pathway the ***Mind/Body response***.

Try this simple exercise to show the power of stress. With either arm, make as tight a muscle as you can. When you think it is as tight as it can get, tighten it just a little more. Within 60 seconds or less, you will experience pain. Stop! Don't overdo it. Now, instead of keeping the muscle extremely tense for less than a minute, imagine keeping it slightly tense, hardly noticeable, for hours at a time. A slightly tensed muscle over a prolonged period will cause similar pain to a muscle intensely flexed for a brief period. People often have a "target" set of muscles that they may keep imperceptibly tense over prolonged periods. Can you now understand why most headaches, jaw pain, neck, and back pain are the result of "muscle contraction pain"?

Mind/Body mental action pathways are often difficult to recognize and directly change. "Treatment" is often directed at relief of the symptom, such as aspirin for a headache or dental appliances for teeth grinding. Self-medication is common, such as using alcohol to relieve anxiety and sleeplessness. The *newer way of thinking*, i.e. skill development in *problem-solving* using *common sense wisdom* and *self-endorsement* as here offered, are effective methods that indirectly resolve *mind/body* problems, rather than just the symptoms. The *newer way of thinking* strens that enhance your well-being, such as becoming your own best friend, becoming your own person, and learning to remain calm, all contribute to a more orderly regulation of one's chemicals and nerves. Medication, yoga, exercise, and relaxation techniques will benefit many.

The Mental Freedom Control Panel identifies the eight mental action pathways available to your will power. They will allow you to better recognize your choices and wisely direct them. The eight labels provided in strens #36-43 are arbitrary symbols to which we assign meaning. The assigned meaning triggers the signals that *switch on* the selected mental action pathway and simultaneously *turns off* the alternative mental action pathways. As you acquire skill in the *newer way of thinking* you will free your will power from *instinct*, *tradition*, and *human* dictators to wisely select from these eight alternative choices. With practice, you will begin to recognize combinations of your mental response choices rather than individual responses. Mental action pathways are not ***either...or***; rather, they are ***both…and***, a bit of this and some of that. One mental action path leads to another. They commonly work in combination, as you will see in stren #45, *Transforming Snapshots into a Motion Picture*

Our mental capacity and use of symbols enables us to join fate and circumstance as producer and director of our life's experience. We may even become the "managing partner," or chief executive officer. The mental strens or "strengths" proposed in teaching yourself *a newer way of thinking* will update your manner of thinking to better deal with modernity. Understanding the Mental Freedom Control Panel is a powerful resource to enhance your well-being. Prolonged stress can cause strain in every part of your body. Increase your *problem-solving* and *self-endorsement* skills as you diminish the *blaming*, *avoidance*, and other mental action pathways that no longer serve their original purpose and may now cause harm. You <u>can</u> do it! Although the methods are easy, they require work, patience, and some direction. I'll look for you in the strens that follow. Meanwhile, have tons of Mental Wealth!

Stren #44: Measuring Mental Wealth

We create a wonderful life through ***Mental Wealth***. Today's stren, #44, provides a powerful tool to measure your *Mental Wealth* and know that you are progressing to become a ***Mental Wealth millionaire***. *Mental wealth* consists of the wisdoms that elevate the quality of our life experience. We become mentally wealthy by applying wisdom to knowledge. A ***Mental Wealth millionaire*** is an individual who has acquired a sufficient number of the required strens (wisdom) to consistently create a joyous meaningful life experience. ***Mental Wealth millionaires*** love to share their *mental wealth* with others for the mutual benefit of the entire community, a process we call "civilization."

I have indicated in prior strens that our society has emphasized the pursuit of ***physical wealth*** while neglecting education in ***mental wealth***. Whereas "enough" material wealth is a basic need, material greed is the major reason we become our own worst enemy. *Material greed + the power of knowledge* have made us the most imminent threat to our survival; however, the benefits of making ourselves greedy for wisdom have no limit. We have yet to popularize the understanding that greed for the acquisition of wisdom is the way we use our best to do our best for our self, our loved ones, and humanity. It is critical that we have a practical measure to know that we are growing our ***mental wealth***.

We easily recognize *material wealth* millionaires because we assign a dollar number to accumulated physical wealth. Having a measure of our progress inspires us to increase the action choices that lead to the outcomes we choose. *Mental wealth* is not as easy to quantify as *material wealth*. However, even an imprecise or "relative" measure allows us to create the desired results with benefits far greater than those we attain by an exact measurement of our material wealth. The power of this stren will be huge when you are familiar with two earlier skills.

1. The first prerequisite is knowledge of the seven *Mind-freeing, Life-changing, and World-saving* word-switches that free our will from domination by our early masters and transform dependency into self-mastery. These word-switches empower our will to overrule the demands of *instinct*, *tradition*, and *human* dictators. They favor common sense problem-solving to the prescribed actions demanded by authority. They are identified in stren #7 and explained in strens #8-15.

2. The second prerequisite is familiarity with the eight mental action choices available to our freed will power. As we become master of our will, we develop the freedom to take personal responsibility for our life experience by wisely choosing among the alternatives available to us. We grow ***mental wealth*** by consistent use of the positive action pathways – *problem-solving* and *self-endorsement*, and avoidance of the six negative action pathways – *blaming-out, blaming-in, avoidance, worry, the helplessness/hopelessness* and the *Mind/Body response*. These action pathways are identified in stren #35, *The Mental Freedom Control Panel*, and explained in strens #36-45.

Learn these *word-switches* so that you can freely and wisely assume responsibility for your own life experience. You can download the eight *Mental Freedom Control Panel word-switches* and their actions by clicking the appropriate links at www.anwot.org. Review them regularly until you can recognize and select them with the ease of selecting letters of our alphabet.

Use this simple self-evaluation exercise to develop your ***mental wealth*** muscles. The *self-endorsement* and *problem-solving sentence* action patterns will work for you to provide freedom, wisdom, mastery, fulfillment, and enthusiasm for your life's experience. The six negative action patterns, comprising your mental flab, will gradually wither away from disuse. Picture how proud you will be of your mind's powerful and wise new physique. The newer way of personal responsibility thinking will grow your mental strength and well-being throughout your life even as your physical muscles weaken.

First familiarize yourself with the Score Sheet and then follow the directions.

SCORE SHEET

The eight (8) Mental Freedom Control Panel (MRFP) Patterns:

	A	B
1. Blaming-in	_____	
2. Blaming-out	_____	
3. Avoidance	_____	
4. Problem-solving		_____
***5. Self*-endorsement**		_____
6. Helplessness/Hopelessness		_____
7. Worry	_____	
8. Mind/Body	_____	
TOTAL	_____	_____

SCORE: Add rating for #4 & #5 = ___ x 3 = ____ [column B]
Add rating for #'s 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8. = ____ [column A]

Subtract A from B to get TOTAL SCORE = ____ [range = - 60 to + 60]

My Super-maturity ANWOT score today is ____. My previous score was ____.

Are you functioning in the plus or minus range? Do you recognize characteristic patterns in others? In your*self*? Are you willing to work to increase your "well-being" score?

Directions: Place the six action patterns that are consistently negative in a column marked "A." This column includes *blaming-out, blaming-in, avoidance,*

hopelessness/helplessness, worry, and the *mind/body response.* Place the action choices that are consistently positive in a column marked "B." This column includes - *self-endorsement* and the *problem-solving sentence*. For each of the eight action patterns available to your will, rate your*self* on the degree you apply that pattern by using a scale of 0 to 10: "0" being no amount of that mental action, "10" meaning you use the maximum amount. The total number in column "A" will be between 0 and 60. The total number in column "B" will be between 0 and 20. Multiply the total number in column B by 3 so that each column will have a possible score between 0 and 60. Subtract the total of column A from the total of column B. The possible range of the FINAL score will be between minus (-) 60 and plus (+) 60. Mark it "FINAL TOTAL SCORE."

The more positive the final score, the greater the likelihood you are creating a joyous, meaningful life experience. +30 or above is a high Mental Wealth score. Most people will initially rate themselves close to the "0" area. Too often, an individual's final score is in the minus range. If you are in the negative range, you would be wise to really get to work! No matter what your score, can you make the positive grow? If you're already on the positive side, wouldn't you like to add a bit more and enjoy the satisfaction of sharing your wealth?

I recommend that you use this simple method to determine your ***mental wealth*** at a designated regular interval, such as each evening. It won't take long until you are nearly automatically and effortlessly moving your score to higher and higher levels by applying *self-endorsement* and *the problem-solving sentence* mental action patterns (**MAPs**). They will grow your freed will power to enjoy each day with the energy of chronic enthusiasm. Eventually your feelings will tell you when you are functioning with a high score without you needing to assign a number by using the calculations.

Here is a suggestion for rating the MAPs. Create a mental tape recording of your thinking. Isolate segments and re-play them. Do your best to identify the degree you use each mental action pattern. Is your favorite one *Problem-solving*? *Self-endorsement*? *Blaming*? *Worrying*? The other patterns? It may be easier to begin by identifying the MAPs you observe in others. Observe their behavior. Can you think of someone who is a *blamer-outer*? A *blamer-inner*? A *worrier*? Who illustrates a combination of several mental response choices? Match yourself to others you observe and use the examples provided in the *Mental Response Control Panel* and the next stren. Which MAPs do you emphasize?

As you use the scales to rate yourself on how much you employ each of the choices, you will soon recognize patterns that are characteristic of your thinking. With labeling and recognition, you position yourself to change the pattern. Through ***self-mastery***, you will direct your thinking more than *master instinct* and *master tradition (habit).* Substitute the *problem-solving* and *endorsement* pattern each time you recognize that your thinking is engaged in a negative pattern. Exercise your freed will power; see and feel your mental self-mastery muscles grow.

Keep in mind that much of the time your thinking may not be involved in any of the identified mental action patterns. Your thinking may simply be engaged in "pastimes," in "neutral." Also realize that each person will rate their action patterns differently. That's O.K. You will attain a positive outcome by simply establishing a general pattern. Support the *problem-solving* and *endorsement* patterns. Attack the negative ones. Your destructive aggression and "murderous instinct" may find an appropriate outlet when directed at MAPs that no longer work, that get you what you don't want. When engaging in the negative patterns, remember to viciously attack the mental action pattern, not yourself or any other.

The Mental Freedom Control Panel and Score Sheet are on the following pages so you can make copies:

The Mental Freedom Control Panel

Mental Response Action Choice		Behavioral or Physical Outcome
Blaming-out **"He, she, they, it did what they shouldn't have done and therefore they deserve punishment."**	**→ ----- → ----- → ----- →**	**Aggression (anger, resentment)**
Blaming-in **"I did what I shouldn't have done and therefore I am guilty and deserve punishment."**	**→ ----- → ----- → ----- →**	**Depression (guilt, self-putdowns)**
Avoidance **Substance abuse, procrastination, withdrawal, mental *self*-deception (denial, lying, feigned illness, rationalization, etc.)**	**→ ----- → ----- → ----- →**	**Short-term gain, long-term pain**
Problem-solving **"Given this situation, what is most likely to get me what I want, now and in the future, for me and you (us and them)?"**	**→ ----- → ----- → ----- →**	**Common sense thinking Wise action, Well-being**
***Self*-endorsement** **"Attaboy! Attagirl! Congratulations to me for doing my reasonable best." [Congratulations to me when I recognize I'm not doing what I can.]**	**→ ----- → ----- → ----- →**	**Energy, willpower to problem-solve, and to create and offer love**
Helplessness/Hopelessness **"I give up!" "What's the use?" "To hell with it." "Ferk it."**	**----- → ----- → ----- →**	**Apathy, depression, in extreme - suicide**
Worry **"What if …" anticipating the worst outcome** **"What is going to happen?" "I can't stand it!"**	**→ ----- → ----- → ----- →**	**Anxiety, phobias, panic, feelings of doom, physical symptoms**
Mind/Body **Mental response to stress leads to exaggerated response to physical system, viz. muscle tension, hormonal irregularity, blood pressure, etc.**	**→ ----- → ----- → ----- →**	**Head/neck/back pain, may involve any/every organ system**

SCORE SHEET

The eight (8) Mental Freedom Control Panel (MRFP) Patterns:

	A	B
1. Blaming-in	____	
2. Blaming-out	____	
3. Avoidance	____	
4. Problem-solving		____
***5. Self*-endorsement**		____
6. Helplessness/Hopelessness		____
7. Worry	____	
8. Mind/Body	____	
TOTAL	____	____

SCORE: Add rating for #4 & #5 = ___ x 3 = ____ [column B]
Add rating for #'s 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8. = ____ [column A]

Subtract A from B to get TOTAL SCORE = ____ [range = - 60 to + 60]

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<u>Directions</u>: Place the six action patterns that are consistently negative in a column marked "A." This column includes - *blaming-out, blaming-in, avoidance, hopelessness/helplessness, worry*, and the *mind/body response.* Place the action choices that are consistently positive in a column marked "B." This column includes - *self-endorsement* and the *problem-solving sentence*. For <u>each</u> of the eight action patterns available to your will, rate your*self* on the degree you apply that pattern by using a scale of 0 to 10: "0" being no amount of that mental action, "10" meaning you use the maximum amount. The total number in column "A" will be between 0 and 60. The total number in column "B" will be between 0 and 20. Multiply the total number in column B by 3 so that each column will have a possible score between 0 and 60. Subtract the total of column A from the total of column B. The possible range of the FINAL score will be between minus (-) 60 and plus (+) 60. Mark it the "FINAL TOTAL SCORE."

Stren #45: Transforming Snapshots into a Motion Picture

Welcome to stren #45, *Transforming Snapshots into a Motion Picture*. This critical insight is the process by which you assume personal responsibility for your destiny. Master this skill and you will make a quantum leap towards creating a joyous, meaningful life experience. As you attain sufficient physical and mental maturity, you can free your will from the commands of *instinct* and your *nurturers*, the process we call *becoming our own person* or attaining *self-mastery.* Mental freedom is not automatic; you must actively secure your independence because dictators resist giving up their power.

Strens #7-15 explained the seven *word-switches* that free your will to attain self-mastery. Strens #35-43 provided a useful tool, the *Mental Freedom Control Panel*, to recognize the mental action choices available to your freed will to transform information into action. Your choice of *word-switch* turns on a specific mental action pattern (MAP) while it switches off alternative actions. The insight here is that the eight choices are connected in predictable combinations. They are not isolated events. Each action choice flows into another. By teaching yourself to recognize the common links, you immensely strengthen your freed will's power to choose the positive actions and thus avoid those combinations that have become ineffective or dangerous.

Here are three examples of commonly linked *word-switches* with their action outcome:

1. "This sure was a tough issue but I worked out a reasonable plan; congratulations to me!" This is the combination of *problem-solving* and *self-endorsement*.

2. "I screwed up again. Why bother? I've got such a headache." This is a combination of *blaming-in* (I screwed up), *helplessness/hopelessness* (why bother?), and *the Mind/Body* response (I've got such a headache).

3. "What if something terrible happens while I'm driving? My heart is pounding like I'm having a heart attack and I could lose control. I can't do it. They should be able to cure me." Here is a combination of *worry, avoidance, hopelessness/helplessness,* and the *blaming-out* MAPs.

Recognizing the common combinations of the eight action patterns will strengthen your effectiveness in becoming master of your personal kingdom. *Instinct*, *tradition*, and *human* dictators express reality as snapshots; there is one way, which is their way, "the right way!" Mental freedom requires that you understand the real world is a stream of connected events whose flow you can redirect through the power of self-management. As you recognize that your mental action choices are animated, more like a motion picture than a series of indelibly printed snapshots, you position your freed will to create alternatives to the choices that *fate* and *circumstance* have made for you. Your freed will can then choose from among them using common sense wisdom to attain preferred outcomes. You will elevate your power of self-mastery by combining the two consistently constructive mental action choices, *self-endorsement* and the

problem-solving sentence. You can do no better than practicing the serial repetition of these two word-switches and the selective avoidance of those action combinations, previously effective, that have now become ineffective or dangerous.

The immature, undeveloped mind of a child is designed by nature to perceive the world as snapshots, as independent, easily understood opposing action choices: "yes or no," "good or bad," "right or wrong," "O.K. or not O.K." Two-category thinking was adaptive when survival required strict obedience to unequivocal directions. The instincts that were necessary for our ancestors to survive in a savage environment, and the control we require from our nurturers during our helpless stage of development, have become hard-wired for obedience. After untold repetitions, such dichotomous thinking becomes habit. The persistence of "either/or" thinking as we mature into adulthood distorts our perception of reality by focusing on differences and overlooking similarities. This two-category thinking that we all passively acquire promotes win or lose confrontation to establish dominance. In civilized society, the primitive, physical *fight or flight* instinct is mentally expressed as *blaming* and *avoidance*. These action paths too commonly cause us to become our own worst enemy. We make an important step to *a newer way of personal responsibility thinking* (ANWOT) as we expand our way of thinking from ***"either/or"*** to ***"both ... and"*** – by turning our "snapshots" into a "motion picture."

The 26 letters of our alphabet and the eight notes of our musical scale become meaningful when joined into a continuous pattern. Likewise, the eight *word-switches* that turn on a specific action pathway take on greater meaning when orchestrated into a sequence. Your freed will power may compose the melody of your life experience <u>if</u> and <u>as</u> you assume personal responsibility to actively select and combine your mental action pathways. With eight MAPs, whose intensity may vary along a 0% to 100% spectrum, the combinations available are infinite.

Certain sequences are commonly repeated, as shown in the above examples. Once you can identify the outcomes of specific combinations, you empower yourself to repeat those patterns that lead to preferred outcomes. This enlightenment to the ongoing drama and action in your mental "movie" will really pay off. First, teach yourself to distinguish the positive from the negative mental action combinations. Then, consistently substitute the positive for the negative combinations. These simple steps will make you the wise master of your thinking, feelings, and actions.

Here is a very important related insight: the longer a MAP exists and the greater its frequency of use, the more that action becomes habitual and resistive to change. The six action patterns we all passively acquire from *instinct* and our *nurturers* have deep roots, established long before you can equip yourself with the two MAPs you must actively self-initiate to wisely manage today's challenges, common sense ***problem-solving*** and ***self-endorsement***. Your self-mastery organ, the cerebral cortex, is not fully physically mature until your late teens, and studies of adult development conclude most individuals remain mentally and emotionally dependent on their early influencers

until their late twenties or early thirties. Many individuals never attain significant independence from the way of thinking initially programmed by *fate* and *circumstance*.

The six passively acquired mental action pathways:

The ***blaming-out*** and ***avoidance*** MAPs are the first established because they are the mental expressions of our genetically coded primitive fight or flight instinct. The ***blaming-in*** MAP is prominent only in humankind because our nurturers "educate" us in guilt and self-putdowns very early after birth. *Blaming-in* is a powerful way to direct behavior. The ***hopeless/helpless*** "give-up" MAP has been shown to be acquired early in animals and humans. Once this MAP shuts down our energy factory we passively adapt to remaining a servant to our early dictators. The ***worry*** MAP is also learned as we acquire language. Symbols become signals that transform the innate "red alert" emergency response from a physical reaction to a mental one. In today's world, danger is more symbolic and occurs over a prolonged period rather than requiring an instant action that quickly resolves the red alert state. The outcome of ***worry*** is a sustained "pink alert" state leading to a variety of *avoidance* and *mind/body* disorders. Our inherited ***mind/body*** connection is easily set off balance by the persistence of a state of "pink alert." Prolonged physiologic imbalance leads to multiple physical and mental disorders.

The two action pathways your freed will must personally initiate:

Problem-solving is creating symbols that turn on an original action path to solve a current challenge when the established path is no longer effective. Common sense solutions created through intelligence tend to lack sufficient emotional energy to overrule well established earlier action patterns. ***Problem-solving*** must be linked to ***self-endorsement*** to provide the necessary emotional energy to overrule established action pathways. Make *the Mental Freedom Control Panel* a powerful tool to recognize and consistently apply the mental action choices that work. The combinations that no longer serve their original purpose will atrophy from disuse. Individuals who repetitiously combine the ***problem-solving*** and ***self-endorsement*** patterns create a successful life experience.

Each of the eight choices offers both satisfaction and cost. You might expect that your thinking would seek whatever benefits each action pattern has to offer, but that's not how it works. The negative action paths persist because *instinct* and *tradition* link their commands to instant emotional consequences. Emotion provides great power to survive and resist change. The wiser action paths of *common sense* intellect, such as collaboration for mutual benefit, usually lack sufficient power to replace the emotionally linked *survival of the fittest, fight or flight, win/lose, self-serving* action paths of *instinct* and *tradition*. We commonly observe combinations of the *blaming, avoidance, worrying, hopelessness*, and *Mind/Body* mental actions that result in harm and respond poorly to conventional treatment. The power of this stren is that once you can label the negative combinations, you can challenge and replace them with a more effective mental action.

Linking the *problem-solving* and *self-endorsement* mental action pathways will generate the energy, creative power, and patience to make yourself a wise and powerful creator of your own destiny. The *problem-solving sentence* applies common sense wisdom and original "out of the box" self-initiated actions specific to today's issues. *Self-endorsement* creates the emotional energy required to overrule those patterns no longer adaptable to new knowledge. You will position your freed will to assume personal responsibility for the way you think, feel, and act. You will join *fate* and *circumstance* as a new member of your personal Board of Directors and succeed in becoming its Chairperson. Our best hope to create world peace is global education in the *newer way of thinking* that consistently combines these two mind-freeing, easy to teach and learn MAPs. You <u>can</u> do it! Although the methods are easy and available to anyone, they require work, patience, direction, and some degree of risk-taking. For practice in recognizing MAPs, periodically redo the exercise and score sheet provided in stren #44.

Practice: Can you label the Mental Action Patterns in real life situations?

Specific life situations provide an opportunity to practice identifying common mental action combinations. Can you identify the combinations most influential in those here provided? For the big payoff, can you recognize the combination of patterns that prevail in your own life experience? Consider the means available to you to modify the established combinations and create the pathways that lead to preferred destinations. Skill in recognizing the linkage of the mental action choices to one another will grow your self-mastery by leaps and bounds.

Examples of mental response combinations: see how they change and how you can change:

1. For several years following a football injury that left him quadriplegic as a teenager, "A" was embittered, hopeless, depressed, and preoccupied with dying. He blamed others and himself. One day he had an insight that changed his life. He realized that as long as he focused on what he had lost, didn't have now, or couldn't attain, he'd stay miserable. He began to focus on what he did have and what he could do. He obtained help to attend school including an aide to literally "turn the pages." He earned a degree in higher education, married, and adopted a child. When I saw him, he was strikingly enthusiastic and happy. Here is a mixture of the *blaming*, *avoidance*, *helplessness/hopelessness* response dramatically changed by *problem-solving* and *self-endorsement*.

2. "B's" parents were very demanding and her superior performance made her their favorite among her siblings. "B" had what most people want – brains, good looks, a good job, and recognition from her peers. Yet her perfectionism kept her miserable and she suffered from regular tension headaches. Nothing she did was quite good enough, not the way it *should* be. For example, even though she had beautiful teeth, she was preoccupied with a perceived "defect" which was unnoticeable to others, and so she tried not to smile. She was what I would call a "love junkie,"

dependent on others' approval for her self-worth. Here is a mixture of *shoulding* on herself, i.e. *blaming-in*, *worry* ("what if they don't accept me/"), and the *Mind/Body* response.

3. "C" found that a bit of alcohol before a talk relieved his anxiety. He felt better, and perhaps he did better. He found similar relief from marital stress. In time, alcohol became like a "best friend" – it gave him immediate comfort, was uncritical, and was readily available. You can imagine how this short-term gain brought increasing longer-term pain. When those who cared urged him to abandon his "friend," he became resentful and adamantly denied his growing dependence: "I can stop anytime I want!" As his work and marriage deteriorated, he was given an ultimatum: "Get help or else!" While at first he was reluctant, his resistance to AA gradually changed to enthusiasm. He acquired the wisdom others offered. His newer manner of thinking led to one of his greatest satisfactions, helping others by doing *12th step work* (mentoring others). What MAPs can you identify?

4. "D" had such panic episodes that she came to avoid most situations. She could not take her graduate exams, refused to drive an automobile, and her "what if" thinking regularly pictured the worst of all outcomes. With encouragement and support, she step-by-step confronted her fears and slowly expanded her boundaries, including driving. As the "what iffing" changed to "most likely" and she grew more confident, she was able to take and pass her graduate exams. She established a more wholesome life style. Can you recognize the change in her mental response patterns?

5. "E" was adopted when her new dad wanted a daughter rather than his biologic son. Her presence was a rose to dad, but a thorn to mom. Life for E became quite difficult when several years after her adoption, dad died. The balance of "favored" (dad) and "reject" (mom) was suddenly shifted to "reject." E was no longer the prankish, spoiled child; she quickly became a hellion. All that goes with *blaming-out* bloomed, especially lack of consideration for others. As she later expressed, "Better to be rejected for what you do than what you are. You can always change what you do; you can't change what you are." What MAP's can you identify? Could self-endorsement skills make a difference?

Stren #46: The Greatest Danger to Civilization

Welcome to stren #46. This may be the most unsettling of our collection of wisdoms. It points the finger at ourselves as the source of the imminent catastrophe we face. The greatest danger to humanity is the failure of our society, our educational institutions and leaders (that's "us"!) to teach our citizens common sense problem-solving. We have yet to make common sense common. Here is the explanation. *Instinct* and *tradition* are dictators! They hardwire our thinking to process information into two opposing categories. *Either/or* thinking emphasizes differences. There is "*our way or the wrong way*." What is not "*good*" must be "*evil* or *bad*." The action outcome of ***either/or*** thinking can be summarized as follows:

> ***My way* is absolutely good and right. *Not my way* is absolutely evil, bad, and wrong. Good is therefore justified in ridding itself of evil.**

We mindlessly support blaming others, blaming ourselves, punishment, and winning for our tribe irrespective of costs. ***Either/or*** thinking is the reason we have bigotry, prejudice, and harmful, win/lose confrontations. It is why our history is defined by a series of wars. ***Either/or*** thinking is the root cause of greed; "enough" does not exist because the "other" might have more than we do. We believe that one side is superior and it must be our side. ***Either/or*** thinking demands that we continue to use our new knowledge to create and unleash more powerful weapons until we bring about the triumph of "good" and eliminate "evil." Given today's weapons with ultimate destructive power, mutual annihilation is a likely outcome.

Dictators demand that everyone do what they say is *good* or *right*. They usually punish when anything other than their prescribed path is followed. Unfortunately, too many dictators emphasize their own self-serving interests without regard for others' well-being. The *blaming-in* mental action pathway, i.e. guilt, is a favorite method of those dictators who would forever hold their charge a prisoner of the *traditions* they espouse. Moving forward to the *self-mastery* stage of independent thinking is prohibited.

Both...and thinking recognizes that we are more alike than different. We each have our positive and negatives. We want to think *our* tribe is or should be superior, but common sense knowledge and wisdom recognizes we share common interests. Humankind is of the same family. Each tribe desires that their children survive and thrive, and have a good life that includes love, freedom, peace and happiness. Our transition from the ***either/or*** thinking to ***both...and*** thinking frees us from dictators. *Tradition* demands that we continue to remain at the level of our ancestors and their level of knowledge. Elevating our way of thinking requires that we apply *common sense wisdom* to learn from our mistakes, not punish ourselves. **The newer way of common sense thinking empowers us to evaluate the authority of *instinct, tradition*, and *human dictators* and, when appropriate, rebel from *tradition*.**

Self-mastery is the stage of development that enables us to wisely direct our creative power[11]:

- **Nature** hard-wires the action pathway ***instinct*** for instant *fight or flight,* and demands self-preservation regardless of the consequences to "not our tribe."

- **Our Nurturer's** action pathways lock us into ***tradition***. We are hard-wired by guilt to sustain allegiance to their ***either/or*** perspective of *good vs. evil,* and confront those who fail to conform. Tradition provides yesterday's proven solutions to yesterday's challenges.

- ***Self-mastery*** is the process of educating our intelligent freedom organ to solve problems by applying ***common sense wisdom*** to knowledge. We attain mental freedom from *instinct* and *tradition* and assume personal responsibility for our well-being to the degree that we strengthen our way of thinking with *common sense* wisdoms. The *newer way of thinking* enables us to create new "out of the box" solutions using new knowledge. *Common sense* replaces the ***either/or*** two-category way of thinking hardwired and demanded by *instinct, tradition,* and *human* dictators. Wisdom is universal; it takes no sides and is equally accessible to all tribes.

Let's credit and respect our nurturers, not blame them. They are usually benign dictators. They demand of us what they believe to be in our best interest when we lack the ability to survive and make wise judgments. Most nurturers carry out their mission doing their reasonable best. They are limited by the residual *either/or* thinking they learned from their own nurturers, and they are teaching immature minds that are only capable of *either/or* thinking. We are more likely to survive and thrive through our first decades by blindly following the demands of dictators than by aimlessly following our primitive, immature impulses.

Unfortunately, too many dictators emphasize their own self-serving interests without regard for others' well-being. Even when *common sense* supports rebellious action, the guilt our first controllers emotionally embed in us when resistance is not possible, and the fear of punishment still holds us a prisoner to their biased *either/or* thinking. Moving forward to the *self-mastery* stage of development requires persistent, sometimes dangerous effort. Until we teach ourselves to problem-solve using *common sense* instead of *blaming in; until we* teach ourselves to learn from our mistakes through education, rather than punishing others or blaming ourselves, we will remain servant to *instinct, tradition*, and *human dictators*. Destructive aggression and destructive confrontation will persist until we no longer exist. If we are successful in educating our population in the newer way of thinking that Einstein envisioned, we will recognize to what degree our own nurturers remain stuck in the immature ***either/or*** thinking passed on to them from their forbearers.

[11]Strens 3, 23, and 33 describe the three masters who would control our life's experience: *nature*, *nurture*, and our *self*. They each have unique action pathways according their own distinct perspective. I advise reviewing them. *Instinct, tradition*, and *self-mastery*; *endogenous*, *exogenous*, and *mentogenous*, are related labels for the forces that govern our life experience.

What is the practical significance of the awareness that we have become our own greatest threat? The simple answer is that we can endorse ourselves for discovering knowledge of such importance that our future depends in it. Informed and inspired, we can then begin the process of applying our *common sense problem-solving* energy to resolve the threat. The two-category thinking of the self-serving dictators that first direct our energy persists, hidden in the symbols that signal our beliefs – the flag of our country, and the symbols of religious or secular ideology such as the cross of Christianity or the swastika of Nazism, the mascot of our favorite sports team, ethnicity, gender, skin color, and so on. Until we recognize that the cherished symbols that we value also harbor the bigotry and prejudice we despise, the benefits of our allegiances will be negated by outdated solutions that are no longer adaptive. We can create a wonderful world if each category of linked individuals would collaborate for mutual gain instead of competing for superiority. This will not happen as long as we continue to process information into two categories. Word-switches such as the peace symbol incite us to focus on our similarities more than our differences. We can make both...and *common sense* thinking dominant if we work together. To our credit, a significant number of us already recognize the value of giving and sharing and are working to further peace and what we require to thrive. Uniting these peace leaders will create a powerful force to educate those who have yet to "get it," who remain stuck in immature ***either/or*** thinking. Leadership by edict is at best temporary. By unleashing our powerful weapon of mass construction, *common sense*, we will lead and succeed by example.

Stren #47: Good Judgment

Today's stren, #47, explains how we acquire good judgment. According to my 1979 edition of the American Heritage dictionary, ***judgment*** is the capacity to make reasonable decisions, especially in regard to the practical affairs of life; good sense; wisdom. ***Wisdom*** is good judgment; common sense; sagacity; understanding what is true, right, or lasting.

Mark Twain expressed the following opinion:

> ***Good judgment comes from experience. And where does experience come from? Experience comes from bad judgment.***

Do you understand Mark Twain's view of "good judgment"? Do you agree with him? If good judgment comes from bad judgment, why do most people put themselves down and verbally beat on themselves when they make bad judgments? What thoughts come to mind when you make a bad judgment?

You may not remember your experience of learning to walk but you surely have observed how a child learns – first leaning too far one way, falling, picking himself up, leaning too far to the other side, falling, picking himself up, and experiencing many falls over a period of time before being able to navigate a straight path. Children don't seem to get upset or put themselves down when they err and fall down. They quickly pick themselves up; they keep trying until they get it right. Learning from mistakes and from bad judgment is quite natural, a trait inherited through our genes. Yet, I've observed how many adults get so discouraged when they don't succeed in an endeavor; they utter unflattering putdown words and easily give up.

It is said that when Edison was asked how he could go on to invent the light bulb after making so many mistakes before finding that tungsten would work, he responded, "I didn't make any mistakes. I learned 5000 substances that wouldn't work." I've also read of many multimillionaires who became successful in business only after many, many attempts that others would describe as "failures." There is great wisdom in the statement, "If you don't succeed at first, try, try again." Even better: "Try again with enthusiasm." In strens #23 and 24, *The Reasonable Best Test of Self-worth* (parts 1 and 2), I suggested we teach ourselves the skill of vigorous self-endorsement each time we discovered we weren't doing our *reasonable* best, even when our endeavor didn't bring the desired results. Rather than waste our energy putting our self down, it's more constructive for us to recognize what we can learn from our bad judgment so we can progressively reach our goal in succeeding attempts. *The Reasonable Best input* measure of self-worth is our means to consistently generate enthusiasm: "Hurrah for me when I do my reasonable best." Doing our *reasonable* best is 100% within our control. The more commonly practiced but inappropriate *outcome* measure of self-worth is so different: "*I'm only O.K. if what I did got me what I want.*" No matter how absolutely we

direct our energy to the outcome, there are many influences over which we have little or no control.

I conclude that we are unwisely taught to put ourselves down when we make mistakes. We may be punished symbolically or even physically. It's like the custom of giving red marks on an exam for our mistakes instead of stars for all our correct answers. How many times have you received a red mark and said, "Aha, here's my opportunity to learn"? So let's recognize an important wisdom: we can and do learn from mistakes. Blaming, guilting, avoiding, giving up, and such related ways we commonly handle bad judgment are "bad judgments about bad judgments." Recognizing and acknowledging a bad judgment is the action pathway to effective problem-solving.

Now we can ask: Must we only learn by making mistakes, by bad judgment? There is a better way. How about learning from the mistakes other people make? Most challenging issues are not so unique that we are the only individual who faces them. Humankind has become rulers on earth because so many individuals make mistakes, learn from them and are more than willing to share their solutions with others. We are special be the degree we invent sophisticated language to acquire, store, share, and pass on solutions to problems and continuously build on others' experience. We can wisely use good judgment by learning from other's mistakes and prevent the negative consequences when we learn from our own bad judgment. "Monkey see, monkey do." Intelligent animals learn from others' successes. We do too. Do we learn from others' mistakes enough? Do we do so whenever we can? Successful people invest their energy in learning from others; they go out of their way to find mentors.

We have a very special, advanced way of teaching ourselves to consistently act with good judgment. It has been called by such names as "***cognitive rehearsal***" and "***no trial learning***." Again, because of our advanced use of symbols to mentally manipulate knowledge, we can create multiple alternatives in our mind; we experience them privately and then apply common sense wisdom to select among the alternatives. We can practice and judge the consequences of our actions before launching them into the world of real consequences. ***No trial learning*** is our most powerful tool for prevention. Do you agree that *an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure*? How important is prevention when it comes to managing our newest power to create weapons of ultimate destruction? Get the idea? I'm confident that you do.

I hope this stren will inspire you to keep growing your collection of wisdoms. Make it one of your highest priorities. Take in all that we have to offer but don't ever stop collecting. The futures of our loved ones and Mother Earth depend on us. We require sufficient Mental Wealth millionaires to make *common sense wisdom* common by spreading our mental wealth to those with less opportunity to learn. Become *one* of the *each one to teach one*. That is really good judgment!

Stren #48: *Chronic Enthusiasm*: A New Word-switch

Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm. - Ralph Waldo Emerson
Enthusiasm moves the world. – Arthur James Balfour

Welcome to stren #48. In today's wisdom tip, you will learn the two powerful words that when joined together turn on and sustain the energy we require to reach the goals we seek. ***Chronic enthusiasm*** is the most common, basic ingredient to success in any endeavor. ***Chronic*** means *sustained, of long duration, continuing,* and *constant*; it is derived from the Greek word *khronos* meaning time. ***Enthusiasm*** means *excitement, rapturous interest, fondness, zeal, activity that inspires interest,* and *passion,* as derived from the Greek word *enthousiasmos* meaning inspire.

In stren #41 I identified the *hopeless/helpless (H/H)* response as one of the most devastating behavior choices available to our will. The *H/H* response shuts down our energy factory, resulting in "give up" behavior, apathy, depression, and in the very extreme suicide. ***Chronic enthusiasm* is the antidote for the *H/H* response!** People who make their life's experience joyous and meaningful generate chronic enthusiasm. They consistently feel good and do good as their enthusiasm provides continual rewards to sustain multiple interests.

Enthusiasm uplifts ordinary or poor performance to superior output. A successful pep talk is often the ingredient that makes the underdog a winner in a sports contest when the team with greater athletic talent falls short of enthusiasm. Dwight D. Eisenhower told us, "*What counts is not necessarily the size of the dog in the fight, but the size of the fight in the dog*." Notable leaders, be they a Churchill or a Hitler, irrespective of the merit of their passion, example superior enthusiasm that inspires others to join their cause. I recall a story of a Boy Scout troop nearing the end of their long hike – tired, demoralized, complaining, and in growing disarray. The leader cut off a branch from the nearby trees for each scout and advised them that they now had a trusty steed to ride to the finish line. Branch between their legs, with renewed spirit, they galloped to their end point without further complaint.

What subject we choose is less important than the act of passionately investing in specific enthusiasms. The topics of interest to one individual may have little or no interest for another, and the variety of enthusiasms available for our special focus is endless. For example, during my medical training, my study group was being instructed by a proctologist, a specialist in diseases of the rectum and lower intestine. He was examining a patient using a proctoscope, an instrument inserted in the anus that allows one to see the interior of the large bowel. He suddenly erupted in enthusiasm: "What a beauty; you must see this!" as he called each student to come see the treasure he discovered. The malodorous, puss-filled weeping lesion he found so exciting elicited an "Ugh" from most of us. David Starr Jordan, the first president of Stanford University, tells us:

Bad poetry is not poetry at all except to the man who makes it. For its creator, even the feeblest verse speaks something of inspiration and of aspiration.[12]

I include among my own chief enthusiasms the search for wisdom and enlightenment and the joy of sharing this with others; love of family and humanity; acquiring skill in making music on my electric organ, even if done poorly; and appreciating nature's creation of beautiful wood, minerals, and flowers. I am especially uplifted as I admire the creativity of contemporary glass artists who transform the ordinary substance, sand, to create objects that inspire joy and awe. I have been impressed by the wisdom of William James who described beauty as "medicine through our eyes." I share my enthusiasms merely to point out that our enthusiasms can be selected from those having *win-win* outcomes. They enrich myself and the world, create harm to no one, and are available in abundance without limit. Goals that have limited quantity, most evident in physical wants that are sought with greed beyond need, such as money and power, often become a problem. Human ingenuity is capable of providing our population's needs, but not when our way of thinking demands that we engage in harmful *win/lose* competition without consideration for our neighbors. The newer *common sense way of thinking* creates out of the box solutions using wisdom; it is our means to make our lives safe and joyous. Our mission to survive is making common sense common through collaboration and chronic enthusiasm.

It is easy to recognize individuals lacking in enthusiasm. They commonly engage in the negative mental action patterns such *blaming* others and/or themselves, and *avoidance*, which then leads to the *helpless/hopeless* response. They show apathy, depression, physical maladies of every kind and, in the extreme, are prone to physical aggression including suicide and homicide.

In my consultation to nursing homes, I observed a common syndrome of apathy and depression described by a colleague years ago. He called it *todes erwachen*, "waiting for death." These individuals ran out of enthusiasm. On the other extreme I recall an elderly gent in a wheelchair who regularly greeted me full of enthusiasm: "Hello, doc. How are you? Anything I can do for you today?" David Starr Jordan offered this wisdom in his book, *Life's Enthusiasms*: Acquire multiple interests in our youth, when we are most able, as we have greater difficulty in our last years when we must confront our demise. I recommend his advice that we enthusiastically stuff our closets with multiple interests, even those where we know we are unlikely to complete, to insure we will have an abundance of the youthful energy that makes our life's experience joyous.

The power of ***chronic enthusiasm*** is a skill that can be easily taught and readily learned. Our society currently teaches us to enthusiastically pursue physical wealth and pamper our body. We can no longer neglect to educate ourselves in the more appropriate wisdoms that create mental wealth. They are available in unlimited abundance to sustain our vigor throughout our lifetime. In the next stren, I want to

[12] *Life's Enthusiasms*, David Starr Jordan, 1906

consider the means by which we assume responsibility to create enthusiasms that enable us to make our entire life's experience joyous and meaningful.

Stren #49: Life's Enthusiasms

Success is going from failure to failure without loss of enthusiasm. –Winston Churchill
Knowledge is power, but enthusiasm pulls the switch - Ivern Ball

In stren #48, I identified two words that identify a major source of the powerful energy we require to reach our goals – *chronic enthusiasm*. Today, let's consider the source of *chronic enthusiasm* to insure that we have it in abundance throughout our lifetime.

Role models are a prominent source for learning *chronic enthusiasm*. Some of us have been fortunate to have parents and mentors who demonstrate *chronic enthusiasm*, and impart goals that contribute to our well-being and that of our global community. But what if you are one of the unfortunates whose models were lacking in enthusiasm; or worse, exemplified its opposite, *hopelessness/helplessness*? Perhaps they demonstrated other patterns, such as *blaming* and *avoidance,* which often result in the *H/H* outcome? Individuals stuck in the negative mental action patterns are prone to become human cancers; they take, give back little, and create a world we don't desire. What alternatives are there when *fate* and *circumstance* are unkind? We know the *common sense* answer: As we mature from helpless, dependent crybabies, we are wise to recognize that we have all that we need to assume responsibility for our personal destiny. The means to acquire ***a newer way of thinking*** that empowers us to take charge of our life's experience is ours for the making.

We act wisely when we build on our enthusiasms and elevate them to our level of maturity. As children, we are enthusiastic about toys, games, sweets, magic, winning, approval, and the like. Later we recognize the joy of freedom, enlightenment, sex, love, knowledge, the arts, and giving to others. Too often our society role models compulsive enthusiasm about our appearance, and greed for money and other symbols of power and physical wealth. They are commonly pursued in a self-serving way without regard for others. We neglect cultivating enthusiasms which have no limit and add to our own well-being, as well as that of our loved ones and humanity.

How do we create the *chronic enthusiasm* that maintains our youthful vigor throughout our lifetime? The secret of *chronic enthusiasm* is wisely directing our thinking to the two consistently productive action choices available to our will power – ***the magical problem-solving sentence*** and ***self-endorsement***. *Self-endorsement* is the source of energy we create to offer love to our self and to others. The *problem-solving sentence* guides us to apply common sense solutions to *win-win* outcomes for both the present and the future. Once these basics are established, we can equip ourselves with an abundant flow of energy to invest in life's enthusiasms. The choices available for us are ubiquitous and without limit. No one needs to be deprived of life's enthusiasms except by their own lack of effort.

By adding *common sense wisdom*s to *chronic enthusiasm*, we create short and long term goals that benefit our self, our loved ones, AND our world neighbors. We can learn from the wisdoms others gladly provide, many of which allow us to benefit from

their mistakes rather than pay a price for our own poor judgment. I especially urge you to review *The Reasonable Best Measure of Self-worth* described in strens #23-24. It substitutes an input measure of self-worth that is always within our control for the common output measure of self-worth that we each acquire early during the immature dependency phase of our life when we are incapable of personal responsibility. Self-worth and *chronic enthusiasm* are closely linked together.

Now I offer a special bonus, the wisdoms of a recognized world expert on the topic of enthusiasm – David Starr Jordan, first President of Stanford University. Here are excerpts from his 1906 book, ***Life's Enthusiasms***[13] and other books.

And my message in its fashion shall be an appeal to enthusiasm in things of life, a call to do things because we love them, to love things because we do them, to keep the eyes open, the heart warm and the pulses swift, as we move across the field of life. Let "the bit of green sod under your feet be the sweetest to you in this world, in any world." ... let us keep our hearts young and our eyes open that nothing worth our while shall escape us. And everything is worth our while, if we only grasp it and its significance. As we grow older it becomes harder to do this. A grown man sees nothing he was not ready to see in his youth. So long as enthusiasm lasts, so long is youth still with us. "To take the old world by the hand and frolic with it;" this is Stevenson's recipe for joyousness. Old as the world is, let it be always new to us as we are new to it. Let it be every morning made afresh by Him who "instantly and constantly reneweth the work of creation."

Regarding teachers: Plodding and prodding is not the teacher's work. It is inspiration, on-leading, and the flashing of enthusiasms. A teacher in any field should be one who has chosen his work because he loves it, who makes no repine because he takes with it the vow of poverty, who finds his reward in the joy of knowing and in the joy of making known.

The poorest use of time is to kill it. This is the weakest and most cowardly form of suicide. Moreover it is never quite successful.

Bad poetry is not poetry at all except to the man who makes it. For its creator, even the feeblest verse speaks something of inspiration and of aspiration.

In the arts of music and painting and sculpture, one may find not only professional satisfaction, but the strength that comes from higher living and more lofty feeling. In the study of history as biography, the acquaintance with the men and women of other times, those who have felt and thought and acted and suffered to make a freer world for you and me, like inspiration may be found. History is more than its incidents. It is the movement of man. The picturesque individual, the man who could not be counted with the mass, give inspiration to history. He names such individuals as David, Christ, Caesar, Plato, Cromwell, Darwin, Goethe, Franklin, and Lincoln, among others. It is well that we should know them, should know them all, [and] should know them well....

[13]Copyright 1906 by the American Unitarian Association: printed by the Heintzmann Press, Boston

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... action should be understood in a large way, the taking of one's part in affairs worth doing, not mere activity, nor fussiness, nor movement for movement's sake, like that of "ants on whom pepper is sprinkled." As the lesser enthusiasms fade and fail, one should take a stronger hold on the higher ones. "Grizzling hair the brain doth clear" and one sees in better perspective the things that need doing.

Jordan noted that there are masters in the art of living as well as in other arts and sciences. ANWOT is our means to make ourselves masters in the art of living. Jordan believed that "the final end of education is not learning or official position, but service to humanity." The greatest service he could envision was the promotion of peace and the elimination of war. Do you agree with him?

Here is additional information on David Starr Jordan:

David Starr Jordan served as chief director, 1909-11, of the World Peace foundation, and dean of the American section of the World Peace Congress at The Hague, 1913. In 1925 he won the Herman Peace Prize for the best educational plan for preserving world peace. Jordan's books include *World Peace and the College Man*, 1916; *Ways to Lasting Peace*, 1916; and *The Outlawry of War*, 1927.

One of David Starr Jordan's enthusiasms was religion. For him, true religion was "individual, not collective," and "concerned with life, not with creeds or ceremonies." Below are more of Jordan's thoughts on religion.

"true religion concerns our relation to each other and to unseen and unmeasured powers surrounding us."

"... when organizations in the name of religion strive to resist the progress of knowledge and to punish or ostracize men and women who think for themselves and by the truth are made free, their influence is evil."

"...much that we have called religion is merely the debris of our grandfather's science."

Jordan believed that "...those who control the spiritual thought of the Twentieth Century will be religious men," and that the religious expression of the new century would "deal with the world as it is in the service of 'the God of things that are.'" He was fond of saying that wisdom "consists in knowing what to do next, virtue in doing it"; and that religion "should provide a reason why." "Intolerance is unscientific," he wrote in 1883. "So is it unchristian." For him, true religion was "individual, not collective," and

“concerned with life, not with creeds or ceremonies.” He was uncomfortable with organized religion, claiming that the “machinery of worship is mistaken for its essence”.

For Jordan, the essential feature of religion is dedication to the highest purposes. Religion should be known by its tolerance, its broadmindedness, its faith in God and humanity, its recognition of the duty of action. The following poem illustrates Jordan’s belief in the resilience of humankind:

"Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the pit from pole to pole,

I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud

Under the bludgeonings of chance,
My head is bloody but not bowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and
Looms but the Horror of the shade,

And yet the menace of the years
Finds and shall find me unafraid.

It matters not how straight the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,

I am the master of my fate,
I am the captain of my soul!"

Stren #50: Asymptote - A New Word-switch

Today's stren, #50, will astound you. It explains a concept that is essential to self-understanding and thereby to human survival. Once we assign meaning in simple terms to the one word symbol, ***asymptote,*** it will turn on profound enlightenment. Don't let the dictionary definition[14] throw you; focus on the explanation that follows. An ***asymptote*** is a curve that draws increasingly nearer to a line without ever touching it. Let's now look at an asymptotic curve and assign meaning that turns on the immense power of knowledge:

The horizontal line represents time and the vertical line indicates increase in human knowledge. Knowledge of cause-and-effect relationships is the means by which we increase our power to influence our self and all that is about us.

The curve in this simple chart illustrates that we have grown knowledge very slowly until the introduction of the scientific method. The time line could begin with the first life on earth, 3½ billion years ago. We could also mark the time line's starting point with the appearance of intelligent humans circa 150,000 years past, or our ancestor's invention of sophisticated language, which inspired a quantum leap in the growth of civilization some 50,000 years ago. Wherever you begin the time line, the observation remains the same: the line representing knowledge was almost flat until the development of the scientific method about 300 years ago. The further back we go, the flatter the line, indicating the growth of knowledge was virtually imperceptible. Our ancestors were intelligent but they had limited knowledge. Notice that the dramatic upturn of the curve representing increased power that comes with knowledge began very close to the end of the chart, and the introduction and proliferation of weapons with ultimate destructive power is occurring NOW during our very generation, an instant in historical time!

As we grew knowledge to make ourselves more powerful creators we rapidly increased our population to almost seven billion. With more scientists alive today than all of history AND with our recent technology for mass communication, we are now accelerating our constructive and destructive power in rapidly diminishing smaller periods of time.

[14]An asymptote is "a line considered a limit to a curve in the sense that the perpendicular distance from a moving point on the curve to the line approaches zero as the point moves an infinite distance from the origin." *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language.*

If we consider earth's 4 ½ billion year history as one hour, our ancestors initiated civilization in the last mere 1/100th of a second. In 1/1000th of that 1/100th second, we have so rapidly expanded our creative power that we now are in a race between cooperation and catastrophe. We can choose to mutually elevate humanity as well as instantly dissolve all that is important to us. Awareness inspires the urgency to teach ourselves ***a newer way of thinking*** that can consistently direct our power to wise outcomes.

Today's unprecedented power, expressed unwisely, is now predicted to create human catastrophe beyond most people's imagination. To prevent loss of control, we must become informed that our power for self-annihilation proceeds as an asymptotic curve, not as a straight line. No other species has reached our level of power to both elevate ourselves and create our own self-destruction! Do you understand the meaning of this asymptotic acceleration of our creative and destructive power? We have become powerful creators who are suddenly responsible for our destiny and that of the world. We – now, in this generation! – and any future generations must make our history wisely, or we will become history.

Our most recent creations from our new knowledge of universal cause-and-effect relationships, i.e. science, include sanitation, antibiotics, the industrial revolution, rapid travel, mass communication, cloning, pollution, global warming, depleting the seas, and overpopulation. None of these things pose such an imminent threat to our loved ones as the current proliferation of weapons with ultimate destructive power! We must impress upon ourselves the speed at which we now increase our power. The simple illustration of the asymptotic curve can serve to indelibly enlighten us to a fact essential for our survival. The creative and destructive force we attain with knowledge is suddenly accelerating at such explosive speeds that we have dramatically increased the danger of human catastrophe, including self-extinction.

Most people wish or pray for world peace but fail to collaborate with others to take meaningful action. Awareness of our new destructive power and the projected consequences of its current proliferation are essential for our survival. Motivating our will to take effective urgent action requires that we first recognize that our world is suddenly different. Current technology has shrunk the world; it is making more tribes our neighbors as well as creators of ultimate power. The rule of *survival of the physically fittest* that has worked for billions of years is now inverted to *destruction of the physically fittest*. The ownership of weapons with ultimate destructive power by multiple tribes, including those formerly possessing insignificant power, is occurring in our generation. This is a cataclysmic event! The "have nots" traditionally target the "haves" in a destructive *win/lose* or *lose/lose* confrontation. Awareness inspires the urgency to teach ourselves and then popularize *a newer way of thinking* that can consistently direct our power to wise outcomes.

Will enlightenment from this simple chart create sufficient energy for you to join other peace leaders in collective action? Please become a partner in creating ***a newer way of thinking***. We must reach a critical mass of Peace Leaders to make a

difference. Recommend **www.anwot.org** to as many individuals as you can. Begin with those who are closest and most receptive to our Peace Mission. Help create the domino effect that will circle the planet. ANWOT is our most promising solution to preserve our world for those we love.

Stren #51: Life Wisdoms

Welcome to stren # 51. Would you like a collection of practical assumptions people commonly arrive at through experience and reflection? A senior teacher of therapists, Lewis Wolberg[15], has identified eight common ideas people learn after wrestling with life's conflicts. Years of therapy have been distilled into the common insights offered here for your benefit. These same conclusions are found in "rules of living" laid down by poets and philosophers from the earliest times. They are bits and pieces of mental "strengths,' the wisdoms which, when harmoniously joined, permit a manner of living more in keeping with reality. Ponder on each to understand its meaning. Can you relate these assumptions to those to which you adhere?

As expressed by patients [bold from Lewis Wolberg, comments by Donald Pet M.D.]:

1. ***All people have problems and I know now that mine are no worse than anybody else's.***
   Most people, when asked if they would trade their problems with someone else's, prefer to keep their own. We are naturally prone to see the empty part of the glass when looking at our self, but see the full part when they compare with someone else. We all experience many hardships through our lifetime, including the inescapable fact that we are mortal, but we can point to multiple examples of individuals with the most severe problems who nevertheless learn to create a joyous, meaningful life. Know that there is a way and that way is available to you.

2. ***I realize I considered my symptoms a sign of weakness. I realize they aren't. I don't pay attention to them and they pass. They aren't such a big deal now.***
   In our youth, we are prone to be extremely self-conscious. We think others are scrutinizing our flaws, but the likelihood is that they don't really care because they are preoccupied with their own perceived shortcomings. We emphasize what we "should" be, instead of appreciating what we are and asking what will make things better.

3. ***One of the big problems I had was considering myself the center of the universe. It now isn't so important for me to feel so important.***
   Indeed, in our childhood, we learn we are the center of the universe. Someone must nurture us because we can't do it for ourselves. It appears that the world is made for us because things just sort of magically happen. Remember, our ancestors thought we were the center of the universe and everything revolved around us until Galileo proved otherwise. We didn't want to accept it; Galileo was punished just for questioning what everyone thought. Once we accept that the world is often unfair and learn to deal with it, life is easier to manage.

[15]From *The Technique of Psychotherapy*, Lewis R. Wolberg, M.D., 1977

4. ***I was so full of guilt I felt I would bust. When I talked things out, I realized my standards were a lot stricter than those of other people. As a matter of fact, I would purposely do things to prove I was bad; now I don't have to.***
   Guilt is unique to humankind because it is a favorite way for our nurturers to "educate" us to do as they say. Some are taught to overdose on guilt, resulting in *perfectionism* or *scrupulosity*. Such individuals are among the most unhappy even though they often excel in what they do. A bit of corruption properly applied is an effective antidote. Guilt, which I label the *blaming-in* mental action pathway, is rarely productive. Recognizing the shortcoming and asking what action will correct it is far more preferable and constructive.

5. ***The price I would pay for my indulgences was just too high. So I don't burn the world up! So I don't get as much of a bang out of doing ridiculous things! The quietness I feel more than compensates for the high life I was leading.***
   Short-term gain often results in long-term pain. Self-endorsement is our most potent acquired skill for wisely managing the innate cravings of instinct that would rule our life if left unchecked. Methods that maintain calmness such as progressive relaxation, yoga, meditation, etc. are valuable to include in everyone's collection of skills.

6. ***Why knock yourself out climbing on top of the heap? You're nowhere when you get there. You kill yourself trying. I was so ambitious and perfectionistic that I had no time for living. Now I try to find pleasure in little things, and it works.***
   Freud told us "lieben and arbeiten," *love* and *work*, are the most satisfying of life's endeavors. Why not learn to love your work? Too often we make money the end game, while making meaning of the everyday things that are abundantly available to us are far more important to creating a fulfilled life. We must teach ourselves to become our own best friend.

7. ***I don't have to blame my parents anymore for my troubles; whatever happened happened. Why should I let the past poison my present life? I feel I can live now for what life has to offer me right now.***
   During our "magic" years when we are taken care of by our nurturers, we each reasonably come to expect that this is the way it should be. How frustrating when we are confronted with the reality that the "free lunch" was temporary. Frustration innately mobilizes the desire to blame whoever or whatever is no longer doing that they "should" do. *Blaming-out* is a natural response that becomes non-productive. We do far better to teach ourselves the *problem-solving* skills with which we take responsibility for our own well-being.

8. ***I used to torture myself about the future. Worry about it so much I couldn't enjoy anything. I knew I was silly, but I couldn't stop. Now I just don't care. I do the best I can now and I know the future will happen as it will happen no matter how much I worry about it. I take things as they come.***

Worry is excessive preoccupation with life's challenges. Substitute *concern* for worry. Concern uses the smallest amount of energy required to appropriately manage an issue. Endorsing ourselves is far more productive than worrying. Strens #23-24, which put forth an input measure of self-worth rather than an outcome measure, explain the means by which we consistently maintain a positive attitude even when things don't turn out as we'd like.

There is no limit to the number of wisdoms that contribute to a wonderful life. Use these eight Mental Wealth wisdoms; take what you can use from the Educational Community collection and keep on going.

Stren #52: The Three "Success" Qualities

In today's stren, #52, you will learn three qualities that are commonly found in people who attain success in any endeavor. These qualities have been identified in multiple studies and verified in my personal observation; they consistently work for others and they will work for you. Once you identify them, you will find they are easy to learn and make part of the repertoire that will increase your popularity. They are (1) accurate empathy, (2) unconditional positive regard, and (3) congruence.

1. **Accurate Empathy**: *Empathy* is the ability to convey to another person that you understand their experience. You can resonate with the feelings, thoughts, and motives that person is going through. "I get it." Empathy does not require that you agree with the person's perspective. It very well may be that your position is quite different, even opposite to that being expressed.

   Example: Jill: "It's so painful that I lost my best friend in an accident." Mary responds: "When my mom passed, it took me months to regain interest in things. I was preoccupied and angry with the world. Is your pain anything like that, or something else?" Through active listening, we convey resonance and understanding.

2. **Unconditional Positive Regard**: *Regard* is the quality of demonstrating respect for the person even though they may act in ways that we don't respect; and indeed, we may need to set firm limits on that person's behavior. Regard for a person does not mean acceptance of their negative actions or behavior. Regard shows one's willingness to pay attention and seriously consider another's motives. The words *unconditional* and *positive* mean we are able to recognize worth in this person and all people. We are able to convey the genuineness for our respect for the person.

   Example: "I think your anger is uncalled for, but I value your friendship. What can we do to work this out?" Among the most powerful words ever spoken are, "Forgive them, they know not what they do." We are instinctively preprogrammed by our genes to respond negatively, often to fight or run when some "other" is not perceived as one of our kind. Unconditional positive regard is a way to overcome this programming.

3. **Congruence**: People who maintain consistency show the quality of *congruence*. They are not cold one day, warm another; sometimes genuine, but self-centered and impassionate at other times. What we represent to the other person is consistent, and our character can be counted on. Others may expect that when we next meet, we will show the same characteristics that we have previously demonstrated.

Example: “Mom had so much on her shoulders, but she was always there to listen and offer words of wisdom.”

Because these three behavioral skills work most effectively when joined together, we are wise to practice and develop our abilities in each of them. They are quite easy to learn. They don’t require unusual intelligence, good looks, material wealth, or even good health – just serious effort. These three skills open the door to dialog. The combination of *accurate empathy*, *unconditional positive regard*, and *congruence* show willingness to share and work together on a common problem. They invite others to participate in a collaborative, cooperative effort to solve problems in such a way that all parties share in the most positive outcome the circumstance permits. When people can come together and communicate using the magical *problem-solving* common sense wisdom, we can create a *win/win* outcome that works for today and the future. Treat yourself with these qualities to become you own best friend lifelong.

The prerequisite behaviors required to achieve these three social skills, and the multitude of others that make us Mental Wealth millionaires, have been described in previous strens. Refer to the *self-endorsement* skills, the magical *problem-solving* sentence, and *the Seven Mind-freeing, Life-changing, World-saving Word switches* described in earlier strens. They enable us to become our own person, to free our will from the dictators who would otherwise determine our life experience. Thereupon we can acquire these three success qualities, and many other wise behaviors that support a joyous, meaningful life experience.

Remember, none of us are born with knowledge or social skills. The instinctive behavior we inherit is often not very civil, and we cannot choose our parents or most of the other nurturers - the role models whose behaviors we mimic to first become who and what we are. We are totally dependent on fate and circumstance until we mature sufficiently to teach ourselves what we need to succeed in our environment. *Accurate empathy*, *unconditional positive regard*, and *congruence* are three proven skills that you can add to your repertoire, or strengthen if you already possess them. I believe anyone can create a joyous, fulfilled life experience by acquiring the common sense way of thinking that is available free for the asking. Collect enough of the wisdoms proven by others to work, and you will grow your collection to become a Mental Wealth millionaire. These three are among the most powerful.

Stren #53: Resilience

Today's stren identifies a skill that is closely related to enthusiasm. *Resilience* is the energy that enables us to bounce back from the stresses that we each encounter in our lifetime. My dictionary defines resilience as follows: "The ability to recover quickly from illness, change, or misfortune; buoyancy;" also, "the property of a material that enables it to resume its original shape after being bent, stretched or compressed; elasticity." Resilience is one of those essential ingredients that contribute to surviving and thriving in an imperfect environment.

We are all born with considerable resilience. Our genes have programmed behaviors throughout our history that enable us to adapt to our environment and continue the life cycle. Self-preservation is among the strongest of instincts, and we readily observe this in all life, particularly animals. One of my favorite examples of resilience is the process of learning to walk. While you may not remember your struggles to walk, you have surely watched a child falling repeatedly, then picking him or herself up and trying again. How many falls to the left, forward, backwards, here and there, with the self pick-me-ups are required before success is attained? Little or no instruction is needed; we already somehow know to keep trying, and with repetition, we make ourselves skilled walkers.

The problem is that our upbringing tends to nurture resilience to death. Instead of recognizing that mistakes and poor judgment are necessary tools for learning, we often teach the *blaming-in* mental action pattern - guilt and self-putdowns - that bring on a *helpless/hopeless* response (***H/H***). The *H/H* mental action is among the most devastating because it shuts down our energy factory. We come to assume (usually falsely) that our efforts will only be wasted, and so we stop trying and passively accept whatever fate and circumstance demand of us. The value of this stren is to recognize that just as we learn helplessness, we can also unlearn it. We can teach ourselves to turn our energy back on and rekindle the resilience whose embers were not extinguished, but remain still simmering.

During my training in psychiatry at John's Hopkins, one of my professors was Curt Richter, who was distinguished for his studies on learned helplessness. Rodents put in a tub of water normally move about until they find safety. Experimental rodents whose motility was restrained when put to the survival test exhibited "give up" behavior and drowned. Consider the baby elephant who is restrained by a rope tied to a wooden stake driven in the ground. When the elephant grows in strength and size, it would be a simple task to pull himself free of the tether, but he does not. The resilience nature provides is extinguished by nurture.

In *Man's Search for Meaning*, Victor Frankl concluded from his experience as a concentration camp prisoner during World War II that the important ingredient in those few who survived was "meaning." They recognized they were free to find meaning and value in living, and had a responsibility to do so. Those who saw only hopelessness lacked the resilience to survive. My sister-in-law has been working on a project to

interview the survivors and families of survivors of the holocaust. I am told that resilience is among the most important qualities observed in their histories.

These observations regarding *hopelessness/helplessness* help us to understand why it is so important to create many life enthusiasms that sustain meaning and purpose in our lives. We can see that the variety of enthusiasms and values to which we can direct energy is unlimited. Name any topic, item, artistic endeavor, etc. and we can find individuals who invest their energy to learn more of it. The spark of meaning is within us if we seek it and nourish it. Our search begins with the awareness that we have the freedom to assume responsibility for making choices. Above the circumstances that would limit our choice-making, we hold the human spirit of creativity. Frankl tells us we can always take a stand; our attitude is ours alone. He who has a *why* to live can bear most any hardship. Frankl, who had married not long before his entire family was arrested and killed in concentration camps, attributes his resilience to his love and persistent hope to be reunited with his wife, although she did not survive.

Religious leaders and philosophers through the ages have a high degree of consensus about the most powerful sources of resilience: doing service to benefit others. Mature individuals express greater enthusiasm in their acts of giving that those of receiving. Einstein suggests the life of an individual has meaning only insofar as it aids in making the life of every living thing nobler and more beautiful. Love is recognized as a powerful source of energy, enthusiasm, and inspiration to a meaningful life.

If love is indeed one of the most important ingredients in resilience, we are wise to learn what we can do to create an abundance of this force. In the next series of strens, please share with me an exploration of what love is and how we create it.

Stren #54: Why Love?

Welcome to stren #54: Why make love our most important enthusiasm? In prior strens, we have discussed the process of freeing our will power from *instinct* and *tradition* to assume responsibility for our personal well-being. Who and what we are, and how we are to think, feel, and act are first determined by endogenous and exogenous forces over which we have no control. For simplicity, I have called these forces *instinct* and *tradition*. More broadly they have been labeled *nature* and our *nurturers,* or *fate* and *circumstance*. These early controllers are dictators in that they lay out specific action paths and command us to follow them. They don't ask our opinion because it takes years for us to develop one. Nature has gifted us its most advanced brain, containing a sophisticated computer we call the *cerebral cortex*. Like any computer, it is first programmed to follow commands. Unlike other computers, when our cortex is mature and equipped with language and knowledge, we become super intelligent. As we grow more intelligent, we become capable of self-programming. However, no matter how powerful we become, until we assume personal responsibility and rebel from our early masters – a process we call *becoming our own person* or *self-mastery* – our intelligence will remain servant to the whims of *instinct* and our *nurturers*.

Now here is the most interesting part of the process of our becoming powerful creators. To the degree that we free our will from the demands of our early dictators, we make ourselves responsible for our own destiny and all that is about us. We empower ourselves to change what *instinct* and our *nurturers* have commanded. The greater the knowledge we acquire, the greater our power to make both constructive and destructive changes. We have suddenly acquired so much power that surviving and thriving requires that we direct our energy constructively. Today's weapons of destruction offer no second chance. Our new pathway must be prevention rather than making mistakes and curing them. We must get it right the first time.

Here is the problem: We acquire the power of knowledge before the wisdom to consistently direct that power constructively. Mental freedom is the power to act both wisely and stupidly. The power of knowledge has put us in a race, like it or not, between civilization and self-annihilation. The recent explosion of knowledge has thrust our generation into the role of godlike dictators. We have both the opportunity and the burden to rule wisely; or we could abdicate our throne and passively allow *instinct* and the established traditions of our *nurturers* to persist. This would be a very stupid choice, because *instinct* and *tradition* include destructive aggression and war as a favored means of resolving conflict. The *win/lose* outcome of destructive confrontation is no longer applicable. The outcome of weapons of ultimate destruction is *lose/lose*.

So, here we are, teeter-tottering between remaining servant to past masters and forging ahead into unexplored pathways. If we choose to move forward, what tools shall we prepare to equip us for the journey? This is a seminal issue we'll now consider. I proposed the following:

1. **Resilience**: We need to know that we have the ability to pick ourselves up when we fall down, when progress encounters adversity. Resilience is the antidote for the hopeless/helpless mental response that shuts down our energy. We strengthen our resilience by creating values that make life meaningful, that give us a motive to outwit adversity.

2. **Chronic enthusiasm**: Our freed will requires a consistent source of energy. We need to know the means available to us to turn on energy; so, let's review the ways to mobilize our energy-producing factory to supply an abundance of what we need. Our most efficient way is by creating symbols and assigning them meaning that inspires action. A special ability of our cortex is to create high energy symbols that serve as signals to switch on preferred action paths. I label these high energy symbols "word-switches" because they direct energy to new paths while turning off pre-established pathways. Our freed will can use symbols to trigger chemical and physical changes in our body. For example, thinking about biting into a lemon may produce a response similar to actually biting into one. Someone shouting "fire" in a theater may set off an emergency response even more pronounced than an actual encounter with a fire. By recognizing our power to create symbols, link them with meaning, and use them as signals to incite action, we make the range of enthusiasms endless. The issue then becomes, "What enthusiasms do we prefer to value?"

3. **A value map**: Once our freed will is strong and resilient and is clear on the process of creating energy, we can focus on the selective creation of values. What new enthusiasms shall I invest my energy into? What enthusiasms already provided by *instinct* and my *nurturers* are important to keep, and which would I be wise to replace? Most important, as I become a powerful creator, what new directions will best lead to a joyous, meaningful life?

Let's look about us and ask, what are the most popular enthusiasms? Which are most constructive? Which do I prefer? I observe that seeking love, making money, watching T.V., eating good food, and raising children are high priorities. In general, men invest in sports, sex, and competition; whereas women devote more energy to their superficial appearance, pleasing men, love, and domestic interests. However, the stereotyped differences between the sexes are diminishing. Indeed, the fluidity with which we modify our values and enthusiasms is itself quite striking. What is important to a child changes with maturity and education. It is also apparent that some valued enthusiasms are constructive while others are not. While many pray for others, some prey on others. Most people expend their energy in ways that contribute to the well-being of the world, while some endeavors, like cancer cells, take and contribute little or nothing constructive.

While I find it very interesting to see the number and variety of enthusiasms in which people invest their energy, I am most interested in which enthusiasms, and have the biggest payoff. What priorities are wisest to select when investing my energy? When I turn to the advice of the world's scholars, religious leaders, and philosophers who invest

their energies in discovering the art of living, there is surprising unanimity of opinion: The most universally constructive endeavor is LOVE, giving something of yourself to benefit someone or something. Therein is the kernel of wisdom I attempt to convey in this stren, to prepare you for the coming strens on *love* and *love creation*.

Stren #55: What is Love?

Welcome to stren #55. This stren provides an exploration of love. The more you understand about love, the easier it will be to strengthen your love creation skills. A side benefit is that you will learn how to become your own best friend. The testimonial of others, personal experience, and observation verify the importance of love to a fulfilling life. This and the next four strens offer directions in growing your ability to create love and the highest form of love – forgiveness. We lack disciplined teaching programs that offer these skills. Do you agree? This is an attempt to fill this void.

You probably know one or more persons who have a great capacity to express love, and you can think of others who have a great capacity to be hateful. The energy that goes into producing love or hate can be under our direct control. We can have an immense say in the degree we love and hate, and in what form we choose to express our self – how much, how many, and how long.

On love:

Many people whom I have asked to express what love is, respond by saying they don't know how to describe it but they "know what it is." The disciplined teaching and learning of a skill requires identification: "Learning starts with labeling." Let's begin by attempting to assigning meaning to what we will call "love." What we call "making love" is often better described as "making sex" or "infatuation."

We'll distinguish 3 types of actions that are commonly labeled "love."

1. **Erotic Love, *Eros***: Erotic love is an intense sexual desire for another person. Our genes pre-program each of us to fuck to insure procreation. Little or no instruction is needed. Instinct equips us with an action so compelling that we are willing to put ourselves in great danger for a very brief pleasure. This is especially observed in animals. We can understand why; sex is essential for the survival of any species. Erotic love is very non-discriminating in that the stimulation leading to a pleasurable response may be from multiple sources including our self. Nature manages to keep our sexual interest dormant for over a decade until puberty, brings it forth with overwhelming intensity, and then it retreats in later life.

2. **Parental Love**: The "filial" love we have as a parent. Parental caring is, like sexual attractiveness, biologically motivated; it may be turned "on" or "off" in higher species by a hormone. In creatures with a long period of dependence, such as ourselves, the love of a parent for a child is also learned from our nurturer role models. The dominance of estrogenic hormones suggests why females excel in nurturance while androgenic hormones explain why competitive aggression is more characteristic of males. Here is a classic example, though, where nature is "both...and," not simply "either/or" –each sex has both types of hormones, but usually in different proportions.

3. **Mature Love**: The third type of love is “intense, affectionate concern for another person” gifted without contingency. Mature love is energy and attention we our *self* create for the benefit of someone (including our self!) or something beyond ourselves. It adds to what our nature and nurture provides. My dictionary adds a second definition: “the benevolence, kindness, or brotherhood that man should rightfully feel toward others.” I would prefer to change “should feel” to “would wisely” feel toward others. I consider love and forgiveness acts of free will, rather than a “should” imposed on me by some authority.

Of these three sources of love – nature, nurture, and our *self*, this stren focuses on the “mature love” we our *self* create. Love is not limited in quantity; you can make a little, a lot, or virtually none. A parent with eight children is not restricted to giving 1/8th of the love that a one-child parent can offer to each child. Indeed, each of those eight children might receive more love than an only child. Likewise, you may love (and/or hate) an “other,” many “others,” and you may love your *self*. Giving love to one person doesn’t mean you love another any less.

Mature love is a willing gift – you have great freedom to generate love and decide where and how you direct it. Your loving may be short or long-lived. Your loving may continue, cease, increase, or decrease, in the same manner a factory may increase, decrease, or cease production; and like the factory, you may even change what it is producing. Indeed, these strens on love propose that you review all of the products coming from your energy factory and increase your loving capacity.

What thoughts do you hold about love? How do your views agree and differ? Most religions and ethical programs teach to love your neighbor as yourself. What does this mean to you? I prefer the wording: “Learn to love yourself so you have love in abundance to give to others.” It is quite difficult to give away what we don’t have. Mature love is created in our cerebral cortex when we free our will to act with common sense and intention; we create symbols that magically transform natural energy to the energy of love that we can gift to others. A valentine’s card that featured our cerebral cortex would be more appropriate than one with a heart.

Qualities of a lover:

Pure love requires the maturity to enjoy giving without strings. There is satisfaction in the act of giving even when love is not returned. The gift of love is a complete act in itself. The lover has learned to love him/her self and is skillfully self-endorsing. When you fill your cup and it overflows, you then have the greatest capacity to give. The person who gives with an unfilled cup often resents the receiver when their response is less than expected or hoped for. The love-maker skillfully uses energy to enrich others, and the world we share...and experiences joy in so doing. He/she has become aware of his/her natural tendency to blame, and redirects this energy in a positive direction.

The lover may have very limited or immense capacity. Most religions and cultures have examples of infinite lovers, for example, Jesus. While some strive to be an infinite lover, reality suggests that doing your "reasonable best" is a practical, attainable goal. To me, this means allocating an appropriate amount of our energy to continued growth of our love creation capacity and being humble enough to accept our human limitations and fallibility.

In my observation, many people create and feel their love but have great difficulty expressing it. It is as though we have a rationed quantity of love and store it for when we really need it. The words "I love you" are rarely expressed. Instead, we devise really obtuse ways to express love in a manner that won't hurt if the loved one doesn't "properly" receive our love. In a recent popular sitcom, Raymond is asked by his wife why he never says "I love you." Though he quite obviously does, he chokes on the word and finally says, "I show you with my eyes."

While the mature lover derives joy in the act of giving love and isn't giving merely to get, the capacity to receive love is also a most worthy quality of mature love. Recognize that the loved person's acceptance and acknowledgment of the love offered by another is itself an act of love; it does enrich the satisfaction of even the most experienced lover ... AND is immeasurably encouraging to the novice lover in their tender and often clumsy attempts to grow their skill in love creation. Maintaining unconditional love is a very advanced skill that few attain; thus, the gracious acceptance of the giver's gift is <u>your</u> gift. I have observed many people who become quite good lovers but have little capacity to graciously accept love. I have heard the proposal that we create a marvelous life if we develop four qualities: giving love, appropriately expressing anger, accepting love, and appropriately receiving anger.

Do you agree with the above description of love? What would you add? Subtract? How do you assess your own love creation skills? Write down your idea of love-making. Share this stren with another person who would be willing to discuss it with you. Express your thoughts. The goal is for you to examine your own view of love and be able to put it into words.

Stren #56: Love and Sex

Welcome to stren #56. Today I want to consider the relationship between love and sex. A significant source of our problems is mistaking erotic love for mature love. Love and sex have distinct qualities. They can be experienced together or separately. Together, they can be glorious and mutually enhancing. Though our language commonly associates them, like health, wealth, and happiness, they need not go together. People can be healthy, physically wealthy, and yet quite unhappy; they may have poor health, be materially limited and yet enjoy each day. Sexual attraction need not include love and vice versa. Mature love is the catalyst to the most fulfilling sex.

1. **Mature love** is an unconditional *gift* for the benefit of one or more individuals. We originate mature love in our freedom organ, our mature cerebral cortex, and transmit it from within to without. Mature love is a self-initiated intentional act.

2. **Eros or sexual gratification** is primarily a *response* to stimulation of nerve endings prewired by nature. Stimulation signals pleasure areas located in the older part of the brain to turn on and thereafter be consciously experienced and interpreted in our cerebral cortex.

Sexual urge and filial love are regulated by chemicals. They may be turned on or turned off by hormones. Sexual appetite is also learned in higher species. We have sensory receptors located primarily in the skin and concentrated in certain areas of our genitals. These receptors are connected by nerves to the oldest portion of the brain, and produce signals that switch on what I believe to be the single most common and the third most intense physical pleasure we can experience. It may be surpassed only by direct stimulation of pleasure centers localized in the brain and the sustained emotional "high" associated with certain drugs. Once this most intense pleasure is experienced, our appetite may become voracious. Behavior that is rewarded is repeated! Think how our behavior might change if babies were born instantly and orgasm came nine months later.

Sexual pleasure is quite non-discriminating towards the source of the stimulation. Our genitals lack eyes or a brain and transmit signals in response to varied sources. Mature love, while having powerful emotional ties, is more strongly influenced by the last to develop "thinking" portion of the brain, our *freedom organ*. And while loving actions may be acquired from role models, love creation is a more conscious "willing" *act* that grows with mental and emotional maturity and the development of our skill in thought control. Infatuation, somewhat like the attraction of one magnet to another, may be a mental and emotional by-product of sexual or other emotions. It does not have the same voluntary giving quality as love.

If sexual contact is interpreted negatively, like any experience, loss of appetite and distaste may follow. I have been told by many heroin addicts that when going through withdrawal they may find that orgasms are energy-draining and not at all pleasurable. We are interpretive creatures whose use of symbols powerfully influences

our experience. I find it of great interest that the same area of our older, automatically regulated brain that is dedicated to pleasure is intermingled with the instinct for physical aggression. This makes sense. If we had sexual urgency but lacked the drive to pursue it, our species would become extinct.

Another striking characteristic of erotic love is nature's design that keeps our sexual interest dormant for over a decade until puberty, brings forth its calling with overwhelming intensity, and then draws it back in later life. Eros is one of many "clocks," like sleep/wake cycles and menopause, that nature's genes wire prior to birth. Ritualistic sexual behavior is present in all species whereas mature love requires the presence of the sophisticated mature cerebral cortex. It is critical to understand that mature love is a voluntary, intentional act that we may initiate as we free our will power from the control of *nature* and our *nurturers*, from *instinct* and *tradition*. Eros is a given; mature love is an opportunity and a responsibility.

Do we *fall* in love or *crawl into love*? The distinction is important! "Falling" is governed by gravity, a force outside of our jurisdiction. "Crawling" is powered by our own will, an act we choose. Nature has deemed procreation basic to survival of a species. It so powerfully pre-programs its subjects to engage in reproductive activity that copulation is ritualistically pursued even when life itself is at risk. Common sense is commonly ignored. *Win/lose* confrontation for mating rights is readily observed, most transparently in the animal kingdom. Genes overlap the location of aggression and pleasure centers in the primitive portion of all brains, add features designed to attract a mate such as chemicals, and rituals that assure that procreation will occur and that newborns will be nurtured to a state of self-survival. Nature demands that we "fall into sex." We also call this "infatuation" and, mistakenly, "love." Thus, I say, "We *fall* into sex; we *crawl* into love."

Our *nurturers* and societal *traditions* add to *nature's* gravitational pull for "falling into sex." Money or its material equivalents are required for survival. Sex is a very saleable commodity. Sexual activity commonly results when a payer offers money and/or security to a needing payee; love may be of secondary importance. What is the message in the hit song, *Diamonds Are a Girl's Best Friend*? Society rewards sex, even when love may be limited or lacking, by offering economic benefits and social and religious pressure to come and stay together "until death do us part." Marriages of convenience are widespread! Unconditional concern for the "other" is often lacking in nature's plan. You have heard the term "selfish lover." Intercourse is for one's own gratification with little or no regard for the other.

Extending the dependency on others that we all require during our prolonged immaturity is common, and can include emotional as well as physical dependency. Approval from others may be compulsively sought. In the extreme, the needy individual becomes a "love junkie." This was clearly expressed by a promiscuous young woman who abhorred sex but confessed, "I couldn't resist anyone who told me they loved me, even though I knew they didn't mean it." To the credit of *self*-mastery, we often create love from the incentives to procreate that have been provided by *nature* and our

nurturers. What begins as the instinctive need to “get laid,” to get pregnant, or to securitize physical needs and wants, becomes the incentive that inspires mature love.

