

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Mid-Life/Career Renewal

For self-renewing men and women the development of their own potentialities and the process of self-discovery never end...Exploration of the full range of our own potentialities is not something that we can safely leave to the chances of life. It is something to be pursued systematically, or at least avidly, to the end of our days.

John Gardner

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Personal Systems Development

Integrated Pathways for Adult Development. This chapter reuses the Personal Systems Development Life Cycle Model introduced in Chapter Seven and which is now shown as Figure 11-1. Once again, the horizontal axis represents a notional distribution of the adult life span, and the vertical axis displays selected dimensions of cognitive and emotional reasoning that may be used to discuss practical elements of human development. Particular emphasis is on the *Mid-Life/Career Transition* marker that often serves the individual as a re-awakening, a warning, and/or an opportunity to *make things right* while there is time to do so. The transition from the *Early to Middle Adult* stage is our main interest in this chapter.

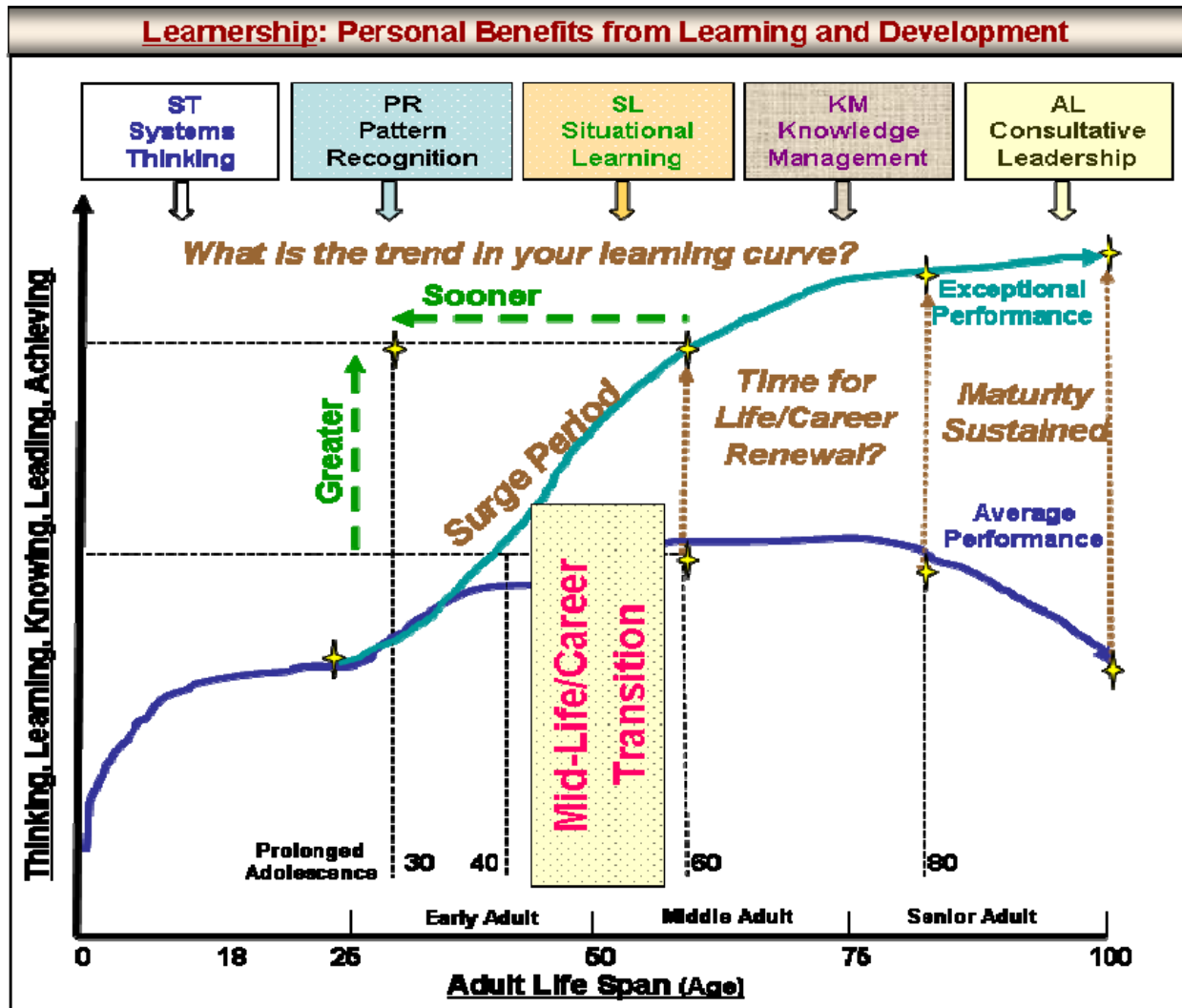


Figure 11-1

A review of the dimensions of reasoning and development illustrated in Figure 11-1 is a useful prelude to the detailed perspectives and observations provided further-on in this chapter. The five sets of developmental activities and one special learning experience and challenge (Mid-Life/Career Transition), are summarized below:

[Author's Note: Using Figure 11-1 for reference, readers are invited to reflect on their own development and positioning in the figure in terms of the following topics. Where are you along your path of growth and development?]

1. Cognitive Priorities – The Learnership Integrated Systems Architecture (LISA) envisions four levels of social systems development, each one requiring its own level of personal cognitive activity in which we come to understand our unique purpose and our relationship with others in society. We realize both the breadth and depth of our interrelationships as we sequentially shift our mental energies from (1) *personal micro-cognition* when it is “all about us” as we pass through prolonged adolescence; (2) through *organizational macro-cognition* when we take on the responsibility of family and career, (3) through *community mega-cognition* as we invest additional time to help manage and guide the future of our local communities (city, county, state); and lastly (4) to *societal meta-cognition* when we have lived the majority of our lives and begin to take measure of our larger world (our nation, the world's nations) and our place in it – our search for a *sense of wholeness and completion*.
2. Learning Cycles – The vertical scale identifies five major categories of activities that generally unfold in an overlapping, but systematic manner. As each of these activities moves through the sequential time periods, other opportunities for lifelong learning and development are presented, but of course are optional. The *reflect-reason-renew cycle* inserted in each age period is a reminder that there are distinct cognitive and emotional insights available to each of us as we continue to grow and develop.
3. Psychological Objectives – As we move through our stages of adult development, we experience psycho-social changes. In the prolonged adolescence period our *identity* and personal *ego* are foremost in our attention. Who are we; what is our purpose; and how will our needs be satisfied are the questions that need to be answered. When we move to the early adult period our concerns expand to include getting in touch with ourselves (*soul*) and others (*intimacy*) at a deeper level. In middle adult life we evolve again as we attempt to gain a full understanding of what we really have become (*self*) and how we can begin to share with posterity (*generativity*) the best of our knowledge and insight. Lastly, if we are healthy and lucky, we transition into the senior adult level of psychological *integrity* when our interests, knowledge and accomplishments converge into mindfulness and *self-fulfillment*.
4. Archetypes and Relationships – Four distinctive periods of growth are recognizable across the human life cycle in terms of representative archetypes, psychological drivers and levels of dependence. The first three symbiotic relationships are: Warrior (*Ego*) – *Dependence*; Creator (*Soul*) – *Independence*; and Sage (*Self*) – *Interdependence*. In the last stage, personal *Self-fulfillment* is the culmination of a life well-lived. The learnership philosophy and architecture requires that self-fulfillment to be optimally achieved, that is, be supported by high performance, the common good, and human enlightenment achieved in the other social systems domains.

