



PDHonline Course R124 (5 PDH)

The Right Choice: Applying Life's Priorities and Ethics to Engineering

Instructor: William A. (Bill) Brant, J.D., P.E.

2020

PDH Online | PDH Center

5272 Meadow Estates Drive
Fairfax, VA 22030-6658
Phone: 703-988-0088
www.PDHonline.com

An Approved Continuing Education Provider

The Right Choice: Applying Life's Priorities and Ethics to Engineering

William A. Brant, JD, PE

Course Content

“The Unexamined Life is not worth living.”

---Socrates (Greek Philosopher known as the Father of Ethics)

1.0 THE UNEXAMINED LIFE

Why are we here, what is our purpose, what are our priorities in life? Are our priorities fixed in God, family, country, friends, job; not necessarily in that order? Have we thought about these questions lately?

This course is based on recent lectures provided to engineering students at University of Texas at San Antonio and the local ASME and ASM International chapters. However, the idea of examining life's priorities did not originate with me. Professor Patrick Grim, State University of New York at Stony Brook in his course entitled *Questions of Value*, by The Teaching Company® caught my attention with his lecture on life's priorities.¹ I sent an email to Dr. Grim informing him I enjoyed his Life's Priorities lecture and was going to adapt it for my lectures in Engineering Ethics. In the context of great philosophers, Professor Grim was grateful that I was sharing his ideas, and I am grateful for his ideas.

I am sure you will agree with me that Life's Priorities must be the most fundamental question to examine in our lives. What do we do with our life? Who are we, really? Life's Priorities require action and evaluation of our self. It is not just passive philosophical thought.

Actually, we have already defaulted into a life and it is imperative that we seek the real life priorities that we truly want out of our life. If we do not think about Life's Priorities, we can not change.

So, let us go forward and think about **your** Life's Priorities.

2.0 LIFE'S NEEDS

What are life's basic needs? It seems almost intuitively obvious that human life has particular needs. To some extent, life's priorities have been set for us by life's needs.

Dr. Abraham H. Maslow developed the "Hierarchy of Needs" pyramid.^{2,3,4,5} Most of the work, even today, on human needs begins with a basic understanding of Abraham Maslow's work.⁶

Maslow (1908-1970) himself is an interesting study. Rather than study law as his father wished, Maslow studied psychology at the University of Wisconsin. His early experimentation was with baby rhesus monkeys and attachment behavior. After obtaining his Ph.D., Maslow researched human sexuality at Columbia University in New York. While in New York, Maslow met many European intellectuals immigrating to the United States to escape the Nazis. He studied these intellectuals in his work. Later, Maslow became chair of the psychology department at Brandeis University, Waltham, Massachusetts, where he was introduced to the idea of self-actualization from Kurt Goldstein.

Noted for his pyramid of the hierarchy of human needs, Maslow was also instrumental in the Humanistic Psychology movement, sometimes referred to as the Third Psychology or "Third Force" after Behaviorism and Freudian Theory. Humanistic Psychology is an orientation toward the whole of psychology rather than a distinct area or school. It respects the worth of persons, respect for differences of approach, open-mindedness, and interest in exploration of new aspects of human behavior. It concerns itself with areas, such as love, creativity, self, growth, organism, basic need-gratification, self-actualization, higher values, being, play, humor, affection, ego-transcendence, objectivity, autonomy, responsibility, meaning, transcendental experience, peak experience, etc., which have little place in the other psychology theories.⁷ Moreover, Maslow studied exemplary people rather than neurotic or mentally ill people.

The theory behind Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs pyramid is that as humans meet their basic needs, they will graduate to sets of higher needs that proceed to a prescribed hierarchy of needs. Based on his experimentation and work with monkeys, Maslow determined that monkeys had basic needs over other needs. The basic needs had to be fulfilled before more advanced needs could be satisfied. Thus, breathing was a basic need that had to occur before thirst. Thirst occurred before hunger. Maslow saw human needs like a rung on a ladder of the pyramid. The most basic needs at the bottom are physical or physiological needs as shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1

The basic physiological needs are air, water, food, sex, and homeostasis (equilibrium between interdependent processes).

When the physiological needs are met, humans progress to the next step or level, Safety Needs. Safety Needs concern physical safety and security needs for finding safe circumstances, stability, protection, and a need for structure or order in a social system.

After both physiological needs and safety needs are met, the next step or group is the Belonging Needs. The Belonging Needs include love, affection and belongingness. These needs overcome feelings of loneliness and alienation.

The fourth level of the needs pyramid contains the Esteem Needs. The Esteem Needs require recognition by other humans that give results in feelings of prestige, acceptance, and status. Self-esteem is important and results in feelings of adequacy, competence, and confidence. These feelings overrule discouragement and inferiority, which can take place when esteem is low or missing.

Maslow's first four levels are referred to as Deficiency Needs or D-needs. The D-needs are needs that must be met (survival needs). Whereas, the top self-actualization level is a growth level or Being Needs level (B-needs). The Being Needs are continually shaping our behavior and consist of morality, creativity, spontaneity, problem solving, lack of prejudice, and acceptance of facts.

It is the B-needs, self-actualization, level that we are primarily interested in here because, I dare say, virtually everyone taking this course has met all the D-needs. Just in case we are not on track, we will discuss *worry* and its implications because it can interfere with our D and B-needs.

Therefore, it is the self-actualization, B-needs, we will primarily focus upon in this course. Maslow used a qualitative method of biographical analysis for persons he classified as self-actualizers. The self-actualizers were studied: (1) some from history, i.e., Abraham Lincoln, Thomas Jefferson; (2) some from people Maslow knew; and, (3) others, mostly college or post-college subjects. He researched and studied their biographies, writings, acts and words developing a list of characteristics that fit these self-actualizers. **Maslow determined self-actualizers were reality-centered, problem-centered, with a different outlook on the means and ends. Personal relationships were different as were their social interests, compassion, and interest in humanity. The self-actualizers had humility and respect toward others. Maslow discovered his self-actualizers had strong ethics or ethical standards which seemed spiritual in nature, but not really associated with religion as such.** These self-actualizers were creative and inventive with abilities to see ordinary things differently.

Self-actualization, then, is reaching one's fullest potential. Our fullest potential is where we are headed in this course.

Pre-conditions for D-needs

There are immediate prerequisites or conditions for the basic D-needs. Danger is reacted to as a threat to the D-needs. Moreover, as well as danger there are other prerequisites: freedom to speak; freedom to do what one wishes to do as long as no harm is done to others; freedom to express one's self; freedom to investigate and seek information; and, freedom to defend one's self, justice, fairness, honesty, and orderliness in society.^{8,9}

Maslow considers acquiring knowledge and systematizing the universe, in part, as a technique for basic safety in the world, or for the intelligent person, in part, an expression of self-actualization.

Maslow caveats that his data and evidence are for intelligent people, and he has no data for unintelligent people.

As you might quickly realize, the United States was founded on the "freedoms" for the most part to ensure our prerequisites or conditions precedent to meeting our basic D-needs. These prerequisites or conditions are **not normally present** in totalitarian régimes or under authoritarian control as we have seen over the course of history.

The Authoritarian Character

The authoritarian character or personality type is an impediment to reaching the self-actualization level of achievement. Maslow states that "there are many who tend unconsciously in the authoritarian direction."¹⁰

It becomes important to evaluate the authoritarian person because of its impediment to reaching one's fullest potential. Maslow asserts that many of the characteristics of the authoritarian person are well known, but need to be tied together for a unified understanding of the total personality. He identifies the authoritarian person as having "a logic of their own which integrates all life from them in such a way as to make their actions not only

understandable, but from their own point of view, quite justifiable and correct.”¹¹ Maslow calls it their “world-view.”

The authoritarian person is psychologically insecure. This psychologically insecure personality views the world s/he lives in as a jungle, dangerous, threatening, or challenging, and other human beings are thought of as selfish or evil or stupid. In this fixated jungle, people are like animals, who either eat or are eaten and are either feared or despised. You are only safe if you can dominate. **The “authoritarian never loves nor respects other human beings any more than the animals in the jungle can be said to love or respect each other.”**¹²

The authoritarian regards most or all other human beings as rivals who are either superior and feared, or inferior and dominated. People are ranked like on a vertical ladder and are divided into those above and those below the authoritarian on the ladder. Thus, the authoritarian classifies humans into two groups, those superior and those inferior. Moreover, the authoritarian has a strong drive for power, status, external prestige, and a psychological need for power over people. If the authoritarian does have power, it is used for his/her own psychological needs, in a selfish way and/or in a hard, cruel, or even sadistic manner. Power used in this manner is the symptomatic expression of thwarting a person’s basic needs for safety, belongingness, or love. The true need for this power is for unconscious psychological satisfaction.¹³

One of the best known characteristics of the authoritarian is hostility, hatred, and/or prejudice toward some group of people. They also tend to identify kindness, sympathy, generosity with weakness or inferiority and to identify cruelty, brutality, selfishness, or hardness with strength or superiority.¹⁴

Here is the kicker. **The authoritarian can never be happy.** Why? Because, their nature can never allow them to be ultimately satisfied. Their need for power is insatiable because the only theoretical satisfaction would be to have complete power over everyone in the world. Even with complete power, one could be threatened by the inability to trust anyone, the lack of friends, and by the facts of life, which include illness, old age, and ultimately death. Moreover, the authoritarian must be perpetually and insatiably ambitious.¹⁵ Extreme examples of this authoritarian personality are Hitler, Stalin, and Mussolini, but there are many examples to a lesser degree.

Not only is the authoritarian a threat to others around him/her, they are unhappy individuals without ethics or morals. Can authoritarians be changed? Maslow contends therapy and/or psychoanalysis can change this person, but it is very difficult without the authoritarian's will or desire.¹⁶

Tragically, the authoritarian can never rise to the B-need (Being Need) level in Maslow's hierarchy of needs, the self-actualization level.

Self-Actualization

Maslow makes the determination: that a musician must make music; an artist must paint; and a poet must write, if they are to be ultimately happy. **“What a man can be, he must be.”** Even if the D-needs are met, a person must still do what s/he is fitted to do. This is the self-actualization need.¹⁷ By extension, if we **can** be engineers or scientists, we **must** be.

Maslow refers to this desire for self-fulfillment as the tendency to become actualized in what a person is potentially. “This tendency might be phrased as the desire to become more and more what one is, to become everything that one is capable of becoming.”¹⁸ Logically, this self-fulfillment tendency would cause us a desire to become better and better engineers and scientists.

These B-needs manifest themselves in signs or symptoms of restlessness, or something missing in life. B-needs are not always clear what it is a person wants. Oftentimes, a person knows what they do *not* want, but are not clear on what it is they really want. We will try to satisfy your B-needs with your Life's Priorities.

Thus, the last level provides a growth motivation toward the highest level, self-actualization. Only a small percentage of the world's population is truly, predominantly, self-actualizing. Maslow estimated about two percent world wide.¹⁹

Needless to say, the goal in this course is to strive for this top two percent and reach the self-actualization level.

What are Self-actualizers seeking beyond the D-needs? What can we seek as the attributes for Self-actualization? Self-actualizers try to order their lives by seeking the following attributes or values:

1. The truth, as opposed to dishonesty. Truth promotes trust which is a fundamental ingredient for all meaningful relationships.
2. Goodness, as opposed to evil. Self-actualizers look at the optimistic view.
3. Beauty, as opposed to ugly or nastiness. Beauty has been said to be in the eyes of the beholder and you can look for the beauty in everything.
4. Unity or wholeness, as opposed to fragments or forced choices. Self-actualizers try to understand the big picture rather than accept what is without understanding.
5. Aliveness, as opposed to blandness and blind routine. Self-actualizers find fun or a game, like children, when doing a routine. They are like the champion ice skater who has practiced over and over, but hits a higher, alive, level in competition.
6. Perfection, as opposed to inconsistency or haphazardness. Self-actualizers are in the “zone” to use a sports term.
7. Completion, as opposed to an incomplete project. Self-actualizers achieve the goal, not falling short.
8. Justice and Order, as opposed to injustice and chaos. Self-actualizers seek the proper use of authority to uphold what is right, just or lawful, while being fair and impartial.
9. Simplicity, as opposed to complexity. Self-actualizers look to simplify rather than obfuscate.
10. Richness, as opposed to dullness. Self-actualizers seek a richness component to life, not just following the crowd.
11. Effortlessness, as opposed to strenuous. Self-actualizers possess a fluidness and confidence that makes things look easy to an observer. If you know something and can perform really well, it becomes effortless.
12. Playfulness, as opposed to forced drudgery. Self-actualizers are almost childlike in their tasks with interest.
13. Self-sufficiency, as opposed to dependency. Self-actualizers are self achievers, not dependant or rote followers of others.
14. Meaningfulness, rather than aimlessness. Life has meaning as does a self-actualizer’s work. They are not just “9 to 5 workers.” They go beyond the mere subsistence of life.
15. Creativity, as opposed to status quo. Self-actualizers are “thinkers outside the box.”

Interestingly, Self-actualizers must seek these attributes or values. When the attributes or values are absent, Self-actualizers develop depression, despair, disgust, alienation, and a degree of cynicism.^{20,21} Worry as we shall see, is an impediment to self-actualization and our Life's Priorities.

The Dichotomy of Science and Religion

Let me digress just a bit to discuss what I believe to be an important polarization in the United States and the Western World. That polarization is the battle between science and religion.

Maslow found new developments in psychology were changing the philosophy of science such that basic religious questions would become a part of the science purview, especially if science is broadened and redefined. He maintains both science and religion are too narrowly defined. Science and religion have, and continue, to separate from each other. *As Maslow puts it, science became too exclusively mechanistic, too positivistic, too reductionistic, and too desperately attempting to be value-free. Moreover, science has nothing to say about ends or ultimate values or spiritual values and these ends are entirely outside the range of natural human knowledge. This value-free science can never be known in a confirmable, validated way that would satisfy intelligent persons.*²²

*Maslow asserts that this value-free attitude “dooms science to be nothing more than technology, amoral and non-ethical (as the Nazi doctors taught us.)” Then science can be no more than a collection of instrumentations, methods, techniques, and a tool for man’s usage for good or evil, for any end that is good or evil. Moreover, the dichotomizing of knowledge and values has damaged religions by cutting them off from facts, from knowledge, from science, to the point of making religions enemies of science.*²³

Once science broke away from religion toward independence, the same thing happened with problems and questions of values, ethics, spiritually, and morals. “Sooner or later, we shall have to redefine both religion and science.”²⁴

Science becomes amoral, to the point of becoming anti-moral and even anti-human. It becomes merely technology that can be used for anyone for any purpose. Maslow illustrates with the example of the German scientists who were equally at home working for the Nazis, communists, or Americans and, thus, science can be dangerous to human ends. Some scientists can become monsters as long as science is conceived to be akin to a chess game, an end in itself, with arbitrary or non-existent rules.²⁵

Moreover, science makes it impossible to study abstract items such as psychotherapy, naturalistic religious experience, creativity, symbolism, play, the theory of love, mystical and peak-experiences, and areas of poetry and art. Thus, this separation between religion and science produces a crippling effect on science and religion, as well as a crippling effect on facts and values.²⁶

Maslow asserts that we need an expanded science which is able to study and teach values to mankind. This expanded science would include practically everything in religion that can be naturally observed.²⁷

Clearly, we, as a society, and each of us as individuals must see to it that science is ethical and moral. One only has to think of science and clones, designer babies, embryo stem cells, and our basic definitions of “what life is” and “what death is” to know that we must think, act, and be ethical in our scientific endeavors.