The enthusiasms that are hard-wired into us by *instinct* and *tradition*, such as erotic love, sustain our dependency. Frustration follows when these commands remain unfulfilled or uncompensated by self-mastery. Such dependency is expressed in many of our popular love songs: *Prisoner of Love* (Perry Como), *You Always Hurt The One You Love* (Mills Brothers), *I Want You, I Need You, I Love You* (Elvis Presley), *I Can’t Stop Loving You* (Ray Charles), *Saving All My Love For You* (Whitney Houston), *Addicted to Love* (Robert Palmer), *I Just Can’t Stop Loving You* (Michael Jackson), *Can’t Live Without Your Love and Affection* (Nelson), *How Am I Supposed To Live Without You* (Michael Bolton), *Can’t Help Falling In Love* (UB40), *You’re My Everything*.

Nature insures at least minimum competence in fucking; most of us “get it” with minimum instruction. This is hardly the case for mature love, which we must create through a gradual, active willing process. Advertisements for techniques to enhance sexual pleasure are ubiquitous, but where does one “buy” a course on becoming an expert mature lover? Our establishment has yet to institutionalize education for its populace on the basic skills of mature love and the *newer way of thinking* (ANWOT) essential for our survival. We are unlikely to change our educational system until enough citizens recognize the difference between love and sex. Mature love is such an important issue that I recommend you give it considerable attention and share your views with others. I urge you to give some priority to the next strens on the skills of mature love. Popularizing mature love will have a powerful influence on making our world a safer, more enjoyable home.

Stren #57: Love Creation

Welcome to stren #57, ***Love Creation***. This stren offers an unorthodox *common sense* explanation of the process by which we make mature love. Mature love is our most important source of the energy we need to assume responsibility of our life experience, the secret to resilience and creating the multiple enthusiasms that sustain our youthful vigor. It is the most powerful antidote to *helplessness/hopelessness* and other negative action paths that threaten our well-being. In short, mature love is the most worthy universal asset we can attain.

Your love-creation factory and steps to strengthen it:

In previous strens, I indicated that mature love is a willing gift. You have great freedom to generate love and decide where and how you direct it. You may love continuously, short or long-term, and increase or decrease love in the same manner a factory may increase, decrease, or cease production. Like any factory, you may even change what is produced. This stren proposes that you review all the products you create in your energy factory and increase your production capacity for mature love. Is love among its many skillfully-created products? What other products can you identify: hate? Jealousy[16]? Worry? Greed? Ideas? Knowledge? Music? Material products?

Your factory production is determined by a Board of Directors. It consists of your genes (what worked in the past), your nurturers (what you are expected to want), and your*self* (what you assume is wise). There is a chief executive officer (**CEO**) of your Board of Directors who has the last word. The other members of your Board of Directors will be considered in a later stren. Though you may become CEO of your energy factory's production, you would be unwise to assume this powerful position without appropriate skill. Consider your lack of competence when you first came into this world, and the many years *nature* and your nurturers served as CEO to make you what you are. Much of the early teachings we receive from *instinct* and our *nurturers* not only don't encourage us to become CEO of our factory, they are persuasive in immobilizing such aspirations – dictators want their perspective to be obeyed and are usually intolerant of new directions, no matter how brilliant.

You can learn to wisely direct what and how much your factory produces. This *taking charge* process has been referred to elsewhere as "becoming our own person." We learn from those who have developed such skills, have clarified the resources needed, and may also be worthy role models – that's what strens are about. Familiarity with the energy factory within you starts you on your path to becoming CEO of your Board of Directors. This awareness is essential to inspire you to assume personal responsibility for your life experience.

You pick which TV station you watch; you may choose to develop a job skill, study a language, or learn to play a musical instrument; AND you have the resources to

[16]Jealousy may be just behind prejudice as a primary source of destructive aggression.

grow your love-making factory. Now let's focus on the love creation portion of your energy factory and consider the process that empowers you to "turn on" your production.

Mature love is a skill that you may choose to study, learn, and develop. You have a good start if you have been lucky enough to have been provided loving role models. Disciplined preparation in love has long been neglected; most people could far better explain how to play bingo than how to create love. We receive far more instruction in reading, job training, and so much else. You will likely need to make room in your factory and re-direct some of your attention and energy; i.e., selectively challenge old established habits that don't get you what you want, and frequently get you what you don't want.

Action begins with a small spark of faith in yourself that initiates, "Yes, I can." The ingredients to growing your love creation factory are all available to you. You already have or can surely acquire these five ingredients:

1. **Faith in yourself**: The tiny spark needed to initiate, "Yes, I think I can." Borrow this spark from someone else if you lack it.

2. **Work**: Mental practice that anyone can do; improvement with effort is quite satisfying.

3. **Patience**: Many simple self-endorsement techniques that create patience are available for the asking.

4. **Direction**: Available free in this collection of wisdoms, self-help books, and role models.

5. **Risk-taking**: Willingness to rebel and let go of what once worked, creating factory space.

Superior intelligence, material wealth, and even good health are not required. Absolutely zero magic is needed, though the new skills may seem to work magically. Like any skill, love creation is acquired step-by-step, in bits and pieces, and some bits are acquired prior to mastery of the more advanced pieces.

The main intent of this stren is to create the awareness that you can create a joyous meaningful life and inspire you to take action. Begin with the small spark, "Yes, I can," that is the antidote for the *helpless/hopeless* response. Then you can acquire the additional "strengths" or mental skills that grow your love-creation energy. Each skill is teachable and learnable. From my own efforts at growing a mature love factory, as well as others', I have identified many component skills. The "bits and pieces" that are useful for growing your energy factory emphasize *self-endorsement* – becoming your own best friend (a very basic skill worthy of your earliest attention!); strengthening faith – the "yes I can" skill, using the near-magical problem-solving sentence; patience;

learning from mistakes; acquiring the vocabulary of mature thinking; recognizing and dealing with blaming (resentment, jealousy, destructive aggression); the skill of forgiving; the “reasonable best” measure of your self-worth (avoiding perfectionism); dealing with anxiety; clarifying your values; and ultimately the skill of creating new strens that are most meaningful to you and that may also make a difference as you share them with others. The strens just identified are picked from a larger collection of wisdoms because they most directly contribute to developing your love creation factory. They will contribute in other ways to your skill in the management of your life, to feeling good and doing good. They are more completely identified in stren #58.

Stimulate your mind with these questions: Terrorists often claim they act for the love of their principles, usually but not always religious. Do terrorists meet your criteria of love-making? Where might they fall short? Why do people become terrorists? Why do others follow them?

Stren #58: The Skills of Mature Lovers

Welcome to stren #58, ***The Skills of Mature Lovers***. Unlike erotic love, which nature pre-wires in each of us, mature love is an acquired skill that must be learned, like reading or playing a musical instrument. This stren considers the specific skills we acquire to create mature love.

Religious leaders and recognized scholars have provided us with two universally accepted wisdoms necessary to create the peaceful love-filled world we wish or pray for:[17]

1. **Treat others as I want to be treated.**
2. **Love myself so that I may love my neighbor.**

A large number of individuals understand and practice the skills of mature love but they have yet to sufficiently unite to educate our global population. We have some pretty good ideas but so far we lack the will to proceed to succeed. Perhaps this is because we must first identify the specific skills that contribute to making ourselves mature lovers. This stren is my attempt to do so. These skills are all readily taught and learned, and can be mastered with study and practice. The collection of strens in this series is a beginning curriculum.

1. Self-endorsement, becoming your own best friend: If you were to take several random "tape recordings" of the conversation that goes on within your mind and replay them, would it sound like two good friends talking? Does it seem more like there is a terrorist(s) within your self-conversations? Skill in self-endorsement enables you to become a marvelous lifelong companion to your*self*.

2. Using the "magical problem-solving sentence": This stren encourages universal common sense to create wise solutions to life's challenges using current knowledge. This sentence replaces earlier action pathways that are prone to result in blaming, avoiding, anxiety, depression, and the like. **Given this situation, what is most likely to make things better for me <u>and</u> you (us <u>and</u> them), for now <u>and</u> in the future?**

3. Dealing with blaming: Our natural tendency to hold someone or something as the cause of our discomforts (often our *self*) usually leads to a desire to hurt or punish. Blaming others or blaming yourself wastes energy that could be used more productively. The *blaming* mental response is one of the easiest to identify and convert to beneficial problem-solving.

4. The skill of forgiving: Resentments and jealousy are natural and common, but are rarely productive. Forgiveness is the advanced expression of love that reclaims the energy wasted by resentment and jealousy.

[17] I believe the minor liberties I have taken in selecting this wording from multiple expressions of these two principles accurately convey their meaning.

5. Strengthening faith – the "yes I can" skill: Until you have some belief that you can make a real difference, you aren't likely to call on the energy to make a change. When this innate skill has been squashed through learned helplessness, you can "borrow" enough of a spark to rekindle your own and get back on track.

6. **Patience:** One of the five basic ingredients in acquiring a new skill, patience needs to be acquired. We all enter life with the motto "I want what I want when I want it." Frequent self-endorsement for your efforts and each small step along the way create patience without the need, as one person requested, for a "crash course." There are multiple techniques to strengthen patience, especially *emotional self-endorsement* and *secondary endorsement*.

7. Learning from mistakes: When we learn to walk, we need to overdo it, lean too far "this way," then "that way," and fall quite a few times. Children usually tolerate their mistakes better than adults - a "fall" while learning to walk leads to more effort and "success." Energy is directed to learn from mistakes and make them a source of growth rather than the guilt, putdowns, blaming, etc. so common in early education.

8. The "reasonable best" measure of your self-worth (avoiding perfectionism): Unrealistic expectations are a major source of unhappiness and depression. The perfectionist can be quite effective and productive but is usually among the most miserable, depressed people. This "input" measure of self-worth is within your control 100% of the time to evaluate your efforts and preserve your self-worth.

9. Your value system: Since most decisions we make are based on our beliefs and assumptions rather than scientific fact, we make more informed use of our resources when we are able to clearly identify our values. The stren, *My (your) Assumptive World,* among others in this collection, encourages you to increase awareness of your own values.

10. *A newer way of thinking* (ANWOT): We are born immature and dependent. Achieving maturity, what some researchers have described as "becoming our own person" requires newer ways of thinking that often are quite contradictory to our earliest ways. The mental skills that create mature love are the components of *a newer way of thinking* (ANWOT). They represent my attempt to develop a systemic method of teaching the skills needed for becoming your own person.

11. Acquiring the vocabulary of mature thinking: Words trigger patterns of thinking and action. Some simple changes in your vocabulary, *trigger-words*, can turn on the mature thinking that was not possible during your early years of development.

12. Dealing with anxiety: Excessive anxiety, panic, and phobias are far more common than most realize. The common tendency to "what if" and anticipate the worst, usually most unlikely, possibilities rather than think "most likely" is often the source of excessive anxiety.

13. Ultimately strengthen your skill in creating your own original strens: The mental strengths here offered are only a fragment of the multitude of possible strengths that add value and meaning to your life. An important goal in developing basic skills in making your life more meaningful is to develop your capacity to create your own teaching/learning skills, ones that fit your unique life's situation. Hopefully you will create some worthy of sharing with others, adding to the general pool of strens.

Stren #59: Forgiveness

Welcome to stren #59. This stren explains why *forgiveness* is one of the most powerful of all mental skills, perhaps the most. I believe popularizing the skill of forgiveness is essential to attain peace of mind and create peace in the world. See if you agree.

"Forgive them, for they know not what they do." These are perhaps the most important words ever spoken. Forgiveness = *for* + *giving*. Forgiveness is a powerful, high-energy form of love. Love is energy whose expression adds a positive experience to the world. It is a gift of our own creation for the benefit of an "other" and our *self*. Love and forgiveness are primarily human qualities because we create them using our unique language-equipped cortical brain. For the same reason, we are also distinguished by the degree we engage in resentment and hate, bigotry, prejudice, blaming others and ourselves (guilt), harmful confrontation, and war. Please consider my explanation of the validity of this insight.

Destructive aggression is historically the basic means by which earth's creatures (us included) sustain the life cycle, establish a territory, obtain food, reproduce, and protect their young. We inherently act to serve our *self* and those we identify as "our family," often at the expense of others. We are born pre-scripted to deal with *not I* and *them* with little regard for their well-being. Our motto at birth is, "*I want what I want when I want it*." Imagine how our gene's message would be expressed in words:

> *The world is for your benefit, to provide your needs and wants. Seek immediate pleasure; avoid immediate pain. If it feels good, tastes good, looks good, smells good, or sounds good, take it if you can. The well-being of what is not me or not my tribe does not matter.*

Nature's way, *survival of the fittest,* is <u>not</u> a strong supporter of forgiveness. Quite the opposite! It may better be described as an advocate of "fortakeness" = for + taking. Power to dominate to obtain one's needs is crucial in a savage environment. Nature's way is essentially amoral, self-centered, and impatient. It advocates both constructive and destructive aggression.

Minus numbers Plus numbers

-10 -9 -8 -7 -6 -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 -0- +1 +2 +3 +4 +5 +6 +7 +8 +9 +10

Hate ⇔ ⇔ ⇔ ⇔ ⇔ ⇔ ⇔**neutral** ⇔ ⇔ ⇔ ⇔ ⇔ ⇔ ⇔ **Love**

Forgiveness ➔ ➔ ➔ ➔ **Love**

Forgiveness is an act of love. Picture an unbroken line starting at minus ten (-10), diminishing to zero (0), and continuing to plus ten (+10). *Minus ten* represents the most intense *hate* or *resentment*. Forward movement lessens hate, crosses the indifference area at *zero*, and proceeds to the most intense experience of love at *plus ten. Hate* is the more extreme tension of resentment due to real or imagined hurt. Any degree of forgiveness moves our strained feelings towards the *love* end of the scale. It

decreases the tension of sustained resentment. Forgiveness is the special energy that converts harmful aggression into beneficial action. In addition to preventing destructive confrontation, forgiveness frees us from carrying a persistent burden - the heavy load of resentment. I consider forgiveness the highest expression of love because it magically transforms resentment and hate into love.

Why is this a magical feat? If an individual shows us an empty hat, puts in a rabbit, covers it, utters "abracadabra," and then pulls out the same rabbit, we are unimpressed. What if instead, they pull out a cat? Wow! That is powerful. We call such a person *a magician*. Through the use of symbols, our cerebral cortex commonly performs equivalent magical transformations.

As the cerebral cortex matures, we acquire the ability to perform magical acts. Forgiveness and love qualify as the most worthy magical acts of our human brain. Here is how our mental "magic" works. First our cerebral cortex uses images and symbols to transform our commonly shared physical reality into our personal mental reality. We call this "consciousness". We assign *meaning* to symbols and manipulate them to form ideas, concepts, and imagination. As our cortex matures and adds knowledge to intelligence we acquire the mysterious power we call *will* to become powerful creators. *Will power* is the force that transforms our private mental reality into action pathways not previously present in our shared physical world. *Will power* enables us to reverse the process of transforming our commonly-shared reality into our personal mental reality.

physical reality → mental reality → will power → physical reality

For example, when biological changes alert your brain to danger, such as being physically or verbally attacked, you are prewired to respond in kind – fight back, hurt the offender, become resentful, and sustain the urge for harmful aggression. This is the fight part of our *fight or flight* instinct. This is not "magical"; it is natural. Now, what if someone puts harmful aggression into your hat, and you cover it, apply a few symbols, and then pull out something entirely different? Forgiveness? Kindness? Reconciliation? This remarkable turn of events is a dramatic magical transformation. Your marvelous brain can manipulate what comes in so that instead of what instinct and tradition have prewired to come out, you wisely exercise your freed will to create the new outcome that works better, short-term AND long-term.

We can understand that this special ability requires considerable time for our complex brain to mature and add wisdom to create beneficial change. The degree of magical power will depend not only on the innate capacity and maturity of the cortex but also on the quality of the meanings assigned to the symbols with which it has to work. Some thinking programs are more sophisticated than others; and, of course, native languages are necessarily designed to express the pre-judged perspectives of *nature* and our *nurturers*. Our immature cortex is incapable of *common sense problem-solving* until it is mature and properly educated.

To the degree that we free our *will power* from the demands of *instinct*, *tradition*, and *human* dictators, we become our own person. We call this *self-mastery*. By owning our *will power*, we join fate and circumstance as masters of our thinking, feelings, and actions. The power of intention is a "magical" feat. Think about it. Physical reality goes into our mind: we transform it into something that emerges in a very different form.

The earliest programming of consciousness is dominated by our gene's *survival of the fittest, fight or flight* perspective. Our first symbols emphasize "fortakeness." They are the mental expression of nature's repertoire of physical behavior. Symbolic dominance and aggression are mental alternatives to physical dominance and aggression. Physical might is replaced by economic, political, and/or religious symbols of power – money, expensive "toys," titles, "beauty," approval, patriotism, "rightness," a promise of a marvelous afterlife, and a variety of symbolic rewards limited only by our imagination. Hatred, resentment, jealousy, greed, and the like become the symbolic replacements for fighting to attain dominance and to survive.

Would you now envision that in just the manner instinct and tradition design our symbols to dominate and control others, this same resource is available through self-mastery and wisdom to create forgiveness, love, cooperation, sharing, philanthropy, happiness, peace of mind, and yes, even peace-in-the-world? **These positive qualities of self-mastery are quite difficult to create when we are occupied with the manner of thinking nature first provides us. Forgiveness is a basic mental strength that allows us to move on to those "magical" uses of symbols that express constructive use of our aggressive energy.** For this reason, we may consider forgiveness our most powerful mental asset.

Forgiveness, like mature love, is deficient in our world compared to our preoccupation with the *fortakeness* expressed in the various forms of harmful aggression mentioned above. Each of us may acquire skill in directing our thinking to love and forgiveness. The secret is to practice *self*-endorsement. We will continue to have great difficulty giving to others what we lack in ourselves. This is why this collection of wisdoms emphasizes practical strens on *self*-endorsement. We are as fully capable of manufacturing love and forgiveness as creating resentment and hate. However, directing our mental energy to constructive aggression is a skill that must be cultivated, unlike the destructive bent that is pre-wired into our thinking by our genetic history. Forgiveness is a high-energy product. I hope this stren will motivate you to attend to the skills of love and forgiveness. I, and you, and our world benefits by every individual who converts their mental energy manufacturing plant to the production of love and forgiveness instead of harmful aggression.

Stren #60: The Biggest Payoff
Saying "Goodbye" To the Terrorist Within

Welcome to stren #60. As we discussed in the previous stren, when an individual puts a rabbit into a hat and pulls out a cat, we call that person a *magician*. The portion of the brain that makes us human, our cerebral cortex or *freedom organ*, routinely performs such magical feats. It converts physical energy into the mental energy we call *consciousness*, assigns meaning to symbols that transform energy into another form, and then reverses the process. The transformed mental energy is turned back into physical energy, only modified. Today's stren focuses on our human brain's most important magical feat – transforming the harmful energy that resides within us into constructive energy, specifically turning resentment and hate into a loving lifelong friend.

Are you familiar with the voice within that is impossible to please? That can be counted on to let you know you are not quite the way you should be, and never will be? That convinces you to punish yourself with putdowns, guilt, and for some, even physical harm? This is the same terrorist who instinctively blames others but has been taught to bully you. Would you like to say "goodbye" to the terrorist who lives within you? This stren shows you how. Turning resentment and other forms of harmful aggression into love is our greatest magical feat because this knowledge creates world peace and insures our future. You need to first understand the destructive aggression within each of us that characterizes our history and how this terrorist comes to turn on ourselves.

Resentment and hate are inevitable; self-endorsement and love are optional.

Blaming-out

For 3½ billion years of life on earth, destructive physical confrontation has been the law of the land. Can you imagine what life was like for our ancestors when housing and the cultivation of food were non-existent? Survival of the fittest meant *eat or be eaten, kill or be killed*. Destructive aggression is a basic means by which our ancestors excelled in order to survive in a savage environment. The genes of the most aggressive warriors, who succeeded for millions of years through their destructive prowess, program us for physical superiority. This predator instinct is not "evil"; it is nature's means to survive in a savage environment. Consider the hawk, predestined to take its prey without remorse, mindlessly acting according to nature's commands. We, like the hawk, also inherently act to serve our *self* and those identified as our family or tribe, irrespective of the harm to others. Just observe children's insensitivity; teens are notorious for their bullying.

With the gradual development of the cerebral cortex, our ancestors became increasingly intelligent. They discovered the universal rules of cause-and-effect and began replacing trial-and-error learning with common sense knowledge. Experimentation with civilization got a boost 50,000 years ago with the introduction of sophisticated language. The creation of language is the source of immense power. By assigning meaning to symbols, we acquire, store, share, and pass knowledge forward to grow our constructive and destructive power. It is appropriate to expect that our intelligent cerebral cortex will

first be introduced to language that biases us to serve the predator instinct and the competitive traditions proven to be previously effective. Our nurturers, influenced by the long chain of their nurturers, sustain our innate competitiveness. Harmful aggression will remain prominent until we collectively teach ourselves to recognize that what was adaptive and necessary in our past has now become maladaptive and even dangerous.

Because common sense is so limited for our first decades, our nurturers have no choice but to direct us using simple, two-category *either/or* explanations of the world. We remain helpless while we are immature, and we uncritically accept whatever interpretation of the world our nurturers provide us. Our first experience with language biases us to serve the pre-judgments and prejudices of *instinct* and our *nurturers*. The world must first be understood in two extremes – good or bad (*evil*), right or wrong, O.K. or not O.K., friend or foe, safe or dangerous, value or denigrate. But while this early two-category processing of data is necessary, it is also the major source of bigotry. You get the idea. Hatred, resentment, jealousy, greed, and other forms of mental aggression become the symbolic replacement for physical aggression. If our way, our family, our kind, our flag, our leaders, our religion are good and right, then what is *not us* must be bad and wrong. It is O.K. to demean those who are *not us*, even to demand that *not us* come over to our way or be punished. With repetition, this *either/or* way of thinking becomes habit that controls our beliefs, feelings and actions. The culture of our society is an expression of our collective habits.

We'd like to think we are beyond this two-category *either/or* thinking, but the evidence does not support it. The harmful outcomes of *either/or* thinking are evident in our daily life. Our TV, movies, and games clearly distinguish the good guys from the bad guys; countries are friends or foes; our popular sports events encourage us to cheer the hero and boo the clearly identified villain; our laws require us to plead *innocent* or *guilty*; we adhere to two-party politics where party dominance is often more important than collaboration for mutual benefit. In any confrontation, we commonly glorify our side, demonize and dehumanize the other side, and justify their need for punishment. Even our gods take sides, and we commonly pray for them to favor our designated teams. As a psychiatry resident, I heard a lecture by Brock Chisholm, first director of the World Health Organization, who described the disbelief of Canadian soldiers during WWI when they discovered that every German soldier had inscribed in their belts, "Gott mit uns, *God is with us*." Didn't they know God favored the Allies?

Now that we are arming multiple tribes with ultimate destructive power, we have much to learn and little time to succeed. The outcome of sustained blaming predictably results in escalation of negative feelings and harmful confrontation, as documented by our history. When most tribes have weapons with such ultimate destructive power that they provide no second chance, *survival of the physically fittest* is likely to result in all losers. The weak and "*have nots*," frustrated, first target the strong and the *"haves*." The long established "might is right" tradition becomes suddenly fatal. Love, forgiveness, collaboration, cooperation, and compromise are the new champions of surviving and thriving. We must selectively update the trial-and-error solutions, instincts, and traditions that have long been effective but have now become dangerous. We need to deal with the

terrorist we each harbor within us. We are up to the task if we first teach ourselves to forgive and negotiate rather than demonize and destroy those we perceive as enemies, i.e. who or what deviates from our dictators. In short, our time is short!

Now for the biggest of all payoffs from our magical ability – saying goodbye to the terrorist who lives within and hello to becoming our own best friend.

The transformation of *blaming-out* to *blaming-in*: We, like other species, are genetically programmed with energy to physically harm others. Unlike other species, however, we also convert physical aggression into mental symbolic expression, such as *resentment* and *hate*. Humankind excels in a new category of mental aggression I label *blaming-in*. *Blaming-in*, which includes self-putdowns, learned guilt, and self-demeaning talk, is not innate like the *blaming-out* action pathway, but is a skill we are taught by our nurturers. *Learned guilt* and the wide variety of self-putdowns serve as a powerful method to insure compliance with our nurturer's commands. With decades of rewards when we conform to our tribe's perspective, and punishment when we disobey, the two-category manner of processing information becomes indelibly inscribed pathways to action. Indeed, blind obedience to our dictator's "shoulds" – such as, *don't go in the street*; *never touch the fire*; *don't go with strangers* – are required for our safety and survival. Failure to uncritically obey the commands of instinct and our nurturer's commands, which have been proven to work by trial-and-error-experience, can result in individual or species extinction.

However, when carried beyond our stage of helpless immaturity, this early way of thinking supports mental slavery to instinct, tradition, and human dictators. Learned guilt and putdowns sustain our dependency and helplessness and lead to feelings of inadequacy. You will get the most important wisdom in this stren when you say, "*AHA, these self-putdowns, guilt, and blaming are like diapers, once helpful but now a bit ridiculous; I can now replace them with what makes a lot more sense*." You need to selectively unlearn those dictatorial commands that once were effective but have now become dangerous. You do so by adding more fulfilling pathways to direct your energy, because habits don't go away; habits remain with us, ready to take over whenever opportunity permits, whenever we fail to intervene.

The harmful mental aggression to punish ourselves for what is not acceptable to our tribe is rooted in our early two-category prescriptive language. Who can avoid living up to all the *shoulds, have to's, musts,* and *ought to be's* we are taught? We are so far superior in intelligence to any other species that we excel in quickly learning the *blaming-in* mental action pattern of putdowns, guilting, and demonizing ourselves. We are experts in recognizing how we are not O.K. We are taught that our tribe's goals are the only good and worthy ones, and that if we deviate we have sinned and deserve punishment. The thinking, feelings, and action pathways others program into us become expressed as the voice of the terrorist within. The terrorist's main function is to let us know that we must comply with the rules inscribed by instinct, tradition, and human dictators. Unless we submit to their authority, we deserve blame and punishment. We each harbor a terrorist within us whose main function is to maintain blind obedience to authority. *Might makes right*; *might gets rid of evil in us by punishment*. This *blaming-in* behavior is

prominent only in humankind. In stren #62, I will elaborate on why suicide is only prevalent among humans and explain the most important antidote against bullying.

***Fortakeness is natural*; *forgiveness* is learned with common sense wisdom!**

We each harbor within us a terrorist whose main activity is demeaning, guilting, and putdowns. By recognizing that self-centered behavior, lack of respect, and insensitivity to *not me* or *not our tribe* is nature's way, we more easily learn to forgive ourselves for being what we are taught is unacceptable and deserving of punishment. Until you forgive yourself for the destructive energy you don't like in yourself, you will remain a servant to *instinct*, *tradition*, and *human* dictators, unable to fully assume your opportunity to love yourself and thereby love others. The first step to love others is acquiring skill in loving yourself. Understanding that harmful aggression is within each of us enables us to be more tolerant of the annoyances we see in others. We are more likely to perceive the other as in need of education in civility and limit setting instead of a personal attack deserving of punishment. Understanding makes it possible to forgive, love, and offer help rather than express the "retaliation" that escalates our negative energy to destructive confrontation. *Problem-solving* is more effective than punishment.

Forgiveness is a new human quality compared to the traditional *fortakeness* expressed in various forms of harmful aggression; our intelligence is initially designed to enhance our warrior/terrorist biology! *Forgiveness* is the secret ingredient we require to create authentic love, to generate the self-endorsement that frees us from *instinct* and *tradition*. **We can't give away what we don't have!** We will continue to have great difficulty giving love to others when we lack it in ourselves, when our factory space is dedicated to *blaming*. This is why I emphasize *self*-endorsement strens. As powerful creators we are as fully capable of teaching ourselves to create love as nature would have us manufacture harmful aggression.

O.K., let's come back to our starting point, the magician who puts a rabbit in a hat and pulls out a cat. Each of us can acquire the magical skill of transforming *fortakeness* and other forms of harmful aggression into love and helpful aggression. But before we can engage in the many self-endorsement skills that enable us to create love, we need to overcome the negative emotions that resist giving of ourselves to benefit others. We must create a quantity of the magical ingredient – *forgiveness*. *Forgiveness* allows us to create love-making space in our mental energy factory.

Hate -10 -9 -8 -7 -6 -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 -**0**- +1 +2 +3 +4 +5 +6 +7 +8 +9 +10 **Love**

Forgiveness ➔➔➔➔➔➔ Love

Forgiveness has been described as a higher energy expression of love. When we already feel offended enough to experience resentment, we require greater energy to create mature love because we are already functioning at a negative energy level. Whether the perceived injustice was valid or not, the negative feelings need to be neutralized before we can create the positive feelings that benefit us and the world.

Clearly, letting go of resentment is harder than creating love. Directing our *fortakeness* energy to *forgiveness*, to constructive aggression, is a skill that must be cultivated, unlike the destructive bent that has been pre-wired into our thinking through genes and habit. We come to appreciate the joy of giving, which is greater than that of receiving, through experience.

***Forgiveness* is the magical ingredient that empowers us to transform the negative emotions in our hat and pull out loving energy.** We have seen, especially in the last 100 years, that *human selection* is joining *natural selection* in deciding who shall live and who shall become extinct. At issue is personal responsibility. During our early "magic years" things seemed to automatically happen without our help and we could not make much of a difference in our lives. Our path was directed by others. We were more in a position to rebel against others than to initiate our own creativity. This early experience makes it difficult to recognize we must create what we want in our life. Human selection has suddenly become the powerful force that is determining the condition of our planet and the fate of the life it supports. Unlearning *blaming* is a difficult but necessary task.

I, and you, and our world all benefit by every individual who frees their willpower from *fortakeness* and magically transforms its energy into *forgiveness*. "Magically" is not really magic; it is a skill based on applying practice to knowledge; ask any great magician. I hope this stren will motivate you to attend to the skills of love and forgiveness. Even though we have come to abhor physical slavery, we still support mental slavery. We allow ourselves to blindly follow the demands of *instinct*, *tradition*, and the *human* dictators that tell us what we must believe and how we must think, feel, and act. To the extent we do so, we forgo the marvelous opportunity to become the wise creator of the peace we wish and pray for, and we fail to protect our loved ones from the ultimate destruction that our generation is making widely available. Let's apply our "magic" and transform *short term gain for long term pain* into *short term gain and long term bigger gain*.

We have the knowledge and the means to rapidly educate our populace in the *newer way of thinking* that stresses common sense, love, and forgiveness. Certainly, during the time it will take to achieve this goal, we must maintain our vigilance. We need to continue to set limits on those who promote destructive aggression. We still must continue to use muscle to delay the otherwise inevitable unleashing of weapons of ultimate destruction. But we can no longer remain stuck in the perspectives of instinct and two-category thinking. The one permanent solution to world peace is spreading the *newer way of thinking* that teaches us to act with knowledge and wisdom instead of relying on the authority of dictators.

The self-endorsement skills first provided in these strens and on our Internet site, **anwot.org**, will equip you to create the love and forgiveness that you require to fulfill your own needs; you will enrich others with what spills over. *Forgiveness* is the most advanced state of love. Your freedom organ is most impressive when you provide it the wisdom to transform the raw destructive energy you and every person harbors within into love and

forgiveness. You can and must if your choice is "to survive and move towards higher levels," as Einstein advised.

Let me give you one illustration of the magical capabilities of our freedom organ to create *a newer way of thinking*. Lisa Gibson's brother was among the 270 who died when a Libyan terrorist bomb brought down a Pan Am flight over Lockerbie, Scotland in 1988. What came out of Lisa's hat did not fit our usual expectation. Rather than crying out for vengeance, Lisa founded a nonprofit corporation to promote humanitarian and educational reconciliation between the U.S. and Libya, and fosters cross-cultural activities. Get her book, *Life in Death: A Journey from Terrorism to Triumph* (Xulon Press, 2008) to learn what response she received to her letter of forgiveness to the terrorists. Reaching out with *forgiveness* and celebrating our oneness is our best hope for lasting peace.

To the dictionary definition of love, "the intense affectionate concern for another person," a second is added: "the benevolence, kindness, or brotherhood that man should rightfully feel toward others." I would prefer to change "should feel" to "would wisely feel" toward others. I prefer to consider love and *forgiveness* as an act of free will rather than a "should" imposed on me by some authority. *Forgiveness* is defined: "to renounce anger or resentment, to excuse a fault or offense."

Forgiveness is not a natural act; it is an intentional act of our own creation to invest our energy to help rather than harm. Nature has prescribed the universal *survival of the physical fittest* rule in each of us through life's history. Tradition, which consists of the wisdoms that have been effective in the past, resists change, even when the new way is supported by common sense. The emotion linked to tradition commonly trumps our intelligent awareness of what is wise. Our will power will remain biased to the perspectives of *instinct* and *tradition* until we teach ourselves to add positive emotion to *a newer way of thinking* that respects common sense.

The overwhelming majority of our informed citizens have told us to expect the use of weapons of ultimate destruction unless we take urgent action. The question becomes apparent: Who can determine that the universal rules for survival have changed? Who can determine what is wise to change? The answer is just as obvious. Intelligence and knowledge have created the change and the most informed of us are now responsible for wisely managing our new knowledge.

What process of change can we expect? First there will be defectors from tradition. It will be tough going. Tradition resists change and makes it difficult for "deviants" like Christ, Martin Luther King, and Gandhi. It is a very mature skill to graciously invite contradictions to the assumptive views that we assign value, and it can have a powerful effect on the world. Is there any more powerful *newer way of thinking* than teaching *forgiveness* and love?

Stren #61: Punishment and Limit Setting
Why is forgiveness essential?

Welcome to stren #61. Today's wisdom explains the distinction between punishment and limit setting. The distinction is subtle but so significant that our survival may depend in it. Understanding the difference explains why forgiveness is essential if we are to survive and thrive in this new age. *Human* selection is rapidly overtaking *natural* selection as we master the knowledge of cause-and-effect to acquire the godlike power of creation and destruction.

Punishment is inflicting harm, often with a sense of justification – "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth." *Instinct* and *tradition* have favored inflicting harm as a means to show dominance and insure compliance with their preferred rules. It assumes that future compliance will be attained by the threat of force and loss of freedom. Punishment is primarily self-serving with little regard for the well-being of those who deviate from our tribe's rules. We dehumanize those not of our persuasion and justify our lack of respect. Our present prison system hasn't worked for most individuals and tends to breed more potent crime. Punishment escalates resentment and hate towards the punisher. The growing tension commonly leads to harmful confrontation as the separation of the establishment and the deviant grows. *Getting hurt* means *getting even*.

Limit-setting recognizes the need for firm and swift restriction of harmful behavior to protect ourselves while providing education and rehabilitation (*re-habiting*) to the source of harmful behavior. Limit-setting assumes that most anti-social behavior is primarily due to *lack of appropriate education* and/or the *presence of inappropriate education*. Harmful behavior, whether genetically programmed or learned, will continue until forgiveness and appropriate education and support provide incentives to function within the limits of civility. My experience with the prison system is that both punishment and rehabilitation are represented but there is a far greater emphasis on punishment.

Punishment is nature's tried and proven *survival of the fittest* action pathway. **Limit-setting** is the self-initiated product of *common sense wisdom* that intentions benefits all parties involved.

At first glance, forgiving those whose behavior offends tradition appears illogical and dangerous, but this reaction is based on a misperception of forgiveness. Forgiveness does not free others or ourselves from responsibility; it does not ignore harmful action. It sets swift and firm limits in a manner that allows us to address harmful behavior in a way that has the most productive outcome for all parties. In addition to freeing our *self* from wasteful energy-draining preoccupations such as resentment, revenge, and punishment, forgiveness redirects our innate energy towards education, rehabilitation, and problem-solving.

Filial love, the concern of a parent for a child, or concern from a member of a family or tribe for one of their own, usually emphasizes **limit-setting**. The intent of

"tough love" is to benefit all parties. The emphasis of **limit-setting** is redirecting behavior from harmful to constructive actions. **Punishment** is more common when the parent experiences rage and acts more on the pathways prewired by instinct than those determined by common sense. Filial love is more tolerant of unacceptable behavior than resentment and hate. Filial love can be turned on or turned off by hormones; in humankind, it is also learned. As a generality, women are more practiced and competent in filial love. The estrogenic hormones prevalent in women favor nurturance whereas the androgenic male hormones urge competition to establish dominance and reproductive rights. This is why I believe nature better prepares women to play a more important role in creating world peace than men. However, men are equally capable of education in the skills of forgiveness and love that are suddenly required to survive and thrive.

Our society favors **limit-setting** when children are deviant and when adults who are labeled mentally ill, retarded, or brain impaired engage in anti-social behavior; not so with "normal" adults. We "forgive" those we assume lack intentionality and offer them our concern. Yet, adults who deviate from society's norms are perceived as *bad, evil*, and deserving of **punishment**. However, on closer inspection, we find that the unacceptable behavior is the outcome of what has been taught and the appropriate skills that were never taught. Education in the missed skills would seem more appropriate than punishment. Yet individuals and classes of people identified as "not our kind" by religion, ethnicity, skin color, sex, finances, geography, and so on are often dehumanized and judged to be deserving of whatever wrath is dispensed.

For millions of years, the animal brain has been the indisputable master dictator on earth. It is pre-programmed to advocate survival of the fittest through fight or flight. Our human brain distinguishes us from all other life on earth by the degree we use symbols to manipulate ideas, concepts, and imagination to initiate phenomena new to what nature provides. With the introduction of scientific method we have increased our gradual growth of knowledge of cause-and-effect relationships to quantum speed. Virtually anything that yesterday we believed was impossible is being accomplished today. Suddenly a few individuals and soon most tribes will have the power of destruction that most persons cannot even imagine. While other species passively churn through the life cycle according to a predetermined script that advocates punishment, we have received a gift of opportunity to decide what we make of ourselves. Our constructive and destructive power is accelerating so rapidly that we suddenly have assumed responsibility for the fate of humanity and the state of the world that is our home.

Knowledge of the universal cause-and-effect rules of the creative force that got us this far provides us power but does not provide the wisdom we require to consistently direct power for our benefit. However, it does provide the opportunity to acquire wisdom. Recognizing the wisdom of limit-setting instead of punishment, of forgiveness and love instead of domination by intimidation and punishment, has become one of our most urgent lessons.

Nature's established, relatively automatic action pathways are a wonder to behold, as anyone who is familiar with the mechanics of the human body will conclude. Our creative tampering with nature's ways also initiate troublesome issues such as pollution, global warming, depletion of the seas, and now the most urgent threat to our well-being – proliferation of weapons with ultimate destructive power. We must now ask, are nature's ways, proven to work in the past, still effective with humankind's newly created modifications?

Our most informed citizens answer "no." $E=mc^2$ has suddenly changed the rules for survival which were effective in a primitive society. When all sides in a conflict acquire weapons of ultimate destruction, the *survival of the physically fittest* rule is suddenly changed to *destruction of the fittest*. As the weak become as powerful as the strong, we can anticipate mutual destruction. The country recognized as the strongest is the preferred target of destructive aggression because it poses the biggest threat to the cultures of the weakest. Guess who that might be? Nature prepares us to have allegiance to our local tribe. As our technology shrinks the world into a global community, we must teach ourselves to act for our mutual benefit.

The animal portion of human brain and the two-category thinking we all first learn divide the world into those who are *good and deserving*, i.e., *our side*, and the *other side* who are *evil and need punishment*. Punishment to hurt rather than help, "an eye for an eye," remains the preference of the populace because they have worked, at least until now. *Forgiving and helping* instead of *hating and punishing* your enemy *i*s quite a radical idea. What a rebellious act - to suggest that we love our enemies! Tradition resists change and makes life difficult for "deviants." What might the initial defectors from *instinct* and *tradition* expect? Moses, Jesus, Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Galileo, Darwin, and many others found out it will be tough going. Graciously accepting contradictions to one's assumed values is a very mature skill popular only among our most insightful minority.

How are we to teach ourselves that the long established rules of survival have suddenly changed? *Common sense* leads us to the conclusion that forgiveness and love must characterize the *newer way of thinking* most certain to create world peace. Forgiveness is the mental magic that transforms the energy of hate and resentment into the energy of love. Forgiveness allows us to move beyond the resentment and hate that prevent us from applying the powerful symbols that turn on cooperation, sharing, philanthropy, happiness, peace of mind, and yes, even peace in the world. We began experimenting with civilization a mere 50,000 thousand years past when our ancestors introduced sophisticated language. Now, we have much to learn and very little time to succeed. We are up to the task if we first teach ourselves to forgive and collaborate for our mutual benefit rather than demonize and punish those we label as "evil." The outcome of sustained resentment is predictably escalation of negative feelings leading to destructive confrontation. Is there any more powerful *newer way of thinking* than teaching forgiveness and love? The practical application of forgiveness is expressed when we recognize the distinction between **punishment** and **limit-setting**.

Stren 62: Preventing Suicide

Welcome to stren #62: Preventing Suicide. Let's reveal the startling reason why humankind exclusively monopolizes the suicide market and animals offer no competition. The answer to a few questions leads us to simple interventions that more effectively halt the rising rate of suicide than our traditional advice.

(1) Why does one of our kind intentionally commit self-murder every minute?
(2) Why was this bright happy 10 year old singing as she was stopped just in time from hanging herself?
(3) What made this world-renowned musician murder himself after such a perfect recording performance that the entire symphony orchestra gave him a rarely offered standing ovation?
(4) And why did kamikaze pilots and now suicide bombers disrespect one of our most powerful instincts – self-preservation?
(5) Even though the answer to these questions is obvious, why do we avoid recognizing it?

We will lack effective suicide prevention until we squarely face what we don't want to hear. **We ourselves are the primary reason suicide is an exclusive human trait!** The common denominator is that the faulty assumptions we teach our children provide the motivation for suicide in the same manner our parents taught us, and as they learned from their elders. The young girl wanted to die so she could visit her beloved granny after she was told that would be possible in heaven. The musician, even though the recipient of constant adulation, could never satisfy his learned perfectionism, and the role of education is quite obvious in the multiple instances of kamikaze pilots and suicide bombers.

Most persons have had suicidal thoughts. My bout came as an immature pre-teen from my conclusion that I was responsible for my parent's off-and-on-again divorce and the painful frustration from feeling pressured to take sides. Fortunately, I was able to turn around the negative thoughts by picking an alternative route when I naively asked myself what I might do to straighten them out. This was the beginning of my motivation to become a psychiatrist. Faulty assumptions too often end in harmful outcomes. Suicide prevention is most effective when we teach ourselves and then proactively educate our children to consistently make common sense interpretations of the data we receive. Most current interventions focus on what to do when a crisis emerges, when it may be too late to effectively reverse the faulty assumptions that create guilt, self-punishment, helplessness/hopelessness, depression, perfectionism, and related thinking that incites self-murder. We need to modify the early education that invites suicide as an alternative to learning to manage life's stresses. This stren offers twelve specific easily taught common sense examples of interpretations of data that establish the joys of living. Recent news has dramatized the frequency of suicide by young people subject to bullying. Bullying is a natural instinct quite difficult to eliminate. *Bully-proofing*, i.e. teaching resistance to bullying promises to have a much higher payoff.

We will continue to pass the human tradition of suicide forward until we point the finger directly at ourselves and assume responsibility for the faulty thinking we create. How exciting to discover the cause, even if we are it, because by accepting our responsibility we position ourselves to introduce the prevention education you will learn here. First, we must teach ourselves that truth[18] is the required path to knowledge, not the dead end route we create by the self-defeating guilt that keeps us stuck in avoidance.

Nature has gifted us its latest model brain. Through our extensive use of symbols, we acquire the power of interpretation. We differ from other life by the degree we assign meaning to data and then create assumptions. Our assumptions become signals to turn on a specific thought, feeling, and action. Rather than obedience to the prescribed action pathways nature wires into the animal portion of our brain, we act on the combination of assumptions originating from the cerebral cortex portion of our human brain. Our interpretations create morality and a value system. Faulty assumptions lead to maladaptive, often dangerous, values. Values based on common sense are most likely to increase our ability to survive and thrive.

Our most universal goals include experiencing a joyous meaningful life in a peaceful loving world. It is obvious that we have yet to teach ourselves the assumptions that lead to our most preferred outcomes. If the values we assume by our erroneous interpretation of data cause most of our misery, we reach a simple to understand solution to better our life experience. Let's identify the assumptions that are dangerous and maladaptive, no longer teach them, and proactively teach the wiser assumptions we discover as we apply common sense to our growing knowledge of cause-and-effect. There are a multitude of faulty assumptions, more than we can quickly address. However, we can initiate a dramatic improvement by selecting and modifying the most dangerous. The twelve faulty assumptions here identified can have a dramatic effect. We better our life experience with each modification.

Our ancestors were intelligent but they lacked knowledge of cause-and-effect. As we increasingly add knowledge, we continue to improve our power of interpretation. We have modified our ancestors' worship of idols, unusual rituals, superstitions, and erroneous interpretations of natural phenomena. Our long history of replacing faulty assumptions with newer ones that conform to current knowledge would seem to make continued change easy. The really difficult challenge we face is facing ourselves and challenging tradition. Accepting responsibility to modify our sacred assumptive views requires that we acknowledge we are the source of the problem. Challenging faulty assumptions is risky because tradition punishes deviance. Tradition would have us blame and then punish whoever or whatever is responsible for our stress – that's difficult when we are the source. Common sense would have us welcome recognizing our causative role because awareness provides us the opportunity to create "out of the box" solutions. Problem-solving is wiser than punishment in today's partially civilized

[18]Common sense interpretations supported by the universal laws of cause-and-effect instead of the authority of a dictator

society where most tribes own weapons with ultimate destructive power. "*An eye for and eye ...,"* once adaptive, must now be replaced with "*Love and respect our neighbor*." Cooperation and problem-solving is a worthy replacement for punishment as our primary means to achieve our goals.

Here are my selections of twelve critical modifications of our assumptive views that will prevent suicide:

FA = faulty assumption; **CS** = common sense assumption (ANWOT)

1. **FA: Persons guilty of wrongdoing and mistakes deserve punishment. CS: Guilt is a trigger for problem-solving, to ask, *What can I learn from the experience?*** It is wiser to learn from mistakes than blame and punish ourselves when we make mistakes. The power of interpretation transforms the physical *fight* instinct to symbolic attack. Instead of *physically* attacking others, we *mentally* blame others and invent many ways to apply symbolic punishment. We are taught and then teach that rebellion from authority justifies punishment. *Blaming-out* is understandably an instinctive response to frustration that often leads to escalation of conflict. However, **the process of *blaming-in* is humankind's original creation**. Guilt takes the form of verbal putdowns, emotional pain, and in the extreme, intentional physical attack on our self - suicide. Education in the value of making mistakes and effective limit setting are more productive alternatives to punishment. We are required to learn from mistakes until we can problem-solve using common sense thinking (ANWOT). Our cortex isn't fully developed until about the age of 18 and most persons don't reach their peak of mental freedom before their late twenties or early thirties.

2. **FA: Praise only counts if it comes from someone else. CS: Maturity means accepting responsibility for our self-worth.** Self-endorsement is our means to generate abundant love to meet our needs, become our lifelong best friend, and have plenty to give to others. Valuing our self when we do our *reasonable* best makes us always in control of our self-esteem; depending on others for our daily requirement of approval is hazardous. Suicide is frequently precipitated when we allow ourselves to become overly dependent on a single significant other who withdraws their affection. Check out stren 23-24, a *reasonable best* input measure of self-worth that is 100% in our control instead of the commonly used outcome measure which is beyond our control. Common and some uncommon means of self-endorsement are offered in our stren collection at **www.anwot.org**.

3. **FA: Win at any cost! CS: Make peace, not war.** Our animal brain advocates the destructive aggression that was required to eat and not be eaten in a savage environment. Bullying is but one expression of our instinct to dominate. In our contemporary partly civilized world we rarely face emergency life-threatening confrontation. Resentment and "getting even" usually result in escalation and mutual harm. Forgiveness promotes a far wiser solution - collaboration for mutual benefit. Peace is among our highest priorities.

4. **FA: My way, the <u>only</u> way, is the right way. CS: There are many ways to get to the top.**
   When we are immature, our limited problem-solving ability requires that we divide the world into two easily understood categories – *good or bad*, *right or wrong*, etc. Since we are unable to consistently be *good* and *right*, unrealistic expectations create self-putdowns that cause feelings of inadequacy, guilt, apathy, and depression. Perfectionists persistently attack themselves. Making mistakes is nature's way to teach independence and problem-solving.

5. **FA: Me and my values stink. CS: My values are on loan from fate and circumstance. I don't need to stay stuck.** The ingredients to change my values are abundantly available. They are willingness to try, work, patience, direction, and risk-taking to break out of my shell. The ingredients I lack are free for the asking. Unusual intelligence, money, connections, good looks, and even good health are nice but they are not required. I can always accept responsibility to change the values I was taught. Recognize that the guilt that may have been programmed into us is not productive and I don't need to dwell on it - "You got in but you're unwelcome. Leave of I'll kick you out."

6. **FA: I am indestructible. Life goes on forever. CS: Life is precious and time limited**. Children and teenagers often fail to realize that death is final. When I contemplated suicide I had visions I would see my parents repenting and apologizing for the stress I perceived they caused. We have one life; we have or can attain the means to make it joyous. When we are dead we are really dead.

7. **FA: Blindly obey what authority prescribes. *Might makes right.* CS: When reasonable, replace prescriptive thinking (should, have to, must, ought, etc.) with descriptive word-switches (could, prefer, I am wise when ..., etc.).** The prescriptive language we all first learn when we are immature constrains our thinking, feelings, and actions to the one *right* way that authority commands. Descriptive word-switches incite us to create and apply newer solutions using common sense. The prescriptive language that is required when we are immature and helpless requires ongoing updating as our cortex matures and we equip it with knowledge and the common sense wisdom to assume responsibility for our fate.

8. **FA: I have been taken care of up till now so I'm entitled to be taken care of lifelong. CS: Don't expect free lunch!** Recognize the devastating helpless/hopeless response that commonly occurs when unrealistic expectations are not fulfilled. Unfairness and disappointments are part of life's experience. Suicide is commonly precipitated by an unmet, usually unrealistic expectation. Nature provides us the resilience to pick ourselves up when we get knocked down but the faulty assumption that "I'm entitled" causes big problems.

9. **FA: Money, power, or fame will keep me forever happy. CS: Encourage cultivation of multiple enthusiasms.** The elderly have a very high rate of suicide. A colleague described a depression syndrome he called "todes erwachen," *waiting*

for death. When we lack enthusiasms, we have little else to think about other than facing death. Persons who commit suicide commonly limit their energy to such a narrow vision that the loss of interest by a loved person or situation is sufficient to trigger the helpless/hopeless response, depression and suicide. Cultivating wide and varied interests early in life when we have the energy of youth is a powerful antidote to suicide.

10. **FA: Keep your eye on the empty part of the glass, see the hole in the donut. CS: Learn and sustain an attitude of gratitude.** We are biologically prewired to anticipate the negative because preoccupation with life-threatening events and maintaining a "red alert" state had survival value in a savage environment. In our partially civilized world, we rarely require emergency life-saving action. Recognize we live better than the kings of a few hundred years past and savor each of the abundant life enhancing free gifts nature provides.

11. **FA: If I don't feel good, it's my fault. I must deserve it. CS: There are multiple instances when life sucks but we have many ways to manage. Others find a way; so, I can too.** Nature provides us with the resilience to substitute "I think I can" for "I give up." When depression is genetic or chemical, the need for medications or protective custody may require professional evaluation. All depression is self-limiting.
12. **FA: I'm alone. No one has experienced this. No one will understand. CS: Cultivate several confidants or at least be aware of at least one with whom I can make an open issue of my pain.** Even if I don't know someone, there are professional, religious, and public service counselors willing to help and even welcome the opportunity to do so. Faulty ideas, like an abscess, need to be opened up an allowed to drain before they pollute the system.

The fact that we all learn our native language, even the most difficult ones, during our formative years tells us proactive education in the joys of living will be easier and more effective than in our adult years. This selection of common sense assumptions is not exclusive; the wisdoms that promote well-being are unlimited. Elaboration of these skills of joyous living and many more are provided here at the Educational Community forever free website, www.anwot.org. When you the teacher so educate yourself you will be a more amazing teacher.

What wisdoms can you add that grow mental wealth? Thinking about your most useful assumptive views will inspire your own creativity. **The very same assumptive views that prevent individuals from committing suicide are applicable to prevent the species suicide we are making more likely day-by-day by our faulty assumptions.** The newer way of thinking that will reduce the prevalence of suicide are offered through the Educational Community, Inc. forever free Internet site. Partner with us in teaching the skills of ANWOT that will prevent individual and species suicide.

One of my professors, Curt Richter[19], discovered the concept of "learned helplessness." Rodents whose movements were restrained in their early development quickly gave up and drowned when placed in a tank of water; those with no history of being restrained swam to safety. Our prevalent educational methods prescribe what is expected and punishes failure to comply. We are taught to associate mistakes with failure and need for punishment. Repeated mistakes create the psychological learned helplessness that shuts down our energy factory and suffocates our natural resilience to the common stresses of living. Nature programs us to make mistakes and learn from them. Through the power of interpretation, we override nature's wisdom, substitute ***blaming-in*** and self-inflicted punishment, and a "give up" mentality for problem-solving. No species compares to the education in "guilt", self-putdowns, and other forms of attack that we impose on ourselves.

The newer proactive intervention this stren offers does not invalidate the advice currently offered. You will learn much by going to the Internet, "suicide+prevention," for comprehensive contemporary advice on suicide prevention. Specific resources include: (1) The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is 1-800-273-TALK (8255); website = suicidepreventionlifeline.org. (2) The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. (3) Emergency: call 911. The prevalent advice is valuable but it is often too little and too late. Once the assumptive views that lead to learned helplessness/hopelessness, guilt, depression, perfectionism, dependence on authority, and so on are inscribed during our formative years and then made habit by repetition, they resist influence when the crisis occurs.

In my professional experience, here are a few tips that I believe are most useful:

- ✓ Always take as serious someone's statement of intention to commit suicide.
- ✓ The most important intervention is persistent encouragement that the individual find some confidant to whom they can express their feelings ... and then help them find an acceptable person.
- ✓ Inform the person that the hopelessness/helplessness that is related to depression is time limited and they are wise not to make important decisions when so down. C. Wendell Muncie, author of one of the first texts on depression, saw many depressed persons before the advent of medications and concluded that depression is always time limited and will improve if the person can be protected from irreversible action, suicide.
- ✓ Don't be afraid to make one's preoccupation with suicide and open issue. Ask specifically if there is intent and the means to act.
- ✓ Seek professional help who can evaluate if the individual requires involuntary protective care. In many situations, medication can lead to dramatic improvement.
- ✓ Be aware that the high frequency of suicide among alcoholics soon <u>after</u> drinking stops calls for heightened, not diminished, concern.

This stren is a harsh presentation of reality that can be easily interpreted as blaming ourselves for the victims of self-murder. When a relative or close friend

19 *The Psychobiology of Curt Richter,* by Curt Paul Richter, ork Press, 1974. *Curt Richter, A Life in the Laboratory,* Jay Schulkin, Johns Hopkins Press, 2005.

commits suicide, the common experience of guilt is not productive; it helps no one. The pain of loss normally proceeds to healing. Guilt unnecessarily sustains pain. Don't make that mistake! Rather acknowledge that by pointing our pointing the finger at ourselves, our values and culture to accept responsibility, we position ourselves to update our faulty assumptive values. While there are too many to eliminate the problem, by identifying those most dangerous, we can create a dramatic change.

Stren #63: The Puzzle of the Seven Continents

WHY A NEWER WAY OF THINKING?

You are needed

Welcome to stren #63, **The Puzzle of the Seven Continents**. We will solve it by applying *a newer way of thinking* (ANWOT). This process of attaining mental freedom has also been called *becoming our own person* and *self*-mastery. As we have discussed in previous strens, this change is crucial because destructive aggression is inherent in the manner we think. We have become our worst enemy because we have recently become so powerful that we create weapons with ultimate destructive power for which there is no cure; and we are recklessly changing the world so that it will no longer be able to provide our needs.

Our prevalent manner of thinking is the root cause of our contemporary problems and is no longer adequate to protect us from our *self*. As one author put it, "We are doing better and feeling worse."[20] Though we have become our worst enemy, we also have the potential to become our own best friend. The ANWOT skills are so simple to learn that it seems unbelievable that they can so powerfully advance us along the road to humanity and civilization. The ANWOT mental skills will make a huge difference because there is such a deficiency in these *mental vitamins*. Our established educational system has yet to make ANWOT education standard in its curricula.

Knowledge is our resource for either shared prosperity or global disaster, or some combination of both. Our recent explosion of scientific knowledge has thrust us into a New Era where *human selection* is replacing *natural selection*. After WWII, sufficient nuclear bombs were stockpiled to destroy the world as we know it 10 times over. We must popularize ANWOT if we are to thrive and survive the threats of modernity. Einstein not only ushered in this new era with his work on the atomic bomb; he also told us what we must do to prevent self-annihilation. The tick-tick-ticking of the doomsday clock is approaching midnight; it is only a matter of time before we create our own "big bang." Each of us is a member of a larger system that is on a course to destruct. Someone(s) will unleash destructive power never before experienced and unimaginable by most persons.

To illustrate the need for *a newer way of thinking*, join me on a brief visit to an imaginary planet, one that has some similarities to our own. Imagine a planet with seven distinct continents, each containing among its creatures a family of humanoids (the H's). On each continent, there is struggle for dominance. Through their smarts, the H's come to dominate all others creatures. The H's on each continent develop their own culture, customs, beliefs, and rules that actually increase their dominance. Though the cultures on each continent differ, they each live harmoniously within their confines, unaware that there are other continents with a distinct system of life and assumptive

[20] *Doing Better and Feeling Worse*, John H. Knowles (Ed.), Norton and Company, Inc., N.Y. 1977.

views. Each population is obedient to, even fiercely protective of, their own set of beliefs and rules.

As the families on each continent grow more knowledge, they improve their means of communication and travel. They discover that the world extends beyond their continent; they are no longer isolated from one another. Indeed, their growing capacity for travel and communication "shrinks" their world. H's now confront other H's who appear unfamiliar, speak a different tongue, and fail to obey the rules of their established cultures. What would you predict about the confrontation between the H's of these different continents? Thus far, each family has confronted other creatures that they have dominated through superior power. It has been quite acceptable to consider all non-H's objects, suitable to service their bidding – to provide food, labor, and amusement. To make a servant and/or kill any non-H has been the law of the land. It seems quite predictable that each family of H's would first use their intelligence as they have in the past, to grow more physical power and so dominate the "other." Each family directs its energy and intelligence to produce greater power, viz. weapons of mass destruction. Their efforts result in great success. Each family of H's produces the destructive mega-power to decisively defeat whoever would challenge their authority.

Yet there is a problem, which Einstein foresaw. He recognized that our nature and nurture directed us to use our intelligence for destructive as well as constructive purposes to attain our needs and wants. Our mastery of science enables us to make such powerful weapons that we no longer preserve our lives at the expense of others but instead take our own lives along with the lives of others. Nature's perspective, *(physical) might makes right* is no longer adequate; it is but partially true.

Do you understand his concern? As long as the H's on our hypothetical planet continue to think as they have been accustomed, it is merely a matter of time before Armageddon, mass mutual destruction! Perhaps more crucial than the $E=mc^2$ equation that led to the bomb, Einstein provided a solution to the danger he prophesied: *We shall require a substantially new manner of thinking if mankind is to survive,* one that will direct our intelligence to act with *reason* and *wisdom* more than instinct and habit. We need to update our operating system so that it can consistently direct our mega-powers to constructive outcomes. To what avail is Utopia if we self-destruct along the way?

As our recent science of travel and communication shrinks our world into an interrelated global economy, the "us" also grows bigger. "Me" is increasingly becoming a part of a larger "us." As the group which is "us" grows larger in size, the number of "us's" diminishes; the trend is towards a divided world where there is only one "us" and one or a few of "them," with each one intent on domination and forcing the "other" to accept their political and/or religious assumptions. Given our history of destructive aggression and the explosive growth of our power to make a difference, it is clear we are headed for holocaust of unimaginable proportion … unless we provide new direction!

In our own not too distant past, every person was armed with two fists. Gradually we developed and distributed weapons until first a few of us had guns, then many had them, and in some areas, most. Nobel's discovery of dynamite produced bombs (and the Nobel Peace Prize!), which have become quite commonplace. The suicide bomber is a current "innovation." Now the number of groups possessing multiple weapons of mass destruction is increasing, as are the individuals who could trigger them with the push of a button or simple word. Given our present manner of thinking, in which of these situations would you and your loved ones be most secure? Do you believe, like the H's on their seven separate continents, that increasing our physical power increases our security? I personally believe that while escalation of physical power may temporarily serve as a source of deterrence, it is not a long-term solution to preserving our well-being.

We have created this critical time of both danger and opportunity through rational thinking. Scientific discovery is the product of the cooperation of our collective mental energy throughout our history. If two heads can be more productive than one, imagine what could be learned through the collected wisdom of multiple insights from each segment of humanity. **Is there any culture, religious group, race, or geographic region that cannot contribute some piece to the diversity of wisdom we require?** What is remarkable today is the abundant wisdom in our texts, the collection of ideas in our libraries, and the ability to share information via our growing efficiency in communication. The task that faces us is to persuade each culture, religious group, race, and geographic region that virtue implores love more than hate, peace more than war, sharing more than hoarding, cooperation more than dominating, freedom more than slavery. We make such truths apparent through the reasoned outcome of wisdom. More than tolerance for others, **peace requires that we understand our <u>need</u> for the wisdom "others" have to contribute.** We initially grow the momentum for global peace by convincing and persuading ourselves of these values, by pointing an educating finger <u>in</u>ward to strengthen our personal responsibility. Some would prefer slavery to death, but who would choose slavery over freedom? Freedom cannot persist without the companion of wisdom.

This is the most important reason to add global priorities to your local ones. You are needed to become <u>*one*</u> of *each one, teach many* who will help develop and popularize the ANWOT mental skills that upgrade our thinking to deal with our most universal unresolved problem … destructive aggression. We don't want to proceed to the confrontation anticipated on our hypothetical planet. ANWOT frees our will power from the prejudices of our genes and nurturers. A freed will + wisdom empower us, through our freedom organ, to act with knowledge and wisdom more than instinct and habit. We need to become the genie who can answer our own prayers, who can make our wishes a reality. Along the way we first acquire the prerequisite skill to global peace: peace of mind. If you are not yet persuaded to become *one* of the *each one, teach many* to participate in ANWOT, please take our educational Peace Quiz.

When we heal ourselves, we bring peace to the world.

Stren #64: What Makes Us Human?
Our Super-duper Cerebral Cortex

Welcome to stren #64: **What Makes Us Human?** Wisdom is based on knowledge. Sages throughout the ages have advised us: "Know Thyself." Let's modernize the syntax by writing "Know our *self*," specifically the *self* of *self*-mastery. What is it that makes me "me"? And how am I different than "not me"? We share many similarities with other species but recognizing the special features of our human brain provides us the biggest payoff. Here are some things worth knowing.

- Our brain is among the most complex of all structures. When I was in medical school, I was told it consisted of 100 million cells. Today's technology reveals that our human brain contains 100 billion cells with 100 trillion connections. If each of the nearly 7 billion people on earth were represented as one cell, our brain would hold everyone and have room for 14 more such collections. Can you imagine creating a machine with so many parts?

- Scientists tell us life on earth began 3½ billion years ago when simple chemical structures became sufficiently complex to reproduce themselves. Single celled organisms progressed to those with two or more cells, and the number of component cells has gradually increased to the present time, where our most complex species have specialized organs working together to promote the survival of that species.

- The first life was brainless and mindless. Simple cells have receptors that draw them to or away from heat or light. As the number of cells increased, chemicals and nerves were introduced to coordinate activities. Simple wiring evolved into a nerve net and then a mass of nerve cells. Some nerves became specialized to receive messages and others to transmit data. When a receiving and transmitting wire are connected by a nerve cell, a "reflex" response is created, such as a knee jerk. Our spinal cord consists of vertical rows of such reflex systems.

- A mass of nerve cells that coordinates the activities of other cells is called "a brain." The earliest central mass of cells expanded in time to a point where continued growth was attained by an outcropping from the central mass. Can you visualize how one outcropping may lead to another ... and another as more control and wiring was required?

- The simplest brains served to coordinate activities but were "mindless." We can understand that conscious awareness required greater sophistication. What about becoming conscious of our consciousness, i.e. *self*-consciousness? Historically, the progression in complexity from one to multiple segments is slow and gradual; greater awareness is to be expected with each increase in brain complexity.

- Our human brain is a contiguous mass of masses so it is difficult to exactly delineate one specialized segment from another; the boundaries are not always sharp. One classification identifies seven segments labeled the *medulla, pituitary, pineal body,*

pons, cerebellum, thalamus, and *cerebral cortex.* There are other classifications that may be related to function as well as anatomy. The seventh segment, the cortex, is the one that distinguishes us the most from other life. For simplicity, let's label the six earlier segmented masses of cells *the animal brain*. The "human brain" includes the animal brain plus the cerebral cortex. The influence of the older segments remains dominant until balance favors the newest segments. Remember, the perspectives of the older segments persist; they remain eager to prevail.

- We have labeled humankind *Homo sapiens sapiens* – the species that not only knows, but knows that it knows. Scientists estimate the earliest life to qualify as humans emerged about 150,000 years ago. They also tell us that our human brain increases in complexity and size more rapidly than any other organ. The huge dinosaurs which became extinct about 650 million years ago had a huge muscle mass but very small brains relative to the size of their other organs. It appears we are the growing edge of the creative force that has gotten us this far, and we are continuing to progress to even greater sophistication.

- No other species can use symbols to influence themselves and everything about them as we do. Circa 50,000 ago, our intelligent cortex invented sophisticated symbols to add a private mental reality to co-exist with our commonly shared physical reality. Thus, w**e simultaneously dwell in two worlds: (1) the common physical environment we share and (2) our personal mental universe.** By assigning meaning to symbols, we empower them to act as signals to turn on energy. For example, a religious symbol – a Christian cross, or a word – "fire," may turn on energy by triggering a physical signal such as a nerve impulse or release of a chemical. Some symbols turn on more energy than others. By creating a glossary of symbols, we increase the power of our cerebral cortex. We continue to invent new symbols as we grow knowledge. A basic glossary is provided in stren #100.

- As our human brain manipulates symbols to create new combinations, we imagine new alternatives. We discover nature's secrets – knowledge of cause-and-effect. We store the knowledge we discover, share it with others, and pass it forward from generation to generation. It is said that we stand on the shoulders of the giants who preceded us and learn from the easy availability of their wisdoms.

- We extend our personal store of knowledge through a data system of libraries and instant communication technology. Information is the basis of "knowing." Knowledge of cause-and-effect is our source of immense power. Increasingly, we make ourselves godlike creators and destroyers. We create words and symbols that identify events and ideas, record our history, promote current events throughout the world, and predict the future with more or less accuracy. Other earth creatures "know" their environment primarily through their immediate experience; their level of consciousness and use of language is limited.

- Our mental experience has "perspective." We may travel through time to dwell on the past, present, and future. We may revisit and "freeze" time. For example, "resentment"

is a repetitive dwelling on a past experience while “optimism” is a sustained anticipation of a future experience. We not only travel back and forth in this life but we create elaborate assumptions about an afterlife. Such assumptions profoundly influence our life’s experience.

- Consider how our way of thinking has grown from simplicity to sophistication. Initially, conscious awareness consisted only of images and automatic reactions. Later, thoughts that popped into our mind could be manipulated by thinking about the thoughts. Conscious awareness expanded our power to find original solutions to the goals prescribed by instinct and our nurturers. Like a computer, we acquire data through input. The information is processed to serve the commands posed by the authority that entered it. Such masters at the human keyboard might be *instinct*, our *nurturers*, *fate, circumstance, culture*, and *human* dictators. Our super-sophisticated human brain enables us to reach the next level of consciousness where we control the keyboard: *self*-mastery.

- We engage in a process called **“*reflective thinking*”** which is the ability to observe our thinking. It is much easier to shave or put on makeup when we see our reflection in a mirror. Our cortex enables us to become conscious of our consciousness, i.e. *self*-conscious. Our mental life is like a continuous motion picture, “a stream of consciousness.” *Fate* and *circumstance* provide the initial story line; they stimulate our thoughts and thinking. We commonly stay stuck at this level. Reflective thinking is our means to become skillful in *self*-programming. Only we can teach ourselves to become our own person. We may selectively modify the action patterns others have pre-wired, and so we assume responsibility for our destiny. Other living beings follow the script provided by *nature* and *nurture,* while we may become the producer and the director of our mental motion picture.

- Thanks to our complex brain and its elaborate mental processing capacity, we can manipulate information, interpret it, and form beliefs. We use the data recorded in our memory and current experience to make assumptions. The collection of assumptions, beliefs, and personal interpretations of data constitute our ***assumptive worldview***. We can more powerfully influence our thinking, feelings, and actions by our assumptions than by the here and now information provided by our body and our senses. Other earthlings are constrained by the limited pathways prewired by nature and their nurturers.

- Unlike our animal brain, which is preprogrammed at our birth to benefit us with the trial-and-error survival skills passed forward through history, our cerebral cortex is more like a *tabula rasa*, a clean slate. During our first dozen years, our cortex has an extraordinary ability to learn by mimicking whatever our role models dictate. Immature and uneducated, our *tabula rasa* has little resistance to whatever interpretations our early authorities inscribe. The combined programs become our ***assumptive worldview*** and establish the values that influence our thinking, feelings, and actions.

- Our animal brain is amoral. It is prewired to repeat the life cycle. It favors saying "yes" to whatever looks, feels, tastes, sounds, and smells good; it demands risky, self-serving action if it seems likely to succeed without too big a price. Our nurturer's perspective is commonly the opposite of the animal brain's amoral *seek pleasure/avoid pain* demands for instant satisfaction. The conflict between the "*yes*'s" we inherit and the "*no*'s" of tradition often persist through our lifetime as a major source of stress. No other species invents the degree of neurotic anxiety that leads to the distinctive human traits of blaming others, guilting ourselves, and harmful aggression to appease our value system.

- Our ***assumptive worldview*** not only defines the values that are *right* and *good*, it automatically distinguishes what is *wrong* and *evil*. Our first assumptive views divide the world into two *either/or* opposing categories: advocacy, allegiance, love and obedience for "our tribe," and suspicion, disrespect, hate, and dehumanizing what is not our side. This early *either/or* way of thinking is an important source of bigotry and prejudice.

- **Simple o**rganisms lack consciousness; they respond reflexively. More complex organisms with consciousness add sophisticated but relatively predictable mental responses; they are genetically determined or acquired from previous experience. Humans have a vast repertoire of preprogrammed reflexes and assumptions plus the ability to reflect on our thinking, make modifications, and initiate original action. Pre-wired action pathways are inflexible and poorly adaptable to the new challenges we create. Learn to look for and recognize those hardwired action patterns that have become maladaptive**.**

- *Nature* predisposes us to *fight or flight, survival of the fittest* behavior; *nurture* prescribes their traditional action pathways through *"should, have to, must, ought*" trigger words that dictate yesterday's solutions to today's problems. Our tendency to respond to information habitually and "uncritically" gets us into trouble when confronted with new issues that require "out of the box" *common sense* solutions. In our partially civilized world, we are rarely confronted with emergencies requiring instant action**.**

- Power can be expressed wisely and stupidly. Wise assumptions based on *common sense* and current knowledge are likely to result in more productive outcomes than faulty, established assumptions that ignore current knowledge. We make ourselves effective leaders by educating our cerebral cortex to verify our established assumptions using common sense. The *Triple A* stren, #66, explains the process of examining our maladaptive assumptions and selectively substituting ones that work.

- As we acquire knowledge of cause-and-effect, we continuously upgrade the assumptions that constitute our worldview. Our ancestor's giant leaps of faith went far beyond reason. They led to idol worship, superstition, and rituals we now consider bizarre. Science inspires us to revise our assumptions and diminish the size of our leaps. We no longer burn presumed witches at the stake or believe we live on a flat world that is the center of the universe. Many faith-inspired groups are now accepting

the idea that the creative force that explains us required more than six days and that we are a work-in-progress, better described as *humane becomings* instead of *human beings*, because we are proceeding to greater complexity and personal responsibility for our destiny.

- Our ancestors were intelligent but they lacked knowledge. Their survival and ours may be attributed to the cunning use of brains to overcome brawn. Through our use of symbols, we build on our survival skills. Stren #50 explains that we grow knowledge like an asymptotic curve, not as a straight line (see graph below). With the development of the scientific method, we grow our power of knowledge in shorter and shorter periods of time.

We used fists, rocks, sling shots, and bows and arrows for 150,000 years to kill a few at a time, but now we are creating and making available weapons with ultimate destructive power to multiple tribes. Our generation and succeeding ones now have the power to rapidly advance civilization, eliminate war, and institutionalize peace. We have also made ourselves the first species to put itself on 24/7 alert to destroy all that is about us and we are making this power widely available.

- The *newer way of common sense thinking* (**ANWOT**) stimulates self-examination and ownership of our assumptive values. We are unique by the degree we can "override" the assumptions that have become habitual and develop newer paths for action. Mental freedom is the opportunity to choose among existing alternatives and those we self-originate. Through the power of interpretation, we gain the godlike power to create and to destroy. Like it or not, nature is pushing us out of the nest and we must assume responsibility for our destiny. We best recognize that we are *humane becomings* rather than human beings.

- Nature has provided us with a specialized freedom organ and the message is that it is time to fly off on our own and take charge of our own destiny. The gift of our human brain is a gift of opportunity. We can educate ourselves to create alternative actions, add them to existing ones, and wisely choose from among them. We can also choose to remain stuck in our adolescent stage of maturity where the balance of control remains in our animal brain. We are free to choose wisely and stupidly. What is your choice?

Here is the critical knowledge that will help us survive and thrive. Our human brain has entered a super-mature stage of development that provides us the godlike

power to create and destroy. Suddenly, the specialized qualities of the cerebral cortex make us responsible for our survival. The mysterious ability of the human brain to transverse physical and mental (non-physical, spiritual) borders empowers us to influence our own destiny. By the use of symbols to make ourselves interpretive creatures, we elevate ourselves from an immoral to a moral species. We add a spiritual self to our physical self. Our collection of assumed values becomes the moral system that guides our thinking, feelings, and actions.

To the degree we discover knowledge of the universal laws of cause-and-effect, what we otherwise call *common sense*, we enter into the super-maturity stage of development. To the degree we passively obey authority, we will remain servant to *fate, circumstance, culture*, and any dictator we allow to dominate our assumptive values. The process of reaching this third stage of development, beyond immaturity and maturity, is called by various names that include *super-maturity, becoming our own person, mental freedom,* and *self-mastery*.

Super-maturity and the process of becoming a wise leader for world peace are addressed throughout this collection of strens, but especially 4, 7, 12, 16, 30, and 65-68. You will progress to super-maturity as you substitute the word-switches that apply universal common sense wisdom for those trigger words that turn on outdated action patterns supported by the authority of dictators. ANWOT creates *out of the box* problem-solving based on current knowledge instead of yesterday's hard-wired solutions to yesterday's problems.

The outcome of applying ANWOT to common sense knowledge is that we free our will from our animal brain to assume the humane qualities we now require to survive. Popularizing ANWOT will create the number of new Mental Wealth millionaires needed to prevent the predicted imminent human catastrophe and create permanent world peace.

Only *humanmind* has the intelligence to enter a third stage of development in which we make ourselves the dominant manager of our life's experience. By teaching ourselves sufficient wisdoms to make ourselves Mental Wealth millionaires we assume the godlike qualities of mental freedom, problem solving, originality, flexibility, tolerance for diversity and other conflict resolution skills, cooperation, creating love, humor, and the power to "feel good" and "do good." Understanding the stages of development inspires us to attain the third stage of super-maturity.

Stren #65: A Movie Fantasy – What next?

Welcome to stren #65, *A Movie Fantasy*. This is an exercise in assuming responsibility. You have seen the individual "film clips." Now let us bring them together to create a feature motion picture of our development. The magnificent plot of nature and nurture has brought the audience to the edge of their chairs. You are the director! What next?

The plot thus far: In the beginning, there was nature. Following its own rules, nature created life. In human time, life's development has ever so slowly, imperceptibly, progressed from the simplicity of a single cell to the wondrous complex creatures we see about us. Nature introduced mental life, consciousness and self-consciousness, intelligence, and the ability of creatures to know and learn. At first, nature directed consciousness and served as its "teacher." Then students created increasingly complex symbols to represent and manipulate the common physical world we all share, and the students became teachers.

The plot becomes more interesting as some families of living beings acquire the ability to not only experience a private mental life but also to convert nonphysical concepts into physical energy. Our family, humankind (H), makes a gigantic leap. The combined creativity of nature and nurture enables us to store information, to program our own meanings into symbols, to reflect on our own thinking, and to create new pathways for action. They add a third master – *self* – to take responsibility for our development. Nature and nurture have determined that their newest child shall have *self*-mastery! Through the development of intelligence and the cooperative efforts of our teachers, H is becoming independent of the rules of our parents.

Applying the "trigger power" of symbols, H is acquiring the freedom of *self*-management along with immense power to "make a difference." By focusing our attention on the commonly shared *physical* phenomena of the world, H has created a science of the rules governing their application. Skill in applying these rules to direct its power has grown "explosively." Thus far, H has understandably invested most energy in rapidly expanding power, producing and improving both our productive and destructive means of aggression. This is because through our evolutionary past, nature and nurture's means of function (their "operating systems"), which have been programmed for "survival of the fittest" – domination, blaming, competition, and the like, have been the undisputed directors of its creatures. We see that these predetermined scripts for living are no longer adequate. Recently, H has begun to invest limited resources in the science of peaceful conflict resolution. The lead actor is increasingly acquiring the godlike will power to direct his own destiny and even most of what is about him. And now, as H's power for *self*-mastery matures, H dares to take on the tasks of managing its very own parents, nature and nurture.

Here is the drama. The time to reverse the expression of our current and expanding means for mass misery is rapidly ticking down to zero. We now face the critical task of harnessing destructive aggression to express its awesome energy toward

constructive ends. The drama is cresting. Given the powers of our physical science and the freedom to direct its outcome, will the director of this motion picture apply H's *self*-mastery constructively or destructively? Does H allow its power to be controlled by the "fight/flight" and the habitual action patterns of nature and nurture? Shall we continue to emphasize the "trial-and-error" and "role-modeling" methods of learning that have brought us to the present? Does our new scientific knowledge to manipulate physical power require a "no trial" mental method of learning that permits us to act with wisdom based on reason, imagination, and fantasy before committing action which is irreversible? We see that nature and nurture's gifts of intelligence, power, freedom, and *self*-mastery entrust, and suddenly thrust the choice onto the protagonist, H. The evidence of destructive intention and the multiple "emergency alert" alarms are ubiquitous. However, reason, the source of the protagonist's motivation to take appropriate action, is numbed by the instinct and habit that has, thus far, sustained H. The protagonist appears to be passively waiting for salvation to come from some outside edict or intervention. H appears stuck in the older operating systems of nature and nurture. *Self*-destruction appears to be H's future! Is H's fate hopeless?

The plot is increasingly unpleasant. I am so agitated; a thought pops into my mind, "Remove myself from the theater. I don't like the plot, and I don't want to see the ending. I can probably find a soothing T.V. program or other interesting entertainment." Whoops! The movie stops. This is as far as our motion picture goes. I'm not disappointed because I was just about to leave anyway. Wait! I realize I have a healthy imagination, and through it, I can become this movie's director and producer! In my fantasy, I can direct the protagonists and continue the script any way I choose. I'll do it my way. You also can be director and producer! I hope you'll do it your way so we can compare.

I proceed by considering how H can get out of this mess. Wise direction requires a newer way of thinking. The means are quite attainable. H now has the creative capacity to replace trial-and-error learning with no-trial learning. By applying *common sense* to imagination, the protagonist can rehearse alternative actions before taking action. Prevention will not be accomplished passively. It is apparent that if H is to survive, H must acquire a mental science that liberates its thinking, one that allows thinking to function with wisdom as well as strength, a mental science that is equivalent to the physical sciences that have enabled H to freely wield immense physical power.

The initial task is to overcome apathy. We know that hopelessness is the most devastating response, and it's difficult to challenge because it shuts down our energy factory placing us totally at the whims of fate and circumstance. William James, described as our country's father of philosophy and psychology, concluded, "the most important discovery is that a human being can alter his life by altering his attitudes of Mind." Through ANWOT, we can wisely direct the drama to a happy outcome. We have the power and the freedom to create ANWOT. Our choice is what we will! Our science of *physical* phenomenon has enabled us to direct the power of matter. Similarly, the science of *mental* (spiritual) phenomena is our means to direct the power of thinking. Yes, we can understand why creating a science of the rules by which the

mind operates will come after the simpler task: thinking is private and individual, and therefore the rules of mental or spiritual phenomena are more difficult to study. As director and producer, I have the protagonist focus their energy on recognizing the rules that govern mental trigger power. When we label the rules of thinking through which nature, nurture, and our *self* operate, we establish a newer science of mental management, ANWOT, which is far more likely to attain an outcome we desire than one we don't want.

The process of change begins with one or a few individuals – you, and you, and you. We have seen how the combination of "*each one, teach many*" and our recent means of mass communication can have a dramatic effect. Our larger system can be influenced when sufficient individuals learn to process knowledge and direct our energy to constructive aggression, cooperation, love, sharing, belonging, harmony, and related newer survival skills. The rewards for participation are *feeling good* and *doing good*. What outcome would you predict if H continues the old manner of thinking?