5. Seasons and Passages – Running horizontally through the middle of the model is a conceptual vision of how each of us could hopefully become self-fulfilled. This vision is the space between the *High Growth Zone of Human Knowledge and Development* and the *High Growth Zone of Ego, Soul and Self*. Our ever-expanding acquisition of learning, knowledge and skills permits us to master the challenges in each time period, refine and maintain our focus, and experience a well-lived and successful life. It is important, however, to acknowledge the reality that given the unequal allocation of knowledge and resources among most social groups, a significant portion of each population will enter what is termed the *Low Growth Zone of Human Indifference and Stagnation*. Once in this zone, an immense effort is required to re-emerge and get back onto the road of development for successful living.

6. Mid-Life/Career Transition – This stage of cognitive and emotional awareness, and even discomfort, generally occurs in the 45-55 age range, but can vary significantly depending on an individual's particular life circumstances. It is often a period of disruptive feelings, cognitive dilemmas, and forced reflection on matters having to do with one's life purpose, progress, happiness, experiences, and increasing age. Challenges include moving from independency to interdependency and from intimacy to generativity. Greater emphasis is required on learning and preparing for later life and ensuring a *second life* identity and adulthood commensurate with the knowledge and experience already gained. Throwing off old stereotypes, letting go of outgrown priorities, and developing real clarity about one's own capabilities, purpose, and impact on posterity are the usual areas for concern and purposeful renewal.

[Author's Note: The mid-life/career challenge is to use the months, even years in this period, to invest in significant reflection, learning, and planning for renewed focus and energy. Additional education, new experiences, and conversations with a wider range of colleagues and contacts are helpful techniques to identify opportunities for development and greater purpose. New visions, goals, and strategies are all possible when this time period is used effectively.]

Learnership for Self-Renewal. A major audience for this book from its early conception has been those individuals (1) in the throes of their *mid-life/career transition*, (2) who are managing the *generative stage* of their adult life cycle, and (3) who are focused on planning their senior adult *self-fulfillment* activities. The learnership philosophy, architecture, and practices offer a holistic and integrated approach for practicing *self-renewal* in a systematic, meaningful manner. John Gardner has written extensively on this subject (Self-Fulfillment: The Individual and the Innovative Society (1981) and some of his insights are summarized here for consideration – particularly by those actively transitioning to another stage of their lives:

1. Self-Development – “For self-renewing men and women the development of their own potentialities and the process of self-discovery never end...Exploration of the full range of our own potentialities is not something that we can safely leave to the chances of life. It is something to be pursued systematically, or at least avidly, to the end of our days.” (pp.10-11)

2. Self-Knowledge – Human beings have always employed an enormous variety of clever devices for running away from themselves, the modern world is particularly rich in such stratagems.” (p.12)
3. Courage to Fail – “We pay a heavy price for our fear of failure...If you want to keep on learning, you must keep on risking failure – all your life. It’s as simple as that.” (p.14)
4. Love – “The joy and suffering of those we love are part of our own experience. We feel their triumphs and defeats, their hopes and fears, their anger and pity, and our lives are richer for it.” (p.15)
5. Motivation – “All of us cannot spend all our time pursuing our deepest convictions. But all of us...should be doing something about which we care deeply. If we are to escape the prison of the self, it must be something not essentially egocentric in nature.” (p.16)
6. Innovation – “Today even the most potent innovators are unlikely to be effective unless their work coincides with a crisis, or a series of crises, that put people in a mood to accept innovation.” (p.29)
7. Individuality and its Limits – “The moral for all of us is clear. We have a duty to nourish those qualities within ourselves that make us free and morally responsible beings. And we have an equally compelling duty to honor values beyond the self.” (p.93)
8. Moral Decay and Renewal – “In a pluralistic society consensus must necessarily be sought at what one might call a *middle level of values*. Obviously it cannot deal with the surface trivialities on manners and daily customs; neither can it sound the depths. It can deal with fairly fundamental values governing man’s behavior and with concepts such as *freedom* and *justice*. But those values float over still-deeper reaches of philosophic and religious beliefs...that gain their strength from man’s deepest nature...to force consensus would be intolerable...*so a pluralistic society wisely seeks to establish its consensus in the middle depths.*” (p.118)

[Author’s Note 1: An appropriate reminder at this juncture is that the learnership philosophy is anchored to a set of Universal Goals and Ideals that virtually all educated and reasonable people, organizations, communities, and societies would likely support and attempt to attain. The four Goals are: *self-fulfillment, high performance, the common good, and human enlightenment*. The six pairs of Ideals thought to be sufficient for inspiring morality in a pluralistic society are: *Truth-Honesty, Freedom-Democracy, Beauty-Goodness, Love-Happiness, Responsibility-Trust, and Justice-Equality.*]

[Author’s Note 2: Gardner’s observation on “moral decay and renewal,” above, is particularly insightful in that it recognizes that an extremely valuable aspect of a pluralistic democratic society is that a wide range of deeply held beliefs can be expressed and compete for attention in the public sphere. However, when those with strong beliefs or self-serving purposes attempt to seize or manipulate some aspect of American public policy or governance to favor their views –

thereby disadvantaging other groups and beliefs in the process – they should be perceived as being out-of-bounds. The excessively wealthy, powerful, and/or charismatic people among us are still entitled to the one vote per person rule of democracy. The middle ground, where the vast majority of American citizens can participate in social, economic, and political affairs without threats and intimidation from self-absorbed individuals and groups, must be protected. Attempting to exclude or dominate others, whether those others are in the minority or majority status violates the American vision of freedom and justice.]

Insight into Mid-Life/Career Renewal

We shall renew neither ourselves, nor our society, nor our troubled world unless we share a vision of something worth saving.
John Gardner

Mid-Life Perspectives.