Peak-experiences

Maslow found that self-actualizers could achieve a higher experience which he termed “Peak-Experiences.” These peak-experiences are a type of revelation, ecstasy, transcendence, or supernatural experience.²⁸

Maslow’s findings indicate normal perceptions of self-actualization people and, in occasional peak-experience of average people, these perceptions would be relatively ego-transcending, self-forgetful, and egoless. During these peak-experiences the experiences were unmotivated, impersonal, desire less, unselfish, not needing, or detached. These people become object centered rather than self centered during their peak experiences. It is as if the peak experiencers were perceiving something that has independent reality of its own, and was not dependent upon the beholder.²⁹

Perhaps a few examples will help clarify what these peak experiences might be. A prime example is falling in love. A person in love detaches him/herself from being self centered and, instead, becomes focused or centered on the other person. One of the distinguishing characteristics is the disorientation in time and space. People in love are oblivious to their surroundings and have no concept of time, i.e., hours seem like minutes. Another peak experience is the birth of a child. After that birth, the parents become totally focused or centered on the newborn. They are oblivious to the conditions around them as well as time, i.e., time stands still for the precious moment. Other examples may be the poet, writer, musician, problem solver, or artist who becomes oblivious to his/her surroundings and passages of time. They are object focused or centered and not at all centered toward themselves.³⁰

Interestingly, Maslow found, the peak experience was only good and desirable, and never evil or undesirable. These peak experiences, were intrinsically valid and perfect experiences, complete in want of nothing else. “It was sufficient to itself.”³¹

Our peak experiences are in contrast to ordinary cognitions (mental actions or processes of acquiring knowledge and understanding through thought, experience, and the senses) and reactions. Ordinarily, we proceed and value usefulness, desirability, badness or goodness, or suitability for purpose, i.e., means-values. Ordinarily, we evaluate, control, judge, condemn or approve, with laughter at, rather than with. Unlike the peak experiencers, we react to experiences in personal terms and see the world in reference to ourselves. Peak experiences escape from the self or world. It is almost like an out of body experience, time and surroundings are not there.³²

These peak experiences are timeless and spaceless in the senses, detached and perceived in themselves, unmotivated and detached from the interests of man, and perceived and reacted to as if they were in themselves “out there.” They are perceptions of reality independent of man and persisting beyond his life. “Peak experiences are from this point of view more absolute and less relative.”³³

Moreover, “it is this ability to perceive the whole and to rise above parts which characterizes cognition in the various peak experiences. Since only thus can one know a person in the fullest sense of the word, it is not surprising that self-actualizing people are so much more astute in their

perception of people, in their penetration to the core or essence of another person.”³⁴

Maslow found that *any* person in a peak experience takes on temporarily many of the characteristics of self-actualizers. They, at least temporarily, become self-actualizers. These are their happiest and most thrilling moments. They have their greatest maturity, individualism, fulfillment and psychologically healthiest moments.³⁵

We can look at this peak-experience/self-actualizing/peak-experience episode where powers of the person come together in an efficient and intensely enjoyable way, more integrated, more open to experience, more idiosyncratic (individual), more expressive or spontaneous, full functioning, creative, humorous, ego-transcending, and independent of lower D-needs. The person becomes at these times “more truly himself, more perfectly actualizing his potentialities, closer to the core of his Being, more fully human.”³⁶

Self-actualizing people are found to have peak experiences much more frequently than other people.³⁷

So what? What difference does self-actualization and peak experiences make? Quite a lot of difference if we are trying to be all we can be. Self-actualizers experience more peak experiences than others. Peak experiences shape our lives.

Maslow found:

1. Peak experiences have some therapeutic effect.
2. Peak experiences can change the person’s view of him/herself in a healthy direction.
3. Peak experiences can change his/her view of other people and relationships with them.
4. Peak experiences can change the experiencer’s world view.
5. Peak experiences can release him/her for greater creativity, spontaneity, expressiveness, and idiosyncrasy.
6. Peak experiencers remember the experience as important and desirable and seek to repeat it.
7. Peak experiencers feel that life in general is worth while and life itself is validated.³⁸

Peak experiences may be understood as completions-of-the-act and bring out identity. The authentic person is himself complete or final in some sense. S/he experiences subjective finality, completion or perfection at times as well as perceiving it in the world. Maslow finds it may turn out that only peak experiencers can achieve full identity. Non-peak experiencers will remain incomplete, deficient, striving, and lacking something.³⁹

Personally, I can understand, through my own experiences what Maslow found theoretically and experimentally, having fallen in love and shared the birth of children. Perhaps you have also.

Our purpose of studying Abraham Maslow is to realize the D-needs and B-needs. By studying the B-needs and the impediments to achieving the B-needs, we can strive to achieve self-actualization and an identity of self. I am convinced that you must have a self-identity, know who you are, and be comfortable in your own skin in order to have a better life. Basically, if you do not like yourself and who you are, others will not like you either and life becomes harder.

Our goal is to improve our self and map out a better life for ourselves, and those around us.

3.0 THE GOOD AND GOOD LIFE

We have just discussed the psychological requirements and needs for life. But, what about the philosophical needs? What about the “good life”? Your, “good life”?

It would seem that if you want a “good life,” you must determine what is good. What is the idea of good?

In the *Republic*, Plato through Socrates, discusses “the good.”⁴⁰ Socrates himself never wrote or published his thoughts or works. Plato, who was a student of Socrates, used Socrates as a character in the *Republic* written in dialogue form, as if a conversation between Socrates and other characters. Plato implicitly indorses Socrates.

The idea of “the good” requires sufficient knowledge or nothing else will have value. Or, put another way, without knowledge of “the good,” nothing

else will have value. “[I]f we don’t know it [good] even the fullest possible knowledge of other things is of no benefit to us...[y]ou certainly know that the majority believe that pleasure is the good, while the more sophisticated believe that it is knowledge.”⁴¹

Knowledge of the good can guide us in our use of what could be potentially good. Examples of things that on the surface appear to be good, may be used for bad or good. Such things as money or strength can be used for both bad or good. Therefore, some knowledge or guidance must be acquired on how to use them. In today’s world, nuclear energy can be used for good, peaceful purposes such as nuclear power plants or heart pacemaker batteries; or, bad, nuclear weapons used unwisely.

Life Itself

How about life itself? Would we say life itself is good? If we were to say life is good, Socrates/Plato would disagree. Socrates/Plato would say that life is neither good nor bad by itself. A life could be either bad or good.

Socrates/Plato’s assessment is that we must know how to use our life in order to make it truly good. Moreover, we must have knowledge of what the good life really is. This “good life,” then, is the ultimate object of our quest.⁴²

Pleasure

Socrates/Plato take great lengths to show that pleasure, by itself, is not the “good life.” Many people, including some philosophers think that pleasure is the highest good. However, some people may derive pleasure from drinking excessively or obtain pleasure by doing violent acts against innocent people and this type of pleasure would not be good or a good life. Socrates/Plato say people want knowledge of the real thing, the true thing, and truth, “In the case of just and beautiful things many people are content with what are believed to be so, even if they aren’t really so, and they act, acquire, and form their beliefs on that basis. Nobody is satisfied to acquire things that are merely believed to be good, however, but everyone wants the things that really are good and disdains mere belief here.”⁴³

Thus, Socrates/Plato believe the good or good life is contained in reality. They further divide reality into two regions: the visible and the intelligible.

Reality: Visible and Intelligible

The region of the visible, or realm of becoming, contains things that we can sense with our senses, see, hear, feel, smell, or taste. These things have a finite life time and are not permanent.

The intelligible region can be intellected with the mind. However, the intelligible region can not be seen with the eyes or sensed with our other senses.

Socrates/Plato analogize “the good” as the sun. Here the sun is responsible for making things visible. Further, on the other hand, the sun is responsible for the existence of life itself. Without the sun, there would be no life as we know it.

The analogy of the good is related to the intelligible as the sun is related to the visible. Truth comes from “the good” and that truth is “the good.” Thus, according to Socrates/Plato, “the good” is caused by knowledge and truth. Therefore, as the sun is responsible for the visibility of things, likewise “the good” is responsible for truth. Moreover, the sun is responsible for all living things and “the good” is responsible for our being and responsible for the truth.

Summarizing Socrates/Plato’s analogy, the sun is responsible for the visibility and existence of things in the visible universe. Likewise, “the good” is responsible for the truth and for being. “The good,” then, makes knowledge possible, because it makes truth possible. When you know something, you are able to make true statements about it. Knowledge and truth come together and our idea of “the good” is the cause of truth.⁴⁴

[This idea of good becomes a source of all value in the world and has a moral and ethical significance. Socrates/Plato’s idea of “the good” becomes the principle of reality, being, knowledge, and truth.](#)

Aristotle And The Good Life

Aristotle opens his *Ethica Nicomachea* (Nicomachean Ethics) with the purpose and pursuit of the good,

“Every art [craft or profession] and every inquiry, and similarly every action and pursuit, is thought to aim at some good; and for this reason the good has rightly been declared to be that at which all things aim.”⁴⁵

Aristotle believed nature does not act in vain and all things whether natural or created, man-made or divine, are intended to fulfill a purpose in life. For example, an acorn becomes an oak tree, a knife is created to cut, the captain of a ship is there to pilot the ship, mankind has an end and a purpose, some *telos* (an ultimate objective or aim). Each of us has an end and purpose, a *telos*.

Aristotle believed every way of life, every profession, art or craft (“*techne*” from which the word technology is derived) has a distinct purpose. Aristotle extends this *techne* to living in general or a craft of life. We have a purpose in our lives. Aristotle identified this purpose by isolating our distinctly human activity. Only humans can reason and we must live and act according to our reason. Humans can reason toward the “good life.”

However, there is a big difference between mere life, where one does not reason at all; and, the “good life,” where one reasons well.⁴⁶

4.0 HOW WORRY AFFECTS US

My purpose for this including worry in this course is to emphasize you can limit worry if you think, act, and be ethical. Secondly, if you can limit worry, life’s needs and life’s priorities are more easily achieved. I am convinced that strong ethical values will reduce worry; just as I am convinced all my witnesses need to tell the truth on depositions and at trial. Unfortunately, worry is much more complex than behaving ethically.

Dale Carnegie in the 1940’s while coping with his own worry, discovered that other people worry to the point of limiting their performance. Dale Carnegie had several failures early in his life until he started teaching adult night classes at the YMCA. He taught public speaking to adults at night and determined that these adults needed an ability to win friends and influence people, but one of the biggest problems with his adult students was **worry**. A large portion of his students were businessmen, executives, salesmen, engineers, accountants, and persons associated with the trades and professions. Carnegie was forced to write his own textbook when he could

not find a suitable text to use in his class. Dale Carnegie wrote the classic text, *How to Stop Worrying and Start Living*, because he discovered the New York City library had only 22 books dealing with worry, while having 189 books on worms.⁴⁷ Carnegie was surprised that there was virtually no education on what worry does and how to address worry.

Think back to your education. Have you ever had a course, or even a class, in worry? And yet, worry can play such an important factor in our lives.

Studies Show Ethical Values Reduce Stress

Psychological “value” research at UCLA by Dr. Shelley Taylor and other researchers, biologically showed that persons with a high value system showed significantly lower levels of *cortisol* when placed under stress. (When the body becomes stressed, the pituitary gland at the base of the brain releases adrenocorticotrophic hormone, ACTH, which stimulates adrenals to produce cortisol.) In personal correspondence from Dr. Taylor, she related to me that persons with the high value systems in the study correlated to high ethical values.⁴⁸

Further proof is obtained from Edward M. Hallowell, MD’s book, *Worry-Hope and Help for a Common Condition*.⁴⁹ In his list of management of worry without medication, Dr. Hallowell lists that ethical action is the right action:

“Do what is right. This is obvious advice but it is worth mentioning because so many of us behave as if it were not important...Most of us are equipped with consciences. If we do wrong, our consciences will give us a hard time. Some people have no consciences and are very dangerous, but they are not common. Some people have hypertrophied consciences, and they are paralyzed with guilt over the slightest misdeed. But most of us are in the middle. **And the simple but hard fact is that if we do wrong over and over again we will not be happy. We will worry and suffer inside, no matter how happy we may pretend to be.”**⁵⁰

There should be no question that strong ethical values will reduce worry, and stress. But, is that enough to eliminate worry? Sadly, worry is much more complicated than ethical values, despite its reduction of worry. **Worry can**

disrupt Life's Priorities. We are seeking life's needs and life's priorities, and, worry can annihilate our priorities and paralyze us from our good life.

The Basics of Worry

According to Dr. Hallowell, one in four people will meet medical criteria of anxiety disorders defined by the presence of debilitating worry.⁵¹ Robert L. Leahy, Ph.D. in his book *The Worry Cure-Seven Steps to Stop Worry from Stopping You*, researched that 38 percent of people worry every day; and, 50 percent of the United States had serious problems with depression, anxiety, or substance abuse at some time in their lives. Moreover, depression, anxiety, and substance abuse increased over the last fifty years. Dr. Leahy maintains that worry is everywhere and all of us worry. Worry is a central part of anxiety disorders and depression.⁵² (There is some debate over whether worry by itself can cause depression, but most agree that worry is a component in depression.)

As a noun, worry is defined by *The New Oxford American Dictionary* as a state of anxiety and uncertainty over actual or potential problems. Worry can be a special form of fear. We create worry by lengthening fear with anticipation and memory, expanding it with imagination, and feeding it with emotion. Our worrying mental process requires a brain that reasons, remembers, reflects, feels, and imagines. Worry is made complex once it reaches the cerebral cortex (learning part of the brain) that is switched off.⁵³ Worry is unique to us as humans.

In the mind of the worrier, danger or a bad outcome is anticipated. This bad outcome anticipation causes the mind to go into a spasm or a lock that can not accept good news. The mind becomes stuck in a negative way and can not let go of these negative thoughts for hours, days, weeks, months or maybe years. Some of our latest research indicates we have a physical basis for worry. One of the brain's switching circuits for example, the caudate nucleus, sticks like a muscle cramp and does not allow worry to pass. The muscle cramp holding onto worry can be over a relatively minor problem. Moreover, when a matter becomes traumatic, additional biological processes present themselves. Our bodies send out neurotransmitters and other hormones in response to trauma. This trauma response can cause worry

also. As Dr. Hallowell terms it, worry can “burn” itself into the brain and change the actual physical state of the brain. Moreover, trauma and worry combined can permanently change a person’s brain chemistry. [These events may cause a person to change from a confident risk-taker into a “skittish, guarded, melancholy person over the course of a few months.”](#)

Unfortunately, there is not just one type of worry, but many different types, which we will discuss.⁵⁴

Some types of worry are genetically obtained at birth. One type might be worry associated with shyness. Other types of worry come and go in everyday life. But, some types of worry present themselves in diagnosable conditions, for example depression, generalized anxiety disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, or obsessive-compulsive disorder.⁵⁵

The Worry Equation

A word must be said about “good worry.” Not all worry is bad. In fact, worry is good up to a point. Some amount of worry warns us of dangers by transforming into fear and asserts that corrective action must be taken, in some cases, to survive. Worry behaves somewhat like a Bell-shaped curve. Performance increases as worry increases until it reaches the top of the curve and then performance decreases with further increase of worry. A certain amount of worry causes our creative juices to flow and provides us with human characteristics. Conversely, too much worry is bad for us.