It is said that the longest journey begins with the first step. The very first step to world peace begins with a simple *Little Engine That Could* act of faith, "Yes, I think I can, I think I can, I think I can." This initial spark of belief in our *self* that *I can make a difference* leads to the five component skills to proceed to succeed:

(1) **The ingredients**: *faith* that I can make a difference ("I think I can"), *work, patience, direction*, and *risk-taking* to replace traditional *either/or* thinking with ANWOT.
(2) The **ANWOT vocabulary** of word-switches that upgrades our thinking for self-mastery[21]
(3) Wisdom – **the collection of strens** or "mental strengths" provided through the insights of those who have preceded us and those of our contemporaries.
(4) The **Mental Freedom Control Panel** describing the eight mental choices available to our will to deal with issues.
(5) **A value system** based on universal *common sense* that moves us to constructive aggression.

These five component skills are offered forever free by the Educational Community, Inc., at www.anwot.org. They are also attainable in abundance through many easily found resources such as libraries and the Internet. Will you partner with us in forging the path to world peace?

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[21]A beginning glossary of word-switches is provided in stren #100.

Stren 66: THE TRIPLE A (AAA) STREN

A Basic Tool to Strengthen *A Newer Way of Thinking* **(ANWOT)**

The next series of strens will enlighten you on the power of interpretation. We make ourselves godlike creators and destroyers who now determine our destiny and that of all about us. You will love the practical benefits your will experience as you put this understanding into practice.

The "*Triple A*" stren, #66, is a powerful wisdom to elevate us to the newer way of thinking we require to survive and thrive in our new era of weapons with ultimate destructive power **(WUD).** ANWOT does not replace our early way of processing data; it adapts the faith based assumptions for modernity by adding common sense wisdom to new knowledge. Thus, it is not "new"; it is "newer." You will love the *Triple A* stren because it is such a helpful tool to understand your mental "workings" and progress to the self-mastery phase of your development.

AAA = Arousal → Assumption →Action

I am indebted to Albert Ellis, the developer of ***Rational Emotive Therapy***, for the *triple A stren* because he has elucidated the "ABC" concept that I have slightly modified:

A = an Activating event,
B = one's Belief, and
C = the Consequent action.

My favorite professor, Jerome Frank, in his classic book ***Persuasion and Healing***, referred to the importance of our "assumptive world" consisting of the collection of assumptions that powerfully influence our thinking, feelings, and actions. Our "assumptive world" corresponds to the "B" in the "ABC" wisdom. Ellis explains this idea dates back to the philosopher Epictetus who proclaimed, "**Men are not disturbed by things, but by the views which they take of them**." Recall the wisdom of the Charles Shultz cartoon character "Peanuts," *Happiness is a state of mind*. Humans create most of our troubles because we passively assume "A", and activating event leads immediately to "C," the consequent action. He has developed a system of self-understanding that redirects you to focus on "B", the major cause of "C." We best manage ourselves when we recognize it is not the event that causes unhappiness; it is our faulty assumptions or beliefs in response to the event. By assuming "A" is the source of our stress, our thinking is prone to blaming some "it," "other," or "our self." Blaming leads to harmful aggression. By recognizing the importance of our interpretation of the arousal event – "B" instead of "A", we are more likely to examine our thinking, direct our attention to constructive problem-solving, and take personal responsibility for our actions. We differ from other life on earth by the degree we use language to interpret the data we receive.

In prior strens, I describe three stages of our development, each with its own "master" who would have us interpret the world according to their perspective:
Stage 1: **master nature**, our genetic inheritance

Stage 2: **master nurture**, what we acquire from our teachers, culture, and other "nurturers"
Stage 3: ***self*-mastery**, what we choose for ourselves as we free our will to become our own person

The action course we take is the outcome of which master's set of assumptions dominate. The survival instinct we inherit is located in the first to develop animal portion of our brain. It emphasizes an automatic physical action, what has been called the "fight or flight, survival of the fittest" response to arousal. During our immaturity, our nurturers provide us a two-category language that biases us to divide the world into *either/or* opposing sides. We are to blindly obey the authority representing "our side." Dominance through symbolic means is preferred to physical means: position, title, wealth, superficial appearance, economic, political, and religious authority. Physical aggression within one's family or tribe is usually prohibited, a "no-no!" but may be condoned if directed to "not our side." We passively accept instinct and our nurturers' assumptive views. They become habit through repetition and tradition as they are passed forward. Dependence on our nurturer's expectations commonly includes winning, by "beating" others in competition, and being *right*. Assumptive views are usually taught using "prescriptive" (*should, have to, must, ought*) and "dichotomous" language. *Dichotomous* means limited to two contradictory sides such as *either good or bad, right or wrong, us or them, etc.*

The early language and assumptive views that effectively serve instinct and tradition during our immature years are insufficient to serve us well in our mature years. Hardwired, their inflexible assumptions are increasingly disastrous in our rapidly changing contemporary world, especially as most tribes acquire WUD. **Instead of making our best bargain with the godlike power we ourselves create, we become our own worst enemy.** The triple A stren inspires us to create *a newer way of thinking* that is compatible with our growing *self*-mastery. It provides our thinking a wiser perspective that emphasizes knowledge and universal common sense. Updating our passively acquired assumptive worldview is accomplished by simple word-switches in our language and teaching ourselves the collective wisdoms others make available to us.

If you begin to use the AAA or ABC sequence to examine your "assumptive world," you will gain a valuable insight to add to your self-management skills. This tool will help you move on to the third "self-mastery" super-maturity stage of development. ANWOT is our means to problem-solve applying universal common sense to the most recent knowledge of cause-and-effect to create the *out of the box* solutions that work. Accurate assumptions develop skills in originality, cooperation, loving, and wise direction of your actions. Taking charge of your assumptive world is the key to using your best to do your best, to feel good and do good**.**

The following examples are provided to help you understand the powerful influence of your assumptive views. Ask these questions: What makes the difference in the resultant action, the event that gets our attention or interpretation of the data?

Can you identify the mediating assumptions? Are some relatively automatic, attributed to the inherited "fight/flight" response pattern or "prescribed" by early nurturers? Would alternative assumptions that you might create lead to different action outcomes? Can you recognize that *nature, nurture*, and the *self* of *self*-mastery may interpret the same event in ways that result in different outcomes?

Example 1: Harry and Joe each live near the cemetery. Harry regularly takes his lunch to relax there. He says "What a beautiful serene place." Joe avoids going anywhere near the cemetery. He may even have panic episodes thinking about the "unnatural" things that go on among the dead.

Example 2: We are born with a "natural" response to avoid pain. Some individuals deliberately cause pain and injury to themselves, and do so with satisfaction. Asceticism is the practice of the belief that the greater the pain experienced on earth, the greater will be the reward in eternity. My dictionary indicates ascetics commonly believe that pain "releases the soul from bondage to the body and permits union with the divine."[22] What other assumptions might lead individuals to flagellate themselves or inflict self-pain? To become kamikaze pilots or suicide bombers?

Example 3: A baseball fan is talking with three umpires and asks: "How do you know what is a ball and what is a strike?"

Umpire #1: "I call 'em the way I sees 'em."
Umpire #2: "I call 'em the way they are."
Umpire #3: "They aint nuttin until I calls 'em."

Example 4: William James was reading a book while visiting an illiterate native tribe. The leader, accompanied by an entourage, approached him and offered to exchange most of the tribal valuables for the book. Why? The chief observed James staring for hours at the book. He concluded James's prolonged gaze into the strange object was the source of the magical power they attributed to him.

We are required to make a multitude of assumptions to explain the world about us. Our assumptions powerfully influence how we deal with the motion pictures on our mental screen. The events themselves are at first merely occurrences devoid of meaning or already impassioned with nature's and nurture's assumptive views. For each person, there is a unique perspective. Can you identify how fate and circumstance determined <u>your</u> "assumptive world"?

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[22]*The American Heritage Dictionary*, Houghton Miflin/Boston, 1979.

Stren #67: Proceeding to Succeed
Four Steps

Welcome to stren #67, Proceeding to Succeed. This stren explains the four steps most certain to prevent imminent human catastrophe and create sustained peace. The process requires a sufficient number of leaders who understand the process here described and will initiate the domino effect required to mobilize the larger population into constructive action. Given the nearly seven billion people who wish or pray for world peace, I believe a million peace leaders united in effective action will be unstoppable. I have no doubt that goal is attainable given the reach of our current mass media and Internet.

The problem has been described in detail throughout these strens, and in the other resources available for free at our website, **www.anwot.org**. To sum up briefly: surviving through harmful aggression, which has worked for billions of years, has suddenly become maladaptive as our generation creates and makes weapons with ultimate destructive power **(WUD)** widely available. Our most knowledgeable scientists and informed citizens predict one or more tribes are likely to use them in our generation and most certainly during our children's lifetime. War followed by rebuilding, the traditional means to establish dominance, is no longer possible as our WUD offer no second chance. Prevention through cooperation and collaboration is required instead. We have a mission to elevate ourselves to become the humane species we preach but have yet to reach. Understanding how we can proceed to succeed will overcome the prevalent hopeless/helpless attitude that shuts down our energy to take action. Subsequent strens will explain our unique third stage of development, the meaning and the process of attaining self-mastery.

Our species has been gifted with a specialized freedom organ, our cerebral cortex, with sufficient intelligence to free our will from *instinct* and the *traditions* of our nurturers. We invent symbols to create language and self-consciousness. This is our means to master our own destiny and that of all about us. When mature and properly educated, we not only think about our surroundings, we think about what we think. We are conscious of our consciousness. We create a private world, make assumptions using the data available to us, and create phenomena and action pathways unprecedented in nature. Through the power of interpretation, we make assumptions that become our collection of beliefs. Our **assumptive worldview** establishes a value system that distinguishes us from all life on earth. The values we assume create a mental- spiritual private world that influences our life experience more than the events of the physical world we share in common. Only we discover cause-and-effect, store, share, and pass this power of knowledge forward to increasingly make us godlike creators and destroyers. Within the last one hundred years, a blink in historical time, our scientific method has created a quantum leap in *self*-mastery. Our recent dramatic acceleration of knowledge has thrust our generation and certainly our children's generation into a race between survival and annihilation.

Our animal brain supports the destructive action pathways that were effective in solving yesterday's problems by applying yesterday's knowledge. Some actions have become maladaptive given the new solutions required to solve the problems of today's technology. Domination through harmful symbolic aggression may be expressed as jealousy, resentment, hate, bigotry, prejudice, bullying, *greed and speed*, and insatiable pursuit of the symbols of power such as physical wealth and titles. These behaviors are not the deviant expressions of "evil" people. They are the action patterns we would expect to be dictated by our animal brain. They persist unless restrained by education in the skills of civility. To the degree we allow our animal brain to dominate our thinking and **assumptive worldview**, we will remain uncivilized and become the first species to hasten our own extinction as we apply our creativity stupidly. The symbolic expression of instinct's *fight or flight*, *survival of the fittest* perspective to dominate through harmful confrontation is no longer adaptive in a world where most tribes possess weapons with ultimate destructive power.

The wonderful news is that **since we ourselves cause much of our distress by our way of thinking, we are positioned to assume responsibility by creating newer problem-solving skills.** We no longer need to passively sustain traditional outdated action pathways. We can selectively replace the assumptive worldviews imposed on us by our animal brain and those of our nurturers that were adaptive to yesterday's problems. ANWOT elevates us to the *self*-mastery stage of *humanmind's* development … problem-solving, originality, creating love, flexibility, tolerance, cooperation, and other conflict resolution skills. Power, applied with wisdom, can consistently lead to "feeling good" and "doing good." The wise direction of our rapidly expanding s*elf*-mastery requires "willful" updating of our **assumptive worldview**. Let's now understand how to solve the problem.

The Solution: If we are to continue to make history instead of making ourselves history, we must follow these four steps.

1. **Become aware of the severity of the problem.**
2. **Recognize that the danger is imminent**.
3. **Understand that prevention is required**.
4. **United action will be unstoppable.**

PROCEEDING TO SUCCEED by wise direction of our power of creation and destruction:

1. **Become aware of the severity of the danger** of proliferation of biologic and nuclear WUD. The Nagasaki and Hiroshima bombs were the equivalent of 2000 trucks each carrying 10 tons of dynamite. Can you imagine the effect of one 20 megaton bomb, the equivalent of 2,000,000 trucks with 10 tons of dynamite? Ounces of biological pathogens, properly distributed, are capable of exceeding the harm from our most powerful bomb. The materials required to produce biological weapons are more available and easier to create unnoticed than

nuclear weapons.

2. **Recognize that the danger is imminent**. Our most informed citizens predict that biological and/or nuclear WUD will be used again before the end of 2013[23], most likely in our lifetime, and almost certainly in the lifetime of our children. Urgent action is required. We must overcome the hopeless/helpless attitude that shuts down our energy. Most people wish or pray for world peace but fail to unite to take effective action while terrorists organize their followers to rule the world.

3. **Understand that preventive action is required**. As described above and in previous strens, the traditional problem-solving pattern of the animal portion of our brain, *war followed by a rebuilding "cure,"* is no longer suitable because WUD offer no second chance. WUD don't hurt in stages; they remain out of sight and mind until a single, devastating strike, at which point it is too late. The destructive power of today's and tomorrow's weapons (if there is a tomorrow) is irreversible. Survival requires assigning a value to prevention that exceeds anything we have done to date.

4. **United action will be unstoppable.** We have the knowledge and technology to proceed to succeed ... if we make a coordinated effort. The critical step is uniting sufficient world peace advocates to popularize ANWOT. We can arouse most of the nearly seven billion persons who want to live in a peaceful world if we first unite one million of our most capable citizens. The first individuals to be recruited are those successful leaders who are already motivated for world peace. If you are an individual who is a Mental Wealth millionaire or are willing to teach yourself *the newer way of thinking* to acquire Mental Wealth, we need you to partner with others as an *each one, teach many* peace leader who will educate our global population. We must first change our own **assumptive views** to include global priorities. By acquiring ANWOT, we elevate our assumptive worldview to create a joyous meaningful life experience and simultaneously become a powerful force for world peace.

ANWOT leads to the universal values such as *love your neighbor* and *do unto others* that all intelligent problem-solving arrives at through common sense. It inspires the skills of patience and love that shift our **assumptive worldview** from our animal brain's narrow focus on local priorities to include the global issues that only our human brain can envision. ANWOT redirects our energy from physical wealth and physical health (including superficial appearances) to make wisdom, i.e. Mental Wealth, our highest priority. I have observed that most physical wealth millionaires discover that "there" isn't "there" – in other words, material success doesn't bring all that our animal brain assumes will be at the end of the rainbow. Greater satisfaction is attained by becoming a *giveaway* millionaire, focused on a charitable endeavor that benefits a specific category of individuals. Kudos are in order for those leaders who reach this

[23] ***The World at Risk***, Report of a joint Commission of the U.S. Congress to study and report the status of proliferation of WMD.

level of super-maturity. However, we still miss the big picture. Good deeds focused on localized groups are too little and too late to overcome our current momentum for self-extinction. Often the “give” is tied to a “take,” to serve greed through a good deed, *giving to get* more than truly giving of oneself to serve humanity. Would the *give* persist without the *take* of monetary reward or public adulation? Perhaps it is unreasonable to expect we can sufficiently elevate ourselves above the demands of our animal brain where the self-endorsements we create enable us to give and sustain our good deeds as a complete act, where rewards from others are no longer required. However, is there any doubt that our united efforts can create a quantum leap towards a gentler safer world if we simply expand our assumptive worldview to add global priorities to the local ones we pursue?

I do hope this stren provides sufficient awareness of the four steps to achieve our highest goals: a wonderful life experience and world peace. The next stren explains how we can proceed to the *super-mature* third phase of development which is available only to humankind.

Stren #68: Super-maturity
The third stage of development

Welcome to stren #68 which describes the process of progressing from immaturity, to maturity, and then the developmental stage of *super-maturity* that is available only to humankind. We gain considerable enlightenment by recognizing the stages of mastery as we progress from womb to tomb. The assumptions that influence our values and actions change relative to our level of maturity. The *super-maturity* stage is especially important to understand because it is in this stage that we develop the skills to take responsibility for our life's experience. The four steps described in stren #67 to insure that we survive and thrive are relegated to those of us who attain the development stage of super-maturity.

Who we are, what we become, and what we stand for are first determined by authorities over which we lack control. We give names to these authorities such as *instinct* and *tradition, fate* and *circumstance*, *nature* and our *nurturer*s. The authorities who first program us have greatest influence during our formative years:

Immaturity (stage 1): We lack the capacity to question and resist whatever our genes demand through instinct. We inherit the pre-wired behaviors that were determined by trial-and-error to work, especially those that emphasize the *fight or flight*, *survival of the fittest* instincts that were crucial to survival in the savage environment our ancestors faced. Can you think of anything comparable to the billions of years of trial-and-error learning that has honed the design we inherit though our genes? We are fortunate to be born with such a level of perfection.

Upon birth, our *nurturers* add their programs to our genetic inheritance. They provide us with the language, flag, and political, religious, and assumptive worldviews that are prevalent in our family of origin. Their prejudgments become our prejudices. Our brain has its greatest ability to mimic role models during our pre-teen years. Like a sponge, we absorb whatever *fate* and *circumstances* prescribe. Consider how easily we acquire a native language compared to learning a foreign language after our brain has matured.

We all first perceive the world in *either/or* opposing categories. *Instinct* and our *nurturers* command we follow their way and that all else is "wrong." Words like *should, have to, must, ought, yes* and especially *no* leave little doubt of what is good and right. With repetition, their way of thinking becomes my way of thinking. "My way, the only way!" becomes habitual. Habit passed forward from generation to generation becomes tradition. This dichotomous way of thinking is adaptive when we lack the *common sense* required to survive. To the degree that this *either/or* thinking persists when we become godlike creators and destroyers, our **assumptive worldview** will remain biased toward bigotry, prejudice, harmful confrontation, and war.

Maturity (stage 2): Maturity is the natural process by which our organ systems attain their highest level of function to serve the whole system. Many species are born already at the level of maturity that they need to survive and function

independently. Being the most complex species, we require years of nurturance and role modeling before we are prepared to assume nature's requirement – survive to repeat the life cycle. We owe our highest level of function to the power of interpretation attributed to our matured cerebral cortex. Because our cerebral cortex doesn't reach full physical maturity until about the age of 18, we have limited mental freedom from *instinct* and *tradition* during our developing years. Although we all share the *survival of the fittest* prescriptions of *instinct,* we may vary considerably depending on the programming inscribed into our immature brain by our nurturers and circumstance.

Have you considered to what degree the beliefs and assumptions that determine your values and actions are rented from various sources? The assumptive views hardwired by fate and circumstance dominate our way of thinking, even when our bodies have matured, because our intelligent but immature cerebral cortex remains servant to our animal brain and tradition. We increasingly have the ability to rebel against authority, but must teach ourselves a number of mental skills before we can overcome the persistence of our animal brain's two-category way of thinking. Bigotry, prejudice, and harmful confrontation remain rooted in our uncritical obedience to the authority of *fate*, *circumstance*, and *human* dictators.

Most people reading this have had a liberating education. Your nurturers have provided you with basic skills of civilization and prepared you to partially become your own person. I say partially because most tribes inscribe traditions that require continued allegiance to their assumptive worldview and they severely punish rebellion. This is why "risk-taking" is one of the five ingredients to progressing to the third stage of development – what we label by such names as *super-maturity, self-mastery, mental freedom, thought control,* and *becoming one's own person*.

Super-maturity (stage 3): *Super-maturity* is the process of freeing our will power from *fate* and *circumstance* to master our life's experience, favoring *common sense* over the blind acceptance of authority. Mental freedom makes us responsible for our life's experience – freedom means we can choose wisely or stupidly. Stupidity is "blindly" and uncritically accepting (remaining stuck) in whatever *fate* and *circumstance* make of us. Wisely applying universal *common sense* to knowledge to attain super-maturity is our choice.

We upgrade our thinking to attain self-mastery by emphasizing wisdom above the hardwired action pathways programmed by *instinct, tradition*, and *human* dictators. This *newer way of thinking* (ANWOT) applies today's knowledge of cause and effect to create newer, out of the box solutions suited to current and anticipated dangers. ANWOT is based on assumptions affirmed by reason and common sense using current as well as prior knowledge. It consistently adapts our godlike constructive and destructive power to beneficial outcomes. ANWOT is our means to independently create and choose among alternatives. *Super-maturity* is the on-going process during which we assume responsibility to selectively upgrade our animal brain's two-category thinking to express the humane civilized skills we require to survive and thrive, especially urgent as we proliferate weapons with ultimate destructive power. Most

people's thinking remains at the mature stage of development where their **assumptive worldview** is still dominated by authority more than universal *common sense* wisdom. Surviving and thriving requires shifting the balance of our thinking to the *super-maturity* level of development where global priorities assume equivalent importance to local ones.

Super-mature individuals have acquired sufficient self-endorsement skills to exceed their minimum daily requirement for approval and offer the love that spills over to others. It is difficult to give to others what we don't own. Outside approval is welcomed but no longer a requirement or dependency. The act of giving is complete in itself, not a barter of giving to get. Such individuals create a joyous, meaningful life experience irrespective of what *fate* and *circumstance* hand them. I call them Mental Wealth millionaires.

Historically, collectively, and individually, humanity has progressed to its adolescent stage of development. We are in the process of shifting from our self-serving animal brain to the *self*-mastery enlightened by universal *common sense* wisdom. The ingredients we require are abundantly available for our asking: faith in our self, work, patience, direction, and risk-taking.

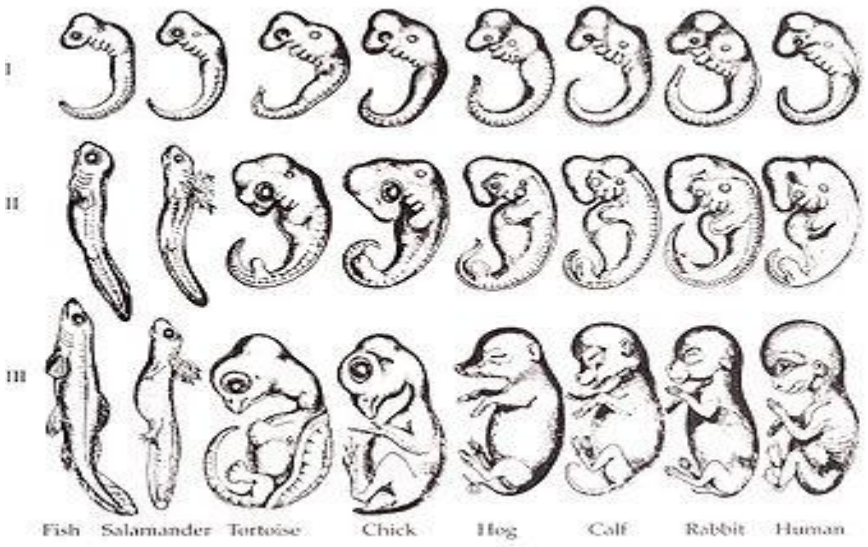
The Educational Community, Inc. forever free web site, **www.anwot.org**, offers the collected skills that enable anyone to become a Mental Wealth millionaire and world peace leader. Please collect your free gifts and partner with us to popularize *a newer way of thinking*. Attaining super-maturity is our best hope to create a permanent world peace.

Stren 69: Ontogeny Recapitulates Phylogeny (ORP)

Do not be taken back by the tongue twister title of the insight offered in today's stren. A simple explanation reveals how this concept helps us to understand and even predict our behavior. Later I'll show you many examples of the practical knowledge revealed by this concept, including what we must do to survive and thrive as most tribes acquire weapons with ultimate destructive power.

Ontogeny refers to the growth and development of an individual in form and function from a single cell to its complexity at maturity. **Phylogeny** is the creative process beginning with the evolutionary history of a species. The embryo of the most complex life begins as a single undifferentiated cell. As species have increasing complexity, the methods of adaptation progress to greater sophistication. **Ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny** (simplified as **ORP)** signifies that an organism progresses to its highest level of function by entering and then graduating from each of the less sophisticated preceding levels of development. ORP provides us a valuable map of where we came from, the direction we are headed, and what alternative paths we might choose to reach our preferred destination faster, easier, and with great accuracy.

Nature programs all life to complete the life cycle. Simple species are born pre-programmed with all they need to survive. As organisms become more complex, trial-and-error learning, mimicking role models, and conscious problem-solving are added. Only our species has been gifted nature's latest model brain with sufficient intelligent use of symbols to attain self-mastery. We alone may attain sufficient self-mastery to partner with nature in determining our destiny and all that is about us. We continue to grow our godlike constructive and destructive power. ORP tells us we are on a rapid path to create unprecedented human catastrophe and possibly self-annihilation. Our future requires that we act wisely and decisively.



Haeckel's alleged fraudulent embryo drawings[24] shown above brought him discredit.

Ernst Haeckel introduced the ORP concept in 1866. Modern biology disproved his theory that all species progress from simple cell to complexity in a straight line, but they provide credible evidence that all life shares similarities until branching leads to different species. Each branch may differ from another branch. For example, the branch leading to humans and apes shows greater similarity than the branch leading to dogs and hogs. The embryonic stages of species are most similar but differ as they mature and "branch" into maturity. Genetics and molecular biology show there is greater similarity between species as we approach the base and roots of the tree of creation.

A modern interpretation of ORP introduced by English philosopher Herbert Spencer is that culture conforms to recapitulation theory. He said *Education is the repetition of civilization in little*. The ORP principle is expressed in our continual refinement of civilization, morality, and our religious and political ideologies. Learning conforms to the following progression: genes ⇨ trial-and-error ⇨ mimicking ⇨ mental rehearsal ⇨ self-initiation. Our first "education" is provided by the directions encoded in a succession of genes that go back millions, even billions of years prior to the 9 months of our gestation. All life is hardwired at birth to repeat the life cycle within the constraints provided by nature's authority - fate and circumstance. As the most complex earth creatures, only we have been gifted a newer segment to our animal brain with sufficient intelligence to create sophisticated symbols, and manipulate them to create imagination and phenomena original to nature - bombs and buildings, religious and political ideologies, and moral values such as forgiveness. We create the skills we call humane by discovering the universal rules of cause-and-effect and applying common sense to identify universal values such as "*Love your neighbor as yourself*" and "*Treat others as you would have others treat you*." "Share for mutual benefit." Common sense based on knowledge is an elective skill. Most individuals passively allow themselves to remain partially developed, stuck in rules demanded by the hardwired authority of our animal brain: "Eat or be eaten"; "My way, or my tribe's way - the only way!"; "The Aryan race is the superior race."

The gods and idols of the earliest religions served only their tribe; they provided magical power to dominate "the other side." Such giant leaps of faith based on wild assumptions led to bizarre rituals, such as burning "witches" at the stake, are being replaced as our advances in science direct us to more universal assumptions supported by knowledge of cause-and-effect. Darwin's concept of evolution is a contemporary example of a disputed confrontation between those who believe God magically created everything including human beings and then rested after six days, and others who assume the creative force that explains *humane becomings* required billions of years and is still progressing within the universal laws of cause-and-effect.

[24]See Wikipedia, Ernst Haeckel: ref. Richardson and Keuck, "Haeckel's ABC of evolution and development," p. 516

Nature has gifted us its latest model "human" brain containing a sophisticated cerebral cortex. It is the seventh of a series of specialized brains[25], each of which has erupted from prior specialized segments. The six segments to first develop have been referred to as the "animal" brain. Humankind represents the leading edge of creation because this seventh segment uses symbols to provide us the power of interpretation. Only we grow and pass knowledge of cause-and-effect forward from generation to generation to attain the mental freedom to create godlike power. We now determine who survives and who becomes extinct. The ORP principle helps us understand that nature has thrust us into unchartered waters and is providing us both the opportunity and the danger to assume responsibility for our own destiny and that of all about us.

The fact that physical development occurs well ahead of mental and emotional maturity is of considerable practical interest. Brawn precedes brain. The adage coined by Edward Bulwer-Lytton in 1839, "The pen is mightier than the sword," applies only after the development of language. The prophet Mohammad is quoted as saying: "The ink of the scholar is holier than the blood of the martyr." Communication skill may surpass violence. Peace by changing one's assumptive views may benefit all whereas the sword too often results in death. The recent introduction of weapons with ultimate destructive power (WUD) has again tipped the direction of energy towards muscle and our animal brain; it presents us with our most imminent crisis.

We derive our special godlike power by our ability to create assumptions about the data we receive and design original action pathways not available to other species. As we attain our highest level of function, we become conscious of our consciousness, i.e. self-conscious, we may self-program directions to our will power. The assumptive views or beliefs we create to interpret our conscious awareness may override the prescribed action pathways of instinct and tradition, fate and circumstance, nature and our nurturers. This super mature stage of development, available only to humankind, provides us both opportunity and responsibility for our destiny and that of all about us. The creative force that brought us to this level, be it God or nature depending on your assumptive worldview, is throwing us out of the nest - telling us to become free and "fly" on our own. It has provided us the intelligence to proceed and succeed. The freedom that we hold precious requires that we choose among alternatives – wisely or stupidly. **Wisdom is applying common sense to newer knowledge to make good judgments. Stupidity is allowing ourselves to uncritically obey the authority of tradition that advocates yesterday's effective solutions to manage today's problems.**

Now I will keep my promise to provide many examples of the practical benefits from our understanding of the principle, *Ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny* by first elaborating the most important. Through the scientific method, our generation is rapidly increasing our godlike power of creation and destruction. Human selection is overtaking natural selection to determine who shall live and who shall become extinct.

[25]The *medulla, pituitary, pineal, pons, cerebellum, thalamus,* and *cerebral cortex* are one of many classifications.

Increasingly, we assume responsibility for our destiny and that of all about us. Our animal brain directs our thinking, feelings, and actions long before the humane portion of our brain, the cerebral cortex, is sufficiently mature and equipped to consistently adapt our mega-power to constructive outcomes. Instinct and tradition would have us advocate yesterday's methods to solve today's problems – instinct, trial-and-error, and mimicking role models. Our animal brain is hard-wired to advocate survival of the fittest through domination and destructive confrontation, "war followed by cure." The rapid proliferation of weapons with ultimate destructive power offers us no second chance.

ORP allows us to predict the outcome of being led by our animal brain and understand how we can prevent it. We must progress beyond our repertoire of inherited behaviors, the newer behaviors we add through trial-and-error, and mimicking our role models to attain our highest level of function, the stage I call *super-maturity*. We must teach ourselves a newer way of thinking that adds common sense wisdom to self-mastery. Nature has provided us a "freedom organ," our intelligent cerebral cortex. Freedom conveys to us the choice to express our growing godlike power favoring constructive or destructive outcomes, or some combination of the two extremes. By progressing through our developmental stages to super-maturity, we can add wisdom to the power of mental freedom. We can self-program the humane values that elevate us above other life. Such values include but are not limited to the mental freedom to choose among alternatives, love, forgiveness, compassion, cooperation and collaboration for mutual benefit, mercy, kindness, and humor. At issue is to what degree we direct our will towards mass construction instead of the opposite.

The ORP concept helps us understand that individually and collectively, we are a work-in-progress reaching inward to become the most civilized species and master of our destiny. This highest level of maturity is exclusive to humankind but only attainable if we unite to elevate us above our animal phase of development. Here are the promised specific useful insights "*ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny"* offers to help us attain our highest level of function.

- ✓ The genetic inheritance that first determines who and what we are was determined far earlier than the 9 months preceding our birth. Their prescribed directions have their origins in the simplest life forms that gradually progressed to greater complexity.
- ✓ All life remains servant to instinct and nurturers, to fate and circumstance, to nature and nurture.
- ✓ Nature prescribes a primary mission common to all life: Repeat the life cycle!
  birth ⇨ attain sexual maturity ⇨ procreate ⇨ protect young ⇨ die
- ✓ The life cycle becomes increasingly complex as the form and function of the species becomes more complex.
- ✓ Nature has gifted humankind its most advanced brain to add to the animal portion of our brain. We proceed through the same development phases as other species but only we have the capacity to teach the super-maturity that frees our will to assume personal responsibility for our destiny.
- ✓ Mental freedom from the pre-programmed authority of the animal brain is a hard earned choice, not a given.

- ✓ Physical development precedes mental and emotional maturation. The animal portion of our brain is competent during our early years and continues to seek dominance through our lifetime. Our cerebral cortex gradually reaches full physical maturity circa 18 years after birth while mental and emotional maturity for most humankind is attained by their late twenties, thirties, or never.
- ✓ The animal portion of our brain is genetically pre-programmed to demand sexual activity before we acquire the freedom to choose wisely.
- ✓ Savage "animal brain" behavior precedes civil behavior.
- ✓ *Fight or flight* and *survival of the fittest* behavior for our own and our tribe's self-serving interests precede cooperation and collaboration for mutual benefit of all tribes.
- ✓ Our earliest assumptive worldview, i.e. valued beliefs including religion and political ideology, are inscribed by authorities beyond our control such as fate and circumstance.
- ✓ Genes and our nurturers teach allegiance to our self, our local tribe and its rulers.
- ✓ The animal portion of our human brain is wired at birth prejudiced to repeat the life cycle for the benefit of our self and our local tribe at the expense of "not us": fight or flight, self-preservation, eat and not be eaten, procreate, and protect our offspring through destructive confrontation.
- ✓ The common sense motivation to cooperate and collaborate for mutual benefit with "not me" and "not my local tribe" may be acquired with physical maturity and appropriate education.
- ✓ Local priorities precede global priorities until we are taught or teach ourselves otherwise.
- ✓ Whoever or whatever is not of my family or local tribe are there to serve our needs.
- ✓ Our thoughts, thinking and will power are first servant to instinct; then our nurturers add the traditions they demand. With education in the use of symbols and skill in reflective thinking we may become our own person and assume responsibility for our own destiny.
- ✓ The simpler means of education and problem-solving gradually proceeds to more sophisticated means of education:
  Hard-wired problem-solving skills ⇨ trial-and-error ⇨ mimicking ⇨ no-trial learning by cognitive rehearsal ⇨ adding common sense knowledge to no-trial learning to create more accurate assumptions and shared universal values ⇨ a newer way of "reflective" thinking to assume self-mastery
- ✓ The assumptions we assign to data are based on great leaps of faith until we increase our knowledge of the universal laws of cause-and-effect. Common sense is the application of knowledge of nature's universal rules of cause-and-effect.
- ✓ Even as we acquire knowledge to make more accurate, less wild, leaps of faith, we are reluctant to abandon established faith-based assumptions. Our animal brain perspectives persist even as our "newer" cerebral cortex progresses to maturity and super-maturity.
- ✓ Applying common sense to the universal rules of cause-and-effect enlightens us to universal wisdoms: "Love your neighbor as yourself." "Treat others as you would have others treat you." Our animal brain advocates self-serving values.
- ✓ Common sense is an elective skill; most individuals, in varying degree, passively accept the rules of what our early and current authorities dictate.
- ✓ The power of knowledge that makes us godlike creators and destroyers grows before we attain the common sense wisdom to consistently constructively apply it.

- ✓ The prejudged assumptive worldviews of instinct and tradition (fate & circumstance, nature & nurture) that determine who we are and what we value precedes our ability to create a contemporary worldview supported by current knowledge.
- ✓ Dependence on authority precedes common sense problem-solving and self-mastery.
- ✓ As our animal brain acquires the ability to create action using symbols, the first and most predicted primitive expressions of our instinctive physical fight, self-preservation instinct will be *blaming*. Blaming to punish others and to punish our self (guilt) is a more efficient safer way to control behavior than physical confrontation.
- ✓ Blaming when we experience frustration for what we lack precedes the development of an attitude of gratitude for what we have.
- ✓ Worry precedes the development of optimism; it has greater survival value in a savage environment.
- ✓ Humor and laughter increase with civilization, as we lessen the need to preoccupy ourselves with *red alert* life threatening emergencies. They serve to dissipate chronic stress.
- ✓ Greed and speed are emphasized before wise creeds and good deeds.
- ✓ Physical muscles precede the development of mental wisdom.
- ✓ The desire to receive precedes the satisfaction of giving.
- ✓ The primary physical signaling system to produce action consisting of chemicals and nerves precedes our secondary signaling system consisting of mental and spiritual values.
- ✓ The assumptive views that lead to action are first based on great leaps of faith until we acquire the knowledge of cause-and-effect that gradually lessens the size of the leap.
- ✓ Most of what we call “evil” or “immoral” is better explained as the expected natural expression of animal “survival behavior.” Appropriate education in civility is lacking or inappropriate education has been role modeled.
- ✓ ORP explains why we must replace *an-eye-for-an-eye* punishment with forgiveness, love, education, and effective limit-setting; why we must replace the two-category thinking advocated by our animal brain with a newer way of common sense thinking supported by universal knowledge of cause-and-effect.
- ✓ **Our animal brain demands *survival of the fittest* weapons with increasing destructive power that will rapidly create our own extinction unless our most capable leaders unite to popularize *a newer way of thinking* using common sense wisdom.**

Stren 67 explains how we must proceed to succeed. Stren 68 describes the process of progressing from immaturity, to maturity, and to super-maturity; from depending on our animal brain to teaching ourselves the skills our newer freedom organ requires to elevate ourselves to the humane civilized qualities we now preach but have yet to effectively teach. I hope this concept, “*Ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny*,” serves to shed more light than heat.

Stren #70: Why Do We Have Destructive Aggression and War?

Welcome to stren #70. This stren explains why our history is defined by a series of wars and why we are headed for self-annihilation. The next stren will describe Einstein's solution to prevent human catastrophe and promote world peace. We have an opportunity and obligation to ensure that our children and other loved ones have the opportunities we enjoy. Global action is required to prevent a horror most individuals could not comprehend. The "why" is important because it leads to the "how" we can proceed to succeed.

The Problem we all face has been simply stated in a report to President Obama that was commissioned by the U.S. Congress. After interviewing over 250 world experts on the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the first sentence of the Executive Summary states:

> *The Commission believes that unless the community acts decisively and with great urgency, it is more likely than not that a weapon of mass destruction will be used in a terrorist's attack somewhere in the world by the end of 2013*.

The report adds:

> *There is still time to defend ourselves, if we act with the urgency called for by the nature of the threat that confronts us. Sounding that call for urgent action is the purpose of this report.*[26]

Humankind is the first and currently the only species on earth to make itself capable of triggering self-extinction and dramatically changing Mother Earth by the word of one person. At the present moment, multiple tribes are designing weapons so powerful that we can hardly imagine the horror of their use. Our newest weapons, unlike previous ones, offer no second chance. Powerful leaders have already indicated it is their moral right and intention to use them. The likelihood that biological or nuclear weapons will be unleashed within the lifetime of our children is even greater. This stren, together with the next, is a plea to you to unite with others to preserve our children's well-being. Working together, we will be unstoppable; the alternatives are not very pleasant.

Here are the three major reasons we are drifting towards annihilation:

1. **Nature's role**: For 3 ½ billion years, nature has genetically engineered our animal brain to survive in a savage *eat or be eaten* environment. We are preprogrammed at birth to survive through *fight or flight.* Destructive aggression is instinctive to the animal portion of our brain.

[26]*The World at Risk*, U.S. Congress commissioned report on the status of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, Vintage Books, December, 2008, p. xv.

2. **Nurture's role**: All native languages bias us to process information into two *either/or* opposing categories; this is the primary cause of bigotry, prejudice, destructive confrontation, and war. Helpless at birth, our survival requires that we first serve the authority of instinct and mimic whatever traditions our nurturers demand.

3. **Self-mastery's role**: Nature has provided humankind its most advanced brain to replace destructive aggression with love and the humane qualities to which we aspire. We have yet to educate our population in *a newer way of thinking* (**ANWOT**) required to prevent war and cooperate for our mutual well-being. This is our most urgent mission.

Given the three reasons destructive aggression and war persists, we can now explain each.

Our intelligent brain has allowed us to become powerful rulers on earth. Only humankind grows knowledge of cause-and-effect, what we call science. Knowledge is the means by which we free our will power from instinct and tradition to acquire sufficient self-mastery to direct our destiny. We initiate constructive and destructive phenomena not present in nature.

Intelligence ⇨ knowledge ⇨ self-mastery ⇨ wise and stupid use of power

1. **Nature's role**: For 3 ½ billion years of evolution on Mother Earth, nature's survival of the fittest rule has included the *fight or flight* instinct. Survival required identification and loyalty to a local tribe. Non-tribe members were considered fair game to abuse in whatever way suited the tribe's or individual's needs. Eat or be eaten is critical thinking in a savage environment. The instinct to dominate and thrive, without consideration for others, is omnipresent in the common gene pool of complex species. Children, driven by *instinct,* are known for their impatience and insensitivity to the feelings of others, and bullying is common among teens.

Until the appearance of humankind 150,000 years ago, the ability to survive in an uncivilized, savage environment was related to physical prowess and limited ability to adapt to change. Those with the best killing power usually reigned as master within their domain. Many species, including our own, are designed as "killing machines." Muscle power, which has been among the most important tools for species survival, has only recently been surpassed by humankind's creative mental power. Our most ferocious wild animals are no match for bullets. The adaptive natural reproductive efficiency so long experienced by fish cannot keep up with the recent means by which we strip the seas to support our increasing population. The species that survive through physical might and nature's other means of adaptation (*natural selection*) are not designed to adapt to human selection.

We are genetically programmed to preserve *our kind* without regard to *not our kind*. Nature's *survival of the fittest* rule is the first reason we are prone to compete and advocate that our tribe become the master race to dominate all others. Instinct has a long history of making *fight or flight* basic to our behavior repertoire. Fists, slingshots,

and bows and arrows have recently been replaced by increasingly powerful weapons of destruction. In each confrontation, one tribe has sufficient power and the will to triumph. Damage is sustained by both winner and loser, but in every situation, destruction is followed by repair. This is the way it has always been. Habit would teach us that competition, application of power, and *win/lose* scenarios are the rule of survival.

Our current knowledge has produced such a revolution through science that human selection has joined natural selection. We now partner with nature in determining who shall live and who shall become extinct. The *win/lose* scenario common in our sports, businesses, personal relationships, and wars has been changed by weapons with ultimate destructive power. *Win/lose* has been replaced by *lose/lose* and *win/win* outcomes, and we have not been given adequate notification. How are we to know that our established rules of survival have been suddenly reversed; that the time is suddenly upon us when competition, hate, and war need to be replaced by cooperation, love, and peace? Can we rely on instinct or habit to tell us when weapons with ultimate destructive power suddenly make the strong and the weak equal? We need to re-engineer our way of thinking from *greed and speed* to *wise creeds and good deeds*.

2. **Nurture's role**: Instinct and tradition are often mutually supportive of resentment and hate. When they are not mutually supportive, I recommend directing our attention to nurture more than nature, because we are interpretive creatures. The meanings we assign through symbols to interpret the physical information our senses provide are so powerful that they often override our physical signaling system. The cortical portion of our human brain has become the capital where our intentional action decisions are made. All native languages bias us to process information into *either/or* opposing categories. This two-category dichotomous thinking is the primary cause of bigotry, prejudice, destructive confrontation, and war.

   During our early years, we are required to process information into two categories. Our cerebral cortex is physically undeveloped and unequipped to think with reason and wisdom. Until about the age of puberty, our brain has an extraordinary ability to mimic our role models. The authority of instinct and tradition is indelibly inscribed into our minds; we are like putty in the hands of our nurturers. These earliest formative years have been called "the magic years." Things just happen. Fate assigns us nurturers who teach us the "*correct*" assumptions about the world. Our nurturers teach us *their* way; their way becomes *our* way. We learn what is *right, good,* and *O.K.* We are given the behavior rules of our culture. We acquire our name, our native language, and we are assigned a flag, a religion, and one or more local "tribes" to which we owe our allegiance. Two-category thinking pits tribes against each other -- the political right against the political left, the religious *enlightened* versus the religious *evil,* and *the haves* versus *the have nots*. It assigns value by color, gender, ethnic affiliation, class, and even by geographic location. What is <u>not</u> "our" way automatically falls into the *wrong*, *bad* or *evil*, *not O.K. other* category.

With repetition, this dichotomous understanding of the world becomes habit. Unless we actively modify our *either/or* way of thinking, life remains a competition between sides. Each tribe is passionate to win, to dominate those who are not a member of their own tribe. Win/lose confrontations are the predictable outcomes of two-category thinking. *Either/or* processing of information will sustain conflict and wars until we teach ourselves a newer way of *both...and* thinking that recognizes we each have *both* positives *and* negatives.

Recall the ditty:

There is so much bad in the best of us,
And so much good in the worst of us,
That it ill behooves any of us,
To put down the rest of us.

Our nurturers, who include our parents, teachers, and our personal culture, may not intend to teach us a dichotomous way of thinking, but they have little choice when our mind is yet incapable of acting on reason and wisdom. This is why our nurturers emphasize prescriptive words like *should, have to, must*, and *ought*. *Can't* and *no* are also popular words that command blind obedience to authority. Like terrorists, our nurturers and our culture commonly impose their will through fear and intimidation. We are brought up to accept the voice of authority: "Do as I say, not as I do." We can credit most teachers with loving motives, but their thinking and beliefs have been restricted by the authority of the teachers and culture who taught *them*. Some nurturers and cultures deliberately discourage any liberation of our thinking from their authority. Even when their motives are clearly self-serving, we are expected to serve their needs and wants. Consider the kamikaze pilots in WWII and the suicide bombers who override the most basic preservation-of-life instinct. We all are conditioned to comply with the views that our authorities command during our formative years.

Nature has programmed our animal brain to learn by making mistakes, to discover wisdom by trial-and-error. We make many mistakes while learning to walk – we fall, crawl, get up, and repeat the process until we become master of our muscles. Likewise, each of us is fated by nature's design to pass through the clumsy, exaggerated two-category thinking that distorts our world into opposing sides. The instincts we inherit were adaptive in a primitive, savage environment where survival required instant assignment of *safe or dangerous* to any stranger. Superficial characteristics automatically turn on an automatic alerting response. The first expression of our thinking repeats the innate *fight or flight* behavior we observe in other complex species. Mature thinking is characterized by the ability to focus on what people share in common more than their differences, on the deeper, meaningful qualities of an individual more than skin-deep appearance. Animals have not been gifted with a brain that can manipulate symbols to free themselves from instinct and tradition. They lack our opportunity to create *a newer way of thinking*. Their rules of behavior are fixed and predictable from generation to generation.

On the other hand, animals are usually satisfied with *enough*, with protecting their kind within their own domain. It is our use of symbols, our higher level second signaling system, that prepares us for greed and accumulating what is far beyond our own needs. Only our kind aspires to become a master race and subject all else to our wants. While animals are content with their own survival, enough to eat, and the ability to procreate and protect their young, we are easily seduced by the symbols of power – money, titles, a guarantee of a heavenly reward in the afterlife, trophies, connections, and superficial beauty. Technology – Industrialization and urbanization – has made it possible for a few individuals to assign themselves the wealth of thousands by the signing of a paper or manipulation of records. If we survive our present time, historians will refer it as the age of *greed and speed*.

3. **The role of Self-mastery**: Through our gift of intelligence and its use to grow our knowledge of cause-and-effect, i.e. science and technology, we make ourselves increasingly powerful creators and destroyers. We have yet to take responsibility to popularize *a newer way of common sense thinking* that fulfills our spiritual requirements for survival. Our new capability for rapid travel and mass communication requires adapting our local survival skills to global survival. We need to educate ourselves to consistently and wisely direct our power to the humane qualities of love, kindness, mercy, and compassion, among others. Intelligence must first serve our older "animal" brain's preoccupation with taking care of our physical needs for survival. Our genetically engineered *fight or flight* programming is prewired long before we are capable of common sense problem-solving. Fulfilling spiritual needs by establishing a common sense value system must await the physical and mental maturation of our cerebral cortex.

Among the multiple interests we share, peace ranks at the top. Wisdom enlightens us that survival now depends on changing the immature two-category way of thinking each of us first acquires. Our own innate negative thinking blames others and demands that they conform to our way, but as adults, we are responsible for our own life's experience. Coercion by fear and intimidation may work in the short term, but it usually leads to escalation of conflict, stored resentment, and desire for revenge: "*The next time, I shall win*." Our world is now full of oppressed tribes preparing for "*the next time*." Our new reality is that we can no longer afford a next time because it is likely to be the last time. When we attack and murder our own *stinking thinking*, we hurt no one and make the world a safer, gentler place. We can succeed if we lead by example instead of by force. It is said, *a person changed against his will is of the same opinion still*.

Humankind is the leading edge of nature's creative process. We alone can attain sufficient mental freedom from instinct and tradition to alter our destiny and assume responsibility for Mother Earth. Mental freedom is our opportunity to create alternatives and choose among them. We are the first and currently the only species with sufficient knowledge to reprogram our thinking to favor cooperation and peace instead of competition and destructive aggression. The momentous choice we each face is (1) to what degree we shall tolerate our will remaining a servant to the long established rules

of instinct and habit, and (2) to what degree we shall assume self-mastery of our will to serve us favoring reason and wisdom. The introduction and proliferation of weapons of ultimate destruction (**WUD**) has created an emergency. The time remaining to choose is limited by the time it will take for WUD to be obtained by the leaders who seek them and already justify their use.

Thus, the primary reason we have war is because **we have insufficiently taken the opportunity to free ourselves from uncritical obedience to our first masters.** Nature and our nurturers command that we unquestioningly obey their authority. Instinct and tradition are ineffective and uninterested in teaching us to apply *common sense* wisdom that challenges their dictatorship. Authority resists change. As we attain physical and emotional maturity, we may educate our self to become our own person. Super-maturity requires that we free ourselves from the authority of instinct and habit. Even those individuals who have the most oppressive self-serving nurturers can attain mental freedom once they acquire proficiency in reflective thinking, i.e. the human skill of using symbols to think about our thinking. Reflective thinking is our means to self-mastery.[27] Physical maturity and sophisticated use of language equip us to attain self-mastery. We can claim our will as our own by selectively rebelling against the instincts and habits programmed by nature and our nurturers. Those with the misfortune to have oppressive nurturers, and who were brainwashed more than educated, will require greater effort to emancipate their thinking, but there are abundant examples of individuals who become their own person in spite of their early circumstances.

Although it is difficult to avoid the power of instinct and tradition, the great news is that we have virtually complete freedom to change the way we think. Our great religions and philosophers have worked out the basic universal wisdoms we need to survive and thrive. In our time we have created the means of mass communication that allow us to make our collective wisdom available to anyone, anywhere, anytime with little or no cost. We can rapidly teach ourselves the newer mode of thinking that Einstein and our informed citizens warn us that we require if we hope to survive our most powerful enemy – our self! Our challenge is to selectively free our will from authority so that we may solve new problems using common sense. Changing our way of thinking is quite straightforward, no harder than learning our ABC's, using a computer, or learning any complex skill. The far more difficult obstacle is the resistance of instinct and habit to relinquish its authority over the force we call *will power*. Dictators rarely give up their control voluntarily.

When many tribes possess ultimate destructive power, the long established rules of survival become reversed. The time for weaker tribes to acquire doomsday weapons that make them world threats is now measured in years rather than billions of years. Suddenly, the strongest are the most vulnerable because they are the first to be targeted by each weaker group which aspires to become the new master race.

[27]Reflective thinking is more fully described in stren #77.

During humankind's 150,000 years on earth, there have been many tribes and tribal leaders but no world leaders. No tribe has had sufficient destructive weapons and the means to transport a conquering army the long distances needed to rule the world. The Nazis, who were the last to try, would have succeeded if they had been first with nuclear weapons. In 1945, exclusively armed with "the bomb," the U.S. could have coerced the rest of the world to submit to its rule, but chose instead to help rebuild Europe through the Marshall Plan. The U.S.S.R. soon became the second world leader with the capability of global conquest. NOW, in our current generation – that's right, yours and mine – as you read this essay, other countries and terrorist subgroups are proliferating and acquiring WUD. Our recent speed of travel and the proliferation of WUD have made it possible for a single group and a single world leader to rule all, and the number of aspiring world leaders is increasing. Each potential world leader is now our neighbor because they can destroy our local community in the time it takes to walk to the next house. As someone facetiously quipped, *just wrap the bomb in the tons of marijuana that daily comes into New York*. Suddenly, like it or not, we have added citizenship in the world community to our "local" allegiances.

We have rapidly changed the world in our generation, even more so within the last 100 years. We are continuing to accelerate the speed of change, putting ourselves, our loved ones, and Mother earth at imminent risk. Instinct and habit would have us ignore these breathtaking changes until it is too late. Nature's way has been to provide the test and then teach us the lesson, but that method is no longer viable. Nature has provided us the adaptive tool, our cerebral cortex, to confront new problems with reason and wisdom. We can anticipate challenges before they occur. Prevention is a powerful tool of wisdom. Self-mastery is our means to change our prevalent way of thinking to favor cooperation, love, and the spiritual values we now require. We have the mental creativity to establish permanent peace if we merely assert our will. "I think I can. I think I can. I think I can. I will. We will." Will you join the grass roots movement we require to change our *win/lose* manner of thinking into one that has a *win/win* outcome? Will you take action now to protect your loved ones? Please, for the benefit of our loved ones and all of humanity, teach yourself the wisdoms that create a joyous, meaningful life. Become a Mental Wealth millionaire and teach others to do the same. Material wealth and your physical health are important, but neither, individually or together, guarantees the consistent benefits most certainly provided by Mental Wealth!

Mental freedom makes us responsible for ourselves and all about us. Our generation is required to teach ourselves *a newer way of thinking* that relies on reason and wisdom <u>if</u> we choose to become our own best friend instead of our own worst enemy.

Given the time constraints, most realists agree that preventing catastrophe is a long-shot. If you are like most, you have yet to recognize the seriousness of the imminent threat. You may prefer to remain asleep and enjoy your dreams. It will take an immense effort to persuade you to reexamine your thinking and invest the required energy to make yourself a Mental Wealth millionaire and powerful force for world peace. A good friend recently told me, "You are wasting your time. You can't change nature."

After giving the matter some thought, I came to the insight that teaching ourselves to think by applying wisdom more than instinct and habit is consistent with nature, not contradictory. While nature is pushing us out of its nest to move up and onward, it has also provided us a remarkable problem-solving organ. Our human brain is our means to succeed in attaining self-mastery and to complete the road to civilization. With no better alternative, we must make the attempt instead of remaining stuck in hopelessness and helplessness.

Our first use of symbols advocates what has been – instinct and habit. *Greed* and *speed* are the inevitable passageway to *wise creeds* and *good deeds*. We need to examine ourselves and ask what we are willing to change, to realize how resistive we are to questioning authority, and how authority powerfully resists change.[28] Unfortunately we don't have much time to teach ourselves the lesson that leads to prevention instead of cure.

If your child or some other loved one were to fall down the stairs, you know you would drop every other priority and rush to render help. Nature's way has always been to cause a problem and thereafter create cure through trial-and-error. Nature gives the exam and then teaches the lesson. WUD do not hurt or call us into action until it is too late. There is no cure, only prevention. Since we are equipped with a freedom organ, we can anticipate consequences before committing ourselves to action.

Now, **what is most important to teach ourselves from this understanding of why our history is defined by our wars?** It is this. The shocking answer to "Why war?" is that striving for dominance is inevitable because of the way we think. It is not just "them"; we are included in this as well. "*Know thyself"* is the wisdom of our sages throughout history. We are equally prone to guide our lives by the prescriptive, dependency, two-category thinking as those *others* who we blame for the world's ills. Until we teach ourselves to recognize that we remain stuck in the two-category thinking that leads us to conclude that *our way* is the right and good way, even the only way, we will continue to promote the prejudgments or prejudices that lead to confrontation and destructive aggression.

We are like juveniles teetter-tottering between allowing our new creative power to be dominated by our early masters and freeing our will power to critically evaluate our superstitions, established customs, and the credibility of authority. In varying degrees, people are guiding their actions using common sense to favor reason and wisdom more than instinct and tradition. However, there are not yet a sufficient number of super-mature thinkers to lead the way. As long as peace advocates wish or pray for peace but remain passive while terrorists unite their followers to take action, the doomsday clock will move forward. We are the growing edge of our creator's work-in-process that is pushing us towards personal freedom and civilization. After billions of years, we are now far along the way but have yet to reach the goal. We are the link between animals

[28]This would be a good time to review the features that characterize those individuals who achieve maturity and those who partially achieve maturity but remain stuck in two-category thinking that fosters *win/lose* competition more than *win/win* cooperation. See especially strens #33 & 34.

and humanity. We need enough *newer way of thinking* individuals to complete the road to civilization and world peace. The majority of our global population remains brainwashed by a small number of leaders who claim they are the designated oracle of unquestionable Truth. Like sheep, servant to instinct and habit, we can easily be coerced by fear and intimidation.

While you are reading or hearing this, others are proliferating weapons of ultimate destruction (**WUD**). Someone will use them to subdue those they designate as evil. The next war is likely to make us history rather than allow us to continue to make history. We don't have much time. Einstein told us the one most certain means to prevent the imminent catastrophe and promote world peace: *We shall require a new mode of thinking* (ANWOT). The good news is that we have the knowledge and the means of rapid self-education to change the predictable course of our destiny. We lead by example. We require a tiny percentage, perhaps one million of our seven billion global population, to become the enlightened individuals who will initiate the domino effect to circle the world. That's all we need to crack the thin veneer holding back the global passion for peace that will be unstoppable. Will you become *one* of the *each one teach many* leaders that will make a difference? The next stren, Einstein's solution, will explain how.

Stren #71: Einstein's Solution – A Newer Way of Thinking (ANWOT)[29] Preventing Catastrophe and Creating World Peace

Welcome to stren #71, an interpretation of Einstein's solution to prevent war and create world peace. We can survive and thrive through our united efforts in spite of the dangers of our new era. You will love becoming a Mental Wealth millionaire and a powerful force for world peace. Stren #70 explained why destructive aggression and war are inevitable if we don't take action. We are heading towards doomsday, first because the animal portion of our brain is genetically engineered to automatically follow the path of *survival of the fittest*. Second, our native language biases us to think in two opposing categories that create bigotry, prejudice, destructive confrontation, and war. Third, and of most interest, we have yet to unite to popularize the newer way of common sense thinking that supports problem-solving for mutual benefit while a small number of terrorists organize their followers to take effective action.

Einstein told us the most certain (perhaps the only) means available to protect us from "us":

> *Our world faces a crisis as yet unperceived by those possessing power to make great decisions for good or evil. The unleashed power of the atom has changed everything save our modes of thinking and we thus drift toward unparalleled catastrophe. ...* ***a new type of thinking is essential if mankind is to survive and move toward higher levels.***[30]

In stren #28 I compared the dominant way of thinking established by *instinct* and *tradition* with the *newer way of thinking* that Einstein told us we require. Our early established way of thinking and ANWOT have four characteristic differences.

(1) The two-category thinking we first acquire within our native language biases us to perceive the world as two opposing categories – *either* good *or* evil. Reality is distorted with the result that we learn to show allegiance to our side and demean what is other than our side. The *newer way of thinking* switches "*or*" to "*and*." This simple word-switch directs our thinking to similarities instead of two opposing sides. It promotes using common sense to create alternatives and choose among them.

(2) Our language, including phrases such as *They make me* ..., conveys our dependency on authority and leads to blaming others. ANWOT substitutes the personal responsibility word *I allow* for words that convey dependency and lead to blaming when our wants are unmet.

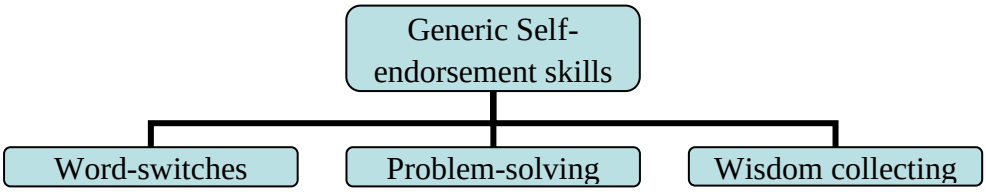
(3) Instinct and our nurturers prescribe what is right and O.K. Substituting *descriptive* words for *prescriptive* words, such as *I could* for *I should*, inspire us to question authority and create new "out of the box" solutions.

[29] Modified from the Mini-course, letter 2, *Become a Mental Wealth Millionaire and Powerful Force for World Peace*.
[30] The New York Times; May, 1946.

(4) The commands of instinct are hardwired into our biology, and the traditions of our nurturers are inscribed within our native language. We are programmed to automatically apply the solutions that effectively worked for yesterday's problems. ANWOT applies common sense to current knowledge to solve today's problems with flexibly designed solutions suited to novel challenges.

No matter how small our differences and how great our shared interest, as long as we remain stuck in *either/or* two-category thinking, people will engage in *win/lose* and *lose/lose* harmful confrontations. The conflict between our great religions illustrates this point. Even though the similarities far exceed the differences, conflict persists. Given our new, powerful weapons, surviving and thriving requires that we popularize mature *both...and* thinking that promotes collaboration for our common benefit.

Here are the self-taught skills by which we make ourselves Mental Wealth millionaires and World Peace leaders.



Each set of component skills are explained within the 100+ strens offered through our free web site. Like any complex skill, such as playing a musical instrument or mastering a profession, they require study and practice over time. No step requires unusual intelligence.

The generic self-endorsement skills are the wisdoms that empower our will to create love for ourselves. Self-endorsement skills allow us to become our own best friend, life-long. We spend almost all of our life engaging in conversation with ourselves. The time we engage in active conversation with a person, even a significant "other," is estimated in one study to average less than 7 minutes a day. In teaching ourselves to love our self, we generate the love we can offer to enrich the greater community. Most religions and philosophers promote a fundamental *common sense* wisdom, "Love our neighbor as we love ourself." It is difficult to give away what we don't own. We start life as "love-takers"; we require care from others to survive. Self-endorsement is the means by which we become capable "love-givers." Acquiring *mental wealth* allows us to become "big spenders." As *self*-endorsement empowers us to love others and become a citizen of the global community, it provides another critical skill, *patience*. Self-endorsement is the reward that allows us to fulfill the immediate physical satisfaction demanded by instinct so that we may pursue the more lasting *mental-spiritual* satisfactions that are acquired through work and practice. The ***generic skills of self-endorsement*** prepare us to create the *word-switches* that turn on more ***specific*** ANWOT skills (see strens 2# and #16-24+).

Word-switches and ***trigger words*** are the meanings we assign to symbols that powerfully influence our biology. They shape the path and action outcome of the data our brain receives. Humankind is unique by the degree that we apply language to discover universal knowledge of cause-and-effect. ***Word-switches*** free our will from *instinct*, *tradition*, and human dictators to become godlike creators of our own destiny***.*** By manipulating symbols through imagination, we create ideas and original physical action pathways that change ourselves and all that is about us. ***Trigger words*** are symbols, usually one or a combination of words that serve as a signal to turn on the pathways prewired by instinct and tradition. ***Word-switches*** are specialized trigger words in that we ourselves power a symbol with meaning that overrides the established action commanded by *instinct* and *tradition*.

A *word-switch*, like a train track switch, redirects an established action pathway to a preferred path and destination while preventing the outcome that would occur without the switched action.[31] For example, the *either/or* two-category words that trigger the commands of *instinct, tradition*, and dictators are embedded in all native languages during our immature years. It divides the world into *good* or *bad* (evil). Switching "*or*" to "*and*" directs our thinking toward similarities and shared interests rather than assigning one side "*good*" and the other side "*bad*" or "*evil*." The selective use of a limited number of ANWOT *word-switches* for *trigger words* upgrades yesterday's hardwired problem-solving actions by applying *common sense* wisdom to current knowledge; we thereby create "out of the box" solutions to today's challenges. The power of *trigger words* and *word-switches* is explained in stren #5. Stren #100 provides a basic glossary of important *word-switches* that upgrade our thinking for modernity. Reviewing the glossary will inspire you with new ways of understanding. Since there are a limited number of *word-switches*, this basic step to ANWOT is easily taught and readily learned.

During the formative years of our youth, our mind is servant to the dictatorship of *instinct* and the *traditions* of our nurturers. The trigger words they include in our native language bias our way of thinking to their prejudged beliefs, values, and pre-wired action pathways. Word-switches empower us in many ways. ***The seven Mind-freeing, Life-changing, World-saving word-switches*** provided in strens #7-15 free our will from the *prescriptive, dependency*, *either/or* two-category thinking we first acquire. ANWOT *word-switches,* such as substituting *should* with *could*, invite our thinking to consider alternative actions instead of uncritically obeying what the *should* word demands. *Word-switches* upgrade our thinking from uncritical acceptance of what "others" make of us to *self-mastery,* what we call *becoming our own person*. They turn on reason and critical appraisal and turn off mindless obedience to the authority of *instinct*, *tradition*, and *human* dictators.

Thereafter, ***The Mental Freedom Control Panel*** (strens #35-44) explains the eight action choices available to our freed will power. *The "magical" Problem-Solving Sentence*, consistently applied, directs our energy to *win-win* management of stress: "*What*

[31]Also, compare a *word-switch* to a light switch. It turns on and off the direction and outcome of energy. We merely flip one light switch and the wiring hidden behind the wall moves to a preferred outcome.

is most likely to benefit me and you, now and later?" It replaces the sentence that has become a major trigger of danger in today's world: "*My way, the only way!*" The *Control Panel* is a useful tool to manage the harmful thinking patterns that are usually a source of trouble, such as blaming others or one's self, avoidance, worry, hopelessness, and the many types of physical maladies we cause by our way of thinking. The *Problem-solving Sentence* stands out as our most critical strength to succeed in any endeavor.

Collecting wisdoms is the additional means to complete the journey to civility. We cultivate our raw energy towards beneficial outcomes as we acquire those wisdoms others have proven to work and those we ourselves initiate by applying common sense to knowledge. We benefit by standing on the shoulders of the giants who precede us. By learning from other's mistakes, we avoid having to unnecessarily bear the burden of our own. Over 100 wisdom tips provided on the Educational Community Internet site will empower you to become your own best friend, free your will from domination by *instinct* and *tradition* to assume personal responsibility for your destiny, and establish a problem-solving *win-win* "out of the box" mode of thinking.

Einstein's ANWOT *solution* is a curriculum of the *self*-taught wisdoms that any individual may use to make their life more wonderful. The ANWOT strens we offer free at **www.anwot.org** are certainly not exclusive. They, along with many more *mental wealth* skills, may be found in libraries, media, role models, etc. They are plentiful and free for our taking. By acquiring this basic curriculum of ANWOT skills and engaging the powerful mass media, the collected efforts of a few can seed and succeed in initiating ANWOT education globally. I am confident that once our population tastes the fruit of ***mental-spiritual wealth***, they will nourish its seeds to fruition.

We have become the supreme rulers on earth because of our ability to apply wisdom to the power of knowledge. The traditional means of managing conflict is destructive confrontation followed by "curing" the damage. We have initiated a new era where multiple tribes will soon possess weapons so powerful that they have no "cure." The tradition of harmful confrontation must be replaced with prevention! *Instinct, tradition*, and *human* dictators demand compliance to the solutions that worked well for yesterday's problems using yesterday's knowledge. Our survival and well-being require that we quickly change our long-established way of thinking.

ANWOT is the application of *common sense* wisdom to knowledge in order to create good judgment. It is the process of selectively replacing the action pathways hardwired by *instinct* and *tradition,* which have become ineffective or dangerous, with newer actions pathways we ourselves initiate. Humankind collects, stores, shares, and passes knowledge forward from generation to generation. Along with the benefits of knowledge, we must assume responsibility for its negative effects. We need to create new action pathways to deal with pollution, global warming, starvation, and weapons with ultimate destructive power. Our generation has created a race between the two extremes of Utopia and self-annihilation, and we are rapidly approaching the finish line, most likely within our children's lifetime. Working together, we can create our preferred outcome.

Instinct and *tradition* dominate the way most individuals think. *Common sense* problem-solving is uncommon. Until we shift the balance, we will continue to engage in bigotry, prejudice, destructive confrontation, and war. We cannot tolerate the unleashing of today's powerful weapons. Because the Internet and other mass media enable us to educate the global population rapidly at anyone's convenient time and location, virtually free, our task is quite doable ... *if* we can muster our will to take action. If our wisest citizens don't take action, who will? If not now, when?

Our society's current education and values are biased to promote the modern expressions of *instinct* and *tradition* – material wealth, power, physical health, superficial good looks, titles, status, and longevity for now and an eternal hereafter. We have many institutions that teach the skills of "making a living" and succeeding in competition. Where does one go to learn how to make a joyous, meaningful life and promote world peace? Greed and speed supersede wise creeds and good deeds. We have yet to popularize the ANWOT curriculum that transforms immature, dependency thinking into mature *self*-mastery and personal responsibility thinking. Our society has yet to popularize the skills for making a meaningful life through inspiration and perspiration instead of domination and magical intervention. When scientist/author K. Eric Drexler was asked what technological achievement from the past 100 years threatens humanity the most, his surprising reply was "infotainment."[32] Electronic media distracts people with the latest sound bites. They misrepresent truth, and "any serious topic that bobs to the surface is washed away." Sound bites compound every problem that could be lessened by a better-informed public.

ANWOT is a gift of opportunity that we can refuse

What prejudgments control *your* thinking? To what degree have you freed your will?

Each of us—yes, you and I included—are initially required to serve the whims of *instinct* and *tradition*. And most of us, although convinced of our independence, remain a mental servant to those masters who first create our life's script. What higher goal is there than liberating our mind "to pursue our own good in our own way" (John Stuart Mill)? Who likes having "others" write their life's script? Most of us would prefer to become our own director and producer. Imagine owning the *something* that gives us the power to consistently *feel good* and *do good.* Freedom from *instinct*, *tradition*, and *human* dictators, i.e. *self-mastery*, is among our most cherished desires; some hold freedom to be even more important than life itself. Slavery is universally abhorred, certainly if one's role is slave rather than master.

Some compare our brain to a computer or robot that is first programmed according to the whims of the programmer. Simple symbols such as a cross, a crescent, a six-pointed star, and a swastika can summon powerful but wildly different thoughts and emotions depending on one's early training. Nurturers have decades to

[32]Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, Jan. /Feb. 2007, p. 58. Drexler is an expert on nanotechnology and the benefits and dangers of technological innovation.

program immature minds to owe allegiance to their own perspectives. Recent events show they can easily create martyrs, kamikaze pilots, and suicide bombers. Throughout history, virtually every tribe honors those individuals who create harm to non-tribe members. Popular science fiction themes convey the idea that computers will become so intelligent that they will take over and rule us, their creators. Let's recognize that we are the computers who have recently created such an explosion of knowledge that we are assuming responsibility for our own destiny and all that surrounds us. We now have ourselves to fear – much more than smart machines or aliens.

Mental freedom is the process of adding a third master, *self*-mastery, to the first controllers of our destiny. ANWOT consists of those mental skills that convey ownership of our thinking, and that free our will from domination by "other" masters to create *geniehood*. We alone among earth's creatures have a *freedom organ*, the cortical portion of our brain, with the size and complexity sufficient to direct and produce our life's experience. We do so by developing the mental muscles we call *will pow*er and *wisdom*. Through our rapidly expanding knowledge, human selection has now joined natural selection to determine our fate. *Humanmind*, properly educated with mature thinking skills and knowledge, provides us sufficient will power to overrule much of *nature* and our *nurturers'* control over our destiny.

We are mental interpretive becomings with a mission and a purpose[33]! We powerfully influence the fate of our world. The way we think influences the way we feel and the way we act. The *meanings* of words and symbols govern our manner of thinking. Meanings are first programmed by outsiders, but ANWOT is the programming *we* create to update our thinking for maturity. The process is accomplished by simple but critical word substitutions that I call *word-switches*. We require a very limited number of these *word-switches* to acquire the *thought control* that powerfully influences our feelings and actions.[34] By choosing to invest in ANWOT, we acquire ownership of our *self*.

While other creatures respond reflexively to sensory input, we are equipped to act on the *meaning* our freedom organ assigns to the data. Other earth creatures follow destiny's course, but language enables us to create, dwell, and actively intervene in our own mental *virtual* world. We study nature's rules, then challenge and modify them. Our *freedom organ* converts physical energy into mental energy, imagines new phenomena, and initiates *will* power to convert mental energy into physical action. Our scientists have not yet figured out how we accomplish this magical feat of transforming physical into spiritual phenomena and again reversing the process.

Our first way of thinking emphasizes *instinct* and *tradition*, i.e. obedience to authority, and it works effectively while we are physically undeveloped and mentally

[33] "becomings" is more accurate than "beings" because unlike other earth creatures, our freedom organ empowers us to customize who and what we become. Here is a good example of the manner our language distorts our perception of reality. [Aha - my spell checker is *on* to indicate *becomings* is not in our dictionary] "Beings" conveys we are static; "becomings" conveys we are in the process of elevating ourselves from past or present.

[34] See letter 4 of the Mini-course.

immature. We require a simple *either/or* way of thinking that divides the world into clearly understood extremes. Our mind first functions more like an intelligent slave. It may be brilliant and creative but it remains servant to the whims of its first masters. We become *self*-masters by overcoming their programming and acquiring skill in creative self-programming.

Instinct and *tradition* are formidable masters of our life's experience! These dictators, who first program and direct our thoughts, conspire to remain the rulers of our thinking. Only the creation of *a newer way of thinking* frees our will power from slavery to its early masters. This requires that we continuously update the *meaning*-pathways that years of repetition have made relatively effortless through habit. *Word-switches* are our tools to turn off established pathways and turn on newer *common sense* pathways that direct the power of new knowledge to preferred outcomes.

Nature provides us its most advanced brain; its mental capacity when mature dwarfs any computer we could create. It also provided us a beginning software program we call *instinct*. Thereafter, our nurturers created our native language and refined it over 50,000 years. We are gifted with the potential for *self*-mastery! Intelligence, sophisticated language, and knowledge are tools we are given to create mental freedom. **MENTAL FREEDOM IS A GIFT OF OPPORTUNITY THAT WE <u>CAN</u> REFUSE! MOST DO!**

In sum, *A Newer Way of Thinking* (ANWOT) consists of the new mental action pathways we create to equip our native language to master the challenges of modernity. *Self*-mastery is the freedom of our will to solve problems by applying *reason* and *wisdom* instead of *instinct* and *habit*. ANWOT allows us to accept personal responsibility for problem-solving and end our prolonged state of dependency and blaming that sustains harmful confrontation. It favors prevention over cure. I urge you to regularly apply the critical *common sense word-switches* that free our will. Over 100 wisdoms that empower us to create a joyous, meaningful life and become a World Peace leader are available forever free to anyone, anytime, anywhere at **www.anwot.org**. A critical small number of committed individuals working together can change the world by popularizing Einstein's insight so that humanity can survive and thrive.

The wisdoms that comprise **ANWOT**, Einstein's solution to war, are the very same skills that enable us to create a joyous, purposeful life experience. I label this process **Becoming a Mental-Spiritual Wealth Millionaire**. Mental Wealth consists of the wisdoms that are most certain to lead to success in any endeavor. None of us are born with wisdom, but anyone who is willing to study, practice, and risk freeing their self from the manner of thinking initially programmed by *instinct* and *tradition* (fate and circumstance, nature and nurture) can become a Mental-Spiritual Wealth millionaire! The efforts of people working together to create ANWOT will be unstoppable.

Stren #72: World Peace - Call to Action

Uniting the *Mental Wealth millionaires who will popularize ANWOT*

This is the most important insight of three linked strens that explain ***Why, What*****,** and ***How*** we create world peace. Stren #70 addressed ***why*** We Have Destructive Aggression and War. Stren #71 explained ***what*** we must do: Einstein's Solution – A Newer Way of Thinking (**ANWOT**). **This stren, #72, is a Call to Action: *how*** we will proceed to succeed. Please give it your greatest consideration.

Here is a simplified explanation of the problem we face and its solution.

The Problem: We understand the problem. We have recently grown knowledge of cause-and-effect so rapidly that we have made ourselves powerful creators and destroyers. Suddenly, we have the godlike means to influence the future of humanity and the fate of all that is about us. Our prevalent *either/or* way of thinking, driven by instinct and tradition, is characterized by "***My way, the only way***." We can no longer tolerate harmful *win/lose, lose/lose* confrontations to assert dominance. The use of weapons with ultimate destructive power offers no second chance. Terrorists organize their followers to take effective action while the near total world population lacks direction and maintains a *hopeless/helpless* attitude.

The Solution: Einstein has told us the solution. We must teach ourselves a newer way of problem-solving thinking (**ANWOT**) that applies common sense wisdom to create *out of the box* solutions to current problems. "***What will make things better for me and you (us and them) for now and the future?***" We must selectively replace *instinct* and *tradition's* pre-established *compete to win* action patterns with *common sense* wisdom applied to today's knowledge to *collaborate for mutual gain*. Too many people's thinking is still dominated by the habitual action pathways that were effective for yesterday's issues. If we choose to survive and thrive, we must change the way we think with the urgency demanded by the problem. We need to replace *win/lose, lose/lose* destructive confrontation with *win/win* prevention. We have the knowledge and the means to rapidly educate our population, but we lack the will. Informed leaders are required to unite and take effective action.

The Call to Action[35]: We first need to overcome the *hopeless/helpless* attitude that leads to ignoring the problem or "almost" action. Effective action begins by waking ourselves to the predicted imminent human catastrophe. We require sufficient peace leaders to initiate urgent preventive action. *Instinct, tradition*, and *human* dictators resist change. Enlightenment begins with those already most receptive to education. We who are best positioned to solve the problem need to first enlighten ourselves to the wisdoms that elevate our thinking from greed and speed to wise creeds and good deeds. We need to shift the balance of our thinking so that we pursue **mental wealth** more than physical wealth. Sufficient Mental Wealth millionaires are the peace leaders who will initiate the domino effect that will circle the world with *a newer way of thinking*.

[35]For specific actions go to *Letter 8 Call to Action* in the folder **Mini-course 8 letters**.

The self-taught wisdoms that create Mental Wealth millionaires are offered in other strens. This critical stren is a common sense Call to Action to proceed to succeed. The Educational Community's goal is to unite one million Mental Wealth millionaire peace leaders who will initiate the domino effect to circle the world with ANWOT education.

The most immediate danger to our loved ones, to our self, and to civilization is the likelihood that weapons of mass destruction (WMD) will be unleashed. Virtually every scientific group, peace group, and informed citizen agree.[36] So does a U.S. Congress mandated high level Commission report that interviewed over 250 world experts.[37] In spite of our current efforts, "our margin of safety is shrinking, not growing" (p. vii). The actions of our government and others, which include attempts to secure loose nukes and the materials needed to produce WMD, negotiation, deterrence, and intimidation may be appropriate and necessary but none promise a lasting solution. Peace missions to help needy countries are laudable but too few and regrettably too late. *Instinct* and *habit* will sustain *destructive* aggression. We must teach ourselves to think, adding wisdom to willpower, or we will most likely succumb to misdirected power. In short, we can and must rapidly educate ourselves in *a newer way of thinking* if we choose to survive and thrive in our new age.

We are no longer bound by nature and nurture's prejudices – we are now capable of achieving self-mastery. Nature has provided us an intelligent freedom organ; our nurturers have given us sophisticated language. Directed with *common sense* wisdom, our creativity can modify the long established ways of thinking that are no longer adaptive to our recent science. I refer specifically to nature's long established *fight or flight, survival of the fittest* perspective and our prevalent *two-category prejudicial way of thinking*. The Educational Community hopes to unleash the passion for peace imprisoned in the overwhelming majority of members of our global society.

Margaret Mead told us: "***Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.***" We need a small percentage of leaders; let's estimate only one million of our almost seven billion inhabitants to initiate the Domino Effect that will circle the world, establish world peace, and prevent the predictable imminent catastrophe. This stren will show you why you are needed and the specific, simple action that will make you a powerful force for world peace.

I have conducted several hundred interviews asking two questions:

Do you wish or pray for world peace? The answer is nearly unanimous - "Yes."
What do you do to make it happen? The answer is overwhelmingly, "Nothing."
(Sample video interviews may be viewed on our web site; click Interviews.)

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[36]For example: The Union of Concerned Scientists (ucsusa.org), an alliance of more than 250,000 concerned scientists and citizens; the Board of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists (the bulletin.org), which includes 18 Nobel Laureates and has created a Doomsday Clock to symbolically tell us *not if, but when* we reach midnight; The Physicians for Social Responsibility (psr.org); and Ploughshares (ploughshares.org).

[37]*World at Risk: The Report of the Commission on the Prevention of WMD Proliferation and Terrorism*; December 2008; Vantage Books.

The most common "explanations" (excuses) reveal the *helpless/hopeless* attitude that shuts down our energy factory while we drift towards doomsday:

1. *My efforts won't make any difference.*
2. *I would do something but no one ever told me what to do that makes sense.*
3. *I've got too many local issues to think about global ones. God or our President will have to take care of it.*
4. *It's not my problem. I'm not a terrorist. Go talk to the bad guys.*

I conclude from the interviews that World Peace is among the top of people's wishes and prayers. People want wealth, good health, and the well-being of their loved ones, but a peaceful world is the linchpin to everyone's desires. If we can unleash the pent-up energy for peace present throughout the world, we will be unstoppable. Understanding is not enough. "Almost ready" won't do. Action is required!

We have marvelous news. The very same technology that threatens to destroy our planet can also be used to rapidly educate our global population to create peace. The Internet and mass media can reach anyone, anywhere, anytime, at little or no cost. The very same resources that President Obama demonstrated could recruit millions and win the election are available to educate the world. Through our united effort, we also will succeed using this amazing technology. We have the knowledge. We have the means. Now we require only the will to proceed to succeed. A small number of influential citizens must become the peace leaders who will initiate the domino effect that will circle the world. Our communication technology makes the viral spread of knowledge doable in a very short time. Will you become *one* of the *each one, teach many* who will start the process?