The Future of Humanity. In Crucial Questions about the Future (1991), futurist Allen Tough poses several questions for our consideration regarding the future of humanity – questions such as: What is most important of all? Why do we act in ways that hurt our future? How can we achieve a satisfactory future? How can each person contribute? Discussing these questions and their potential solutions is fertile ground for everyone’s meta-cognitive social development. The balance between what we can and should do for ourselves, and for others, becomes more obvious when conversations on topics such as these are organized, facilitated, and action is taken. Tough stimulates conversation by stating his views on what needs to be done to achieve an exceptional future in terms of (1) five top priorities, (2) future-relevant knowledge, and (3) individual learning and change.

Five Top Priorities:

1. *Increase humanity’s knowledge of world problems and social change much faster than the problems themselves increase. A three-fold increase in future-relevant research, inquiry, disciplined thinking, knowledge, synthesis, and wisdom would probably be a highly beneficial expenditure, not a waste of money.*
2. *Disseminate this knowledge to political leaders, other key decision-makers, and the general public of all ages through education, books, mass media, and fresh approaches.*
3. *Improve governance, including planning, policies, governmental structure, and public administration. We need to sharply reduce the influence of unduly narrow and short-term pressures on all aspects of governance.*
4. *Avoid the worst catastrophes of all. In particular; world wars, population growth, deterioration of the planet, and the resulting misery and poverty.*

5. *Foster positive directions and improvement.* Not only avoid catastrophes, but devote effort and innovation toward improving various aspects of civilization.

Future-Relevant Knowledge:

1. We need more thoughtful *understanding of any traditional or false beliefs* that threaten our future, to decide why so much human behavior undermines a flourishing future for human civilization, and determine the most urgent and appropriate actions that we need to take.
2. We need *vigorous thinking and research* about the arrangements and institutions that are likely to produce individual and group behavior that is in the long-term interests of human civilization.
3. We need to determine how to get human *society to take its own future seriously* and to act accordingly.
4. There is a great need for *deep thoughtfulness*, from wrestling with the most important question of all, for seeing the big picture, and for acquiring wisdom and a broad perspective.

Individual Learning and Change:

1. *Never in history have so many people known so little* about the matters most important to their occupational, social, personal, and political future. This ignorance is a powder keg.
2. Once enough people *care about the future of human civilization*, choosing and implementing the necessary priorities and policies will be easier than at present.
3. Adult educators, college and university instructors, teachers, writers, artists, composers, public speakers, book publishers, and the mass media will all play a crucial role in *fostering the necessary learning and changes* in the people of every nation.

[Author's Note: These questions draw upon the thinking, learning, knowing, leading, and achieving learnership competencies presented in Chapters Two through Six of this book. Fundamentally, Tough is calling for the development and application of mature, adult reasoning by societal leaders. Nothing less than the future of human civilization is at stake.]

Dealing with Loss. Judith Viorst, author of Necessary Losses: The Loves, Illusions, Dependencies and Impossible Expectations that all of Us have to Give Up in Order to Grow (1986) has much to say on life transitions and the predictable changes in most everyone's sense of self as they proceed through their respective life cycles. Viorst quotes research psychologist Daniel Levinson on the process of separation and loss people experience as they move through various life phases and transitions: "The task of a developmental transition is to terminate a time in one's life; to accept the losses the termination entails; to review and evaluate the past; to

decide which aspects of the past to keep and which to reject; and to consider one's wishes and possibilities for the future. One is suspended between the past and the future, and struggling to overcome the gaps that separate them. Much from the past must be given up – separated from, cut out of one's life, rejected in anger, renounced in sadness or grief. And there is much that can be used as a basis for the future. Changes must be attempted in both self and world.” (p.266)

Viorst proceeds with her own story with the comment that: “...at about forty, those bridging years which take us from early to middle adulthood, Levinson calls this time the Mid-Life Transition. For most of us it's a crisis – a mid-life crisis. I have had one of my own...life begins at forty, we're told; we're getting better, not older; if Sophia Loren is what middle age is, it ain't bad. But before we can come to some positive view of the others side of the mountain, we need to acknowledge that middle age is sad, because – not all at once, but bit by bit and day by day – we lose and leave and let go of our young self.” (p.267)

Viorst, the prolific writer of numerous books of poetry and prose and a contributing editor to Redbook magazine, continues with a series of insightful observations that illuminate the subject of this chapter. A synopsis of her factual, but sometimes humorous comments is presented here, in sequence, to capture the chaos of mid-life crisis:

1. “The mid-life decline of youthful good looks is far more wounding for women than for men, for men can be wrinkled and balding and in other ways battered by time and still be viewed as sexually attractive.
2. Being physically attractive counts much more in a women's life than in a man's...identified as it is for women, with youthfulness, does not stand up well to age...a woman may fear aging because age will steal her power – her sexual power to attract a man.
3. And we may start to feel that this is a time of always letting go, of one thing after another after another: Our waistlines. Our Vigor. Our sense of adventure. Our 20/20 vision. Our trust in justice.
4. We feel shaken. We feel scared. We do not feel safe. The center's not holding, and things are falling apart.
5. We want a second opinion that says; ‘Don't you worry, you are going to live forever.’
6. We find in every ache and bodily change and diminished capacity intimations of our own mortality.
7. In mid-life we discover that we are destined to become our parents' parent. Few of us have factored that into our life's plan.
8. As past realities start to collapse, we challenge the self-definitions that have sustained us, finding that everything seems up for grabs, questioning who we are and what it is

we are trying to be, and whether, in this life of ours, the only life we have, our achievements and our goals hold any value.

9. Faced with the losses that mid-life has already brought, or is soon to bring, faced with a sense of finiteness and mortality, few of us will renounce our youth with anticipation of gain. And many of us will fight it all the way.
10. The *change-resisters* defy the realities of time by handing on to their power and to their non-negotiable ways of doing things. The *youth seekers* do not want to stand pat; they want to go back in time. They liked what they had and want to have it again. The *psychosomatic sufferers* trade off psychic distress for physical ills, including heart attacks and perhaps even cancer. The *self-improvers* distract themselves by filling up their time; they are running too fast to notice what they have lost.” (pp.268-272)

So, what can we do to manage our way through our mid-life transition or crisis? Can we get back into control of our mind and emotions? Can we reflect on our early life learning and renew ourselves for the later life that follows? And, what is it that we need to know or do differently, anyway? For what purpose? Viorst gives us a clue: “Integration – the unifying of seemingly opposite tendencies – is seen as the grand achievement of mid-life. But of course it’s a process we’ve met with previously. It began with our childhood struggle to heal the split between good and bad mother, to heal the split between devil and angel me, to balance our wish for attachment with our wish to be separate and free. The struggle – now on a higher level – continues. And so we strive to integrate (1) our feminine self with our masculine self, (2) our creative self with the self that knows inner and outer destructiveness, (3) a separate self that must die alone with a self that craves connection and immortality, and (4) a wiser, more seasoned middle-aged self with the youthful zest of the self we are leaving behind. Our season is autumn; our springtime and summer are done.” (p.282)

[Author’s Note: And now for the good news! The average 50 year old today can expect to live for 30 more years – half will live longer and experience more vitality, more enjoyment, and more learning and accomplishment than ever before in the history of humankind. Notwithstanding Viorst’s well documented depiction of loss and diminution expertly written in the 1980s, we are now a new people; much healthier, still striving to find meaning, still in control of our ultimate destiny, and much more involved in leading and mentoring others to become all they can be.]