[The point here is to allow “good worry” even fear to reach the top of your performance, but to try to recognize the point that worry negatively impacts your life.](#)

Dr. Hallowell’s basic equation of worry is instructive:

$$\textit{Increased Worry} = \textit{Increased Vulnerability} + \textit{Decreased Power.}$$

Dr. Hallowell believes most situations involving worry follow this basic equation. He uses an analogy of a violin to help explain the equation. Think of the violin bow as our life experiences and the violin strings as our biological makeup. The music of life is made by moving the bow of experiences across the strings of biology. The person playing the violin is our conscious self, our unplanned and unconscious self, as well as God, fate,

luck, or chance. How well our music sounds depends upon how we handle what happens to us in life and our physical biological makeup.

It is important to recognize the balance between life's experiences and biology to relate to the mental processes involving worry. **Worry is strongly influenced by this balance between life's experiences and biology.** Some of us are predisposed biologically to worry, more so than others. By the same token, some worry is brought about by life experiences. However, the actual worry process itself is similar whether it is biological or experiential. Biologically, worry is a form of fear. Psychologically, worry results from a heightened sense of vulnerability in the presence of a diminished sense of power; hence, Dr. Hallowell's basic equation for increased worry.

Let us put this in perspective with an example. If you are having financial problems, you may be worrying about money because you feel more vulnerable and less powerful when meeting your financial obligations. The critical aspect is the reality of the situation. It would make sense to worry if you were actually broke. However, sometimes the poor person does not worry, while the richer person worries constantly. **The important point is that worry might arise from what is imagined rather than what is reality.** This worry comes from the imagined and not the actual danger itself.

The treatment of worry should follow Dr. Hallowell's Worry Equation. Treatment must consider both vulnerability and power. To solve for decreased worry, we must increase the sufferer's power while decreasing the sufferer's vulnerability. You will worry less if you feel less vulnerable and feel more powerful.

It is not my intent to give you medical advice. My purpose here is to provide non-medical suggestions to lessen worry and focus on your Life's Priorities. Dr. Hallowell opines that you should seek professional help if: (1) you worry intensely, more than your peers; and, (2) if you worry over an extended period of time. These are signals for a professional evaluation.⁵⁶

Biological Part of Worry

"Our brains are equipped to register fear---and worry---more sensitively than any other emotion," according to Dr. Hallowell. Because we are so wired, worry and fear thinking are placed ahead of positive thinking; and, makes positive thinking a constant chore. Of course, this is worse for some

of us than it is for others. Moreover, this mental wiring, if you will, naturally makes happiness, contentment, and pleasure more difficult because they are not naturally occurring mental states. In other words, our brains are wired for survival, not happiness.

Worry and fear are as natural to us as hunger and thirst. Worry and fear cause hormones, nerve cells, neurotransmitters, parts of the brain, skin sensors, reflexes, hearts, and involuntary muscles to stand at attention, alert constantly 24/7 to fight the dangers of fear, whether real or imagined.

In today's society, our physical danger is not as common as our psychological danger. Even so, our brains interpret **all** danger as physical danger with the familiar "fight or flight" physical response.

Worry involves processing chemical and switching circuits in the brain. Although worry can lead to fear, some fear is sudden and involves a spinal cord reflex action. I can think of seeing a nearby snake as a sudden fear response with reflex action. This is quick with very little brain action to mull over.

By contrast, full-fledged worry involves the whole brain. For example, suppose you see your bank statement is overdrawn. Immediate thoughts of how and where will I get the money to cover the overdraft hit you. These bank statement thoughts may develop into worry that may resonate for some time. Fixating on this worry has a physical basis in our brains and body.

Our worry can start in the amygdala (an almond shaped nucleus of neurons beneath the temporal lobe and involved in the processing of emotions, particularly fear⁵⁷) that regulates our fight or flight response and other functions. When the amygdala senses danger, a fixating worry problem may begin. From the amygdala, signals are sent to the prefrontal cortex (part of the frontal lobe dealing with working memory⁵⁸). The prefrontal cortex starts analyzing the worry and reverberates signals back to the amygdala about worry. The amygdala perceives the signal as more danger and sends alarm signals back to the prefrontal cortex, which in turn causes continued worry and signals more worrying to the amygdala, which perceives more danger, and a cycle of worry continues. [The amygdala/prefrontal cortex loop can become so powerful that it can almost paralyze a person from meaningful action. This loop between the amygdala and prefrontal cortex is](#)

part of a network of electrical, chemical, and magnetic properties in the brain.

Neuroscientists now have evidence that a gene that influences serotonin (neurotransmitter) production in the brain might predispose a person toward being a born worrier. Brain imaging shows that worrying can have excessive activity in that part of the brain (cingulated cortex) that allows you to change thoughts.

Genetically predisposed people are more aroused neurologically and are more on guard than others. These people are always alert, tense, and ready for action. Their uncontrollable autonomic nervous systems are at a higher set point than others. This higher set point means these genetically predisposed worriers have a heightened arousal in their blood pressure, respiratory rate, and skin electrical properties.

As you might imagine, this is a grossly simplified version of the worry process. In summary, worriers tend to inherit a neurological vulnerability that can be triggered by life events. Some people might be born confident, while others are predisposed genetically to insecurity.

The important point to be made is that if you are a worrier you can change; and, be free to seek life's needs and life's priorities.⁵⁹

The Prefrontal Cortex Connection to Ethics

Daniel G. Amen, MD, board certified child, adolescent and adult psychiatrist, and pioneer in brain SPECT imaging for psychiatry has studied thousands of brains in his clinics. Single Photon Emission Computerized Tomography (SPECT) uses a radioactive isotope gamma emitter to study cerebral blood flow and, indirectly, brain activity or metabolism. **Dr. Amen connects ethics and the prefrontal cortex, “prefrontal cortex is so important to ethics and thoughtfulness.”** Moreover, Dr. Amen maintains, “chronic stress kills cells in the memory parts of your brain.” Further, studies show that antisocial behavior and criminals have ten percent less prefrontal cortex in their brains.⁶⁰ It is not surprising from a physical perspective to find that criminals lack ethics or ethical thinking.

Ethics, Stress, Worry Related In the Brain

As Dr. Shelley Taylor showed previously, high ethical values reduce stress. Dr. Amen asserts the prefrontal cortex is important to ethics. Dr. Hallowell represents worry causes a switching back and forth from the amygdala to the prefrontal cortex. Dr. Amen states chronic stress kills cells in the memory parts of the brain and criminals have ten percent less prefrontal cortex in their brains. **Ethics, stress, worry are all related in the brain, biologically and psychologically.**

Worry of the “What-if”

I have often thought as engineers and scientists we are trained in the “what-if” mode of thinking. When I was a student, I can think back to so many times my professors would explain something and then change our thinking with a “what-if” we did this question; or, changed an assumption. Of course, the professor’s “what-if” would drastically change the whole problem. At times I would be stymied on a problem not knowing which “what-if” direction to take. I believe our “what-if” education and experience predisposes us to some extent for worry. Maybe the “what-if” is “burned in” as Dr. Hallowell terms it. I imagine a kind of “fault tree” with an unorganized “fault tree” analysis taking place. Even a failure modes and effects analysis can keep our minds thinking to the point of overload with “what-ifs.” Depending on the situation, the “what-ifs” are fed by our powerful fear system. Nature makes us think of the “what-ifs” to protect us from danger. Engineering makes us think about dangers and safety as part of our job and obligation to society.

Our fear part of the brain resides deep in the brain and is part of the primitive brain. If we only had a brainstem, we would react to fear, but we would not be able to think about different possibilities of danger. With only a brainstem, no worry; add the creative brain and we can worry.

Worriers keep trying to examine what can go wrong. Pathological worry resides in the brain and not in the reality of the outside world.

Dr. Hallowell confirms that the “what-if” reflex can defeat a person. He conveys, the predicament of underachievement is common and has many causes. Some of us underachieve because we are depressed and some of us are depressed because we underachieve. Substance abuse causes some of us to underachieve and some have substance abuse because we underachieve. Some people lack self-confidence and underachieve while some

underachieve leading to a lack of self-confidence. It is hard to know which comes first. **However, a common pathway to underachievement can often be excessive worry.** We can often hold ourselves back by worrying over the dangers of a new idea. We worry about taking risks, the “what-ifs.”⁶¹

Conditions We Can Deal With, Without Medication

Again, it is not my intent to provide medical advice. However, there are worry, and a number of conditions or disorders that can be treated and improved with recognition and self-help. The first step in treating ourselves is to identify those conditions or disorders that can be treated and take action.

The French philosopher and mathematician Rene Decartes (1596-1650) is credited with the phrase, “I think, therefore I am.” At least in some areas, modern psychology has recognized that our thoughts (cognitions) control how we think, act, and feel. By controlling our thoughts, we can control how we think, act, and feel.

Let us discuss the conditions or disorders we can overcome and start with what can be the most severe---depression, worry, and anxiety.

Depression, Worry, and Anxiety

“Depression has been called the world’s number one public health problem.”⁶² Depression is a disorder of mood characterized by an internal subjective state of hopelessness and causes despair. Depression is one of the worst forms of human suffering causing feelings of shame, worthlessness, hopelessness, and demoralization. Research reveals that the depressed person sees him/herself as an inadequate loser, doomed to frustration, deprivation, humiliation, and failure. Depression involves a disturbance in thinking. A depressed person thinks in idiosyncratic (individual) and negative ways about him/herself, their environment, and their future. This pessimistic mental thinking affects mood, motivation, and relationships, which can lead to a severe spectrum of psychological and physical symptoms.⁶³

Unproductive worry and/or rumination, a thought process of repeating itself over and over, can be one of the first signs of depression. It is important to realize that unproductive worry and/or rumination may not be depression

just because you think you are having a stressful time or bad luck. [The worry we are talking about is worry that is out of proportion to real life circumstances.](#) Moreover, worry and depression can happen at any age. Keep in mind that your worry or depression is treatable. Unfortunately, many people view worrying and depression as one of life's hardships and needs to be "gutted out" or to "just toughed out." These people fail to realize that severe, extended worry should not be a part of life. Depression is not weakness or moral failure and can be treated.⁶⁴

Unfortunately, depression, worry, and anxiety do not arrive one at a time, either/or, packages. Often they come together. However, the feelings are different from one another. The key is to recognize them, separate one from another, and work on each separately. Anxiety develops from a perception, worry, or fear of danger. A prerequisite to feeling anxious is telling yourself something terrible or bad is going to happen. On the other hand, depression feels as if the terrible thing has already happened. You go into a blue, worthless, failure mood. You lose interest in life, other people, and activities. Nothing excites you anymore; you are overwhelmed. You worry or feel that things will never change and you will always be miserable. But, the worst is the feeling of hopelessness.⁶⁵

Often, if you are depressed you will feel anxious as well. If you are anxious, you may also be depressed. This anxiety/depression disorder is like the "which came first, the chicken or the egg?" Dr. David Burns believes this anxiety/depression follows the Common Cause Theory. Anxiety and depression have at least one common cause as well as their own unique causes. Something in the brain triggers different kinds of emotions, such as anxiety and depression, at the same time. Dr. Burns sees this in many of his patients.⁶⁶

[Research supports Dr. Burns' clinical practice and belief that many patients with anxiety and depression can over come or at least minimize the problems on their own using the tools outlined in his books, *Feeling Good*, *The New Mood Therapy* and *When Panic Attacks*, *The New Drug-Free Anxiety Therapy that Can Change Your Life*.](#)⁶⁷ Dr. Burns is further supported in theory by Edward M. Hallowell, M.D. and Robert L. Leahy, Ph.D. and their books previously mentioned.⁶⁸

Worry Self-Assessment Quiz

Since almost everyone worries to some extent, you may find it worthwhile to assess your worry. Dr. Edward Hallowell has graciously given me permission to use his Worry Self-Assessment Quiz reproduced in **Appendix A**. I encourage all of you to test yourselves and see where you fall on the worry scale.

After completing the Self-Assessment Quiz, you are able to assess how much you worry. You might take the quiz from time to time and keep track of your worry. Does your worry decrease, increase, or stay the same?

Most importantly, you are able to assess if you should seek professional help, able to improve with self-help, or rest assured that you are not a worrier.

Specific Anxiety Disorders⁶⁹

So far we have discussed depression, worry, and anxiety. However, anxiety disorder is a general term used to discuss several different forms of abnormal, pathological anxiety, fears, and phobias. Anxiety disorder pertains to nervous system disorders as irrational or illogical worry not based on fact or reality.

Common usage has made fear and anxiety interchangeable, despite their specific scientific meanings. Fear is an emotional and physiological response to a recognized **external threat**. Whereas, anxiety is an unpleasant emotional state, with sources less identifiable. Anxiety may be accompanied by physiological systems of fatigue or exhaustion. Fear and anxiety are often used interchangeably because fear of recognized threats causes similar unpleasant mental and physical changes.

It is important to recognize and distinguish between the specific anxiety disorders to accurately diagnose and effect a better treatment and results.

The diagnoses for specific anxiety disorders are set out in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of the American Psychiatric Association (DSM)*, which is revised ever so often. The *DSM* could be called the Bible of mental disorders and lists the criteria and requirements for all of the disorders recognized. We will list most of the common anxiety disorders with a brief summary of each which should allow us to identify them.

Common anxiety disorders are:

1. General Anxiety Disorder (GAD)
2. Panic Disorder (PD)
3. Agoraphobia
4. Specific Phobia
5. Social Anxiety Disorder
6. Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)
7. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
8. Hypochondriasis
9. Body Dysmorphic Disorder (BDD)

Each of the above specific anxiety disorders is characterized with particular symptoms that identify them.⁷⁰

1. **General Anxiety Disorder (GAD)** is characterized by chronic (long term) worrying. People with this disorder feel afraid of something but are unable to articulate the specific fear. GAD is a long lasting anxiety that is free-floating and not focused on any particular object or situation. Sufferers have a difficult time controlling their worries. Sufferers may develop headaches, heart palpitations, dizziness, insomnia, and chest pain, attributed to muscle tension and autonomic fear response. Typically, GAD could be a constant worry involving several things, such as work, health, finances, business, school, or family matters.