The first step, usually the hardest, is actually quite simple, requiring little time and effort. Will you notify as many people as you know or can of our forever free educational web site, www.anwot.org? Friends on your email list will love the gifts of proven wisdoms that anyone can apply to make their life more wonderful. Want to do more? Tom Robben has created a database from which we will send our ***World Peace Quiz*** and other educational content. Are you willing to search the Internet for the email or snail mail addresses of individuals and feed them to our database? Our web site will show you how. This would be a great help. Think of the people you know and who your friends know. Individuals in all walks of life can incite others, for example: media representatives, teachers, corporate human relations officers, and on and on. An extensive list is provided in letter #8 of the Mini-course: ***Become a Mental Wealth Millionaire and a Powerful Force for World Peace***. We have already started a database for India and want to reach all countries. For example, I would love to reach Peace leaders in Japan because I suspect their experience with two A-bombs intensifies their motives for world peace. The Educational Community's web site offers solutions to two of the top priorities on most people's wish or pray-for list – the proven wisdoms that create a wonderful life and world peace ... and it is guaranteed forever free!

Here is a list of priority target individuals and groups to reach:
1. Peace organizations: there are so many worldwide
2. Educators
3. Clergy
4. Media representatives (radio, television, and print)
5. Corporate human relations officers
6. People with followings: Entertainment and sports personalities
7. Political leaders
8. Inmates in our prisons: there are 2.3 million in the U.S., 1 for every 100 adults!
9. Parents
10. Motivational and thought leaders/bloggers: you already have large lists to love ANWOT
11. All of the above in other countries
12. Who is left out? Include them!

Become a *Mental Wealth Millionaire*!

One of life's greatest satisfactions is giving something of ourselves to our loved ones. Making our planet a better place to live is among the top priorities for most of us. Mental Wealth millionaires, unlike physical wealth millionaires, love giving away their wealth. Will you become a Mental Wealth millionaire if you have not already done so? Enrich yourself with the mental strengths that make your life more wonderful. Leading by example is far more effective than leading only by authority. *People changed against their will are of the same opinion still*.

What is *Mental Wealth* **(MW)**? *Mental wealth* consists of those wisdoms most certain to lead to success in any endeavor. We have become the supreme rulers on earth because our human brain has sufficient intelligence to create sophisticated language. Using symbols, we acquire, share, store, and pass knowledge forward to future generations. *Knowledge is a source of power.* We stand on the shoulders of knowledgeable giants who preceded us. We can apply power constructively AND destructively. *Mental wealth* is our means to consistently direct power to beneficial outcomes, to fulfill our wants. *Mental wealth* also equips us to weather the unavoidable storms we each experience. True wealth grows as we acquire wisdoms that help us use our best to do our best.

Any individual who is willing to study, practice, and risk freeing his or her self from the manner of thinking initially programmed by *instinct* and *tradition* (fate and circumstance, nature and our nurturers) can become a *Mental Wealth millionaire*! We become our own best friend, free ourselves to become our own person, i.e. attain self-mastery, and create new wisdom to adapt to the changes of modernity.

Three assets are the basis of a marvelous life experience: (1) *physical wealth*, (2) *physical health*, and (3) *mental wealth*. We only require "enough" of each. Animals "get it"; humankind doesn't. Our educational system emphasizes making a living more than learning to live. Acquiring power through *physical wealth* is our most popular ambition; it

is the greatest focus of our energy. Our dominant way of thinking would have us insatiably pursue *physical wealth* and *physical health,* including superficial attractiveness. Most people concentrate their energy toward the pursuit of physical wealth or pampering their body, while both individuals and our society ignore MW. Our shopping malls feature multiple ways to make us superficially attractive; common *sense* tells us we are far better off if we instead greedily pursue *mental wealth*, the wisdoms that create a joyous, meaningful life. MW is more certain to consistently fulfill our wish for a marvelous life experience. There is no limit to the amount of wisdom we can acquire and we make the world better in doing so. *Mental Wealth millionaires* have the resilience to create a joyous, purposeful life even when faced with limited *physical wealth* and *physical health*. *Physical Wealth millionaires* are well represented among those who are depressed, even those who commit suicide.

Where does one go to acquire the wisdoms that create *Mental Wealth millionaires*? As society is merely the collection of individuals that comprise it, each of us, individually and collectively, are the deciding forces that determine society's rules. Awareness of the benefits of *Mental Wealth* will incite a change in our priorities.

The wisdoms that make us a powerful force for world peace are the same wisdoms that make us Mental Wealth millionaires. These wisdoms are the same *newer way of thinking* skills Einstein told us we require if we are to survive and thrive. Learn our interpretation of the *newer way of thinking* (ANWOT) and how we can work together to create the domino effect that will circle the world. As a realist, I accept that transforming our state of global conflict into world peace is a long-shot, but we must pursue any glimmer of hope because the alternative is a horror beyond our imagination. As an optimist, I am confident that our modern technology provides us all that we require to popularize ANWOT and avoid the predicted catastrophe.

Stren #28 compares the unique benefits of *Mental Wealth* (MW) with the benefits of *physical* wealth. I suggest you refer to it to remind yourself of the many benefits of *Mental Wealth*.

The Need for ANWOT Education

Understanding our history provides profound insight. Over time our brain has evolved into seven specialized segments[38], the most recent being the outer layer or *cerebral cortex*. It provides us consciousness and intelligence among other benefits. This newest portion started to expand its physical size about 2,000,000 years ago. Yet, historians date the beginnings of civilization to just 50,000 years ago with the creation of sophisticated language, about the time of Neanderthal Man. Because our ancestors had no permanent residences, they wandered in their savage environment searching for edible plants and what they could kill. They relied on their wits to protect their only important possessions – weapons and families. Can you imagine what preoccupied their thinking?

[38]The medulla, pons, pituitary, pineal gland, cerebellum, thalamus, and cerebral cortex.

Through the billions of years it took us to progress that far, nature's *fight or flight* and *survival of the fittest* rules became firmly established. Many species, including our ancestors, can be described as "killing machines." Brute strength is supreme; "might is right." Our genes equip us to separate friend from foe, safe from dangerous, how to eat and not be eaten. Thus, we are born with pre-judgments (prejudices!) based on superficial identifying characteristics to tell us who is of my tribe and who is not. The instinct we inherit doesn't give a damn about "the other." The hawk takes its prey without remorse! The predator within is not immoral; it is amoral, merely servant to nature's genetically encoded bidding.

Born with a prejudged/prejudiced way of thinking encoded by genes and expressed as instinct, we are all born amoral. We can be expected to follow nature's basic rules of conduct unless we are taught or teach ourselves otherwise. Destructive confrontation may be understood as society's failure to properly educate its citizens. Instead of blaming and punishing "bad" behavior, society would be wise to point the finger at itself and ask what it is lacking in the way it educates its citizens. Deviants would be seen as in need of consistent limit setting, rehabilitation ("*re-habiting"*), and ANWOT education rather than punishment. We can understand why Irish Catholic and Protestant children hate each other by the age of three; Israeli children see Palestinians as enemies and vice versa; and intolerance, hatred, and destructive aggression are prominent throughout the world.

Our society has yet to establish and promote the educational resources needed to bring ANWOT to our masses. Our formal schooling emphasizes the three R's and the traditions of our culture. Multiple studies of adult development indicate that most people aren't prepared to take control of their thinking until their late 20's. Formal education for most ends right about the time we reach our peak receptivity to the ANWOT mental skills – when our brain has reached physical maturity, has acquired skill in the use of symbols, and is ready to learn to wisely transform knowledge into constructive action. Even our "liberal" arts colleges have not targeted the skills of ANWOT for specific courses within their curriculum. How many teaching resources can you name that specialize in mental freedom and world peace, the prizes of ANWOT? Without ANWOT education in our schools and lacking adult teaching resources, we are prone to remain stuck with our early prejudices, indoctrination, and two-category *either/or* thinking. Each of us remains part of the problem until we take appropriate action to create the solution. Popularizing ANWOT promises a quantum leap for our partially civilized world. The payoff will be huge because our society has so badly neglected education in the skills of mature thinking. I encourage you to become a part of the ANWOT Peace Academy.

The Educational Community offers an effective in-depth curriculum of Einstein's solution to peace and prosperity. Come to **www.anwot.org** to collect your forever free gifts, including over 100 wisdoms in three formats – video, audio, and script. Each can be viewed on screen or downloaded. Take the 20-question educational ***World Peace quiz***. Check out the Mini-course: ***Become a Mental Wealth Millionaire and World Peace***

Leader; and two books - ***The Short Course to Mental Wealth*** and ***A Newer Way of Thinking***. A ***blog*** will allow interaction with other Peace Leaders. A twice per month seminar is planned that will be available by phone and webinar. Many more *Mental Wealth* skills may be found in libraries, media, etc. By creating a basic curriculum of ANWOT skills and engaging the powerful mass media, the collected efforts of a few can seed and succeed in initiating ANWOT education.

One of my hopes is that our united effort will create sufficient interest that individuals will create ANWOT seminars similar to AA (Alcoholics Anonymous) groups present throughout the world. Group sharing and learning in a supportive environment is among the most effective forms of education.

Here are multiple reasons why *Mental Wealth millionaires* working together will succeed in popularizing Einstein's solution:

Powerful communication technology (Internet, blogs, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, teleseminars, etc.) is now available. The ANWOT self-taught mental wisdoms are offered via electronic media forever FREE to anyone, anytime, anywhere without commercials or solicitations for money. Education for a safer, gentler world and the well-being of loved ones is a universal desire. ANWOT will be welcomed globally because it is respectful to geographic, religious, and ethnic boundaries. ANWOT is easy to teach and learn, and can readily be embraced by the masses of all cultures. The subject matter offers what people seek: *Mental Wealth*, enlightenment, happiness, optimism, belonging, peace of mind, world peace, skills for living, social support, and *meaning* – the opportunity to participate in a clearly worthwhile cause. Mental freedom from the demands of *instinct, tradition*, and *human* dictators is among our most sought after goals. The skills to feel good and do good are universally desired. Nonprofit (especially peace) groups can be encouraged to support ANWOT because promoting peace is relevant to virtually every specific purpose that is being advocated. For-profit corporations have motive to support ANWOT because promoting the skills of mental wealth improves company morale, and support for world peace is an excellent image builder. Influential people in key fields such as the media, politics, religion, education, entertainment, sports, etc., once enlightened, will be motivated to endorse Einstein's solution and become leaders of the MW *millionaire movement*.

How many are for peace of mind, peace for humankind? How many are against? Einstein's solution emphasizes the wisdoms that, when added to *self*-mastery, direct our energy to weapons of mass construction. We far more prefer those *common sense* values universally recognized by philosophers and preached by our religions than those that stir conflict. We want to create the civilized world that is within our capability. The blaring sirens warning us of the impending use of weapons of ultimate destruction are becoming increasingly difficult to ignore. They are a promising source of motivation. **We will succeed if we apply our collective will!**

Although the percentage of people throughout the world who have upgraded their native language for maturity and civility are small, even a small percentage of billions

represents a large number of individuals. If you are so fortunate to be among this enlightened minority, let me boldly suggest that you now have an obligation to insure for others the opportunity that has been provided to you. Sharing our knowledge and wisdom with others is an expression of becoming humane. However, here is a practical, self-serving reason to spread ANWOT education to those less fortunate. To the degree we ignore the prevalent manner of thinking, such as the blaming that leads to harmful aggression, we create and/or passively support those bigoted leaders whose actions are the greatest threat to our loved ones.

I repeat Margaret Mead's wisdom:

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.

The Educational Community, Inc. forever free Internet site: **www.anwot.org**

Stren #73: What is Normal? What is Sane?

I'm glad to welcome you to stren # 73. Today's stren will consider why our society considers many behaviors normal that are not sane and many behaviors abnormal when they are just what is to be expected. You are asked to judge to what extent you are *normal* but not sane!

What is it about these people's behavior that seems *wacko,* yet I consider *normal*?

1. Jenny, ten years old, was quite happy and singing when caught about to hang herself.
2. Mike was a bully. He hated blacks and Jews and threatened to blow up his high school.
3. Susan could not sleep comfortably unless she had cotton in her mouth.
4. Joe was regularly put in the prison "hole" (isolation) for sexual attack on other young inmates.
5. Grace was suicidal, hearing voices that convinced her she was possessed by Lucifer, the devil.
6. Jacob threw up upon the thought of eating a certain food.
7. By the age of three, a group of children already hated all Catholics while a comparison group already hated all Protestants.
8. Kamikaze pilots during WWII and suicide bombers in the mid-East conflict disregard one of our most powerful instincts – survival.

How is any of this normal? They each were behaving just as they had been taught! Their feelings and actions were quite normal responses to the way their early masters had programmed them. Their ways of thinking would not pass the test of common sense, but why would it if they had not been properly schooled in rational thinking?

1. Jenny was told that when she died she could once again be with her favorite person, her deceased grandmother. Children are especially gullible.
2. Mike's mom was abandoned by the man who impregnated her. Unable to cope, she drifted lower and lower on the economic scale, was raped twice, and vented her bitterness and prejudiced opinions on her son.
3. Susan was convinced by her superstitious mom that something terrible would happen to mom if she didn't regularly chew cotton at night. Her peers laughed at her when she revealed her secret at a pajama party by asking why others didn't have cotton. It took some time and many restless nights to get use to sleeping without her cotton.
4. Joe "knew" he had to ejaculate to get rid of a "tight collar" but also that it was a sin to spill his seed outside of flesh. Once his opinion was exposed in a group therapy session, his peers persuaded him that it was O.K. to "beat the meat," I no longer had to see him in the prison's seclusion room.
5. Grace was brought up where speaking in tongues and hearing voices were expected occurrences during prayer rituals. She was admitted to my care when I was a resident in psychiatry at Johns Hopkins because she was suicidal,

convinced she was evil. Her religious leader confirmed that in his opinion she was indeed possessed.

6. Jake discovered a roast beef sandwich he had eaten was actually ham; he realized he violated his religion's dietary code and immediately vomited. As a college student, I witnessed a similar situation when Mohammed, having been assured there was no meat in a vegetable stew, found on his spoon what was unmistakably a piece of bacon.
7. This was observed in a study of children growing up in Ireland [*The Hartford Courant*, 7/25/02]. What might we expect of a child growing up in Palestine? In Israel? Wherever unresolved conflict is common?
8. Through years of immaturity, Kamikaze pilots and suicide bombers' way of thinking was indoctrinated by leaders who chose to teach "*do as I say, not as I do*."

What hardwiring controls <u>your</u> thinking? Free your will. Become your own genie.

Normal is determined by the authorities who make us what we are according to their teaching and role models. A dictionary definition of *normal* is *conforming, adhering to, or constituting a typical pattern; the expected state*. "Almost all normal people want to be rich without great effort" – F. Scott Fitzgerald. [39] Most of our world's population is long on *normality* but short on *sanity*.

Sane is acting with common sense to whatever degree our knowledge permits. A dictionary definition of *sane* is *showing sound judgment; reasonable; rational; mentally healthy*.[40]

What society or "the establishment" holds to be normal is often not sane. Sane people are often judged by society to be abnormal. Many exceptional individuals who discovered knowledge and wisdom that have dramatically impacted the way we think were first labeled abnormal and shunned by the larger population – Christ, Copernicus, Galileo, Darwin, Einstein, Freud, King, Gandhi, and the suffragettes to name a few. Here are several additional examples of the power of authority to mesmerize common sense:

The popular fairy tale, "The Emperor's New Clothes" expresses the power of self-deception. An emperor who cared only about his clothes and about showing them off was duped by two swindlers to believe that they could make the finest suit of clothes that had the special quality of being invisible to anyone who was either stupid or unfit. The emperor first sent two of his trusted men to see it. Neither would admit that they could not see the cloth and so they praised it. Thereupon, the emperor allowed himself to be dressed in the "clothes" for a parade, never admitting that he could not see what he was wearing for fear that others would think he was stupid. The townspeople, who had also heard that anyone who couldn't see the cloth would be revealed as stupid,

39 The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language; Houghton Mifflin Company; William Morris, editor
40 Ibid.

wildly praised the magnificent clothes. A small child, too innocent to be pressured by the rumor, revealed the hoax: "The Emperor has no clothes!" Person to person, the townspeople whispered that the emperor had nothing on. Even though the emperor heard, he held his head high and finished the procession. The story is relevant in political and social contexts when an obvious truth is denied by the majority despite obvious evidence to the contrary. [41]

One of my favorite books, *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*, by Richard Bach, is about a seagull learning about life and flight. Bored with the daily squabbles over food and seized by a passion for flight, he pushes himself, learning everything he can about flying. Instead of welcoming his desire to teach others what he has learned, he is shamed and expelled by the Elders for his unwillingness to conform, and for doing what no other seagulls dared to do. Jonathan goes off on his own, believing that all hope is lost. An outcast, he continues to learn, becoming increasingly pleased with his abilities. He eventually finds others similarly outlawed for not conforming, teaches them the love of soaring up and onward, and establishes teachers for other flocks.

On November 18, 1978, directed by Reverend Jim Jones, 918 people committed mass "revolutionary suicide" (many were allegedly forced to participate, including babies) at their Guyana community. Jones persuaded members of The People's Temple cult that the present world was evil and they would be better off dead than face life on earth.[42] The victims included Congressman Leo Ryan, the first member of Congress to be assassinated in the line of duty in the history of the United States.

In 1933, with a unique blend of nationalism, militarism, and racial theory, Adolf Hitler persuaded millions that they were a unique people – a master race with a special destiny. State-produced films and radio drove the message home of the greatness of the German people. People felt happiness and the seduction to Nazism was swift. "Young people were the most excited by the propaganda; over ninety percent of us were behind everything that went on." Perhaps no statesman had ever been as loved. An entire generation was taught to live the ideal German life the Nazi's prescribed. To be a Jew, homosexual, mentally or physically challenged, a Gypsy, or any minority was judged to be subhuman.[43]

The wealthiest man I ever met, a billionaire, was obsessed with making money. "*Enough*" for this individual, and many other *normal* people, had come to mean "*infinity*." There will never be "*enough*." This man alienated his family and friends, and I believe, as did he, that he was among the most miserable individuals on earth.

Can you think of situations where groups of persons surrender their common sense to authority? What unexamined assumptions do you maintain, acquired solely on the basis of authority, that would have difficulty passing a test of common sense? Do you believe citizens of other countries or religions are inferior? Are people who

[41]http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Emperor's_New_Clothes
[42]http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jonestown
[43]http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/peoplescentury/episodes/masterrace/description.html

insatiably pursue money, power, or fame *normal*? Are they *sane*? Are they victims of self-deception?

Lacking language, knowledge, and common sense at birth, we are all victims of "*normality*" – we are compelled to mindlessly accept whatever programming *fate* and *circumstance* make of us. Who we are and what we are to become is determined by forces to which we have limited resistance. We don't pick our parents, language, nation, religion, gender, and on and on. We are initially slaves to fate and circumstance. Our first masters are *instinct* and the *nurturers* who inscribe their traditions into our way of thinking.

We are born stupid and remain so until we teach ourselves *a newer way of thinking* that frees our will power to personally assume responsibility for our destiny. Stupidity is continuing to mindlessly obey the commands of authority after we have taught ourselves to apply common sense to current knowledge and create more adaptive solutions to manage today's issues. The hardwired action patterns determined by instinct are usually based on trial and error solutions, whereas the traditions of our nurturers reflect reasonable solutions to *yesterday's* problems according to *yesterday's* knowledge. We make ourselves increasingly powerful creators and destroyers as we acquire knowledge of cause and effect, what we call *science*. We both advance and tear down all that is about us. The state of the world indicates that we are ruling with greater stupidity than wisdom. The perspectives of our animal brain and the unexamined acceptance of our nurturer's traditions will continue to advocate for the survival of our self, our family, and our tribe at the expense of all others. Our history of harmful confrontation and war will continue unless we add sanity to self-mastery[44]; until we learn to question *normality* and teach ourselves *a newer way of thinking*, ANWOT.

The "*animal portion*" of our brain[45] has earned its name because it is preprogrammed with "software" that advocates "animal" behavior – *survival of the fittest, fight or flight, my way the only way*. The cerebral cortex that makes us human is a *tabula rasa*, a blank or unwritten tablet. It is like a new computer, with limited files but ready to accept whatever input our first masters type into our keyboard. This is why the same morsel of meat that results in delightful anticipation by one individual is a source of revulsion to another whose cultural upbringing forbids eating it. Even simple symbols such as a cross, a crescent, a six-pointed star and a swastika can summon powerful but totally opposite thoughts and emotions according to one's early training. This is also why some "leaders" who have decades to program immature minds can easily create martyrs, kamikaze pilots and suicide bombers, while they characteristically isolate themselves from the sights, sounds, and smells of human destruction. How shall we explain why, throughout history, virtually every religion honors those who create harm to nonbelievers in the name of their God? Is God confused, or are we?

[44]In his classic book, Sanity and Survival, my favorite professor, Jerome Frank, M.D., Ph.D., offers persuasive documentation of our need to add common sense to problem solving.
[45]Consisting of the medulla, pituitary, pons, pineal body, cerebellum, and thalamus.

Self-mastery is the process of adding sanity to the first controllers of our destiny. We do so through *a newer way of thinking* (ANWOT). ANWOT consists of mental skills that convey ownership of our thinking that frees our will from domination by "other" masters to create *genie hood*. *Humanmind*, properly educated in sane thinking, provides us sufficient will power to overrule much of nature's and our nurturers' control over our destiny. While other creatures reflexively follow destiny's course according to the data received, we are equipped to act on the *meaning* our freedom organ assigns to the data. We create, dwell, and actively intervene in our own private mental world. We study the rules, challenge and modify them. Our *freedom organ* converts physical energy into mental energy and initiates *will* power to convert mental energy into physical action.

nerves/hormones/etc. → concepts/thinking→ will power → physical action

Properly schooled, we make our cerebral cortex the home of *sanity* – common sense, wisdom, collaboration for mutual gain, prevention, and the qualities we identify as humane. Otherwise, our intelligence remains a servant to our animal brain and the traditions of our nurturers. A popular science fiction theme is that computers will become so smart that they will take over and rule all life including humankind. We are that computer, so powerful that we have already overtaken much of what nature and nurture make of us. We simultaneously create civilization and become our own worst enemy by proliferating weapons of self-annihilation. Informed experts tell us to expect their use in our lifetime or within our children's unless we take urgent action to popularize sane thinking.

I estimate that in order to prevent human catastrophe and create world peace, we require a grass roots advocacy of one million ANWOT teachers whose sanity exceeds their normality. I urge you to review the *Common Sense Test of Common Sense* (stren #91) and question yourself to determine if you are one of those exceptional individuals who will acquire ANWOT and become one of Einstein's army to educate our seven billion neighbors.

Stren #74: Becoming One's Own Person: Undoing Self-deception

Welcome to stren #74 of the EC wisdoms that teach *a newer way of thinking*. Today's stren encourages you to examine the degree you remain a slave to fate and circumstance. The chart that follows compares the mental behaviors predictable when we uncritically obey the forces that make us what we are, with the humane attributes that we require to survive and thrive in modernity. Many of the problems we create for ourselves are due to self-deception. We believe we are our own master when actually we are merely acting on what feels right because nature and our nurturers have programmed us to believe *their* way is *our* way. Put to rational scrutiny, we discover which of the authority's assumptions that determines our thinking, feelings, and actions fail *the test of common sense* (see stren #91). The perspectives we inherit and passively acquire, primarily through instinct and those inscribed by our nurturers sometimes become maladaptive, even dangerous. The greatest problem is that we deceive ourselves into thinking we are right and justified when we are acting quite stupidly. "Stupidity" is uncritically obeying authority when we are capable of wiser problem solving by our use of common sense.

A child's world is one where direction is required and mistakes are usually forgiven. Our earliest processing of information must be simple and easily learned; authoritarian directions must be authoritarian, clear, and require little or no judgment. Blind obedience to authority is a life-saving skill in a dangerous environment when our own problem-solving skills are limited. For the first dozen years of our life our brain is exceptionally skilled in mimicking the behaviors and beliefs of our nurturers and what other role models provide us. Consider how effectively everyone acquires their native language. Even an abused child will cling to its nurturers because they are seen as the most important source of protection and survival from unknown greater dangers.

In stren #86 I refer to a parable that compares us to sheep, hypnotized to believe they are protected and happy when they are not. A single sheep dog can control the herd by its mere presence, bark, or a nip to the legs of a few sheep. I also referred to *the helpless/hopeless response,* a more contemporary explanation of why we fail to take wise action when common sense would urge us to do so. Socrates, regarded as one of our wisest teachers, concluded, "The unexamined life is not worth living." Until we become consciously aware of our self-deception, habit will sustain our mindless self-deception. Mental freedom is more than just "growing up." We become our own person by teaching ourselves *a newer way of thinking* (ANWOT).

We require conscious awareness to motivate us to assume self-mastery. Comparing the assumptions commonly acquired during our formative years with those that are supported by universal common sense wisdom will inspire you to a newer way of thinking. The chart will sharpen your awareness of how strongly your life experience is determined by fate and circumstance. By assuming personal responsibility you can add *common sense wisdom* to problem-solving to make your life more joyous and meaningful.

The chart highlights two ways of thinking, each assuming different beliefs: (1) those acquired from our genes and modified by our nurturers through our formative years, and (2) our mental behavior when information is processed substituting *a newer way of thinking* (ANWOT) that conveys *self*-mastery. The ANWOT side expresses the humane action pathways that elevate us above the animals, while the other side predicts the actions advocated when the animal portion of our brain dominates our intelligence. The extremes are emphasized to highlight the differences; in real life, the line separating the two is not so distinct. Nevertheless, you will gain considerable enlightenment to improve your life experience.

The characteristics that most distinguish the animal portion from the cerebral cortex portion of our brain[46] can each be conveyed in one sentence:

Animal brain: "*My way the only way.*"
Trial and error learning has enabled us to survive by making the highest priority repeating the life cycle. The *either/or* two-category way of thinking we first learn pre-wires us with loyalty to our family, our tribe, and whatever interpretations we learn from our nurturers. We identify with those who are like us – our flag, religion, teams, ethnic group, gender, geographic location, and on and on. Those not perceived as "our side" are devalued, dehumanized, and considered a resource to be of service without consideration for their own survival or well-being, because it is "not us."

Human brain: "*What will make things better for me and you, for now and the future?*"
Mature and equipped with knowledge, the intelligent humane portion of our brain is capable of discovering the universal "laws" of cause and effect, and can store them, pass them forward, and add common sense problem solving to the power of knowledge. We create morality as each tribe discovers universal common sense values that improve the quality of life and adaptation for survival: love, forgiveness, kindness, mercy, compassion, and the ideals that we call "humane." We can recognize that society is like the different systems of our body – survival requires that each specialized organ must contribute to and cooperate with the whole for the system to remain healthy and survive. One deviant component can extinguish everything.

Study the chart. Add to it and strive to *become your own person*! Attain your highest level of competence to make your life experience joyous and meaningful. Share your mental wealth to benefit those you love and those who you will never know.

[46]The animal brain refers to the six segments of brain that develop before the cerebral cortex: the medulla, pituitary, pons, pineal body, cerebellum, and thalamus.

HIGHLIGHTS OF ANWOT BEHAVIOR	*HIGHLIGHTS OF NATURE/NURTURE BEHAVIOR*
LOVE: I create and maintain my love-making factory. I generate love to fill my own needs and have excess to share with others. I welcome love from others, but am not dependent on it.	LOVE: I am a love junkie, depending on others to fulfill my requirement for love and approval. I am upset when the person(s) I need love from loves another.
AGGRESSION: I aggressively direct my energy to constructive purposes for myself and the greater community. I energetically pursue conflict resolution and win-win relationships.	AGGRESSION: I use physical and mental aggression to get my way. I must win and see to it that the "other" loses even if it is harmful to me.
POWER: Power is a useful asset when applied with wisdom. It is a tool to do constructive things.	POWER: Power helps me get my way. I want as much as I can get. I want to dominate others.
WISDOM: A fulfilled life requires wise *self*-direction. The pursuit of wisdom is a lifetime goal; I can learn much from others.	WISDOM: Power is wisdom. I know what is good and right. Those with powerful tools make the rules.
WORLD VIEW: The world is my garden. I have a choice of many things I can grow here and enjoy the outcome of my labor.	WORLD VIEW: I have been provided for in my early years, and therefore I should be taken care of throughout my lifetime. If I don't get what I need, it's somebody else's fault.
LANGUAGE: When I can, I use descriptive words that lead to problem-solving, and analog words that provide me a more accurate picture of things.	LANGUAGE: I am used to prescriptive words that point out who's to blame, and dichotomous words that make it clear which side is the good and right one.
RELATIONSHIPS: I am my own lifelong traveling companion, and I work to become my own best friend. I share my good feelings with others.	RELATIONSHIPS: Friends are important because I can get what I need from them. I am worthwhile if and when others give me praise and show me love.
PROBLEM -SOLVING: I regularly ask, "What is most likely to get me what I want in the short term and the long term?" This usually occurs with cooperation, con-sensus, compromise, patience, dialogue, and other conflict resolution skills.	PROBLEM -SOLVING: I hope someone or God will resolve this problem. If I were boss, I'd know how to handle it. Much of my life though is "grinning and bearing it" because the "haves" have it and unfortunately I don't.

HIGHLIGHTS OF ANWOT BEHAVIOR (CONTINUED)	*HIGHLIGHTS OF NATURE/NURTURE BEHAVIOR (CONTINUED)*
ORIGINALITY, CREATIVITY: I come up with creative new ideas and methods that I determine will make a contribution to my well-being and/or that of my community.	ORIGINALITY, CREATIVITY: I come up with creative new ideas and methods that will please some important "other." I want the love and adoration that comes from doing what they say is worthwhile.
CHILD REARING: At first I need to set firm limits to direct them. As they mature, I will educate them to think for themselves and become what they choose to become.	CHILD REARING: I will teach my kids right from wrong, and demand that they make me proud. When they go astray, the right punishment will correct things.
DIRECTION: Now that I am empowered to think for myself, I am responsible for the direction of my life's experience. There are many fulfilling paths to choose from.	DIRECTION: I am stuck the way that fate has made me. Others have given me a good idea of what I am and what I'm suited for, so I might try to make the best of it.
INDEPENDENCE, HABIT: I am my own person. I am grateful for what has been provided and now I'm master of my own ship. I will consider, but not depend on habit.	INDEPENDENCE, HABIT: What has got me this far has "worked" to a degree. The old path is what I was taught and what I know; hopefully it will work out the best.
VALUES, RELIGION: My beliefs and the meanings I ascribe to the world have largely been acquired from my nurturers. I will evaluate them critically and determine what makes sense to me.	VALUES, RELIGION: I have been educated in the ways of the world, and told the right way to believe and how to act properly. If the authorities said it, it must be O.K. and the right thing for me.
FREEDOM: I have been provided the unique opportunity to free myself from the control of other "masters" and own my thinking, feelings, and actions. I will gratefully strive to wisely direct my life's experience.	FREEDOM: As long as I do the right thing and follow the rules, I will be granted a good life's experience. By being creative and pleasing the authorities that prescribe the correct way of thinking and doing, I will be rewarded and not punished.
TOLERANCE: While I don't respect all views, I try to respect all people and promote friendship. There is plenty of room for differences of opinion.	TOLERANCE: I know who the good people are and who is trustworthy. Others need to be taught to think and act in the right way or be punished.

Addendum:

The ever-changing reality we experience through the metamorphosis of our thinking from immature to mature and super-mature, from animal brain to human brain, cannot be fully reflected in a simple two-category chart. Keep in mind that the traditional way we express information emphasizes polar extremes; dichotomous thinking conceals the true connected relationship between the animal portion of our brain and the newer "human" portion of our brain. Written communications are snapshots that are incapable of fully expressing the continuous motion of reality. A more accurate representation would provide a scale to reflect the degree to which each master contributes to the reality we actually experience. The following figure demonstrates how we start life dominated by our animal brain, and how gradually our cerebral cortex increases in strength of leadership:

Animal brain -10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10+ Human cerebral cortex

A slightly more sophisticated figure would show a continuous time line to identify the changing relationship as we progress from dependency to self-mastery:

-10⇔9⇔8⇔7⇔6⇔5⇔4⇔3⇔2⇔1⇔0⇔1⇔2⇔3⇔4⇔5⇔6⇔7⇔8⇔ 9⇔10+
Animal brain (line represents passage of time) Human brain

Both extremes of this relationship between our animal and human brain may be undesirable. Some combination of our animal brain's emotion with our cerebral cortex's intellect in which common sense has become the chief executive officer (C.E.O.) would be most desirable.

But even these representations fall short. We know that the degree of influence by each of the masters who control us is in continuous to-and-fro motion like the waves of the ocean. A motion picture would be far superior. We have yet to create a language that's sophisticated enough to allow us to fully comprehend the motion picture we call reality. Do not be discouraged. We can attain amazing insights from our current level of sophistication. In studying the chart, try to process the *either/or* presentation by replacing the vertical line that separates them with a horizontal line that connects them gradually creeping towards ANWOT but moving to and fro depending on the amount of strength each entity presents at any given time.

Stren #75: Preparing for Loss

This stren addresses how we may prepare our *self* to better deal with losses we will surely experience during our lifetime.

Do you agree that while life has many gains, we all experience a variety of losses? Consider what people experience … a favorite toy or doll breaks, things wearing out, the death of a pet, getting laid off, and the loss of another's approval and/or affection. We lose our youth, beauty fades; we lose our vision and hearing, our hair, our strength, and sooner or later our health. We lose our innocence, our baby appeal that invites others to take care of our needs and wants. For some, a loss by their favorite team is a traumatic event. We not only lose the things we desire; they are replaced with what we don't want -- wrinkles, aches and pains, obligations and debts. Loss is inherently painful, yet it is manageable.

Ultimately, we lose our most precious commodity, life. It is certain! I recall a study that concluded when the woman in a committed relationship died first, the male partner had an average life expectancy of 9 years. If the man died first, the woman had an average life expectancy of 13 years. Few people prepare themselves to emotionally deal with this critical time period upon the loss of a significant other.

We have ample time to prepare. Yet, most of us refuse to face what is unpleasant, despite the wisdom of doing so. We tend to deny it, push it out of our minds when it appears, and/or inflict excessive anticipatory worry and pain on ourselves, far beyond that which is productive. How well have you been prepared for loss? What teaching have you been exposed to thus far? How have you provided for your self to deal with loss?

Observation clearly indicates that some manage well, others poorly. The way people think and the wisdom within their thinking are the major determinants of how loss is managed. We learn from what others have found effective. This guide provides *a newer way of thinking* and a collection of the wisdom that has worked for others.

Here are some practical suggestions that can help you prepare yourself to wisely and productively manage your losses in life when (not if) they occur. Pick and choose, and add what works for you!

- ✓ The basic conclusion from my study of people who best manage loss is that they **own and actively direct their thinking**. They skillfully challenge fate and circumstance. Thinking is our most powerful means to manage what we feel and how we act. The native language we first acquire reflects our helplessness and dependency on others. This passively acquired blaming and hopelessness thinking persists until we change it. Ineffective thinking that prolongs suffering is

common: “You should care and be there.” “He, she, it makes me ….” “The world should be fair!” “What did I do wrong to deserve this?” “I can’t stand it.” “Why bother, what’s the use?” Those most successful in managing their loss (and their life) have developed *a newer way of thinking* that I label “ANWOT.” This newer manner of thinking emphasizes personal responsibility and wise problem solving. ANWOT is the means to freedom from “outside” control, the means to *self*-mastery and becoming one’s own person. “This may be damned difficult but I will keep doing what I reasonably can” replaces “I can’t stand it! My happiness depends on ….”. “I could” is substituted for “They should”. By using personal responsibility language, we strengthen our willpower and empower our thinking to “make a difference.” Words and concepts that foster wise problem solving are used in place of the early prescriptive thinking that promotes blame and prejudged conclusions (prejudice!). By owning our own thinking, we can wisely manage our feelings and actions, and prepare our self for our inevitable losses. This new way of thinking is readily taught and learned; it is the focus of this guide.

- ✓ Become a better lover, beginning with our self, by developing our love-making factory. Practice the strens on *self*-endorsement. Become our own best friend and lifelong traveling companion. In filling our own cup, we will have more to give away by applying the *newer way of thinking* to create our own minimum daily requirements of love. Once we cure our self of the common love junkie habit, so necessary in our early years, we can substitute mature love for dependent love. We will still experience pain when we lose a loved person and/or object of affection; however, we will know how to assist our own natural healthy healing process.

- ✓ Recognize the tendency to “guilt,” to blame ourself. Too often we are our own worst enemy rather than our own best friend. Recognize the difference between absolute best and reasonable best. Perfectionists measure their worth against the absolute best and usually suffer the most, unnecessarily.

- ✓ The most powerful wisdom, what I call “the stren (strength) stren” came from a doctor of psychology who, as a teenager, suffered a football injury that caused permanent loss of use of his legs and arms. Asked how he managed such a loss, he replied, “For a while I wanted to die. Then I realized that when I dwelled on what I lost, didn’t have, or might not attain, I made myself miserable. Everything changed when I began thinking about what I had accomplished, what I had right now, and what I could yet attain.”

- ✓ Learn from the wisdom of others. After reading the above stren, a woman virtually incapacitated by mourning the death of her father wrote me, “Instead of just thinking of my loss, I began to think more of the good times and happy moments we shared. The stren has made a big difference. I feel so much better.” The way we think powerfully influences what we feel and what we do. This guide contains a collection of the “strens” or strengths that others have used

and shown to be effective. Try also to become aware of the negative effects thinking may have. A happy 8-year-old girl was caught in time as she was calmly attempting to hang herself. Asked why she would want to die, she explained, "You said grandma was in heaven and I could see her when I die." Distorted thinking, even well-meaning, commonly leads to harmful outcomes.

- ✓ Expect emotional and even physical pain. Know that it is normal and we can stand it; the intensity of the pain does diminish with time. Life's enthusiasm, with its many opportunities, will resume.

- ✓ Kubler-Ross and others have described common responses to loss. Shock and denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and thereafter, acceptance, are responses best managed when we realize they are part of the normal process of mourning. Knowing they may occur and that we can deal with them will be helpful.[i]

- ✓ Invest yourself in many interests. Now! Pursue them with chronic enthusiasm.

- ✓ Make this "magical" problem-solving sentence a routine step in thinking: "Given this situation, what is most likely to get me what I want, in the short term and the long term?"

- ✓ If role models are available, seek their advice. Support groups can reassure us that we are not alone. They are often a source of companionship, support, and helpful advice. Be prepared by cultivating one or more confidants. Practice putting feelings into words and sharing them with one or more others. Be a friend. Develop a circle of friends and support people. Caring and sharing works!

- ✓ When opportunity presents, try to help someone else experiencing loss. When we attempt to help another in need, we benefit as much as the person in need.

- ✓ Read about dealing with loss. Don't wait until loss has already visited. There are many good sources now available.[ii]

- ✓ Prepare a will. In addition to knowing our affairs will be carried out as we wish, we can learn a great deal as we consider what is meaningful. Be sure to consider what you desire if you become so incapacitated that you could not make your own decisions, for example, the use of life support?

- ✓ Have you prepared yourself to manage economically? Too often, one becomes so dependent on a partner to manage finances that without them, one flounders and can become easy prey for vultures. Acquire some basic finance management skills and consider what trusted backup resources are available.

Make your life more wonderful by applying *the new way of thinking* wisdoms available forever free on our web site www.anwot.org. They will prepare you for

loss. The ultimate benefits will be yours as you create and add your own wise thinking to your unique life's circumstance.

Stren #76: History Lesson

Welcome to stren #76, a brief history lesson to help us acquire perspective on the unique challenge we face, and to create its solution. As we become increasingly enlightened about where we came from and recognize our current knowledge, we are in a better position to wisely guide our future. For example, to the popular self-help books that emphasize the skills that enable us to *feel good* we now must add the wisdoms that teach us to *do good*. We need to include values and our spiritual life. Our current explosive discovery of knowledge has thrust us into a new era. Bullets target one individual, but a single hydrogen weapon targets populations and cities and multiple bombs target all of civilization! History teaches us that as most tribes acquire weapons with ultimate destructive power (**WUD**) that offer no second chance, the "fittest" will be the first targeted by the "have nots." Any survivors would then face polluted water and air, disease, lack of medical resources, and the consequences of damaged genes.

Einstein's solution, *a newer way of thinking* (**ANWOT**) differs from other self-help methods in that it educates our thinking to consistently work for us and become our most potent weapon for mass construction (**WMC**)! Many of the preprogrammed solutions of instinct and habit that worked for past problems have now become ineffective or dangerous. From our knowledge of history and growing wisdom, we can teach ourselves the *thought control* skills we require to prevent the human catastrophe predicted by our most knowledgeable citizens. The interpretation of ANWOT offered in this collection of strens frees us from *instinct* and *tradition* to create common sense *outside of the box* solutions. The following chart illustrates the rapidity of our current rate of change:

APPROXIMATE TIMELINE OF YEARS TO → → → →	**PRESENT:**
Our Galaxy → → → → → → → → → →	13,000,000,000
Hot Gas Cools to Form Earth → → → → → →	4,600,000,000
Biologic Life, Natural Selection of the Fittest → →	3,800,000,000
Extinction of Dinosaurs → → → → → → →	65,000,000
Homo Sapiens – An Enlarged Brain → → → →	2,000,000
Humanmind/Beginning of Civilization → → →	500,000
Homo Sapiens Sapiens: Modern Man Knows He Knows →	150,000
Refinement of Language: Human Selection Joins Natural Selection, Sophisticated Language, Quantum Leap in Civilization → → → → →	50,000
Evidence of Art and Creativity → → → → →	30,000
Mass Media & Communication, Computers, And Fast "Everything": Travel/Food/Etc. → → →	100
New Era: WMD/WUC, **Destruction of the Fittest**, Human Selection Trumps Natural Selection → → →	60
?? **ANWOT**, Constructive Aggression, WMC/~~WUD~~ → →	**??**

WMC = Weapons of Mass Construction; WUD = Weapons of Ultimate Destruction

The road to civilization began some 40,000 – 50,000 years past. Imagine life before cultivation of food, when sustenance depended on wandering from place to place in search for plants and what one could kill. There were no permanent residences and virtually nothing to own but primitive weapons, women, and children. Writing would not be invented for another 10,000 years, and primitive art and written accounts of history would require an additional 10,000 years. Being limited in language skills (no classes in reading and writing!), what "meanings" would you imagine to be prominent in their manner of thinking? How would civilization be passed on from generation to generation? How far have we come? How far do we have to go?

We have discovered the link between apes and humans; it is us! *Humane* includes the qualities of kindness, mercy, compassion, and concern for the welfare of humankind. We aren't there yet. We're still part animal, part human. The crucial question is how much of each? We must educate ourselves in *a newer way of thinking* if we wish to make ourselves more humane. It took us a long time to accept that we are not the center of our universe. Those brave enough to suggest it did not have an easy time. The establishment more than resisted. We got over it. Every quantum leap innovation through knowledge that challenges established thinking will meet resistance, as prominently demonstrated by Christ, Copernicus, Galileo, Columbus, Darwin, Einstein, Freud, Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Picasso, Fawcett/Pankhurst/Susan B. Anthony,[47] Al Gore, and so many others. We'd like to believe we're a step beneath the angels, but even if angels do exist, we are much closer to apes, an assumption for which we have considerable scientific evidence.

Humankind is unique in its ability to think. We process physical information to mental alternatives, choose among the creations we initiate, and will them to action. For example, $E=mc^2$ explained that mass could be converted to immense energy; this knowledge led to "the bomb." T**he cortical portion of our brain routinely converts physical signals, i.e. mass, into mental energy in the form of abstract concepts, and then back again to physical action.** We call this mysterious mind-body phenomenon *will power*. "Humanmind" grows, stores, and shares knowledge. The *meaning* assigned to symbols creates the energy[48] that is our source of *will power*. The manner in which we think determines how our will converts the mental energy of concepts into physical action.

History provides us the perspective to recognize that for the first time, an earth creature has empowered its will with the godlike power to dramatically change itself AND the world shared by all life, a world that until this instant in time has been the sole domain of nature. *Humanmind* has joined *natural selection* in directing our destiny! We are now partner with those forces that previously made us what we are and determined what we may become. Our traditional way of thinking is no longer adequate to preserve us in this New Era. Einstein told us the nuclear age has changed everything except our way of thinking. We will remain on a course to self-destruction until we assume mastery of our *will power* and educate our freedom organ

[47]Leaders of the suffragette movement which gave women the right to vote.
[48]Does the word "fire" trigger the same amount of energy in a language not understood by the individual?

to become our weapon for mass construction (WMC). **The technology we now have for mass education along with our collective wisdom is sufficient to thrive in our New Era. To proceed to succeed, we need only create the spark that initiates our will!**

As described in other strens, we are innately programmed to blame others when we experience one of life's common emotions – frustration. It has become popular to argue that organized religion is the cause of most of our ills, including wars, while others provide good evidence to refute this. We also blame political and economic issues, conflict between the haves and the have-nots, desire for power and dominance to control others, ethnicity, skin color, jealousy, and any area where there are differences.[49] Such blaming detracts us from the germane issue that **the meaning assigned to data determines the degree that thinking acts for or against our well-being.** The common element in harmful human aggression has been and remains the way we think. No other creature engages in blaming or resentment, passes hate on to future generations, creates guilt, and demands recognition and an afterlife reward as we do. Nature is neither "good" nor "evil;" nature just "is." We interpret what *is* by the meaning we assign to events.[50] We could say, "I think, therefore I am dangerous."

Our way of thinking has been and continues to be responsible for both destructive AND constructive aggression, war and peace, prejudice and tolerance, hatred and love. **Education to upgrade our thinking offers our best hope to create the world we seek while avoiding self-destruction along the way.** The ANWOT mental skills provided here are incredibly easy to teach and learn. The resources we require are immediately available. We need only choose to direct our will to make the effort.

The most potent cause of our current ills will be found by recognizing that when we blame, our bent trigger finger points at our *self, specifically* our prevalent manner of thinking. In pointing the finger inward, we need to include our society. Establishment mores and laws are an expression of the dominant manner in which individuals think. Most people remain dependent on their first masters, *instinct* and *tradition*, because we have yet to institutionalize the education we require to upgrade our thinking for maturity. When we perceive that we are powerless to change "the other," and/or "the establishment," our common response is apathy, the mental equivalent of the instinctive physical *flight* pattern. Perhaps this explains the epidemic of psychological deafness to the **red alert** sirens blaring throughout the world. **A modicum of self-endorsement skills, the seven *mind freeing, life changing, world saving* word switches, and other strens are sufficient to free our thinking from domination by our animal brain.** Common sense can replace those perspectives of our early programmers that

[49] I personally believe that our most popular religions are dominated by advocates of those qualities that promote our humanity and peace. Religious leaders are among our most important force to bring about the better future we seek. Once aroused from passivity, they offer the best hope to reform those radical fundamentalists that would bring harm to every "other."

[50] "There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so."-William Shakespeare

focus on differences instead of similarities, and advocate domination by harmful aggression rather than cooperation and collaboration for mutual gain.

Nature has provided us with its newest model brain and our *nurturers* have empowered us with sophisticated language. These gifts set us apart by making us godlike creators responsible for our life's experience. S*elf*-mastery frees our will to pursue wisdom and the humane qualities we seek. Power and creativity flow from knowledge. Humankind's unprecedented power and creativity is dangerous when directed by instinct and habit. *Instinct* and *tradition* have been designed to be adaptive for animals and our own prolonged period of physical and mental immaturity. Mental freedom empowers us to direct our aggressive energy for our betterment AND for our detriment, to constructive and destructive outcomes.

Knowledge shifts the control of our life's experience from our hands to our head. Inherent in power is the need to apply it wisely. A **freed will + wisdom** is our formula to choose peace, to become our own genie and make our wishes a reality. Adding wisdom to power is an active choice available to a freed will. Given a choice between favoring the development of wisdom or the creation of physical power, we can understand that thinking dominated by instinct would initially make physical might a clear priority. Though we invest in both, we have a strong bias to invest in physical weapons of destruction and defense. The power of common sense wisdom provides greater security and permanence than physical might.

I hope this brief history lesson will upgrade your thinking to recognize that we are altering the balance of nature so rapidly that we must take urgent action if we hope to survive and thrive.

Summary of Critical history dates

Eternal history: Your guess is as good as mine; difficult to even imagine
Our galaxy: 13 billion years old, one of hundreds of billions of galaxies in the universe
Our sun: One star among 200-400 billion stars in our galaxy, about 5 billion years old
Our planet: Earth is estimated to be 4.6 billion years old
Life on earth: First simple matter to reproduce = 3 ½ billion years past
History of humankind: Enlarged brain appeared about 2 million years past; modern man about 150,000 years past
Leap into civilization/personal responsibility: Creation of sophisticated language 50,000 years ago
Essential personal history: Your birth date
***Red Alert Crisis*:** NOW! - *Proliferation of weapons with ultimate destructive* power require urgent education in a new way of common sense thinking (ANWOT).

Stren #77: Reflective Thinking, Cognitive Rehearsal, and Prevention

Welcome to stren #77, which identifies the skill that frees you to become your own person. We owe our capacity for *self*-mastery to what we label "reflective thinking," When you put on make-up, shave with a razor, or trim your eyebrows, how much easier is it to have a mirror? Seeing your reflection allows you to make adjustments to get what you prefer. Reflective thinking is our mirror for *self*-mastery. It provides us self-consciousness - we are conscious of our consciousness. We think about our thinking. The complexity of the cortical area of the human brain and our use of symbols to create language empowers us to "see" our *self*, to manipulate our mind's activity and direct its course to serve what we choose instead of what nature and our nurturers urge.

Reflective thinking is our source of mental freedom! Just as our kidneys and liver have evolved to their present level of specialized function, the newest portion of our brain provides us reflective thinking. I call this brain segment our "freedom organ." It enables us to join *nature* and *nurture* in determining our destiny. As we physically mature and our nurturers teach us language and the use of symbols, we become a junior partner to *fate* and *circumstance*. The *newer way of thinking* (ANWOT) is the means by which we may gradually become senior partner, "Chairman of the Board," and "C.E.O." **Nature's gift, your "freedom cortex," and your nurturer's gift, language, and their alliance provide *reflective thinking*.** Such enlightenment will surely arouse your passion to attain mental freedom. Enthusiasm is the most important ingredient to our source of energy to succeed in becoming master of your *self*.

Reflective thinking provides us the ability to add prevention to learning by trial-and-error and role modeling. This important mental skill is called "cognitive rehearsal" or "no-trial learning. We use our imagination to create multiple alternative pathways and follow them to their logical conclusion before putting them into action. Freedom is the ability to do this. The poor judgment we exercise in our mental rehearsal enables us to learn before taking physical action that is irreversible. The prewired pathways that have become ineffective or dangerous can be redirected to new action pathways that result in our desired outcome. *Reflective thinking* provides the out-of-the-box originality we create using today's knowledge to solve current problems.

Until we develop the marvelous gifts, our freedom organ from nature, and language from our nurturers, our thinking remains a faithful servant to instinct and habit. For the nine months of our gestation period, we are clearly controlled by forces totally unrelated to our intention. Fate and our genes are "boss." At birth, when we are helpless and immature, our nurturers stamp their will on our destiny. Circumstance, also beyond our control, adds its mark to what we inherit through fate. Thinking begins early, but it's crucial to recognize that our will is servant to our masters, *nature* and *nurture,* for many years. Sources outside our choosing establish our initial behaviors – allegiances to a tribe, flag, and belief system. With luck, and the gifts of *nature* and *nurture*, we are encouraged to seek mental freedom, to become what we choose to become. But more commonly, the "establishment" directs us to blindly accept what it has determined is "good" and "right." Originality that is not in compliance with what our

nurturers prescribe is often labeled “rebellion.” It is likely to be ignored, or criticized and punished. *Fate* and *circumstance*, like all masters, resist releasing their slaves. If you are unfortunate enough to have an overly controlling slave master, *self*-mastery, i.e. mental freedom, is yet available, but at a greater investment of your will power. Even if *fate* and *circumstance* are unkind, you have the resources to attain mental freedom, as so many others have demonstrated!

I believe that when a sufficient number of our population free their will to discover the universal rules of cause-and-effect, we will unite our global community with the *common sense* values of cooperation and collaboration for mutual benefit. Let’s become our own genie and fulfill our wishes for a joyous, meaningful experience in a peaceful world. What better gift can we offer to those we love!

Stren #78: Our Second Signaling System, a New Word-switch

Today's stren, #78, introduces a new word-switch, *second signaling system*. *Word-switches* are our means to selectively replace the *trigger words* hardwired by instinct and tradition with newer action pathways we ourselves design to assume control of our will power. The knowledge turned on by this word-switch inspires us to become our own person and assume responsibility to wisely direct its power; failure to understand the power of our second signaling system will lead to our self-extinction.

For every physical action, a physical signal is the final common pathway to trigger the action. All life is sustained by physical cues that trigger a specific action. This process is labeled "our primary signaling system." Humankind is distinguished from other life on earth by the degree to which our intelligent cerebral cortex creates mental energy by assigning meaning to symbols. Our use of symbols to influence our primary physical signaling system is called our *second signaling system*.

For example, a specific word may release chemicals and activate our nervous system. The symbol of a cross, crescent, six pointed star, or swastika may release considerable energy depending on the specific meaning previously assigned to that symbol. One individual finds a cemetery a quiet setting to enjoy a picnic; while another panics at the thought of walking through it, fearing ungodly spirits that might dwell there. No species creates and uses symbols to initiate action the way we do. We continue to expand this second signaling system from the limited number of symbols initiated by our ancestors.

The final common pathway leading to a physical response consists of a measureable physical event such as a chemical or electrical change. However the symbols we energize by the meanings we assign to them are capable of triggering the chemical or electrical final pathway. Since ideas are not physical, we label them "mental" or "spiritual." Scientists usually prefer the term "mental power" whereas faith-based individuals may label this energy "spiritual power." The label "will power" brings a similar image of non-physical energy.

Our cerebral cortex is the source of our exceptional ability to assign meaning to symbols and make them capable of releasing sufficient energy to trigger physical action. The more knowledge we acquire of the universal rules of cause-and-effect, the greater our mental strength to exercise will power. Humankind has increasingly become the dominant rulers and creators on earth because of our second signaling system.

We each start life as a servant to *instinct* and thereafter the traditions of our *nurturers* and the demands of *human dictators*. We remain obedient to these early masters unless and until we free our will power to assume personal responsibility for our life's experience. We create symbols consisting primarily of language and we assign meaning to the symbols we create. Our symbols serve as signals to turn on imagination, concepts, and alternative action pathways of our own original design. Through our power of interpretation, we transform the commonly shared physical reality

into personal mental images. The specialized ability of our cerebral cortex to manipulate images enables us to discover knowledge of the universal rules of cause-and-effect. New symbols, energized with meaning, are passed forward, allowing successive generations to grow their self-mastery and power to influence what is about them. Mental freedom to pursue "good" in our own way is among our most prized goals. We are powerful creators because our second signaling system manipulates images in logical sequences to form ideas.

Imagination is much more important than knowledge. ... Einstein

We store knowledge like a library stores data, and we pull out what serves our need by the use of a linked symbol. Make the new word-switch, "*second signaling system*," the word-handle to grasp your power of imagination, bring it to conscious awareness, and serve as an accelerant to the process of mentally freeing your will from domination by *instinct* and *tradition* to become master of your own life's experience.

Knowledge of the universal rules of cause-and-effect is power. The more knowledge we acquire, the more we make ourselves powerful creators. We not only increase our power; we continue to dramatically accelerate the speed at which we increase our power. With more scientists alive today using increasingly powerful technology, we now grow knowledge (and power) at an explosive rate. We envision becoming the civilized humane species we create in our imagination, while we simultaneously direct our unprecedented power towards becoming the first species to annihilate itself. Knowledge is power that is suited to both constructive and destructive ends.

The payoff of this stren begins when we realize that the first part of our life experience is not in our control; we have become what fate and circumstance have made of us. But wow!!! We make a fantastic discovery: We don't have to remain a mental servant to other masters. Our freedom organ, matured, is ready to develop. Once we understand that symbols with their assigned meanings influence action, we can ask what is needed to get at the controls. The secret of making ourselves wise creators of the joyous life experience we seek is adding word-switches to our second signaling system that accurately reflect the common sense order of cause-and-effect.

Knowledge is raw power. Wisdom is the means by which we selectively replace the superstitions and faulty assumptions of our animal brain (*instinct*) and the hardwired *traditions* of our nurturers with common sense. The source of common sense is our intelligent freedom organ. Mental strength is accomplished by creating symbols and assigning them meanings that generate energy. Our collection of symbols provides us the power of interpretation that elevates us above other life. The word-switch "second signaling system" serves to turn on our conscious awareness of the source of our special power. Once we recognize the secret of our mental strength, we position our intelligent freedom organ to add wisdom to power.

We increase our power of knowledge as we discover the universal rules of the creative force that governs all life. The more knowledge we discover, the greater our raw power to act both stupidity and wisely. Our ancestors were intelligent but they had limited knowledge. Their power of interpretation was understandably misdirected by superstition, false assumptions, and rituals we now consider bizarre. By equipping our animal brain with an intelligent cerebral cortex to do its bidding, we have made ourselves the most powerful life on earth, so powerful that we are close to creating our own annihilation.

A simple explanation for the current crisis that threatens our survival. Our second signaling system is dominated by trigger words that turn on old solutions based on primitive knowledge. Individually, collectively, and historically, the influence of our animal brain precedes the maturity of our freedom organ to think using common sense wisdom; our intelligent but immature cortex is servant to our animal brain for many years. Our ancestors have slowly equipped our second signaling system to repeat the life cycle at all costs. Overloaded with trigger words biased to serve our animal brain, we preserve our local family without considering the harm to those we perceive as *not our family*. As we acquire more knowledge and increasingly harness nature's power, we become more dangerous.

With physical and mental maturation of our freedom organ, our second signaling system may use common sense to add wisdom to power. Each word-switch we add to our glossary of symbols replaces ignorance with common sense and shifts the balance from "my way the only way" confrontations to problem-solving collaboration for mutual benefit – "what is best for all parties, for now and the future?"

The power of our second signaling system will continue to be the greatest threat to our survival unless and until we teach ourselves Einstein's solution – "a new type of thinking is essential if mankind is to survive and move toward higher levels."[51] We do so by creating newer word-switches that turn on universal common sense and selectively replace those trigger words of our ancestors that perpetuate the action pathways established by instinct and tradition that have become maladaptive.

We have enough intelligence, knowledge, and technology to rapidly popularize ANWOT. Indeed, we perpetually create newer symbols that add civility and the humane qualities that elevate us above animals. What we must realize is that we can no longer tolerate the slow growth of common sense thinking. Urgent action is required now if we are to survive and thrive as most tribes acquire weapons with ultimate destructive power.

The trigger words created by our animal brain and the traditions of our nurturers express the adaptive action pathways proven by trial-and-error learning to work for yesterday's challenges. New technology creates newer problems that render these older hardwired solutions dangerous. We must rapidly upgrade our thinking. We must add wisdom to the power of our second signaling system. Wisdom is attained by the

[51]The New York Times; May 25, 1946.

process of selectively replacing the hardwired trigger words that mindlessly advocate obedience to the commands of *instinct* and *tradition* with newer word-switches offering out-of-the-box common sense solutions, that accurately reflect our current knowledge of the universal rules of cause-and-effect.

Our future or its lack now requires urgent action. We must assume personal responsibility to popularize ANWOT. This stren will be productive if sufficient individuals are inspired to apply the word-switch “second signaling system” and take action to popularize *a newer way of thinking* and become an *each one, teach many* leader of world peace.

Stren #79: The Use and Abuse of Fantasy

Welcome to stren #79, *The Use and Abuse of Fantasy*. The wisdom offered in this stren is that **fantasy can serve as either a substitute for action or a preparation for action.** A lack of understanding of this distinction is the reason we create most of our problems.

Through ***the power of interpretation***, we make ourselves godlike creators who increasingly influence our destiny and everything about us. We assign meaning to symbols that become signals to turn on action. Our symbols create a second *mental* signaling system that empowers us to activate our *physical* first signaling system. Imagination is the means by which we create ideas and phenomena not present in nature. We then transform our private mental creations into the physical reality we share in common. The mental freedom to create alternatives and choose the course of action that determines our destiny is among our highest values. The management of our exclusive second signaling system to interpret consciousness is critical to elevate us to humane species to which we aspire.

Fantasy and imagination, like all powerful tools, need to be understood and wisely directed. Fantasy is mental action that is a component of our personal, private, conscious world; it co-exists with the physical world shared in common with other life forms. Fantasy is a synonym for imagination; they are often used interchangeably as I will do here. I offer the slight distinction that fantasy has a greater automatic or involuntary driving force whose energy source is the animal portion of our human brain, whereas imagination has a larger component of intention energy initiated by the portion of our brain that distinguishes us as human, our matured cerebral cortex.

Definitions:
Fantasy and imagination refer to the power of the mind to form images of things not present to the senses or within the actual experience of the person involved.[52]

Fantasy - an imagined event or condition fulfilling a wish; vivid imagination; the natural conjuring of mental invention and association.

Imagination - forming a mental image or concept of that which is not real or present; the ability or tendency to form a mental image or idea; the ability to deal creatively with reality.
"Fantasy is applied principally to the product of imagination given free rein, especially to elaborate mental representation having little similarity to the real world."

1. **Fantasy as preparation for action**: Most people already understand and accept that conscious manipulation of symbols is our most important source of creativity. We discover universal wisdom and knowledge of cause-and-effect through the *common sense* use of fantasy. Einstein said "The gift of fantasy has meant more to me than my

[52]*The American Heritage Dictionary*, New College Edition, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1979

talent for absorbing positive knowledge," and concluded, "Imagination is more important than knowledge."

2. **Fantasy as a substitute for action**: Most people do not realize that fantasy, properly directed, is also our most effective means to control the prewired instinctive demands of our animal brain and the traditions inscribed by our nurturers that are no longer effective or have become dangerous. When we learn to apply common sense to imagination to mentally project the likely outcome of our physical action, we can wisely choose to "switch" to an alternative action. This powerful use of fantasy to prevent what we don't want is called "cognitive rehearsal" or "no-trial learning." The logical action pathways we rehearse in our private consciousness envision the outcome of multiple alternatives, thus allowing us to create and select the action most likely to succeed.

   Here is the fun part. The mental action we take in our fantasy can provide us a source of amusement and pleasure, and it hurts no one. We are free to do the most outrageous things in our fantasy without paying for our primitive or harmful imaginings. This is why humor and laughter help us deal with the most difficult life situations. Fantasy has the power to relieve our tensions so that we can substitute the intelligent response for established action pathways that are no longer in our best interest.

   When fantasy is directed by our animal brain, the portion of our brain that is prewired to sustain the life cycle, we can expect a bias towards *fight or flight*, survival for our self and our "family,' and shortsighted goals that satisfy the desire for immediate relief from frustration. For example: "Road rage" and other expressions of rage are quite common. While I'm driving, someone cuts me off. My first fantasy is that my car turns into a tank and I roll over the *>%;! and flatten him to the road to teach him a lesson. A second, more civilized possibility is to say a few nasty words or "give him the finger." In my fantasy, both provide short term satisfaction. After enjoying the moments of fantasy that also dissipate my frustration, common sense and civility lead me to conclude I am not the highway police. My goal is to get to my destination and not respond in a way that is likely to delay me and start a process of escalation that would result in mutual harm. Fantasy is a marvelous substitute for physical action that provides *short-term gain* at the cost of far greater *long-term pain*. It allows us to neutralize the destructive aggression demanded by our animal brain and unleash it only when wise mental rehearsal confirms its necessity.

   Misunderstanding or misuse of fantasy is a common source of trouble. During my professional career, a colleague remarked how he liked meditation because it provided him a number of patients. He was referring to the small number of individuals who develop a psychotic or panic reaction as they suddenly cleared their mind of external stimulation to be confronted with the destructive fantasies uncaged from their deeper mental recesses. (Of course this is not to dismiss the great value meditation can provide in most cases.) Another example of the misunderstood fantasies that invade our consciousness is a young woman who, with the encouragement of her fundamentalist minister and family, was convinced she was possessed by the devil and

could only find a solution in suicide. Mislabeling the "inner voice" as magical or supernatural is a common source of harmful behavior.

Common sense thinking (ANWOT) + imagination lead to the "magical" problem-solving sentence that empowers us to reach our highest level of function: "***What is most likely to make things better for me and you (us and them), for now and the future?***" Wise people substitute this universal problem-solving sentence for the self-serving sentence prescribed by instinct and, nearly as often, by tradition, "*My way, the only way*."

Stren #80-A: Understanding Sexual Pleasure[53] and its Link to World Peace

Welcome to stren #80. Today's wisdom may surprise you when you learn how sexual pleasure is linked to the creation of world peace.

Sexual gratification is the third most powerful physical pleasure higher species can experience. Why number three? Number one is direct electrical stimulation of the brain's pleasure centers – studies have shown that monkeys will repeatedly push a lever to the point of complete exhaustion to sustain the buzz. Based on my professional experience with drug addicts, I rank the feelings produced by certain chemicals second because narcotic users consistently choose the ecstasy of "a good high" over orgasm. Nevertheless, sexual pleasure is nature's number one gift of physical satisfaction in that it requires no unusual intervention on our part to experience gratification. Indeed, we require extraordinary indoctrination by our nurturers to reduce the pleasure by admonitions that create guilt and inhibitions in our early stages of development. Traditionally we are taught that sex must be avoided until we satisfy certain criteria, such as commitment or marriage.

Our mores have dramatically changed in recent years, especially with respect to women. Fainting and psychologically induced paralysis were commonly described by Freud and others, a result of the Victorian values dominant in his time. I am old enough to remember when the use of the word "virgin" in a motion picture was sufficient to restrict its distribution, and I recall that it was common to see sex-related hysterical convulsions in my earlier years of psychiatric practice. The idea that a woman's role sexually "is to please her mate and bear children" was also common. The number of women never experiencing orgasm has diminished, and the availability of explicit and accurate sexual education has immensely improved (in most areas of the world). The restrictions and punishments for "sexual misconduct" remain more severe for women than men. Two of King Henry the VIII's wives were "legally" beheaded for alleged unfaithfulness, and stoning or beheading is still an approved punishment for substantial members of our world population. I believe this lack of equality can be attributed to nature's early bias to provide males with physical strength. The growing equality is related to the increasing prominence of our cerebral cortex, which emphasizes wisdom, otherwise called "common sense."

Sexual experience must be our number one natural pleasure because, foremost, the survival of any species requires reproduction of the life cycle – procreate, nurture young to sexual maturity, and then die. Consider the extreme program nature assigns to salmon: they must swim upstream to lay their eggs and, exhausted, die so their carcasses can provide nourishment for their offspring. Parents in all species make extreme sacrifices, often unacknowledged or unappreciated, for their children – although nature is kinder to us than the salmon.

[53]I acknowledge Allen Barnes, M.D., professor of obstetrics/gynecology at Johns Hopkins for his lectures on sexuality among other teachers during my professional training.

Psychologists offer the universal observation that “behavior that is rewarded is repeated.” This explains why sex is a prominent command of the animal portion of our brain, and orgasm, once experienced, becomes a highly prized delicacy. Consider how different our behavior would be if babies were born immediately and orgasm occurred nine months later. I found it especially enlightening to learn that the pleasure centers in our brain overlap with the centers for aggression. This makes sense. If a species were motivated towards sexual experience but lacked the aggressive energy to pursue a mate, that species would soon become extinct. Indeed, males displaying aggressive “manliness” are observed to attract more women and be most sexually active.

We are provided with chemicals, primarily hormones, which influence our behavior. Androgens, so-called “male” hormones, promote behavior to compete and dominate for the right of mating choice. In many species, males fight for “harem rights.” Estrogens, so-called “female” hormones, favor aggressive energy to make oneself attractive to a mate and thereafter protect progeny to maturity, often at the peril of one’s own life. As it is expressed in the lyrics to the show, *The King and I*, "The bee goes from flower to flower to flower . . . the flower does not go from bee to bee to bee." Males are more easily aroused by sight and smell to aggressively seek immediate short term satisfaction, while females tend to be slower to sexual arousal, more responsive to touch and persuasion, and preoccupied with the awareness that they bear the longer term consequences of sexual engagement. Men innately think about sex more often than women and fantasize orgasm anytime with anyone; romance and parenting is more a women’s preoccupation. One man for one woman is one way but simple observation persuades it is not nature’s way. Males are instinctively drawn to play with a gun or war toy, rather than cuddle a baby doll. It’s important to note that we each possess both androgens and estrogens, so these distinctions are not absolute. However, our nurture tends to emphasize the differences.

Behaviors can be predictably turned on or turned off by the regulation of hormones and other biological substances. Sexual behavior remains dormant for many years until a burst of chemical changes are unleashed when we reach puberty. It is quite apparent that we, like all higher life, are powerfully subject to two masters we label by such names as *fate* and *circumstance*, *nature* and *nurture*, and *instinct* and *habit* (“tradition” is habit passed forward from generation to generation).

All species exert extraordinary energy and take life-endangering risks for the short-term act of copulation. Our emotions often successfully trump our intellect even when we know the short term gain is likely to create longer term pain and the brief immediate physical satisfaction is not in our best interests. It has been said that the male brain is prewired to dissolve in his penis upon slight provocation. How better to explain the regular news stories of famous dignitaries whose careers are tainted by a salacious sexual episode? I recall during my training in psychiatry, after Professor Allen Barnes lectured on the topic of sexual pleasure, he concluded by advising we not jeopardize our careers for a few minutes of sexual pleasure. A fellow resident asked the first question: “How do you make it last a few minutes?”

Having established that procreation is our most powerful source of energy, let's now go to "Part B" of this stren to consider the link between sex driven aggression and world peace.

Stren #80-B: Understanding Sexual Pleasure and its Link to World Peace

In Part A of this stren, we learned that our pleasure and aggression centers are narrowly focused on directing energy to sustain the life cycle at any cost. We differ from other life on earth by our ability to create symbols, assign them meaning, and experience an elaborate private consciousness. As interpretive creatures, we add non-physical, i.e. "mental" or "spiritual" power to physical power. Our cerebral cortex, physically mature and equipped with symbols, uses fantasy and imagination to interpret the data our senses provide. Assumptions and ideologies create a value system. Our ideas, energized by the values we ascribe to them, have the power to supersede the demands of our biology. The personal mental world may become more influential than the physical reality we all share.

Fantasy and imagination provide a unique *mental-spiritual* second signaling system that empowers us to influence our primary signaling system. Freedom, patriotism, religion, and greed are examples of the endless values we may adopt to change ourselves and the world. "Common sense" puzzle solving ability allows us to discover and grow knowledge of nature's universal laws of cause-and-effect. Symbols add the common sense problem-solving that recognizes collaboration for mutual gain is preferred to win/lose or lose/lose confrontation. Our ideas introduce new phenomena not provided by the creative forces of nature. A step above consciousness, self-consciousness empowers us to attain self-mastery and act independent of the demands of fate and circumstance.

As we increase knowledge we become more powerful creators! Our mental-spiritual *self* is sufficiently powerful to selectively override or modify the pre-wired action patterns of instinct and tradition. In addition to the trial-and-error adaptive behaviors nature inscribes in all life, only humankind possesses a sophisticated cerebral cortex capable of freeing us from *fate* and *circumstance*.

Through the power of interpretation, we transform ourselves from servants of *fate* and *circumstance* into their partners in determining our destiny and that of all about us. We are no longer an amoral species limited by powers beyond our control. We make assumptions that explain the world, and then we may choose to act on the assumptions or beliefs we value instead of the predetermined action pathways prescribed by instinct and our nurturers. We introduce free will and morality by assigning values to our actions. Freedom is the ability to create alternatives and choose from among them. Mental freedom offers the choice to accept what our creative forces have made of us or to selectively modify *what is* to bring about *what we create*.

Power entails danger as well as opportunity. Power may be directed wisely and stupidly – to constructive and destructive outcomes. "Stupidity" is mindlessly trying to solve new problems using the prewired pathways that were effective for yesterday's issues. "Wisdom" is applying *common sense* to today's knowledge to create "out of the box" solutions that replace established actions that have become dangerous.

Prevention replaces trial-and-error learning. Trial-and-error is no longer adaptive given our new weapons of ultimate destruction that provide no second chance.

One of the ethical concerns of contemporary science is that a small number of dictators will use our new technology of mind control to make most of our populace mental slaves. Most people don't realize the extent to which we are already preprogrammed by our genes and culture. Historically, dictators attain power through mind control by the instructions given to us during our prolonged immaturity when we lack the ability to resist. For example, we are biased to identify with a flag, a country, and worldview; and every national anthem emphasizes the successful defiance of its enemies. The possibilities using today's knowledge of genetic manipulation and brainwashing are hardly imaginable.

We are genetically preprogrammed to identify with "our kind," a circumscribed family with whom we resonate and respect. Simultaneously we alienate ourselves from non-family who we disrespect, view as competitors, and are disposed to fear as enemies deserving harmful aggression. Newborns bond to the source of security that protects them. It doesn't matter if the nurturers are well-meaning or tyrants; the newborn will cling to the perceived source of life-saving and life-granting protection. Perhaps this explains why some women will sustain repeated mistreatment and yet remain loyal to an abusive partner.

What force shall direct our power? The prime candidates are the instinctive demands of the animal portion of our brain, the prescriptions of our nurturers, and the *common sense* solutions we ourselves create applying the collected wisdoms of our intelligent cerebral cortex. The distinction is critical because power directed by our instinct for procreation is likely to lead to human catastrophe, whereas power directed by our intellect is our means to avoid self-annihilation and promote peace. The enlightenment into the nature of our instinctive energy for procreation in Part A prepares us to choose wisely. The way to proceed is the subject of ANWOT and described throughout these strens. Here is essence of what we must understand:

Visualize our two ways of thinking: (1) the preprogrammed action pathways of *instinct* and *tradition*, advocating what has been determined by *fate* and *circumstance*, and (2) the *common sense* conclusions derived from current knowledge to provide original solutions to the problems we create by our new technology. Our animal brain is driven by emotion while the cerebral cortex portion of our brain is dominated by logic, by common sense. We can predict which behaviors will be favored when our growing mental power is directed by the instinct to procreate at all costs, and compare them to the actions favored when applying *common sense* to knowledge of cause-and-effect.

The power of interpretation directed by our animal brain (instinct): procreate and sustain the life cycle at any cost; behavior is prescribed and amoral, lacking judgment of right or wrong; priorities are local – self, family, tribe, country, flag, political and religious ideology, sports teams, war heroes, etc.; power, winning by domination; *greed and speed*, immediate gratification, survival of like kind, emphasis on short term outcomes;

win/lose or lose/lose confrontation to benefit our side; ***either/or*** thinking - "***My way, the only way***", WAR.

For the early part of our life's experience, our creative power is predominantly controlled by our animal brain. The narrow goal of procreating and raising progeny to reproductive maturity can be expanded to include the symbolic equivalents of satisfaction. For example, money, fame, and the promise of a rewarded afterlife may be among the values described above.

The power of interpretation directed by our human brain (intellect): assumptive worldview and beliefs to explain the world determined by *common sense* applied to current knowledge; choice making establishes a value system – morality and immorality are added to amoral behavior; universal values such as "Love your neighbor as yourself," "Treat others as you would be treated"; love, forgiveness, cooperation, *wise creeds and good deeds*; emphasis on short and long term outcomes, win/win collaboration for mutual benefit; global priorities are added to local priorities; ***both...and*** thinking – "***What is best for us and them, for now and the future?***", PEACE.

Instinct provides that all life identifies with the source of its early survival, its local family, its "own kind." Our senses provide information on the superficial characteristics that provide instant recognition of friend and foe, safe and dangerous. Our intelligent cerebral cortex enables us to "see" beyond the superficial. We have discovered we are part of a greater family – those who also possess a sophisticated cerebral cortex. *Common sense* is our means to recognize that as we become more powerful creators, we advance civilization and insure our survival by uniting our collective intelligence for mutual gain. Attempting to dominate by physical might is no longer adaptive when competing warriors all have weapons with ultimate destructive power.

Instinct and intellect are commonly at war with one another. Instinct, being hardwired, is incapable of negotiating peace, whereas intelligence is designed to do so. Instinct consists of the solutions that worked for yesterday's problems and that have survived over millions of years of trial-and-error learning. Though tried and proven to be effective for most current issues, hardwired action patterns are not adaptive to dangers we have never experienced. The problems that we create with our explosion of knowledge requires *a newer way thinking* (**ANWOT**) that favors applying *common sense* to current knowledge of cause-and-effect. Our human brain has not only enabled us to create new action pathways and choose from among them; we can choose to add common sense wisdom to the freedom to choose. We may also make the unwise choice of not choosing, and continue to blindly obey the commands of *instinct* and *tradition*.

Fantasy and imagination initially serve us as a *preparation* for action that is more effective than those hardwired for automatic response. We now recognize the value of imagination as a *substitute* for harmful physical actions that have become dangerous. We may create emotional consequences by the mere act of thought control. Our socially prohibited instincts can often be satisfied in fantasy, allowing us to deal with

reality using common sense. The newer use of imagination as a substitute for actions that are no longer adaptive is a learned skill we make available to ourselves through appropriate education of our intelligent human brain. Review stren #79, "The Use and Abuse of Fantasy."

Our journey in history began with the energy to procreate. We have come a long way and progressed to a critical border crossing. The gift to those we love of continued survival and a better life is ours to offer if we unite our collective intelligence. We have adequate teachers of physical science who have pushed far ahead in creating extraordinary means of constructive and destructive action; what we require are teachers of common sense, what is called "mental" or "spiritual" science. Until we teach our population to emphasize *common sense thinking* (Einstein's solution to destructive aggression), we will continue to mislead ourselves by focusing on the petty differences we create by our political and religious ideologies, as well as ethnic, racial, and gender differences, while we overlook the far greater similarities that identify us as one family.

I have been rebuffed by friends who insist that confrontation and war is our nature and we can't change it. Common sense, what we call science, teaches us that the ability and the responsibility to change <u>are</u> part of our nature! We are not static human "beings"; nature has made us human "becomings." Through the gift of our intelligent human brain we are challenged to become the civilized species we now can foresee. Nature is pushing us out of the nest. Humankind has been given the opportunity to fly on our own power. We have been offered nature's greatest treasure – the mental freedom to choose. The work we require to apply our freedom wisely, to "fly" on our own power, confronts us with our greatest danger. We must graduate from trial-and-error learning to add wisdom to knowledge. We require prevention. Our weapon for mass construction (**WMC**) is educating ourselves to emphasize what is called *cognitive rehearsal* or "*no-trial learning*." The errors we make in our imagination cause no harm. They allow us to get it right the first time when we physically act – as we now must.

This stren recognizes that sexual aggression is the fountain of our energy. Making peace with our nature rather than vilifying it has great value. Let's apply *common sense* knowledge to direct our raw energy to the constructive pathways that make our world safe and more wonderful.

Stren # 81: The Serenity Stren

Welcome to stren # 81, a powerful wisdom worthy of a place among those most productive universal wisdoms that are supported by common sense judgment, such as:

1. *Love yourself so you have an abundance to love your neighbor*.
2. *Treat others as I want to be treated.*

This *serenity stren* is a modified version of the *serenity prayer*:

I will acquire the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change;
courage to change the things I can;
and the wisdom to know the difference.

The philosopher W.W. Bartley expresses a similar sentiment:

For every ailment under the sun
There is a remedy, or there is none;
If there be one, try to find it;
If there be none, never mind it.[54]

The **Serenity Prayer** is the common name for an originally untitled prayer that theologian Reinhold Niebuhr wrote for use in a sermon, perhaps as early as 1934. Niebuhr himself was quoted in the January, 1950 Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) newsletter, *Grapevine,* as saying the prayer "may have been spooking around for years, even centuries, but I don't think so. I honestly do believe that I wrote it myself." The serenity prayer was noticed in 1941 by an early member, and adopted as integral to the teaching of AA and other programs offering comradeship and group support.[55] Twelve step self-help programs such as AA are among the most effective recovery programs for many individuals.

Only the first line of the traditional prayer is modified from the original:

God grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change;
courage to change the things I can;
and wisdom to know the difference.

The original prayer asks God to give us serenity, acceptance, courage, and wisdom. Prayer is a very effective means of inspiration and change for individuals who believe in a supreme being who personally intervenes in the lives of those who ask. AA members who have difficulty accepting the concept of a supreme being who actively intervenes in our life are often advised to interpret "God" to mean a *higher power,* such

54 References may be found in Wikipedia, the free Internet encyclopedia; see "Serenity Prayer."
55 Ibid.

as nature's gift to us of an intelligent brain. The modification emphasizes the benefits of assuming personal responsibility for the change we want to create.

It is our nature to be dependent on others during our long immaturity, and appropriately so. We learn to expect the world will take care of us because we would not survive without such nurturance. Too often, this habit, once established, interferes with our mission to assume personal responsibility for our well-being. We cry "foul" and blame the presumed source who fails to meet our unrealistic expectations. All help boils down to self-help, best accomplished with and through other people. We create the first spark by substituting *will power* for *won't power*. *The Little Engine That Could* story shows us how: "I think I can, I think I can, I think I can. I will." With maturity, we attain the freed will to direct our thinking where we choose. Creativity emerges from the focus of our thinking. It is unwise to expect that our problems will be solved for us when we don't use what is ours to solve them ourselves.

The story is told of a very religious man whose house was in a flooded area. The mayor ordered buses to evacuate the residents. The leader refused, stating his faith in God would save him. As the waters rose he climbed onto the roof where a boat came to rescue him. Refusing, he remained adamant that his faith in God would save him. As the waters continued to rise, a helicopter flew by and dropped a ladder to carry him to safety. Steadfast that God would save him, he refused to grab the ladder, and perished. When he met St. Peter at Heaven's Gate, he asked, "Why did God not save me?" St. Peter replied, "Dummy! God sent a bus, a boat, and a helicopter and you ignored all three."

The Serenity Prayer is often understood to mean that our lives are completely subject to forces over which we have no control. The modification here provided is to convey that we are not hopeless and helpless in the face of difficult situations. We have energy to pursue those challenges we can manage, and we preserve our energy by accepting that some life challenges are indeed beyond our control.