Longevity, Identity, and Moral Character. In The Fountain of Youth: Cultural, Scientific, and Ethical Perspectives on a Biomedical Goal (2004) editors Stephen Post and Robert Binstock present the research and perspective of numerous experts on extending youth and long life. A useful presentation is that made by Christine Overall in “Longevity, Identity, and Moral Character: A Feminist Approach.” Overall says: “My point is that greater longevity, as a widespread social phenomenon, requires the development of new moral system. The reason is that as the human life span increases, different stages of life are being and will continue to be redefined...increasing longevity creates opportunities for new ways of living. For example (paraphrased):

1. What schooling and education mean will be redefined. *Lifelong learning* in the form of formal and informal schooling will permit people to continue to acquire skills, information, and understanding as need and interest dictate.
2. What marriage, partnership, friendship, sexuality, and gender mean will be redefined. There will be opportunities for more relationships at various points during the longer life.
3. What it means to be father, mother, parent, grandparent, and family will be redefined. Increasing technological control over conception, contraception, gestation, and birth make it possible to manage the timing and nature of reproductive behavior.
4. What it means to work, have a job or career, and retire will need to be redefined. engage in several careers over a lifetime – and to choose the time and type of one's retirement.”

All this will lead to the adoption of new roles and new identities as our life stages are reinterpreted. And, with new and redefined life stages, human beings will have the prospect of taking up new values and responsibilities.” (pp.291-293) “Morals and virtues will change with an increased focus on ‘How should I live?’ and ‘What kind of person should I be?’ and less on the more authoritarian notion of chastity and sexual purity...the focus of virtue ethics is on the individual agent and his or her character rather than in acts or rules. Character is the composite of the psychological qualities, both mental and moral, that make one a distinct person.” (p.293)

Christine Overall presents *feminist virtue ethics* as a major contributor to the future social order in that it allows for the possibility that appropriate and genuine virtues may be defined in relation to the specific communities in which they are needed and valued...Since feminist ethics emphasizes the importance of personal and social contexts both in shaping moral challenges and in providing data for responding to them, it requires us to be aware of contexts of aging and of increasing longevity...Some virtues, like honesty and truthfulness may be important for a lifetime, while others, such as receptiveness and or assertiveness, may be more useful at some stages than at others. She states that “Ethicists ought not to make moral evaluations or construct moral theory in a vacuum. Morality and moral systems cannot be analyzed and assessed without attention to the social context in which moral values are transmitted and moral decisions are made. Ethicist must take into account the effects and implications of cultural categories such as gender, race, class, sexual orientation, ability, and age, and their attendant belief systems and stereotypes.” (pp.295-296)

Christine Overall summarizes her thesis by saying that: “A longer life provides a greater chance for human flourishing, for learning virtues, and for living a good life. The person who seeks to foster in herself the appropriate virtues and who is successful to at least some degree is the person who will best be able to adapt to a changing environment, who will be more likely to transform herself, and will be able to flourish within the context of a longer life.” (p.300)

[Author's Note: Much scientific activity today revolves around prolongevity, countermanding the effects of senescence (aging), and helping people have choice in defining their own immortality. While we cannot be certain regarding the concept of life after death, we can absolutely begin to manage how posterity remembers us and our time on this planet. Perhaps taking time to assess and reflect on our state of mid-life/career development, we can plan and activate a second life stage of growth that is fully rewarding while we live, and is uniquely respected after we pass from this level of existence.]

The next three topics (Longevity Revolution, Age of Power, 50+ Reinventing America) present a range of perspectives illustrating the societal challenges and opportunities that are starting to be recognized as the first boomers start moving into their mid 60s. The learnership book and American Learnership Forum are being established to explore the developmental interests and service needs of mature people as they move through their senior adult life cycles.

The Longevity Revolution. In America the Wise (1998), Theodore Roszak describes the coming of a "new people" in American society. He says: "We are the first generation of the senior dominance. The beneficiaries of a *revolution in life-extending medicine and public health*, we enter the second half of our lives possessed of more political influence, greater wealth, and more vitality than any older generation before us. The values we choose to live by cannot help but be a commanding influence in shaping the century to come." (p.1) Some examples of near-term changes that will begin to have major impact on U.S. political, economic, and social affairs include:

1. Discovering a New People – More people are living longer and their extended participation in societal affairs will shape the course of history. The largest-growing sector of our population as of the early twenty-first century comprises those over eighty- five. Death, if one survives its first call, is a great awakener of conscious and a call to serious reflection and radical reappraisal. The forty million Americans now living on entitlements are the largest component of the welfare state. They will soon be joined by another eighty million Americans as the baby boom ages into retirement. (pp.9-11)
2. Concern about Entitlement Affordability – Increasing economic concern is being expressed from a number of public and private sector organizations that so large a percentage of retired people will become a drain on the U.S. economy. Some have suggested that senior entitlements are unsustainable, undeserved, unprincipled, and unfair – and that a "fiscal breakdown" is in the making. Additionally, the baby boom generation is uniquely identified for its "unseemly" and "ruinously dysfunctional" way of life. (p.27)
3. Rise of the Non-Profit Third Sector – The *Third Sector* is the sum total of all volunteer work outside the marketplace, either by individuals or through non-profit organizations. The third sector holds communities together in such fields of education, day care, health care, legal advocacy, sheltering and feeding the homeless, and drug rehabilitation. Women have traditionally been the main caregivers due to their greater longevity and social service skills, but more men are coming into the field. The third

sector is becoming the main focus of work for retired seniors, the money spent by that sector is greater than the GNP of all but seven nations, and there are already more people in that sector than in construction or transport or textiles. (p.99)