Fortunately, there is information and help for anyone suffering from GAD. The **Anxiety Disorder Association of America (ADAA)** has a website to help identify specific anxiety disorders and help treat these conditions. The **Anxiety Disorder Association of America** general website can be found at:

www.adaa.org

The ADAA website is a good place to start and has a test for specific disorders that allow for self-assessment as well as other information and recommendations. The GAD self-test is at webpage:

www.adaa.org/GettingHelp/SelfHelpTests/selftest_GAD.asp

2. **Panic Disorder (PD)** is characterized by anxiety attacks that are brief attacks of intense terror and apprehension that can cause trembling, shaking, confusion, dizziness, nausea, difficulty breathing, and feelings of impending doom; or, a situation that would be embarrassing. Panic attacks generally happen after frightening experiences, prolonged stress, or exercise. They may also occur for no apparent reason. Sufferers all of a sudden feel like they are about to pass out, lose control, go crazy, or die. Many people who suffer panic attacks think they may be having a heart attack. Some people worry excessively and even quit their jobs or refuse to leave home to avoid future panic attacks.

A Panic Disorder (PD) self-test is on the ADAA webpage at:

www.adaa.org/GettingHelp/SelfHelpTests/selftest_Panic.asp

3. **Agoraphobia** is an anxiety based on an extreme or irrational fear about being in a place or situation from which escape is difficult or embarrassing. Agoraphobia is a common complication of panic disorder and can refer to avoidance behaviors that sufferers develop. Examples may be that a sufferer has a panic attack while driving and then tries to avoid driving, which relieves anxiety, but makes future driving more difficult due to behavioral reinforcement; or, the sufferer may be afraid something terrible will happen if they are away from home.
4. **Specific Phobias** are characterized by a strong, irrational fear and avoidance of an object or situation. The person knows the fear is irrational, but nonetheless anxiety remains. Phobic disorders are different from generalized anxiety disorders because there is a specific stimulus or situation that causes a strong fear response. The level of fear is often inappropriate for the situation and is even recognized by the sufferer as being irrational, but the sufferer is unable to control their anxiety. Typically, there is an intense fear of something specific, for example, spiders, snakes, blood, heights, driving, dogs, flying, or being trapped in a small place (claustrophobia).

Tests for these phobias are located at:

www.adaa.org/GettingHelp/SelfHelpTests/selftest_specialpho.asp

5. **Social Anxiety Disorder** also called social phobia is characterized by intense fear of being negatively judged by others or being publicly embarrassed because of impulsive acts. Physical symptoms caused by this disorder include faintness, blushing, profuse sweating, or heart palpitations. Social Anxiety Disorder can be so intense it may lead to avoidance behavior. Social Anxiety Disorder may include: Shyness, nervousness or self-consciousness around other people; Test Anxiety, nervousness and freezing up when taking a test; Public Speaking, a speech or presentation in front of a group of people causes anxiousness; Performance Anxiety, competing or performing in front of an audience causes nervousness or anxiousness; or, Shy Bladder Syndrome, feeling nervousness or self-consciousness having to use a public restroom.
6. **Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)** is an anxiety disorder characterized by obsessions and/or compulsions. Obsessions are distressing, repetitive, intrusive thoughts or images that the person often realizes are senseless. Compulsions are repetitive behaviors that the sufferer feels forced or compelled to do, which sometimes relieves the anxiety. Typical obsessions might include worry about being contaminated (Howard Hughes is an example) or fears of behaving improperly or violently. The obsessions may cause a ritual or routine, compulsions, such as excessive hand washing (Howard Hughes), repeating phrases, or hoarding in order to relieve the anxiety caused by obsession.

A test for OCD is found at:

www.adaa.org/GettingHelp/SelfHelpTests/selftest_OCD.asp

7. **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)** is an anxiety disorder caused by an extreme traumatic experience, such as being involved in warfare, rape, hostage situations, or serious accident. The sufferer tends to experience flashbacks or nightmares, avoidant behavior, emotional numbing, difficulty sleeping, irritability, and/or lack of concentration.

A test for PTSD is found at:

www.adaa.org/GettingHelp/SelfHelpTests/selftest_PTSD.asp

8. **Hypochondriasis** is an anxiety disorder characterized by concerns over one's health. The sufferer worries that they have a serious medical problem or disease, despite assurances from a doctor that they are healthy.
9. **Body Dysmorphic Disorder (BDD)** is an anxiety disorder characterized by body appearance concerns. The sufferer is convinced that something grotesque or abnormal plagues their body appearance, despite assurances no one else can detect the sufferer's perceived defect in appearance.

5.0 TAKING CONTROL OF OUR WORRY

Over the last several sections, we addressed depression, worry, and anxiety. We briefly reviewed common anxiety disorders to make a cursory identification of these types of disorders. Hopefully, you are not afflicted with depression, worry, or any of the anxiety disorders. The odds are that you do or did suffer to some degree with some depression, worry, or anxiety either now or at some time in your life. The self-tests were meant to identify areas to yourself for you to recognize these areas in order to help yourself or, if need be, seek professional help. A good feature of the self-tests is that only you know the answers. However, you should be honest with yourself to achieve the best results.

Maslow's Needs. If we think back to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Figure 1, previously discussed, we know that humans require Belonging Needs and Esteem Needs. The Belonging Needs require love, affection, and belongingness to overcome feelings of loneliness and alienation. Esteem Needs require recognition by other humans and self-esteem is important for feelings of adequacy, competence, and confidence, to overcome discouragement and inferiority. The Belonging and Esteem Needs were termed Deficit Needs and are required needs that must be met. Belonging and Esteem Needs are survival needs. Depression, worry, and anxiety may prevent us from achieving even the basic needs.

However, we want to aim at Life's Priorities at the highest Being Needs or Self-Actualization level. Depression, worry, or anxiety can rob us of our self-actualization potential and keep us from Life's Priorities and the good

life. In order to achieve all we can be and want to be, we must overcome depression, worry, and anxiety.

1. Productive and Unproductive Worry.⁷¹ Some worry is productive, i.e., worry that motivates you to solve problems and leads to immediate action. Unproductive worry, conversely, leads to “what-ifs” with no practical solution.

Unproductive worry is based on three unrealistic beliefs: one, my worry is important and I should dwell on it; two, I must identify all possible solutions before I move on; and, three, I must be certain of the outcome.

An example of unproductive worry on a grand scale is the U.S. Congress’s worry over radioactive wastes. Congress has faced this problem since the 1940s. Every few years Congress worries and dwells on the radioactive waste issue. Engineering studies are commissioned to identify all possible solutions. And, then, of course, Congress must be certain what the outcome will be. Unfortunately, the perfect solution is not there, so Congress ruminates, over and over, and study after study. If we individually lived like Congress, Republican or Democrat, we would be in continuous unproductive worry; our brains battling back and forth.

Productive worry consists of: (1) a question or problem that has a solution; (2) is focused on a single event and not a chain of events; (3) accepts imperfect solutions; (4) does not use worry or anxiety as a guide of measuring stick; and, (5) recognizes the controllable from the uncontrollable. Unproductive worry consists of the opposite.

How do you make worry productive? Make worry productive by dissecting it and taking it in small bites. You would not attempt to eat a 20 ounce steak by putting the whole steak in your mouth. You would slice it into bites. Take your worry and eat it like a steak, one bite at a time.

Is my steak example appropriate? *Psychology Today* article entitled, *Stepping Out*, dealing with social anxiety gives this advice, “Trying to tune out anxious thoughts may make us more self-conscious...but by taking small risks, accumulating a pattern of successes, and taking credit when we do something right, anyone can become dramatically more confident in most daunting social situations.”⁷² If you think about worry like eating a large steak, in small bites, you can set a course of success apart from worry.

2. Accept Reality and Commit to Change.⁷³ Acceptance is seeing reality. Reality is different than the worry you are thinking. The key is to seek out what is real right now and not think about what could happen or “what-if.” One technique is to focus on breathing. Athletes take a few deep breaths before they perform. If you concentrate on your breathing, your mind releases other thoughts and brings you to the moment or present. After you have come back to the present, focus on the reality not the way you think about the future but what is here and now. Recognize there is a reality that you are going to live with right now.

Commitment to change requires you to identify what you really value and want. Your values and wants allow you to move past the difficult problems or obstacles in life to achieve goals and seek happiness or achievement.

Worry is the internal struggle against accepting the undesirable. Worry is a protest against reality. And, worry is the refusal to recognize and accept uncertainty and limitation. Worry is not action and does not get the job done. Problem solving requires you to put worry aside and start on the problem.

Okay, how do you accept reality? Psychologists have come up with some techniques to bring you to accepting reality.

- 2.1 Mindfulness---derived from Buddhist thinking that requires concentration on the immediate present. Mindfulness is acceptance of the present without trying to control the experience.
- 2.2 Gain Distance---worries are thoughts that are treated as if they are reality. Gain distance by standing back, taking each worry, and noticing that these are just thought; then, walk away from the thought.
- 2.3 Describe What is in Front of You---worries cause you to jump to conclusions. Describe what is in front of you right now. By describing what is in front of you, it places you in reality and avoids possible conclusions that may never happen.
- 2.4 Suspend Judgment---worries have judgments about what is bad or good, necessary or unnecessary. Try to find the judgments in your worries. Take those judgments and try to describe them in color, sensation, or the behaviors that you actually see.
- 2.5 Take Yourself Out of the Worry---worries focus on you. “I am worried I_____.” Take yourself out of the worry by thinking about the

fact that you are not by yourself. Other people have the same problems, and some are worse off than yours.

2.6 Remove Yourself to See Reality---after taking yourself out of worry take one further step. Imagine you do not exist. Picture the events, people, sun, stars without your presence. If you are not present, there is nothing to worry about. Try to remind yourself that the world is not about you. Suspend judgments and focus on those things you can observe.

What are the problems preventing us from accepting reality? There are two primary problems in accepting reality: (1) unwillingness to accept our limitations; and, (2) unwillingness to accept uncertainty. Unwillingness to accept our limitations usually involves things we can not control. Things happen in life and we have to deal with the cards life dealt us. Worriers usually equate uncertainty with danger. Just because we do not know how the events will turn out, does not mean they will turn out bad. Uncertainty, itself, is neutral and is simply unknown. Focus on the facts that are known and do not assume the worst. Think positively.

Dr. Leahy describes the mechanism of worry. When people worry they become less anxious. Worry is abstract and linguistic. Worriers rely on this abstract thinking and prevent themselves from experiencing visual images of bad outcomes. Since worry keeps us from experiencing anxiety, we avoid highly emotional visual images. Thus, worry and our search for certainty is our form of emotional avoidance. The more we can tolerate uncertainty, the less worried we will be.

Psychologists often require their patients to examine the “cost/benefit” of accepting uncertainty in a detailed manner. As another tool psychologists will have their patients write out their worst thought in what they term “thought flooding.”

The Power to Change. You have the power to change by making a choice, committing to successful imperfection, and practicing constructive discomfort. To make a choice you must seek a goal, figure out what it takes to achieve your goal, and be willing and committed to “keep on keeping on” to achieve your goal. Successful imperfection means carrying out behaviors that do not necessarily have a perfect outcome. The idea is to make progress through small steps. If you want to get into shape, you do not start by running a marathon. You start out slowly and build up. Here, you do not

need perfection; you need progress. Progress requires some constructive discomfort.

Worry attempts to avoid anxiety or unpleasant emotions. Procrastination is the avoidance of discomfort. Constructive discomfort means you must change your attitude toward discomfort. Again, getting into shape requires some constructive discomfort. One way of confronting discomfort is to make a list of uncomfortable things in the past that were helpful to you. Your list might include: studying for exams, exercise, solving difficult problems, achieving goals at work, or other things that were uncomfortable at the time, but you were glad you did them. Now, make a list of the uncomfortable items in achieving your goal, step by step.

Change and progress in your life involves successful imperfection and constructive discomfort; that is, doing what you have been avoiding because of your worries.

3. Write Down Your Worries and Challenge Your Worries.⁷⁴ A technique that psychologists use is to require their patients to write down in a diary or journal a “worry record;” where they were when they worried; how much they worried; and what happened after they worried. By having a “worry record,” the patient can identify and analyze the worry.

Another technique is to set time aside to worry. By setting time aside to worry, it forces a focus on worry at a particular time and provides a control over the worry. Focusing at a specific time devoted to worry allows you to keep from worrying at other times. You will find that your worries become repetitive and you are really dealing with the same worries, but they are contained in your worry time. Eventually, since your worries are the same worries over and over, you tire of them and drop them all together, which is the idea behind the technique.

Journaling and analyzing your worries, tracking what follows after your worry, and setting worry time allows you to gain some control over your worries. One way of analyzing each identified worry, is to divide worries into the worst outcome, most likely outcome, and best outcome; and, then assign numerical probabilities to each. This helps you put each worry into perspective.

4. Your Core Beliefs.⁷⁵ If you have a negative belief about yourself, you tend to think there is something defective about yourself. To combat your negative belief you will compensate or avoid certain things in an attempt to adapt to your negative belief. Your worries result from these negative core beliefs. By seeing where you fit in, you will be able to identify yourself in these issues, understand yourself better, and work toward reducing your worries. So, let us look at these negative core beliefs.

4.1 Defective---you think you are incompetent and inferior. Adaptation---avoid letting people really get to know you, challenging tasks or relationships, you try to please other people to mask or cover up your defects.

4.2 Abandonment---you think important people will leave you and you will end up alone and miserable. Adaptation---you continually seek reassurance and do not express true opinions because you are afraid these people will leave you.

4.3 Helpless---you think you are unable to take care of yourself, you are dependant. Adaptation---you stay in unrewarding jobs or relationships because you are afraid of making a change.

4.4 Special or I Centered---you think you are superior and deserve attention and praise. Adaptation---you surround yourself with people who need you so they will tell you how great you are. You break rules to get your way and demand others give in to your needs.

4.5 Responsible---you take pride in being rational, diligent, and getting things right. Adaptation---you exhaust yourself with work making sure you are doing the right thing. You review, review, and re-review to make sure no mistakes are made.

4.6 Glamorous---you focus on being attractive to impress other people. Adaptation---you spend significant time, energy, and money to be physically attractive.

4.7 Autonomous---you value your freedom to do things your way. Adaptation---you put up barriers to people with authority over you and refuse to comply with others' requests. Things must be done your way.

4.8 Caretaker---you take on the responsibility for making everyone feel comfortable and happy. Adaptation---you constantly sacrifice yourself for the needs of others.

Think about your core beliefs. How are your core beliefs related to your childhood and adult experiences? How do your core beliefs relate to the values you were taught? How do you get back on track? To get back on

track requires commitment, work, and realization that you have been tricking yourself. In short, get real.

You have spent years developing adaptation habits to compensate or avoid confronting your core fears. Often you will resist attempts to change your core beliefs. You will see your core belief as actually preventing another belief from being activated. You often see your core beliefs in all-or-nothing terms with no shades of gray. **The key here is once your core negative beliefs or fears have been identified and analyzed, turn the negatives into positives. Imagine taking the negative worry situations and look at them in a positive core belief. Visualize yourself in a positive core belief situation.**

5. Failure Is A Good Thing.⁷⁶ Failure presents us with an opportunity to do better. However, all of us worry about something going wrong. Psychologists say our education does not train us how to handle failure.