We are all born "stupid." "Stupid" means we continue to blindly obey preprogrammed behavior patterns after we are equipped to use our intelligence, when we have the ability to see. Many of the inherited behavior patterns that enabled our ancestors to adapt and survive no longer work or have become dangerous. Nevertheless, they were encoded in our genes and are passed forward from generation to generation. A second set of hardwired action pathways are those traditions inscribed in us by our *nurturers* when we were immature and incapable of taking responsibility for ourselves. The forces of *instinct* and *tradition* that determine *who and what we are* are often referred to as *fate and circumstance* or *nature and nurture*.

The behaviors demanded by *instinct* and *habit* are usually effective because many of the challenges that we face are the same as those our ancestors faced; they have been proven effective over millions, perhaps billions of years. However, the problem with hardwired automatic action responses is that they lack the *here and now* common sense wisdom to anticipate the consequence of newer challenges – especially

those that are the outcome of our growing knowledge and technology, such as weapons with ultimate destructive power, global warming, pollution, and overpopulation. This is why I urge you to add this modified version of the Serenity Prayer to your collection of wisdoms.

While we are wise to welcome help, we need to recognize that we have been given all we need to make our lives joyous and fulfilling. Although we have limited power to change others or the world, we are the sovereign rulers of our thinking. The five required ingredients are abundantly available to us: *faith in ourselves ("Yes, I think I can"), work, patience, direction, and willingness to risk giving up the dependencies and expectations that no longer work*. As we mature, our mission is to assume responsibility for our own well-being and experience the joy of contributing to the well-being of those about us.

The serenity stren compliments stren #1 and the universal common sense wisdoms discoverable by individuals of diverse cultures. Adopting and regularly practicing a few simple wisdoms will rapidly elevate your level of function:

1. Stren #1- *Direct your thinking to what you have achieved, what you have now, and what you might yet achieve.*
2. *Love yourself so that you have plenty to give to others*.
3. *Treat others as you want others to treat you*.
4. The problem-solving sentence: *What is most likely to make things better for me* and *you, for now* and *the future?*
5. The serenity stren.

Then, further empower yourself by continuing to pursue the wisdoms that make you a Mental-Spiritual Wealth millionaire. Enthusiastically collect the wisdoms that others have labored to discover by their mistakes and gladly make available to you, and use your intelligent human brain to create the newer wisdoms that will be your gift to posterity.

Stren #82: Thoughts and Thinking – Recognizing the Players

Hi. Stren #82 provides knowledge essential to develop "thought control." Equivalent terms include *mental freedom, self-mastery, becoming one's own person,* and *super-maturity*.

In a three-part stren and elsewhere, I have named the three masters that direct our life's experience:

1. Master nature: what we inherit from our genes; the wisdom of billions of years of evolution
2. Master nurture: what we are taught after birth; the prescriptions of our parents and community
3. *Self*-mastery: the control we exert over our own lives, if and to what degree we emancipate our *self* from nature and our nurturers' prescriptions

Despite our wishes, our influence over others and the way the world treats us is quite limited. Yet, we have immense say in what matters most, the quality of our own life's experience. Observation of many happy, enthusiastic persons in the face of the worst imaginable life's circumstances convinces me that we each maintain the capacity to feel good and do good. There is a way! I have learned that *self*-mastery requires distinguishing "thoughts," "thinking" and our special kind of "reflective thinking" from one another. We control our power of imagination and interpretation most effectively through accurate labeling.

When we are born, our genes have already written an elaborate script for our life's experience, with contributions from generations past we shall never know. Master nature, "speaking" through our genes, demands that we replicate the life cycle. Thus, our first directive, to guarantee the continuation of the gene pattern, is to survive long enough to reproduce.

A comparison of our level of thinking with other earthlings is very instructive. In one celled and very primitive organisms, reproduction merely requires splitting itself. Behavioral patterns such as movement towards heat and light are inherited. Birth, reproduction, and death are regulated true to nature's dictates. Little more is required for survival beyond what nature provides. Thinking and consciousness are not a consideration.

Creatures with greater complexity have specialized organs to take care of specific functions: the means to take in food, eliminate wastes, and so on. Reproduction involves more than simple division. Progressively, we see that a network of nerves and a central nervous system develops to coordinate the new functions and to better serve the needs for survival and reproduction. More complex earthlings have a mass of cells to coordinate their nerve network, the organ we call "the brain." Increasingly complex organisms are noted not only by the greater size and complexity of their brain, but also additional collections of cells with distinct functions, i.e., a "newer brain." An examination of our human brain indicates that it is not one unit but a series of

seven connected segments.[56] It is noteworthy that the seventh and latest, observed in the most complex earthlings, is growing in size and complexity more rapidly than any other specialized organ. The cortical brain contains areas for speech, control of voluntary muscle, and functions we rely on for willful action. This growing edge of the nervous system is our means to attain freedom from nature and nurture. (A Catholic priest/theologian/scientist, Tielhard De Chardin, has added a religious perspective to this observation, suggesting that evolution is moving us closer to the image of God.)

While this central nerve system is initially wired to coordinate the activities of the organism's different parts, a primitive level of mental awareness occurs at some stage of the brain's increasing complexity. We call this new function "consciousness." The ability to be conscious of our environment and to consider better ways to insure that the life cycle will be completed provides great advantages. It is difficult to identify a point in the growth in size and function of the brain at which earthlings add mental awareness. I hypothesize that the inception of conscious awareness consisted of an image being presented of something that is needed, followed by processing that results in an adaptation to the challenge presented. The image received is called a "thought," and the mental processing of the image is called "thinking." The progressive development of the cortex continues to add new sophistication to our problem-solving capabilities … the ability to manipulate conscious images and learn from mistakes. Humankind's advanced cerebral cortex has the capacity to consider its needs and resolve them. "Mistakes" can be rehearsed in the mind and corrected before action is taken. We call this process "cognitive rehearsal" or "no-trial learning."

As complexity increases, it takes longer for a creature to reproduce. Instead of being fully prepared to deal with the demands of its environment at birth, a set of directions we call "learning" is required. To accommodate this learning process, elaborate specialized organs have developed that sense what is outside of our physical self and transmit the expectations our environment and nurturers make upon us. These sense organs are wired to our consciousness; their messages are in addition to the message from within. The customary "human" skills for eating, walking, talking, sanitary habits, ***the three r's***[57], etc. are absent at birth; our nurturers considerably embellish what nature provides. From birth, we are regularly confronted with a multitude of prescriptions, "*shoulds*" from our outside world. Humans exceed all other earthlings by far in the amount of learning and nurturance required to complete the life cycle.

As you can see, thoughts originate from many sources. Your conscious awareness is made up experiences which may include pictures, symbols, ideas, and feelings such as pain, heat, and so on. The sense organs and systems of our body are continually sending requests asking for service from our central processing system. The animal brain manages most, like digestion and breathing, physically and automatically, but some are referred to conscious awareness for special attention. Our conscious mental processes make contact with our experience by "thoughts" and "thinking." Multiple thoughts and the elaboration of these thoughts, what we call

[56]One classification includes the medulla, pituitary, pons, pineal body, cerebellum, thalamus, and cerebral cortex.
[57]The three r's = reading, 'riting, 'rithmetic

"thinking," go on in our mind, often at the same time: "Bladder full, need food, too cold, want some of this, more of that, right now." "Eat your spinach." "Pee in the toilet." "Listen to your parents … because I say so." "Vote Republican!" Yes, the demands are often beyond the capability of these higher processes and so absolutely contradictory that master nature or master nurture cannot be satisfied.

The network gets quite complicated but our amazing brain is usually up to the task. The constant flow of thoughts has been called the "stream of consciousness." Sometimes it is more like an obstacle course - disjointed, bizarre, a jumbled mess of confusion. There may be multiple motion pictures displayed simultaneously on several screens. Messages need to be sorted and assigned a priority, and the orders need to be filled. These "thought"-messengers may enter consciousness from within, from our organs; and from without, through our senses. Thoughts commonly originate and can be categorized as directives from one of two sources, master nature (genes, instinct) and master nurture (our environment, habit).

Imagine watching a sports event, like football, in which the players on both teams and the referees all wore the same uniform. How difficult it would be to follow the action. Here is my definition for distinguishing "thoughts" from "thinking."

<u>Thoughts</u>: a thought is an awareness that "pops into our mind" without being invited. It is a visitor offering a message to be considered.
<u>Thinking</u>: thinking is what our mental processing does with our thoughts. When we elaborate on our thoughts, we are thinking.

In the sports analogy, "thoughts" are the visiting team; "thinking" is the home team. Thoughts arrive without effort and are involuntary. They are messengers carrying information, often requests, from master nature or master nurture. Thinking is the active mental process to elaborate on and service the message. Keep in mind that **master nature and master nurture each wire us to receive messages and process them, to engage in thoughts <u>and</u> thinking! They each "speak" in their native tongue, i.e., a characteristic language. They may use different symbols, images, vocabulary, and the like to convey their message.**

Our brain is multilingual; it not only understands but has become proficient in at least two languages. From our birth, we have learned these languages, and we have almost always faithfully, with "blind" obedience, tried to please these two masters. This can and does lead to problems, because to please one often means disobeying the other. A point I wish to convey is that the service provided by *conscious awareness*, (thoughts, thinking, and the symbols of language needed for mental processing) *initially develops to serve the demands of nature and nurture, long before the development of self-mastery*.

<u>Reflective thinking</u> is our third and newer manner of specialized thinking; it provides our identity as humankind and enables us to master ourselves. Reflective thinking is the capacity to reflect on our thoughts <u>and</u> our thinking, i.e.

to think about what is going on in our conscious mind. We are "conscious of our consciousness." This ability to think about our thinking, manipulate it, and modify it, to create new solutions and innovate novel action is due to the size and complexity of the human brain and our ability to use words and symbols. This manner of thinking excels in "abstract" reasoning; abstract means "separate." Originating from our highest mental function, rational thinking is insulated from the passion of our nature and nurturers. When I refer to *self* and the power we have for *self*-mastery, this is the portion of our conscious mental activity that is active. It is our capacity for reflective thinking that enlarges our personal identity, and offers us the opportunity to challenge the demands of our nature and nurture and set our own course. While other earthlings may have some degree of reflective thinking, they lack the opportunity for *self*-mastery because they also lack our capacity to use symbols, language, abstract thinking, speech, writing, and other tools available to humankind.

Reflective thinking, and our opportunity for *self*-mastery, requires many years to become fully developed. Studies on adult development suggest that it is difficult to become our own person before our late twenties. Many require longer. Some people's mental activity and thinking are dictated predominately by their nature and nurturers throughout their entire life. Unlike sexual maturation, which usually begins with the **automatic** release of hormones at puberty, **the maturation of our *self* is a voluntary, active, and willful process. *Self*-mastery is never absolute. The degree and quality of our *self*-management skills increases as we acquire wisdom and strens and develop *a newer way of thinking* (wow, a third language!).**

I hope this stren will impress on you that years of repetition, "speaking," and thinking in the languages of our early masters, *nature* and *nurture*, creates a habitual pattern of thinking that is difficult to change. We substantially increase the development of *a newer way of thinking*, of becoming our own person, and freeing our *self* from the control of our early masters, when we have a conscious understanding of the process of maturation, what is required, and how we can contribute. [See also the description of reflective-thinking in stren #83, *Know Your Self*.]

Labeling the source of a thought as "nature," "nurture," or "*self*" does not provide an automatic value judgment. Frequently the urgings of our nature and nurture are in our best interests. Confirmed by our appraisal, we are wise to support and carry them out. However, we best do so using mature rational decision-making rather than acting with blind obedience. Nature and nurture are commonly at odds with one another, and their demands may no longer be applicable for our stage of life. Reasoned common sense decision-making regarding eating habits, how to dress, and sexual attitudes is usually preferable to maintaining the *good/bad*, *right/wrong* thinking commonly acquired from our early authorities. We are usually better served by judgments that involve some moderation and cooperation than by competition. In addition, the *self* of our reflective thinking will often be creative and may improve the means to obtain the ends sought by our early masters. We may also choose to plot a course for our *self* totally unknown to our nature or nurturers. Thus, skill in accurately connecting our thoughts and thinking to their appropriate master will be a valuable aid in

sorting out, refining, and wisely acting on the many demands constantly before us. "Is this thinking carried on in the service of nature's wants, nurture's wants, or what *I* want?" "Who's the boss?" "Who's in the driver's seat now?"

When thoughts pop into our mind, they don't announce themselves as "master nature, your genes speaking," or "master nurture, orders from your environment speaking." They enter simply as generic "thoughts." They often have more "local" identities, for example nature's callings: stomach…"feed me"; bladder..."full, got to pee"; penis…"do something about my hard"; warrior…"he cut me off, kill the bastard" (the *fight/flight* instinct); impatience…"I want it now!"; or nurture's calling: someone resembling one's parents…"eat all your vegetables"; role models…"it doesn't matter how you play the game as long as you win"; religious leaders…"Love thy neighbor"; critical events, such as a parent's divorce/death…"you are the cause"; sometimes characters such as an angel, the devil, the voice of conscience…"no hanky panky!"; …and so on. I have heard many names people have given to the messengers and voices that appear in their consciousness; nature and nurture are infrequently named, even though they are the "parents" of most thoughts and thinking.

Several examples of "thoughts" and "thinking" as they might appear in mental processing are provided. Which originate from your genes? From your nurturers? From your *self*? Can you identify the source of the players in your own mental motion picture?

Example 1 Activating event: Your bladder is full
Thought: Signal goes off - a feeling of fullness, bladder full. "Need to pee."
Thinking: "Must go to the bathroom."
Reflective thinking (**RT**): "I'll wait until I get to the restaurant."

Example 2 You haven't eaten in four hours:
Thought: "I need food; I want a fudge sundae."
Thinking: "Sure would enjoy a sundae but I should be eating carrots."
RT: "I'll treat myself now and lighten up on my dinner."

Example 3 The alarm goes off or someone calls out to you:
Thought: "Wake up."
Thinking: "How much time do I have? Maybe I could get another ten minutes."
RT: "I'd be wise to get up now!"

Example 4 Sometimes there isn't a clear activating event; an "internal clock" goes off.
Thought: "Golly, I forgot to pick up bread and milk."
Thinking: "I must stop and get it or I'm in trouble."
RT: "I won't bother, everyone will enjoy eating out."

Example 5 You become aware your skin has a pimple (or wrinkles):
Thought: "Uggh!"
Thinking: "Oh my God, I've got to get rid of it right away."

Thinking: “Did I do something I shouldn’t have done to deserve that?”
RT: “Not too pretty. How do I best handle this?”

Example 6 Driving
Thought: “This thing will easily do 100.”
Thinking: “Sure would be a gas. Hit the pedal!”
RT: “What if I get caught? That doesn’t fit into my plans.”

Example 7 Dinner has been served.
Thought: “You must eat your vegetables before you can have dessert!”
Thinking: “Maybe you could make me before, but I’m not a kid anymore.”
RT: “What is a good, healthy diet?”

It is common for multiple thoughts to pop into your mind.
Example 8 Your examiner informs you that you failed your driving test.
Thought 1: “Oh, shit!”
Thought 2: “The asshole (examiner) made a mistake.”
Thought 3: “As always, I’m a failure.”
Some possible elaborations:
1. “Let me figure out how to get even.”
2. “How am I going to explain this?”
3. “I’m such an idiot!” and other putdowns that go on and on.
4. “I didn’t hear right.”
5. “What do I need to do to get it right the next time?”
6. “I think I’m too nervous to learn to drive; I’ll manage without.”

You can come up with a number of additional possible responses.

I reiterate: accurate labeling provides the “handle” to make change. I encourage you to develop skill in identifying your thoughts and thinking and recognizing which master they are serving. It’s difficult to understand what’s going on if all the “players” are in the same uniform. You see, multiple thoughts commonly occur at one time, each demanding thinking time and action. If we are to use our energy wisely, we need to choose which voice(s) should receive our attention. Can you recognize where your thoughts come from? Who sends these messages? Is nature, nurture, or your *self* doing the speaking?

Thoughts enter your conscious awareness with a purpose to be satisfied. Each thought, and the thinking that follows (i.e., the elaboration on the thought) is the agent of a specific master. Yet, when thoughts appear, they don’t identify which master has sent them. They don’t say: “I am your nature speaking.” They “look” alike; they are generic; they wear no uniform to clarify which team they represent. They do have an agenda for which they seek attention and action. Thoughts also tend to be quite rude. Thoughts have no concern that another is speaking; they often announce their elaborate agenda competitively with others. Confusion and muddy thinking are common unless order is imposed. I present this picture of the workings of our mental activity in the hope you will understand the importance of recognizing which master is the source of your

thoughts and thinking. Properly labeling them is a worthy effort if you are to engage in wise action.

Example 9 Activating event: you get a paycheck
Thought: "I've got money!"
Thinking: 1. "How quickly can I get to the casino, have a ball? I deserve it."
Thinking: 2. "I have to save it; there will come a 'rainy day.' Or I should give to charity." RT: 3. "We want to save to buy a house – to the bank. I think I can afford a bit of 'mad money' and also make a bit of a donation if I work this out."

#1 is most likely nature ... please me now, little concern about the future; #2 is most likely nurture ... what we are taught we "should" do, a common "prescription;" #3 is most likely my *self* speaking ... a reasonable step in my best interest.

Example 10 We have multiple thinking responses to the same issue.
Someone you felt was a really good friend and confidant has betrayed you.
Response 1: You are preoccupied with ways to get even.
Response 2: You dwell on your inadequacies as a person and stay depressed.
Response 3: You conclude relationships mean pain and dedicate yourself to avoiding them.
Response 4: You plan to discuss your experience with others and see how they handled a similar situation.
Response 5: You are preoccupied in worry that your ex-friend is spreading rumors; it's difficult to sleep; "will I lose my job?"
Response 6: You ask, "How can I best repair this situation now and plan for the future?"

There are multiple possible responses. Can you identify which master is doing the thinking in each of the above examples, or any other responses you might consider? Because the perspectives of *thoughts, thinking,* and *reflective thinking* often overlap, the distinction between the three may not be sharp, but they need not be – even the slightest hint is usually sufficient to apply wise self-management.

I have defined the thoughts and thinking as the expression of the wishes of our first two masters. Let's now address the critical issue of this guide - the recognition, labeling, and development of *self*-mastery. ***Self*-mastery is the emancipation of our *self* from dependence and blind obedience to our nature and nurture.** It is the skill that opens the door to freeing our mind and taking charge of our own life, to "become our own person," to act most wisely in our own interest including bringing about feeling good and doing good.

Now, a final point: Our masters usually don't speak directly to our awareness but usually through some "messenger." We may amuse our *self* when we can attach some person, event, or situation to the thoughts expressing their selves in our awareness. For example, the "should" prescriptive-type thoughts may sound strangely like mom,

dad, a role model, a religious text, or even a mirror ("You are not the fairest of all."). Nature's thoughts may seem to come from a warrior-like individual, or some physical image representing our stomach, genitals, etc. Sometimes the messenger is clearly recognized; other times we need to be quite creative. As we define these specific characters, events, and other "influencers," we might give the more important ones a seat on our Board of Directors.[58] I believe creating an image of our Board is a valuable tool to better understand the process of *self*-mastery.

It becomes easier to manage our mental activity as we recognize that some of our "characters" speak for multiple issues. For example, a parent figure is advocating how we should look, what career we should take, how to deal with sexual feelings, and so on. You will also realize that each of our three masters, through their representatives, commonly speak to the same issue. For example, the "parent" character representing our nurture may speak to our safety and how to manage our sexual interests, while a representative of your nature also speaks to the same issues. However, their demands and method of satisfying them may be quite at odds.

Although I have compared our mental processing to a sports arena, I want to point out that our mind's arena is somewhat different in that there are usually three teams on the playing field. Also, the rules for "winning" encourage the teams to cooperate when possible for their mutual advantage rather than compete to make one a winner and the other(s) a loser.

We deal with our life's issues more effectively as we (our *self*) become more proficient in recognizing the characters in our consciousness, as our labeling and classification skills provide us a better understanding of our mental processes, and as we acquaint our *self* with our Board of Directors.

Advice: This stren, #82, *Thoughts and Thinking*, and strens *Know Your Self* (#83), *Know Your Masters* (#84), and *Know Your Board of Directors* (#85) will most effectively help you to *a newer way of thinking* when you can integrate these ideas. While the concepts are easy to understand, it will take considerable practice and patience to fully enjoy the practical benefits of their application.

[58]See stren #85, *Know Your Board of Directors*

Stren #83: Know Your Self

Welcome. Stren #83 is part 1 of a three-part stren to introduce you to that portion of your mental function that is capable of taking responsibility for the direction of your life, enabling you to create *feeling good* and "*doing good*." I suggest you review in succession *Know Your Self, Know Your Masters, and Know Your Board of Directors,* the three parts of this stren. As you integrate them, you will increase your understanding of the *self* of *self*-mastery and facilitate your development of *a newer way of thinking*.

Throughout the ages, philosophers, theologians, scientists, and people of every type ask similar questions. "What is our purpose?" "What is the good life, and how can we attain it?" Perhaps the most common answer is to "understand oneself." Socrates proclaimed, "The unexamined life is not worth living." Christ preached, "Know thyself." And Freud developed a system of therapy based on making us more aware of our deeper "unconscious" self. I join the multitude of others who elevate *self* discovery to prime importance. My interest focuses on a specific part of our mental activity that enables us to become master of our *selves*. It is this "something" within us that enables us to break the chains of servitude imposed by our genetic inheritance (our nature) and the nurture to which we have been fated. I designate this part of our mental function our *self*, the *self* of *self*-mastery. I have maintained a special interest in this *self*: how to get a handle on it, i.e. how to label it, how to strengthen it, and how to explain it to any willing consumer.

Humankind is distinct from all other earthlings because we have the possibility of freeing ourselves from the impersonal masters who direct our lives. Other creatures are prepared from their birth, or soon after, to carry on the functions of their lives. Their patterns of behavior, from birth to death, are limited and relatively predictable. Birds fly, fish swim, and animals roam following mostly instinctual patterns. The means of survival, patterns of reproduction and feeding, the function of vital organs, and so on, are gifts from which there is little deviation and limited exchange privilege. While we humans share much of this endowment, we also have, as most everyone believes, "free will." We not only have a multitude of alternatives from which we may choose, but we also have immense capacity to create new alternatives and act on the basis of what we create. Philosophers call this *intentionality*. More so than any creature, we can challenge our inherited nature and the teachings of our early nurture. Humankind stands apart by our capacity for laughter, and our ability to read, to fantasize, and to anticipate the future. By devising ways to share wisdom and knowledge, we have opened the door to independence from what our genes have fated us to be. It has been said we are what we have become because we have the ability "to stand on the shoulders of the giants who have preceded us." We have made ourselves the dominant creature on earth. And while we have the capability to do marvelous things, we can also use the power we have acquired to destroy ourselves – individually and collectively.

What is this "something" that permits us free will, intentionality, mastery of our

environment, the control of our thinking (and thereby our feelings and actions), and other "human" skills? What is this nonphysical power we call upon? Is it "spirit," "mind," "soul"? Just how is this "it" connected to the body? Is this something totally exclusive to humankind, perhaps a gift from an almighty source?

The fact that we have not yet solved the problem to our satisfaction is indicated by the absence of a uniform agreement. **The issue of greater importance is that <u>right now</u> we do have the means to make a difference in how this "something" acts for our well-being**. We don't require technical understanding of this mental power to harness its practical effects. Everyone easily learns how to "work" the T.V.; we are not required to know how and why a person miles away can be seen in our living room. We are wise to develop the practical knowledge and skills that work in our best interest, that are likely to get us what we want and to avoid what we don't want. By effectively nourishing this, we may assume control of our thinking, feelings, and actions.

Once we recognize that we have the potential within us for *self*-mastery, we may develop its constructive application rather than be burdened by the harm of misdirected rationality. The first step is to give a label and definition to this specific part of our mental resources, this "something" that enables us to develop a *self*, the "I" part of me.

Since we already use the term "***self***-mastery," I am going to refer to this "something" as the "*self*." *Self* is the mental processing within us that gives us the possibility to "master" ourself. It conveys the ability to have "free will," (and "free won't" to resist the courses of action imposed by our nature and nurture) and "intentionality," i.e., the power to initiate action on the basis of its own abstract reasoning. It is the part of us that provides us with an identity or individuality. When we refer to "I" or "me," we are not speaking about a muscle or organ; we are generally referring to the "me" that is responsible for our actions. If you find this use of the term *self* difficult, you can substitute the word "boss" or "master with reasonable accuracy. Further, I will refer to the process which permits the development of this *self*, "reflective thinking." Reflective thinking is a more developed form of thinking. It is like a consultant looking in on our thinking – examining it, manipulating it, modifying it, and initiating ideas not present in our more primitive thinking. *Self* is the portion of our mind that can reflect on its mental activity. *Self*-mastery is the capacity to think about our thoughts and ideas, to be conscious of our consciousness. Having given our unique resource a name, let us address the characteristics of *self*-mastery and how understanding it can dramatically change our life. The next two strens elaborate on the two other masters of our life and <u>their</u> means of expression.

A distinction is made between our ordinary self and our *self* in the reflective thinking sense. I arbitrarily select this notation for this newer *reflective* thinking because it emphasizes that the reflective *self* has a separate function. Thoughts and thinking enter into our conscious awareness from our body ["Hey, I'm your bladder speaking; I need some relief."]; similarly, our senses create thoughts and thinking from sources outside our body ["Wake up!" "Fire!"]. The *self* is "separate" in that it can reflect independently on the thoughts and thinking that originate outside its *self*. This rational

self may engage in abstract problem-solving relatively untainted by the passionate demands for safety, food, sex, conformity, the instinctive demands of nature, and the acquired programming of our nurturers.

"Our self" refers to our entirety; "our ***self***" refers to the mental *self* of *self*-mastery. They are best distinguished by their function.

***Self* of *Self*-mastery (boss, master):**

1. free will and intentionality, the capacity to choose among alternatives, modify, add, subtract, create, and initiate action; the unique capacities of humankind

2. reflective thinking, the capacity to think about our thoughts and thinking

3. the ability to engage in abstract, dispassionate processing of information; "abstract" reasoning insulates or separates us from the more passionate, automatic thoughts and thinking originating from our nature and nurture and residing in the animal portion of our brain.

4. the portion of conscious awareness that gives us an identity, that empowers us to "become our own person," take control of the direction of our life, influence our thinking, feelings, and actions (including feeling good and doing good)

5. The *self* is not "born" until many years after our physical birth. We commonly require 20-30 years to develop sufficient skills and wisdom to have the willpower needed to wisely manage our thinking, feelings, and actions.

6. Our *self* develops and resides in the newest and most rapidly changing portion of our brain we identify as the cortex and its frontal lobes. I call this portion of our brain our *freedom organ*.

Our self, Yourself:

1. our physical self and …

2. the thoughts, thinking, ideas, etc., - that part of our conscious awareness that originates within our physical self, and/or that originate outside our *self* and are conveyed by our sense organs

3. all that our nature and nature have made of us

4. the passions, emotions, demands, expectations, "conscience," goals, habits, and so on that have been provided by our genes and nurturers. The relatively automatic mental function originating from our genes and nurturers.

I find it useful to think of the *self* as the product of nature and our nurturers' union, a gift to humankind that performs a specialized function. The kidneys filter fluids, the heart pumps blood, and the brain traditionally processes thoughts and considers how best to protect our lives and to see to it that the life cycle continues. Picture our brain as having a new part whose specialized function is reflective thinking and abstract reasoning, the equipment for *self*-mastery. Our human brain is in fact a series of five brains, the latest to develop being the cortex, where our "freedom organ" resides. Unlike every other organ, whose development and function are relatively automatic, the outcome of the development of our "*self* organ" will vary depending on its "education." As the *self* develops, it may take an increasingly active role in directing its own mental growth … determining which skills and which wisdoms to acquire, and what amount of energy to expend. Reflective thinking is our means to become the programmer of our *self* – thus, *self-mastery*.

The *self* of *self*-mastery has specific characteristics that set it apart or "abstract" from our self. It is the quality of abstract thinking that gives us an identity apart from our physical self and the thoughts and thinking that originate from outside the reflective *self*. It is a specific portion of our mental function that has the capacity to reflect on the thoughts, thinking, pictures, and the like that constitute the "motion picture" of our consciousness. The mature *self* labels thoughts according to the master they serve (nature and/or nurture), organizes them, manipulates them, adds to them, chooses among alternatives, creates new patterns of thinking, and then "wills" action to effect change. This reflective *self* has attained a generous capacity of the skill to be conscious of its consciousness. In its mature stage of development, it is relatively independent of our body. It is "wired" to receive thoughts and thinking that originate from outside sources.

It is most important to understand that the wiring between our mental *self* and our physical self goes both ways; the *self* is not simply a receiving station, but can cause physical changes in our body. Hormones and chemicals are influenced by the direction and content of the thinking activity of this reflective *self*. The mind's ability to effect physical and mental change has been called our "second signaling system." Symbols (words, images, concepts) are the chemicals, hormones, and "juice" of the mind. Our *self* can create fantasy or images that have no corresponding existence in the common world, viz. a nonexistent creature, and then respond to its creation with strong emotion. This *self* continues to baffle our attempts to understand just how its volitional capacity works and how its nonphysical existence is related to the physical brain. Nevertheless, we <u>can</u> understand how to recognize it, address it, nourish it, and – of critical importance – utilize its power to make a difference in our lives. Here is our source of direction to become what we are capable of becoming, and avoid what we do not wish to become.

Our early lives are largely ruled through the perspectives of our genes and nurturers, emphasizing passion, blind obedience, and habit. **As we develop reason, our thinking starts out by acting mainly in the service of those early perspectives!** Passion and habit are ill prepared to deal with time and the consequences of the mega-

power of *self*-mastery. The special advantage of this rational *self* is its ability to respect passion and habit, integrate them into the greater scheme of our lives, and provide direction through short and long-term problem-solving. The *self*'s capacity for abstract reasoning allows it to separate its *self* from the passionate commands of our nature and nurture, and the thinking and reasoning of our immature years. It is better prepared to consider what is wise over time and to initiate prevention and proactive constructive action.

The *self* I am referring to is not present at birth. Many years must pass before the mind is sufficiently powerful and mature to become the chief boss of our thinking, feelings, and actions. The mental apparatus that is *self* requires nurturance to attain its best functionality. The skills needed for this *self* to become effective can be identified, and they can be taught and learned. The *Guide* is my collection of such skills. I invite you to share and expand the curriculum of the skills that promote taking charge of our life's destiny.

If you were fortunate enough to have a good genetic inheritance and upbringing, you already have a well-developed, wise *self;* you "feel good and do good." Since we never attain perfection, mental growth is a lifelong opportunity. You can add to your strengths from this collection of "wisdoms." And if you've missed some important ingredients in your life so far, I predict you will benefit dramatically from this collection of wisdoms. And through our blog, I hope you will expand this incomplete collection of strens.

Stren #84: Know Your Masters

Welcome back to *a newer way of thinking*! Stren #84 acquaints you with the would-be controllers of our lives. It explains the two easy mental substitutions that jump-start the skill of becoming our own person. This is part 2 of a three-part stren [the others being *Know Your Self* and *Know Your Board of Directors*].

We humans differ from other earthlings by our capacity to engage in language, to create, to choose among alternatives, and to take charge of the direction of our lives. The greater size and sophistication of our brain is the source of this special conscious mental power. While we share with other creatures the automatic function of our heart, digestion, breathing, and vital organs, it is our brain that makes us unique by freeing us from a routine existence. Through this gift of exceptional mental capacity, we may become our own person. This is highly desirable because of all the rights and privileges that go with it, including feeling good and "doing good." If misapplied, this power of *self*-mastery may also be the source of the unusual worry, depression, suicide, destructive aggression, and miseries we humans commonly bring on ourselves and others.

Since the ability to take charge of our life occurs within our conscious awareness, I will introduce you to a practical method to recognize and develop this source of our mental freedom. Learning starts with labeling. The jumble of thoughts, ideas, pictures, and so on that constitutes our mental activity is made more intelligible by an accurate classification system. The major aim of this collection of wisdoms is to provide the handles that strengthen our capacity for *self*-mastery. So let's identify the three "masters" that would direct our thinking, feelings, and actions. Each is represented in our consciousness by <u>thoughts</u> that seem to "pop into our mind" and the <u>thinking</u> that originates in your mind. They are identified as master nature, master nurture, and our mental *self*, <u>*self*</u>-mastery. Like a tri-party government, we are influenced throughout our life by what we inherit, what our culture makes of us, and what <u>we</u> our *self* initiate.

We are already familiar with the importance of our genetic inheritance and our upbringing in determining who we are. Therefore, I need only highlight the fundamental characteristics of their dictatorship that direct our lives.

Master #1, Nature: Our genetic inheritance controls virtually everything at our birth. Refined through billions of years of evolution, it sets the stage for what we are, and remains active throughout our life. Its orders of first importance are survival and reproduction: we are born, we reproduce, we die. How greatly we have diverged from this mold! A prominent instinct is our "fight or flight" response. We are prepared to fight and/or run to survive. Animals need be aggressive to obtain food and protect their young. A related characteristic of our nature is the drive to obtain pleasure and to avoid pain. It does its work through chemical, hormonal, and electrical effectors without need of rational thinking. Nature ensures that our vital organs function without conscious effort; they work "automatically." Indeed, automatic may describe much of the activity of nature. Nature is oriented to the here and now, and it is relatively intolerant of

frustration. An impatient "I want what I want when I want it," is characteristic. It is prepared to be aggressive and kill to obtain its needs, but, unlike later controllers of our life, there is little interest in killing for sport or on the basis of some abstract belief. It is also important for us to understand that much of nature's work unfolds well after birth. Our sexual organs don't mature until about our second decade, and our brain and nervous system are still developing in our late teens.

Master #2, Nurture: Approximately 2000 years ago, the young mind was labeled a "tabula rasa," an "unwritten-on tablet" or clean slate. Along come nurturers with their chisels to hammer in the "correct" messages. Once imprinted, the message is there to stay. **Who were the "inscribers" of your mind?** Parents? Teachers? Books? Significant emotional events? Friends? Role models? Mistakes? Power or its lack? And **what were the messages?** Did they "tell" you whom you can trust? How you should eat ... dress ... look? The approved manner to express anger and aggression? What language to speak? How males and females are to act? What you are to believe? What is your proper place? When you asked why, did you get a satisfactory explanation or did you get the godlike response: "Do it because I say so; I am your parent." Perhaps you were too young and "unthinking" and couldn't handle an explanation anyway; or were so gullible you would accept any explanation no matter how unreasonable or biased. Immature and physically undeveloped, how could you be expected to know what was "right" or "wrong"? Until you were "taught," were you really concerned if you wet your bed, took your sibling's candy, or if the mirror said nice things about you?

Could you imagine how the demands expressed by your genes might differ from those of your nurturers? They may agree, but more often they are at odds. Our genes say, "If it looks good, tastes good, or feels good, do it." Our nurturers more commonly say, "If it looks good, tastes good, or feels good, it's probably bad; no, you can't, shouldn't, mustn't," and so on. Our nurturer's emphasize words that express "no," can't, must, have to, don't, and a repertoire of rewards or punishments for "good or bad," "right or wrong" action. Even "bad words," "bad thoughts" may be punished.

Master nature says, "If it looks good, take it; if it feels good, do it; and if it gets in your way, bite it or hit it, and do it <u>now</u>!" What would your nurturers have to say about that? Why should your nature cooperate with your nurturer's demands? Was it because of the "should"? If you don't do what you "should," "have to," "must," or "ought," you are to "pay the price." What is the price? A scolding? ... isolation (go to your room, prison)? ... withholding food ... a privilege? withholding love or physical contact? ... or receiving a physical punishment? Perhaps you could get a bit of reprieve and avoid being punished if you responded correctly ... a bit of guilt, shame, or some acknowledgment that you have punished yourself ... especially if it appeared you really meant it. Perhaps the punishment could also be avoided if you were able to blame someone or something else?

Master #3, our *self*, *self*-mastery: If we are born with one set of directions, and receive

a whole new set of commands from the world we are born into, is there some point where *we* have a say? Are we destined to be a slave to master #1 and master #2 all of our life? When will I be able to "speak"? Perhaps it's not a "point in time," but "over a span of time." I believe that we have reached a stage in evolution, just as we also reach a stage in our personal development, where the mind is no longer made of stone. We now have paper and word processors. Could it be that the carvings of master #1 and #2 are not all indelible? Perhaps there is some way to modify them ... ignore them ... add to them? Unless you are a strict determinist, you believe, as I do, in "free will," i.e. the freedom to initiate and choose among alternatives. We humans, far more than any other living thing, have the chance to free ourselves from the dictates of our early masters.

The power and wisdom of self-mastery, master #3, is the primary concern of this Guide, recognizing and developing that portion of our mental activity that frees us from domination by our early masters. Emancipation of our will power and creativity requires a series of tasks: developing an awareness of this marvelous opportunity, properly labeling it, acquiring the words and language that enables it to express itself and grow, filling it with wisdom, and supporting it to become the chief director or executive officer of all those who participate as controllers of our life's experience. This collection of strens contains bits and pieces of wisdom that strengthen this *self*. Study and practice of the Guide's strens provide direction to take charge of one's own life, to become our own person, to consistently feel good and "do good."

Since becoming our own person is a task of conscious activity, of our mental *self*, we need to distinguish the means by which nature, nurture, and our *self*'s intentions appear in our awareness. First, let us pay tribute to that part of our nature that works without imposing itself on our consciousness. We marvel – and appropriately so – at the intricacy with which our organs perform their duties – digest our food, regulate our oxygen supply, protect us from infection, heal our wounds, and so much more. Our "autonomic" or automatic nervous system is preprogrammed by our genes and requires no directions from our *self*. Nature makes itself known in our consciousness advocating for our basic needs … survival, reproduction, and protection of the young. Its messages are usually short and uncomplicated: eat, drink, pee, fight, run, engage in horizontal recreation, have fun, avoid pain. It demands quick service; patience is generally lacking. What is "not me" is meant to serve me, as we come to believe during our early "magic" years. Nature is also amoral, selfish, and ruthless in serving its programmed needs. The hawk cares nothing about the well-being of its prey. Destructive aggression is survival's most important resource. Nature generally follows the principal of survival of the fittest, what has been termed "natural selection."

We underestimate the power of symbols. Our nurturers direct our thinking through the meanings they assign to symbols, words, and the language they inscribe in our mind. A cross, crescent, six pointed star, or a swastika evokes very different responses depending on our nurturer's teachings. Ants, pig, dog, cow, monkey, or human flesh are appetizing and arouse salivation in some, while others abhor eating one or more, and may even vomit at the thought. Words are the hormones, enzymes,

and “juice” of the mind. They become our “second signaling system” capable of directing our muscles and influencing our biochemical-electrical mediators of action. Language has enabled humankind to become supreme master on earth.

Master nature establishes its domain primarily in our physiology. Our substance is designed to advocate its needs for preservation by physical fight or flight, pursuit of pleasure and avoidance of pain. It is amoral, impatient, and uninhibited by guilt and “conscience.” To nature’s needs for survival and procreation, our nurturers add their wants. *Master nurture* establishes its dominance in our native language. It gifts us with a mental “second signaling system” that sets us apart from all creatures and enables us to become rulers on earth. Our nurturers imbed meaning into symbols and words, and thus they wire our native language – our second operating system – to emphasize blind obedience, dependency, and allegiance to their personal rules as well as those of the “establishment.”

Prescriptive words: “should,” “have to,” “must,” “ought,” and related words convey that we are required to follow the rules of some outside authority.
Dichotomous words: The world is divided into “either … or” categories: good/bad, right/wrong, mine/yours, us/them, for/against, innocent/guilty, and so on. Dichotomous thinking is the source of most prejudiced (pre-judged) thinking.
Blaming: Through the years of our nurturance*, he, she, they, it, the world, God*, or some “other” are responsible for us and therefore are the source of any frustration.

I hope you will agree with me that our nurturers’ O.S. is appropriate and effective for the decades we require to attain physical and emotional maturity, when we lack basic wisdom and adequate skills for reflective thinking. A major problem arises when circumstance and *self*-mastery require a newer manner of thinking; habit demands that we continue to do what has worked up to now. Through countless repetitions, the blaming, prescriptive, dichotomous pathways have become habitual and virtually effortless. Our current educational establishments are prone to sustain the dependency thinking inherent in our native language. As you will see, the proposed changes to update our thinking are quite simple; the difficulty is challenging the supreme rule of habit. Perhaps our most critical contemporary challenge is to develop and popularize newer educational resources that update our thinking to support mental freedom. Let us recognize that the destructive “survival of the fittest” aggression inherent in nature’s O.S., and the blaming, prescriptive, prejudged thinking of our nurturer’s O.S., are to be expected in <u>all</u> native languages, irrespective of geography – English, German, Chinese, etc. Although children learn different languages and religions, their neural mechanisms process data through similar common pathways. This is why we may reasonably expect destructive aggression to continue until a sufficient mass of our populous upgrades its manner of thinking (ANWOT).

***Self*-mastery**: Over decades of physical maturation and mental development, we gradually attain skill in reflective thinking: the ability to think about our thinking, to be conscious of our consciousness. Reflective thinking empowers us to rebel, to create alternatives and choose among them. Mental freedom, i.e., *self*-mastery, is not

automatically provided to us as are our first O.S.'s. The choice to become our own person is a marvelous option that requires each of us to actively update of our manner of thinking.

Nature favors instinct driven by the collective wisdom of past experience. Our nurturers emphasize obedience to authority and their prescribed standard for thinking, feeling, and action, pertinent to the collective wisdom of the present. The updated *newer way of thinking* (ANWOT) emphasizes reason based more on knowledge than instinct and/or habit. **Mental rehearsal permits integration of past and present wisdom and anticipation of the future consequences of alternative actions, and wisely focuses more on prevention than cure!**

A mental *self* may exhibit brilliance, creativity, and originality in its means of expression and yet remain a servant to the uncritically accepted goals of some other master's demands. Innovation dominated by nature is likely to amplify its tendency towards destructive aggression, while creativity directed by our nurturer's perspective emphasizes blind obedience to *their* prescribed goals. The state of our world, past and present, may be understood to be an expression of the combined manners of thinking influenced by our nature and our nurturers. Our culture currently invests more energy in competition than cooperation; beating others (winning) more than helping; indifference, prejudice, resentment, and hatred more than love and friendship; and weapons of mass destruction far more than weapons of mass construction. We equip our armies for war, not peace. Knowledge of our nature and our nurture's operating systems make our aggressive priorities quite understandable. *Their* programs, by which we process information with meaning, dominate our thinking. We can predict that our prevalent manner of thinking will continue to create bigger and more destructive weapons, engage in blaming, and sustain our prejudiced perspectives and uncritical acceptance of authority, even though such action is no longer in our best interest.

Mental freedom implies skill in critically examining the demands imposed upon us by nature and our nurturers, accepting those that remain effective in our contemporary life situation, challenging those that no longer work and indeed may be destructive, and energetically creating and/or modifying the goals that are most likely to get us what we desire, now and in the future. Our well-being, feeling good and doing good, requires ANWOT plus knowledge of our collective wisdom. Both are so readily available! We have yet to direct our creativity to educate our masses in these skills, but we can do so now as we educate ourselves.

The intended outcome of reading this stren is that you will recognize the three masters that direct our life's experience, the characteristic operating system (O.S.) by which each advocate its own distinct perspective; and that you acquire the two simple mental interventions that strengthen *self*-mastery. The two following steps that dramatically update our thinking to ANWOT are incredibly simple:

Step 1. When possible substitute descriptive, analog (continuous), personal responsibility words for blaming, prescriptive, dichotomous words. Trigger

words redirect our nurturer's O.S. to personal responsibility and problem-solving and away from dependence, blaming, and uncritical acceptance of authority.

● **Personal responsibility: "I allow," "I choose," "I am wise when …"** for he, she, it, they, the world, God, makes me …

● **Descriptive words: [I] choose, prefer, would like, am wise when, want …** etc. for prescriptive words: [I] should, must, ought, have to, need ….

● **Analog[iii] words: both … and → this and that, the pluses and minuses, the positives and negatives of each alternative choice, for dichotomous either…or words. Either…or → both…and**: us or them → us and them; good or bad → good and bad; now or later → now and later; this or that → this and that; etc.

I observe that most people succeed in freeing themselves from *physical* dependency on their nurturers in the course of their maturation. We are taught to, dress and feed ourselves, and to provide our own financial support and shelter. What adult wants someone else to be responsible for their bowel habits? Yet, when it comes to emotional independence, too many remain dependent on others for love, endorsement, and emotional support, and uncritically submit to other's moral directions and value judgments. Our culture currently lacks a systematic educational system to develop mental independence, one that it routinely provides to wean us from physical dependence. Like sheep, the masses are prone to submit to the will of others. Please understand that I greatly value approval, recognition, support, and love from others; earning approval is worthy of our efforts. This is quite different than going through life as a "love junkie," demanding that others and the world provide for our wants and treat us "fairly". How many instances can you think of where someone, including your *self*, engaged in destructive behavior such as resentment, mental or physical aggression, or depression (mentally "beating on one's self," even suicide!) because someone or something did not satisfy their wants? Resentment is our mental cancer; it chronically wastes our valuable resources. We would be wise to acquire the basic skill to provide ourselves our minimum daily requirement (MDR) of emotional endorsement, to free our *self* from dependence on others. To what degree do you provide your own MDR of love and endorsement? What method(s) do you use? Could including the techniques offered in this Guide's endorsement strens enhance your mental and emotional freedom?

Step 2. Redirect nature's destructive aggression to *energy* for problem-solving.

Substitute "energy" for "anger". Immediately begin the practice of habitually following the labeling of your emotional response as "energy" with the problem-solving sentence: *Given this situation (which may be unfair) what is most likely to get what I and they want, for now and the future?*
Example: "He (she, they, it) made me angry; he should pay." A reasonable substitute: "I allow this to get to me. I'm upset; what's the best way to use this energy that'll work for both of us, now and later?"

Nature wires us to impulsively engage in destructive aggression, our ***red alert*** emergency *fight or flight* instinct. Physical and/or mental attack is rarely appropriate in modern society; it usually gets us what we don't want rather than what is in our best short and long-term interest. When a need or want is not met, we naturally produce arousal and generate energy. Energy is our resource to act to resolve tension. The label we use to name what we experience has a profound influence on how we mentally process it to an action outcome. Common labels are "anger," "anxiety," and "frustration." "Anger" is pre-wired to an action outcome that often leads to blaming and/or some form of destructive aggression. The same physical experience identified as "energy" is more likely to stimulate a problem-solving manner of thinking. Reason is more likely to work in today's world than the instinctive behavior patterns applicable in animals and primitive societies. Awkward at first, repetitious substitution of "energy" for "anger," followed by the problem-solving sentence will become increasingly effortless and automatic. Problem-solving will prevail as our instinctive destructive and aggressive tendencies atrophy from lack of use.

Consider how the mental activity of our three masters may differ:

Example 1
A 5 year old and a piece of apple pie on the kitchen table: what "conversation" ensues?

Nature: Ah, looks good, I want it. Yes! I'll eat it.
Nurture: No! Can't have it. Maybe after dinner ... if you're good. Your brother wants it.
Nature: I'll figure out how to get that pie.
Nurture: You know what to expect when you behave that way. Remember what happened last time.

Example 2
15 years later:

Nature: Great face, nice ass. Hot stuff. Go for it!

Nurture: Don't even think about it!
Nature: Sure would like to; I'll figure out a way.

Nurture: If you play, you pay. It's not worth it. Think of all the trouble you'll get into.

Self: There are some pluses and minuses to either choice. I'll think about how best to work this situation to get what I want and not get what I don't want.

Can you imagine several versions of how this internal dialogue continues?

Example 3
You've been waiting for 15 minutes in a slow-moving line to get off your highway exit.

Another driver speeds in the outside lane and cuts in front of you.

> Nature: That S.O.B. needs a lesson.
>
> Nurture: Don't be concerned about what the other person does.
>
> OR: Anyone who drives like that shouldn't be allowed to get away with it. God damn him! Hope a cop is there.
>
> Nature: No one does that to me and gets away with it! I'll give him a piece of my mind, or the finger (or some other symbolic, even physical attack).
>
> *Self*: He was rude and frustrating. It'd be good for him to be taught better, but this isn't the time or place for me to get involved. My desire is to get to my appointment. However, I can fantasize I'm in a tank, run over his car, smile for having showed him, and maintain my calm as I get on with my business.

In each example, multiple would-be-directors of action appear in one's awareness. There is often controversy. Nurture may agree or disagree with nature, depending on the individual's upbringing. A child's conscious thinking and actions are mostly a struggle between the urgings of nature and nurture. The mature thinking of *self*-mastery requires years to attain independence and sufficient power to be in control.

I have found it useful to relate my mental function to that of a modern corporation. Policy and action are determined by a Board of Directors. My mental Board is controlled by three major stockholders: nature, nurture, and my *self*. Each advocates action from its own distinct perspective, the characteristics of which I have indicated above.

Do you recognize any members of your Board? A parent? A role model? A religious leader or text? A selfish uncontrolled brat? An almighty figure, God? Your *self*? Who dominates? Who is demanding? Reasonable? Passionate? Get the idea? You may also prefer to develop your own method to best recognize the controllers of your life.

How might your Board have looked when you were born? A few years later? Age 15? Age 21? Several years in the future? Are you the same person as when you were born, during puberty, as an adult, in your twilight years? Do you appreciate how your interests and needs change over time? Master nature does not send a representative to our Board demanding sexual gratification until many years after our birth; how did that newer member influence your Board? How has your Board changed over time; and how might you like to change it in the future? Are there members of your Board you'd like to remove, replace, add? How much say (or vote) have you exercised in changing of the composition of your Board?

Part 3 of this three-part stren, *Know Your Board of Directors*, provides a more detailed consideration of our mental structure. Your power to manage your own life, to negotiate with your thoughts and direct your thinking, will increase as you become familiar with your Board members and the master whose agenda each represents.

Stren #85: Know Your Board of Directors

Welcome again. Stren #85 offers a mental exercise to assist taking ownership of your life's experience. It is part 3 of a three-part stren [the other two being *Know your Self* and *Know your Masters*].

Becoming master of our *self* is like becoming the chief executive officer (C.E.O.) of a corporation. This stren illuminates the process of becoming C.E.O. of our corporation, i.e., attaining *self*-mastery. You are asked to produce and direct a motion picture of the process of assuming directorship of your own Board of Directors.

Our "corporation" is like many others with some exceptions. We are mental creatures. Our primary product is the thinking that our "factory" produces and the management of will power. We have a personal, unique, and private one-of-a-kind mental existence that "houses" our Board of Directors. It stores vast amounts of information using words and symbols, modifies and/or makes various images, and creates original motion pictures. Our personal "corporation" is unique from those of other people by the degree to which we willfully influence our thinking, feelings, and actions.

Corporations have multiple parts with specialized activities. Each part has workers, directors or "bosses," and a C.E.O. In a corporation, the stockholders "own" the company; they elect directors to manage the corporation. These directors sit on the Board of Directors. They are usually picked to represent diverse knowledge, skills, and interests applicable to the smooth operation of the corporation. The Board members determine overall policy and select the "hands-on" person who actually runs things, the C.E.O.

We, like that corporation, have many parts with specialized activities. To name a few, there are departments for nutrition, waste management, information storage, public relations and communication, planning, health and safety, recreation, finances, and of course "survival." We can name many more departments; we are quite diverse. Since most of my (and your) corporate decisions are made through "thinking," I identify my Board members by asking who has a "say" in directing my thinking. If you prefer another term than "thinking," you can substitute "life," or "corporation," or whatever suits you better.

Will you have a meeting of your Board? It's difficult to seat all the directors. Would you identify the most important ones and give them seats? You may find it helpful to actually draw a conference table and provide a name for each seated director. Look down the table. Identify the most important members. Don't try to be exact, just look for a rough indication of the most prominent. Are there any directors that you specifically recognize? If so, put in their name(s). Is there anyone resembling your parents? Is there a representative of religious persuasion urging specific "commandments"? Are there any representatives advocating the law or making specific cultural or societal demands? Do some sound like your "conscience"? Are there

voices on your Board that would cast concern to the wind, that advise, “Do what feels good; now!” when it comes to food, sex, power, etc.?

Some Board members own considerable stock in your corporation; others own little or none. Assume 1000 shares were issued. Make an estimate of the number of shares each has. Some directors are more influential than others, aren’t they? You might make a double or triple star to denote those with the most power. The most influential are not always the biggest stockholders. What percentage of stock do you own?

Who conducts the meeting? Is there a rotating director or is there a chairperson? Is the chairperson effective? Who speaks the most? Are the meetings productive? Chaotic? Democratic? Dictatorial? Surely you are on the Board. Are you the C.E.O., “the chief boss”? Were you on your Board when you were born? You didn’t have much directorship power at birth; who was the C.E.O. of your Board then? What percentage of stock in your corporation did you own when you were born? What percentage do you own now? When and how did you acquire the shares? Can you identify any important “heroes” or role models who have or had a seat? When did you, or might you, assume power? Do you “control” the direction of your Board meeting? Who does? Who are your chief competitors? How has the composition and control changed over the prior years of your life? How would you want it to change at this point?

Most of your Board members have been there a long time, since a time when you had little or no say. Would you like to get rid of some of your Board members? Have any served their purpose? Perhaps they were quite useful, even essential, at an earlier stage of your development, but now might actually impede your progress.

Consider what you can do for yourself now that you could not do at birth … at age 5 … at age 10 …as you grow to adult maturity. Surely you don’t want anyone feeding you, attending to your bowel habits, or directing your sleeping, eating, mating, or other activities. Yet, it is clear that you are consistently under a barrage of “commands” that you have no choice but to at least hear. Your bladder makes itself quite clear, as do your stomach, bowels, and other body functions. Your five senses regularly send messages, usually wanting attention, and sometimes yell “urgent” or “emergency”. Fortunately, these body functions usually do their own work automatically and independent of your conscious attention. Yet, wouldn’t you agree that they do have considerable influence on your Board of Directors? Do you notice a “latecomer” to your Board who seems preoccupied with sex and/or romance? Does that Board member own many shares in your corporation? How influential is that member? When this new member, representing nature’s powerful urge for sexual pleasure, joined your Board and met the “parent” and “religious” Board members, what was their dialogue like? Are <u>you</u> a “latecomer” to your Board?

It is quite apparent that our Board changes over time. New members add diversity, goals are modified, and new directives are created. Our common external

world and its demands are also changing over time. *Self*-mastery appears relatively late in the course of our development, as our *self* grows over time. Unlike the other directors assigned to our Board by nature and nurture, we have a good deal to say about if, when, and to what degree our *self* gains representation on the Board. Keep in mind that until there is sufficient presence of *self* on the Board, our directives are from sources over which we have little control. They are quite dictatorial. We spend years in servitude and come to blame or praise the "other" controllers, with some justification because they do direct our life's experience. Initiation and assertiveness often yield to instinct and habit, and we resist the call of *self*-management. Some people never become C.E.O. of their own Board. Do you know any such individuals?

Initially, agents of your genetic inheritance dominate your Board. After birth, your nurturers exert a considerable presence. Could you briefly create a mental picture of how your Board may have looked when you were born? A few years old? Age 15? Age 21? Several years in the future? Are you the same person when you are born, during puberty, as an adult, and in your twilight years? Do you appreciate how your interests and needs change over time? How has your Board changed over time; and how might you like it to change in the future? How much effort have you exercised to change the composition of your Board?

Many people I observe are still directed by their very first Board members, who remain unchallenged even though the interests they represent may no longer be useful, and indeed may even block someone from becoming his/her own person. Most corporations periodically schedule a vote by the shareholders to re-elect, add, or remove certain members of the Board. In most cases, the voters who determine the outcome of the election don't even know the Board members and are not well prepared to make these changes. It would be a rather unsatisfactory situation if our own mental Board ran like this.

If we are to become C.E.O. of our own corporation, then we must teach our *self* to know each member and the perspective they advocate. An effective C.E.O. would have skills in negotiating with members of the Board of Directors and be especially wise to court the most powerful ones. Devote some time to thinking about the people, things, and events that have had a significant influence on you. Try to give each a name or label. Once you have this list, put them in some general order of power. In your mind, and preferably also on paper, create a table where your Board members convene. Place the names or labels that identify each "director" of your Board around this table. Include your *self*. Can you assign some percentage of influence to each member? For example, does your parental member have 1% .. 5% .. 20% .. 60% of the say? Assign each Board member a rough number – no need to be anywhere near exact, but try to be as specific as possible though about the names/labels/ and/or identity of each member.

In my Board, certain early directors are pretty consistent "yes" advocates. These directors are impatient, demanding, and have little concern for anyone or anything save their own interest. They commonly urge, "**Yes**, I want what I want when I want it," as if

they have a common allegiance. They usually vote for whatever brings pleasure and/or avoids discomfort – even "illegal, immoral, or fattening" acts.

Sometime after birth, a new group of directors came onto my Board. These new members frequently oppose the "yes" guys, and they seem to have the motto, "Anything that's fun, especially anything 'illegal, immoral, or fattening,' is an absolute 'no!!!'" Who are these "no" voices demanding that I must stay within a narrow path of "acceptable" actions? I didn't invite them or put them there. I must admit many are quite wise and provide very valuable service, but I think some have outlived their usefulness. Others even get in the way of progress; they are "regressive," obstructionists, and often vindictive. These "no" voices often vote as one party, just as the "yes" voices do.

It appears that each of our Board members have allegiance to one of two "bosses." The "yes" group seems beholden to Master Nature. Those in the "no, you can't," "you have to", "you must not" group appear to have just as strong an allegiance to the controller of my second stage of development, Master Nurture. These nurturer voices often speak the same language: "This is the voice of your conscience."

Do <u>you</u> have a "conscience"? Can you identify any specific voices? Parents? Teachers? Role models or "heroes"? A book, such as the Bible? A particular event or series of events that was so influential that it got a seat on your Board of Directors? Perhaps your "conscience" is a conglomeration of many of your past nurturers. Did you notice that the perspectives of the big bosses, nature and nurture, are represented by agents. As with a sports event, much confusion is eliminated when each player can be identified with a specific team, so it is important to recognize which team each Board member represents.

Our thoughts are like the expressions of two major political parties, the "nature party" and the "nurture party." Like our Democratic and Republican parties, they each claim to advocate what is best. I sometimes fantasize that the nature party's "mascot" is an impatient, demanding, amoral infant; while the nurture party's "mascot" is an equally demanding, overbearing dictator. These "bosses" remain dominant in our thoughts throughout our life, until we develop sufficient mature thinking to become our own chief boss, the C.E.O. of our personal Board.

Success in attaining the position of C.E.O. requires considerable work and training. The early Board members don't readily transfer power; they tend to get comfortable in their seats. You see, *self*-mastery is a voluntary, active, aggressive process of emancipation. It requires a struggle, a revolution! However, it may be done cooperatively, productively, and far more peacefully than the often fierce competition engaged in by the "yes" and "no" factions, nature and nurture. If you would be the C.E.O., you're going to need support from a number of them. To get such support, you're more likely to succeed if you make time and energy to introduce yourself to your Board members and really get to know them. How long would you expect it to take? Certainly it will not happen instantly, and not without effort.

Once you have formed a rough idea in your conscious awareness of your Board and its composition, move on to the next step. Tune in to the thoughts that you experience. What is their intent? Consider your thoughts as messengers from one of your Board members. Can you relate the message as originating primarily from one of the members you have identified on your Board? Which "master" is speaking – your nature, your nurture, or your *self*?

Now that you have an introduction to your directors, mentally direct and produce a "motion picture" of the composition of <u>your</u> Board of Directors, beginning when you were born and showing how it has changed over time to become what it is now. Include a short motion picture of "Coming Attractions." This fanciful motion picture, *This is My Life – A History and Prospective of my Board of Directors,* can be a useful tool to understand the process of becoming your own person. It can help you strategize the changes in your Board of Directors and assume the role of a wise and just C.E.O. Use this motion picture of your Board to consider which members you'd like to demote, who you would add, and how you can improve its function and become the wise leader that is within your capability.

You may find it helpful to consider your Board from this additional perspective. Imagine the Board of Directors as a fish, like the salmon. It is born alone; its mother has already died. ("Mom" lays eggs, dies, and its body becomes the food for offspring … quite a sacrifice!) Its genes prepare the newborn to survive independently from day one. The salmon's Board has a director of swimming, director of eating, and other directors with innate programs of "what to do, how to act." The guidance from the Board is predictable and inflexible. A bird, such as a robin, is <u>not</u> prepared to do it all from birth. "Parents" show their young what and how to eat, teach their offspring how to fly, and then "to fly away." Clearly, there are directors on the robin's Board from both nature <u>and</u> nurture. Nevertheless, the robin's behavior is fairly predictable and automatic. To what degree is there a *self* of *self*-mastery represented on the Board of Directors of other creatures?

In our situation, it is clear we have directions from both nature and nurture. During the "reign" of power by nature and/or nurture, our patterns of behavior are, like other creatures, also quite predictable and inflexible. As "conscious" mental creatures, nature's and nurture's urgings appear in our thoughts and thinking as messengers, usually advocating "yes" and "no" positions – often in contradiction with each other. At some point, the *self* of *self*-mastery appears. The representatives of *self*-mastery bring new expertise to the Board. They negotiate, rearrange information, rehearse solutions, create new alternatives, and provide many choices of action that nature and nurture do not provide and indeed often resist. The direction of *self*-mastery provides flexibility, independence, and the unique powers that become our source of godlike creativity.

Our genes and nurturers don't appear on our Board with signs that say "nature" or "nurture". They appear on our Board as specific characters, phrases, and symbols (such as a cross, a star, or a crescent; perhaps a flag). They are more like messengers advocating the interests of their masters' perspectives. Some are easy to recognize,

even by name, such as “mom.” Others are incognito. We further our *self*-mastery by accurately assigning these messengers to their appropriate “party.” They seek the attention of our conscious awareness where they appear as “thoughts” and are elaborated by “thinking.” Since our directors are commonly at odds with one another, their conflicts and passionate self-centered advocacies are the most frequent source of our difficulties. The primary aim of ANWOT is to provide the skills of ***self*-mastery**, the skills that enable you to become the major stockholder and a wise, effective C.E.O. of your own corporation. Wise management fosters cooperation rather than competition, and rational problem solving which considers the interests of <u>all</u> parties to best satisfy short <u>and</u> long-term goals.

If I may address the philosophical question of what special function or purpose I might have as a human being, I think it may be actualizing our special gift – the opportunity to free myself from the constraints of fate and empower my *self* to become what I choose to become. The opportunity is fraught with danger, especially where power precedes wisdom. To be on our own requires us to take responsibility for the negative consequences of our actions as well as the positive ones. Yet most all opportunity is allied with danger.

Now let’s consider some specific examples to engage your thinking. What is your opinion of who is in charge and what is going on in the Boardroom in the following situations? Can you identify which specific members of the Board are speaking and how the dialogue goes?

- Betty is 5. There it is – one piece of apple pie on the table. She knows her brother wants it. What’s going on in Betty’s Boardroom?

- Alice’s attractiveness, especially her skin and teeth, is admired by others. Yet, Alice is convinced that she has pimples and crooked teeth (which nobody else sees), spends much of her time seeking medical help, is reluctant to smile, and usually holds her hand over her face.

- Bob is crazy about cars and sees a stereo he really wants; he is about to get married, and the couple wants to have a baby and buy a house. Their income, while good, is not sufficient to do all these things. What’s the dialogue like in the Boardroom? Who’s “speaking”? Who’s in charge?

- Jack is a military man trained to program a drone to drop a bomb on a house presumed to house an enemy. What dialogue is going on in the decision-making room? Would it be any different if Jack was commanded to throw a grenade into the house which he determined was occupied by men, women, and children?

- It’s a very difficult exam. The outcome could determine Dick’s chance to get into graduate school. The smartest kid in his class is next to him, and he can clearly see that guy’s answer sheet. What’s Dick’s Boardroom like?

- Harry is 12. He has experienced his first wet dream and soon discovers the fantastic sensation he gets by rubbing his penis. Is there Boardroom activity? Is there a new Board member?

- Pam is 22 and married a year. She has never experienced genital pleasure and has "bad" feelings when she has sexual thoughts. Even so, she was sexually active even before marriage, and craves being told she is loved by her sexual partner. Can you construct what influences may have led to Pam's situation? Who/what might be the active directors serving on her Board?

- Agha Mir, 25, is offered $60 from a prosperous family in return for his four-day-old son; his wife and other children are starving. The family can eat for a month on this amount of money. [taken from a story in *The Hartford Courant*, 2/8/02; he accepts]

These examples were selected to help you reflect on your own life's situations and examine the functioning of your Board of Directors. Consider the thoughts that "pop into your mind" as messengers advocating for one of your three masters: master nature, master nurture, or *self*-mastery. Recognizing the source of your thoughts can be very helpful in decision-making. Nature tends to emphasize past wisdom; nurture focuses on present experience. S*elf*-mastery can integrate past and present wisdom and the resources to wisely anticipate the future consequences of action. What are some current situations in your own life that you could use as examples? I encourage you to reflect on meaningful situations in your life. Your power to manage your own life, to negotiate with your thoughts and direct your thinking, will increase as you become familiar with your Board members and the master whose agenda they represent.

See also these related strens: *Know your Self*, *Know your Masters*, (parts 1 and 2 of this three-part stren) and *Thoughts and Thinking.*

Stren #86: Mental Freedom
Conscious Evolution and Survival

Welcome to the "wake-up!" stren, #86. Familiarity with prior strens permits us to create a unified understanding of mental freedom. We have assumed responsibility to make our life joyous and meaningful. Success requires that we first recognize the *self*-deception that we are already wisely mastering our destiny when our intellect remains dominated by the prewired rules of fate and circumstance.

When Abe Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation (January 1, 1863), he used his martial war power to suspend civil law to accomplish two important principles. First, the proclamation freed the muscles of over 3 million black slaves from the control of white masters. Second, Lincoln's courageous act changed the consciousness of the world population. His edict popularized the moral judgment that the abolition of slavery of a person of any color to a self-serving master was, and remains, a correct moral action. In his Gettysburg Address (November, 1963), Lincoln referred to the war's goal as "a new birth of freedom."

While the law established the right of black slaves to direct their own muscle power, their opportunity to free their intelligence from fate and circumstance was initially little improved. Some were even worse off than before because of their lack of education and inexperience with *self*-mastery. They were suddenly without the support of a "master" whose interest was to protect his "property." Courageous edicts and laws cannot of themselves emancipate the intellectual power of people whose minds remain slaves to instinct, tradition, and human dictators, what we also call *fate and circumstance*. True *self*-mastery must include the opportunity to discover and share knowledge, and then use it wisely. Freeing our muscle power to do our own bidding is of limited benefit when our intellectual power remains dominated by self-serving masters who initially prescribe who we are and what we are to become.

Physical freedom is the opportunity to direct our own muscle power.
Mental freedom is the opportunity to direct the power of our intelligence.

The reward of freeing our intellect from domination by our animal brain is the opportunity to create a joyous, meaningful life experience. By teaching ourselves to replace the hardwired prescriptions of dictators with *common sense* problem-solving, including collaboration and cooperation for mutual gain, we elevate ourselves to the humanity to which we aspire. If we allow ourselves to remain servant to our animal brain we can predict continued destructive confrontations, human catastrophe, and possibly self-annihilation from use of our new weapons with ultimate destructive power. The intent of this stren is to create awareness that it is our time to free the enslaved intellectual power of all persons from fate and circumstance. More than ever, we are positioned to claim mental freedom from self-serving dictators who would have us uncritically obey their authority and ignore common sense wisdom.

In prior strens, we have learned that all earth creatures are born into mental slavery and remain so. Humankind is the exception. We begin life as a servant to instinct and thereafter are taught to obey the prescribed rules modeled by our nurturers. The way all people think, and because of that the way we feel and act, does not need to remain servant to Masters Fate and Circumstance. Nature has gifted us with a specialized "freedom organ," our sophisticated cerebral cortex. We are capable of educating ourselves to assume personal responsibility for who we are and what we choose to become. The force that has created all life has selected us to become its partner in determining our fate and all that is about us. However, years must pass before our freedom organ is sufficiently mature and we can educate our *self* to attain *self-mastery*, what we also call *mental freedom, becoming our own person, thought control,* and *super-maturity*.

Our freedom organ provides us the power of imagination and interpretation through the use of symbols. It enables us to discover, store, share, and pass knowledge of nature's secrets forward to successive generations. Our generation has acquired sufficient knowledge of cause-and-effect that we have made ourselves godlike rulers on earth. Knowledge empowers us to alter what nature and our nurturers first make of us. This ability to selectively choose the extent to which we accept those prewired behaviors demanded by our animal brain and the tradition prescribed by our nurturers is *mental freedom*. It grants us the ability to introduce original common sense solutions that we ourselves create instead of remaining blindly obedient to authority. Mental freedom is never absolute; it is measured by the degree to which we create original actions and direct our will power to selectively choose from alternate possibilities. In short, although we all spend the better part of our first decades as a servant to instinct and tradition, with appropriate education we can free our will from fate and circumstance to assume *self*-mastery and personal responsibility for our life's experience. Our freed will, equipped with the power of knowledge, may make life wonderful, create self-annihilation, or anything in between, depending on what combination of instinct, tradition, and common sense governs our will.

Let's not confuse mental freedom with wisdom. A freed will tends to act stupidly until educated to think using common sense. Stupidity is using yesterday's solutions to yesterday's problems to solve today's problems when we have new knowledge and the common sense needed to address current issues.

There are both similarities and differences between the subjection of the physical power of our muscles and the subjection of the creative power of our mind to "other" masters. One difference is critical to our survival – the degree to which we deceive ourselves into believing that we are in control of our power of knowledge!

<u>Similarities</u>: Physical slavery of our muscle power and mental slavery of our intellectual power both subject us to the self-serving demands of an "other" master. Each is created by the authority of powerful forces which we are initially helpless to resist. The master may be benevolent or tyrannical but usually is some combination of

both. Fairness and justice, however, are hardly conceivable in a master-slave relationship. Masters usually resist emancipating their slaves. When our freedom organ is mature and educated in common sense thinking, we may propose self-mastery but our animal brain and established tradition oppose giving up control; they call forth the authority of emotion and assert their will to trump intellect. On the other side, the slave's perception of his master's treatment, whether cruel or kind, usually fades in importance next to preservation of life's needs – food and shelter. To seek physical and mental independence from authority risks giving up the protection and support that has sustained life for unproven venture and danger.

Much like physical slave owners, *instinc*t and *tradition* assert authority as their measure of propriety and declare alternative beliefs to be rebellion or heresy. They punish originality when it opposes their perspective, no matter how much it is supported by common sense. Hardwired to believe their own assumptions, they are impersonal bystanders disinterested in knowledge and wisdom – especially when innovation is contradictory.

<u>The Critical Difference</u>: **When physical freedom is compromised by an "other" master, slaves are clearly consciously aware of their restraints; not so with mental slavery!**

Nature provides us multiple senses to make us aware when our muscles are constrained by another; however, we lack senses to inform us that we are all born into mental slavery, and that our creative power remains so enslaved until we educate ourselves in the *newer way of thinking* that recognizes self-mastery. Nature physically pre-wires us to detect and avoid physical danger. Mental freedom, like spirituality, wisdom, and the values that create morality are concepts; they are invisible to our physical senses. We only know the qualities of self-mastery through our intellect.

We lack the power of imagination and interpretation until our freedom organ is sufficiently mature and properly educated to appreciate the degree our mental power is controlled by other masters. The emotion that motivates our behavior resides within our animal brain and is active from birth, while common sense and wisdom emerge years later as our cerebral cortex attains maturity, and even then only when equipped with proper language.

Mental slavery is easily made invisible by the teachings of *instinct*, *tradition*, and the *human* dictators who "educate" us in our first way of thinking. We learn that the master's way is "the right way and the only way". Continued self-deception is expected when guilt and physical punishment demand obedience to the will of the master and restrict rational engagement with tribes and ideas labeled as *unworthy of trust* and *dangerous*.

The Russian philosopher, Peter Ouspensky, attributes to his teacher, G. I. Gurdjieff, an interesting parable to describe man's predicament:

A powerful but mean magician raised sheep for his dinner table. He didn't want to pay to hire a shepherd or erect a fence to keep the sheep from running away so he hypnotized them. First he had them believe they were immortal and when they were being skinned, it would be good for them, even pleasant; second, that he was a good loving master; and third, that if anything bad would happen to them, it would not be that day so they had no need to think about it. Thereafter, the sheep never ran away and quietly awaited their time when the magician would require their flesh and skins.[59]

Should the sheep be awakened from their hypnotic state? Are they better off knowing their fate if their animal brain is incapable of altering it? What if their brain was sufficiently developed that knowledge of their predicament could inspire them to alter their fate? Ouspensky concludes that in order to act consciously with intention, it is necessary to know the nature of the forces which keep man in a state of sleep. Hypnotic sleep is not normal but may be maintained and strengthened to prevent self-understanding.

A more contemporary explanation of the hypnotic sleep described by Ouspensky is called the *helplessness/hopelessness* response. The helplessness/hopelessness (H/H) response is the false belief, usually learned early, that any effort to solve a problem will be futile so we "give up" trying. The H/H response shuts down our energy factory. Rodents placed in a tub of water will swim to safety while rodents that are restrained early in life fail to do so and drown.[60] A baby elephant tethered to a stake will reach adult size with enough strength to easily uproot the stake, but doesn't. The pervasiveness of the H/H response has been widely documented in humankind. In several hundred interviews I have conducted, respondents overwhelming stated they wished or prayed for world peace but took no action because they felt powerless to make a difference. During our immature, helpless years, we all learn that approval must come from others. We not only lack the ability to endorse ourselves during our formative youth, we are often taught is it vain and egotistical to do so; thus, the pervasiveness of H/H. We continue to depend on others for what more appropriately we could assume personal responsibility.

IF we choose to continue to survive and thrive, awareness of this one difference is critical! The current proliferation of weapons with ultimate destructive power has created an urgent need to awaken ourselves. The power of intelligence controlled by the emotion of our animal brain will lead to the imminent human catastrophe predicted by our most knowledgeable citizens. We require conscious awareness of a problem before we can initiate the urgent united action we now require to save us from ourselves. Surviving and thriving requires that we "outlaw" the mental slavery of people of all colors to self-serving dictators as we have outlawed control of the muscles of black people from slavery to white masters.

[59]*In Search of the Miraculous*; Peter Ouspensky, Harcourt, 1949, page 219; quote paraphrased.
[60]I was fortunate during my training in psychiatry to hear lectures by Professor Curt Richter who conducted the original experiments on the H/H response.

Here is a second important feature that distinguishes the power of intellect from muscle power. Our animal brain is driven by emotion; our cerebral cortex is motivated by intellect. Hardwired throughout history to learn by making mistakes through trial-and-error, our animal brain lacks the cerebral cortex's ability to consciously apply common sense and promote change by intention. The knowledge we acquire through intellect enables us to recognize what our senses don't automatically bring to our conscious awareness. Logic and common sense lack the power of emotion; however, unlike the animal portion of our brain, our cerebral cortex can assign meaning to symbols and thereby link the power of emotion to common sense. Our specialized freedom organ is like an unwritten tablet, a clean slate. It provides us the opportunity to self-program *a newer way of thinking* that empowers us with intentionality – it has the ability to learn how to learn. Consciousness allows us to alter what nature and our nurturers make of us. The greater the knowledge we discover, the more we make ourselves powerful influencers of our destiny.

So, how can a force this powerful become enslaved to an "other" master? Once our animal brain experiences how the power of knowledge multiplies the power of muscle, it becomes an addiction. The conscious efforts of our freedom organ are enslaved to our animal brain and "educated" in the traditions prescribed by our nurturers when our cortex is too immature and helpless to resist, and we initially lack the self-consciousness to know anything else. From birth, the conscious power of our cortical brain is forced to serve the mindless authority of *master instinct* and then our nurturers, *master tradition*. Until we consciously choose to educate ourselves in self-consciousness and assume a leadership position, we remain passive servants to fate and circumstance.

The demands of instinct and our nurturers are often in conflict; their competition for dominance is a common source of anxiety which when exaggerated, leads to irrational behavior or what we call "neurosis." One of the benefits of common sense wisdom is creating an end to the civil war fought between our two early masters, i.e. instinct and our nurturer's traditions. Creating peace of mind will lead us to world peace. Logic by itself lacks the strength to resist the authority of emotion. This is why educating our cerebral cortex in the skills of emotional self-endorsement and linking them to common sense is our means to *a newer way of thinking* (ANWOT), mental freedom, patience, peace of mind, and peace in the world.[61]

It is time to recognize that mental slavery is far more pervasive than the subjugation of one's muscle power to an "other" master. Recognition is a prerequisite to abolishing mental slavery. The action that ended physical slavery was not easy. It required great courage to challenge tradition and issue the Emancipation Proclamation, along with a united effort by abolitionists, America's bloodiest war, and three years to obtain the consensus to pass the thirteenth amendment to the Constitution. Mental freedom from nature and our nurturers cannot be created by edict. It is the reward of

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The seven mind-freeing, life-changing, world-saving word-switches described in strens 7-15 may be effectively applied once we teach ourselves sufficient skill in emotional self-endorsement.

our personal conscious effort to educate our self in *a newer way of thinking*. The world peace we wish or pray for requires the effort of minds freed from the destructive aggression of our animal brain so we can recognize the value of cooperation and collaboration for mutual gain.

Consciousness and Self-consciousness:

The opportunity and now the urgent need to popularize mental freedom can be attributed to four phenomena related to the evolution of mental awareness. For billions of years, life on earth lacked conscious awareness. Although we don't know how many years ago the evolution of our central nervous system attained primitive consciousness, it is apparent that mental awareness has been expanding since small-brained dinosaurs roamed earth some 600 million years past. Consciousness has a long history of slavery to *instinct* and *tradition*, to *fate* and *circumstance*. It has served the animal brain to improve trial-and-error learning. Mental power added to muscle power enables our predator instinct to become far more effective in preserving the life cycle.

Our ancestors created the second important phenomenon when they introduced complex language 50,000 years ago. Language was a quantum leap in the development of self-mastery by empowering *reflective thinking*, what we also call "self-consciousness." Self-consciousness is the special human quality of our advanced cerebral cortex to become conscious of our consciousness. The label for our species is *Homo sapiens sapiens*; it means "the one who is aware of being aware." Self-mastery is the skill that enables us to join *fate* and *circumstance* in determining our destiny. Reflective thinking is our means to think objectively about what we think, and to initiate directions that go beyond the pre-determined limits of instinct and tradition. Our unique freedom organ, when mature and educated with common sense wisdom, is our means to create out-of-the-box solutions to new problems using current knowledge, and to become our own person and assume personal responsibility for our destiny.

The third phenomenon boosting our mental freedom opportunity was the discovery of the scientific method. It initiated the asymptotic growth[62] of our knowledge to its current explosive speed. Knowledge of the universal laws of cause-and-effect provides us the raw power to change ourselves and all that is about us. Knowledge by itself does not provide wisdom to apply power constructively; wisdom requires applying common sense to knowledge.

The forth phenomenon propelling us to mental freedom is current and linked to our survival. Due to the explosive power of knowledge we are now proliferating biological, chemical, and nuclear weapons so devastating that they offer no second chance, and making them available to multiple tribes. We have set ourselves apart from all life on earth by changing the rules for survival, and so we have made ourselves responsible to step up the evolution of mental freedom to a revolution. The prediction of our most knowledgeable citizens that our newest weapons will be used in our lifetime or that of our children is our wake-up call! We can't afford to sleep through the blaring

[62]Asymptotic growth is accelerating the acquisition of knowledge in diminishing periods of time; it is described in stren #50.

alarms warning us of imminent catastrophe; they can no longer be ignored. Surviving and thriving requires that we rapidly educate our freedom organ in the skills of ***a newer way of thinking*** (Einstein's solution) that emphasizes prevention more than trial-and-error learning. We must consciously push evolution forward. We need to make our cerebral cortex the dominant director of our thinking, feelings, and actions rather than the animal portion of our brain. We must teach ourselves to selectively replace trial-and-error learning and the mindless mimicking of our nurturers with wise, common sense problem solving.

To proceed to succeed, we must understand that emotion is our "Goliath" while reason, embodied in "David," is the underdog. Our freedom organ must attain a high degree of maturity and be educated in common sense wisdom before we can expect a reasonable contest between brain and brawn, before cooperation and collaboration for mutual gain can overcome the traditional destructive competition to assert dominance of one's own tribe that marks our history. Our future requires that we make wisdom our dominant leader in <u>cooperation</u> with physical might. We must strengthen the common sense problem solving ability of our cerebral cortex to redirect the self-serving destructive aggression preprogrammed in our animal brain. Until we teach ourselves *a newer way of thinking*, brawn and what we call *fate and circumstance,* or *instinct and tradition*, will remain our masters, as it is with all other species.

The secret to self-mastery has been revealed in earlier strens. Education for self-mastery begins with emotional self-endorsement as described in strens #2, 4-8, and especially 16-24. We must teach our intelligent cerebral cortex to link sufficient emotion to common sense to assume mastery of our life's experience. Education in self-endorsement is quite easy IF we first get over our learned helplessness/hopelessness behavior. The mental wisdom of "David" will collaborate with the muscular "Goliath" of our animal brain for mutual benefit when we teach ourselves sufficient emotional self-endorsement. We do so by assigning meaning to symbols that transform ideas into physical phenomena, a task that is quite attainable through our properly equipped freedom organ.

<u>What are the implications of remaining a mental slave to instinct and tradition</u>?