4. Maturity and the Media – The national media outlets for radio and TV services focus primarily on the 18-49 age group while seeming to forget that in the 21st century the population over 65 will steadily increase and outnumber the population under 25. The marketing trend away from youth and toward age is irreversible – and the older generation is more skeptical and less trusting of advertisements. They are a “harder sell” and not as committed to technological products. “Context” will become more important in entertainment, mindless adolescent behavior will be less tolerated, and sex will not be as large a draw for selling products and services. (pp.125-126)
5. Generativity and Mentoring – Erik Erickson was among the first psychologists to see aging as “a stage of growth of the healthy personality” and coined the word *generativity* to refer to the eldering project of our later years: “the interest in establishing and guiding the next generation,” as he defined it. Daniel Levinson has sought to broaden generativity to mean *mentoring*: “It is a complex role, combining the function of teacher, sponsor, guide, exemplar, and counselor... mentoring is a social task that had best take place outside the parent-child relationship.” (pp.168-169)

The Age of Power. Ken Dychtwald (Age Power: How the 21st Century will be Ruled by the New Old (1999) takes another view of the impact occurring by the boomer generation moving into their senior years; and it is not too complementary. Most of his book focuses on the overall negative impact of such a high percentage of elders on the American economy: huge deficits, higher taxes, unfair burdens for younger workers, the heavy lobbying hand of seniors’ organizations (e.g., the AARP), and negative economic trends. Still, in his concluding chapter: The Age of Power, he does offer some coaching to that generation (he is one of them) on how they can do better as seniors than they did in the earlier stages of their development. Quoting pp.235-236, the author comments: “By now it will be obvious that America is becoming a “gerontocracy,” and that four outcomes are certain:

1. More of us will live longer than in the previous generation.
2. The epicenter of economic and political power will shift from the young to the old.
3. We will need to change our current mind-set about how to spend the extra years of our life.
4. How we decide to behave as elders will, in all likelihood, become the most important challenge we will face in our lives.”

Dychtwald continues: “In the decades ahead, the boomers will complete America’s transformation into a gerontocracy as they take control of the nation’s social and economic power. From this demographically and politically dominant position, they will have the potential to realize their full intellectual, social, and political influence, not as baby boomers but as elders.

In youth, boomers were self-indulgent in their priorities. In their late teens and twenties, many shared an idealistic commitment to society. During the past several decades of career building and childrearing, many of their early ideals have been submerged. As boomers shed the skin of youth, however, they could be migrating into the *most powerful years of their lives*. If they can step outside their generational tendency toward self-centeredness and wield this power with wisdom and generativity, they could rise to their greatest height and make a remarkable success of history's first multiethnic, multiracial, and multigenerational melting pot. Or if, like silver-haired velociraptors, they use their size and influence to bully younger generations and gobble up all the available resources, we will find ourselves in a Jurassic Park of our own making.

If this generation evolves to a deepened appreciation of the effect it has on others and can learn to exemplify a new kind of wise, mature leadership, when the boomers' time on earth is over, perhaps they will be remembered not just as the *largest* generation in history, but the *finest*."

50+ Reinventing America. Authors Bill Novelli and Boe Workman (50+ Igniting a Revolution to Reinvent America, 2006) provide a much more upbeat look at the nation as its boomers move into the senior citizen ranks. They acknowledge the alarmist tone of much of the discussion surrounding the aging U.S. population, but propose strategies for alleviating some of the difficulties. First, they say it is a fact that:

1. "Boomers have not prepared adequately for their long futures.
2. Companies are rapidly shifting financial risks and responsibilities to workers and retirees without adequate preparation and safeguards.
3. Government programs are not working as well as they should, and many need to be modernized, better financed, and more engaging to the public.
4. We have a health-care system that is designed to pay bills but doesn't promote health and wellness.
5. We have a growing older population that by and large is vital and active and possesses great intellectual wealth. But we have not structured a social model to optimize their continued involvement." (p.12)

On the positive side, however, the authors recognize trends and opportunities designed to enable seniors to live better and contribute more to their communities:

1. Opportunity to Transform Health Care – Increase efficiencies, cut costs, decrease chronic disease, provide access to more people, and increase the availability and use of technology.
2. Opportunity to Reinvent Retirement – Charitable volunteering, continuing education, care-giving to family and others, better financial preparation, and phased retirement.

3. Opportunity to Revolutionize the Workplace – Adaptability to the changing workplace and technology, recognizing the advantages of stable, reliable, and part-time older workers.
4. Opportunity to Build Livable Communities – Modification of homes for better access and use of physical aids, provision of transportation services, and construction of senior communities and recreation facilities.
5. Opportunity to Change the Marketplace – Greater attention by marketers to the services and products required by seniors, and greater assistance fighting consumer fraud and financial scams.
6. Opportunity to Advocate for a Cause – Participation in public health and safety groups, social and political activism, and mentoring and coaching younger adults and children.
7. Opportunity to Leave a Legacy – Completing one’s own life work, contributing to the betterment of others, and sharing experiences and wisdom accumulated over a lifetime.

[Author’s Note: The next two perspectives look more closely into the needs and motivation of people as they move into the mid-life/career stage of their lives and begin to become concerned about how well their lives are really turning out. Questions such as: (1) Is this where I thought I would be, and still want to be? and (2) Am I fulfilling the vision and goals I once held for myself? are often asked. Their answers may not be satisfactory. Their time for self-assessment and reflection might now be at hand and “second life/career” planning may need to begin.]

Answering Your Call. John Schuster, author of Answering Your Call: A Guide for Living Your Deepest Purpose (2003), is an executive coach, trainer, and speaker with a lifetime of learning and experience devoted to helping people achieve their best and become fulfilled. In his book he explains how successful people negotiate their lives and careers in the pursuit of their “calling,” and why that pursuit, conducted in a mindful manner, yields meaningful long-term results. For purposes of this learnership discussion, six topics have been created within which a few of Schuster’s developmental recommendations are summarized and presented for reflection:

1. Recognize Your Calling – A *call* is an influential awareness, part intellectual and part emotional, that motivates us to go beyond the surface level of an issue or topic in order to accomplish something of lasting purpose. A call may be heard as an inner voice, visually recognized as a mental picture, or a learning experience that commands our attention and stimulates us to action. Open-minded, lifelong learners experience many more calls due to their diversity of experience, accumulated knowledge, and interpersonal contacts. Calls are particularly notable as influencing factors affecting peoples’ mid-life and/or career transitions and personal crises. Schuster says: “Calls command that you attach yourself to something infinite and lasting so you can escape the life you thought you deserved and replace it with the life you were meant for.” (p.14)