Not being trained to handle worry and/or failure is the very reason we are addressing worry in this course.

Actually, I must confess, I have been trained for failure in a trial setting. Years ago, I attended an Association of Trial Lawyers of America Advanced Advocacy course. Bob Bokelman, a very fine trial attorney from San Francisco was our section leader. Bob told us he lost his first seven jury trials before he started winning, but success will come. One of the lecturers was Bill Barton, a top trial lawyer from a small town in Oregon. Bill had a formula for winning and losing a trial that has stayed with me all these years. Here is Bill Barton's formula that applies to trials, and some areas of life.

In a trial four things can happen. One, you can be prepared and win. That is what is supposed to happen. Two, you can be prepared and lose. That is not supposed to happen, but there is not a thing you can do about it, so move on and forget it. Third, you can be unprepared and win. The result is good, but again, not in your control, since you were unprepared. Fourth, you can be unprepared and lose. Only if, you are unprepared and lose do you have to look at yourself and consider that you caused the loss and you had control. This is where you have to take a hard look at yourself.

In the above formula, loss has been equated with failure (at least failure to win), but you nearly always learn more from a loss than you do from a win.

In interviewing jurors after a win, they are generally complementary and agree with what you have done during the trial. After a loss, the jurors will tell you areas that did not go well for you or which of your witnesses they did not like. Failure in these cases is a learning lesson.

It has been said, “it is not that you failed, but what you did afterward that matters.” You can undermine worry by learning from your mistakes and how to move beyond failure and on to the next stage. If we learn to handle failure and minimize its effect by learning from it, we will worry less. [Since failure is inevitable for us, and since we worry about failing, we must develop a strategy for coping with failure.](#)

Let us look at some coping mechanisms for ourselves and some tools to use.

5.1 My Behavior Failed, I Did NOT Fail. Say you received an “F” on a test. Should we say, I failed the test? Should we say my performance on that test failed? The difference between these two questions is that you label yourself as a person who failed. By labeling yourself as a person failing you generalize into other situations or other tests. One test can make you feel hopeless. You are keying in on yourself as a failure, when it was really just the performance on the test that was a failure, and only one time and at one thing.

People do not fail, behaviors fail. By attributing your failure to specific behaviors, more effort was required, you can change your behavior, not who you are as a person. Recognize yourself as a collection of actual behaviors and potential behaviors. You have millions of behaviors, meeting people, going places, taking tests, the list goes on and on. If only one behavior failed, look at how many other behaviors you have left to succeed. By limiting your failure to a particular time, place, situation, and behavior, you have successful opportunities in the future. I doubt there are many people who had as many failures as Abraham Lincoln, and yet he was able to get past failure and become a great American president, revered by all.

5.2 I Learn from Failure. Think of a child trying to put together a jigsaw puzzle and putting the wrong pieces together. Is that failing, or is that child learning? That child is learning and becomes better and better at jigsaw puzzles.

Failure has the connotation of finality. However, learning is empowering and future looking, moving, not stopping. The best way of using failure is to learn from other people's failures. Failure provides information, often more information than successes.

5.3 Failure IS My Challenge. View failure as your challenge. If you reframe failure as challenge, you are energized and try harder. Reflect on failure in terms of what you can learn and become determined. [You make your choice about your response to failure.](#) You can choose to give up because you think it is too hard, or you can be motivated to try harder.

Psychologists term persistence and resilience with difficulties **“learned industriousness.”** If you are reinforced only for outcomes, success or failure, black or white, then you may be undermined by a failure experience. However, if you are reinforced for effort, you will persist when experiencing failure.

5.4 I Will Try Harder. Normally, there are several causes that you can attribute to a failed task. You could think the failed task is due to bad luck, lack of ability, too difficult a task, or you lack of effort. If you attribute this failure to a lack of your ability, you are more likely to become depressed and stop trying, cease learning, and stop doing other tasks. Psychologists indicate that it is not the failure alone that leads to depression, but how you interpret that failure.

[If you are a worrier and attribute your failures to personal deficiencies or incompetence, you are setting yourself up to worry about failure in the future. However, if you realize failure was due to a lack of effort, difficulty in the task, or bad luck, you will worry less about failing in the future because you can overcome failure in the future by trying harder.](#)

5.5 Is IT A Failure? Oftentimes, when you go through a divorce or lose a job, you equate the event with total failure on your part. But, is there any responsibility on the other side? Perhaps, the other side is fifty percent or more at fault. Failure implies an all-or-nothing evaluation of yourself, which is almost never correct. Both parties contribute to the outcome of the situation.

However, regardless of the divorce or loss of job, in the long term, the outcome may be positive for you and anything, but a failure. There is life

after divorce and/or job loss, for they can bring positive synergy for your life in the future.

5.6 Play to Your Strengths and Behavior that Can Succeed. Often we focus solely on the single behavior that does not succeed, a sort of tunnel vision. Then, we worry about the one thing that prevents us from our wanted success. We need to focus on our strengths and all the behaviors that promote our success, rather than butting our head against the wall with the behavior that does not bring us success. Focus your energies and time on the behaviors that are rewarding and you will begin feeling better.

5.7 Focus on What You Can Control. So many times in football and other sports you hear a player interviewed and they say something like “we just went out there and played our game and executed well.”

Play “our game” was their key to success. Why? Because the team that played their game, took the other team out of the game, so to speak. In other words, you can not control what the other team does, you can only control what you and your team do.

The same is true for you. Focus on the things you can control, play your game and do not worry about the things you can not control.

5.8 Maybe I can Succeed Without That. When you focus on a single goal to the exclusion of other goals, you have made that one goal essential to your success. A single goal focus causes you to worry about achieving that single goal and you develop a tunnel vision.

Most of the goals that you have tried to achieve, even the ones you did achieve, were probably not quintessential to your life. For example, we can not all get into Harvard University, but Harvard is not essential to our life. After all, there is Yale and Georgia Tech. Getting into a particular university, acing a particular test, attracting someone to yourself, getting a particular job, are goals you might have thought were essential. But, in reality, life goes on without those goals and you can adapt and be successful without those goals that were thought to be essential at the time.

Perhaps the best illustration I can give was my professor for Real Property I in law school. At a review session before the final exam (you only get one exam per course in law school), he could sense the whole class was uptight,

nervous, and worried about the exam. He finally just said, “relax, ten years from now the grade you make on this test won’t make any difference.” He was right.

5.9 Not All Behaviors Fail. Sometimes when you do not succeed at a particular goal, you react as if everything failed. This is all-or-nothing thinking and we do not analyze the situation with the intent to learn what went right that we can use again in the future. We become stuck with the failure of the past.

Unfortunately, we often think that if we did not do something perfectly, it was a waste of time and nothing paid off. This is like the child saying, “if I can’t win, I am just not going to play.” By viewing life only in terms of a win or perfect score, you are missing the thrill of playing the game. You are discounting the importance of the process and experiences, highs and lows, of your daily life.

5.10 We All Fail at Something. After a failure, we feel all alone and tend to internalize our feelings. It becomes personal. First, we should realize that everyone fails, for example Abraham Lincoln, who failed time after time. Next, we should share our failure with a trusted friend. This can bring you closer to your friend and helps you realize you are not alone. It makes us more human.

Successful people build on their failures and learn from their mistakes.

5.11 Not Everyone Knows of Your Failure. It is human nature to worry that everyone notices your failures, talks about them, remembers them, and judges you forever. I am reminded by what my then boss, Tom Stolhandske told me. Tom was an All-American football player for the University of Texas, lawyer, and a County Commissioner for Bexar County (San Antonio), Texas. Tom and I were discussing newspaper articles about people’s failures; in City/County government as pointed out by the newspaper. He had some newspaper moments as County Commissioner. But, he pointed out to me that only one-third of the people even got the newspaper and even less actually read it. Moreover, after two weeks, unless the article continued to be carried, it was forgotten.

Most people forget and move on. We need to do the same.

5.12 Shooting for the Right Goal. When you worry, you think that your goal is essential and you blame yourself if you do not achieve it. The problem with this thinking is that you can yourself into overlooking all of the positive aspects of your goal that were accomplished.

Superbowl losers are still pretty good football teams with a winning record; and, they have something to build upon for next year. So should you.

5.13 There Is Life after Failure. If your actions result in something short of your goal or perceived success, do you say, “I failed”? “I failed” treats your lack of success as a fatality. Dr. Leahy’s research shows that people who worry about making a mistake, losing, or failing often think they have no fallback position. This makes these people extremely cautious when they try to change their behavior. The important thing to remember is that failure does not end all and there is life after every failure. Life nearly always gives second chances.

5.14 My Standards Are Too High. Although self-perfectionism might be a nice goal, it is not an end product. Obsession with self-perfectionism prevents the ability to see that you are achieving other goals. Moreover, perfectionism is most often the illogical result of tying your performance to your perceived self-worth. “Perfectionism is a key component of depression and anxiety. Perfectionistic thinking leads to negative self-evaluations of performance at work, appearance, sexual behavior, relationships, and health. It reveals a disparity between real self-image (how you see yourself) and ideal self-image (how you would like to be). People with a greater disparity between real and ideal self-image are prone to becoming depressed and anxious...the problem with perfectionistic standards is that they are never attained...thereby leading to continual dissatisfaction and worry,” warns Dr. Leahy. Perfectionism is a false self-standard.

5.15 Just Do Better than Before. Life is a learning experience. You start life knowing very little, but learning more and more. You cumulate gains over time. If you have ever watched someone trying to learn to walk again after a traumatic injury, you see them take a half step at a time, one foot, and then the other, slowly, until after time they can walk again. Just do better than before.

The idea is to change from a fixed perception of performance to a performance of accumulated experiences and learning new behaviors. In the

sports world, this is playing within yourself. (As a baseball pitcher in college, I can't tell you how many times I have been told "not to over pitch." Over pitching results from trying to throw the ball as hard as you can. Your effort does not match you motion and you actually throw the ball slower.) Learning new behaviors built upon accumulated experiences, repetition, and practice decreases worries about failing.

5.16 Failure Substitutes. Dr. Leahy refers to this as the "Italian Restaurant Solution" where your favorite meal might be veal. Suppose you are at your favorite Italian restaurant and they don't have your favorite dish, veal. What do you do? Most likely you look at the menu and select something else. By selecting something else on the menu, you have adopted a simple learning theory that stresses positive behaviors, called behavioral activation theory.

In other words, if you are faced with a behavior that failed, shift gears and find something else that is rewarding. Do not sit there and worry, move on to something else, i.e., the "Italian Restaurant Solution."

5.17 Not Trying Is Worse than Failing. Perhaps you have heard the expression, "it is better to have loved and lost, than to never have loved at all." We discussed "learned industriousness" in Section 5.3 above. "Learned industriousness" is taking pride and pleasure in exerting effort toward your goals. In sports, it is the effort and thrill of playing the game. Going into the 2008 Olympics in China, 87 countries participating have never won a metal in anything. Those winless countries still train and proudly compete. The winless athletes are not focused solely on the outcome and are less likely to label themselves into success or failure. As a result, they are less likely to become depressed or worry about their failure. They simply train, do the best they can, and forget about the outcome; while enjoying the Olympic experience and taking pride in trying.

5.18 "I Have Not Yet Begun to Fight!" Recall Captain John Paul Jones who was in dire straits against the British Warship Serapis and the British captain asked him to surrender. In the face of battle, John Paul Jones announced, "I have not yet begun to fight!" Look back on your skills that challenged you in your life. Maybe you were learning a sport, learning a language, learning calculus, chemistry, physics, or advanced courses. Surely you had frustrations and/or failures along the way. But, you persevered. Think back to those days when something did not work out the way you

wanted it to; and, view the situation as, “I have just begun to fight” and keep going.

5.19 Tomorrow Is Another Day. Back when I was playing baseball in college, I remember a game we lost 14 to 1. After the game, our coach, Andy Cohen, told the other team’s coach, “you will wish you some of those runs tomorrow.” Ironically, the next day we came out and beat the same team by the identical score, 14 to 1. What a difference a day makes!

Positive Psychology is a recent kind of psychology that views people differ from one another in the way they pursue positive goals. Positive goals lead to a more optimistic approach to life. These people welcome challenge, growth, change, excitement, and independence. They view tomorrow as another day for opportunity and success. Every failure is almost always followed by a success. That is, unless you are negative and believe you will never again have any positive, successful, experience in you life ahead.

[I have seen, heard, and read about people with a terminal illness, who, remarkably, have a tremendous positive attitude. A case in point is the book *The Last Lecture* by Randy Pauch, where he discusses living while dying. Why can't we all have a positive attitude?](#)

5.20 The Time Is Now. The “what-ifs” that almost never come true persist in the hypothetical world of the worrier and pessimist. Healing, “behavioral activation” deals with starting right now and going forward. How many times have you been feeling tired, noticing joint and muscle aches, and thinking you just don’t have any energy? I am not suggesting that this is not caused by a disease process or strains from activity, but often there is not an organic underlying cause, and you feel better once you get going.

Psychologists have found that rumination and avoidance prolongs depression and anxiety. It causes negative self-preoccupation and reduces your chances for positive constructive action.

Treating yourself with “behavioral activation” to reduce worry means that you begin right now making a list of activities, taking in a game, play, concert, walking in a museum, one of my favorites---going to a bookstore, jogging, calling a friend, or other activity that gets you going. The time is now!

We have recrafted and exemplified Dr. Leahy's twenty failure modes. Dr. Leahy believes the twenty failure self-statements challenge you to think differently about events in your life. These self-statements empower you to take control of your response to failure and away from worry, which is one of our goals in this course.

You control your thinking and action after unpleasant events. You can not control the past, but you can control how you look at the past and proceed into the future.

6. WE Are Emotional Beings.⁷⁷ Worry becomes a way to avoid our emotions. Worry substitutes thinking in abstract sentences rather than feelings; and, an important factor is the lack of visual imagery of what the worrier actually fears. Worriers also have a greater difficulty identifying emotions.

One method psychologists use to have patients identify their emotions is to have them write stories about experiences that upset them, telling what happened and how it felt. They found that actually writing out feelings helped people feel better.

You too can keep a dated diary or journal with a detailed description of what is troubling you, experience, feelings, and thoughts. Bear in mind, professional help is most likely required beyond identifying your feelings and emotions in a diary or journal.

It is beyond this course to diagnose or treat any of the emotional problems that could be surrounding you. The intent here is to just bring out into the open problems that could prevent our higher goals of applying Life's Priorities.

7. Time And Worry.⁷⁸ Your stress and your worries are often affected by your sense of time and how you cope with time. However, time is not an object that we can touch. In our mind, time is a sense that we perceive as to what we are doing presently and what we project into the future. Urgency is our sense of having to do or get something done; and, urgency is entirely subjective. Urgency is what we make it.