Again, familiarity with what has been described in prior strens (for example: strens #33-35, 39-40, 70-72, 77-79, 82-86) allows a concise answer. The human brain has evolved from a single undifferentiated mass to greater size and complexity, presently culminating in its seventh specialized segment, the cerebral cortex.[63] The control of behavior gradually shifts to the highest centers. If time were not of the essence, we could predict that our intelligent cerebral cortex will come to dominate the way we think, feel, and act. The humane values we preach such as love, forgiveness, cooperation, tolerance, compassion, wisdom, mental wealth, global citizenship, and world peace would eventually prevail over the behaviors that are characteristic of the animal portion of our brain. Currently we strive to dominate and win by harmful confrontation, advocate "my way, the only way," and promote local priorities such as our

[63]The medulla, pituitary, pons, pineal body, cerebellum, thalamus, and cerebral cortex.

flag, team, religion, ethnicity, etc. with little regard for who or what is not identified with "our side." Our language emphasizes dependency, prescriptive, and dichotomous words that divide the world in two opposing "either/or" categories. Emotion drives our behavior more than common sense. In short, we remain "animal brain" dominant.

The greatest imminent threat to our surviving and thriving is that powerful weapons that offer no second chance will be unleashed. The hardwired adaptive behaviors that were established by millions of years of trial-and-error learning that were effective for yesterday's problems will no longer solve today's dangers. Surviving and thriving now require that we consciously evolve to greater civilization by emphasizing prevention rather than making and correcting mistakes that offer no second chance.

The critical question is "How can we empower our freedom organ?" The answer is quite simple. We need only awaken ourselves to realize that we are fully equipped to consciously push evolution forward. We must teach ourselves Einstein's solution – *a newer way of thinking* based on common sense – and we must act urgently. We can no longer passively wait for evolution to follow its natural course. The wisdoms that strengthen our freedom organ are readily available and easily self-taught. A limited number of peace leaders are needed, whose united effort will initiate an unstoppable domino effect.

Our current godlike power to influence our destiny, in the control of our animal brain, will certainly result in human catastrophe. We can educate ourselves in the common sense wisdoms that create our weapons for mass *con*struction. Common sense, using today's knowledge to solve today's problems, is our means to selectively replace the hardwired solutions that worked in the past. The Educational Community's collection of strens is offered to you forever free as one resource to help you become your own person and a powerful teacher of world peace.

Self-examination:

How often do you do what feels good immediately when common sense would lead you to take a wiser action? Do you observe many people who relentlessly pursue physical wealth far beyond "enough" while they neglect seeking the mental wealth that creates a joyous, meaningful life experience? Have you noticed that our society, "the establishment," is a reflection of the dominance of emotion over common sense? Our formal education excels in teaching skills that promote physical wealth while neglecting those that prepare us to create a joyous, meaningful life experience. To what degree is your own life dominated by your animal brain – *greed and speed* more than *wise creeds and good deeds*? Are you among the majority that deceive themselves into believing they are global citizens when in fact the first priority is "giving to get"?

If we imagine the collective mind that reflects our total population, we see that our animal brain has been and remains dominant over our freedom organ. Our establishment values reflect what we might expect in an individual whose *majority*

political party in control of consciousness is the animal brain – and the party platform emphasizes accumulating material wealth and security for one's self, tribe, flag, and belief system more than education in wisdom, nonviolent communication, and the skills that create Mental Wealth millionaires. In short, we remain "animal brain" dominant. Emotion drives our behavior more than common sense. The critical question is "How can we empower our freedom organ?" The answer is, through emotional self-endorsement and secondary endorsement.

We are the link between animals and humanity. **We are adolescents in the transition stage of evolving from dependence on our animal brain to assume personal responsibility for our destiny.** Mental freedom requires five ingredients abundantly available to each of us: "Yes, I can" (a spark of faith in our self), work, patience, direction, and risk-taking (a willingness to let go of established ways that no longer work). We have the means to free our will from domination by *instinct* and *tradition*, from *fate* and *circumstance* IF we awaken ourselves to the task. We have crossed a tipping point in our evolution where we can apply our knowledge to ask appropriate questions and mobilize our collective skills to answer them:

How shall we respond to the important questions we create as we acquire the godlike power of knowledge through intelligence? Shall we continue to remain ignorant and persist in directing our energy to benefit our self, our tribe, and local priorities regardless of others; or shall we recognize our new technology and the reality that makes everyone our neighbor? To what degree will we allow our growing power to remain dominated by instinct and tradition instead of educating ourselves with wisdom? Shall we continue to favor nature's trial-and-error *either/or* way of thinking that has been dominant through our evolutionary history, or shall we apply nature's special gift of a sophisticated freedom organ to strengthen the newer way of *both...and* thinking that applies common sense to new knowledge to create fresh solutions to new problems? Will we succumb to the easy road by passively accepting the prewired authority of authority, or progress by fiercely educating ourselves to become our own person? As the evolution of life progresses from simplicity to complexity, from mindlessness to consciousness, and now to *self*-consciousness, will we direct our freed will to constructive outcomes or continue to take our chances with fate and circumstance? Shall we continue on the established path of growing through destructive confrontation, or teach all tribes to "win" through collaboration and cooperation. Will we passively allow our mental power to become our weapon of ultimate destruction and self-annihilation, or make common sense wisdom our weapon for mass construction and a wonderful world?

Success in any endeavor may begin with a proclamation but it must be followed by action. Lincoln's edict was the trigger that mobilized a united force to outlaw a tradition we now consider immoral. We don't need to create the energy required for world peace because it is already present, imprisoned in most of our global population. We require only a few leaders, united in effort, to recruit and educate a critical number of mental freedom teachers – "Einstein's army". They in turn will initiate the domino

effect that will circle the world to unleash an imprisoned passion for peace that will be unstoppable. Are you already a peace leader? Willing to become one?

Stren #87: Understanding Will Power – The source of mental freedom

Welcome. Today's stren, #87, reveals the secret of taking control of the mental faculty by which action is initiated and directed, what we call *will power*. Will power is one of the most important unsolved mysteries confronting science. Although we appreciate the power of the mind, the exact mechanism by which imagination and interpretation transforms a concept into physical energy to change the world yet defies our best science.

Will power is word power! "Words are the most powerful form of magic."[64] When an individual shows us an empty hat, utters the "magic" word *abracadabra*, and pulls out a rabbit, we call this person a "magician." We routinely use symbols, primarily words, to magically transform mental or spiritual concepts into measurable physical energy and the actions we create through it. Words are the equivalent of the magician's wand. They are the vehicle for the magical power that allows us to master ourselves and everything around us. "*The pen is mightier than the sword.*"[65] Words build us up and put us down; they create and destroy. Words also empower us with morality – the freedom to establish a personal value system different from what other masters would impose. However, we must first learn or create the specific words linked to emotion that energize the intentioned action. We require considerable schooling in the use of *magical* symbols before we can assume mastery of our life experience. You will significantly increase your personal control over your life's experience by understanding the workings of will power.

Learning starts with labeling! We will be revisiting some of the terms introduced in earlier strens.[66] Our will power is directed by one of three authorities or some combination of the three. Assigning names to each of these masters creates a foundation to recognize the specific words that express the perspective of their master. There are multiple labels to identify the forces that influence our will. In prior strens I have favored the labels *instinct, tradition,* and *self-mastery*. Related labels for instinct are *nature* and *fate*; related labels for tradition are *nurture* and *circumstance*. I have identified the following additional words to signal self-mastery: *mental freedom, thought control, becoming one's own person,* and *super-maturity*. None of these trigger words characterize all of the properties of the forces that direct our will but they effectively serve to distinguish each master from the others. Our language is limited in its ability to fully capture the essence of reality. Nevertheless, symbols empower us to take control of our life's experience. Symbols comprise the mental *second* signaling system that humankind creates to influence our primary physical signaling system.

In stren #86, I indicated that we all remain mental slaves to fate and circumstance, or instinct and tradition, for many years before we are mature enough to educate ourselves to assume responsibility for our life's experience. Until we claim our

[64]From the movie, Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows, part 2.
[65]Adage attributed to English author Edward Bulwer-Lytton in 1839 for his play Richelieu.
[66]You may want to review prior strens and stren #101- ANWOT concepts.

will power we will continue to blindly obey the authority of others – masters resist relinquishing control of their servants. Guiding our destiny using common sense instead of continuing to blindly obey authority requires that we first free our will to become our own person. We proceed faster and more easily when we understand the process.

Although we initially lack sufficient power to control fate and circumstance, the power of our freedom organ to master ourselves becomes increasingly more apparent with the explosive growth of technology. Human selection is dramatically overtaking natural selection in determining the fate of the world. A commonly debated question in my scientific training asked, "Which is more important – nature or nurture?" I have not yet heard the more relevant question, "What is more important – nature, nurture, or *self*-mastery?"

Our will is prewired by our genes to automatically turn on instinct's designated action pathways. Our nurturers, culture, and other events over which we have no control want pieces of our will power. *Master nature* rules our will until *master nurture* invades nature's kingdom to compete and, more often than not, successfully confront and overpower the commands of instinct. Because instinct is initially hard-wired and the traditions of our nurturers quickly become so, they are generally inflexible to any modification of their established pathways. Neither asks for approval. *Master fate* and *master circumstance* carry on a civil war for quite a long time before we introduce the third director of our will power, what we call "*self*-mastery." The long and painful confrontations between these first two masters take quite a toll on our peace of mind. One of the significant benefits of *self*-mastery is the opportunity to create inner peace through the power of common sense.

Won't power: Years of control by instinct and tradition create a helpless/hopeless mindset. Habit from multiple repetitions of blind obedience makes it very difficult to challenge the authorities who first master our will. It takes great courage and equally great stupidity to rebel from authority when we lack the power to do so and we are almost certain to incur resistance and punishment for acting, even for thinking, contrary to instinct and tradition. While we lack the strength of will power, we do have *won't power*. *Self*-mastery of our will power begins with *won't power*. *Won't power* initiates the early rebellious acts that allow us to recognize that we can differ from the "establishment" and still survive. *Won't power* provides the spark that gradually allows us to move forward to claim our *will* power. Self-mastery requires that we risk facing the warnings of masters who resist freeing their subjects to pursue the uncertainty of success. Disobedience to authority initiates the "self" of *self*-consciousness that begins the life-long process of freeing our will power and keeping it free.

Consciousness: The evolution of conscious awareness introduced a non-physical, private mental energy source that is capable of influencing the direction of physical energy. Consciousness is the vehicle by which we introduce symbols that serve as a signal to turn on action. This mental activating system, what we are calling *will power*, energizes symbols with meaning to convert nonphysical ideas or concepts into physical energy. Symbols in the form of words, such as "mother" or "fire," and

images, such as a Christian cross or Nazi swastika, serve as triggers to turn on concepts and ideas, feelings, and action. Our *primary signaling system*, which consists of the physical pathway that leads directly to action, is present in all species. Imagination and ideas empower us with a *second signaling system* (see stren #78) to incite the emotional energy that may deliberately initiate a physical action pathway. We make ourselves powerful creators and rulers on earth because of this sophisticated *second signaling system*.

The new source of energy introduced by conscious awareness is raw will power until direction is provided by one or more masters. Recognizing the masters that direct our will requires accurate labels to identify the "players." *Instinct* is the first master of our conscious will. Instinct consists of the action pathways hardwired during our 9 months of gestation, but it has a much longer history of behaviors learned by trial-and-error that began billions of years ago. We then acquire whatever traditions our *nurturers* provide us through years of immaturity when we are unequipped to resist. The word-symbols first programmed into our consciousness remain faithful to the perspective of their creator.

Consciousness begins as a servant of instinct and tradition until we attain sufficient maturity and our freedom organ is schooled in the newer words that serve intellect and common sense instead of authority. *Self*-mastery means there is a "*self*" that can assign meaning to words and visual symbols. Thus, we must create *self*-consciousness, i.e. become conscious of our consciousness, to personally initiate the energy that directs change.

Self-consciousness: We require years before we attain sufficient maturity and schooling to create a "*self*" that's strong enough to master instinct and tradition. The cortical portion of our brain must be educated in "*reflective thinking*" – the ability to look at ourselves, to think about what we think. **The secret of *self*-mastery is educating our *self* to become objectively aware of our thinking, like when we reflect upon ourselves in a mirror.** It is so much easier to put on make-up or shave and make appropriate adjustments when we can "see" in a mirror what we want to change. ***Reflective thinking*** (stren #77) is *a newer way of thinking* (ANWOT) that provides us our identity as a "*self*." *Mental power* and *spiritual power* are overlapping labels for energy that has a non-physical source. Scientists label this abstract energy "mental power" while "spiritual power" is preferred by more religious individuals.

Reflective thinking requires new words that switch the allegiance of our will from "other" masters to the newly introduced *self* of *self*-mastery. An appropriate label for the specialized symbols that initiate change is "*word-switch*." A "switch" redirects one course of action to a different action according to the "master's" intention, the same way a *physical* switch can change the direction and destination of a train or control the intensity of an electric light. Symbols, especially words, are *abstract* switches ("***abstract****"* being defined as *apart from concrete existence or substance*) that direct or redirect mental energy according to the perspective of the authority that programs the symbols with meaning. Once we establish our new "*self*" entity, we can educate our

freed will with the *word-switches* that can add wisdom to the word power of *self*-mastery.

Word-switches (strens #5-15): Words can be programmed to serve a specific master. Our will remains a slave to the authority of instinct and tradition until we create a vocabulary of words that switch control of our will power to the common sense perspective of our mental *self*. The ability to reprogram the action pathways of dictators is the specialized function of the advanced portion of our human brain, our cerebral cortex. I prefer the label "freedom organ" because it describes the cortex's most important function: freeing our will power from its earlier masters to take charge of our life's experience.

The process of establishing mental freedom is accomplished by the creation of new *word-switches* that we add to our mental control panel. Recall that *trigger words* serve as a signal that turns on the action pathway of its designated master, usually instinct or tradition. *Word-switches* are specialized trigger words that we design to upgrade a previously established action pathway. *Word-switches* are most effective when our intelligent freedom organ applies current common sense knowledge to improve the outcome of established pathways that have lost their effectiveness and/or have become dangerous due to new circumstances. We free our will from early masters bit by bit, with each new word-switch and symbol that reflects the intention of our matured *self*-consciousness.

A freed will is the means to realize our decisions, wishes, or plans, to pursue our own good in our own way. Will has been defined as "strength of mind." This is why I refer to the wisdoms that create self-mastery as "strens." Each wisdom and common sense concept that we add to our repertoire strengthens our freed will while it diminishes the power of instinct, tradition, and the human dictators that would control our life's experience. A freed will makes decisions according to one's own discretion and acts upon them independently, in spite of opposition from other authorities.

Our greatest problem is that we deceive ourselves into believing that we are masters of our *self* when we still remain servant to instinct and tradition. It is as though we are hypnotized to remain faithful to the authority of our early masters and the deceptive authority of "sound bites", when the exercise of common sense would have us forge newer action pathways supported by wisdom.

Sound bites: Words condense power into what we call a *sound bite*. A *sound bite* is a very short piece of speech, words from an authority figure that are taken from a larger speech or an interview and which are singled out for the listener as the most important point of the speech. A sound bite is meant to be taken as truth, and to remain in the listener's memory as a "taste" that represents the whole "meal" of the larger message. Since the context of what is being said is missing, sound bites are often agents of manipulation.[67] They make it easy to convey what the authority figure demands of the listener to think, feel, and act. Sound bites notoriously substitute brevity

[67]en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sound bite

for common sense; they misrepresent reality for the self-serving benefit of "the authority." One is meant to comply with the message, like mindless sheep, according to the directions of their master, much like a small sheep dog can direct an entire herd by its mere presence, bark, assumed threat, or a symbolic bite on the leg of a few members of the herd. Sound bites are prominent in TV advertisements and political campaigns. They are also the favorite means by which instinct and tradition control our will power.

> "One could argue the greatest threat [to humanity] is one that works indirectly: the growth of mass infotainment, enabled by electronic media. It has evolved under a kind of natural selection that favors whatever holds people's attention, which has at best a loose connection with the truth. Disagreements about the facts are twisted into conflicts between people; complex topics are simplified, mystified, or ignored; and any serious topic that bobs to the surface is washed away in a sea of sound bites, flashing images, and what passes for news. Because this overlays and crowds out other communications, it compounds every problem that could be lessened by a better-informed public."[68]

The important insight in this stren is to recognize that we are all subject to instinct and tradition until our freedom organ is physically mature and appropriately schooled and self-taught. Education in *a newer way of thinking* that reflects the will of *self*-mastery must be cultivated through a gradual process such the curriculum of strens offered in this series. We empower our freed will by adding new *word-switches* that turn on adaptive action pathways that reflect common sense wisdom, and selectively turn off those established patterns that have become habitual, automatic, and ineffective. Our freedom organ can reprogram established thinking pathways using out-of-the-box common sense logic to assign meaning to new word-switches. Like in the train track analogy, the simple act of willfully changing the switch at a single point creates a new outcome and negates the predetermined course of action.

We have made ourselves powerful creators! We have the knowledge to invent word-switches with the assigned meanings we choose and thereby influence our life's experience and all that is about us. We may choose to act wisely or stupidly. We may continue to blame others or assume personal responsibility. We may allow our will to keep serving the commands of our early dictators, or free our intelligent mind to act with common sense wisdom, with *self*-mastery. We can harness the "magical" power of words to take charge of our destiny even though we don't yet precisely understand the mystery of how the body and mind, physical and spiritual power interact. This power is available to each of us. It doesn't depend on money, good looks, or unusual intelligence, and may be even be effective when we lack good physical health. Which choices will you make?

[68]Interview with K. Eric Drexler; *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists,* Jan/Feb 2007, p. 58.

Stren #88: Know Your Values; Know Your Religion (Part A)
My Assumptive World or "Religion"

Welcome! This stren, #88, and the next one will encourage you to become more acquainted with *your* values. Our first values emerge from the collection of our beliefs; they first spring from faith in authority rather than knowledge, from acceptance of instinct and tradition rather than scientific study. Awareness of our history shows us that science gradually leads to changes in our beliefs, because new knowledge can make established assumptions untenable. As we increase our knowledge of universal cause-and-effect relationships, we realize that many of the extraordinary leaps of faith our ancestors made missed their mark. However, it takes considerable time for established religion to adapt to new knowledge because instinct and tradition resist chance. Established religions initially declare new knowledge that contradicts its authority "heresy". In time, it acknowledges the possibility of a small degree of validity and years later the new truth is heralded as the original product of its own creativity.

We are powerfully influenced by the values we accept on faith. Examining your value system can help you become your own person and dramatically strengthen your self-mastery to direct your destiny. To encourage you to reflect on your own beliefs about the world and how you acquired your values, I will reveal the process by which I acquired most of my "religious" views or assumptions. I want to inspire you to understand the process that shaped your values. The process of "knowing yourself" will strengthen your religious beliefs, not weaken them. This stren is <u>not</u> intended to impose my personal values on you. I believe neither you nor anyone capable of vision is wise to blindly accept another's views. I share my story to encourage you to examine your story. I would also like you to understand my passion to promote mental freedom and world peace. The next stren will focus on the influence of science on our religion and how they are compatible.

This stren could just as well be called "My assumptive world." Each of us acts in a manner that is based on the assumptions we make about our self and the world we live in. Science doesn't provide us sufficient facts to answer our most important questions: *Do we have a purpose, and if so, what is it? What is ethical and moral? What is beauty? What is the perfect life? Is there life after death?*

For our first dozen years, until about the onset of puberty, our brain cells have the special ability to faithfully record what they receive. Learning the "shoulds" that dictators demand of us is as predictable as learning our native language. The values to which we are exposed are not our own. They belong to those who shape us like putty in their hands – namely *nature* and our *nurturers*, *fate* and *circumstance*. The values of those in authority are passively recorded in our brain and remain there unless and until we actively modify them. Whether our role models are well-meaning or just mean, loving or self-serving, we remain servants to their whims unless and until we actively modify them. The immature mind lacks the strength to do otherwise. Perhaps this is why Socrates told us, "The unexamined life is not worth living," and sages through the ages advise self-enlightenment: "Know thyself!"

We act primarily according to the faith-based assumptions we make about what we know and what is beyond our knowledge. Imagine that all of our scientific knowledge is bounded by a fence. Our ancestors were intelligent, but their limited knowledge could be contained within a very small fence. What is unknown is outside the fence and must be assumed on faith. Many of the answers to our most important questions must be answered based on our assumptions, beliefs, and the values we assign to what is beyond the fence – what I call "our religion." Religion is the sum total of our collected beliefs or assumptions. With the recent introduction of the scientific method, we are rapidly expanding the knowledge inside our fence and applying it to our daily life's activities. History reveals a progression of modifying the giant leaps of faith that missed their mark with smaller jumps that have greater universal acceptance.

This is my story. Use it only to identify your own values, certainly not to mimic mine. The word *humanist* best describes what I accept as my truth. I am concerned more with human beings, their interests and achievements, than with abstract beings or issues of theology. My passion is to improve our human condition and alleviate suffering. I believe we are a work-in-progress of a powerful creative force which is transforming ourselves and the earth from a savage, uncivilized state to one that emphasizes the humane qualities of love, kindness, mercy, and compassion.

My views were influenced by a mildly Jewish upbringing, although many of my early years were spent with a young, non-Jewish "nursemaid" who looked after me while my parents worked long hours. I am mostly a gastronomic Jew. I love matzah ball soup and gefilte fish. I also love going to Disney World, visiting the various pavilions and trying the different ethnic foods. This is one basis of my conviction of the importance of diversity. My understanding of Judaism as it was taught to me is as follows.

The central ethical command is embodied in one word, "*mitzvah*." It means, *do good deeds*! This moral obligation is simple and easy to follow. There is no missionary movement to convert others to Judaism, as in Christianity or Islam. Within my Jewish upbringing I have never heard that "chosen" implied Jews claim to be a master race. I was taught "the chosen people" means Jews were given extra responsibility to introduce the idea that there is one God who rules all, an idea which was contradictory to the practice of idol worship and multiple gods. Our ancestors had some interesting beliefs as a result of their leap to faith, and some unusual rituals to please their gods

"Chosen" also means the Jews are to think with wisdom and share such with others. One of the most admirable *mitzvahs* is to study with the sages how to best conduct our life. The sages were thought-leaders, usually *Rabbis,* which means "teachers," who engaged in dialog to interpret ethical issues. I was taught with an

emphasis on this life; there is no description of an afterlife, but neither is there a refutation. *Life after death* wasn't considered an important theme, perhaps because it is beyond our current knowledge. There is no equivalent of the elaborate descriptions of heaven and hell found in Christianity.

When I was taken to *shul* (Jewish temple) I could not understand the services, which were mostly conducted in Hebrew so they weren't very meaningful. I am aware of Jewish fundamentalists who believe they have the right answers, just as fundamentalists in all religions advocate the superiority and exclusivity of their own religion. The fundamentalist perspective is, "My way, the only way." This assumption, based on authority more than common sense, has always turned me off; more so now that I'm a bit more knowledgeable and more mature. I believe ascribing superiority of one group over another is the expression of bigotry, prejudice, and destructive confrontation. I hold that no religion is superior and none are inferior, but that beliefs that support doing harm to others require restraint.

I was the first in my family to finish high school, and I was uncertain about what I might do upon completing it. My life took a dramatic turn when my high school counselor and football coach, Otts Helm, called me into his office and insisted that I go to college. My family did not encourage me but they offered no resistance and were supportive of my decision. Johns Hopkins truly provided me a liberalizing education. I am grateful for the opportunity many professors provided by sharing their knowledge and wisdom. Philosophy and religion were favorite subjects as they addressed many of the questions I asked myself. Medical school was certainly an experience in getting to know my physical self, an invaluable beginning to study the workings of the mind. My most influential mentor was the late Jerome Frank, professor of psychiatry at Johns Hopkins and world authority on the psychological issue of war and peace. However, my greatest teachers were the thousands of individuals who shared their journey to well-being during my professional practice.

In my college days, I was taught that "religion is the moral teaching of humankind." My dictionary definition is "a set of beliefs concerning the cause, nature, and purpose of the universe ... often containing a moral code governing the conduct of human affairs."[69] Some people identify a specific "organized" formal religion that they ascribe to and *say* they practice; yet, they often conduct their lives so at odds with the principles of their identified religion that I question if they got the name correct. Others who profess no formal religion seem to subscribe quite faithfully to the moral teachings of one or more identified religions. Even avowed atheists regularly act on the faith they place in their assumptions. From my point of view, everyone is "religious" because we are always acting on the basis of our particular faith, our unique set of collective

[69]Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary, Random House, 1994

assumptions. They just might not have a name for their unique personalized set of beliefs. "My religion" or "John's religion" may be more accurate than the broad labels we use, such as Christian, Moslem, Jew, Nazi, atheist, etc. Since our religious beliefs are so influential, wisdom suggests we familiarize ourselves with the assumptions that influence the conduct of our life.

We used to believe ourselves to be a step below the angels. That may be true, but I confess I don't even know if there are angels, and if so, whether we are very close or eons away. I believe I am the "immediate" product of millions of years of evolution, and a step above the monkeys … a giant step. I humbly accept that my human capacity for mental freedom, while quite sufficient to serve me well in my lifetime, may be puny in the grand scheme of things. I am curious to know how I came to be. As so many others do, I assume there is a first cause or "uncaused cause" but I don't believe I have the capacity to clearly identify who or what that power is and what my place is in the overall scheme. However, the challenge of discovery is inspiring and I am excited by the opportunity for self-enlightenment. I believe I have sufficient resources to make my life's experience beautiful, fulfilling, and productive. I have faith in my capacity to make a difference for me, and that in so doing, I'll have an impact on others and the world of which I am a part. I hold the directing of my energy to these ends to be a worthy endeavor.

I would like to know if there is a hereafter and what that might be. Explanations are commonly found in most formal religions, and many people accept a faith-based explanation that powerfully influences their actions. I assume there are universal values and wisdoms that our great religions have identified most of them, and they have far more similarities than differences. I believe the pervasive animosity associated with formal religions is created by our two-category early way of thinking more so than the basic values of our formal religions. Our prevalent manner of thinking leads us to focus on our differences while we ignore the similarities that relate us. This is why I believe Einstein's insight is correct – if we choose to survive, we require *a newer manner of thinking* (ANWOT) based more on common sense than authority.

My *assumptive world view* is the basis of what I consider my religion and the values that lead to action. They form a framework that makes it easier to address the value issues of daily living. I cannot say I always adhere to them but I do what I reasonably can. I hope my story will help you relate to your story.

Here is what makes sense to me:

☻ ***Striving to do worthy deeds*** **is the simplest statement of my religion.** Good deeds are doing what benefits someone and/or makes the world a better place to live. The world consists of its total amount of positives and negatives; any worthy deed adds to the total good.

☻ Attaining the good life requires knowing one's *self*. The 5 ingredients are abundantly available: faith (I think I can!), work, patience, direction, and risk-taking.

☻ The universal rules of a moral life are discoverable through common sense and verifiable by diverse tribes. Examples include "*Treat others as I would have them treat me*," and "*Love myself so I have plenty for my neighbors*." Our animal brain advocates "*My way, the only way*" and "*Eat or be eaten*," concepts which are unlikely to receive universal agreement.

☻ I strive to have tolerance for all people even if I don't agree with their assumptions. Tolerance begins with respect for myself.

☻ I am responsible for my actions and experience. I have been given the gift of opportunity to become my own person, to free my will from the demands of "others," and I don't want to waste it. Though initially dependent on *fate* and *circumstance*, I believe that as I develop physical and mental maturity I can selectively free myself from those commands of my genes and nurturers that no longer work. *Mental* freedom is one of my most important strivings. I believe we can each choose the amount of energy we invest in *self*-mastery, and when we do, the payoff is invaluable.

☻ I continuously strive for self-enlightenment by strengthening *newer ways of thinking* (ANWOT) to cope with the issues of modernity. I have come to believe that the prescriptive, dichotomous, two-category manner of thinking inherent in the native language we first acquire is the prime source of prejudice, hatred, and wars. I believe we each <u>can</u> acquire a wiser manner of thinking to consistently promote our well-being and the well-being of those we love.

☻ Love is an important source of energy; perhaps our most important.[70] Resentment and hate restrain love. Forgiveness is our most difficult but potent form of love. It is our antidote to resentment and hate.

☻ Creating and sharing love begins with loving one's self: Love, like hate, is a product of our manner of thinking, of our higher mental skills. I do well when I assign a high priority to the use of my mental energy for the manufacture of love.

☻ I strive to become my own best friend because I will be with my *self* far more than anyone else. I want to enjoy and make meaningful the time I have to converse with myself.

☻ Maintaining an attitude of gratitude is wisdom of the highest priority. I look at the doughnut more than the hole and focus on the half-full more than the half-empty glass. Gratitude can be expressed in so many ways.

☻ The Serenity prayer provides powerful wisdom: I wisely create the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to

[70] "Life is short, and we have not much time to gladden the hearts of those who travel with us. Oh, be swift to love!" Sign: *The Gathering Place*, Hartford, CT.

know the difference. I regard "prayer" as a wish to motivate me to do all I reasonably can to make it happen. I am my own genie!

☻I value mistakes as a source of learning: Wisdom comes from mistakes; accept and learn from them. Nature endows us with tolerance for mistakes. Consider our ready acceptance of the many mistakes required to learn to walk. It takes years of "training" for us to learn to abhor mistakes, and even more years to rediscover that mistakes are an important means by which we learn. I'm fond of the expression, "I waste at least half my time; I'm just not sure which half."

☻ Maintain high expectancy but limited expectations. My lower expectations conform to the reality that my reasonable best efforts often result in an outcome less than my goal. I accept that I have limited control over luck and circumstance, and the world often doesn't respect "fairness." I believe in working hard to do my reasonable best, and I judge my worth more by my input than the outcome.[71] As I am always in charge of doing my reasonable best, I regularly endorse myself.

☻ I am far from perfect, especially in my own pursuit of *self*-mastery. I invest more time and energy than most because I maintain a special enthusiasm for self-enlightenment, in *the art of living*. I accept my limitations, and expect I will continue to make unwise decisions due to my lack of perfection.

There are many more assumptions that contribute to how I think and feel and act. While grossly incomplete, these assumptions provide the framework that permits me to fill in the spaces as the need arises to address my personal decision-making. I pursue truth and wisdom because I believe they have inherent value for creating a fulfilling life. Are you aware of the "framework" that constitutes <u>your</u> religion? In the next stren, I will share how science influences my value system and encourage you to examine the relationship of science to your religion.

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[71]Carl Rogers, a therapist, put it well when he suggested our view of self-worth may be likened to a fraction in which the numerator is the outcome and the denominator is our expectation. By making unrealistic expectations we judge ourselves to be and feel less than whole.

Stren #89: Know Your Values; Know Your Religion (part B)
Science, religion and values

In the previous stren, #89, I explained how our faith-based *assumptive views* create our personal religion and influence our actions. In this stren, I want to consider how science, i.e. the common sense knowledge of the universal laws of cause-and-effect, influences our religion. The word "common" in common sense means it is discoverable by anyone, anywhere, irrespective of their location or religious ideology. Science is based on the universal laws of cause-and-effect, what we call *knowledge*. It helps us perfect the assumptions upon which we base our religion. Religion is the outcome of the leap of faith we make through our assumptions. Religion may be considered an art form in that it is based on personal meaning we ascribe to information that is not readily provable. In the previous stren I offered an analogy that science is knowledge of the universal laws of cause-and-effect, what is contained within a fence. Our knowledge is impressive and constantly growing, but the area outside the fence is far larger than what our science now provides. Religion is the leap into the area beyond the fence. Science and religion are not only compatible, they are contiguous. As in the prior stren, I offer my assumptions to encourage you to identify and strengthen your own process of becoming your own person, i.e. *self-mastery*.

I am impressed by how much I have learned in 76 years, and how much scientific knowledge humankind has accumulated and shares within an ever-expanding fence. I am even more impressed with the expanse outside the fence, *what I don't know and may never know.* Yet I am regularly called to act on assumptions that I make based on what is outside the fence. Decisions on the conduct of life, related to such areas as values, morality, justice, and aesthetics, must often be made on the basis of faith and personal "taste" rather than scientific fact. I rely heavily on common sense and wisdom, but ultimately a leap of faith is required. Here are some common sense assumptions based on common sense thinking.

I accept a number of common sense "scientific" arguments for the existence of an almighty force most people call "God." (1) Every phenomenon has an antecedent; i.e. each effect can be traced to its cause. Reason suggests that eventually there must be a *first cause* or *uncaused cause* sufficiently powerful to set things in motion. A suitable name for the first cause would be "*Prime Mover*" or "*Uncaused Cause*." (2) Saint Anselm's "proof" for the existence of God also makes sense: God is "that than which no greater than can be." Assumptions that this greatest of all powers favors me and my tribe with little respect for "not me" or "not my side" seems to be more a self-serving expression of humankind than a divinely inspired message from the almighty force. (3) I am drawn to the view of the Jesuit priest Teilhard de Chardin. Based on his scientific study of paleontology (fossils), he concluded that evolution represents a progressive plan to make humankind in the image of God. Our growing self-mastery and making ourselves powerful creators of original ideas inspires me to respect de

Chardin's insight that we are driven by a powerful creative force, yet unrevealed by our level of scientific discovery. (4) In my college days at Johns Hopkins, my roommate and I debated the presence of miracles; I refuted them and he supported their occurrence. When I now think of the magnitude and complexity of the world, I concede to him that our very existence, and the universal orderliness of cause-and-effect, is miraculous.

So while I remain agnostic about what is beyond the fence, I accept there is a supernatural force. I don't accept that *he, she, it,* or *the uncaused cause* takes sides and favors one group over another. When I was a kid I used to bargain with God: let Howie Moss, the slugger for the then Triple-A league Baltimore Orioles, hit a home run and win the game, and I in return would please God by ceasing to bite my nails and pick my nose. More often he struck out. I kept bargaining with God for a long time even though my offers were rarely accepted. I recognize the long history of man's need to create idols, superstitions, and magical intervention when knowledge is lacking. We made assumptions that the earth was flat and the center of the universe; that God approved of killing witches; and we have routinely demanded that members of "our tribe" engage in war to prove that our assumptions are superior. In WWI, to the astonishment of the Allies, every German soldier had "Gott mit uns" (*God is with us*) inscribed on his belt. Gradually, some religions are modifying their insistence that God literally created the world in six days and then rested, and they are lessening their resistance to the idea that evolution is the creative process of a powerful force. These changes suggest to me that our beliefs are still fluid and we have more myths to shed. I am especially skeptical of any individual or group that proposes on the basis of authority that a particular religion or political ideology is the supreme one according to their or God's authority. Common sense suggests such proclamations are self-serving inventions of humankind.

Common sense knowledge would suggest that the *First Cause*, or "God" if you prefer, set into motion multiple generations of substance beginning with matter, which then progressed in an organized, rational manner to simple life that can reproduce itself. Thereupon, simple life would predictably progress to more complex life that can not only reproduce itself but also assume responsibility for its own survival, pleasure, and the freedom of self-management. Recent science, i.e. common sense knowledge, informs us that humankind is the growing edge of creation, and that we still have much to teach ourselves if we wish to continue to survive and evolve to higher levels of civilization.

One of God's first creations would appear to be the universal laws of cause-and-effect, i.e. what we call "knowledge." Its predictability is the most universal sign we have that there is an orderly basis to our existence. It is discoverable by intelligent minds, more specifically nature's unique gift to humankind of an advanced cerebral cortex. It functions as a specialized "organ" within the human brain to discover wisdom. The cerebral cortex frees humankind from dependency on *fate* and *circumstance*,

nature and *nurture*, *instinct* and *tradition*, to become powerful creators with the opportunity to rule their own universe.

Common sense can tell us the Prime Mover is unlikely to play favorites among people and divide the world into opposing sides. Rather, we learn by "mistakes" and pass our new found knowledge of cause-and-effect and wisdom forward. We begin by seeking physical wealth, but then we must progress to mental or "spiritual" wealth (wisdom) if we are to discover what is in our best interest before we self-destruct from our innate *survival of the fittest* derived greed.

My understanding of scientific knowledge leads me to infer that I am a link in the process of evolution and that we are headed somewhere even more complex than we are now, but I personally will not experience what time ultimately brings. Consider how religions change with knowledge. Try to imagine the common assumptions that influenced the beliefs of cave people. Have you modified your own beliefs since childhood? Did you write a letter to Santa this year? Or have you instead become your own Santa or genie, responsible for the gifts you receive? Yes, knowledge and "fact" does influence our views about what we don't know, but let us also graciously acknowledge how much we don't know and will not understand in our lifetime. Nevertheless, I am inspired to use my best to do my best and arrive at the important basic beliefs that I indicated in the prior stren.

When I convene with nature through my higher self, here's what I learn. I have been gifted with a freedom organ, nature's latest model brain. This makes me privileged beyond any other form of life on earth because it allows me to discover the secrets of my creator, be it nature or a superhuman force. I and my human family have been provided the tools for self-enlightenment. I have the ability to recognize that nature is a work-in-progress and I am an important part of it. Work-in-progress means beginning simple and primitive, and striving toward greater complexity and sophistication. It means we are moving towards an end point; we are not "finished." Humankind has been provided the opportunity to influence which finishing point we reach. My species or "family" has the intelligence to create knowledge through what we call *science*. We recreate the physical world using and manipulating symbols, and create original combinations not found in nature. We magically convert physical data into non-physical ideas that appear only within our personal consciousness; we then transform imagination back into the physical reality for the entire world to share. Intelligence is the power of a freed will to create alternatives and choose among them. We are distinguished among earth creatures by our capacity to join nature in determining our present and designing our future.

Intelligence (power) may be used constructively and destructively. Free will is the means we have to exercise our choices. Nature tells me, "Your human brain is like my biggest uncut diamond, my most solid rock, easy to throw and a good weapon if you choose to leave it in its primitive state. You can also choose to polish it, shape it, and make it an object of beauty."

My higher power, the intelligence within my cortex, unlike my older "automatic" animal brain, allows me to see the similarities in our diverse family and the benefits each of us has to contribute to humanity. I can see that, like each organ and cell in my body, I am part of a larger system and I best serve my purpose when I contribute to the good of the greater whole. I can also see that when cancer cells only take from the system and give nothing back, they eventually kill their host and die along with him or her. So my understanding is that I function best as a member of the whole system, and I do what I can to help the system evolve to greater sophistication, greater freedom, and to becoming more humane and civilized. I enjoy envisaging what I would like the "finished" end point of our work-in-progress to be, and then considering what I might contribute to help us move in that direction. I believe that this is what I can do for my family, other loved ones, and humanity. Promoting humanity seems a most worthy source of meaning and purpose.

When I contemplate what I'd like the end point to include, words that come to mind include joy, happiness, peace, cooperation, sharing, purpose and meaning, creativity, mental freedom, belonging, companionship, justice, learning, and pursuing even higher levels towards "perfection" which will always be somewhere in the future to strive for. Total maturity, complexity, and sophistication are perfected end points of our work-in-progress that shall always be beyond our reach.

I have attended the religious services of many different faiths, and find a comforting spirituality in all of them. I am impressed that virtually all religious groups and philosophers come to the same moral views. This is understandable to me because common sense leads to universal wisdoms such as, "Do to others as you would have them do to you," and "Love your neighbor as yourself." The differences in religions are mainly confined to dogmatic proclamations based on the authority of a *superhuman* being or a divinely inspired *human* being who commands certain behavior and the acceptance of creeds that have limited basis in rationality. They commonly declare their particular group, philosophy, political view, and/or religion is superior to others, but they fail the common sense test which requires that non-tribe members would come to the same assumptions. I suspect that any group holding such views has a self-serving purpose.

While I admit there are people who behave in ways I don't particularly like, I do have a great affection for humanity. This is one source of my passion to strive to bring about happiness and world peace. I am concerned for the well-being of my children, grandchildren, and other loved ones. These are the main reasons I devote my time and energy to popularizing *the newer way of thinking* that I believe is most certain to bring about world peace.

In sum, I believe science and religion are not only compatible, they are contiguous. As we discover the universal rules of cause-and-effect, we recognize a creative force that applies to everyone. We learn that we are members of a larger

family who progress through cooperation and collaboration. I maintain no religion is superior; no religion is inferior. I strive for tolerance toward all religions and all individuals. I accept that some leaders are convinced that they are destined to be a master race and are authorized to subject others to their will by force, including murder. Despots, like Hitler, may be impervious to rational persuasion, and I believe it is the duty of all peace-loving world citizens to come together and humanely impose whatever restrictions may be required to restrain the power of those who would control and endanger others. Bigoted leaders will become powerless if enough concerned citizens lead the way by attending to our own immature two-category thinking. I believe the newer way of common sense thinking will crack the thin veneer that holds back the passion for peace and freedom present in all humankind. The grass roots power of the masses will be unstoppable.

Stren #90: Modern Flight Patterns
Mental *Self*-deception

Stren #38, *The Avoidance Response*, explained one of the eight choices available to our will to direct action. You met a number of mental pathways that cause us to distort reality, some of which result in us believing that our understanding is accurate. Because we cannot make effective decisions when reality is blocked from our perception, these patterns are especially dangerous to our well-being. This stren, #90, *Modern Flight Patterns*, revisits this important topic as promised, to provide a more thorough understanding of the danger created by mental self-deception. By increasing your recognition of self-deception, you will attain better control of your life's experience.

The animal portion of our brain[72] is hardwired at birth with one of our most powerful survival instincts – *survival of the fittest*. The most common action choices available to our ancestors in their dangerous environment were *fight* and *flight* – physical confrontation or running and hiding. Danger automatically triggers an emergency "red alert" action state. Our body undergoes rapid physiological changes to increase our energy level so we can take immediate action. Chemicals such as adrenalin and stress hormones are released, along with sugar for energy; blood is diverted from our digestive system to muscles; heart rate increases to get more blood to muscles and to the brain make us more alert. The precision and complexity of this emergency response is a wonder to be admired. Individuals with the most effective resources to fight or run had the greatest chance to reach reproductive maturity and survive.

Nature's selective tripling of our cerebral cortex, the human portion of our brain, over the last million years, and the introduction of language approximately 50,000 years ago has brought about an important change. Our ability to consciously manipulate symbols to create common sense solutions and negotiate rules of civility has made us distinct from animals. The primitive fight/flight response is replaced by methods that are more adaptive in a civilized society. Physical fighting is usually prohibited and punished, and modern technology makes physically running and hiding more difficult, but the intelligent use of language has allowed us to create alternative "rules" to let us survive and thrive. *Brain* has surpassed *brawn* to provide us unprecedented power that makes us undisputed "king of the beasts."

As we develop language and civilization, we invent numerous mental actions to fight or escape danger. Instead of running from danger using our feet, we apply mental power. A popular way of running is to "magically" remove the danger from our conscious awareness. Such self-deception allows us to play now but at great expense later – "*short term gain, long term pain"*! The animal portion of our brain, with its motto, "I want what I want when I want it," has its way until our cerebral cortex has sufficient maturity and common sense. Present feelings are innately more powerful than objective reason, which lacks the force of emotion unless we teach ourselves the

[72]The medulla, pituitary, pons, pineal body, cerebellum, and thalamus

endorsement skills that link emotion to the intelligent action choice. Common sense wisdom using current knowledge can upgrade prewired solutions that have become ineffective or dangerous. Stupidity, failing to apply common sense to mental power, increases danger as we ourselves become our own worst enemy.

Some expressions of our avoidance actions are deliberate and readily recognized by our conscious mind. Common examples include ***procrastination*** – finding another activity to escape an unpleasant task; ***substance abuse*** – inappropriate use of alcohol, drugs, and food; ***telling lies*** – "It was my brother who did it"; and ***physical or emotional withdrawal*** – deliberately changing a job, spouse, friend, or location rather than facing a stressful situation. Patterns involving mental *self*-deception are among the most difficult to manage because individuals believe their own distorted thinking. Intelligence enables our mind to create various mental means to avoid stress. Our animal brain is hardwired to instinctively run and hide from danger, and, lacking common sense, it is preprogrammed to seek safety and pleasure and avoid immediate danger and discomfort. Our cerebral cortex has a more realistic perspective of the long term consequences of *self*-deception. It is better positioned to create original actions that prevent the unhappiness and danger that accrues when we block out reality.

Individuals who rely on *self*-deception behaviors to avoid stress often lack motivation and resist giving up their "defense" against discomfort. Unaware of their lack of awareness, they are more resistant against engaging in the *self*-education that inspires better alternatives. Two of our most perceptive minds have provided us complimentary means to recognize our self-deception, a prerequisite for us to take effective action. Freudian *defense mechanisms* and Pavlovian *conditioning* terms have enriched us with new sets of word handles to grasp how we distort reality. Each helps our conscious awareness to see the effortless self-deception invisible under our radar.

We are indebted to Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) and Anna, his daughter/disciple, who identified many of the mental mechanisms we develop to "run away" from the difficult realities of modernity.[73] His "talk therapy," psychoanalysis, offered a safe environment to express whatever came to one's mind. Difficult or uncomfortable themes would come to the surface in layers, and once accessible to consciousness, they could be examined with the help of the therapist and resolved. While the treatment was impractical for the mass population because of its cost, it was a valuable research tool. Freud, a keen observer and winner of Germany's highest writing award, the Goethe prize, identified many methods by which we unknowingly distort reality. *Self*-deception that blocks out our perception of reality can be very dangerous because it shuts down or redirects our problem solving energy to easier but less important issues. Accurate labels help us identify them in others and ourselves, thus enabling us to take effective action.

We all engage in *self*-deception because it suits our instinctive need to reduce anxiety and perceived danger. Our mind invents mechanisms to defend against unacceptable thoughts, feelings, and actions. Some methods of *self*-deception are so

73 *The Ego and the Mechanism of Defense*; Anna Freud, Hogarth Press, 1937.

effective in reducing anxiety that they are accepted as truth. The *Common Sense Test of common sense* (stren #91) is seen as meaningless, and the attempts by others to replace dogmatism with logic are resisted. Freud and his disciples have provided us with effective labels to summon what is invisible to our conscious awareness. The meaning assigned to these labels will help you become consciously aware of the realities we need to face now to prevent the greater danger that comes from ignorance:

- ***denial***: we block external events from consciousness and fail to recognize what is apparent to others. "I can stop drinking whenever I choose."

- ***rationalization***: distorting reality to make it less threatening; excuses believed by the individual but no one else. "It's because my biorhythms are off." "*My (our) way, the right way*." We come to believe our lies. *Self*-deception begets more dangerous *self*-deception.

- ***projection, paranoia***: projecting our uncomfortable ideas/feelings onto others; the opposite of turning emotion inward, or *guilt*. "They don't like me because I have pimples." "They are thinking evil thoughts and want to harm me."

- ***introjection***: imitating someone else's traits to appease one's own perceived lack.

- ***reaction formation***: overcompensation; for example, a person who is unable to accept their attraction to a member of the same sex despises gay people.

- ***substitution/displacement*:** anger is turned inward or to another; upset with the boss, he kicks the dog or yells at his family. Depression is often anger we refuse to acknowledge and turn inward. Our culture prohibits aggression towards others by teaching the human quality we call "guilt." The normal "rage response" to frustration is unacceptable and a source of great anxiety.

- ***identification with an aggressor***: in a highly publicized incident, heiress Patty Hearst was captured by revolutionists, mistreated, and raped, and then identified with their cause and participated as a willing advocate. Some experts considered her behavior classic brainwashing.

- ***undoing***: rituals or magical gestures that cancel out unpleasant thoughts, as seen in repetitive hand-washing. *Scrupulosity*, excessive atonement, is most common among priests and those with obsessive-compulsive disorder.

- ***asceticism*:** self-denial. The urge for forbidden pleasure, often sexual, is a source of anxiety. Renouncing pleasure and inflicting pain on oneself is associated with greater rewards for obedience, especially in the hereafter.

- ***regression****:* in the face of stress, we revert to a behavior from a safer time, such as finding a substitute "security blanket;" a four-year-old wets himself or sucks his thumb when a new sibling gets more attention; a docile person may suddenly

exhibit primitive aggression or childlike behavior.

- ***repression:*** we fail to recall events or names that would ordinarily be remembered.

- ***phobias***: while we may block out the memory of an upsetting event or belief, anticipating the anxiety once linked to the event triggers a "red alert" emergency response. "What if" followed by anticipation of the most negative (if unlikely) outcome is common: "What if ... I'm trapped in the elevator; the bridge collapses; the plane crashes?" A hypersensitive emergency response may "go off" without apparent provocation.

- ***isolation***: emotion is replaced by intellectualization. Upon the death of a loved one, the bereaved is totally rational. Emotion and symptoms of grief may follow much later.

- ***sublimation*****:** the energy associated with unacceptable thoughts or actions is expressed in socially acceptable ways. Unhappy at home, this person invests abundant energy in his profession or philanthropic service. [Note: sometimes *self*-deception has a beneficial effect.]

- ***conversion disorder*** (formerly called hysteria): symptoms that appear to be physical are mentally induced. Fainting was common in Freud's era, and paralysis of a limb may prevent some action associated with anxiety.

- ***physical and/or psychological "illness"***: Feigned or exaggerated physical and/or mental illness may excuse one from facing a stressful reality. Becoming Napoleon or some other powerful person is more satisfying than being "a nobody."

- ***psychosomatic (mind/body) stress*****:** virtually every organ may be the target of a sustained exaggerated state; muscle contraction headache, and neck and back pain are common examples.

These mental mechanisms that defend us against anxiety are often combined, such as rationalization and denial, to create the helpless/hopeless response. Common self-deceptions such as, "My action won't count," "It's not my problem," "I'm too busy," give temporary comfort while avoiding the reality of irreversible harm from procrastination or avoidance.

The various forms of *self*-deception suit our needs temporarily. Anxiety is reduced by distorting our thoughts and perception of reality. The most extreme example of the danger this causes is failing to recognize the imminent danger all of humanity faces from the proliferation of WUD. Nearly our entire population holds the false believe that they are helpless to make a difference; yet common sense would conclude the most likely way we can prevent this catastrophe is to unite peace advocates. Such collective action requires that a critical number of individuals recognize that their active

participation is the most likely way we can create a safe world, which cannot take place while we are caught in *self*-deception.

As a first year medical student, I had the privilege of attending a medical interview with a different terminally ill patient, conducted by Professor Jacob Finesinger every Saturday morning. Finesinger was interested in determining the benefits of telling patients with a terminal illness the nature of their condition instead of the more common practice of "sparing" them the difficulty of facing their prognosis. Some patients expressed appreciation for the candid information so they could plan their treatment and remaining days. Yet, many individuals, having been told, acted in subsequent interviews as if they had no knowledge of their condition, sometimes even being irate about being ignored. When told again, they "forgot." Finesinger concluded that patients wanted the truth, but that partial truth was justified when it was determined an individual was not psychologically ready to receive the whole truth.

The Russian physiologist, Ivan Pavlov (1849-1936), introduced an objective research methodology, complimentary to Freud's "free association" method that helps us to recognize our self-deception. He studied a dog's natural reflex to salivate when presented with food. When he sounded a bell each time the food was presented, in a short time, the dog would salivate to the sound of the bell even without food. He concluded that behavior, including emotions, were based on reflexes that could be "conditioned." From Pavlov's discovery, John B. Watson showed that a young child, unafraid of furry animals, could be conditioned to become fearful and cry when an unpleasant sound was paired with the presentation of a rabbit, dog, or other furry animal. When the unpleasant sound was no longer presented, the child remained fearful of furry animals, or even a fur coat.

Experimental psychologists assert that any event can be paired to any natural response so that the unnatural event, such as the bell or unpleasant sound, will act as an alternative or "second" signal to trigger the natural event. Sounds, sights, odors, even words and symbols can influence our physiology, mood, and attitude. Humans are distinct by the degree to which an unnatural signal such as the word "evil," or an image like the Christian cross or Nazi swastika may trigger behavior that includes our emotions and beliefs. *Beef, ham, monkey brain, sheep's eye,* or *ants* are a tasty morsel for some, but will disgust others, depending on prior *training*. In a recent newspaper story[74], Connecticut Senator Joseph Lieberman described once trying lobster, a violation of his religious views, and immediately vomited. I have directly witnessed this response when a college friend, Mohammed, found what was unmistakably bacon on his soup spoon after being assured no meat was present; another friend fainted after doing what she felt was the polite thing by swallowing the baby bird appetizer presented to her while traveling in China. The mere thought of biting into a lemon has sufficient power to cause pursing of the lips.

[74] *The Hartford Courant*, "Lieberman's New Book Extols the Sabbath", 9/6/11, p. A4.

Stage hypnotists are known to rapidly convince a subject to walk and cluck like a chicken or perform some foolish behavior, and be totally unaware of their folly in the post-hypnotic state. Perhaps the greatest danger to our survival is that we are so easily "brainwashed" without being aware of it. Jun Togo, a Japanese peace advocate[75], has created the term "***good and evil addiction***" to identify the major cause of bigotry, prejudice, harmful aggression, terrorism, and war. How perceptive! Through the years when we are immature, our cerebral cortex is undeveloped, and we are dependent on our animal brain, we are conditioned to view the world in two categories. We learn to owe our allegiance to "*good, right, friend*," and revile and punish what is "*evil, wrong,* and *foe.*" Cooperation and collaboration to create a peaceful world will not be possible until we make ourselves consciously aware that the world isn't divided into *us, the good side*, and *them, the bad side*. Einstein's greatest discovery was not $E=mc^2$; his most important insight was "... *a new type of thinking is essential if mankind is to survive and move toward higher levels*."[76]

In preparing this stren on *self*-deception, a sudden vision connects the insights of Freud and Pavlov. Animals and people alike inherit a *survival of the fittest* instinct that distorts our perception by dividing the world into opposites. We are all slaves to the *either/or* two category thinking that biases us to promote *our side ... the good side* at the expense of *their side* ... *the evil side*. Only we differ from other life in that we have a specialized freedom organ; we are designed to acquire language and sufficient universal knowledge to influence our own destiny. We may free our will from *fate* and *circumstance*, from *nature* and our *nurturers*, to become our own person, what we call <u>*self*-mastery</u>.

The animal portion of our brain has been prewired and perfected through trial and error over hundreds of millions of years to preserve the species – *survival of the fittest* at any cost! We not only identify with our species; we are designed to show allegiance to our subspecies, our tribe, our family, and what we interpret as "our side." Freud and Pavlov each discovered ways to enlighten us to the *self*-deception that is innate in our way of thinking. **We are all preconditioned by the *survival of the fittest* programs encoded in our genes to distort reality into "our side" and "not our side"!** We then label this distortion with such second signals as "good/evil," "right/wrong," "love/hate," "help/hurt," on and on. Once this dynamic is understood, we can position ourselves to direct our energy to *a newer way of thinking.* As we free our will from fate and circumstance, we empower our cerebral cortex with *self*-mastery, to become our own person. We will continue to favor dominance through destructive confrontation and war until we teach ourselves the *common sense* wisdom to cooperate for our mutual benefit.

Our cerebral cortex, once mature and educated to think using common sense, is capable of recognizing the benefits of *both...and* processing of information. *Both...and* thinking adds wisdom to the authority of past experience. It creates awareness that both "good and evil" are within each of us, and not what distinguishes "us" from "them."

[75]*Good and Evil Addiction*; http://www.peace-picturebook.org/GoodEvil/index.html
[76]*The New York Times*; May 25, 1946.

We need the contributions of all tribes to make our wishes and prayers our reality, to make ourselves the humane species to which we aspire. The common sense wisdoms of our cerebral cortex are considerably more adaptive and dynamic than the static trial-and-error action patterns preprogrammed within our animal brain. Our animal brain is a well-meaning parent that teaches its child's freedom organ its perspective, but can predict rebellion from "the old man's" perspective as the child matures and acquires common sense. Progress requires that we continue to create *newer ways of thinking* to replace those that have served to bring us this far.

No less than the survival of our species depends on waking ourselves up to our *self*-deception! As long as we allow the *either/or* dichotomous perception of reality to dominate our thinking, no effort to attain lasting peace and well-being will succeed. World organizations such as the League of Nations and United Nations, religions such as Christianity and Islam, ideologies such as capitalism and communism, governments such as Russia and the United States, political parties such as Democrats and Republicans, divisions by ethnicity, skin color, gender, geographic location, tribal affiliation, and so on, will continue to favor harmful confrontation to dominate more than cooperation and collaboration for mutual benefit. If we are to prevent the imminent "big bang" that will reverse whatever progress we have thus far enjoyed, we must take urgent action. This stren will serve its purpose if it helps to wake us up to our *self*-deception so we can inspire ourselves to establish education in *a newer way of thinking* that makes common sense common.

Stren #91: The Common Sense Test of Common Sense

Welcome to stren #91, *The Common Sense Test of Common Sense*. Today's stren offers a practical means to distinguish universal values and truths from those that are often represented as universal but upon scrutiny are found to be *self*-serving, usually for the benefit of one individual, family, or tribe at the expense of others.

The *test of common sense* is quite straightforward. It is met when multiple tribes with different ideologies discover or arrive at a similar conclusion, especially when they do so independently of the influence of other tribes. For example, the following values have been advocated by multiple groups:

1. *Treat others as you would have them treat you.* The "Golden Rule" is found in some form in almost every ethical tradition.
2. *Love yourself so you have an abundance to offer others* – why *self*-endorsement is critical. This is a variation of "*Love your neighbor as yourself;*" one of the bible's most repeated commands.
3. *Grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.* The serenity prayer has universal wisdom.

While the wording may vary, the meaning of the expression of common sense wisdom is widely understood. Rational individuals of differing cultures will process the data provided and arrive at similar conclusions. While one or a few may attempt to interpret the data to serve their own interest, a common consensus will emerge. Contrast this with those common assertions that suggest "*My way is the only way*": Hitler's "truth" that white German Aryans were a master race seduced millions; but Jews, blacks, gypsies, gays, most other countries and ethnic groups, and so on would hardly agree. Such *self*-serving beliefs become apparent when consensus from diverse groups is lacking.

Perhaps the easiest and most reliable areas to apply *the common sense test* are those supported by scientific knowledge. Science reveals cause and effect relationships that are universal. 2 + 2 = 4 among all tribes. Two molecules of hydrogen and one molecule of hydrogen will always be identified as water. The once widely-believed assertion, based on authority, that the earth is the center of the universe has yielded to the scientific method that provides verifiable evidence to the contrary. Previously-accepted beliefs that influenced behavior are labeled *false* or *superstition* as the universal relationships of cause and effect disprove them. As we acquire more knowledge, we add to our universally repeatable assumptions.

Common sense means a phenomenon is perceived by one or more of our sense organs in a similar way among most if not all individuals. The similarity of our sense organs is sufficiently universal that the data provided and the conclusions we reach will be relatively constant despite one's political or religious affiliation, location, ethnic background, gender, etc. Hot is hot in any tribe, and a flash of lightning is

similarly recorded in any retina. Although we recognize that perception can be distorted by one's prior experience and belief system, the universality of the data provided by our senses is our best means to establish and verify universal ethical values. Stren #73, "*What is Normal? What is Sane?"* addresses the ease by which groups of individuals may be persuaded on the basis of authority to accept universal truths that are quite irrational. Scientific method and common sense fail to verify such truths prescribed by *self*-serving dictators, and the benefit to one tribe or individual at the expense of others is revealed.

The *common sense test* is most reliable where scientific method can validate universal cause and effect relationships; however, it is most important where knowledge of cause and effect has not yet reached and may never reach – those areas where action requires a leap of faith. Imagine that all the knowledge that can be proven by scientific method is contained within a fence. Historically, we have gradually expanded that fence. Given that more scientists are alive today than throughout all history, and that our technology allows us to communicate more effectively, we are dramatically accelerating the speed we expand the knowledge within the fence. Yet, we recognize there is an even larger area beyond the fence that has not yet yielded to scientific method and perhaps never will, including religion, aesthetics, ethics, morality, and political ideologies. How we think, feel, and act first relies on mindless acceptance of authority and then personal interpretation. Until we gain sufficient knowledge of cause and effect, we must make a leap of faith to guide us. One person's "certainty" based on unproved assumptions frequently disagrees with the unproved assumptions of others. It is in these action pathways that the *common sense test* of common sense enables us to rise above the animals.

The *Common Sense Test of Common Sense* is most important in those areas beyond scientific knowledge where action must be guided by a leap of faith.

How shall we manage conflicts among tribes that are based on the leaps of faith that are beyond verification by scientific knowledge? Common sense wisdom suggests that we strengthen our areas of common interest and teach ourselves to maintain extreme tolerance to those areas of difference. The exception is assumptions that lead to murder or irresolvable harm to one or more tribes, or the greater whole. In this instance, the collective members of the sane group need to collaborate to limit the destructive actions using any reasonable, non-violent means. Physical confrontation may be justified when there is sufficient evidence of imminent life-threatening action by the *self*-serving offender.

Unfortunately, there are situations that don't easily lend themselves to non-violent resolution, where two or more sides claim stubbornly and with equal force that their advocacy is "the right and only way." This occurs because the representatives of one or more sides have yet to overcome their animal brain way of thinking. This is why we need to prevent such a situation by urgently teaching the *newer way of thinking*. ANWOT frees our will from our animal brain to become our own person and create out-of-the-box solutions to difficult problems.

Most people agree with the universal ethic that murder and causing harm to others is not humane. Assumptions that lead to destructive aggression towards others are responsive to the *common sense test* – *self*-serving nature can usually be readily identified.

We are all born stupid. Common sense allows us to direct our growing godlike power by replacing stupidity with wisdom. Stupidity is continuing to blindly obey authority when we are capable of applying universal knowledge of cause and effect to create newer, better solutions to current problems. Otherwise we will continue to serve our animal brain's self-serving assumptions based on authority – *survival of the fittest, fight or flight*, and "*my way, the only way*." Every major religion and ideology glorifies its warriors who kill in the name of their God or their leader. Yet both religious and secular groups and spiritual gurus arrive at universal values such as those identified above. They preach the humane qualities of peace, love, forgiveness, kindness, and compassion, and they forbid murder. With few exceptions, our global population wishes or prays for peace and abhors war. The *common sense test* of common sense makes it clear to all that we have reached a point in our evolution where to survive and thrive we must add wisdom (ANWOT) to *instinct* and *tradition*. We will be unstoppable if we merely unleash our pent-up passion for world peace.

Teaching ourselves to consistently apply the *common sense test* of common sense will inspire us to become proactive in prevention! United, we can avoid what we don't want and create what we must to insure the well-being of our loved ones. "*If we could first know where we are, and whither we are tending, we could better judge what to do, and how to do it*." (Abraham Lincoln[77]) We can prevent what we can predict will cause harm.

Any person capable of rational thinking, irrespective of their allegiances, will conclude that war has become obsolete; confrontation using today's weapons of destruction will make everyone a loser and <u>all</u> may be lost. We can no longer tolerate today's weapons of destruction. We must teach ourselves non-violent ways to resolve differences. Common sense will also conclude the best way to resolve our differences is to focus on our similarities for our mutual benefit. Common sense is the means we recognize that our well-being is of our own doing by contributing to the greater system of which we are a part.

These common sense assumptions inspire me to be proactive; I invite you to partner with me:

1. Knowledge of cause and effect has empowered us to proliferate weapons with such destructive power that we can no longer tolerate war! The traditional way of resolving disputes through harmful confrontation is no longer adaptive when multiple parties own weapons that offer no second chance. We must teach ourselves non-violent

[77] http://showcase.netins.net/web/creative/lincoln/speeches/house.htm

means to resolve our differences.

2. Instinct and tradition, supported by mindless authority, focus on local priorities both historically and currently. Common sense enlightens us that to preserve our well-being we must add global priorities to our assignment of energy. All of the world is suddenly our neighbor.

3. The most likely way to proceed to succeed is by focusing on our similarities more than our differences. *A house divided against itself cannot stand* (Lincoln[78]). A united effort to unleash the imprisoned passion for world peace will be unstoppable.
4. We require a considerable number of concerned peace teachers (I estimate one million) who will first teach themselves Einstein's solution, *a newer way of thinking,* and then become the "each one, reach many" teachers of unconditional love-creation needed to educate the rest of our seven billion population through the domino effect.

5. Knowledgeable experts told us to expect a release of WMD by the end of 2013[79] and almost certainly within the lifetime of our children unless we take urgent action. The rapid spread of godlike power to multiple tribes requires urgent education in *self*-awareness and prevention.

   "*Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has*." (Margaret Mead). It worked for AA, Amway, Mary Kay, and every great religion. We must make it work for world peace.

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[78]Lincoln, speech of June 16, 1858 before the Republican State Convention, Springfield, Illinois. Quoted by many others, this is also a concept attributed to Jesus that is recorded in all three synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke). http://showcase.netins.net/web/creative/lincoln/speeches/house.htm

[79]*The World at Risk*, report presented by a Commission established by the U.S. Congress to advise our President, after interviewing over 250 experts on the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; Vintage Books, 12/2008. Poison gas was used in Syria, 2013.

Stren #92: Creating World Peace – Who and How

"*If we could first know where we are, and whither we are tending, we could better judge what to do, and how to do it.*"[80] ... Abraham Lincoln

Einstein told us what we must do to prevent human catastrophe and create world peace – "*a new type of thinking is essential if mankind is to survive and move toward higher levels*."[81] The intent of this stren, #92, is to create sufficient awareness to unleash the pent up global passion for peace that will be unstoppable. It explains how we can proceed to succeed. Based on over 200 interviews[82] I have conducted, it is apparent that we must first get over the helpless/hopeless response[83] that keeps most people from uniting in action.

Most people's thinking is "normal;" it lacks the "sanity" to prevent the use of weapons of ultimate destruction that our most informed scientists tell us to expect before the end of 2013[84] or more certainly within the lifetime of our children. These experts tell us there is still time to redirect the course of history if we unite to take urgent action. To begin, we require an understanding of how we can proceed and who can make a difference.

Normal is passively obeying the demands of nature and our nurturers. These behaviors include prejudgments (prejudice) that teach "Our way, the only way." It is *normal* to favor our local priorities – family, country, religion, teams, gender, ethnicity, geographic region, on-and-on. Our priority is that I or my side corners the world's material benefits and asserts dominance. The animal portion of our brain[85] advocates survival of the fittest, flight or flight, and destructive confrontation to preserve our identified group at the expense of non-members. "In the normal context of organic evolution, all creatures, including humans, seek to maximize their gain relative to the competition, and will continue to do so until the system halts that impulse ...."[86] Competition to dominate will prevail in politics, as well as religious and government ideologies, and we can predict that any weapons will be used when one or more sides become desperate.

Sane is educating the human portion of our brain, our cerebral cortex, to acquire knowledge and apply common sense wisdom to create new solutions to current problems using present technology. Common sense replaces our instinctive tradition to dominate others with *self*-initiated creative problem solving to promote cooperation and collaboration for mutual gain. ANWOT recognizes we are part of a larger system in which we are now all neighbors, and that our survival requires adding global priorities to

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[80] http//showcase.netins.net/web/creative/Lincoln/speeches/house.htm; June 16, 1858, Illinois Republican convention

[81] *The New York Times*; May 25, 1946

[82] See *video interviews* at www.anwot.org

[83] See strens #41 and #86.

[84] *World at Risk*, the U.S. Congress mandated bipartisan Commission to study and report to our President "on the Prevention of Weapons of Mass Destruction Proliferation and Terrorism"; Vintage Books, 2008

[85] The medulla, pituitary gland, pons, pineal body, cerebellum, and thalamus

[86] *Pulsating, Large Jellyfish Filling Oceans*, Professor Robert M. Thorson, *The Hartford Courant*, 9/6/11, p. A12

our local priorities. *Sanity* advocates acquiring mental and spiritual wealth, i.e. the wisdoms that make life meaningful, and sharing them to create Mental Wealth millionaires.

What is Einstein's ***newer*** *way of thinking* solution (ANWOT)? None of us are born with the *common sense* wisdoms that empower us to free our will from our early masters. We must accept the preprogrammed biases of instinct and our nurturers. *Their* culture becomes *our* culture. We are for many years a mental slave to fate and circumstance. *Normal people* come to believe *their* way is the "right way" and in our best interests. We remain servants until we teach ourselves the wisdoms to practice the humane skills that create a civilized world. These mental skills can be identified and organized in a simply taught and learned curriculum.

Proceeding to succeed through the domino effect: World peace and a joyous, purposeful life experience are among the top wishes and prayers of most people. An education curriculum that enables us to become our own genie, offered FREE to anyone and everyone in the world at their convenient time and place, is most likely to succeed. Today's technology enables us to offer these skills free to anyone, anytime, anywhere. Upon completing our primary education, we are most prepared for a graduate course in creating a joyous, meaningful life experience. The Educational Community 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation (**EC**) offers such educational content, including over 100 wisdoms guaranteed to be forever free at www.anwot.org. The EC program provides a new wisdom tip to your computer every two days for simply providing your email address at www.anwot.org. Each stren can be read in ten minutes, at your convenience, and may be repeated as desired. You will quickly experience benefits and will significantly master the curriculum within six months of consistent study.

The ***newer way of thinking*** curriculum has five components:

1. The self-endorsement skills that enable anyone to become their own best friend.
2. The *mind-freeing, life-changing, world-saving* word-switches that free our will from fate and circumstance to become our own person, i.e. *self*-mastery.
3. The *Mental Freedom Control Panel* that identifies the 8 choices available to our will.
4. The collection of proven wisdoms that enables us to create out-of-the-box solutions to today's problems.
5. The universal values that each tribe can independently discover and agree upon.

Satisfied consumers will be encouraged to pass the free web site (and individual strens) forward to family and other loved ones. One of life's most satisfying experiences is giving something of value to others. Prior experience suggests that the recipients will gratefully acknowledge the sender and will pass the information on to their own contacts. The domino effect to create a viral spread of ANWOT is the most effective way to recruit the one million peace teachers critical to influence our planet's full population. Recall Margaret Mead's wisdom: "*Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that*

ever has."[87] It worked for AA, Amway, Mary K, and every great religion. We must make it work for world peace.

The initial spark to create the one million peace leaders needed to virally circle the world with *a newer way of thinking* requires only a limited number of leaders capable of influencing a wide audience. Each teacher will be offered a computer flash drive preloaded with the wisdoms that explain ANWOT and teach peace of mind and world peace, a mission statement, and personal contact and support by qualified staff. The efforts requested of this initial group will inspire more energy than the time and effort needed: an announcement to their email list and other contacts, and a testimonial based on personal experience with ANWOT. I anticipate some individuals will be sufficiently inspired to take a more active role, including participating on an Advisory Board to add their wisdom to the peace initiative.

Here is my list of individuals who can ignite the spark to kick start the peace initiative:

- ☺ Successful marketers, especially information gurus who have proven successful in developing followers and have substantial email lists.
- ☺ Educators, especially directors of college peace programs, who can tap into the energy of young minds already dedicated to the social good.
- ☺ Organizations already dedicated to a Peace mission: Groups of like mind are available globally
- ☺ Corporations and their Boards: What better way to maintain a good public image and increase worker morale than to offer education in happiness, well-being, and world peace?
- ☺ Public figures in entertainment, sports, etc.: An endorsement of world peace enhances one's image and benefits fans, clearly a win-win action. Many individuals who have attained material success find that money and fame are not all that was anticipated, and the greatest personal satisfaction comes through doing public good, including making the world a safer place for family and loved ones.
- ☺ Members of the clergy: Religious leaders are already dedicated to make the world a better place and have the respect of their parishioners.
- ☺ Members of the media: Enhance your image by encouraging your audience to improve their well-being and take effective action for world peace
- ☺ Prisoners: My experience teaching ANWOT to inmates convinces me of the value of providing social skill education to our over two million captive population, who have usually been deprived of such an opportunity.
- ☺ If you don't fit into any of the above, please don't feel left out – anyone with the desire is more than welcome to join Einstein's peace army.

Most educational programs offer free services to win confidence, and then require money for continued services. The EC Peace initiative wants there to be no doubt that our goal is to unleash the imprisoned passion for world peace, and not material enrichment. To maintain the confidence of peace partners, the EC will never

[87]Quote courtesy of The Institute for Intercultural Studies, Inc., New York

solicit money from participants. The negligible costs of education using social media, along with existing private funding, insure the sustainability of the peace initiative. If our educational content is as effective as initially demonstrated, foundations and corporations may voluntarily offer monetary or in kind support to expand ANWOT, but such support is neither solicited nor necessary.

There you have it – what we must do to create world peace, and how you can become a prime mover in making our home a safer, better place. Please choose to become a founding force to popularize sanity in our world.

Stren #93: Making Decisions Right and Dealing with Uncertainty

Welcome to stren #93, the process of making decisions right. How much better could we make our lives if we removed the stress of making decisions? Today's stren offers a way to do just that, along with additional important benefits. Think how many choices we are confronted with every day. Are you among the majority of persons who waste time and energy obsessing over making the right decision? Here is the simple solution:

Make your decision right instead of demanding that you make the right decision.

We have no difficulty deciding between a favorite food and garbage. Choices are easy when the benefits of one side clearly exceed the benefits of the alternative, but we hesitate when we have done our due diligence investigation and the benefits and risks of alternative choices are still equally balanced. This dilemma can lead to the common sense conclusion that there is no "right" and "wrong" alternative. We have the freedom to wisely deal with such uncertainty by focusing our energy to make our choice work. The more energy we can apply to the task, the greater the likelihood that we will make our choice successful. Instead, we are prone to procrastinate, glorify the benefits of the alternate choice, and waste our energy fantasizing that "the grass was greener on the other side." We chastise ourselves and deflate our spirits, "Stupid me, I should have ...." The more energy we waste dwelling on the alternative and "what iffing" the less energy remains to make our choice successful. Even though working to make our choice *right* makes sense, we still tend to inappropriately obsess.

We act in accordance with the assumptions we hold to be true. When we believe we must choose "right" or "good" to avoid punishment, and that we must succeed to receive others' approval and be worthy of love, we are motivated to avoid making decisions. We act on our self-deception until we become consciously aware that our false assumptions are the source of harmful behavior. Understanding the phenomena of universal cause and effect, i.e. knowledge, motivates us to replace faulty assumptions with newer ones that are supported more by personal knowledge than mindless authority. The more we make our self aware of our self-deception, the more likely we are to change the way we think and thereby wisely manage our feelings and actions. Consider these sources of self-deception to motivate you to upgrade your thinking with common sense wisdom.

Dealing with uncertainty: Our childhood is called the "magic years" because things *just happen*. We are provided with food and shelter and we are told what is "right" and what is "wrong." We need not be concerned about making decisions because authorities, i.e. instinct and our nurturers have determined what is "right" and we only need to follow orders. We have been programmed that to do the *right* thing is rewarded by approval, love, and usually material benefits. If we do the *wrong* thing, we may be punished and even worse, considered unlovable. Time after time, we learn that our decisions get us into trouble when they differ from those in authority.

Our needs change as we mature. The clothes we wear as a child no longer "fit," so we change our wardrobe as we grow. The need to upgrade is obvious with clothes, but less so with our early beliefs. We need to become aware of our self-deception before we can take action to selectively update our language to the new realities we face. Each revelation of the source of your self-deception will strengthen your skills in creating a joyous meaningful life.

Our world, once full of certainty, no longer provides the clear directions that a child's mind can follow. Dealing with uncertainty is a specialized skill that must be acquired; otherwise the certain uncertainty in our lives becomes a major source of anxiety and inappropriate behavior. Conscious awareness of uncertainty is normal, and is the trigger to replacing our early faulty assumptions. We become effective managers of our life experience when we realize that difficult decisions are not "right" or "wrong." They simply "are" and then we proceed to succeed by applying our energy to do *our **reasonable** best* with whatever choice we have made. We accept that we have limits on time, energy, and knowledge and have limited control of circumstances. We skillfully make our choices work. Using a "reasonable best" input measure (see strens 23-24) of our self-worth instead of an outcome measure enables us to maintain 100% per cent mastery of our well-being.

Two-category "dichotomous" thinking: The most common source of self-deception is rooted in the two-category way of thinking we all first learn. We all learn to divide the world into *either/or* categories because that is what an immature, unschooled mind can understand. Two-category thinking distorts the world into opposing sides that must be resolved by confrontation to establish superiority. We perceive choices only as *good <u>or</u> bad*, *right <u>or</u> wrong*. Naturally, we will feel compelled to seek the "good" and confront or avoid the "bad."[88] Education in a newer way of common sense thinking (ANWOT) that accurately perceives the positives and negatives of each alternative requires that we learn a series of mental skills over time. Then we rely on wisdom to make our choice and then make it right instead of demanding a sign of "rightness" before we can proceed.

"Red alert" biology: The hard-wiring of our instinct prior to our birth has been programmed over millions of years by trial-and-error to rapidly create a "red alert" response to any perceived danger. Our ancestor's life in their savage environment was always subject to peril without warning. The emergency *fight or flight* response encoded in our genes was immensely successful in preserving our species. In today's relatively civilized world, however, physical flight no longer works given today's technology. Running and hiding is replaced by symbolically avoiding danger – we procrastinate, lie, deny, use drugs and substitute mental running. Today's mental stress results in a sustained "pink alert" stage of emergency response leading to chronic tension and the many consequences of exaggerated muscle contraction and changes in our physiology. Teaching ourselves to maintain our "calm" is among the most beneficial skills we can add to our survival behaviors.

[88]Contemporary expression of our inherited "fight or flight" instinct.

The Doomsday sentence – "My (our) way, the only way.": This simple sentence that characterizes our early belief system is related to our early dichotomous way of thinking and our "red alert" biology. The animal portion of our brain guides our thinking until our cerebral cortex can become physically and mentally mature. It has the narrow-minded perspective that our family and tribe must survive at all costs. Our side counts; others are there to serve our wants. The power of knowledge has suddenly made this simple sentence, formerly required to survive, the source of our most imminent danger – our immense knowledge has led to weapons that cause unprecedented catastrophe, perhaps even annihilation, owned by multiple tribes who all believe their way is the only way.

Perfectionism: Our formative years are characterized by an inability to feed, protect, and think for ourselves. We learn early on that it is necessary to make the "right" decision – our very survival depends on mindlessly following the prescriptions of authority. Perfectionists learn this too well. They are likely the most miserable people in the world, because they consistently demand more of themselves than is reasonable. There can be no "right" decision or acceptable level of performance because the perfectionist's imagination can always picture something better. No matter how excellent the outcome of a decision, or how tiny the shortcoming, the perfectionist focuses on the shortcoming, the hole in the donut, the empty part of the glass. We can understand why depression, self-flagellation, and even suicide are predictable if deciding and not deciding are equally unacceptable. The treatment of perfectionism is corruption while learning to laugh at mistakes! From my professional experience, I believe that it's possible in most cases to soften the rigid standards of the perfectionist without overshooting the mark and leading to an abyss of degradation.

Self-endorsement and the Reasonable Best measure of self-worth: If you want to sharpen your skills in decision making and dealing with uncertainty, review the strens on *self-endorsement*. The Reasonable Best strens (#23-24) are especially relevant.

Until we teach ourselves to deal with uncertainty, we will sustain childhood beliefs based on authority, such as the Doomsday sentence that are no longer adaptive to us as mature adults. Established beliefs, no matter how unsupported by common sense wisdom, require skill in dealing with uncertainty before we can challenge and change them.

Stren #94: Learning Starts With Labeling
Acquiring Mental Wealth

Welcome to stren #94, *Learning Starts with Labeling*. Humankind is distinguished from all other life by our ability to attach meaning to labels – more than our ability to stand erect, the oppositional thumb, or any other attribute. Labels enable us to grasp concepts and manipulate them within our imagination to discover knowledge of cause and effect. We imitate the creative force that establishes order in our universe. We discover, store, share, pass forward, and grow knowledge to make ourselves the undisputed ruler on earth. The power of interpretation that makes us "king of the beasts" is also our source of humanity. Words are our tools to create the world of our highest aspirations, to make us our own worst enemy and source of self-annihilation, or anything in between. **This stren explains the power of labels to make ourselves creators of our destiny.**

Humankind appeared one to two million years ago when our intelligent cerebral cortex began evolving more rapidly than any other organ – it is now three times the size it was then. Modern man, *Homo sapiens sapiens*, the species with a brain "that knows it knows," emerged about 150,000 years ago, but our more recent ancestors are credited with introducing sophisticated language within the last 50,000 years. We are constantly creating new labels. The Concise Oxford English Dictionary releases a list of new words for each edition, adding 400 this year. We require new labels to precisely apply our growing knowledge, for example – *antibiotic, clone, astronaut*, and phrases such as *nuclear option, designer baby,* and *E-reader*. The sixth edition of the dictionary, published in 1976, included the phrase "*switched on*" which I will discuss.

Words are the means by which we free our will power from those "others" that we call by such labels as *fate and circumstance*, *nature and nurture, instinct and tradition.* Words empower our cerebral cortex to become a *self* programmer and master of our destiny. The cortex, or "freedom organ" can create an elaborate mental "*second signaling system*" to influence our physical "primary signaling system." By assigning meaning to symbols, we mentally manage our thinking, feelings, and actions to a degree that dwarfs all other species. The greater the accuracy and expanse of labels, the more power we have to influence our life experience.

The role of definitions is explained here:

> Definitions make clear and unambiguous the meanings of the terms we use. Precise conscientiously followed definitions ... make our reasoning more exact and our communication more successful. Unless its meaning is clearly understood, no statement can be empirically verified nor logically validated by reference to any other statement. ... clarity of meaning can be achieved only through the most scrupulous efforts to specify these meanings in carefully formulated definitions. ... inferences to causal antecedents or to future consequences, to subjective processes that can be directly experienced by only one subject or to unconscious factors (in the dynamic

> Freudian sense) ... must be brought out into the open ... and not left concealed ... where they create endless confusions. Definitions ... do not limit our intellectual freedom to say anything we mean, but are, rather, the logical instruments by which alone *what* we mean can be said, and this intellectual freedom become, accordingly, a positive condition of self-expression and successful communication.[89]

Accurate labels are the basis of effective communication. They are essential for research and discovery of knowledge, and strengthen our accuracy in thinking. Words expand our awareness of history and vision to foresee the future. They enable us to engage in effective *cognitive rehearsal* or *no trial learning* in which we mentally practice solutions to predictable problems before taking action; this is the basis of prevention.