2. Outlast Your Saboteurs – Saboteurs are those occasional people you meet and need to work with whose self-importance and need for authority and control cause them to overlook, dismiss, ridicule or steal your ideas, contributions, and value. Saboteurs have narrow visions of others, withhold support and encouragement, and see the world as a small place dominated by competitive practices. The antidote is to acknowledge your situation; network and connect with open-minded and collaborative colleagues; develop greater tolerance by understanding the others' limitations and stop exposing your weaknesses to them; build courage and endurance as you pull away from their influence; and commit to benefiting others with your newfound insight concerning saboteurs. (pp.61-70)
3. Hear Your Evocateurs – Evocateurs evoke out of other people and their circumstances the skills, gifts, and potential they did not know they had. They understand the innate human longing to be more than we are, and help motivate us in ways that build direction and confidence. Evocateurs see more than others see in us and share their insights as “teachable moments” from which we can draw knowledge and energy. They work on the level of personal “identity” in that they coach us to understand our purpose and abilities so we can grow into an identity of our choosing. (pp.76-84)
4. Become a Provocateur – Provocateurs recognize unfairness, injustice, or other situations that restrain human growth and development, and they speak out in ways to draw attention to these matters. Sometimes they provoke others into action, sometimes they lead the action as provocateurs themselves, but always they work within the larger social system to create significant change for the betterment of humankind. To be successful requires a commitment to long-run, sometimes subtle activism because important change is often incremental. A compelling future vision, a sense of humor, a willingness for controversy, and a strong circle of likeminded friends helps maintain the energy and commitment for long-term change. (pp.97-102)
5. Constrain Your Ego – Our personality is the outer shell for our “egos” and “selves.” *Self* may be understood as our higher will or essence striving for authenticity and meaning – the transcendent part of our connection to others and the universe. The *ego* is the operative part of our self in action, it is what we show to others as we create roles for ourselves and go about making life work for us. Schuster says: “Even the best-inclined egos pose challenges and can taint even our most noble thoughts with their own concerns.” We must be alert for our ego's tendency toward dominance, and work to temper its potentially negative impact. (pp.112-114)
6. Pursue Your Purpose – “Answering a series of calls over our lifetimes will sanctify our lives and exalt our existence. A life is to be lived, a job is to be worked, a role is to be fulfilled. But a calling is something to become worthy of, to make a commitment to, to go on an extended journey for. A calling is like the bugle sound at a great coronation – the Notes ring out above the crowd and draw our attention to the highest of intentions and human possibilities.” (pp.138-139)

Everyone can expect a “call” to occur a number of times in our lives. If we are alert to our own emerging capabilities within the context of our life and career interests and experiences we will have opportunity and choice. Being open to change and prepared for action are keys to our success.

Reclaiming the Fire. In Reclaiming the Fire: How Successful People Overcome Burnout (2001), author Steven Berglas uses his knowledge and experience as a clinical psychologist to dissect the causes and implications of high performer burnout. His data indicates that a large percentage of successful boomer generation people are not truly happy with their lives and actually experience ennui and depression that stems from their failure to self-actualize amid all their trappings of success. The causes of this problem include:

1. Being ambitious, but not for intrinsic reasons.
2. The inability to turn success into a significant life-altering occasion.
3. The stress of having to prove oneself over and over again.
4. The failure to establish a personal sense of purpose and meaning within the larger scope of life.

Berglas’ solution focuses on coaching clients through a personal transformation that:

1. Reduces the perceived risk of failure.
2. Creates conditions to rebuild success and self-esteem.
3. Expands areas of interest and potential involvement.
4. Reframes opportunities for contribution and service.

Of particular value is Berglas’ understanding of the built-in narcissism that underpins the drive and success of many accomplished people. He notes that self-made people generate feelings of confidence in others because they are independent, but the degree to which these very people have dysfunctional attitudes and behaviors that belie their success – and lead to their own discomfort – is not usually recognized. Berglas suggests that as these successful but troubled people move through life they become ripe for self-assessment that can open the doors to personal growth, renewal, and future opportunities. For those in the 45-55 age range who may be moving through their mid-life/career transition period, their learning might be that they can and should develop and embrace the *generative stage* of development toward which they are moving. Berglas attributes the concept of generativity and its importance in human development to Erik Erickson who said: “Evolution has made man a teaching as well as a learning animal, for dependency and maturity are reciprocal: mature man needs to be needed, and maturity is guided by the nature of that which must be cared for. Generativity, then, is primarily the concern for establishing and guiding the next generation.” (p.169) “People who aim to achieve generativity utilize their wisdom or mental excellence in ways that allow them to realize their dreams while enabling successive generations to prepare to realize theirs. “The essence...to building a living legacy is the *attitude realignment* that is step one in the process of reclaiming the fire: divesting yourself of worship for success and with it the squalid cash interpretation put on the word. In its place substitute ‘relationships,’ which have come to be called connectivity...connectivity is the result of taking responsibility for the intellectual and emotional development of others.” (p183)

Clearly, this theme of moving away from ego-driven independence toward an enlarged self-identity that values social engagement and interdependence is insightful coaching for those who have been unusually successful in their past.

Living with Passion and Purpose. In their book Life-Launch: A Passionate Guide to the Rest of Your Life (1995) authors Frederic Hudson and Pamela McLean present a map designed to "...help you locate your deep energy and passion for the destinations you now want to pursue. Yesterday's passions may not serve tomorrow's goals, so ask yourself 'what motivates me the most at this time of my life to be the best I can be?' That's the fuel for your next Life-Launch." They say that: "After examining hundreds of biographies of twentieth century successful adults, we found that the persons we examined measured their lives with six different basic values or passions – often in combination with one another." (pp.66-71) These are:

1. Personal Power – Know Thyself – (Claiming Yourself) Self-esteem, confidence, identity, inner motivation, a positive sense of self, clear ego boundaries, self-love, courage.
2. Achievement – Reach Your Goals – (Proving Yourself) Reaching goals, conducting projects, working, winning, playing in organized sports, having ambition, getting results and recognition and income, being purposive, doing.
3. Intimacy – Love and Be Loved – (Sharing Yourself) Loving, bonding, caring, being intimate, making relationships work, touching, feeling, close, nesting, coupling, parenting, and being a friend.
4. Play and Creativity – Follow Your Intuition – (Expressing Yourself) Being imaginative, intuitive, playful, spontaneous, original, expressive, humorous, artistic, celebrative, recreative, funny, curious, childlike, and non-purposive.
5. Search for Meaning – Spiritual Integrity – (Integrating Yourself) Finding wholeness, unity, integrity, peace, an inner connection to all things, spirituality, trust in the flow of life, inner wisdom, and sense of transcendence, bliss.
6. Compassion and Contribution – Leave a Legacy – (Giving Yourself) Improving, helping, feeding, reforming, leaving the world a better place, bequeathing, being generative, serving, social and environmental caring, institution-building, volunteerism.