Our sense of time can be inaccurate because at times time seems to fly by and other times it seems to stand still. I can think of going to a party and

being there for what seemed like a few minutes when actually we were there for several hours. Contrast that party with some lectures in college that made time almost stand still.

Does time and urgency cause you to worry? Do you feel pressured for time? Do you feel rushed on everything? Have you overscheduled? Do you have this sense that time is getting away from you?

In order to reduce some of your worries, we need to look at time in a controlled fashion and take steps to help us control our sense of time and how we cope with it. Here are some suggestions that may help with our sense of time:

7.1 Control Urgency. Worry is an attempt to control time in the future and escape from the moment. Most worriers have a time urgency; needing to know the answer right away. This makes us feel pressured, anxious, out of control, and focused on an uncertainty. Demanding an answer does not lead to the answer; it typically causes unanswerable questions and is unproductive worry.

Oftentimes, by giving yourself a time limit, you can examine the available information and conclude that you can not get a complete answer immediately. The time limit and examining available information enables you to determine that you do not need the answer right now. Once you realize the matter is not urgent and you do not need the answer right now, you have cut way back on your worry. It is like a cloud has been lifted.

As part of controlling urgency, keep yourself in the present by focusing on your interests, family, friends, work, exercise, and rest. Live in the moment! When you feel this sense of urgency of the future, bring yourself back to the present. Ask yourself, what are constructive and positive things I can do right now.

This sense of urgency grates on you when you perceive you are wasting time, such as being stuck in traffic. The key is to make wasting time part of you schedule and allow enough leeway to take the urgency off.

7.2 It Won't Last Forever. Everyone has negative feelings from time to time. However, negative feelings will pass and do not last forever, and usually last a short time. Feelings are experiences you have in the present

moment and feelings pass with time. Negative feelings, like anger, will pass, so why worry about the negative feelings?

Realize all emotions are temporary. If you can step away from the negative feeling right now, then you can sense it gradually go away.

7.3 Smell the Roses. Worry catches us in all the possible things that we try to control. We become uncomfortable and then anxious and believe we have to change the feeling immediately. Seemingly, we try to control and do everything. By staying in the present rather than focusing on the future, you can let the worry go that feeds your sense of urgency. [Psychologists refer to this **mindful detachment** when you step back in your thoughts to the present.](#)

How do you get back to the present? You can put yourself in the present by getting lost in the details of the present moment. Details of the present include what you see, feel, hear, and smell. Take a walk, look at the trees, grass, birds, and notice them closely. Pay particular notice of the shapes and colors of leaves or flowers. Look at the sky and notice the clouds. Stay in this present moment. Act on that old piece of advice that says you have to “take time to smell the roses.”

7.3 Stretch and Plan Your Time. Worries focus on a specific time in the future. You become so focused that the rest of your life disappears. Worry is all you think about. All other time, past and present reduce to insignificance. You are fixated on worry and the rest of your existence seems to vanish. [How much of your life does this worry actually take up?](#)

Put time into perspective. View your life as a time chart. Your worry is a single point in time and is virtually nonexistent in your lifetime when compared to your childhood, adolescence, young adulthood, and, most importantly, the remaining years of your life. Think about how you will feel about this worry in a week, month, year, five years. Think about all the positives that could happen between now and then. Imagine that you could jump into a time machine and go a week, month, year, and five years into the future. Things you think about today will seem like nothing when you look back from the future, just like there are only a few moments you can remember from ten years ago. Things that we worry about today will turn out to be unimportant in our journey through life.

Of course, it helps minimize worry if we schedule or plan our time. Sometimes we just march off without really developing a plan of how we are going to get where we are going. Oftentimes, we over commit because we do not have a schedule or have an overly optimistic schedule for what we intend to accomplish. We may accomplish half of what we intend to accomplish and then worry about the things we did not get done. Sometimes it will be the important things in life we do not get into our schedule, like spending quality time with our family.

Learn how you can control your time better by developing a schedule or time plan, giving yourself enough time to accomplish what you want to accomplish, and keep the positives in mind as you go forward. There are a number of scheduling calendars, for example, *Daytimers*, that let you plan ahead and keep track of what you did, to aid you in scheduling. In future planning, be realistic in estimating the time it takes to accomplish a task and allow enough time. You might even overestimate and then relax as you accomplish each task before the next one. Lastly, look back and see what you have accomplished. You have accomplished a lot of positive things, so worry less about the future.

[By stretching and planning your time, you are taking control of your life. Taking control of your life reduces the pressure to handle everything in the future, prevents becoming overwhelmed, and reduces worry.](#)

8.0 Other Techniques to Stop Worry.⁷⁹ So far we have discussed various techniques to stop worry. Another important technique to cut down on worry is exercise and diet. You have probably heard this advice before. [Exercise is one of the best techniques for worry you can have.](#) When you are exercising and concentrating on that exercise, you push worry out of your mind. Exercise prevents the background noise or anxiety that accumulates in the brain. Exercise also works for anger.

Some people, who are depressed, suppress that feeling by eating. However, eating is just a temporary fix for the underlying problem and eating can lead to weight gain, which in turn leads to a depressed feeling. Diet is important for weight control and nutrition. Just taking sugar out of your diet can be helpful.

Our bodies must get enough sleep. By not getting enough sleep you become irritable, more easily distracted, lose concentration, more accident prone, and

become more prone to worry. These same symptoms apply when you are sick. Adequate sleep helps overcome these symptoms.

Dr. Hallowell believes connectedness is one of the important ways to reduce worry. **Connectedness refers to a feeling of being part of something larger than yourself.** Connectedness means staying connected to your family; connected to your past; connected to friends, neighbors, fellow workers; connected to new ideas and information; connected to organizations; and connected to spirituality, which might be religious or meditation or nature.

Connectedness makes you happier and less worrisome.

As we leave this section on worry, I know some of you might be skeptical about what I have said over the last several pages. Some might tell me that you are worried about your debt. Will this help me get out of debt? No! But, what we have covered will help you worry less, look at your debt objectively, and lean you toward developing a plan rather than just worry. However, our main purpose is to get past worry so that we can achieve self-actualization and set our Life's Priorities.

6.0 LIFE'S PRIORITIES, THE BEST LIFE, THE GOOD LIFE

When you were a kid and you were trading baseball cards, which card did you want? You wanted the best baseball card! If you are a little older, you wanted Joe DiMaggio, Mickey Mantle, Sandy Kofax, or Yogi Berra. If you are a little younger, you wanted Pete Rose or Hank Aaron. Today, maybe you want Alex Rodriguez. Unless you lived in Houston, you didn't want the Houston Astros. You wanted the New York Yankees or the latest World Series winner. You wanted the best player and the best team.

If you are a woman today, when you were a girl, you wanted the best doll, a Barbie Doll, American Girl Doll, or Madame Alexander Doll with the best clothes. At least my sister and daughter wanted the best doll with the best clothes!

The point is that when you were a boy or girl growing up, you knew what you wanted, the best, at least in the short term. Life was simple then. However, as we get older life is not so simple. Somehow, as we become

adults, we put those “gotta haves” best things behind us and only look forward generally. We do not think of those best things with the enthusiasm of our youth. The best things become more complicated and more expensive.

Dale Carnegie contended one of the most tragic things he knew about human nature was our tendency to put off living. “We are all dreaming of some magical rose over the horizon---instead of enjoying the roses blooming outside our windows today.” Carnegie quoted Stephen Leacock, who pondered about life’s journey, “How strange it is, our little procession of life! The child says, ‘When I am a big boy,’ But what is that? The big boy says, ‘When I grow up.’ And then, grown up, he says, ‘When I get married,’ But to be married, what is that after all? The thought changes to ‘When I am able to retire’ And then, when retirement comes, [s]he looks back over the landscape traversed; a cold wind seems to sweep over it; somehow [s]he has missed it all, and it is gone. Life, we learn too late, is in the living, in the tissue of every day and hour.”⁸⁰ All too often we get caught up in the daily grind, the rat race of life, of going to work each day, earning a living, day after day after day.

In the first part of this course we covered life’s needs, D-needs, B-needs, self-actualization, and studied Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle’s good life. We have examined, tested, and studied, perhaps the greatest impediment to living---worry. We have put worry in its place.

Pause for a moment. What is the most precious thing you have? Your most precious thing can not be held, can not be given away, and must be spent. This most precious, prized, special gift is your life. Your life!

If you have a life to choose for yourself, and you do have a life to choose, you want the best life. You want the best life for yourself. You will want to spend your life well. No more trading baseball cards or dolls, you want the best life. How do you get your best life? What makes a good life, your good life?

Your best life, your good life, relies on the “examined life” as Socrates put it. Just choosing a life is not easy. There are many things that happen in life that are beyond your or our control. On Labor Day 2005, I was writing my PDHonline.org course on The Right Choice: Applying Ethics and Happiness to Engineering, when Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans. Thousands of

people's lives were out of their control. It affected me. It was very difficult to write about happiness when there is widespread devastation and desperation. As I am writing this course on Life's Priorities, Hurricane Ike devastated Galveston, Texas.

My wife and I have vacationed many times in Galveston and have walked up and down the seawall, visiting all the shops and eating at the different restaurants along Seawall Boulevard. News photos show the shops we went into are completely gone, and Galveston is without power, water, sewer, and people who have evacuated are not to come back until it is safer. Thousands of people have no control over their lives in the Galveston, Houston, and other Ike stricken areas. The devastation is unbelievable.

It is true, tornados, floods, hurricanes, and other happenings are not in our control. Amazingly, there is much that is in our control, your control. What is in our control, is our reaction and the way we handle those aspects and situations in our lives that are outside our control. One of the good traits in a life is our character and ability to rise above a life's crisis. Our character, those mental, moral, and strength qualities that distinguish us as individuals, moves us forward. Once life's needs are met and we get past worry, we are back on track to the good life, the best life.

To get back on track and be a self-achiever, we need to "examine our life" because the "unexamined life is not worth living." The "unexamined life" really is not a life at all; it just happens, a default code that you are thrust into.

In 2007-2008, there was a TV commercial making its rounds in two versions talking about investments. In one commercial a fellow, Dennis Hopper, is sitting on a hill, in another he is standing at an intersection of roads talking about financial advice. His key phrase is "you need a plan!" You can't get there without "a plan!" "A plan," he emphasizes, "you need a plan!"

Your life's priorities, your best life, your good life, "needs a plan!"

Virtually all the psychologists, psychiatrists, and self-help experts insist on writing out your thoughts. Something magic happens when you actually write down your thoughts. You go from the abstract to the concrete, in a set sequence, and you can review what you have written, at any time.

Your plan must be written. So, take out a piece of paper and a pen and get ready to create your “plan.” Your plan, will be your plan to your best life, your good life, and your life’s priorities.

Approaches For Your Plan

Before we get started on your plan, there are at least two approaches that can be taken. I have seen some life approaches that have you pretend you are at your own funeral. You prepare your own obituary that you would like to have read at your funeral. Presumably, all your worthwhile achievements and accomplishments would be listed. Then, you work backwards from your obituary to fill in the time and accomplishments between now and then.

Writing your obituary is certainly one way to list your major achievements and developing a list from now until then requires you to focus on some of the things you want out of your life, while making you look ahead.

For me, writing my obituary seems a bit morbid and I would rather have a live working list that is flexible and plans action to be taken while considering actions already taken. However, before we start with your list of good things in your life and then arrange them into your life’s priorities, I would like to talk about values or ethics and what happens when we do die.

As we discussed, you have a precious, prized, special gift given to you; your life. Unfortunately, it can not be held, it must be spent; and, it is being spent minute by minute. At some point in our life, we die. As the saying goes, “the only things certain in life are death and taxes.” However, I believe it is important to look at those values, your ethics, that will transcend your death and include these values, ethics, into your plan, that you pass to future generations.

How You Live Past Death

Again, I owe these thoughts to Professor Patrick Grim and his lecture *Better Off Dead*, which I will tweak for our purposes.⁸¹

The Roman poet and naturalist, Titus Lucretius Carus (96-55 B.C.) put forth the ancient philosopher’s argument regarding the mortality of the soul. Lucretius restates the soul is either mortal or immortal. If the soul is

immortal, there is no death and nothing to fear in death. Conversely, if the soul is mortal, then there is no experience of death, and nothing to fear in death. Either way, according to Lucretius, there should be no fear of death itself. Lucretius also claims that we should not regret what happens after death, just as we do not regret what happened before our birth. However, we might argue with Lucretius on how we might die, it could be painful and unpleasant.

Long Lasting Values, Ethics, Good Works

In this life, it would seem that whether the soul is mortal or immortal, at death, everything ceases. However, death affects different values, and I will put ethics in a class of values, in different ways. There are two types of values we might look at. There are things of value to us, mostly material, car, money, house, pleasures, that we will lose at death. We can not take them with us when we die. Conversely, there are things that are of value in themselves, independent of us, that are not lost at death. In other words, if everything you value is part of your pleasures or something you value purely because it is of value to you, it will be gone to you at your death. But, if there are things you value because they are value in themselves, these values carry on and death can not terminate them.

This may be a bit of a deep philosophical argument, but things valuable in themselves are those values people dedicate to a larger cause than themselves. Causes larger than life might be fighting poverty, fighting for freedom, fighting for peace, fighting for fairness and justice. In short, these might be classified as ethical causes and causes past ourselves, at least larger than ourselves. For such people, it is the larger cause that matters to them. If their own deaths contribute to the cause, they may consider their death to be a positive value and can be happy even in death knowing their cause will continue. These larger than life values are usually doing good for other people; discounting one's own self. Moreover, these ethical causes, good works, may be passed down to sons and daughters and their sons and daughters, generation to generation as well as the persons affected around them.

Maslow, we learned, found self-actualizers and some average people, could achieve higher experiences call "Peak-Experiences." The "peak-experiences" were ego-transcending, self-forgetful, and egoless. "Peak-Experiences" were unmotivated, impersonal, desire less, unselfish, not

needing, or detached. These were object centered rather than self centered people. The peak experiencers were perceiving something that has independent reality of its own, and not dependent upon the beholder.

These values, ethics, good works, then transcend life itself and become larger than life and live past death. By ethics I am talking about moral principles that govern a person's or group's behavior. They are ideals that continue to live, like those who signed the Declaration of Independence. They are dead, but they live on.

Thus, you might consider these values, ethics, good works, and larger than life ideals in your Life's Priorities, best life, good life. Factor in some "Peak-Experiences."

What Do You Want Out of YOUR Life?

You need your life examined, in detail, and a prioritized plan of your values, good life, best life. You have your paper and pen so let us start. I will start by just giving you a random list of good things in life. The list I am about to give you is just a list that I have put together, but it is not your list.

My purpose in providing a starting list is to get you started on your list. You should add or subtract from my list to establish your list of good things for your life. There are things that would be important to you that may not be on my list. Keep your important things in mind as you go through the list. As you go through the list there will be items that you want to place particular emphasis on for your list. Your priorities should be different than the ones on the list, so add yours to the list.

This list is supposed to be a list of good things in life, such if you had to answer, "would you like these things in your life?" the answer would be yes. In other words, the list includes good things and tries to omit bad things or items not important to us.