The unbridled power of our *second signaling system* is servant to our animal brain for nearly two decades before our cerebral cortex is fully physically mature and can *self*-program to override what instinct and tradition make of us. The labels first acquired by our intelligent cortex are designed to serve whatever fate and circumstance provide. The way we think is restricted to the action pathways laid out by authorities over which we have limited control. *Master instinct* and *master nurture* dictate what we are and what we are to become until we acquire the mental strength to rebel from what *is*, and initiate what *we* choose to become.

The animal portion of our brain has been successful in preserving species by *trial and error* "*survival of the fittest*" action paths that have become highly refined over hundreds of millions of years. Instinct lacks the language and labels needed to solve problems using common sense wisdom. It divides the world into two categories: *safe* and *dangerous*. The animal brain is hardwired to preserve *us* at the expense of *not us*. "Us" is our self, our family or tribe. With humankind's introduction of symbols, "us" can include our nation, our religion, ethnic and political affiliation, etc. "Us" defines "not us." The animal brain we each inherit is preprogrammed to distort reality into two extreme *either/or* categories. Because our animal brain dominates our intelligent cerebral cortex through our immature years, our labels are biased to express the two category perspective inherent in *survival of the fittest* thinking. The documents that record our history are a series of the harmful confrontations between opposing sides.

Trial and error solutions, proven effective for yesterday's problems, are inflexible. *Self*-deception results from words hardwired to meanings that are no longer appropriate. Labels that divide the world into opposing categories that worked in a primitive savage environment become maladaptive when applied to our (partly) civilized current world, one that poses new dangers quite unlike those that confronted our ancestors. Labels that call forth harmful confrontation to establish dominance simultaneously "turn off" collaboration for mutual benefit. Common sense knowledge allows us to recognize that

[89] *The Role of Definitions in Psychiatry*, John R. Reid, PhD. (Professor of Philosophy, Stanford University), and Jacob E. Finesinger, MD., (Professor of Psychiatry, University of Maryland); Am J Psychiatry 109:413-420, December 1952.

two-category thinking is the basis of bigotry, prejudice, destructive aggression, and war. However, until we make common sense common, our habitual two-category thinking and destructive aggression will persist.

Our mental *self* is gradually "born," unlike our dramatic physical birth, as we learn to engage in "reflective" thinking – skill in thinking about our thoughts and what we think, i.e. "*self* consciousness." As we attain a sophisticated level of reflective thinking we are able to free our will from other masters to become our own person. We strengthen our *self*-mastery as we acquire *a newer way of thinking* (**ANWOT**). Understanding this ANWOT process of freeing our will power from other masters is critical to attaining *self*-mastery. Now we can elaborate on the importance of ***word-switches***.[90]

Words acquire their power by the meanings assigned to them. Some words are more powerful than others. For example, *mother, cancer, gold, evil, lesbian* are more likely laden with emotion, determined by one's upbringing, when compared to words like *stone* and a nonsense word like *fefm*. Words show allegiance to the master who programs their meaning. They serve as "triggers" to release the emotional energy they represent. The first *trigger words* we acquire express the perspective of *instinct*. A second set of *trigger words* is aligned to the views of our *nurturers*. The third set of *trigger words* are those original symbols our cerebral cortex creates when our will power is sufficiently free from the domination of our first masters. These are the labels supported by *common sense* that enable us to become our own person, i.e. *self*-mastery.

Let's distinguish the symbols that trigger the original action paths of *self*-mastery from the *trigger words* of other masters by creating the new phrase, "*word-switches*." Thus, *word-switches* identify those specialized *trigger words* that "turn on" newer, original *self*-initiated action pathways created by applying common sense to current technology to solve new problems. *Word-switches* "turn off" the hardwired solutions that were effective at managing yesterday's problems using yesterday's knowledge. *Word-switches* are the mental tools we create to elevate humanity. They express the wisdom of our intelligent freed will. As we increase our glossary of *word-switches*, we create *a newer way of thinking* (**ANWOT**) which corresponds to Einstein's proposed solution to imminent human catastrophe. ANWOT is the means by which we "switch off" our preprogrammed two-category *survival of the fittest* worldview and "switch on" the common sense wisdoms that recognize the value of cooperation and cooperation for mutual gain. Our survival requires that we teach ourselves the *word-switches* that direct power for our mutual benefit.

Our first labels, created to serve our animal brain, must be simple and readily *turn on* action that expresses the *survival of the fittest* perspective appropriate for a world divided into *safe or dangerous*. The *safe or dangerous* categories seen by our animal brain become labeled "*good or evil"* by our nurturers. The insightful Jun Togo has labeled this first way of thinking "good and evil addiction."[91] Our initial vocabulary

[90]An introduction to "trigger words" and "word-switches" is provided in stren #5.
[91]*Good and Evil Addiction*, e-book, by Jun Togo; http://www.peace-picturebook.org/GoodEvil/index.html

biases our interpretations of reality through such dichotomous labels as “right/wrong,” “angel/devil,” “master/slave,” “friend/foe,” etc. The distortion of reality by *good and evil addiction* is the major source of bigotry, prejudice, destructive aggression, war, and the imminent threat of self-annihilation. As long as we hold onto the labels that trigger animal brain behavior, the divisions prevalent throughout history will persist, escalate, and soon create unimaginable human catastrophe.

Here are examples of the simple *word-switches* that upgrade our thinking:

- “*I could*” is substituted for “*I should*” – descriptive words stimulate original thinking; prescriptive words require obedience to another master.
- “*I allow*” is substituted for “*you make me*” – personal responsibility is substituted for our natural predisposition to blame.
- “*What will make things better for me and you, for now and the future?*” is substituted for “*My way, the only way*” – problem solving for mutual gain is substituted for destructive aggression to assert dominance.
- “*Pull-up*” is substituted for “*putdown*” – *help* instead of *harm* is *turned on*. Our language lacks words in common usage such as *pull-up;* this is an example of the need to create new words to express common sense wisdom
- **Most important**: “*Both...and”* is substituted for “*either/or”* – this powerful *word-switch* recognizes the positives and negatives within all parties instead of dividing the world into “*all good (us)*” or “*all evil (them)*.”

Here is the “pay off” value of this stren. As we become consciously aware of our *self*-deception, we position ourselves to take corrective action. When our intelligent cerebral cortex is able to engage in reflective thinking, we can process data applying common sense to knowledge of cause and effect. Our will, freed from instinct and tradition, may invent newer labels that more accurately reflect reality. The process of substituting labels that “switch on” common sense for the established labels that trigger hardwired action pathway is quite simple. The self-deception that we are using common sense when we remain addicted to “good or evil” thinking is the greater obstacle we must overcome.[92]

Common sense is universal! It is available to every individual’s freedom organ regardless of political, religious, ethnic, or other prior programming. As we create new ***word-switches*** to replace the ***trigger words*** established by instinct and the traditions of our nurturers, we sharpen our perspective. Through the wisdom of common sense, we will realize that as multiple tribes acquire ultimate destructive power, cooperation and collaboration for mutual gain must replace survival by harmful confrontation if we wish to survive and thrive.

[92]Strens #41 and #86 explain the learned *helpless/hopeless* response that sustains our dependence on authority when we are fully capable of problem solving using common sense wisdom.

This stren will have served its purpose if you become aware of the importance of creating new *word-switches* that free your thinking from uncritical obedience to the authority of "other" masters. We require common sense thinking using current knowledge to solve new problems. However there is much more to learn. The 100^{+} strens of this *newer way of thinking* curriculum are actually a series of *word-switches* to create *mental wealth* (a new *word-switch*). *Mental wealth* is the collection of wisdoms by which we make our wishes and prayers our reality. We make ourselves *Mental Wealth millionaires* by accumulating the common sense wisdoms that make us masters and powerful creators of our life's experience. The creation of *word-switches* that accurately reflect cause and effect is our means to acquire *mental wealth*.

The accumulation and wise use of symbols to create a joyous meaningful life is more important than material wealth. Individuals who have physical wealth, good looks, high intelligence, and connections are well represented among those who are unhappy, depressed, and commit suicide. *Mental wealth millionaires*, including those limited in the material "goodies" to which most aspire, enjoy themselves and live with enthusiasm; even lacking in good health, they still maintain a fulfilling life. What makes the difference? Mentally wealthy people assume responsibility for their well-being by their use of language. They create symbols and manipulate them in their imagination. They replace the *trigger words* that turn on instinct and tradition with *word-switches* that reflect common sense solutions to current problems. They become powerful creators of their own life experience through this newer way of thinking (ANWOT).

The hardwired action pathways of our animal brain were created for survival in a hostile environment where danger lurked at any turn with little or no notice. This is why we have such an automatic "red alert" emergency response. Anticipating the worst danger and having a hair triggered *fight/flight* response had great survival value. Do you see why the labels of our early language bias us towards worry and negative anticipation? The predisposition to see the empty part of the glass, the hole more than the donut, and harbor suspicion towards our neighbor is a biological given. If you were lucky, your parents and role models were able to overcome their biology, but most of us have role models who emphasize our limits more than our strengths, creating a negative image of ourselves and the world. Our formal education tends to emphasize our mistakes, and we are made aware of our weaknesses without equal consideration to our strengths. Negativity is normal! If you are already energetically pursuing life's wonders, you are exceptional.

Mental Wealth millionaires endorse themselves to sustain their own self worth. Freed from dependency on others, they apply common sense knowledge to transform stress energy into chronic problem-solving enthusiasm. ANWOT focuses on the positive to unite people rather than the differences that separate us. *Common sense* directs us to appreciate what we have. No other earth creature has the advanced freedom organ we possess, which allows us to claim our will power to attain *self*-mastery. Whereas the animal brain is elaborately hardwired to survive in familiar circumstances, our cortical brain has the power of interpretation using symbols to flexibly manipulate data. We create new solutions to new issues using new knowledge.

Animals and humans are slaves to their preprogrammed trial and error action pathways. Humankind is equipped with a super intelligent organ than we can educate to think using common sense, and thereby free our will to take charge of our destiny. The great news is that the wisdoms that create mental wealth can be identified, easily taught, and readily learned. They don't require more than the most basic material needs that most individuals already possess.

In a world of seven billion people, there are millions who have made it to the positive side. These are the Mental Wealth millionaire role models to teach us, and quite unlike physically wealthy individuals, they *love* giving away their wisdoms. Their wealth is embodied in their *newer way of thinking,* and you are more than welcome to come aboard. Here is what you can do to take control of your life: Learn to think like Mental Wealth millionaires! Teach yourself the simple labels that create *a newer way of thinking* (ANWOT). Here's the curriculum. Take the course and you'll love the results.

The ANWOT course consists of a series of labels or *word-switches* that call forth common sense wisdom. Each *word-switch* is linked to a wisdom that others have shown work. Each wisdom grows your mental wealth. Collect enough wisdoms, connect them as you would a puzzle, and you will become a Mental Wealth millionaire. If you have already shut your energy factory down with such learned trigger words as "I can't," "why bother" "it's too much trouble," "I don't deserve ...", the simple word-switch "I think I can; I will" provides the small spark needed to switch your energy back to "on". It is the first step to challenging the hopeless/helpless attitude that keeps us stuck.

The ingredients to teach your *self* ANWOT are abundantly available; they don't require money, unusual intelligence, good looks, connections, or even good health. They include *the will to try* ("I think I can."), *work, patience, direction,* and *risk-taking*. The components of forever free Educational Community curriculum are:

1. *Emotional self endorsement* (stren #2) and *secondary endorsement* (stren #20) are the two most powerful word-switches to make us our own best friend; these, along with additional self-endorsement techniques, change us from a *love junkie* addicted to others' approval to a *love giver*.
2. The three *mind-freeing, life-changing, world-saving word-switches* that enable us to become our own person (strens #7, #9-11).
3. The labels that identify the eight choices available to our will to direct action – those that work and those that consistently cause trouble (strens #35-44).
4. The wisdom collection gladly shared by Mental Wealth millionaires for our benefit.
5. The universal values that virtually every religion, philosopher, and common sense thinker arrives at independently, for example, *The Golden Rule*.

Ten minutes of study every other day of the 100^{+} wisdoms in this collection will make a dramatic difference in your life's satisfaction.[93] Strens #100 and #101 are basic

[93]By signing in to our forever free web site at www.anwot.org you receive one of our 100^{+} wisdom tips delivered to your computer every other day.

and advanced glossaries of *word-switches*. Simply familiarizing yourself with this collection of labels and their meanings will be very insightful. The following stren, #95, explains how anyone may create a joyous, meaningful life experience through the wise use of their *second signaling system*.

Have tons of *mental wealth*.

Stren #95: Behavior that is Rewarded is Repeated

Welcome to stren #95, *Behavior that is rewarded is repeated*. Understanding what motivates us is practical knowledge to help make our life joyous and meaningful. This stren explains the special opportunity to assume responsibility for our life's experience that other species lack. With this knowledge, we position ourselves to make our wishes and prayers a reality. We become our own genie.

Scientists have shown that behaviors can be predicted and controlled by managing the rewards and punishments available in the subject's environment. The more accurate our conscious awareness of the relationship of cause and effect, the greater our power to effect control. I am in awe when I see a chicken trained to play ping pong,[94] basketball, or golf by manipulating the conditions that lead to reward or disappointment. I am appalled that fellow humans can be readily influenced to violate nature's most powerful instinct by becoming a kamikaze pilot or a suicide bomber. Laboratory observations of animals and humans help us understand the way *fate* and *circumstance* influence behavior. Our growing knowledge of cause and effect empowers us to influence the behavior of others as well as our self – and resist the self-defeating behaviors that get us into trouble. Most everyone prefers to be master of their own behavior rather than controlled by other masters.

In animals and humans alike, behavior that is rewarded is repeated, and behavior that is punished is avoided. When we make mistakes we experience unpleasant consequences. When mistakes are not fatal, we learn to avoid that mistake in the future, and that leads to a repertoire of effective behaviors. With repetition the adaptive behaviors become hardwired, and are passed forward in the genes of survivors and by education in the tribe's established culture. A benefit of habit is that action pathways become increasingly automatic and less mental preparation is required; instant response to emergency situations is a basic requirement for survival. A disadvantage of preprogrammed action pathways is that they are inflexible and lack the *common sense* problem solving required to create new solutions to new challenges.

The power of knowledge may be directed for both constructive and destructive outcomes. The directors of our behavior include our animal brain, our nurturer's rules, and our intelligent cerebral cortex. Additional names for these three controllers are *instinct* (nature's genetic action paths)*, culture* (the traditions of our nurturers), and *common sense wisdom* (the *newer way of thinking* that leads to *self*-mastery). *Instinct* initially rules alone until joined by *culture* and thereafter *common sense wisdom*. *Instinct* has been designed for survival in primitive and hostile environments. *Culture* is a combination of instinct's predetermined behaviors and the common sense action pathways based on knowledge of cause and effect. *Common sense wisdom* is the outcome of intelligence applied to knowledge. A significant distinguishing factor is that while *instinct* and *culture* address yesterday's problems using yesterday's knowledge, *common sense* applies new technology to create wiser solutions to current problems.

[94]Film of pigeons "playing golf": http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vGazyH6fQQ4; find others on youtube.com

Instinct emphasizes survival through confrontation to attain dominance for one side. *Common sense* supports cooperation and collaboration to benefit all tribes. The *culture* of any tribe is some combination of *instinct* and *common sense*; the greater the tribe's skill in civilization, the greater the *common sense*. The persistence of destructive aggression tells us common sense is still uncommon.[95]

Historically, collectively, and individually, it is our nature to progress from *mental slavery* to *stupidity* before we act with *common sense wisdom*. We are all born into *mental slavery* – to serve the whims of our early masters. *Stupidity* is continued mindless obedience to fate and circumstance when we are equipped with wisdom. *Wisdom* is applying knowledge of cause and effect to elevate ourselves above the animals by popularizing the civil skills that make us humane. During our formative years our animal brain rules our intelligent but immature cerebral cortex. **We are headed for catastrophe because we deceive ourselves into believing that we are acting with *common sense wisdom*, when our intelligent cerebral cortex remains more servant to *instinct* and our *culture* than their *master*.**

Emancipating our will from the demands of our early masters, *instinct* and *culture*, requires an understanding of the positive and negative rewards that sustain them. What is experienced as satisfying or disappointing is different for *instinct, culture*, and *common sense*. As we acquire maturity and common sense wisdom, the rewards that "work" change. Words provide the power of imagination. We become sensitive to past experience and future consequences of action. Local allegiances and craving for immediate satisfaction give way to awareness of global priorities and investing energy now for greater future benefits. The marvelous benefits attainable by our use of common sense are ours to create **IF** we can get our will unstuck from instinct and tradition.

We must make ourselves consciously aware of our self-deception before we can consistently engage in wise action and unite to further our collective well-being. Our knowledge of weapons of ultimate destruction is spreading so rapidly that the doomsday clock is ticking dangerously close to midnight. This ominous reality requires urgent collective action, beginning with recognizing our own stupidity. Knowledge of our animal brain brings us the realization of what we can and must do. The wonderful news is that we are so close to the tipping point that we can effect a dramatic change with limited effort.

The animal portion of our brain is the end product of a software program finely tuned over hundreds of millions of years for survival at all costs. Reaching back far beyond the nine months preceding birth, our genes express the trial and error learning that has enabled us to persist as a species in the savage environment of our distant ancestors. The most important reward was survival. "Might is right." Kill or be killed. We are hardwired to protect ourselves, our family, and our tribe. The rules of civility in effect for one's own tribe don't apply to "*sub-humans*," a label which includes not only

[95]See stren 91, *The Common Sense Test of common sense.*

animals but also members of other tribes. Making *sub-humans* servant to our tribe is among the highest rewards.

Our animal brain lacks the wisdom to manage the power of intelligence. Power without common sense will insatiably pursue the *survival of the fittest* perspective. *Security* to the animal brain is the use of power to accumulate as much material wealth as possible and dominate others. Most people remain passively dependent on the hardwired action pathways of *instinct* and *culture*. We obey the "rules" we inherit from our genes and the traditions we acquire from our nurturers. We accept the programming of *nature* and our *nurturers* as our own. We still believe wars "work" to reward us when common sense shows us clearly that the next war will result in mutual destruction. The action pathways of our animal brain will persist until we choose to actively free our will from *fate* and *circumstance* and assume responsibility for our well-being. "Normality" to the animal brain includes what most of humanity now calls "murder," "rape," and "terrorism." Only consciously aware people actively intervene to assume personal responsibility for our collective well-being. They apply *common sense* wisdom based on today's knowledge to create better solutions to current issues.

The prize of successful destructive aggression is dominating any perceived competitor. In my visit to the Galapagos Islands I observed a common practice among the Blue-footed Booby species – only one sibling survives because the strongest pushes the weaker from the nest. In contemporary society, we call this "murder." We have only recently passed laws to make minorities and women "equal" to white males, but still maintain significant obstacles to equality in gender and race. In civilized society we consider fighting and rape immoral and do our best to curtail it with our most severe punishments. Fighting for mating rights is a common practice among animals – "spoils to the victor" is expected and normal. We still reward with homage and adulation those with the greatest material wealth, physical "beauty," and cunning. The most powerful get to be "dictator" and others submit their *common sense wisdom* to the authority of power, irrespective of the degree of irrationality. Would you agree that most of our world's population engages in stupid actions when we are well enough equipped with common sense to act wisely? The problem persists because we widely and uncritically accept the biased perception that the world is divided into two categories and that <u>our side</u> is "*all good, just, and right*" and <u>others</u> are "*evil, unreasonable, wrong*" and deserving of harm. *Good and evil addiction*[96] is epidemic in our society; this way of thinking justifies bigotry, prejudice, harmful confrontation, and war.

Our animal brain contains the pleasure centers that are intermingled with centers for aggression; they compel us to procreate and compete to preserve the species. In a civilized society, pleasure-seeking requires constraints – this has become a function of the cerebral cortex. We each experience the inner confrontation where our older emotional brain says "yes" to immediate satisfaction and our intelligent cerebral cortex, equipped to apply common sense and anticipate longer term consequences of action, says "no." This is why alcohol, which selectively dulls the cerebral cortex, releases sexual and aggressive behavior such as the "bar fight."

[96]*Good and Evil Addiction*, e-book, by Jun Togo; http://www.peace-picturebook.org/GoodEvil/index.html

Nature distinguishes male from female by the design of our bodies and the allocation of chemical messengers such as androgenic and estrogenic hormones. The concentration of pleasure receptors in the glands penis (tip) preconditions the male for easy orgasm and a proclivity to service many females. The erect penis displays unmistakable intention compared to the diminutive clitoris. The female dedication to nurture her offspring to maturity and the satisfaction from breast feeding is unmatched by men save in unusual circumstances. Males, compelled to seek orgasm, rarely declare intercourse to be lacking pleasure, while many women say that they have sex more "for love" and "to be loved" than to satisfy a craving for orgasm. How would behavior change if babies were born during intercourse and orgasm occurred nine months later? How would the education of our children be different without extraordinary maternal enthusiasm? These features lead me to conclude that women are likely to be the dominant force in avoiding human catastrophe and creating world peace.

The preprogrammed action pathways of our animal brain are our first master. Instinct cannot maintain exclusivity because after our birth, nurturers are ready and willing to take over the dominate role of determining behavior. For the first years of our lives, we are "takers," helpless and dependent on others for our survival. We don't ask – we are compelled by our prolonged immaturity to accept whatever *fate* and *circumstance* make of us. The labels that trigger our thoughts are designed by *nature* and our *nurturers* to emphasize ***their*** perspectives. We first rent them and in time we will passively own them until we invest in our own independence. Most people go through life remaining a "love junkie," craving approval for their self-worth and addicted to material wealth.

Physical pleasure and pain powerfully influence behavior until our cerebral cortex is taught a *second signaling system* – the power of symbols to "turn on" our *primary signaling system*. Words are a source of mental energy to influence how we think, feel, and act. By linking emotion to symbols, our mental activity becomes sufficiently powerful to selectively restrain the action pathways of our animal brain. The culture of our nurturers, as they define it, gradually assumes a dominant role in the way we think, feel, and act. The sources of reward and punishment are beyond our control; our behavior is determined by *fate* and *circumstance*, *nature* and *nurture* – "the luck of the draw."

Our animal brain is characterized by its uninhibited desires, while our nurturer's traditions are generally known for their advocacy of restraint. "No" is the most common word of nurturers, and punishment is more common than positive rewards. Nurturers even use language to condition our thoughts, for example, teaching the uniquely human *self*-punishment we call "guilt." We learn to "guilt" and punish ourselves merely for *thinking* about "evil" or forbidden acts. Guilt may stick with us throughout a lifetime! The power of interpretation extends to yelling (unpleasant sounds[97]), gestures, posture,

[97]Stren #90 describes the "Little Albert" conditioning experiments of J.B. Watson and others to control behavior by unpleasant sounds and multiple stimuli including words.

"the look," and voice tones. With the addition of language, our nurturers add symbolic rewards to the physical rewards – greed, insatiable pursuit of physical wealth, beauty, titles, "adult toys," power over others, and guarantee of a reward in the hereafter. Punishment may include withholding love, endorsement, attention, food, and whatever additional symbolic rewards have been established in our culture.

Symbols also introduce pleasures that are prominent in our species, for example – values, peace, philanthropy, reading, and solving puzzles. When my dad was growing up in Russia, they had no toys. A popular game was pitching broken shards of pottery or glass against the wall to win the valued "prize" – the loser's shard. As an expert pitcher, he felt very wealthy from his accumulation of shards. What were the common forms of reward and punishment in your formative years? Which were most important? Which do you most pursue now?

Self-mastery is *becoming our own person.* Through our formative first decades, our cerebral cortex attains maturity and knowledge of *cause and effect* – the universal order of nature's creative force. The secret of *self*-mastery is the intelligent use of symbols[98] to become *self*-programmers of reward and punishment. We store knowledge and create symbols, usually words, by which we call forth and manipulate knowledge in our imagination to reveal *common sense* wisdom. Through this process we free our will from *fate* and *circumstance* to direct our own life experience. Our freed will can redirect the energy of *instinct* and our *culture* to design original action pathways to reach our own preferred outcomes. *Self*-mastery enables us *to pursue our own good in our own way*.[99]

We remain "mental slaves" to our early dictators, *instinct* and *culture,* until our specialized freedom organ is sufficiently mature and our language is equipped to exceed the rewards and counteract the punishments established by our first masters. Children can be motivated, like the game-playing chicken, by food or treats; and our biological motivation to seek pleasure and avoid discomfort is powerful but our special ability to attach meaning (emotion) to symbols has even greater power. Symbols create beliefs that make it possible to override nature's most powerful instinct – survival. To many species, *killing, robbing,* and *forced sex* means "reward, reward, reward", whereas the assigning of symbols such as "*murder, rape,* and *theft*" can call forth a vision of morality characteristic of our species.

As we expand our collection of labels that accurately reflect cause and effect, we grow our power to influence our *self* and all that is about us. Words that switch on pleasure and turn off pain empower us to modify established behavior and initiate new action patterns. Through education in *self*-endorsement we attain *self*-mastery and apply knowledge to make ourselves powerful creators. *Common sense* wisdom using current knowledge to solve current problems has far more survival value than hardwired solutions to yesterday's challenges based on yesterday's knowledge.

[98]See stren #94, *Learning Starts with Labeling*, to better understand the importance of symbols.
[99]John Stuart Mill, in definition of "freedom," *The American Heritage Dictionary*, Houghton Mifflin pub.

Mental skill in *self*-endorsement is essential if we are to free our will from dictators and become our own person. There are many techniques to endorse ourselves, which are easy to teach and readily learned. The early strens in the *newer way of thinking* curriculum consist of a collection of the most powerful *self*-endorsement skills, beginning with *emotional self-endorsement* and *secondary endorsement*.

Most people go through life lacking adequate *self*-endorsement skills and instead become their own worst enemy. We act stupidly because we are not consciously aware of our *self*-deception. We actually believe we are acting appropriately when *common sense* would show we are simply marching to the tune of fate and circumstance. We are unaware of our mental slavery to other masters and will continue with our faulty assumptions as long as we remain addicted to "others" approval. This may be O.K. if our environment is nurturing and benevolent; it's not O.K. when our source of sustenance is self-serving; it is a catastrophe when we are dehumanized and considered dispensable.

Freed from the need to serve other masters for our minimum daily requirement of mental nourishment, we position ourselves to pursue the humane values that consistently support our well-being. *Common sense* enables us to recognize the value of cooperation and collaboration for mutual gain. *Common sense* is the basis of universal values such as "the golden rule," love, forgiveness, peace, gratitude, compassion, kindness, and all behaviors that elevate us to humanity. We are not born with wisdom; we acquire it by applying *common sense* to knowledge. It took our ancestors many years before we found non-violent ways to face difficult issues. For example, humor and laughter not only detoxify fear and anxiety; they are among our favorite pleasures. Wisdom can be taught and readily learned. Understanding the principles of reward and punishment are instrumental in changing the way we think, feel, and act.

If you are like most people, you won't take action to change a belief, no matter how false, as long as you label it as "true." The secret of mental freedom and sustained well-being is knowledge of cause and effect. You have available to you all the word power you require to free your energy to become your own genie. I urge you to make your wishes and prayers your reality because I know you share my passion for world peace. World peace needs you! When you teach yourself *a newer way of thinking* and wake up to your mental slavery you will want to join *Einstein's army* to make our planet a safer gentler home - this labor of love that will bring you your greatest rewards.

Stren #96: On Creativity

The process of creative thought; what it is, how it comes about, and how it can be used to best advantage.

Welcome to stren #96, *The Creative Process*, the means we may determine our destiny.

What is creativity? We can begin with some dictionary definitions[100]:

create: ·To cause to exist; bring into being; originate. ·To give rise to; produce.
creation: an original act of human invention or imagination.
Creation (*capital* C): God's primal act of bringing the world into existence
procreate: To beget (offspring); reproduce.
procreative: capable of reproducing; *procreative instinct*: directed to procreation.

The creative force that has caused you and me to exist, which people label with such names as *nature*, *fate*, and *God*, has determined that procreation, i.e. reproducing and nourishing our progeny to reproductive maturity, is the most important behavior in life. Pleasure and aggression centers located in the animal brain and the animal portion of our human brain compel us to engage in sexual intercourse, even at the peril of our life. Orgasm is our most intensive natural pleasure.

However, only our kind can rebel from nature's commands and determine our own goals. We have been gifted with a freedom organ, our cerebral cortex, with sufficient intelligence to discover our creator's universal rules of cause-and-effect. Knowledge allows us to self-program our behavior. We bring physical, mental, and spiritual reality into being, and introduce these creations into a world where they have never existed. Through the power of interpretation and imagination, we make ourselves creators and destroyers. We increase our power by the degree we invent symbols to discover, store, share, grow, and pass knowledge forward. No other creature has such freedom to rule its self and influence the design of the universe we call "home." We can educate our freedom organ to create paths original to nature.

Our power to create and destroy is not only unprecedented, it is accelerating so rapidly that our generation has reached a tipping point. Suddenly we surpass fate and circumstance in determining our destiny. Our generation may choose to create a joyous, purposeful life in an ideal world, bring about our annihilation, or any degree in between. We are making ourselves simultaneously our best friend and our worst enemy. Heaven and hell, the perception of two extremes, is the creation of our own doing. The greater our power, the greater the rewards for wise choices, and the greater the punishment for stupid ones. We are discovering that intelligence directed by our animal brain will result in the use of our weapons of ultimate destruction whereas the use of *common sense* wisdom can redirect the energy of our animal brain to preferred outcomes. Like it or not, we have assumed the responsibility to manage our life's experience and the destiny of our world. The value of our creativity and its danger both

[100]The American Heritage Dictionary, New College Edition, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1979.

grow as we educate our freedom organ with symbols to think using knowledge of cause-and-effect.

Popularizing *a newer way of thinking* (ANWOT) that equips our freedom organ with *common sense* wisdom is our most important creative task. Our destiny is influenced by some combination of the hardwired directions of instinct and tradition and the common sense wisdom of our freedom organ's will power. ANWOT is our means to selectively choose where we can allow our growing power to be directed by instinct and tradition, and when we must intervene with common sense wisdom in order to survive and thrive. We currently apply our creative power both wisely and stupidly. Our success in surviving and thriving require an understanding of our creative process.

Creativity can be taught! We can learn to consistently direct our power using common sense wisdom, and we must because our most informed experts tell us our intelligence will soon lead to our extinction.[101] We can solve our most difficult problems if we follow the road map that creative people have laid out for us by their pain and frustrations.

What if we could learn the fastest, safest, surest path to creativity from the world's most successful people? How much easier is any journey when a map is provided, especially one which reveals a superhighway created to accommodate the high volume of wisdom proven to work? We have such map. I believe one of the world's best was created by Eliot Dole Hutchinson for his doctorate thesis at Harvard University.[102] His questionnaire to about 250 of the world's most creative leaders, "scientists, artists, authors, musicians, and just ordinary folk," and an extensive review of literature are the reasons I have invited him as a "guest lecturer." All page-numbered quotes in the section below refer to Hutchinson's thesis.

Creativity is the application of knowledge of cause and effect to solve problems. We discover universal truth as we reveal the orderliness of nature. Logic, i.e. common sense, is the chief tool. Reasoning is at a maximum; random trial and error effort is at a minimum. Insight leads to insight. One idea is incorporated into a set of ideas, and the sets of ideas lead to a higher level of problem to be solved. "Elements are put together like bricks in a wall, each space being determined by the location and size of the preceding block."[p.12] Systematic reasoning is essential to solve complex problems. Once an insight is born through systematic reasoning, then trial and error application may be introduced to demonstrate the validity of the new truth. Whatever the field of endeavor, be it art, music, science, or religion, the process of discovery is fraught with uncertainty and stress. The creative process is cumulative and compounding, leading to more advanced challenges for discovery. The most successful creators welcome challenge with emotional reserve and intellectual objectivity.

[101] *The World at Risk*, commissioned by the U.S. Congress; Vintage Books; December, 2008.
[102] *How to Think Creatively*, Eliot Dole Hutchinson, Abingdon Press, 1949.

Hutchinson's comprehensive study consistently identified four stages of the creative process: Preparation; Frustration; Achievement; and Verification.

1. Preparation

All major creative breakthroughs are supported by years of effort and acquiring technical skills. Perspiration is more important than inspiration. The direction may begin vague and attain focus over time. Logic, systematic planning, intelligence, prior knowledge, work, and accuracy precede an important discovery. Common sense precedes insight, only then to be followed by trial-and-error false starts, verification, and widespread application. Wisdom is added to wisdom to encompass a more comprehensive insight, but that is not enough. Direct results seldom come from sustained effort and inclination. An undirected linkage of these elements must occur that wildly and effortlessly bursts into consciousness, *the moment of insight* described in stage three. It is best to keep multiple problems alive because the random events that spring insight into consciousness is more likely when multiple solutions are pursued than if one's interest is too narrow.

2. Frustration

When the energy to fulfill a drive for immediate satisfaction is blocked, frustration intensifies to create neurotic behavior and sustained physical tension. Creativity leads to a series of temporary frustrations during which uncharacteristic thinking and action is common – sleeplessness, daydreaming, depression, and exhaustion. Defeat may be temporarily admitted, other activities pursued, and preoccupation to lessen the stress and preserve emotional balance. The stress may continue "until a re-education has built up a whole new way of acting and thinking, so here the act of creation is not fully accomplished until the ideas contained in the insight are secured for consciousness in some objectified form – written down, made explicit in memory, and at length evaluated." p. 113

Sustained stress may cause irreparable damage, such as destroying the partially created act, or even self-destruction – intentional or accidental suicide. Even without personal experience, we can imagine the effect of waves of perceived failure, feelings of inadequacy, shame, and hopelessness. The most competent are overcome by frustration. Rodin put hammer to a statue; Tchaikovsky tore up and burned valuable score sheets; and Shelley hid manuscripts so that no one would discover them. Rest and relaxation alleviate discomfort and may be required for the moment of insight. Erudition, unrelieved industry, and accuracy are not enough. There must be a spontaneous reorganization of knowledge more than an addition of an insight, that is rather an interpretation of stored elements – "one not only creates something; he becomes something as well." p.115

Most people have more than enough intelligence to become powerful creators, but lack the emotional resilience to sustain the regular frustrations involved in the creative process. Children and successful creators repeatedly fall down and pick

themselves up. Mistakes are not failures; they are necessary steps to redirect us to the path of progress. "Error" may be a poorly chosen and discouraging word as indicated by Edison when asked how he could continue with so many failures: "... all I have ever tackled and solved have been done by hard logical thinking.... I speak without exaggeration when I say that I have constructed three thousand different theories in connection with the electric light, each one of them reasonable and apparently likely to be true. Yet in two cases only did my experiments prove the truth of my theory." p.15 Edison didn't have any "failures;" he continued to discover what didn't work. False starts are seen as clearing the way for alternative possibilities to reach the goal. An author noted, "Personally I feel compelled to keep up my futile attempts. ... I like to be compelled to keep up these efforts ... When the right idea appears, I forget everything and work like a slave."p.51

It is helpful to understand that creativity means introducing what is not already part of establishment thinking. New ideas or knowledge that contradicts present culture is often met with scorn, shunning, and even severe physical punishment. The temperament to face the external stresses posed by established culture are clearly seen in proponents of "radical" ideas such as Christ, Galileo, Darwin, Freud, De Chardin, Lincoln, Gandhi, and so on. Freud observed that new ideas pass through three stages: first rejected by the establishment, later declared possibly of value but simply a modification of the standard, and thirdly heralded as the establishment's own worthy product. Additionally, in every field that invites creative thinking, one often has to deal with jealous colleagues whose self-interests will suppress even the most brilliant achievement as "worthless." Such injustice is enough to induce aberrant behavior in all but the most composed creators. Isolation and loneliness may be a high cost of creativity that some will be unwilling to accept.

My own struggle with creativity focuses on several related solutions: why some unlikely people are happy and fulfilled, while those seemingly endowed with every benefit confess their unhappiness and worse? Why do we continue to make war when peace makes so much more sense? Given rampant world misery, what is the answer to the universal wishes and prayers for peace prominent in our collective mind? Each insight starts with an idea, and may require a week or more of collecting ideas, frustration, stop signs, and then a rush to the computer to record one or more paragraphs. For me this stress cycle still persists in spite of a lifetime of preparation as a student of the mind and my privileged opportunity to share the insights of thousands through my professional career.

The genuine frustration that comes with a creative mind may be understood in part from our biology. Creativity is a continued push for progress against a seemingly unmovable obstacle. Our innate response when we are confronted with a problem to be solved is the production of "red alert" energy to fight or run. Our ancestors were regularly faced with life-threatening danger and, lacking agriculture, had to kill to eat. The "fight or flight" instinct confronts and quickly resolves the stressful situation and the red alert state returns to normal. In civilized society, fighting is punished (except in war) and technology makes physical flight ineffective. Frustration energy is labeled as *anger*

or *anxiety*, but nature's cue to fight or run is prohibited. New "mechanisms" are introduced to manage frustration, such as blaming, procrastination, and substance abuse, to name a few.[103] The emotional pain of red alert is not resolved but continues at a sustained level of *pink alert* leading to mild or severe symptoms. Thoughts of the problem and wishes to be at work are negated by many of the stress-relieving behaviors.

Evidence from two other sources explains why the deliberate escape from problem solving is regularly described as essential during the frustration stage. Post-traumatic stress syndrome, a common result of war, is seen as an overload of anxiety without opportunity for relief. Studies on prisoners of war who succumb to brainwashing to renounce their country and ideals concluded that any mind under sufficient stress can be twisted to take on an abnormal persona.

3. Achievement: the moment of insight

The culmination of the buildup of frustration is the moment of insight. A community of experience documents that the period of tremendous ambition, threatened failure with accompanying neurotic symptoms, and abandonment into irrelevant matters to preserve sanity ends with almost hallucinatory vivid resolution, success, and release into an emotional and mental orgasm. Smaller insights may first lead to an "Aha" or "Eureka" experience but a jelling of insight to insights to solve the greater struggles of our life is a bombastic experience.

At the moment of insight "one is not only astonished at their number, not only startled by the vividness and ease of their appearance, but also largely at a loss to capture them." p.134 The rapid flood of ideas occurs at unpredictable times and places. There is exaltation, exhilaration, disappearance of neurotic symptoms, and a sense of elevation to a new level of competence. Hutchinson reiterates that the unannounced conscious interpretation that creates something also causes a transformation in the creator. p.115

The data collected during the period of preparation is largely stored in verbal imagery and is brought to consciousness in the medium of language. The most common expression of insight is expressed in (often new) words which link the conscious mind with the data stored and hidden from awareness. Though words are the most popular medium, other means of expression are available – the musician, the artist, the dancer express visual and kinesthetic forms of creative expression difficult to capture by words. Yet, words are the most popular means to willfully encourage the insightful rearrangement of stored data. They are our best way to intentionally summon to consciousness the stored emotions that lead to insight. This is why *a newer way of thinking* (**ANWOT**) emphasizes that creation of updated labels, *word-switches*,[104] linked to common sense problem solving.

[103]See stren #90, *Modern Flight Patterns*.
[104]See stren #5, *Word-switches* and stren #94, *Learning Starts with Labeling*.

Solutions burst suddenly “out of the blue” when insight is least expected. Poems, musical themes, art and architecture, essays, scientific and mathematical problems, often share complete solutions at the “quick as a flash” moment of insight after multiple unsuccessful attempts. Preparation ends with a sudden illumination and release of tension in a period without deliberation. Creators best express their own experience:

Tchaikovsky: “I forget everything and behave like a mad man. Everything within me starts pulsing and quivering; hardly have I begun the sketch, than one thought follows another. In the midst of the magic process it frequently happens that some interruption wakes me from my state.” p.134

An inventor: “It is usually startling for it has no connection with what I am doing. Immediately the idea fills my mind forcing everything else out. I am amazed at the apparent simplicity of it.” p.118

An English scientist: “Any ideas that matter usually arise when I have time to think, i.e. in bed during the three to ten minutes before I sleep, in a train, while driving a car, or on a holiday. ...
The best moments are those, I find, in which I let the imaginative thought become a game.” p. 116

Aldous Huxley: “Smoking and walking about, calm restlessness, without taking the mind too far away from the main thought, helps.” p.117

Wordsworth: The association of the moment of insight linked to a state of relaxation was described as “emotion recollected in tranquility.” p.159

Will Durant re writing history: “I spend a good deal of time making notes and gathering materials. ... the notes for one chapter are classified under an outline that usually contains some six hundred headings ... I am never inspired by a big idea; ideas form in me very slowly, if at all.” p.15

Beethoven: “…became, as it were, transformed. He no longer belonged properly to himself, being wholly possessed by the idea.” p.136

Dr. Banesh Hoffmann, Oxford mathematician: “While reading an unrelated book, I picked up some scraps of paper and straightway, without realizing that there was any difficulty in the problem, I wrote out the solution with hardly a pause. I knew somehow or other that something had solved itself at the back of my mind, but had no idea of the solution until my pencil almost automatically wrote it out.” p. 21

A housewife trying to alter a dress: “I had worked futilely for a half-day. Considerably discouraged, I rolled up the work and put it away, sick at heart because I needed the dress for an affair the next day. That night after two or three hours sleep I suddenly awakened, the plan of adjustment of my dress as clear in that moment as if I had seen it

actually finished before me." p.26

Bertrand Russell, a good summary: "In all the creative work that I have done, what has come first is a problem, a puzzle involving discomfort. Then comes concentrated voluntary application entailing great effort. After this, a period without conscious thought, and finally a solution brings with it the complete plan of a book."p.19

Hutchinson found that whatever the creative undertaking, the moment of insight is likely to occur in three favored situations: "... during or just after periods of rest and relaxation; in periods characterized by a slight mental abstraction or dissociation which in itself furnishes a momentary relaxation; during periods of light physical activity, usually of a more or less repetitive and automatic character, which give relief from the insistent tensions involved." p.120

My passion in the journey to create a universal, comprehensive, and easily understood explanation of human behavior has been most relieved while relaxing in a hot tub on a balcony just off my bedroom. Although I logically attribute any insight to my preparation, a lifetime of learning from many of the world's greatest teachers, and the opportunity to share the creative insights of thousands of patients, the breakthrough moments seem to appear on my mental screen like an email from some unknown sender. I have had fantasies that the hot tub is a mini-Mt. Sinai and I am a Moses waiting for the next wisdom I am to dutifully record and pass forward.

We have yet to learn how to predict when the moment of creative insight occurs. It is often not limited to a single insight but relates to a whole system of issues. One cannot say, "I'm going to arrange to have an inspiration at 9 a.m." During the rush, most report it is best to "let them come," sometimes waiting for the point to be clear.

Many creative people speak about the relationship of creativity to dreams or use of drugs, most commonly coffee (caffeine) and smoking (nicotine). Abundant examples substantiate that "stimulants do at times release genius, contributing as much to its birth as to its decay." p.129 Alcohol has been said to selectively dull the anxiety that inhibits our emotional brain, allowing for a temporary synthesis of animal brain and cortex to create a more productive collaboration of intellect and emotions. What is clear is that the declared insights produced through daydreaming and use of substances lack confirmation when the extensive prior hard work of preparation is lacking. The musician's "creative masterpiece" from a moment of intoxicated divine insight is declared worthless by objective observers and even by its creator in sober moments. The use of substances, especially coffee and tobacco in moderation, is within the limits of propriety when paired with the appropriate preparation.

Some problems are so difficult and beyond solving that we would wisely invest our energy in the more basic pieces that eventually lead to the desired payoff. The greater danger is declaring a difficult problem unsolvable when collaborative effort is the most productive approach. I believe the use of weapons with ultimate destructive power, the most imminent danger we face, will be prevented if we can get over the

learned *hopeless/helpless* attitude. Unleashing the creative energy for peace currently pent up in people's minds throughout the world, we will be unstoppable if we unite in collective action!

4. Verification

Discovery does not stand alone. Common sense ideas discovered in a moment of insight must be tested by trial-and-error applications to determine their realistic social value; overstatements are more the rule rather than the exception. Communicating a creative insight to its judge and jury so that they can understand it is systematic work that may be regarded as dull and uninspiring. Demonstrating the truth of one's claim requires time, during which enthusiasm commonly diminishes or fades away to other endeavors. Insight follows a series of insights linked in a chain that begs moving on to the next link; verification pales beside the fire that burns in the creator's mind to follow discovery with discovery. Finishing an effort leads to restless inactivity and a self-imposed challenge to push knowledge forward.

Additional phenomena may cause the verification step to fall short. Establishment's resistance to new ideas can be punishing. The greater the originality from standard beliefs, the greater the resistance. Without confidence and a brave spirit, as the excitement fades over time, one's energy to verify may be exhausted as does the willingness to become the subject of criticism. The perfectionism required for most leaps in knowledge causes many creators to reexamine and demean their insight as not meeting their unrealistic standard; the imperfections must first be corrected or the project may be abandoned.

It is more difficult to get recognition for creativity at home than abroad because vested interests in the local environment create an atmosphere of negativity. Even though I had completed medical training from prestigious schools offering the latest in medical knowledge, at home I was still the kid who could not be trusted like the real doctor. Traveling beyond local areas to learn from critical evaluation and obtain acceptance is usually more productive.

Emotions in Creation

The power of emotion inspires us to seek and repeat the moment of insight even if the inspired creation fails to meet the test of common sense. The value of the insight may only be appreciated by the subject, or a circumscribed group of believers. Common sense yields to passion for the untested or unprovable belief. Disagreement or opposition from the larger community may be disregarded or even become the basis of harmful confrontation to force acceptance on the basis of authority.

When a creative intension goes unsolved for months or years with prolonged frustration, perhaps abandonment, and then sudden effortless insight appears, the revelation often seems to be mistakenly unrelated to past experience. The subject concludes the source must other than one's *self* – a supernatural being offering

universal truth – and their role is simply to record or share the insight as one's duty. The automatism is a sign of divine (or evil) intervention. Prophets, advisors, and mystics feel that their absolute "insights" are so true and authoritative they could not be their own. The emotional relief observed in confession, chanting, and repentance is commonly regarded as divine. Spiritual ideologies based on a "leap of faith" are often dogmatically pursued while common sense reasoning that challenges the veracity of the insight is ignored.

As one example among many, in 1896 Mary Baker Eddy, founder of Christian Science, wrote, "The works I have written on Christian Science contain absolute truth....I was a scribe under orders, and who can restrain from transcribing what God indites?" p.172 Such resolute conclusions are not only found in most religions but also in secular ideologies such as those decreed by Hitler, Khrushchev, Mao and dictators throughout history.

I have personally seen individuals who profess that their discovery of a universal truth, revealed while under the influence of a hallucinatory drug, must be shared with the world – "I have discovered that a dog is a bitch!" The musician who claims a breakthrough in his art is apt to recant his claims when reviewing the results or getting critical feedback when in a drug-free state. These individuals usually lack the difficult stage of preparation.

The power of emotion is evident through the prolonged stressful anticipation of the moment of insight. Hutchinson identifies three basic sources of the emotion that beckons our pursuit of creativity:

1. *Matured interest* (what I consider to be *fate* and *circumstance*): Once we follow a path, vocational or recreational (sports, stamp collecting), we become tuned in to data present on our early path. Enthusiasm is pursued and grows with greater objectivity and rationality.

2. *Frustration as a source of emotional life*: We are driven to solve problems by our basic needs. The innate biology that energizes us to solve problems is well known. "Necessity is the mother of invention." Our animal brain is prewired to seek whatever provides pleasure and reduces discomfort. The emotions that demand we solve problems sustain a cycle of discomfort, leading to creativity to resolve the problem, only to be followed by more of the same.

3. *Emotional release in insight*: "Joy, zest, gratification, enthusiasm, and even rapture and elation replace the disruptive emotions of the period of frustration." p.155 A basic observation is that behavior that is rewarded is repeated. The moments of insight that follow frustration addict us to pleasure, be it symbolic such as fame or money, or physical such as orgasm or the taste of our favorite food. Creative puzzle solving is as much a way of life as it is an act of production. It is an antidote to the flat uniformity and spiceless mediocrity of daily life.

Thus, some combination of interest, frustration, and pleasure, which are within our control, contribute to the spontaneous reorganization of data that make us creators.

With respect to age, most important advances in knowledge occur between the ages of 20 and 50, although there are many notable exceptions. Youth has more pressing needs whereas seniority favors habitual procedures. Through the years we tend to find comfort in less consequential things; the pursuit of usefulness and quantity may take precedence over originality.

We are indebted to Professor Hutchinson for his painstaking verification of each of the four stages of the creative process and the excerpts of statements by the most notable thinkers. Education can increase creativity! Encouraging self-expression, imagination, dreaming, and exploring deeper emotion, independent thinking, productive relaxation methods to manage frustration, the need for "mistakes," healthy rebelliousness, discipline, and so on are specific ways to promote creativity. We need no reminders of the various ways our current methods of education, emphasizing uncritical acceptance of authority, inhibits creativity.

As a psychiatrist with a lifetime of professional experience, I have no doubt that a prior understanding of the normal stresses creativity encounters will prevent much of the negative effects and support the creativity that otherwise is lost to humanity. Knowledge of the normality of frustration and a proper rest and relaxation regimen makes insight more effective and satisfying. p.114 We can strengthen the natural resilience we inherit to move up and onward instead of the learned helpless/hopeless *give up* behavior we learn through restrictive education. Preventive education promises significant rewards.

Consider these hints to be more successful at creativity:

- Become familiar with the creative process; this and other roadmaps are available.
- Increase motivation for the goal. Anticipate the satisfactions of achievement.
- Define the problem and the goal as clearly as possible.
- Write down ideas to solve the problem and try to make them explicit.
- Resolve not to be discouraged by mistakes, but instead to learn from them.
- Watch for compulsive investment that creates stress symptoms such as irritability, depression, and physical symptoms, and prepare to include rest and relaxation.
- Consider the views of objective colleagues to determine if your task is overwhelming.
- Find alone times to isolate yourself from distractions and temper this with dialogue of your ideas with persons felt to be honest and reasonably objective.
- Be prepared for prolonged frustration and uncertainty before the rush of insight. Know that once we get over the learned *helpless/hopeless* belief,[105] we are capable of managing the struggle.

[105]Stren #41, *The Learned Helpless-Hopeless Response*

- The *self*-endorsement love-creation strens and the seven *mind-freeing, life-changing, world-saving* word switch strens are available forever FREE to everyone, everywhere, anytime at **www.einsteinssolution.org** and **www.lovingmenow.org** will strengthen your resilience to the frustration that holds back creativity.

This stren will have served its purpose if it helps release your creativity to make the world a happier, safer place.

Stren #97: Habits of Daily Living
Maintaining Well-being

Welcome to stren #97, *Habits of Daily Living*. For most people, "addiction" is a bad habit, something to get rid of. This stren addresses *habits* and *addictions* that are worthy to cultivate, that will greatly enhance the quality of your life.

Habit: a constant and often unconscious inclination to perform some act acquired through its frequent repetition
Addiction: a step beyond habit – giving oneself over habitually or compulsively, to be controlled
Dependence: requiring support, subordinate to someone or something needed or greatly desired; being influenced or controlled
Physical dependence: includes biological changes that demand some physical agent to return the physical and mental aberration to a normal state

"Addiction" commonly means we acquire a habit so powerful that it wants to be repeated; and it occurs automatically, with little or no effort, and with such force that it requires great will power to resist. Sometimes it includes physical effects. The alcohol addict may experience irritability, shaking, see imaginary things, have convulsions, and even die. The heroin addict who fails to supply his acquired drug habit experiences muscle and intestinal cramps, nausea, diarrhea, restlessness, and sometimes spontaneous unpleasant orgasm which is described as "draining" and weakening. The addict may notice little or no physical response but have severe mental and/or behavioral effects such as cravings, preoccupation with specific thoughts, and/or performance of specific acts. Consider what occurs with the gambler, smoker, coffee abuser, the "food-aholic," the praying of the "religious addict," the guilt and/or resentment of the "blamer," the perfectionist, and the more gender-stereotyped "addictions," such as preoccupation with sports, or the "appearance addict" whose discomfort grows with their perceived need for makeup, a regular visit to the hairdresser, and concern about their body's size and shape. I recall one woman who was so constantly convinced that her teeth were ugly (they were actually quite perfect) that she persistently worried and refused to smile in public. Habits, and their more demanding relatives, addictions, have powerful physical, mental, and behavioral components.

Addictions and habits need not be negative! Indeed, they can be beneficial, even life-saving. Consider one simple acquired habit: looking both ways before crossing the street. It protects our life and warns us with a bit of discomfort should we fail to exercise this action. Positive addictions enhance our well-being and often prevent us from acting in a nonproductive manner.

Positive addictions are very important. Because they occur and reoccur relatively automatically with little or no effort, they spare our energy for new activity, new enthusiasms. Positive addictions ensure the consistent regulation of our mental and behavior actions just as our heart and liver manage our physical well-being. Here is a

critical insight: **Most habits and addictions are within our power to create!** Once established, they remain faithful to their purpose. Wouldn't you like to have an assistant, who will quite merrily work on your behalf, for your health, happiness, and well-being, with little or no demand for payment? Wow! Is there much else that compares to such a good deal? Wouldn't it be worth the initial effort to establish such faithful assistants? Wisely answer "yes" and please read on.

Positive addictions are so useful that I have identified some of the ones I consider most worthy of cultivation. Each is readily teachable and learnable, as explained in the preceding strens, and directions are widely available. You already have many positive addictions. Can you name them? Accurate labels bring a specific habit to consciousness and make it easier to cultivate that specific habit. Could you imagine the fantastic benefits that we experience when we create many such "servants" to support us? I have prepared this list for your consideration. Why not cultivate the ones you like that you presently lack?

1. **Faith that your efforts count: the belief that you can become responsible for your*self*.**
   The process of taking charge of our life's experience, what has been called "becoming our own person," begins with the faith that what we do does matter. Absent this belief, there is a tendency towards apathy and/or to blame "others" for not providing what we can do for our self. Science does not bridge the leap to faith. However, the mere observation that many others, including those with the most severe limitations, can make their life fulfilling is one inspiration to acquire the required faith to start with the premise, "**Yes, I can!** I think I can, I think I can, I think I can." Recall the marvelous child's story, *The Little Engine that Could*.

2. **Self-endorsement: skill in habitually conversing with our self as one best friend would with another.** Just as we have a *minimum daily requirement* (**MDR**) for vitamins and physical nourishment, we have a MDR for mental endorsement. As adults, we don't expect others to support us, feed us, clean us, attend to our bowel needs; yet, we commonly neglect to teach ourselves to regularly provide our MDR of mental and emotional endorsement. Multiple self-endorsement skills are offered in earlier strens and may be found elsewhere.

3. **Loving, friendship: by filling our needs through self-endorsement, we "spill over" love and share with others.** Love is a willing "gift" that is offered without strings or demands of "repayment." Giving to get is too often an act leading to disappointment. The act of giving of ourselves, what we have created, is inherently *self*-satisfying. In cultivating meaningful relationships, we also expand the opportunity for our personal growth and knowledge that comes with sharing. Consider stren #57, *Love Creation,* and related strens there indicated.

4. **Chronic enthusiasm: the habitual use of our energy for rewarding action.**
   Whatever the goal, success is most likely when pursued with chronic enthusiasm. People who consistently feel good and do good generate enthusiasm by rewarding

themselves for working towards a desired goal.

5. **Belonging**: Just as we consist of many internal organs that make us whole, we are each a part of a greater community. Developing the habit of doing good in addition to feeling good sustains the harmony we attain through our communal interest.

6. **Wisdom: the constructive application of abstract thinking, reason, probability, and the knowledge acquired through the past and current experience of "others."** An addiction to seeking wisdom is the key ingredient to enhance the well-being of ourselves and our community. Too often, the will power we acquire with *self*-mastery is harmful when applied without wise direction.

   ***Self*-mastery + ANWOT + wisdom ⇒ peace-of-mind, peace-for-humankind**

7. **Work: the application of our energy to attain a desired goal.** Work enables us to fulfill our needs and wants. It can be very fulfilling to experience "a good tired." We are not inherently lazy; we willingly work hard when we foresee a productive outcome. Freud concluded the two human endeavors that make for a satisfying life are "*lieben und arbeiten*," to love and be industrious. What a marvelous combination when we learn to love our work!

8. **ANWOT: acquiring the words, ideas, and assumptions of the *new way of thinking* (ANWOT) compatible with becoming one's own person.** The "native" language we acquire through repetition, when our mind is undeveloped and our body is immature, addicts us to a childlike manner of thinking, and thereby feeling and acting. It shapes our thinking to have unrealistic expectations from others, overdo blame and guilt, and remain dependent on the *prescriptive* and *either/or* two category processing of information that sustains the prejudices of our upbringing. ANWOT is the substitution of newer words and concepts that promote rational problem-solving above reaction and action through instinct and habit. Our early manner of thinking emphasizes trial-and-error learning from mistakes and role-modeling. ANWOT emphasizes prevention, "no-trial learning" through forethought and rational mental processing of alternatives before action is taken. Most people are unaware of the degree we remain mentally addicted to the perspectives of our genes and nurturers.

9. **Life style, nutrition, and exercise: promoting the habits of daily living that grow and maintain our physical well-being.** The skills regarding specific life styles are now widely promoted as their benefits are increasingly understood. Acquiring ANWOT strengthens our will power to more regularly do what we understand to be in our best long-term interests.

10. **Mental growth, education: Addicting ourselves to the chronic pursuit of practical knowledge and its beneficial application throughout our life**, and especially in our later years when our physical resources are declining. Habitually exercising our mind is just as important, if not more so than the measures we take to promote our physical health.

11. **Risk-taking: the willingness to let go of established patterns to make way for newer, more appropriate and effective ones.** We cling onto what has worked in the past, even when we recognize that it is no longer effective or appropriate. Necessarily, "old friends" die and sometimes it is our task to aid in their passing. Risk-taking is a frightening ingredient of change, yet it is essential to grow from immaturity to maturity to super-maturity. I like the analogy provided by Gail Sheehy in *Passages*: like the crustacean, we must allow ourselves to become vulnerable as the old shell is shed to make room for our new place in life.

12. **Optimism: anticipating the positive outcomes of our participation in life's activities.** The use of forethought, fantasy, and mental creation of positive possibilities enhances our energy and directs it to constructive use. It is the opposite of "worry," or dwelling on the worst unlikely outcome of our life experiences. Too often we waste our energy in worry, creating unnecessary anxiety, phobias, and the like, when we would be wiser to "optimize." When we're objectively processing the data of our life's experience, optimizing can be very productive and certainly a better choice than worry when we do stray from reality.

13. **Know our assumptions (world view, religion): recognizing the beliefs and values, based on faith upon which we base our actions.** Was this Socrates' wisdom in stating, "The unexamined life is not worth living"? Science provides facts; it does not instruct us in values and morality. Our moral life is largely the outcome of faith in our assumptions and beliefs, and our religion. We commonly become "addicted" to our values and religion early in our life, based on the authority of our nurturers. Our morality, expressed in our actions, is primarily composed of assumptions supported by faith! In this sense, every person is "religious." Our religious values, habitually expressed day-by-day, support (or detract from) harmony within, and harmony (or its lack) in the world around us. Habitual reflection and growing awareness of our assumptions, our beliefs, our prejudices ("pre-judgments"), and our "religion," are habits worth cultivating.

14. **Patience: the ability to delay satisfaction by mentally gratifying our *self* now to attain greater benefits (or avoid pain) later.** We are all born wanting what we want "now!" on getting it "faster!" We are initially addicted to impulse, to "sell our soul" without forethought until we acquire effective means of thinking. Patience is one of the more difficult addictions to acquire; unfortunately there is no "crash course." It is acquired gradually but surely with skill in self-endorsement.

15. **An attitude of gratitude: acquiring the skill to habitually appreciate what we have attained, what we have available to us now, and what we may attain in the future** creates a state of mind that leads us to feel good and do good. Too often we take for granted the plenty we already have. Alcoholics Anonymous is a staunch advocate of this important habit.

16. **The three "success" skills: accurate empathy, unconditional positive regard, and congruence.** Research and observation show that these qualities routinely lead to successful outcomes in both individuals and programs that exhibit them.
    a. **accurate empathy**: the ability to empathetically experience the perspective of the "other" and convey that we understand (not necessarily agree)
    b. **unconditional positive regard**: experiencing and conveying respect and concern for the well-being of the "other" (if not necessarily their ideas and/or actions)
    c. **congruence**: being consistent and reliably conveying the above, not so one day and quite different the next.

17. **Music, song, dance, movement: rhythm and engaging the symbols of music may enrich our mind, provide entertainment, influence our mood, invigorate thinking, and promote cooperation and mutual understanding through shared participation.** The physical benefits are evident. Enriching activity tends to "squeeze out" negative preoccupation. Such activity is readily and in most cases freely available, irrespective of status, and usually harmless to others.

18. **Hobbies: in addition to the pleasure innate in their pursuit, the acquisition of chronic enthusiasms promotes and sustains our vigor.** David Starr Jordan, first president of Stanford University, wrote a book extolling the desirability of acquiring multiple interests in our youth, more than we can possibly fulfill, so that they can sustain us when we have difficulty generating new enthusiasms.

19. **The "reasonable best" measure of self-endorsement[106]: given our limited time and energy, habitually complimenting ourselves when we do what we <u>reasonably</u> can.** We frequently don't succeed in our goals, often due to circumstances beyond our control. Commonly, we have other more important priorities; and of course because we are human, we are certain to make many mistakes. Perfectionists make themselves unnecessarily miserable due to their unreasonable expectations. Notice the "reasonable best" measure is an "input measure" that is within our control, unlike the "outcome measure" more commonly and unwisely used to judge oneself.

20. **The Magical Sentence: "What is most likely to work for me *and* you, for now *and* the future?"** Dealing with life's challenges using rational problem-solving is usually more productive than the automatic responses we acquire through instinct and/or habit. This powerful sentence promotes the mental "habit" of no-trial learning through reason in dealing with life's challenges. Teaching ourselves to habitually guide our actions by this sentence is most likely to promote wise and beneficial outcomes to our actions. While not "magic," it works so well, it seems like it is.

21. **Actively and regularly experiencing sexual gratification**: Addiction to sexual pleasure is nearly universal. Sexual activity has many positive and negative aspects. My assumptions around its positive addictive qualities are clearly open to alternative opinion.
    a. **Sexual activity is generally considered our most pleasurable natural physical**

[106] See strens #23-24

experience. Sex is paramount because survival of the species depends on it. Animals seem chemically "required" to risk their lives to perform the rituals of reproduction. While we are also powerfully driven, we do have a choice. Instinct, pleasure, curiosity, culture, parental and/or other social interests powerfully motivate sexual activity. Sexual gratification brings both discharge of "sexual tension" and intense pleasure. Sexual tension builds up with thoughts of re-experiencing pleasure, and cyclic interest is established.

b. Sexual interest occurs throughout the majority of our life. Sexual activity intensifies at puberty when nature's biological clock begins to tick. It does so through many decades until aging brings a gradual decline in performance, and sometimes in interest. This may be due to the direct "wearing out" of our sex-related biology, or the indirect effects of other physical and psychological changes.

c. Sexual tension is 100% satisfiable. Self-satisfaction is readily available, free of charge, regardless of status, race, religion, creed, etc. It is not harmful to oneself and need not involve anyone else. Physically, our sexual organs are receptors of physical stimulation; they receive information irrespective of the source and transmit it to pleasure centers in the brain. Thus, sexual gratification is available at one's will, without involving anyone else. It has been said that the only time you can be certain of the sincerity of your partner is when it is yourself.

d. Studies indicate that people regularly experiencing sexual gratification enjoy greater well-being and longevity.

e. Sexual activity with a partner commonly fosters related positive experiences: social sharing, intimacy, companionship, love, cooperation, and procreation.

f. Suppression of sexual gratification commonly leads to deviant forms of expression that may be harmful.

Humans are "interpretive" creatures. What has been said above about the positive aspects of sexual addiction may be reversed by one's personal assumptive views, or cultural and religious beliefs. Sexual activity can be a source of significant harm when unwisely expressed. There are clearly consequences that can turn a positive addiction into a negative one. Appropriate, honest information and preparation increase one's likelihood of making sexual pleasure a positive addiction. Knowledge is only recently exceeding the role of raw emotion as appropriate sex education is more widely available.

What positive addictions do you have? Are there some you'd like to develop? What would you add (or subtract) from my list? You can readily enhance and add to your positive addictions. **What are you willing to do about positive addictions that you might want for yourself?**

RECOGNIZE, PRACTICE, AND ENJOY YOUR POSITIVE ADDICTIONS

Let's reverse the process. Can you identify current habits where harm exceeds benefits ... especially those most common? It is more difficult to "extinguish" an established habit than it is to create a new one. However, there is very good news. By creating a more preferable competing behavior that we regularly repeat, we may not

even have to directly address the negative habit; it will weaken and atrophy from disuse. Here are some prominent ones that you might consider:

1. **Blaming**: This is the most common and dangerous "addiction" because it is prewired in each of us to automatically lash out when we experience frustration. It is the *fight* part of the *fight or flight* instinct. Harmful aggression, physical and symbolic, is apt to get us into trouble locally, globally, and collectively. The *rage response* is a common reason our prisons remain full.

2. **Guilt**: This learned habit is unique to humankind, because it is so linked to the use of sophisticated language and morality. Putdowns support hurting oneself, apathy, and depression. The same energy would better be directed to problem-solving.

3. **Avoidance**: Like blaming, avoidance is a prewired "addiction," but it expresses the *flight* part of our innate *fight or flight* behavior. Avoidance has many new forms of expression in modernity such as substance abuse, procrastination, and withdrawal, to name a few.

4. **Hopelessness/helplessness**: This learned "give up" behavior is perhaps the most dangerous because it shuts down our energy factory leaving us dependent on authority, even though common sense wisdom could provide the creative actions that are in our best interest. For example, it is the main reason we fail to unite to unleash the pent up energy for world peace that would be unstoppable.

5. **Worry**: To "what if" and anticipate the worst, to see the hole rather than the donut, the empty rather than the full part of the glass is a modern expression of the prewired habit once required to anticipate danger in a savage environment.

6. **Physical maladies**: The extreme reflex physiological changes of a sustained stressing event account for the "psychosomatic" disorders that affect virtually every organ system; additionally, the head, neck, and back pains related to sustained muscle tension are examples of our prewired mind/body connection. We neglect the learned habits that can prevent these problems, such as progressive relaxation[107] (my favorite), meditation, yoga, self-endorsement skills, on and on.

7. **Impatience**: We are born addicted to the motto "I want what I want when I want it." Creativity and skills require putting off immediate gratification for longer term gain. Patience, which is among the most important habits we can acquire, is neglected in our standard education.

8. **Dependence on approval**: During the first decades of our life, through our need for support and approval we become "love junkies," addicted to other's approval for our self worth even though we have acquired more than we need to assume responsibility for our own self-worth.

[107] http://www.progressiverelaxation.org/; http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Progressive_muscle_relaxation; http://www.hypnos.co.uk/hypnomag/jacobson.htm

9. **Self-putdowns**: Demeaning and negative self-talk is a habit learned when we make unrealistic expectations and fall short of our goal. Much creativity is lost to the world because the mistakes required to get back on the correct path are labeled "failures," lead to self-denigration, and often abandonment of problem-solving action.

10. **Your specific harmful habits**: Once you label a harmful habit, you position yourself to seek the competing behavior(s) that will direct your energy to more positive outcomes.

Others have found the way. Find those others and learn from their success. This collection of wisdoms is one source among many of *newer ways of thinking* gladly shared by successful individuals so others can benefit.

The singular granddaddy addiction the E.C. labels "*either/or thinking*" divides our world into competing categories, viz. *flocks, herds*, and *tribes*. Our innate addiction to *either/or thinking*, reinforced by our dominant tribal language, is the root cause of bigotry, prejudice, harmful confrontation, and war. Addiction to *either/or thinking* has been adaptive for our ancestors. Survival in their primitive environment required membership in a tribe to compete for scarce resources. War has been the cause of temporary peace. The recent discovery and proliferation of weapons with ultimate destructive power has made this dominate way of thinking an addictive disease suddenly more dangerous than cancer, AIDs, and the Black Plague. Our most knowledgeable citizens warn us of imminent human catastrophe. The Educational Community invites you to **www.7plus2formula.org** for our free book. *The 7 plus 2 Formula* explains this addictive disease and Einstein's solution to prevent our species becoming the first to intentionally create it own *self*-annihilation.

Stren #98: Corporate Survival and the Brain

Welcome to stren #98, *Corporate Survival and the Brain*. This stren[108] explains why we have individual and corporate greed, the tipping point predicted to bring about global catastrophe, and what corporate leadership in particular can do to prevent it. The very same dynamics that led 250 world experts to warn us of human catastrophe before the end of 2013[109] can help us understand the confrontation of the public with corporate greed. *Know thyself* has been heralded through the ages as the cure for humankind's ills, and the very same forces that direct human behavior are applicable to corporate behavior. A simple understanding of our brain provides us the best means to prevent harmful confrontation.

Group, political, and societal policy are concepts that exist in individual minds. The collective wills of individuals determine the rules that create our fate for good or ill. The three controllers of our will – nature, nurture, and *self*-mastery – have distinct perspectives. Unlike animals who are servant to nature and nurture, we are uniquely privileged by the ability to discover knowledge and apply common sense wisdom to become master of our self. Einstein told us the one solution to prevent human catastrophe: we must teach ourselves *a newer way of thinking*. The major obstacle is our own self-deception. We erroneously believe we are using common sense when we are in fact servants to the authority of *nature* and our *nurturers*. We are guided more by the animal portion of our brain than the cerebral cortex that is our source of humanity. Common sense is not yet common; surviving and thriving requires that we make it so. Our corporations have the power to make a difference once awakened to the danger.

A simplified understanding of the brain is sufficient to understand the problem. The animal brain and the animal portion of the human brain[110] represent the prewired behavior patterns that have effectively worked in savage environments for hundreds of millions of years. The intelligent cerebral cortex that distinguishes us from animals is our tool to create language, acquire knowledge of cause and effect, interpretation, and imagination. Common sense wisdom is the basis of values, ethics, morality and civilization. The more knowledge we acquire, the more we become godlike creators. Given that there are more scientists alive today than all of history and new technology to rapidly share information, our constructive power is accelerating to quantum speed like an asymptotic curve. One image showing asymptotic growth of power provides startling insight:

An ***asymptote*** is a curve that draws increasingly nearer to a line without ever touching it. Let's now look at an asymptotic curve and assign meaning that turns on the immense power of knowledge:

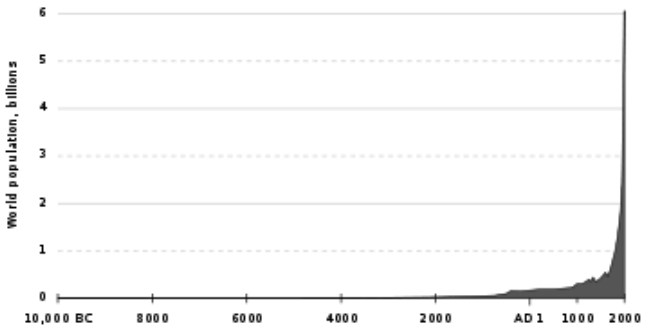
[108] Stren = *mental strength, wisdom*

[109] *The World at Risk*,; Vintage Books, December, 2008

[110] The *medulla, pons, pituitary, pineal body, cerebellum, and thalamus* constitute the animal brain. The cerebral cortex is the sophisticated "freedom organ" that distinguishes us from all other species.

The horizontal line represents time and the vertical line indicates increase in human knowledge. Knowledge of cause-and-effect relationships is the means by which we increase our power to influence our *self* and all that is about us. The curve in this simple chart illustrates that we have grown knowledge very slowly until the introduction of the scientific method. The timeline could begin with the first life on earth, 3½ billion years ago; or with the appearance of intelligent humans circa 150,000 years ago; or our ancestor's invention of sophisticated language, which inspired a quantum leap in the growth of civilization some 50,000 years ago. Wherever you begin the timeline, the observation remains the same: the line representing knowledge was almost flat until the development of the scientific method about 300 years ago. The further back we go, the flatter the line, indicating the growth of knowledge was virtually imperceptible. Our ancestors were intelligent but they had limited knowledge. Notice that the dramatic upturn of the curve representing increased power that comes with knowledge began very close to the end of the chart. We dramatically increase our power in shorter and shorter periods. The introduction and proliferation of weapons with ultimate destructive power is occurring NOW during our very own instant in historical time! The tipping point – do or die – is here but we fail to realize the danger.

As we make ourselves increasingly powerful creators through the asymptotic growth of knowledge, we change the world in other ways. For example, the increases in our population and in our prison populations grow in an asymptotic pattern similar to our frenzied growth of power. Meanwhile, we have barely changed our way of thinking. We fail to recognize the consequences of creating constructive and destructive change in such rapidly diminishing periods of time. The purpose of this stren is to make ourselves aware so we can take urgent preventive action.



Estimated size of human population from 10,000 BCE–2000 CE.[111]

111http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Population_growth

USA incarceration timeline

The most imminent problem is that we deceive ourselves into thinking we are using common sense wisdom when we are still dominated by our animal brain. Only conscious awareness of our erroneous assumption will enable us to change. Einstein told us the solution – we must teach ourselves *a newer way of thinking*. We know how to proceed to succeed once we waken ourselves to the urgency to make common sense common.

What does our animal brain want?

We are compelled by instinct to obey the dictum "survival of the fittest." We are programmed to *fight* at any cost to achieve dominance, and for *flight* to escape danger. One sentence best sums up the perspective of instinct: "My way, the only way." The animal brain, like all dictators, rules through authority. It is reluctant to give up power to common sense wisdom and will resist any attempt to do so. Because our cortex is not fully mature until about age 18, its intelligence is servant to the rule of the animal brain. Instinct was once satisfied with "enough," but now equipped with language and the meaning of "infinity," becomes motivated by greed. It is easy to deceive ourselves that we are noble in our cause when our goal is quite self-serving.

What does the common sense portion of our human brain, our cerebral cortex, want?

Wisdom recognizes that the world has changed. Insight by insight, we expand the power of knowledge to promote or destroy the larger system. Like the various organs that comprise our body, cooperation for mutual gain must replace dominating by the use of harmful confrontation to demonstrate superiority. Cancer cells take, don't contribute to the system, and then must die. The sudden proliferation of weapons of ultimate destruction (WUD) in everyone's arsenal has reversed "survival of the fittest" to "destruction of the fittest." *Win-lose* outcomes turn into *lose-lose* outcomes. Most people wish or pray for peace but fail to unite in effective action because we remain servant to instinct and tradition.

What do people want?

We begin life wanting what our instinct demands and what our nurturers teach us to want. The dominant wants in contemporary society include the symbols of power to dominate: money, a good image, titles, fame, approval, and if not immortality at least a

promise of a good hereafter. The perspective of our animal brain will persist until we educate our cerebral cortex in *a newer way of thinking* driven by common sense wisdom more than authority.

What do our corporations want?

Like most people who say they want well being for all (Love thy neighbor), corporations adhere to the traditions of the animal brain. Some do so consciously while others remain seduced by the false illusion that they are doing the right thing. Corporations want employees who are loyal, work in a team effort to support their mission, who take pride in their creativity and experience the joy of doing something that contributes to the well-being of their local AND global community. They want to create a brand and image that the public respects, that will encourage use of their product. But these goals will not be realized while the animal brain remains CEO of the corporate mind.

During President Eisenhower's farewell address, January 17, 1961, he used the term *military-industrial complex* to refer to the growing political and financial relationships between legislators, the armed forces, and the industrial sector. Political contributions, lobbying to support beneficial legislation, and approval for government spending increased with WWII and subsequently the Cold War. 46.5% of the total world military spending in 2009 was spent by the United States.[112] Corporations grow bigger and more powerful as individual businesses disappear. The potential for corporations to express power for good or ill continues to expand. Their economic, political, and spiritual influence on the community has grown to endanger personal liberties and independent enterprise throughout the country. In 1956, sociologist C. Wright Mills claimed in his book *The Power Elite* that a class of military, business, and political leaders, driven by mutual interests, were the real leaders of the state, and were effectively beyond democratic control. The power of corporations to influence our society has immense bearing on global well-being or its lack. Self-serving motives and both personal and political corruption is widespread. Knowledgeable people power is required to direct corporate actions to constructive outcomes.

Corporate leadership is a growing source of power, and needs the knowledge to use it wisely. Winning by domination is no longer adaptable to survival. Cooperation for mutual gain must replace survival of the fittest by "beating" and competing at any cost. Leaders who want to sustain a social consciousness that promotes global well-being in addition to local prosperity will also want the best education on how to accomplish these goals. The disconnect between what people want and what people do is the source of our current crisis. *A newer way of thinking* (**ANWOT**) that makes common sense common is required.

What can corporate leadership do?

[112]According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Military%E2%80%93industrial_complex

1. First and foremost – become informed. Create education in the skills of ANWOT for corporate leadership. Uncover self-deception to replace corporate greed with good deeds through newer out-of-the-box solutions that fulfill community responsibility. *Common sense* wisdom leads to higher purposes.

2. Provide in-service education to offer the *newer way of thinking* skills. Morale-building creates loyal employees who are happier, energetic, loyal, and take pride in their productivity. Years ago, as a member and on two occasions the chairperson of the National Institute of Mental Health substance abuse review committee, I had the opportunity to monitor grant recipients around the country. Programs where the staff had high morale had best results; it mattered more than the treatment method. The same observation held true in developing employee assistance programs within corporations. Stressed employees are links that weaken the whole chain. Staff happiness and satisfaction contributes to corporate productivity and well-being. Examples have been set: Zappos has created a "happiness officer" position, and Ben and Jerry's added service to community and employee satisfaction to making money. Whatever the corporate mission, high morale correlates with effectiveness and success.

3. Corporate image is one of the best forms of promoting customer loyalty. Admiring customers are the most effective marketers. Offering education in ANWOT to the broader population can be effected with little effort and limited use of resources because email lists and other links to the community are already established. Loyal customers are already receptive to corporate offerings. Education that promotes well-being is likely to go viral and help popularize corporate brand names.

4. Linking with nonprofit corporations that are already dedicated and recognized as bearers of well-being is popular, but more attention to such partnerships will have huge payoffs. Terrorists are effective because they unite their followers into action. A small band of dictators creates great power by organizing their followers while giants get beaten because they emphasize "beating" competition more than collaborating for multiple benefits. Corporations working together can offer continuity and contiguity that will be unstoppable.

Einstein's solution, ANWOT, is the most likely way to increase well-being, cohesiveness, friendliness, and inner and global peace. The skills that detoxify anxiety and fear diminish our *fight or flight* instinct. The five component skills of *a newer way of thinking* are easy to teach and to learn: (1) *self*-endorsement, (2) mental freedom from *instinct* and *tradition*, (3) wise use of our will power, (4) the collection of wisdoms proven by others to work, and (5) the universal values discovered by multiple independent tribes. Further education in the skills that create a joyous, meaningful life experience can be most effective within the context of the workplace.

Unlike many worthwhile missions, education in ANWOT does not require money. The curriculum can be offered free to everyone via the Internet, within the work environment, at one's preferred time, at home or a convenient place of study. The global well-being universally sought in our wishes and prayers requires sufficient social

entrepreneurs who will unite to unleash the pent up energy imprisoned within the global population. Give Einstein's solution a try and become *one who will teach many*. Go to the Educational Community FOREVER FREE web site at **www.anwot.org**, sign in, and learn *a newer way of thinking* that creates peace of mind. Become a powerful force for world peace instead of remaining part of the problem. Make your life REALLY significant.

Stren #99: Know Your *Self* – Essential Knowledge

Welcome to stren #99, *Know Your Self* – the wisdom of wisdoms. This stren offers the clearest vision of what I believe to be the quickest, most direct and certain journey to a joyous, purposeful life experience. It is my attempt to lay out the road map that has worked for me so that I can pass forward the highest gift – the gift of giving. The wisdoms we acquire one by one empower us to create newer links to our well-being and offer them to those we love. The preceding 98 strens are each links to this most important payoff insight – a road map to ***self*-understanding**. This stren offers a comprehensive theory of human behavior and a universal answer to the questions that have preoccupied me. My lifetime of problem-solving passion has focused on three questions:

1. How do some individuals lacking life's benefits create a joyous, purposeful life; while others with material wealth, fame, good looks, super intelligence, connections, and other prized goodies excel in unhappiness, depression, and even suicide?
2. Why is there so much destructive confrontation and war when peace makes so much sense?
3. Can we identify the skills that elevate us to the humane species which we are capable of becoming, and make them standard in our education?

Know Thyself is not original; many others have come to the same conclusion (see Addendum). *Self*-understanding has been regarded by our wisest teachers as our means to enlightenment. My contribution is organizing the wisdom of many teachers into an easily taught, readily learned, forever free curriculum, convenient to anyone, anyplace, anytime.

This search for truth has led me through a path of discovery to limited insights, each urging me on to the next with a promise of being a connecting link to the distant goal. Each link could not be added without first acquiring the wisdoms preceding it. Answers were initially simple and of small consequence, but grew in sophistication and value with evolving complexity. Now that I am nearing the end of my path (I am now 76), I can reflect on those wisdoms that best answer the three questions. Foremost, I have discovered that the advanced solution is not only the same for each of the three questions I posed, it also answers questions others are passionate to solve. Multiple paths converge to a point foretold by visionaries throughout history. Knowledge of one's *self* is a preferred path to answer the great mysteries. Knowledge applied with common sense and emotion is the substance of *mental wealth*! This stren is your road map to make yourself a *Mental Wealth millionaire* (**MWM**) and world peace leader.