[Author's Note: Throughout this book we have been developing and applying the Learnership Integrated Systems Architecture (LISA) as a framework for aspiration and inspiration toward living a life with passion and purpose. Authors Hudson and McLean capture the essence of this objective with their six values.]

Mid-Career Perspectives.

Preparing for the Second Act of Your Life. Many of us were already embroiled in our mid-life/career issues before we realized that a crossroad had been reached without our even knowing

it. Being invested in schooling, building a career, and raising a family had become so time-consuming we did not realize that our 40s had arrived and while much had gone well, not everything was to our liking. Without having stopped to take inventory of where we were going we were continuing to rush forward toward undefined personal and organizational objectives. When our situation change dramatically because of a career and/or life loss or redirection we were thrown into a situation of stress and uncertainty from which extricating ourselves was a major challenge.

In their book Second Acts: Creating the Life You Really Want, Building the Career You Truly Desire (2003) authors Stephen Pollan and Mark Levine comment that many people live two lives in one lifetime, and that being prepared for that eventuality makes that more likely to happen. What they recommend to get things started is much like the Boy Scout motto: “Be Prepared.” In Chapter Three they say to “Develop the Second Act Mindset.” That is, lay the building blocks that will enable the mid-life/careerist to understand what may be of significant value or interest to them and to recognize emerging opportunities when they begin to take form. Their nine building blocks are stated and interpreted here as follows:

1. Reach out for help...and give it back in return – Research your interests and explore the goals and opportunities you want to pursue with others when the right time comes. Don’t be afraid to discuss your interest with others and to seek their input.
2. Embrace conflicting needs...don’t settle – Use periods of stability and reliable income to prepare for your opportunity that might just be around the corner. Don’t over extend, reserve some time and income which will be needed.
3. Cast lots of irons in the fire – Constantly explore, learn, and try new approaches; collaborate with new people with different experiences.
4. Go through open doors – Seek to engage others doing things similar to what you would like to do. Learn all you can from them, partner when possible, and do whatever make sense to continue moving forward.
5. Don’t be ashamed of your shortcomings...be candid – Do a self-assessment of your current state of preparation, your strengths and weaknesses, and actions necessary to fill any gaps.
6. Practice bifocal vision – Maintain expertise in your current career while simultaneously building knowledge and skills for your next position.
7. Just row...leave the steering to God – Favorable events cannot always be planned, but they may emerge differently than anticipated so be ready to grab them when they emerge – whatever their basis, setting, or cause.
8. Embrace your incomparability – Everyone is one of a kind and not “average.” Average is a mathematical concept not an actual place or capability. Seize on your special talents not on what everyone has in common.

9. The Keystone – have hope in the future – Be a hopeful realist. Avoid self-defeating pessimism by grabbing occasional opportunities as they come by.

The authors suggest that without this preparation a period of confusion and even chaos may ensue reducing the person's focus, efficiency, and increasing their level of unhealthful stress.

New Careers, New Workplace. In JobShift: How to Prosper in a Workplace Without Jobs (1994) author William Bridges explains that the past vision of U.S. jobs that entailed Monday to Friday, nine to five, twelve months a year, with promotions and then pensions beginning at age sixty-five are going, going, and will mostly be gone. Newly designed work methods and increased business focus on control of labor costs have enabled greater American competitiveness based on the economies from labor. Updated with today's competitive global marketplace, explosion of technological innovation, and benefits from internet-enhanced virtual operations; the jobs of old are an endangered species. Bridges warns that "All the jobs in today's economy are temporary – for two reasons: (1) the job is a social artifact on the wane along with the (past social and economic) conditions that created it, and (2) that work arrangements themselves are temporary in the sense they are created to meet the productivity needs in an immediate but changing situation." (p.55) He comments that: "In the future your job security will depend on your developing three characteristics as a worker and as a person: *employability* (your momentary abilities and attitudes), *vendor-mindedness* (your being hired to accomplish a specific task), and *resiliency* (your ability to bend but not break and to deal with uncertainty).

Given how the cards have become stacked against being able to use the same knowledge and skills learned and applied for a lifetime of dedicated work with one firm or industry, Bridges encourages most people to prepare for inevitable changes while we still have the time and temporary financial stability to do so. He summarizes his guidance (p.60) as:

1. Learn to see every potential work situation, inside an organization as well as outside it, as a market. (Some day you may be marketing yourself.)
2. Survey your desires, abilities, temperament, and assets (DATA) and recycle them into a different and more viable "product." (Some day your services may be someone else's product.)
3. Build a business plan for your own personal enterprise, refine it as you move forward, and begin to see yourself as being in business for yourself. (Some day you may actually do this.)
4. Learn about the psychological impacts of life in this new world of work – and make a plan to handle them. (Don't be surprised by the emotional challenge.)

Concerning the last item (psychological impacts) Bridges reminds his readers of the research work done by Elizabeth Kubler-Ross on the process of mourning/grieving observed in a large number of people undergoing significant loss. The stages of denial, anger, bargaining, despair, and acceptance are usually witnessed – and people being traumatized by forced career change are

known to experience many of these stages of adjustment. Using the Kubler-Ross framework, Bridges recommends a process that people in need of making such a transition adopt a procedure (p.195) along the following, overlapping lines:

1. An ending, during which one disengages from and breaks the old identity with “the way things were.”
2. A neutral zone, when one is in between two ways of doing and being, having lost the old and not yet having found a way to live with the new.
3. A new beginning, after which one again feels at home and productive in “the way things are” with a new identity based on new conditions.

In his conclusion, Bridges offers a discerning perspective: “Life is a teacher. Periodically it destroys how things have been and forces us to say good-bye to how we have done things and define ourselves. The external details of the change may be unique and confusing, but the real transitional task is always the same: to let go of some reality or strategy or personal identity that characterized the previous leg of our journey. The question life asks is always, ‘What is it time for you to say good-bye to?’” (p.220)

[Author’s Note: Everyone’s the project manager of his or her own life and career. Periodically we need to plan, execute, and evaluate; and to re-plan, re-execute, and re-evaluate. These recurring, situational learning cycles must be accomplished in a timely, accurate, and informative manner if we are to optimize our personal, organizational, community, and societal capabilities and accomplishments. It is particularly important that today’s workers prepare for a lifetime of work activity given the downsizing and outsourcing practices of American industry, the disappearance of traditional retirement programs, and the looming bankruptcy of social security and Medicare.]