So here is a list.

Accomplishment
Intelligence
Love
Fun

Freedom
Fame
Good Education
Big House

Recreation
Honesty
Adventure
Nice Car

Money	Entertainment	Creativity
Contentment	Leisure	Knowledge
Fulfilling sex life	Enjoyment	Wisdom
Good Job	Happiness	Generosity
Children/Family	Spirituality	Self-discipline
Long Life	Romance	Talent
Travel	Safety	Good Health
Recognition	Friendship	Respect
Meaningful Work	Vacations to Europe	Contributions to Society
Writer	Patent on Invention	Pres. of Tech Society
Mayor of Town	Engineering Fellow	Engr. without Borders
Volunteer	Teacher or Professor	Peacemaker
Motivator/Big Brother	Environmentalist	Artist
Musician	Mentor	Coach
Curious	Open-mindedness	Love of Learning
Humility	Bravery	Persistence
Integrity	Vitality	Kindness
Social Intelligence	Citizenship	Fairness
Leadership	Forgiveness/Mercy	Modesty
Hope	Humor	Assessment
Fidelity	Charity	Responsibility
Prudence	Appreciation Beauty/Excellence	Gratitude

The above list is just a start for your list. Part of the list came from Dr. Grim's lecture on Life's Priorities.⁸² I have provided several items that might pertain to engineers. Some items came from Hyrum Smith's book, *What Matters Most-The Power of Living Your Values*,⁸³ while others came from Christopher Peterson and Martin Seligman's book, *Character Strengths and Virtues-A Handbook and Classification*.⁸⁴

The idea here is for you to develop your list that represents a portrait of your priorities and character traits for your own life. Physically writing out your list is valuable to help you organize and prioritize your list later. This list is not complete so take enough time to develop your list. Write out as much as you can think of as you develop your list. Once you have completed your list you are ready to start step two.

Step two for your list organizes your list into a useful structure. There are items on the list that can be grouped or classified rather than left by themselves. Take for example: fame, recognition, and respect, which might fall into the same group or class. You will want to group your priorities to make them easier to work with. Recognition might be a group topic with respect and fame as sub-groups under recognition. Work with your list to make groups and sub-groups, remembering you can still add or subtract from your list of your priorities.

After you have separated your list into major groupings, you have started to understand what it is you value in your good life and life's priorities. Another group might be love, which might include friendship and romance. Now you have two groups: Recognition and Love. Maybe you have another group that is primarily talent with sub-groups creativity and talent. This yields groups of Recognition, Love, and Talent with sub-groups. Weave your way through your list in this fashion.

As you have gone through your list you will discover some groups are rather abstract that you want in a good life and high on your priorities, such as love, creativity, and respect. Other groups are more concrete groups, such as nice car, big house, or vacations to Europe. Concrete groups are important and should be labeled as such, while there are groups that are both concrete and abstract, such as a group you might call leisure which might include a trip to Europe, entertainment, and recreation.

Some groups may include parts of other sub-groups. Travel could be its own group, or part of recreation, or part of education. This is acceptable. [What you are after is what you want your life to look like and what your priorities are for your good life. So, think of these groups the way you want to think of them.](#)

Step three is to rank your groups of priorities. Professor Grim suggests using the test Plato uses in his *The Philebus*. Say you have (1) love, (2) recognition, and (3) talent as important groups in your list. Your list might also include (4) character strengths and virtues, such as wisdom and knowledge, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence. The Platonic test asks if you could have only one group, what would it be?

Would you go for a life of love, to the exclusion of recognition, talent, and character strengths and virtues? Or, would you choose a life of character

strength and virtue sacrificing love, recognition, and talent? Perhaps you want talent, and you would develop talent over the other priorities in your life.

Unfortunately, under Plato's test you only get to choose one group. But, Plato's test forces you to think about your top priority. In my classes, I ask my students to vote on their top priority with a show of hands. How would you vote if you only have one group to choose?

Fortunately, we do not live in an all or nothing group of our life's priorities. You get to choose which groups you want for your life, your good life. However, just choosing really is not good enough. **You need to rank them.**

We all know percentages, so we can start with 100 percent and divide by our groups. If we have four groups, we could have 25%, 25%, 25% and 25%. But, that might not be your life, the life you want. Perhaps you want Character Strength/Virtue to be top at 40%, Talent second at 30%, Recognition third at 20%, and Love last at 10%; or, maybe in your life, Love should be top at 50% and the rest at lower percentages. So, rank your groupings.

By doing this exercise you have identified, grouped, and ranked your life's priorities for your good life. You have actually evaluated how you want to shape your life in a systematic method, rather than just reacting to what life throws at you.

The value of what you have done is that you have established what is really valuable in your own life. There are at least three reasons why this might be important to you. First, people can work for years to achieve certain things, i.e., a good job, a good position, a house in a good area. After decades of effort and sacrifice they have their goal. Yet they end up saying, "is that all there is to life?" They stagnate. When people get to this stage, I have seen them very vulnerable to divorce. They want something different, but they don't know what it is they want.

A second reason to prioritize your values and good life is that some people think they want something to the point of devoting all their effort to get what they want, and make enormous sacrifices in order to achieve something, that in the end they do not really want. I have seen some business owners, tell me it just is not worth the headaches of running a business and they would

just like to get a job and be like “normal” people. They have achieved their dream of running a business, but it has become more of a nightmare than a dream.

A third reason to prioritize your values is that you need to examine what it is you really value and determine the routes to get what you want out of your good life. It may be that what you really want out of life is to hunt, fish, golf, and have a family. Working twenty hours a day to create wealth may be at odds with your life’s priorities of hunting, fishing, golfing, and having a family. You do not need a lot of money to have your good life. On the other hand, it may be that you want to own your own business, take vacations to Europe, have a big house, and do not care about hunting, fishing, or golfing. It may be your priority to achieve success by earning enough money to enjoy what money can buy.

What Matters Most At least you have given your life priorities some thought. I believe you can go a little further for yourself. Hyrum Smith in his book *What Matters Most-The Power of Living Your Values* asks, “What am I going to do with the rest of my life?”⁸⁵ In his workshops along with his book, Smith requires you to identify on cards what really matters. Essentially, you have just done the same thing with your list of your life’s priorities, and your good life.

Smith contends life’s real fulfillment comes when you honestly answer: “What really matters most to me? What would I really like to accomplish? What legacy would I like to leave behind? Your challenge is to answer these questions, which you have on your list of life’s priorities, but then put them into action every day.”⁸⁶

Smith argues that the place to begin should start with your governing values. He terms governing values as “those things in your life that matter most to you, those things without which you would find life meaningless or unfulfilled, those things that lie at the heart of who you are and who you hope to become.”⁸⁷

Roles Smith has developed what he terms “What matters most tri-quetation” with roles, governing values, and mission in the equation. He compares his “tri-quetation” to a three legged stool, such that roles, values, and mission have to hold up the stool; and, by analogy your life of what matters most. Each of us finds ourselves in roles in life, either self-selected or placed upon

us by circumstances. The impact on or to these roles are influenced by our governing values, those core inner feelings and perceptions that govern much of what we do; and, I might add what our character really is. Both our roles and our governing values are influenced in turn by our personal sense of mission, which are our feelings about what we should be doing with our lives.⁸⁸

Smith establishes these “three legs---identification of roles, governing values, and personal mission---are all essential for true balance.” Smith calls it a blueprint; or, as we have referred to it, a “plan” for you life. Roles are the relationships and responsibilities that we have in life.⁸⁹ We have included many of the examples Smith provides in our life’s priorities list, with the exception that Smith extends our children/family item to include parent, son or daughter, spouse, sister or brother, grandparent.

Governing Values Smith begins his chapter on governing values with a quote by Deepak Chopra. I believe Deepak Chopra’s quote is so true and succinctly put that it could well be the single most important point you take from this course. I will say that in some of my other PDHonline.org courses, I have explained theories of the collapse of the Roman Empire, so there is historical precedent for Deepak Chopra’s quote:

“Without values there is confusion and chaos. When values disintegrate, everything disintegrates. Health disintegrates, poverty attains dominance over affluence, societies and civilizations crumble. When we pay attention to these values that society has always held sacred, then order emerges out of chaos, and the field of pure potentiality inside us becomes all-powerful, creating anything it desires.”

Need I say that the economic collapse of 2008 in the United States and around the world supports Deepak Chopra assertion.

Smith defines governing values as “what we believe to be of greatest importance and of highest priority in our lives.” Our governing values lie at the center of who we really are and are a core part of our being. What makes governing values difficult, and our ethics, is our inability to give hard and fast rules that work for every occasion. Some of our values or ethics may represent character traits made up of honesty, compassion, decisiveness, or generosity that have come to have special meaning or desirability in our culture and other cultures. Other values or ethics may

reflect our attitudes about people or other aspects of our lives, for instance, being a loving partner, caring for people, appreciating nature, having faith in a higher power, to having freedom of action and thought.⁹⁰

Cognitive Dissonance Here is a catch. What do we go through when our minds try to mentally juggle and resolve the inner conflicts between two conflicting concepts? There can be a difference between deeply held values and behavior that goes against our deeply held values. This inner conflict produces pain because of the gap between values and behavior which psychologists term cognitive dissonance. Cognitive dissonance is then, that state of having inconsistent thoughts, beliefs, or attitudes, especially as relating to behavioral decisions and attitude change. These personal conflicts can also bring us back to “**worry**” which we covered in some detail.⁹¹

Balance and Consistency We want balance and consistency in our lives, your good life, with your life’s priorities. You have been writing and discovering your core, governing values, roles, character and strengths, in short ethics and priorities. Your priorities and ethics drives your behavior, and there may be conflicts within you. However, you can eliminate or modify your attitudes and behavior that are harmful. You do this by making yourself consciously aware of your values, priorities, ethics, and make decisions or changes to your life’s priorities, out of conflict and consistent.⁹²

Smith’s Four Natural Laws About Governing Values, Priorities, Ethics

Hyrum Smith defines “natural laws as fundamental patterns of nature and life that human experience and testing have shown to be valid.” Smith’s four natural laws exist and operate whether or not we believe and accept them. At least four natural laws regulate our behavior as it relates to our governing values, priorities, and ethics. One, “whether we consciously realize it or not, we have inner values [priorities, ethics] that strongly influence our outward balance.” Two, “our natural inclination is for actions to be consistent with these deeply held governing values.” Three, “by identifying and clarifying our governing values [priorities, ethics], we can tap their power to increase our personal effectiveness.” Four, “when our behavior is in line with our governing values [priorities, ethics], we experience inner peace.”⁹³

From the Four Natural Laws, Smith goes on to prioritizing governing values, life's priorities, ethics and the good life, which you have previously done with your list.

I believe what we have done with Dr. Grim's life's priorities list, expanded, and Hyrum Smith's 'tri-quetion' or three legged stool is to establish two of the three legs. The last leg is the personal mission statement.

Personal Mission In Life We have nearly come full circle since our start. Why are we here, what is our purpose, what are our priorities in life? That was our first question and it might include, what is your personal mission in life? Today, most companies have a mission or vision statement. Unfortunately, I believe a lot of mission statements were developed for marketing purposes, rather than the vision or mission for everyone in the company to know and follow in a cohesive and coordinated manner.

The idea now is to coordinate your life's priorities, character strengths and virtues into a personal mission statement that ties together and simplifies your life into a mantra or theme. Your mantra or theme helps you be motivated toward your good life. Your personal mission statement is a brief written expression of your overall purpose in life.

Your personal mission in life should describe your condensed life's priorities and values into a sentence or two that describes what you want to be and accomplish in your life. It should mold your list of life's priorities into a concise statement of your personal mission in life.

Hyrum Smith took his personal mission statement from Winston Churchill, simply "make a difference." A personal mission statement used by the United States Army was "be all that you can be." A personal mission statement should: (1) represent the best within you, connecting with your inner life and values; (2) incorporate or recognize your unique gifts and ability to contribute them; (3) recognize and contribute to a higher purpose than yourself; (4) recognize and include fundamental human needs (Maslow type needs); (5) rely on principles that produce quality-of-life results; (6) creates both vision and values, character strengths and virtues or ethics; (7) balances God, family, work, community; and (8) most of all, inspires you, not necessarily anyone else. It should be your creation, your good life.⁹⁴

Katharine Hanson, Ph.D., director and associate publisher of Quintessential Careers, advises writing a personal mission statement offers the opportunity to establish what is important in life when starting or changing careers. She provides examples of personal mission statements, a couple of which I will provide here.⁹⁵

For example, “Throughout each day in my life I strive to be loyal to my friends and family, lead a successful career that I enjoy, stay healthy, and take on any challenges that may come my way. I value my family members, friends, spiritual fulfillment, sense of accomplishment, and respect for others. Throughout my life I will always be supportive and loyal to all my family members, allowing a relationship that will last a lifetime. I will always be supportive to fellow friends and assist with any endeavors they may have. My spiritual beliefs remain extremely important in my life, creating the backbone of my inner self. I live life to the fullest and strongly believe that nothing is impossible. Without respect for life and human beings the world would be a meaningless place.” Then an inspirational quote from Henry David Thoreau is included, “If one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours.”

Or, another shorter example, “I am caring, compassionate, kind, and loyal. I give to those in need, and never break my word. I try to help others, and help others help themselves. I believe in being successful, both emotional and financially. Not only for myself, but for the benefit of those around me. I am open-minded and do not criticize what I do not understand. I deal with problems as they arise, and do not avoid responsibility. I believe that above all else, the ultimate goal is happiness, whatever its source, but not at the expense of others. I always attempt to treat others as I would like to be treated myself.”

One more example, “Be loyal. Be honest. Be compassionate. I must give respect before I demand it. I must take the strengths of my loved ones and improve on my weaknesses. Allow myself to empathize, not sympathize. Set, and follow, a good example for my family. Review my actions each and every day. Learn from my mistakes. Put faith in the Lord, in Him anything is possible.”

Your Turn

You have purpose in your life and for others around you. What do you want? How do you intend to achieve what you want? You have written out your life's priorities, roles, goals, values, character strengths and virtues.

Now, compose your Personal Mission Statement and write it out on paper. You have been given some examples. But, these examples are not yours.

There is something magic about creating your own mission statement, so do it now. You may want to make a draft and then visit it in a day or two, but get started.

Just to show you that I try to practice what I preach and do as I say, I will share my personal mission statement with you. My thought is that I want something short, concise, and simple that I can remember.

“Trust in God, live with integrity, exercise mind and body, practice the ‘golden rule,’ show my family happiness and love, strive to achieve wisdom, expertise, and success in life, and serve by example.”

I dare say, that by writing out your Personal Mission Statement, you have accomplished what very few people have done. Practice it and you will achieve a lot.

7.0 Summary

The premise of this course is if you become a better person, you will be a better engineer. The theory is if your needs are met, your mind is right, and you plan ahead, you will achieve your purpose in life and develop your good life.

Your life has been examined and your life is worth living. You know life's Maslow needs and the desire to become self-actualizers and peak-performers.