A MWM is an individual who has acquired sufficient wisdoms to create a joyous, purposeful life experience regardless of what fate and circumstance have prescribed. MWM's enrich themselves by what they offer to others and contribute to global well-being. Unlike physical wealth millionaires who too often are takers, MWM's love giving and creating more MWM's. Each wisdom we acquire brings us a step closer to

becoming a MWM. My passion is to unite one million MWM's to become world peace teachers to our population of seven billion. Most people wish or pray for a safer, gentler world but take no action to bring it about. The ANWOT curriculum explains why we have war, why we fail to unite to prevent it, and what collective action we must create to prevent catastrophe.

We have become our worst enemy because of the way we think. Our animal brain, when equipped with intelligence, directs our unprecedented power towards dominating any competition to our tribe through destructive confrontation. *Survival of the fittest* instinct demands that we acquire the material and symbolic indicators of superiority – physical wealth, titles, fame, connections, and the promise of a rewarded afterlife. To the degree our animal brain rules our cerebral cortex, our dominant education will favor uncritical obedience to tradition. We have made intelligence our greatest enemy; it is about to slay us. We act believing we know what we know, when we are more servants to instinct and tradition than master of common sense wisdom. Our survival now depends on recognizing our greatest problem, our self-deception.

Truly knowing ourselves requires that we first educate our cerebral cortex with *a newer way of thinking* (**ANWOT**). During our formative first decades our cortical brain is too immature and undeveloped to dominate *instinct* and *tradition* (*nature and nurture, fate and circumstance*). The ***either/or*** two-category distorted thinking we all first learn that divides the world into opposing categories is the root cause of bigotry, prejudice, and harmful confrontation. Creative problem solving directed by *common sense* wisdom, prevention, spirituality, values, morality, and the mutual benefits of cooperation and collaboration are beyond the limits of our early thinking capability. The drive toward competition and war that marks our history will persist until we unleash our rapidly growing arsenal of biological, chemical, or nuclear weapons that offer no second chance. That tipping point is imminent unless we recognize the urgency to teach ourselves ANWOT. The challenge in knowing our *self* is to make conscious the self-deception that falsely concludes "*My way or my tribe's way is the only way*." Common sense would substitute "*What works for me AND you, for now AND the future?*"

What if we could eliminate nukes? It's not enough. Experts tell us biological WUD are the most likely threat. What if we eliminated all weapons, but exhaust our water supply? Won't chaos still return? Because we are removed from the sights, sounds, and smells of death we already ignore millions of starving people. We fail to take preventive action because we remain oblivious until it is too late. There no second chance! This is why we must confront the root cause of destructive confrontation – the way we think. When Einstein realized the power of $E=mc^2$, he told us we must teach ourselves *a newer way of thinking* (**ANWOT**) if we choose to prevent human catastrophe. ANWOT enables us to reflect on ourselves and realize our self- deception. We are part of the problem until we act on the solution. We need to know our *self*.

The ***newer way of thinking*** curriculum to become a MWM is roughly the equivalent of a 3 credit college course; it can be mastered in 6 to10 months. Internet technology makes ANWOT available *forever free* to anyone, anywhere, anytime. If you

have not already signed in at www.anwot.org to automatically receive one of the 100+ insights every other day, do so now. We can't make it any easier. The content may also be directly viewed or downloaded.

The discovery of the greatest truths is the addition of insight to insight. There is no limit, and the more insights we collect, the more likely we are to become a MWM. Here is a roadmap of the strens (*mental strengths or insights*) that create mental wealth and MWM's, each of which is described within the ANWOT curriculum:

1. **The first step** is to switch on our creative energy, which for so many has been turned off. Substitute "Yes, I think I can" for "I can't," "It's too hard," "Why bother?" and related *learned helpless/hopeless* words.

2. The **five ingredients** required are abundantly available: *Faith in yourself* (*Yes, I think I can*), *work, patience, direction*, and *risk taking* – the willingness to let go of the ways that no longer work. Physical wealth, unusual intelligence, good looks, fame, and connections are not necessary. Good health and luck are helpful but not required, as so many have proven.

3. **There are five components of ANWOT**:
   a. ***Self*-endorsement skills**: The two most powerful are *emotional self-endorsement* and *secondary endorsement* strens that enable anyone to become their own best friend.
   b. The ***Mind-freeing, Life-changing, World-saving* word-switches** to free our will from fate and circumstance and create *self*-mastery. Essential are regularly substituting (1) *could* for *should*, (2) *I allow* for *they make me*, and (3) *both...and* for *either/or.*
   c. **The eight choices available to our will**: Consistent use of the *problem-solving sentence* and *self-endorsement* will cause the harmful choices to atrophy from disuse – *blaming out, blaming in, avoidance, worry, the helpless/hopeless response* and *the mind/body response*.
   d. The **wisdoms** proven by others to work: Collected from the giants who precede us, and those of our own discovery to create out-of-the-box solutions to today's problems.
   e. **Universal Values** arrived at through common sense by religious **and** secular groups, including *the golden rule*, *love yourself so you can love your neighbor*, and *the serenity prayer*.

4. The **power of symbols**, including words (ideas), musical notes, religious symbols (cross, crescent, 5-pointed star), numbers/letters, (mathematics), and flags (patriotism/allegiance to country or team).

5. **Trigger words and word-switches**: The specific symbols that allow us to grasp ideas and emotional energy.

6. Recognizing **our three masters** and the influence of each: nature/nurture/*self*-mastery.

7. The importance of **personal responsibility,** and the process to assume it.

8. **Changing needs** from *immaturity* to *maturity* to *super-maturity;* becoming one's own person.

9. The **two sentences that determine our fate**: (1) *My way, the only way!* or (2) *What will work for me and you, for now and the future*?

10. Adding **global priorities** to local priorities.

11. Understanding **the creative process.**

12. **Life's enthusiasms** and endeavors.

13. Cultivating **positive addictions**: habits of daily living.

14. **Stressing commonalities** (positives) over our differences (shortcomings). Note that focusing on differences is innate!

15. Attaining and sustaining **an attitude of gratitude**.

16. Education in *common sense* thinking to elevate us to **the humane skills**: such as *love, forgiveness, kindness, mercy,* and *compassion*.

17. Teaching **resilience**: a natural skill curtailed by learned helpless/hopelessness.

18. Learning **the satisfaction of giving.**

19. The role of **prevention** (ANWOT); no-trial learning, cognitive rehearsal.

20. "**Calm" skills**: anger management.

21. **Managing injustice**: *The world is not always fair.*

22. **Your turn to create and add new wisdoms.**

I am confident that you have the same passion to benefit your loved ones that inspires me to popularize ANWOT. If you are not already a MWM, I urge you to do the course and join Einstein's peace army that can and must succeed. I wish you tons of mental wealth!

Addendum: History of *Know Thyself*

Know Thyself was inscribed in golden letters at the entrance of the Temple of Apollo at Delphi (circa 7th century BCE to 373). From that time, Apollo's imperative was heralded as the means to *self*-knowledge and *self*-realization. The Temple was the meeting place of the wise men and religious leaders of many persuasions. It survived until 390 AD when Emperor Theodosius I ordered its destruction in the name of Christianity to halt Paganism.[113] *Know Thyself* has been attributed to Greek sages, and to contemporary scholars and religious leaders since. It is widely acknowledged in the world's sacred traditions to express inner wisdom and be a prescriptive cure for mankind's ills.

Socrates taught *Know Thyself – the unexamined life is not worth living.* In Plato's *Phaedrus* dialogue, he explains why his wise teacher "has no time for mythology or other far flung topics." Socrates says, "But I have no leisure for them at all; and the reason, my friend, is this: I am not yet able, as the Delphic inscription has it, to know myself; so it seems to me ridiculous, when I do not yet know that, to investigate irrelevant things. ... To be curious about that which is not my concern, while I am still in ignorance of my own self, would be ridiculous." The *Suda*, a tenth century encyclopedia of Greek knowledge, says: "the proverb is applied to those whose boasts exceed what they are," and that "know thyself" is a warning to pay no attention to the opinion of the multitude.[114]

Additional references from the web site *Christian Chat*[115]:
'Yoga or union with the divine is to know your self. Your true self. All religions point out to one goal… to know your *self*. Yoga is not just a mere exercise or fun club as most people would think.'
Jesus Christ: 'Know thyself' ["the kingdom of God is within you" ... *]
Prophet Mohammed: 'The one who knows himself, knows his Lord'
Lao Tse: 'The one who knows others is wise, the one who knows himself is enlightened'

*While the phrase "know thyself" is not found in the canonical New Testament, it is implied in references. In *John* 14:17: "Even the Spirit of truth: whom the world cannot receive, because it sees him not, neither does it know him; but you know him, for he dwells with you, and shall be in you." Paul affirmed likewise: "Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" (*1 Cor* 3:16). Similarly, *Luke* 17:20-21: "And when the Pharisees demanded to know when the kingdom of God should come, Jesus answered them and said, 'The kingdom of God does not come with visible signs: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.' "[116]

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[113]http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Delphi
[114]From *Wikipedia*, the free encyclopedia
[115]http://christianblogs.christianet.com/1152285234.htm
[116]*Know Thyself: Man in Evolution*, by W. T. S. Thackara; Sunrise magazine, April/May 2004; Theosophical University Press; from the Internet

The following are extracts from *Know Thyself: Man in Evolution*, by W. T. S. Thackara[117]:

> *Luke*'s second meaning — “the kingdom of God is in the midst of you” — is mystically expressed in the *Gospel of Thomas* (113) ... Jesus said, "If those who lead you say to you, 'See, the Kingdom is in the sky,' then the birds of the sky will precede you. If they say to you, 'It is in the sea,' then the fish will precede you. Rather, the Kingdom is inside of you, and it is outside of you. When you come to know yourselves, then you will become known, and you will realize that it is you who are the sons of the living Father. — Saying 3
>
> ... The savior said, "Brother Thomas while you have time in the world, listen to me, and I will reveal to you the things you have pondered in your mind. Now since it has been said that you are my twin and true companion, examine yourself, and *learn who you are, in what way you exist and how you will come to be*. Since you will be called my brother, it is not fitting that you be ignorant of yourself. And I know that you have understood because you had already understood that I am the knowledge of the truth. So while you accompany me, although you are uncomprehending, you have in fact already come to know, and you will be called 'the one who knows himself.' For he who has not known himself has known nothing, but he who has known himself has at the same time already achieved knowledge about the depth of the All" [italics added]. — II.138.5-19, in *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, p. 201

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[117] *Ibid.*

Stren 100: Glossary of Terms:

[Note: always subject to updating]

This stren consists of terms used throughout the Educational Community content – including the 100+ collection of strens, two books, letters, the Mini-course, the Peace Quiz, and everything available on our forever free web site. The Glossary explains words and concepts to make your learning easier, faster, and more satisfying. Some of the terms will be new to you; others are familiar words used in new and unexpected ways. Stren #101 provides a more comprehensive overview of the important ANWOT concepts, and will enable you to create a unified picture of our mission as human becomings.

A newer way of thinking (ANWOT): Einstein's proposed solution to prevent human catastrophe and promote world peace – the process of learning to apply common sense wisdom to solve today's problems using current knowledge.

Animal brain: the six segments of the brain that automatically regulate our behavior, i.e. our thinking, feelings, and actions. These segments include what we call the *medulla, pituitary, pons, pineal body, cerebellum*, and *thalamus*. The seventh segment, the cerebral cortex that distinguishes us as from animals is discussed below. Because the segments are so interconnected, there are alternative classifications of the segments that comprise our older brain.

ANWOT building blocks to attain self-mastery:

1. **the ingredients: *faith (Yes, I can...), work, patience, direction, risk taking***
2. **the language of ANWOT:** the seven mind-freeing, life-changing, world-saving word-switches
3. **the mental freedom control panel (MFCP):** the eight choices available to our will to take or modify our actions
4. **strens:** the collection of wisdoms that adds strength to manage life's challenges
5. **our value system:** the assumptions and beliefs that influence our thinking, feelings, and actions

***Assumptive world/Religion*:** beliefs based on faith that influence our thinking, feelings, and actions.

***Asymptotic growth of power*:** An *asymptote* is a curve that draws increasingly nearer to a line without ever touching it. The chart below shows the acceleration of the power of knowledge in shorter and shorter periods of time. Notice that the sudden, dramatic upturn in power is occurring NOW, within our time.

***Board of Directors*:** the "Capitol" where representatives of nature, nurture, and our *self* accept or reject the ideas to be transformed into action. The composition of the Board changes throughout our lifetime, especially at puberty.

Both ... and logical thinking: the way of processing information that considers the best solution for all parties in a conflict. Focusing on similarities, *both ... and* thinking promotes tolerance, cooperation, constructive problem-solving, and win/win cooperation.

Common sense wisdom: applying universal common sense logic to current knowledge to solve today's problems. *Common sense* wisdom is our means to consistently direct our power to constructive outcomes and prevent the expression of those *trial-and-error* wisdoms that have lost their effectiveness or have become dangerous when faced with today's problems.
The test of common sense wisdom: people with different geographic, religious, ethnic, and political backgrounds come to similar insights based on logical thinking. Common sense is by definition "common." It is universal.

***Cognitive rehearsal/"no-trial" learning*:** mentally working through issues, considering short and long term outcomes before taking action – the means to prevention.

Consciousness: the private mental "virtual" reality created within our cerebral cortex, or freedom organ.

Creation: the orderly process of change from one state to another, usually more sophisticated state. Every effect has a cause. Logic suggests there was a first cause or "uncaused cause" that set creation in motion whose mystery is beyond our present intelligence to understand.

Creator: one who causes something to exist (dictionary definition). One who applies intelligence to knowledge to bring something into existence that has not previously been present in nature. Only humankind is endowed to introduce a mental creation into the physical or conceptual reality: a sufficiently intelligent organ, the cerebral cortex that can create original concepts; and the mysterious force we call *will power* to bring them from imagination into physical existence.

Dictator: any source of prescribed demands. *Instinct* and *tradition* are our first dictators. Later in life we become servant to *fate*, *circumstance*, and *human* dictators. Acquiring knowledge and wisdom is our means to free our self from dictators.

Doomsday Clock: a universally recognized indicator of the world's vulnerability to catastrophe; it was created and is monitored by the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientist's Board in consultation with its Board of Sponsors, which includes 18 Nobel Laureates.

Either/or dichotomous thinking: our older animal brain's way of processing information into two opposing categories: right/wrong, good/bad or evil, us/them, safe/dangerous, win/lose, etc. Focusing on differences, dichotomous thinking is a major cause of bigotry, prejudice, intolerance, destructive aggression, and win/lose confrontation.

Endogenous: dictators whose source of "wiring" is our biology, such as *instinct*. The innate automatic regulation of our thinking, feelings, and actions. (See also "mentogenous")

Exogenous: dictators whose source is external, such as our nurturers, culture, tradition, fate, and circumstance. Exogenous "wiring" includes the traditional beliefs and action patterns we acquire from our nurturers. (See also "mentogenous")

Fate and circumstance: the first dictators who direct our life experience, *nature* and *nurture* (also known as *instinct* and *tradition).*

Freedom: Self-mastery is the power to create alternatives and choose among them. Physical freedom is self-direction of one's muscles; mental freedom is the process of becoming master of our *self*. The work of our mature cerebral cortex, our freedom organ*,* is to free our will power from the control of dictators.

Freedom organ: our cerebral cortex, the latest part of our brain to develop. It is the source of our intelligence to discover knowledge and apply imagination and will power to create new alternatives. Our freedom organ provides us the opportunity to change ourselves and the world, making us unique among life on earth. We join *fate* and *circumstance* to determine who we are and what we will become.

Freed will: the mysterious power we acquire through our mature freedom organ to assume responsibility for our own thinking, feelings, and actions. The process of becoming self-programmers of the way we think.

Global citizenship *(see Local citizenship)*: recognition of oneself as a member of an interrelated community of like mind; the commitment to contribute to the well-being of the community of humanity in addition to local loyalties. Tolerance for diversity is a learned skill that modifies our early need for local affiliation to a "superior" tribe.

God: a being conceived as the perfect, omnipotent, omniscient originator and ruler of the universe (dictionary definition); the first or uncaused cause of all that exists. I refrain from using *God* because through tradition it has become a powerful trigger word with such diverse meanings that it is often a source of conflict. I personally believe those

contradictions are mostly of our own doing, often inspired by animal brain instinctive "*either/or*" thinking. The less biased word-switch, ***our creator***, turns on our shared commonalities and limits the non-productive conflict. Therefore, I prefer the word-switch *our creator* to *God* as a temporary wise step to diminish the foolish destructive conflict we perpetuate through tradition**.**

Human being(s): the prevalent misleading trigger word that implies that we are static, dependent individuals.

Humane becoming(s): an invented trigger word that enlightens us that we are not static, but a dynamic work in progress. We have a purpose and mission to elevate ourselves to become the civilized, humane species we can now envision.

Interpretive power: **We make ourselves creators through our power of interpretation!** Our freedom organ uses symbols to create a private "virtual" mental reality of ideas and concepts, using symbols, and assigns meaning, ideas, and concepts to the data our senses provide. Using imagination, it rearranges the concepts to create new mental alternatives not previously present in the common reality we share. It then chooses from among the alternatives and applies the mysterious power we call *will* to introduce our private conceptual reality into the physical reality we share in common.
Our interpretations influence our thinking, feelings, and actions. Our work in progress (WIP) is to modify our interpretations as we expand our knowledge, and to increase our freedom from instinct and tradition to become more powerful creators.

Knowledge: the enlightenment of an intelligent mind to the universal orderly rules of cause-and-effect. Knowledge is the basis of science and philosophy, and we become increasingly powerful creators as we expand our knowledge. Our generation is accelerating the growth of knowledge in every direction like the burst of light from exploding fireworks.

Instinct: the trial-and-error wisdoms that are preprogrammed into our biology to automatically direct our destiny. Instinct is pre-wired to be active upon our birth.

Intelligence: the ability to acquire and apply logic to knowledge to become a powerful creator. Only humankind has sufficient ability to use words, make interpretations, and pass them forward to continuously expand our knowledge and wisdom.

Local citizenship *(see Global citizenship)*: loyalty to a circumscribed tribe such as family, team, religion, country, ideology, etc. The innate need to identify with like-minded supporters and often relegate non-members to inferior status.

Love/Forgiveness**:** the creation of energy, using our highest mental function that is directed to the well-being of some other and/or one's self. Forgiveness is the highest form of love.

Mental Cancer: the self-serving belief that "I, us, our tribe's way deserves superiority" AND "not I, not us, or not my tribe are deserving of punishment, even murder if they don't conform." *Our tribe deserves to rule the human race!* Its source is usually to be found in the *survival of the fittest* perspective of our older animal brain.
Mental Cancer antidote: The common sense belief that "I, we, our tribe is an important part of a larger system. We best serve ourselves by contributing to the well-being of our global community." This *newer way of thinking* antidote is the creation of our mature freedom organ once we equip it with knowledge and wisdom.

***Mental/Spiritual Freedom*:** without restraint; liberty from slavery, oppression, incarceration; choice; free will; immunity from the arbitrary exercise of authority. Mental freedom is the goal of ANWOT; "pursuing our own good in our own way" J.S. Mill. Becoming a powerful creator does not of itself provide freedom; our creative power may remain under the direction of *instinct* and *tradition* until we teach ourselves *a newer way of thinking*.

Mental Wealth millionaire: a super-mature individual who has acquired sufficient wisdoms to consistently make their life joyous and meaningful. The same mental skills that make us Mental Wealth millionaires are those that create *the newer way of thinking* Einstein told us we require to survive and thrive.

Mentogenous (an invented word because our language has no word to complement *Endogenous* and *Exogenous*): the self-programmed "wiring" designed by the self-conscious portion of our mind; the creativity initiated by our freed will power and originated in our freedom organ.

Ontogeny Recapitulates Phylogeny (ORP):
Ontogeny: the growth and development of an individual in form and function from a single cell to its mature level of complexity.
Phylogeny: the creative process beginning with the evolutionary history of a species, beginning as all life begins, as a single undifferentiated cell.
Ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny (ORP): An organism progresses to its highest level of function by entering and then graduating from each of the less sophisticated preceding levels of development. *ORP* provides us a valuable map of where we came from, the direction we are headed, and what alternative paths we might choose to reach our preferred destination faster, easier, and with greater accuracy.

***Operating system*:** the means our mind uses to process information to action outcomes.

Our Creator [also referred to by trigger words such as "God," "nature," "the 'first' or 'uncaused' cause"]: the yet-unknowable force that has set creation in motion. Throughout history we have modified our view of our creator: we have progressed from superstition, worship of multiple idols, and harmful rituals, to the current common belief that our creator is a force that deals with all equally and is itself a work-in-progress.

My personal belief is that our creator has provided humankind with a freedom organ that provides us the opportunity and responsibility to become a part of the creative process. We can elevate ourselves; we can cause our extinction; we can bring about anything in between. Whether you share my belief or maintain a different one, I urge each person to focus on our shared interests so that all humanity will benefit.

Power**:** a force to initiate change; the energy source to create and to destroy.

Problem-solving sentence: "What is most likely to make things better for us and them, for now and the future?" Contrast this with problem-solving sentence of our animal brain, "My way, the only way."

Reflective thinking: the skill to think about our thoughts; consciousness of our consciousness. The source of what we call "free will." The power to see our self in a mirror enables us to make a quantum leap in our creative power. Reflective thinking = self-consciousness + imagination.

Second signaling system**:** the power of mental interpretation using symbols to modify our primary physical signaling system.

Self: the trigger word that identifies us as unique in the world, often used in combination with another word to recognize our special powers, such as *self-mastery*, *self-consciousness*.

Self-consciousness: reflective thinking to interpret our thoughts and what we think; thinking about our thinking; becoming conscious of our consciousness; the source of mental freedom.

Self-mastery: our work-in-progress to elevate ourselves to become humane individuals. Most people attain significant self-mastery in their late twenties or early thirties. Some require more time while others remain dependent throughout their lifetime.

Signaling systems*:*

- ***First signaling system***: the mindless biologic nerves and chemicals that directly turn on action as designated by nature, nurture, or initiated by our freedom organ (cerebral cortex); *the final common pathway*.
- ***Second signaling system***: the power of interpretation using symbols to modify our first signaling system; the mature use of imagination to become godlike creators
- ***Self-mastery signaling system*** (*a variation of the second signaling system*): the use of imagination to express common sense wisdom to attain super-maturity and contribute as a citizen to the well-being of our global community.

Stages of development: ***Immature ➔Mature ➔ Super-mature***

- ***Immature***: incomplete physical and mental development; directed by instinct and nurture

- ***Mature***: the process of becoming a creator with power for constructive and destructive action; increasing self-consciousness; transition from dependency to self-mastery
- ***Super-mature***: the process of adding *a newer way of common sense thinking* to consistently direct the power of knowledge and wisdom to constructive outcomes.

Stren *(an invented word)*: any word, concept, idea, wisdom, and experience that strengthens our well-being.

Stupidity: mindlessly trying to solve today's problems using yesterday's solutions.

***Three masters who direct our thinking, feelings, and actions*:**
- ***Nature***: our first master, usually characterized as "instinct"
- ***Nurture***: our second master, also characterized as "habit," and when passed on to future generations is referred to as "tradition."
- ***Self-mastery* (also referred to as *mental freedom, thought control, becoming our own person*, and *super-maturity*)**: The last-to-develop director of our life experience as we equip our freedom organ with sophisticated language and a *newer way of thinking*; the use of interpretation to free our self from dictators and assume responsibility for our life's experience.

Tradition: the predetermined patterns of behavior created by our ancestors from trial-and-error wisdom and the common sense use of then-current knowledge. Traditions are passed forward from generation to generation regardless of their appropriateness to current circumstances. *Tradition* becomes our dominant master until we acquire sufficient common sense wisdom to upgrade what *instinct* and *tradition* make of us.

Trial-and-error wisdom: Our creator produces infinite variations of life to adapt to the changing environment. Those adaptive to *fate* and *circumstance* survive while the others become extinct. About 95% or more of the species ever to have lived have become extinct. Those adaptive trial-and-error methods that have survived 3 ½ billion years of life on earth are passed on to future generations through genetic inheritance and tradition. Trial-and-error wisdom is the preferred method of problem-solving of our older brain. These mindless wisdoms provide reliable solutions to yesterday's issues and those that remain unchanged, but they are poorly equipped to problem-solve new issues.

Tribe: any collection of individuals focused around a common interest, goal, or way of thinking. A tribe can be a family, religious community, political party, or nation, to name just a few examples. One common characteristic of tribes is an insular "us vs. them" way of thinking.

Trigger word *(see also* ***Word-switch****)*: a word, phrase, symbol, or gesture that turns on energy (usually an interpretation charged with meaning) to activate a specific pathway and its action outcome. Our means to promote *a newer way of thinking* and *mental*

freedom is adding new trigger words and word-switches to our existing language as we acquire more wisdom.

Weapons of Ultimate Destruction (WUD): any weapons, including nuclear and biological weapons, capable of causing widespread devastation to human society and the natural world with a single use.

Will power: the mental energy we create to turn on action. Three masters compete to control our will power – *nature* (instinct), *nurture* (tradition), and our self.

***Wiring patterns/"hardwired"*:** pre-programmed actions patterns, usually those present through instinct and inscribed by our nurturers.

***Wisdom*:** the direction of knowledge to constructive outcomes; the common sense use of good judgment to adapt, survive, and thrive when faced with new challenges to our well-being. Our mature freedom organ applies the intelligent use of logic to knowledge to create new solutions to current and anticipated challenges. We preserve and enrich our well-being as we increase our wisdoms, i.e. become Mental Wealth millionaires.

Word-switch *(see also* ***Trigger word****)*: a symbol, usually a word or phrase that substitutes a newer action pathway and destination for an established one by replacing the established ***trigger-word.*** Imagine that you are the controller of the railroad track switches. An oncoming train will follow its current course to the predetermined destination. However, by making one simple change at a single point, you can change both the path and the outcome.

Work-in-progress (WIP): The progressive change from simple and primitive to complex and sophisticated that is characteristic of all creation; the intentional action by a creator to modify the present level of complexity and sophistication. Our ***human WIP*** appears to include freeing our selves from the dictatorship of *fate* and *circumstance* so we can acquire the self-mastery to join them in determining who we are and what we are to become.

- Our *individual* work-in-progress is to teach our self the wisdoms that create mental freedom.
- Our *collective* work-in-progress is to acquire the humane, civilized skills we preach, such as forgiveness, love, kindness, mercy, and compassion. Our freedom organ, properly educated, empowers humankind to change the world into a civilized utopia.

Stren #101: ANWOT Concepts

[Note: always subject to updating]

This OVERVIEW consists of concepts used throughout the Educational Community content – including the 100+ collection of strens, two books, the Mini-course, the Peace Quiz, and everything available on our forever free web site. A reading of this stren will provide a unified theory of the power of ANWOT. Familiarity with the concepts and newer trigger-words will make your learning easier, faster, and more satisfying. Some of the terms will be new to you; others are familiar words used in new and unexpected ways.

A checklist will follow these explanations to determine if you have gained familiarity with the terms.

ANWOT – a newer way of thinking: Einstein's proposed solution to prevent human catastrophe and promote world peace – the process of learning to apply common sense wisdom to solve today's problems using current knowledge. ANWOT frees our thinking from dominance by our genes and nurturers, and provides originality, initiation, and *self*-mastery.

Stren: any word, concept, idea, wisdom, and experience that strengthens our well-being. "Stren" is a word invented by a group of mental health professionals after hearing anthropologist Margaret Mead state that our language is constructed to foster negative thinking and action. We increase our well-being as we expand our collection of strens (see wisdom tip #5).

Mental Wealth millionaire: a super-mature individual who has acquired sufficient strens to consistently make their life joyous and meaningful. Mental wealth millionaires, unlike material millionaires, love giving away their mental wealth. The same mental skills that make us mental wealth millionaires are those that create *the newer way of thinking* Einstein told us we require to survive and thrive

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Trigger words and word-switches: a word, phrase, symbol, or gesture that is programmed with meaning to trigger energy to a specific response in the same manner a light switch is wired to turn on a specific light or set of lights. The response may influence our chemistry, thinking, emotions, and actions. Consider how the same symbol – a cross, a crescent, a six-pointed star, or a swastika – may elicit different responses depending on one's upbringing.

trigger word: a signal that turns on a specific pre-determined action pathway
word-switch: a signal sufficiently powerful to redirect the pre-determined pathway linked to a trigger word to a newer action pathway under our own control

An understanding of the concept of *trigger word* and *word switch* is important. Our means to promote *a newer way of thinking* and *mental freedom* is adding new word-switches to our existing language as we acquire more wisdom. Imagine that you

are the controller of railroad track switches. An oncoming train will follow its current course to the predetermined destination. However, by making one simple change at a single point, you not only bring about your preferred path and outcome, you also prevent the unwanted, pre-determined outcome. Use this analogy to recognize the power of word-switches to give you control of your own destiny.

Meaning energizes the thinking, feeling, and action pathways established by its creator, be it *instinct*, *tradition*, our *self*, or some combination. Our first set of trigger words expresses *nature's* perspective, primarily *instinct*. After birth, our *nurturers* provide us a second set of trigger words wired to turn on their perspective, primarily *tradition*. With the maturity of our freedom organ, i.e. our intelligent cerebral cortex, we become *self*-programmers. We ourselves can create a third set of signals that turn on the newer interpretations and meanings we assign to data by applying current wisdom. ***Word-switches*** are distinguished from other *trigger words* only by the three characteristics we here assign to them:

Word-switches

1. **have the power to substitute an alternative meaning and *a newer way of thinking*, feeling, and acting for a *trigger wo*rd that is presently dominant.**
2. **are usually the products of a mature freedom organ.**
3. **are supported by the most current universal *common sense* wisdoms.**

You know the power of these common *trigger words* to turn off or turn on energy: *"I can't; I won't*." "*I think I can. I'll try. I will."* Can you think of newer words that are the result of new knowledge that influence the way we think and act? Here are a few to get you started – *world citizen, Internet, Mental Wealth, weapons with ultimate destructive power, cholesterol, evolution, word-switches.* Do you see how *trigger words* turn on ideas? Have you assigned meaning to any of these newer *trigger words* that turn on sufficient energy for you to initiate a change in your thinking, feelings, and actions?

As we acquire more knowledge of universal cause-and-effect relationships, what we call "science," we increase our power to initiate both constructive and destructive outcomes. The current discovery and proliferation of weapons with ultimate destructive power require that we create newer, more appropriate *word-switches* that consistently direct our power to constructive outcomes. Let's recognize that our native language is heavily biased toward *trigger words* that turn on the animal brain instinct that favors bigotry, prejudice, and destructive confrontation. As our freedom organ attains *physical* maturity and we teach ourselves the wisdoms that create *spiritual* maturity, we can design new word-switches that apply current knowledge to current issues to create original solutions. *Word-switches* are our means to elevate ourselves to the higher levels of civilization to which we aspire. **Our newest weapon of mass construction is creating and using effective *word-switches.***

The five ANWOT building blocks to attain *self*-mastery (explanations of each to follow):

1. **The ingredients**: the raw material to build new skills (see above and later)

2. **The language of ANWOT**: the seven mind-freeing, life-changing, world-saving word-switches
3. **The mental freedom control panel (MFCP):** the eight choices available to our will to take or modify our actions
4. **Strens**: the collection of wisdoms that adds strength to manage life's challenges
5. **Our value system**: the assumptions and beliefs that influence our thinking, feelings, and actions

Building block #1: Like the flour, water, yeast, and salt needed to make bread, there are five ingredients required to develop *self*-mastery. What you don't possess is readily available to you.

1. **Faith**: belief that "I can" make a difference. Without some faith, we won't try. We generate energy for our first steps when we say, "Yes, I think I can. I will!"
2. **Work**: the practice required can be very satisfying.
3. **Patience**: the benefits of most worthwhile skills are not realized immediately.
4. Direction: we have the advantage of "standing on the shoulders of those giants who have preceded us."
5. **Risk-taking**: acquiring a new beneficial manner of thinking usually means letting go, even "murder," of established ways of thinking that once protected us.

Money, unusual intelligence, "connections," good health, and magic are <u>not</u> needed.

Building block #2: The seven mind-freeing, life-changing, world-saving word-switches.

1. Substitute "I think I can," the spark of energy that inspires action, for the helpless/hopeless trigger words such as "why bother," "what's the use," "it's too hard," "I can't," "to Hell with it.
2. Substitute "I could" for the dictator phrase "You should."
3. Substitute the personal responsibility word-switch "I allow" for the blaming words that express dependency: "he (she, they, it, the world) makes me …."
4. Most important, substitute "both … and" that focuses on similarities for the "either/or" trigger word programmed into every native language that divides the world into opposing categories and promotes bigotry, prejudice, and intolerance.
5. Regularly substitute the problem-solving sentence: "What is most likely to make things better for me AND you (or us and them), for now AND the future?" for "My way, the only way."
6. Substitute when possible "energy" for "anger."
7. Substitute "urgent" for "emergency" and immediately assign "high," "medium," or "low" priority to the "urgent" situation. *Instinct* biases us to mislabel low and medium priority issues as "emergency."

Keep in mind how you will benefit from each of these word-switches: 1. *Yes, I think I can* turns on the energy we require to get results. Word-switches 2, 3, and 4 free our thinking from mental slavery to the *instinct* and *traditions* that nature and our nurturers program into us through the years we are helpless, immature, and it is appropriate for us to blindly obey the authority of dictators. 5. The universal problem-

solving sentence is the "magical" tool that, regularly used, creates *common sense* solutions that work while harmful alternative actions wither away from disuse. Word-switches 6 and 7 diminish the instinctive anger and the emergency *fight or flight* impulsive responses that are least likely to work in our relatively civilized world and that often get us into trouble.

Building block #3: The mental response freedom panel (MRFP) identifying the eight (8) choices available to our will to take action. Most of these mental action patterns are nonproductive or harmful. It is easy to learn to wisely manage them, and immensely improves our skill at *self*-mastery. They work with uncanny effectiveness. If all you develop is skill in managing *blaming-out* and *blaming-in*, you will derive great benefit from ANWOT.

1. **Blaming-out**: mentally attacking an "other"
2. **Blaming-in** and **secondary blaming**: mentally attacking our self (guilt, putdowns)
3. Avoidance: mentally "running" from a stressful situation. This includes procrastination, substance abuse, excuses, dropping out, etc.
4. **Problem-solving**: the "magical" sentence – *What is most likely to benefit me and you for now and in the future?*
5. ***Self*-endorsement** and **secondary endorsement**: *"Atta boy! (Atta girl!)" I deserve to be proud."*
6. **Helplessness/hopelessness, the H/H response**: the devastating "why bother" response that shuts down our energy factory
7. **The "what if" worry response**: wasting energy by exaggerating negative alternatives while neglecting the positive and most likely outcomes. Anticipating the worst leads to inappropriate anxiety and phobias.
8. **The mind/body response**: *mind over matter* reactions, such as tension leading to headache or back pain

Actions 1-3 are primitive symbolic expressions of our physical *fight or flight* instinct. 4. Problem-solving that seeks win/win outcomes for all parties present and future is a worthy universal direction. There is no emphasis on blaming and finding a scapegoat. Energy is not wasted on resentment, avoidance, and other non-productive actions. While not magic, the results will often seem "magical." 5. Self-endorsement creates the independence to love our self and others. 6. The H/H response is the most devastating because it turns off problem-solving action. 7. "What iffing" *the worst* rather than *the best* or *most likely* outcomes is carried over from our ancestors' need for constant vigilance when in a life-threatening environment. 8. The influence of mental stress on our physical state is becoming increasingly apparent.

"Secondary blaming-in" (action 2) is *blaming our self for blaming our self*. "Secondary endorsement" (action 5) is *endorsing our self for endorsing our self*. They are powerful variations of *blaming-in* and *self-endorsement*. Even after people learn that self-blame for mistakes is not productive, they commonly find they continue to do so and then make things worse by attacking themselves: "*I'm such a jerk, I should have learned by now*." On the other hand, few individuals recognize that if self-endorsement is one of

our most positive actions, it is desirable to endorse our self when we endorse our self, thereby strengthening our positive action.

Note: These eight mental response patterns are rarely "either…or." They are intertwined, one often leading to another. These combinations result in an infinite variety of patterns forming a characteristic *personality print,* akin to a fingerprint. **We do well to emphasize problem-solving and *self*-endorsement (actions 4 & 5) while we attack our negative mental responses, <u>not</u> ourselves!**

Building block #4: The collection of strens that consistently lead to wise judgment. We are all born ignorant. By becoming collectors of wisdoms and personally discovering new insights, we make ourselves Mental Wealth millionaires, "wealthy" enough to make life joyous and fulfilling even if *fate* and *circumstance* are unkind. Sharing our wisdom is among life's most satisfying endeavors.

Building block #5: A value system supported by common sense interpretation of universal knowledge.

We differ from animals because we use symbols to interpret data; we make assumptions that create morality. By the political and religious ideologies we create, we may sufficiently influence our thinking, feelings, and actions to override what *fate* and *circumstance* make of us. Our ancestor's values required gigantic leaps of faith because they lacked knowledge of cause-and-effect to support their wild beliefs. We continuously modify our unreasonable assumptions and rituals as we discover universal knowledge and wisdom. We elevate our values from savagery to civility by substituting the common sense wisdom of our cerebral cortex for the instinctive trial-and-error solutions pre-wired in our animal brain. We recognize that our new destructive power requires that we upgrade our self-serving values, "My way, the only way," with global values all tribes can support, such as "Love our neighbor as our self." And "Treat others as we would have others treat us." An "eye for an eye" escalation and domination by "war and cure" no longer work; cooperation and collaboration for mutual benefit, forgiveness, love, and other humane values are now required if we are to survive.

Animal brain: the six segments of the brain that automatically regulate our behavior, i.e. our thinking, feelings, and actions. These segments include what we call the *medulla, pituitary, pons, pineal body, cerebellum*, and *thalamus*. Because the segments are so interconnected in form and function, these segments have alternative classifications. Maturing very early, it advocates *survival of the fittest* and self-preservation.

Human brain: the seventh to evolve and the last to mature segment of the human brain is the one commonly called "*the cerebral cortex,*" or what I prefer to call our "*freedom organ*". Unlike the animal brain, it requires decades to reach full physical and emotional maturity. It is our source of common sense wisdom, civility, and self-mastery.

Human being(s): the prevalent misleading trigger word that leads to the interpretation that we are static individuals dependent on *fate* and *circumstance* like other species.
Humane becoming(s): an invented word-switch that enlightens us that we are gifted

with the opportunity to become increasingly powerful creators. Humankind is a dynamic work-in-progress. We have a purpose and mission to elevate ourselves to become the civilized, humane species we can now envision.

Either/or *dichotomous* thinking: our established animal brain and tradition favor processing information into two opposing categories: right/wrong, good/bad or evil, we /they, safe/dangerous, win/lose, etc. Focusing on differences, dichotomous thinking is a major cause of bigotry, prejudice, intolerance, destructive aggression, and win/lose confrontation.
Both ... and *logical* thinking: the intelligent cerebral cortex's mode of processing information that considers the positives and negatives of multiple alternatives. Focusing on similarities, logical thinking promotes tolerance, cooperation, constructive problem-solving, and win/win cooperation. "Both...and" is the *newer way of thinking* (ANWOT) that enlightens us to add *global* priorities to self-serving *local* priorities.

MDR: the minimum daily requirement of endorsements to thrive: You are already familiar with this term as applied to our physical needs. "We believe the *minimum daily requirement* of vitamin x is 4 milligrams." The exact amount may be unknown. Similarly, we can apply this term to the daily emotional endorsements we need to maintain our self-worth. ANWOT explains how to insure that we receive our MDR.

Love: the creation of energy using our highest mental function (our "freedom organ",) directed to the well-being of some other and/or one's self. The generation of love powerfully influences our physical well-being.
Sex: the natural urge for procreation and physical gratification by stimulation of receptor cells in the genitals and elsewhere. Sex is strongly influenced by our genetic inheritance and the older animal portion of our brain. Note that the major sexual organs, the penis and clitoris, are in-born "receiving stations," while love is a creation of our choosing we send from our highest mental function. Sex and love are quite distinct but are most satisfying when combined.
Infatuation: the illusion of love generated largely by powerful biological urges.

Religion: the assumptions about the world, based largely on faith, that influence our thinking, feelings, and actions. The limitations of our knowledge of cause-and-effect require that we "leap" to assumptions based on faith with respect to values, aesthetics, justice, and most of our daily choices. I consider every person to be religious in that we each primarily act on our unique set of faith-based beliefs. Although formal religions agree more than disagree on fundamental values, most people seem to follow their personal religion rather than adhering to the universal values of the formal religion they profess - values that would promote unity more than the intolerance we more commonly observe.

Knowledge: the enlightenment of an intelligent mind to the universal orderly rules of cause-and-effect; understanding gained through experience or study. Knowledge is the basis of science and philosophy. We become increasingly powerful creators as we expand our knowledge and apply it to muscle. There are more scientists and

philosophers alive today than all of history, and the growth of knowledge is accelerating in every direction like the spreading light we create when we explode fireworks.
Power: a force to initiate change, the energy source to create and destroy.
Intelligence: the ability to acquire and apply logic to knowledge to become a powerful creator. Humankind is distinguished from other life on earth by our sophisticated cerebral cortex. Only we have sufficient ability to use words, make interpretations, and pass them forward to continuously expand the power of knowledge.
Wisdom: understanding what is true, right, or lasting; **the direction of knowledge to constructive outcomes, good judgment**; common sense judgment applied to current knowledge to adapt, survive, and thrive when faced with new challenges to our well-being. Our intelligent, mature freedom organ creates new solutions to current and anticipated challenges. None of us are born with wisdom; our work-in-progress is to collect the necessary self-enlightenment skills. We preserve and enrich our well-being as we increase our wisdoms to make ourselves Mental Wealth millionaires.
Foolishness/poor judgment: We act foolishly when we try to solve today's problems using yesterday's solutions. Trial-and-error wisdom that is deficient in common sense wisdom often leads to harmful outcomes.

Common sense wisdom: our freedom organ's process of applying universal common sense logic to current knowledge to solve today's problems. As we increase our power as creators, we can express our originality both wisely and foolishly. *Common sense* wisdom is our means to consistently direct our power to constructive outcomes and prevent the expression of those *trial-and-error* wisdoms that have lost their effectiveness or have become dangerous. For example, when all tribes possess weapons of ultimate destruction, the rules of survival suddenly change. *Survival of the fittest* becomes *destruction of the fittest*! Common sense recognizes that win/win cooperation is preferred to win/lose competition. We must rapidly popularize *a newer way of thinking* skilled in common sense wisdom to survive and thrive in the age of weapons with ultimate destructive power.
The *common sense test* of universal wisdom: Tribes with different geographic, religious, ethnic, and political backgrounds will come to similar insights based on logical thinking; common sense is by definition "common." Universal wisdoms appear spontaneously and have widespread acceptance. Assertions by one tribe that *our way is the right or only way* clearly fail the *common sense test*, the consensus of divergent groups. We can usually recognize the self-serving purpose of assertions that lack consensual acknowledgement.

Examples of **universal wisdom/values for a satisfying life experience include**:

Treat others as I would have others treat me.

Love myself so that I may more ably love others.

To make yourself happy, direct your attention to what you have accomplished, what you have now, and what you might attain in the future.
To make yourself miserable, dwell on what you have lost, what you don't have now, or what you may never have in the future.

I will acquire the courage to change what I can, the serenity to accept what I can't change, and the wisdom to know the difference.
... the serenity prayer advocated by Alcoholics Anonymous, slightly modified

What universal wisdom(s) would you add?

Creation: the orderly process of change from one state to another, usually more sophisticated state. Every effect has a cause. Logic suggests there was a first cause or "uncaused cause" that set creation in motion, whose mystery is beyond our present intelligence to understand.

Our Creator [also referred to by trigger words such as "God," "nature," "the 'first' or 'uncaused' cause"]: one who causes something to exist (dictionary definition); the yet unknowable force that has set creation in motion. Throughout history we have modified our view of our creator, progressing from superstition, worship of multiple idols, and bizarre rituals, to the current common belief that our creator is a force that deals with all equally and is itself a work-in-progress. My personal belief is that our creator has provided humankind with a freedom organ that provides us the opportunity and responsibility to become a part of the creative process. We can elevate ourselves; we can cause our extinction; we can bring about anything in between. Whether you share my belief or maintain a different one, I urge each person to focus on our shared interests so that all humanity will benefit.
God: a being conceived as the perfect, omnipotent, omniscient originator and ruler of the universe (dictionary definition); the first or uncaused cause of all that exists. I refrain from using "God" because through tradition it has become a powerful trigger word with such diverse meanings that it is often a source of conflict. Throughout history, "God" has become a trigger word that inspires self-serving biased interpretations, leading to foolish, destructive aggression. Conflict is not only prevalent between creationists and naturalists but between people of related religious faiths, even within the same faith. I personally believe those contradictions are mostly of our own doing, often inspired by our animal brain's instinctive "*either/or*" thinking. The less biased word-switch, *our creator*, turns on our shared commonalities and limits the non-productive conflict. World peace requires tolerance for differences, that we accept that no tribe is superior; that each deserves equal respect. **Our most urgent need is to unite our problem-solving energy to discredit one dangerous belief: "Our side is superior, and punishment, even murder, is justified for non-members."**

Dictator: any source of prescribed demands based on authority rather than consensual agreement. Many years pass before we are equipped to evaluate the prescriptions of *instinct* and our *nurturers*. We, like animals, remain servant to *fate* and *circumstance* and *human* dictators until we are able to initiate *self*-mastery. Our work-in-progress is to free our self from dictators to acquire the humane qualities we preach and the utopia we can now envision. Acquiring knowledge and wisdom is our means to free our self from dictators.

Fate and circumstance, instinct and habit (tradition), nature and our nurturers: the first dictators who direct our life experience. The dictators who we first serve may be marvelous role models, self-serving parasites, or most likely some combination of the extremes. How would you rate your early dictators?

Work-in-progress (WIP): A progressive change from simple and primitive to complex and sophisticated is characteristic of all creation. WIP is the intentional action by a creator to modify the present level of complexity and sophistication. Our *human WIP* appears to include freeing ourselves from dictators to acquire *self*–mastery, to join *fate* and *circumstance* in determining who we are and what we are as we strive to reach our highest level of function.

- Our *individual* work-in-progress is to teach our self the wisdoms that create mental freedom.
- Our *collective* work-in-progress is to acquire and pass forward the humane civilized skills we preach, such as forgiveness, love, kindness, mercy, and compassion. Our freedom organ, properly educated, empowers humankind to change the savage, mindlessly governed world into a civilized Utopia.

Becoming one's own person (BOOP): Studies on adult development suggest that our thinking, feelings, and actions are dominated by the perspectives of our early masters, i.e. our genes and nurturers. Just our bodies require many years to reach physical maturity, so do our brains. The unique degree to which we are capable of *reflective thinking*, i.e., being aware of our consciousness and directing it, requires the maturation of the brain. Studies of this process suggest that the acquisition of a "*self*" that surpasses our early teachings, that can wisely challenge them and attain freedom to make independent choices, does not occur until our late 20's or early 30's. Indeed, in many, it never occurs at all to any substantial degree. One goal of ANWOT is that you *become your own person*.

Consciousness: the private mental "virtual" reality created within our freedom organ.
Reflective self: that portion of our sophisticated mental activity that is conscious of our conscious awareness that examines our thoughts and thinking. The reflective *self* is the "me" that provides us identity and frees us to become an autonomous individual. It may develop the power to manipulate, modify, and innovate our activity. The reflective *self* is "born" many years after our physical birth, once the brain is sufficiently mature to lay down the wiring for *a newer way of thinking* and is equipped with language and knowledge.
Self *(*shorthand for "reflective self"): the trigger word that identifies us as unique in the world; it is often used in combination with another word to recognize our special powers such as *self-mastery*, *self-consciousness*. This is the "me" part of our higher mental activity that is able to reflect on itself, is relatively free of the demands of the first controllers of our life, and has acquired the skill to wisely manage our thoughts and initiate problem-solving action. *Self* in italics is not to be confused with "our self," which should be understood in the more traditional manner to represent all that we are physically and mentally.

Reflective thinking: the skill to think about our thoughts; the source of what we call "free will." Just as it is much more efficient to shave or put on makeup with a mirror, the power to observe our selves enables us to make a quantum leap in our creative power. Reflective thinking = self-consciousness + imagination.
Self-consciousness: becoming conscious of our consciousness; the ability to engage in reflective thinking to interpret our thoughts and what we think; thinking about what we think – a human quality.
***Self*-mastery**: the work-in-progress to elevate us to the humane individuals within our capability. Most individuals attain significant self-mastery in their late twenties or early thirties. Some require longer while others remain dependent throughout their lifetime.

Board of Directors: the "Capitol" where ideas are accepted or rejected by its members. Representatives of our *nature*, *nurturers*, and our *self,* through various agents*,* debate issues and vote on actions to be taken. The Board changes over time; for example, there are significant membership changes at puberty. With maturity, we may modify our Board's composition and/or the authority of its members. The power of *fate*, *circumstance*, our parents, and other authorities diminish as we add agents representing our *self*.
Chief Executive Officer (C.E.O.): the "director" or "boss" overseeing our thinking, feelings, and actions. As we attain maturity, we may engage in the process of becoming C.E.O. of our life to oversee the conflicting interests and demands of the members of our Board. We may have a number of executive directors but the "chief" is the senior officer.

As in any complex organization, there is too much going on for the C.E.O. to be directly involved in each activity; much needs to be delegated. Think of the "section chief" members of our mental Board of Directors as representatives of nature, nurture, and our *self*. The C.E.O. and members of our Board may change according to our age and the stage of our development. Each would-be-director can be expected to govern according to their unique perspective. Can you identify any of the *specific* "sub-boss" agents that sit at your Board of Directors?

Master (also "director", "controller" or "boss"): a major energy source that directs our thoughts, feelings and actions. We are wise to recognize the three masters that co-exist within us: our *nature*, our *nurture* and our *self*.

Our three controllers and examples of their influence:

1. Master nature - what we inherit, including *instinct*: the wisdom of millions of years of genetic development encoded in our animal brain, a chief advocate of *self*-preservation, *fight or flight* behavior, and *self*-gratification. A basic principle is "If it brings pleasure and/or avoids pain, do it." The favorite word of your nature is, "Yes!" Genes and DNA are the primary means through which we inherit our nature.
   ☞ Body size, appearance, color, and function; sexual gender, intelligence, dependence. What else would you add?

2. Master nurture - what we are taught: the standards you have acquired from your parents, culture, and environment. Of necessity, much of your nurture takes the form of prescriptions, what "you should do" or "shouldn't do." The favorite word of your nurture, so common in your early years, is, "No!" The directions of your nurturers are frequently in opposition to the directions of nature.
   ☞ Language and symbols[118], religion, assumptions about how the world operates, habits, guilt, resentment, how to think, good/bad, right/wrong, me/not me, us/them, win/lose, trust (faith, belief, and dependence), suspicion, identity (labels that describe and convey meaning and emotion to our *self*). What else would you add?

3. *Self*-mastery - what is ours to acquire and/or create: mental freedom, thought control, wisdom, becoming director and producer of our life's experience, originality, creativity, *self*-initiation; the degree we own our *self*, love and the qualities we consider humane.
   ☞ What you make of yourself.

Nature is often characterized as "instinct." *Nurture*, the second master, may be referred to as "habit," and when passed forward to future generations, "tradition." *Self*-mastery may be referred to as *mental freedom, thought control, becoming our own person*, and *super-maturity. Self*-mastery requires that we equip our cerebral cortex with sophisticated language, skill in interpretation, and a *newer way of thinking* to free our will from dictators and assume responsibility for our life's experience.

Each of these three masters rules its own domain, has a specific agenda, and advocates its own interests. They are sometimes competitive, sometimes cooperative. They express themselves in multiple areas or "departments" of our life. They each are represented on your Board of Directors and have voting shares that may change ownership in relation to your age and level of development. Expect heated discussion with respect to your values, diet, appearance, sexual gratification, and so on.

NOTE: *Instinct* and *tradition* are usually automatic, effective, and relatively effortless as most life challenges remain constant. They are poorly equipped to manage new challenges created by new knowledge, such as weapons with ultimate destructive power. New knowledge is best managed by applying *common sense* wisdom to current knowledge.

Director/"boss": an order-giver, a would-be controller of your thinking, feeling, and/or actions. We have many would-be bosses: our biology, parents, community, and on and on.
Controller: another term for someone/something that acts to direct or "boss" your thoughts, feelings, and actions.

Endogenous "boss": the activation or alteration of an event where direction is most characteristic of our inherited instinctive tendencies and biological needs, our nature; the innate automatic regulation of our thinking, feelings, and actions.

[118] Consider the variety of responses that may be aroused by a cross, a crescent, six pointed star, or swastika depending on one's upbringing.

Exogenous "boss": the activation or alteration of an event where the source of direction is most characteristic of our acquired tendencies, such as our nurturers, culture, tradition, fate, and circumstance. Exogenous "wiring" turns on action based on tradition, i.e. what our ancestors believed according to their state of knowledge.
Mentogenous "boss": (an invented word because our language lacks a trigger word complimentary to *endogenous* and *exogenous*!): the activation or alteration of an event whose direction originates from the mature problem-solving thinking portion of our mind, i.e. *self*-mastery; the "wiring" is designed by the self-conscious portion of our mind; the creativity originates in our freedom organ and is initiated by our freed will power.

Stages of Development: *Immature* ➔*Mature* ➔ *Super-mature*

Stage one - immaturity: the period of incomplete development when resistance to dictators is low; we serve the urgings inherited through our genes and those enforced by our nurturers and environment.
Stage two –maturity: the process of increasing self-awareness and self-consciousness to become a powerful creator with the capacity for constructive and destructive action. Rebellion, doing the opposite of what is prescribed, marks the transition from dependence to *self*-mastery.
Stage three - super-maturity: the process of adding *common sense* wisdom to consistently direct the power of knowledge to constructive outcomes; we our *self* initiate directions, taking into consideration the urgings of the stage one and two dictators who constantly push to reign as C.E.O. of your Board of Directors.

Freedom: without restraint; liberty from slavery, oppression, incarceration; choice; free will; immunity from the arbitrary exercise of authority. Becoming a powerful creator does not of itself provide freedom; our creative power may remain under the direction of *instinct* and *tradition* until we teach ourselves *a newer way of thinking*. Physical freedom is self-direction of one's muscles; non-physical (mental or spiritual) freedom is becoming master of our *self*. "Slavery" is far more than the subjugation of one's muscles to another's will; it includes the surrender of our opportunity to become what we are capable of becoming. Mental freedom is the goal of ANWOT; "pursuing our own good in our own way" J.S. Mill.

Slavery: bondage to a master; being subject or addicted to a specific influence.

Dependence: the state of being determined, influenced, or controlled by something else.
Independence: *self*-support, competence; self-governing.
Physical freedom (opposite: physical slavery): self direction of one's muscles.
Mental freedom (opposite: mental slavery): the process of becoming master of our self, to become independent creators. The work of our mature cerebral cortex, is to free our will power from the control of dictators. We strengthen our freedom organ through skill in reflective thinking, acquiring knowledge, and the intelligent use of imagination to increase our originality and creativity.

Will power: the mental energy we create to turn on action. Three masters compete to control our will – *nature* (*instinct*), *nurture* (*tradition*), and our *self*.
Freed will: the mysterious power we acquire through our mature freedom organ to assume responsibility for our own thinking, feelings, and actions. The process of becoming self-programmers of the way we think.

Conscience: a name commonly given to the mental "voice" urging us to "do the right thing." It is usually a "prescription" of our phase two *nurturers*. Rather than blindly conform to our conscience, we act more wisely when we reflect on its message to ask if it presently represents an appropriate directive. We sometimes are taught to "hear" a voice on one shoulder telling us what we "should" do - i.e. our conscience, an angel, a "Jiminy Cricket" - and a voice on the other shoulder - i.e. a devil-like figure, urging us to do the "selfish" thing. "Conscience" is not to be confused with "conscious awareness" or "consciousness," and is <u>not</u> related to "science."

Freedom organ - our cerebral cortex. The cortical area of the human brain is the latest-developing segment of our seven-segment brain and the most rapidly evolving organ of *homo sapiens*. Specific organs, such as the kidneys and liver, develop to perform specialized tasks. This newer brain area develops to become our "*self*-organ" or "freedom organ". It is our resource for mental freedom and *self*-mastery. It is the source of our intelligence to discover knowledge and apply imagination and will power to originate new alternatives. We engage in advanced abstract reflective thinking. Our freedom organ provides us the opportunity to change ourselves and the world, making us unique among life on earth. We join *fate* and *circumstance* to determine who we are and what we will become.

The languages of our thought processes: Language is a collection of words and symbols by which we think. Can you imagine what your consciousness would be like if you were never exposed to a language? Commonly we identify languages that are related to specific geography like English, French, and German. If you were born in China, Chinese would likely be your "native" tongue. The symbols and notations of music are more of a universal language designed for a specific function.

In the course of our development, we acquire at least three languages. Each language is designed to serve a different master or "controller" of your life's activity, and "speaks" in the native tongue of its own master: *nature*, *nurture*, or *self-mastery*.

The first language – the language of *nature*, our innate or *endogenous* controllers: Your *endogenous* controller is determined by genes. Its interest is *self*-preservation and its behavior has been described as "fight or flight". It is a self-centered boss, oriented to the present, and can usually be identified because of its "I want what I want when I want it" motto. The words of this early language are usually in the family of "yes", "do it" words. I call this the *endogenous* language because it is "wired" to serve your inborn needs.

The second language – the language of *nurture*, our external or *exogenous*

controllers: The second would-be boss is our outside demands, coming from our parents, teachers, authority figures, the law, the religion, and cultural dictates of our specific environment. The language designed to serve this second master is wired to stimulate responses which are usually in direct conflict with the wiring of the first language. It emphasizes a family of "no" words that prescribe what you should not do and/or must do. I call this second language the *exogenous* language because it is designed to serve the outside or environmental forces that make demands upon us. Parents' most common expression of this language is "NO!" Variations such as "you can't," "don't," and "you must" are easily identified. These words characteristically are wired to some form of reward or punishment. Physical and/or verbal "putdowns," withholding of love, approval, privileges, promotions, and restriction of freedom are usually favored over "rewards."

The third language – the language of your reflective *self*, the "freedom" or *mentogenous* language of self-mastery: This language permits mature thinking and fosters problem-solving over punishment. Its family of words is primarily "descriptive," such as "I prefer", "I am wise when", "I like", "I value," and so on. Descriptive words are wired to seek both short and long-term positive outcomes to our actions. Such words stimulate reflective-thinking and encourage loving actions that promote our own well-being in cooperation with the well-being of others. I call this the *mentogenous* language because we mentally initiate the word-switches that update the endogenous and exogenous trigger words of the would-be bosses that will be with us the duration of our life. The mentogenous language is our means to become our own person, to create and choose "feeling good" and "doing good". It is quite revealing that the English language has the trigger words *endogenous* and *exogenous* that identify our first two "bosses," *nature* and *nurture*, but I have had to invent the word *mentogenous* because there is no complimentary word to represent the language of self-mastery. ANWOT advocates the study and application of the mentogenous language of *self*-mastery.

Mental variations of processing information (see also explanations re "Mind"):
Thoughts: the mental impressions our senses bring to our freedom organ: They "*magically*" pop into our mind.
Thinking - the use of imagination to rearrange thoughts into original combinations: *consciousness* + *imagination*.
Reflective thinking - the skill to think about our thoughts and what we think: The source of what we call "free will." The power to see ourselves in a mirror enables us to "see our self" and make a quantum leap in our creative power. Reflective thinking = self-consciousness + imagination

Mind – the home of our conscious awareness and our reflective or higher self: Mental activity has thus far defied description of its material attributes. The relationship of our mental and spiritual activity to the brain is an ongoing area of interest to both science and religion.
Thoughts: the "motion picture" stream of words, symbols, pictures, and experience that fill our conscious awareness, messages that originate from our *nature* and *nurture*.

Thoughts passively, automatically "pop" into our mind as though received from the outside, usually through our five senses, and are passively received from within, from our body state. Examples: "hot," "tastes good," "danger," "hungry," "bladder full – pee."
Thinking: the action portion of our mental activity that represents our higher self. It is capable of manipulating thoughts, creating new solutions, and providing direction to our *self*. Thinking serves three masters, initially the commands we inherit through our genes; later, the commands we acquire from our nurturers; and eventually the modifications we initiate as we acquire *self*-mastery.
Reflective-thinking: the special mental processing through which we reflect on our thoughts and thinking, and become conscious of our consciousness (*self*-consciousness). Reflective-thinking empowers what I have described as *self*. It conveys independence through abstract reason. Our complex brain and use of symbols are our sources of mental freedom, originality, and *self*-mastery.

Wiring patterns: the pre-programmed pathways to action. Words and symbols foster thinking because they call forth specific images; they are "handles" or "switches" that result in specific activity in our brain. I call the connections that lead from a word or symbol to the activation of a pattern in the brain our "wiring." The wiring for physical action is electrical and chemical, such as nerve impulses. The wiring for mental or spiritual action is still a mystery we call "will power."

Different words stimulate different wiring patterns or images. This is because there is a specific "wiring" pattern which the word "triggers." For example, what response do the following words call forth: *fire*! *Mother*, *cancer*, *money*, *Attention! You can't! free*, *fefm, satz*. Can you identify specific words, symbols, or ideas that stir in you specific emotional responses? Enthusiasm? Tears? Words trigger specific electrical and chemical responses that are characteristic to each person, depending on their innate and acquired "wiring." Imagine a light controller in the entranceway of your house that has three switches that look and in fact are identical. One switch turns the outside light on. The second activates one or more lights in the living room. The third controls the lights in the hall. Even though you don't see the wiring behind the wall and may not understand how or why it does what it does, you know that the simple act of flipping the right switch brings about your preferred outcome. The switch that activates multiple lights and appliances in the hall has no effect on the outside or living room lights. Likewise, the family of words that is associated with the demands of each of your controllers, your *genes* and *nurturers*, is wired to process "word" switches differently than the family of words dedicated to *self*-mastery. ANWOT identifies the two early controllers of your actions, your *genes* and *nurturers*, and describes the *endogenous* and *exogenous* language by which each expresses itself. Further, ANWOT promotes the development of the third *mentogenous* controller of your thinking, feelings, and behavior, i.e., *self*-mastery. Some modification of existing words and introduction of new words are required to grow your skills of *self*-mastery.

The family of word-switches that comprise the *mentogenous* language of *self*-mastery is essential to attain our highest level of function, super-maturity. Whether or not you understand and/or agree with the explanations here offered about "wiring," your

use of the “freedom language” will work. I believe an understanding of this “wiring” concept will enrich your progress and stimulate new exciting insights.

Here is one further thought about the “wiring” of our language. Our tendency is to identify “language” as distinct because of its geography, as was mentioned above in the original entry on “Language of our thought processes.” A word or symbol that is different in more than one language may express a corresponding meaning that will lead to an identical response. The symbol differs but the meaning follows a “final common pathway.” For example, the symbol for *fire* in the native tongue of the English, German, French, and Chinese person may follow similar wiring pathways even though the actual spelling and sound of the “trigger” words are different for each individual. On the other hand, I have described how the wiring and therefore the processing and outcome of words we take as similar may indeed serve different masters and lead to different outcomes. For example, depending on one’s religious wiring, the thought of eating *cow* or *pig* may elicit very different responses. Can you imagine color coding words as an electrician uses color wiring to distinguish the action of one wire from another?

Operating system(s): the means our mind uses to process information to an action outcome.
Strens are primarily designed to provide “practical” direction to *feeling good* and *doing good*.
You will benefit whether or not you recognize how and why the wisdom described works. However, the “picture” of *how* and *why* our *self* works through its own operating system may stimulate creative thinking. To the degree the “theory” strens are accurate and you understand them, you will strengthen your capacity to open new doors to get where you’d like to go.

Hardware – the physical equipment used to get things done: A computer and our brain are examples of hardware.

Software – the program(s) designed by their creator to process data: Our computer may have various software programs focusing on different tasks: word processing, number crunching, photo management, musical notation, and so on. Our brain contains multiple programs provided by *nature*, our *nurturers*, and our *self,* each emphasizing its own perspective.

Trial-and-error wisdom: Our creator produces infinite variations of life. Those adaptive to *fate* and circumstance survive while the others become extinct. Over 95% of the species ever to have lived have become extinct. Those trial-and-error methods of adaptation that have survived 3 ½ billion years of life on earth are passed on to future generations through genetic inheritance and tradition. They provide automatic regulation of our thinking, feelings, and actions. Trial-and-error wisdom is the preferred problem-solving method of our animal brain. These mindless wisdoms provide reliable solutions to yesterday’s issues and those that remain currently unchanged. However, trial-and-error wisdom is poorly equipped to problem-solve new issues, especially the recent creation and proliferation of weapons with ultimate destructive power.

Trial-and-error learning: One of the most common ways we acquire skills is by

learning from our mistakes. Though mistakes may be costly, they are often necessary to get the information needed to learn. Walking is an example where we learn from our falls. Recognizing and acknowledging our mistakes is worthy of *self*-endorsement more so than putdowns because it is one of our most productive means of improvement.

Imitation, mimicking, and role model learning: Much of what we learn while we are growing up - our mental wiring - is attained by blindly copying, mimicking, and practicing patterns others prescribe. Our brain has a super-ability to learn by mimicking until puberty, and we continue this method of learning into maturity. .

Cognitive rehearsal and "no-trial" learning: mentally working through alternatives to deal with an issue *before* taking action, considering short and long-term outcomes. This is the basis of *prevention* and therefore a critical skill when we are dealing with issues that may be beyond "cure," such as WUD. Skill in cognitive rehearsal may be acquired with maturity.
No-trial learning: this term is often the equivalent of cognitive rehearsal, but is more general in that we may learn by imitation and role-modeling that requires little or no reflective thinking.

Prevention: mental consideration of alternative solutions to an anticipated problem; use of no-trial learning.
Cure: dealing with a problem after its occurrence, as in "war and cure."

Instinct: the trial-and-error wisdoms that are preprogrammed into our biology to automatically direct our destiny.
Tradition: the predetermined patterns of behavior created by our ancestors from trial-and-error wisdom and the common sense use of then-current knowledge. Traditions are passed forward from generation to generation regardless of their appropriateness to current circumstance. *Tradition* becomes our dominant master until we acquire sufficient *common sense* wisdom to redirect what *instinct* and *tradition* make of us.

The power of interpretation: We make ourselves creators through our use of symbols. We create a private "virtual" mental reality in which we assign meaning to the data our senses provide, and imagine and manipulate ideas and concepts to create new phenomena. We then apply the mysterious power we call *will* to introduce our original conceptual reality into the physical reality we share in common. Our mental interpretations initiate actions that change ourselves and everything about us. We make ourselves increasingly powerful creators as our scientists discover the universal knowledge of cause-and-effect.

Our signaling systems – the means to action: The types of signaling systems are described below.

First signaling system - *the final common pathway* to all physical action: The mindless biological nerves and chemicals that directly turn on action as commanded by *nature*, *nurture*, or what we initiate through our freedom organ.

Second signaling system - the power of mental interpretation using symbols to modify our first signaling system: the mature use of imagination to become powerful creators. We recognize that physical stimulation activates pathways, such as eating calling forth digestive juices. The *thought* of a steak or fresh lemon juice on our tongue, i.e., a mental act, can also "signal" pathways that duplicate the effect of physical stimulation. This "second signaling system" concept helps us to understand the power of our mind to influence what we experience physically. Even though the means by which physical stimulation creates mental activity, and mental activity initiates physical activity, is yet an unsolved mystery of the mind/body connection, we can create the mentogenous language to educate our second signaling system in *self*-mastery and super-maturity.

The *Self*-mastery signaling system – the newer way of thinking that combines imagination and common sense knowledge of cause-and-effect (wisdom): The self-mastery signaling system is simply the consistent application of current *common sense* knowledge and wisdom to our secondary signaling system. Our newest weapon of ultimate construction (**WUC**) is educating our cerebral cortex to popularize the humane values we preach but have yet to teach. Our work-in-progress (WIP) is to elevate ourselves to our highest level of function. The *newer way of thinking* will grow our population of Mental Wealth millionaires and citizens of the global community.

Our biggest problem: Humankind's special power of interpretation using symbols enables us to initiate phenomena into the world that are unprecedented in nature. **Power without wisdom is not an asset. Wisdom and *self*-mastery do not automatically accompany the godlike power we now hold to change what nature provides! Wisdom and *self*-mastery are self-taught skills.** Our increasing power to create is subject to the direction of any of the controllers of our life experience who would have us serve their direction. Their will may be wise and constructive, self-serving and destructive, or any combination in-between. The power we wield through our second signaling system offers the opportunity to create the joyous, meaningful life experience we desire. It is critical to recognize that we are simultaneously creating the unprecedented dangers that threaten to make us the first species to initiate our own extinction. We can prevent the imminent catastrophe. The means to proceed to succeed begins with conscious awareness of the problem. If we can muster our will to surmount this first step, the rest is all downhill.

"Positive" words of the newer language: The words that comprise the native language we first acquire are biased to focus on the negative. Our thinking is imprisoned by words that permit only a negative direction. New words to unlock our thinking may initially seem strange; however, when we don't have simple words to identify important positive concepts, we would be wise to add these new words to our common usage. They serve a practical beneficial purpose. Here are some examples:

Pullup: We recognize a *putdown* as a derogatory statement about someone, or the common act of blaming ourselves. Enthusiastically endorsing someone, or oneself,

would reasonably be called a *pullup*, the opposite of a putdown.
Setforward: The word *setback* is fairly common when we experience difficulty. How commonly do we use the word *setforward* when we experience the opposite? It's not in our dictionary – an example of the bias in our language to focus on the hole rather than the donut. Perhaps familiarity with the word would stimulate greater attention to the growth experiences we have enjoyed.
Optimizing: We all seem to know and use the word "worry," anticipating the worst and most unlikely outcomes of a situation. "When I fly, what if ...." Can you think of a single word in our language that calls to mind that anticipates the most positive outcomes of a situation? The word "hope" was suggested but to me this word doesn't express the comparable level of energy conveyed by "worry." The closest I've come is "optimizing." How often have you heard, "I spent the weekend optimizing"? "Most likely ..." is an appropriate substitute for the "What iffing" that creates unproductive anxiety and phobias.
Resentment: One of this word's early definitions is literally re-experiencing sentiment or feelings. "Re-sentiment" is neutral in that it favors neither positive nor negative feelings. Yet, in modern usage it has come to exclusively mean re-experiencing and holding onto real or imagined injustices that sustain negative, usually angry, punishing emotions.

What other words in our commonly-used language direct our thinking in negative ways that bring us what we don't want?

conflict resolution: the attempt to restore peace and calm from a struggle
win-win outcome: each party to a conflict benefits from the action taken
win-lose outcome: the winner is benefited; the loser is hurting in some manner
lose-lose outcome: each participant experiences hurt

Aggression: the energy we require to attain our needs. Our language and our culture have come to associate "aggression" with destructive action. The *newer way of thinking* directs us to the positive aspects of aggression – directing our aggressive energy to "attack" disease, prejudice, terrorism, pollution, and the like. We can aggressively expand our ability to love, grow wisdom, share, cooperate, negotiate, and improve our well-being. It is interesting that the anatomical locations of sexual pleasure and aggression coincide in the animal portion of our brain. This makes sense, because if an organism was interested in procreation but lacked the aggressive energy to satisfy the interest, the species would not survive.

WMD: weapons of mass destruction
WUD: weapons of ultimate destruction – any weapon, including nuclear, chemical, and biological, capable of causing widespread devastation to human society with a single use.
WUC: weapons of ultimate construction – the application of *common sense* wisdom to current knowledge of cause-and-effect by our mature cerebral cortex to create out-of-the-box solutions to current problems.

Tribe: any collection of individuals focused around a common interest, goal, or way of thinking. A tribe can be a family, religious community, political party, or nation, to name just a few examples. One common characteristic of tribes is an "us vs. them" way of thinking.

Local citizenship: loyalty to a circumscribed tribe such as a family, team, religion, country, ideology, etc. The innate need to identify with like-minded supporters.
Global citizenship: recognition of oneself as a member of an interrelated community of like mind; the commitment to contribute to the well-being of the community of humanity in addition to local loyalties. Tolerance for diversity is a learned skill that modifies our early need for local affiliation to a "superior" tribe.

Local loyalty to one's tribe is inherited. Global citizenship must be acquired through education.

Mental Cancer: the self-serving belief that "I, us, our tribe's way deserves superiority" AND what is "not I, not us, or not my tribe are deserving of punishment, even murder if they don't conform." *Our tribe deserves to rule the human race!* Its source is usually to be found in the *survival of the fittest* perspective of our older animal brain.
Mental Cancer antidote: The common sense belief that "I, we, our tribe is an important part of a larger system. We best serve ourselves by contributing to the well-being of our global community." This *newer way of thinking* antidote is the creation of our mature freedom organ once we equip it with knowledge and wisdom.

Practical: what "works" to attain one's goals most rapidly and with the minimum expenditure of energy; readily taught/learned by ordinary people.

Feeling good: a positive or pleasurable emotional state we enthusiastically seek and want to sustain. It is usually associated with an attitude of gratitude, and of awareness and appreciation for what we have. Feeling good is not the absence of feeling bad; it is the awareness of the presence of something positively experienced. Peace-of-mind is a positive experience.

Doing good: using creative energy and acting in the best interest of ourselves and the larger community of which we are a member. Doing good involves activity that contributes to what is desirable "without doing bad." Each act of "good" adds to the total balance of "goodness" in the world, and can be known as a good deed, or a "mitzvah."

The Doomsday Clock: Created in 1947 and monitored by the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientist's Board in consultation with its Board of Sponsors, which includes 18 Nobel Laureates, the Clock has become a universally recognized indicator of the world's vulnerability to catastrophe from nuclear weapons, climate change, and emerging technologies. The Doomsday Clock conveys how close humanity is to catastrophic destruction—the figurative midnight—and monitors the means humankind could use to obliterate itself. It is presently set at 6 minutes to midnight, in the past as close to 2 minutes to midnight during a confrontation by major powers.

Ontogeny: the growth and development of an individual in form and function from a single cell to its complex mature state.
Phylogeny: the creative process beginning with the evolutionary history of a species. The embryo of the most complex life begins as a single undifferentiated cell.
Ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny (ORP): An organism progresses to its highest level of function by entering and then graduating from each of the less sophisticated preceding levels of development. ORP provides us a valuable map of where we came from, the direction we are headed, and what paths we might choose to reach our preferred destination faster, easier, and with great accuracy. As organisms become more complex, trial-and-error learning, mimicking role models, and conscious problem-solving are added to instinct. ORP reveals what we must do to survive and thrive.

Here are a few examples of simple *word-switches* that redirect the long-established mental pathways created by *instinct* and *tradition* to the newer *self*-mastery way of thinking.

- Substitute *could* for *should*. *Could* inspires our mind to create alternative solutions. *Should* is a popular dictator's word that demands a predetermined course of action, and is a favorite trigger word of theirs. It implies there is one right path and all others are wrong. Too many individuals go through life creating animosity by "shoulding" on others and creating non productive guilt by "shoulding" on their self.

- Substitute *I allow* for *he/she/it/they make me*. *I allow* triggers our need to take responsible creative action. *They make me* triggers blame and excuses. Since we must be taken care of for many years, people come to expect the world will continue to do so. When this doesn't happen, frustration leads to blame. Maturity is the process of teaching ourselves to assume personal responsibility.

- Substitute *both...and* for *either/or*. E*ither/or* thinking, which we all learn when we are immature and dependent, divides the world into two opposing categories. It promotes bigotry, prejudice, and harmful confrontation. *Either/or* thinking is the preferred language of *instinct*, *tradition*, and *human* dictators. *Both...and* recognizes similarities, the positives and negatives of each alternative, and supports win/win rather than win/lose relationships. *Both...and* is a critical word-switch because our survival requires cooperation instead of confrontation.

- Substitute *win/win* cooperation for *win/lose* confrontation. Instinct demands *survival of the fittest* and *fight or flight* as our means of survival, but as all tribes acquire weapons of ultimate destruction, *survival of the fittest* becomes *destruction of the fittest*. Our freedom organ, once enlightened with wisdom, applies logical problem-solving to create collaboration for the benefit of all parties.

- Substitute *humane becomings* for *human beings*. Tradition tells us God magically created everything in six days and the seventh was designated for rest. The trigger

word *beings* conveys that we are a passive, static species. *Becomings* triggers the understanding that humankind is a dynamic work-in-process with a mission and purpose to continue to elevate ourselves from generation to generation. Our creator has gifted us with a freedom organ that distinguishes us from every other creature, past and present, by the opportunity to influence our own destiny. The more knowledge we acquire, the more we understand that creation is a work-in-process and that we are an active part of the process. *Becomings* clarifies our need to add new *word-switches* to our language that turn on new ways of thinking that are adaptive to new challenges.

- Substitute *our creator* for the established trigger word *God*. Tradition has established self-serving meanings that promote the interests of dictators that are not supported by knowledge or logic, and that threaten to lead to our extinction. For example, too many of us understand *God* to be a personal advocate of our tribe's views, who labels "not our side" as *evil*, and who will magically punish those who disagree. Our most urgent need is to unite our problem-solving energy to discredit one dangerous belief: "Our side is superior and punishment, even murder, is justified for non-members." The word *creator* envisions a broader unbiased concept of the mysterious mostly unknown or unknowable source of all about us that we are striving to understand. The trigger word *creator* provides a common ground for diverse religions and naturalists to set aside their differences and collaborate in logical win/win problem-solving action to make our world a safer, gentler place. *A newer way of thinking* focuses on our commonalities and shared interests more than our differences.

Review the following list of words and concepts to assess your familiarity with their meanings:

ANWOT - a newer way of thinking
Stren
Mental-Spiritual Wealth millionaire
The ingredients to change: faith that "I can," work, patience, direction, risk-taking

Trigger word
Word-switch

Components of the ANWOT curriculum for *self*-mastery
1. the ingredients: faith in one's self, work, patience, direction, risk-taking
2. the language of *self*-mastery
3. the mental freedom control panel (MFCP)
4. strens (wisdom, mental strengths)
5. values

Basic language: *the seven mind-freeing, life-changing, world-saving word-switches*

1. “Yes, I think I can. I will!” – the spark of energy to take action
2. “I allow ....” for “they (he, she, it) make me ....”
3. “could” for “should”
4. “both...and” for “either...or”
5. “What will make things better for us and them, for now and the future.” for “My way, the only way.”
6. “energy” for “anger”
7. urgent for emergency + assign high, medium, or low priority

The mental response control panel (MRCP), the mind’s eight (8) response pattern “choices”

1. blaming-out
2. blaming-in and secondary blaming
3. avoidance
4. problem-solving: the “magical” sentence
5. *self*-endorsement and secondary endorsement
6. helplessness/hopelessness, the H/H response
7. the “what if” worry response
8. the mind/body response

Animal brain
Human brain

Human being
Humane becomings

Either/or thinking
Both...and thinking

MDR: the minimum daily requirement of endorsements to thrive
Love
Sex
Infatuation

Religion
Knowledge of cause-and-effect

Wisdom
Universal “common sense” wisdoms/values
The test of common sense

Creation
Our creator, first cause, uncaused cause, prime mover, etc.
God
Dictator

Instinct and habit/fate and circumstance/nature and nurture

Becoming one's own person (BOOP)
Self

Reflective *self, self consciousness*
Self-mastery
Board of Directors
C.E.O.: Chief Executive Officer
Master
Three masters
Director/"boss"
  Exogenous boss
  Endogenous boss
  Mentogenous boss
Controller
Development
Stage one: immaturity
Stage two: maturity
Stage three: super-maturity
Freedom freed will
 Slavery
 Dependence
 Independence
Freedom organ

The languages of our thought processes
  The first language of our *nature,* the language of our innate controllers
  The second language of our *nurture*, the language of our external controllers
  The self-mastery language of our *reflective self*, the freedom language of *self*-mastery

Mind
Consciousness
Thoughts
Thinking
Reflective thinking
Wiring pattern
Operating system
Trigger word, word-switch

Intelligence
Instinct
Tradition

First signaling system
Second signaling system

Third signaling system
The power of interpretation

"Positive" words of the newer language
  Optimizing
  Pull-up
  Setforward
  Resentment
  [You may add to these sample words]
Conflict resolution
Win-win outcome
Win-lose outcome
Lose-lose outcome
Aggression
WMD, WMC

Trial-and-error learning

Imitation, mimicking, and role modeling

Cognitive rehearsal and "no-trial" learning
Prevention
Cure

Tribe
Local citizenship
Global citizenship

Mental cancer
Mental cancer antidote

Practical
Feeling good
Doing good
Self (freedom)-organ

Ontogeny
Phylogeny
Ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny (ORP)

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[i] *On Death and Dying*, Elisabeth Kubler-Ross

[ii] For example, *Helping Grieving People*, J. Shep Jeffries, Ed.D; also see Kubler-Ross]; *Why bad things happen to good people*, Kushner; ask for suggestions at the local library.

[iii] I find the following example helpful: Dichotomous means to divide into two parts or classifications. Analog is used to convey continuity. The hands of an analog watch move continuously over its face. The hands of a digital watch jump from one number to the next; they reflect 1 or 2 or 3, etc. They separate more than join. Words that relate us to others are generally preferable to those that emphasize separation.