You desire to be more than you can be, to have a greater good. We have seen that one of the greatest impediments, that to some extent we can control, is worry. We learned that we all worry to some extent. Our goal

was to evaluate our worry. We also looked at ways to make worry productive. Ultimately, we wanted to put bad worry (excessive worry) behind us and move forward with our life's priorities and our good life. Hopefully, you did well on Dr. Hallowell's Worry Self-Assessment Quiz, but if there were any questions, you were able to self-test through the Anxiety Disorder Association of America website. Moreover, the anxiety disorders discussed may apply to people you know and you can better understand and appreciate them. Further, if your scores fell into areas that require professional help you should recognize your need and seek help.

We also looked at failure, how to handle failure, and how failure can be a good thing.

You set out your life's priorities, best life, and good life. You did this by making your list of good things in life and developing a plan. Your list of good things in life was grouped and organized into topics and major groupings. The Plato Test was applied and then each major grouping was analyzed as a percentage of your priority. Then you correlated your groups of life's priorities with Hyrum Smith's three legged stool, roles, governing values, and personal mission statement.

We learned from Deepak Chopra that without values there is confusion and chaos. Poverty attains dominance over affluence. Psychologists taught us that when values conflict with behavior we can suffer pain and cognitive dissonance.

Lastly, you developed your Personal Mission Statement made up of your life's priorities, roles, values, character strengths and virtues, into a theme or mantra that can be used on a daily basis to act out your life's priorities and your good life.

Now, let us go forward as Goethe so brilliantly teaches:

**“Knowing is not enough; we must apply.
Willing is not enough; we must do.”**

Congratulations and have a great rest of your life!

Appendix A *A Self-Assessment Quiz*

How much of a worrier are you? Dr. Edward Hallowell has allowed me to reproduce a quiz he developed to assess worry that we can use. I encourage you to assess yourself.

In response to each of the questions, give yourself 0 points if your answer is “rarely or not at all,” 1 point if you answer is “sometimes,” 2 points if your answer is “often,” and 3 points if your answer is “almost every day.” The questions that are starred (*) at the end (numbers 46-50) represent major risk factors for becoming an excessive worrier.

Score

Questions

- ___ 1. Do you wish you worried less?
- ___ 2. Do worries pop into your mind and take over your thinking, like annoying little gnats?
- ___ 3. Do you find something to worry about even when you know everything is OK?
- ___ 4. How much did you worry as a child?
- ___ 5. Do others comment on how much you worry?
- ___ 6. Does your spouse (or person closest to you) tell you that you worry too much?
- ___ 7. Do you find that worry clouds your judgment?
- ___ 8. Do you tarnish good times with worry?
- ___ 9. Do you dwell upon a time or times you were unfairly sued, slandered, unexpectedly fired, downsized, or otherwise victimized by injustice?
- ___ 10. Do you worry that good friends will turn on you?
- ___ 11. Do you think about death and get frightened?
- ___ 12. Do you worry about your health in a way that you know, or have told you, is excessive or irrational?
- ___ 13. How often do you worry about money?
- ___ 14. Do you know or do other people tell you that most of your worries are irrational?
- ___ 15. Do you become immobilized by worry?
- ___ 16. Are you more concerned than you wish you were with what others think of you?
- ___ 17. Do you develop physical symptoms in response to stress?
- ___ 18. Do you tend to brood over possible danger rather than doing

- something about it?
- ___ 19. Do you drink or use other drugs when you get worried?
 - ___ 20. Do you find yourself unable to make use of reassurance when you worry?
 - ___ 21. Do you ruminate, i.e., go over the same worry again and again?
 - ___ 22. In the midst of success do you find yourself feeling apprehensive, wondering what will go wrong?
 - ___ 23. When you are alone, is some degree of fear your resting state?
 - ___ 24. Do you feel that it is dangerous, almost like tempting fate, to feel confident and secure?
 - ___ 25. Are you inhibited and/or shy?
 - ___ 26. How much do you procrastinate?
 - ___ 27. Are you plagued by a feeling that nothing can work out well?
 - ___ 28. How often do you feel that something bad is “about to happen”?
 - ___ 29. Do your daydreams tend to be gloomy?
 - ___ 30. When you sort through your mail, do you feel a sense of foreboding, wondering what bad news may have arrived today?
 - ___ 31. Do you avoid confrontations?
 - ___ 32. Are you insecure?
 - ___ 33. Are you alone more than you’d like to be?
 - ___ 34. Do you look for what is wrong with your hotel room or your rental house/condo the minute you enter it?
 - ___ 35. Do you find compliments and/or reassurance hard to take?
 - ___ 36. Do you feel that nobody knows “the real you”?
 - ___ 37. Do you find yourself drawn to negative thoughts even when you’re otherwise in a good mood?
 - ___ 38. Do you wonder if someone is out to get you or is trying to take advantage of you?
 - ___ 39. Do you tend to dismiss as superficial people who are cheerful or optimistic?
 - ___ 40. Would people describe you as imaginative or creative?
 - ___ 41. Is it hard for you to shake off criticism, even if you know the criticism is inaccurate?
 - ___ 42. Do you fail to live up to the standards you set for yourself?
 - ___ 43. Do you feel an unmet need for reassurance?
 - ___ 44. Do you lose perspective easily, worrying over some relatively minor matter as if it were a major concern?
 - ___ 45. Do you feel compelled to worry that a certain bad thing might happen, such as a business deal falling through, or your child not getting picked for the team, or your financial situation collapsing,

out of an almost superstitious feeling that if you don't worry about it the bad thing will happen, while if you *do* worry about it, your worrying might actually *prevent* the negative outcome?

- ___ *46. Did you ever suffer physical, sexual, or psychological abuse?
- ___ *47. Did you have few secure attachments to other people as a child and/or would you describe your childhood as unstable?
- ___ *48. Do you have symptoms of obsessive-compulsive disorder, e.g., habits or ritualistic behavior that you cannot resist and/or intrusive obsessive thoughts that won't go away; or symptoms of panic attacks, e.g., sudden episodes of intense feelings of panic accompanied by physical symptoms of sweating, elevated heart rate, and rapid breathing; or symptoms of recurring, intense anxiety?
- ___ *49. Do you have a family history (in your parents and/or grandparents) of depression or obsessive-compulsive disorder, or panic attacks, or anxiety disorders, or substance abuse?
- ___ *50. Do you have any medical conditions that have been ascribed by your doctor at least in part to excessive worry?

The minimum score on this test is 0. If you scored 0, you must be a supremely secure and confident individual---or maybe you fudged your answers so as not to worry!

The maximum score is 150. If you scored 150, you would do well to read Dr. Hallowell's book---*Worry-Hope and Help for a Common Condition*.

A rough breakdown as to the meaning of your score would be as follows:

0-25: Low. You are not an excessive worrier.

26-75: Potential Danger Zone. You may have some tendencies toward worry that Dr. Hallowell's book can help you with.

76-150: Danger Zone. If you worry this much, consider consulting a professional. This much worry is not good for you physically, emotionally, or spiritually, and it can impair your life at home, at work, and especially when you're by yourself.

THE RIGHT CHOICE: References, Endnotes, Acknowledgments, Permissions & Websites

The Right Choice: Applying Ethics to Engineering and subsequent Right Choice titles started development in 2001. Since then, countless websites were visited, many with links to other sources, some of which are no longer on the web. Every attempt has been made to credit those sources used in this course and your indulgence is asked of anyone who has been slighted.

Of particular thanks goes to Dr. Patrick Grim for his thoughts and encouragement and Dr. Edward Hallowell, who gave me permission to include his Worry Self-Assessment Quiz, word for word, for this course.

1.0 The Unexamined Life

1. Grim, Patrick. *Questions of Value*. The Teaching Company®, 4151 Lafayette Center Drive, Suite 100, Chantilly, VA 20151, 2005.
www.Teach12.com Last accessed 10/11/08.

2.0 Life's Needs

2. Boeree, C. George. *Abraham Maslow*, 1998.
www.ship.edu/~cgboeree/maslow.html Last accessed 10/11/08.
3. Simons, Janet A., Irwin, Donald B., and Drinnien, Beverly A. *Psychology-The Search for Understanding*. New York: West Publishing Co., 1987. "Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs."
<http://honolulu.hawaii.edu/intranet/committees/FacDevCom/guidebk/teachtip/maslow.htm> Last accessed 10/11/08.
4. Abraham Maslow, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abraham_Maslow
Last accessed 9/1/08.
5. Maslow, A. H. *Psychology Review*, 50, 370-396 (1943), "A Theory of Human Motivation." Re-published Green, Christopher D., *Classics in the History of Psychology*, York University, Toronto, Canada.
<http://psychclassics.yorku.ca/Maslow/motivation.htm> Last accessed 10/11/08.
6. Maslow, Abraham H., Stephens, Deborah C., Ed. *The Maslow Business Reader*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2000. p. 2.

7. Maslow, A. H. *Religions, Values, and Peak-Experiences*. New York: Penguin Books USA, 1994. pp. 70-71.
8. Note 5. above. pp.7-8.
9. Maslow, A. H., Lowry, Richard J., Ed. *Dominance, Self-Esteem, Self-Actualization: Germinal Papers of A. H. Maslow*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1973. p. 163-64.
10. Id. p. 139.
11. Id. p. 140.
12. Id. pp. 141.
13. Id. p. 141-42.
14. Id. p. 145.
15. Id. p. 147.
16. Id. p. 149.
17. Id. p. 162.
18. Id. p.163.
19. Boeree. p. 4.
20. Boeree. pp. 6-7.
21. Note 9, pp. 93-94.
22. Note 9, p. 11.
23. Note 9, p. 12
24. Note 9, pp. 12-13.
25. Note 9, pp. 16.
26. Note 9, pp. 16-17.
27. Note 9, pp. 17-18.
28. Note 7, pp. 19-35.
29. Maslow, A. H. *Toward a Psychology of Being, 2nd Ed.* New York: D. Van Nostrand Co., 1968. p. 79.
30. Id. pp. 71-81.
31. Id. p. 81.
32. Id. p. 82.
33. Id. p. 85.
34. Id. p. 91.
35. Id. p. 97.
36. Id.
37. Id.
38. Id. p. 101.
39. Id. pp. 111-12.

3.0 The Good Life

40. Roochnik, David. *Plato's Republic*. Lecture Twelve-Book VI-The Idea of the Good. The Teaching Company[®], 4151 Lafayette Center Drive, Suite 100, Chantilly, VA 20151, 2005; Cooper, John M., Ed. *Plato's Complete Works*. Hackett Pub. Co., Inc.: Indianapolis, 1997. p. 1125, Plato number 505a.
41. Cooper, John M., Ed. *Plato's Complete Works*. pp. 1126-1132, Plato numbers 505a-511e.
42. Id.
43. Id.
44. Id.
45. McKeon, Richard, Ed. *The Basic Works of ARISTOTLE*. Modern Library imprint Random House Pub.: NY, 2001. p. 935, Aristotle number 1094a.
46. McMahon, Darrin M. *HAPPINESS A History*. Atlantic Press imprint Grove/Atlantic, Inc.: NY, 2006. pp. 42-50.

4.0 How Worry Affects Us

47. Carnegie, Dale. *How to Stop Worrying and Start Living: Time Tested Methods for Conquering Worry*. Simon & Schuster, Inc.: NY reprint 1985.
48. Taylor, Shelley E. Email to the author Bill Brant. 6 Dec. 2005. Creswell, J. David K., Welch, William T., Taylor, Shelley E., Sherman, David K., Gruenewald, Tara L., and Mann, Traci. "Affirmation of Personal Values Buffers Neuroendocrine and Psychological Stress Responses." *Psychological Science*. 16.11 (2005): 846-851.
49. Hallowell, MD, Edward M. *Worry-Hope and Help for a Common Condition*. Ballantine Books: NY 1997.
50. Id., p. 298.
51. Id., p. xi.
52. Leahy, Ph.D., Robert L. *The Worry Cure-Seven Steps to Stop Worry from Stopping You*. Harmony Books: NY 2005. p. 11.
53. Hallowell, p. 9.
54. Id., p. 5-6.
55. Id., p. 9.
56. Id., pp. 37-56.

57. Norden, Ph.D., Jeanette. *Understanding the Brain*. The Teaching Company®, 4151 Lafayette Center Drive, Suite 100, Chantilly, VA 20151, 2007. p. 142.
58. Id., p. 155.
59. Hallowell, pp. 57-68.
60. Amen, MD, Daniel G. and Bennett, Ph.D., David. *The Brain in Leadership (CD)*. Amen Clinics, Inc. www.amenclinics.com Last accessed 10/11/08
61. Hallowell, pp. 69-77.
62. Burns, David D., MD. *Feeling Good-The New Mood Therapy*. Avon Books imprint HarperCollins Pub.: NY, 1999. p. 9.
63. Id., pp. xi-xxx.
64. Hallowell, pp. 144-150.
65. Burns, David D., MD. *When Panic Attacks-The New, Drug-Free Anxiety Therapy That Can Change Your Life*. Morgan Road Books: NY, 2006. pp. 31-32.
66. Id.
67. Id., p. 35
68. Hallowell and Leahy, supra.
69. Burns, David D., MD. *When Panic Attacks*. Pp. 40-46.
70. Anxiety Disorder Association of America (ADAA) www.adaa.org Last accessed 10/8/08.

5.0 Taking Control of Our Worry

71. Leahy, pp. 67-75.
72. Casriel, Erika. "Stepping Out." *Psychology Today*. March/April 2008. pp. 69-75.
73. Leahy, pp. 76-95.
74. Id., pp. 96-114.
75. Id., pp. 115-136.
76. Id., pp. 137-159.
77. Id., pp. 160-177.
78. Id., pp. 179-190.
79. Hallowell, pp. 295-306.

6.0 Life's Priorities, The Best Life, The Good Life

80. Carnegie, pp. 10-11.

81. Grim, Patrick. *Questions of Value*. “Better Off Dead.” The Teaching Company®, 4151 Lafayette Center Drive, Suite 100, Chantilly, VA 20151, 2005.
82. Grim. *Questions of Value*. “Life’s Priorities.”
83. Smith, Hyrum W. *What Matters Most-The Power of Living Your Values*. NY: Simon & Schuster, 2000.
84. Peterson, Christopher and Seligman, Martin E. P. *Character Strengths and Virtues-A Handbook and Classification*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.
85. Smith, p. 62.
86. Smith. p. 63.
87. Id. p. 64.
88. Id. pp. 70-71.
89. Id. pp. 72-74.
90. Id. pp. 82-84.
91. Id. p. 85.
92. Id. p. 87.
93. Id. pp. 88-89.
94. Id. pp. 112-116.
95. Hansen, Katharine, Ph.D. *Using a Personal Mission Statement to Chart Your Career Course*. Quintessential Career.
www.quintcareers.com/printable/mission_statements.html Last accessed 10/8/08.

Appendix A Self-Assessment Quiz

Hallowell, Chapter 6. pp.78-83.

www.drhallowell.com Last accessed 10/19/08.