Time Out for an Unreal Career. According to Ernie Zelinski author of Real Success without a Real Job (2006), a person does not have a “real job” if he or she (1) works for him or her self, and (2) loves the activity (work?) they choose (have?) to do. This change in how income earning activity is both perceived and conducted makes a big difference in how much we value our work-life. Many people not only change jobs they decide to work for themselves, and an AARP Policy Institute report says that the self-employed in the U.S. constitute over 10 percent of workers but account for 66 percent of the millionaires. A high percentage of individuals who go into business for themselves have the knowledge and commitment to overcome obstacles and to succeed in providing the products and services others find essential to their needs. Zelinski offers the following “advantages and disadvantages of working for oneself.

Advantages:

1. Flexibility to set your own work hours.
2. Opportunity to use special skills and talents.
3. Opportunity to be innovative and creative.
4. No boss to tell you what to do.

5. Convenience and cost-saving of not having to commute every day.
6. Greater earning potential and a more direct connection between effort and reward.
7. Tax benefits.
8. Variety offered by working on a number of different projects and the mobility of working anywhere.

Disadvantages:

1. Capital usually needed to start a business
2. Uncertain income makes it hard to plan financially
3. Lack of paid-for-benefits such as health insurance, sick leave, and a retirement plan
4. Uncertain work hours
5. Pressure of having sole responsibility for your livelihood
6. Possibility of business failure and loss of capital
7. Perceptions of family and friends who think negatively that you don't have a real job
8. Having to chase clients to get paid" (pp.52-53)

The author continues with the comment: "...if you are a baby boomer quickly approaching retirement, you may be concerned whether you are saving enough for retirement. The good news is that many people may be overestimating how much money they need once they leave the workforce. Several research studies show that people generally spend a lot less as they age...With a retirement pension, you can retire early from your present boring job and find another job that is more interesting even if it does not pay as much. (p.75) This observation is valuable for anyone concerned that they would like to change career direction, but are not certain they can afford to do so. If you have been systematically preparing for an opportunity to make a strategic change, serious thought should given to whether the right time for a new direction is at hand. Zelinski reports that: "Clearly, for those stuck in a rut, early retirement from their present career is a way to replace it with one filled with joy and meaning. For retirees who are financially stable, starting a business is another option. Boredom is a key reason why retirees start a business." (p.76)

On the motivational front, Zelinski suggest that: "Do your best and the best of things will come your way...Doing your best should be a lifelong journey. The measure of your success is not how well you have done relative to anyone else in society. Instead, the measure of your success should be how well you have used your creativity and ability to achieve worthy goals, regardless of how humble those goals are. Doing your best means rising above the mediocrity so prevalent in society today." (pp.219-221)

Your Right Livelihood. In her Discovering Your Right Livelihood (1987), author Marsha Sinetar explains that many people are dutifully at work seeking to "pay their bills" without really understanding what they could be doing that is more in line with their unique purpose, knowledge, skills, and temperament. She argues for everyone to discover a way of earning a living that uses their talent and permits a degree of Maslow's "self-actualization" to be realized. According to Sinetar, "Right Livelihood is an idea about work which is linked to the natural order of things. It is doing our best at what we do best. The rewards that follow are inevitable and manifold...The original concept of Right Livelihood apparently comes from the teachings of

Buddha, who described it as work consciously chosen, done with full awareness and care, and leading to enlightenment.” (p.10) She continues to say that: “Right Livelihood, in both its ancient and contemporary sense, embodies self-expression, commitment, mindfulness, and conscious choice – it is a way of being. Work is:

1. Conscious Choice – The very best way to relate to our work is to choose it ourselves.
2. A Way of Being – Conducting our lives so as to experience the fullest life.
3. Self-Expression – A natural vehicle for expressing our attitudes, feelings, and perceptions for meaningful productivity.
4. Commitment – The willingness to work hard on behalf of something we feel is meaningful.
5. Mindfulness – Deep involvement in the work itself and in the way in which each task is performed.” (pp.11-17)

Sineta cautions her readers to be aware that *resistance* is always lurking wherever people begin to think about making significant change in their lives or careers. To her, resistance is the subtle inner mechanism that urges us to back away from life’s difficulties and demands. It intensifies the difficulties of problems, task, and routines. It undermines enthusiasm, energy, and our finest intentions. (p.82) “She contrasts the difference between those who succeed and those who continually get in their own way:

1. Successful People – Those who experience more of what they desire in life seem to be people who do not back away from problems, growth or difficult tasks...if we observe the behaviors of those people we think are successful (e.g., healthy, creative, materially and professionally fulfilled), we see that they do things willingly that others only talk about doing, but avoid...Discipline becomes a powerful tool for getting what they really want out of life.
2. Unsuccessful People – Such is not the case for the unsuccessful or the unfulfilled. Their habit patterns help them avoid challenges, demands, and the use of their talents. They prefer comfort over challenge, safety over growth, invisibility over visibility...They avoid confrontation and risk at all costs. Thus, professionally and personally, they back away from what would help them become more useful to themselves and others.” (p.83)

[Author’s Note: Hopefully, this author appreciates that people are different in knowledge, skills, and temperament and that these differences make certain occupations and endeavors better for some than for others. Extroverts are likely to pursue different interests and experiences than introverts, the left brain dominant tend to think and act somewhat differently than the right brain dominant, and intuition has more usefulness for many then sensing. Still, her emphasis on individuals having the courage, perseverance, and motivation to seek careers well suited to their talents and to be assertive in pursuit of high performance is commendable.]

Your Mid-Career Rewiring. Authors Jeri Sedler and Rick Miners book entitled Don't Retire, Rewire! (2003) provides a unique point of view on the mid-career transition. From their experience in the executive search and transition coaching they discovered that many people dislike the term "retiring." Instead, they found that "rewiring" was more suitable in that it expressed the attitude of today's generation of middle career workers who desire to be redirected toward other life pursuits rather than to retire. The positive aspect of becoming a *rewiree* is that numerous alternatives to traditional retirement are openly explored, selected, and pursued with vigor by people seeing themselves as much too young and energetic to be retirees. According to the authors, "retiring is a going *from* and rewiring is a going *to*." (p.xiii) Sedler and Miners survey of the reasons people fail to find retirement satisfactory include:

1. Retired for the wrong reasons.
2. Didn't realize the emotional side of retiring.
3. Didn't know myself as well as I thought I did.
4. Didn't have a plan.
5. Expected retirement to evolve on it's own.
6. Thought rest, leisure, and recreation would be enough.
7. Didn't stay connected with society.
8. Expected my partner to be my social life.
9. Didn't know what I was leaving behind.
10. Was overcome by boredom. (p.19)

In order counter the negative effects of a failed retirement, the authors work with their clients to develop new mindsets that lead toward successful rewiring. Their top 10 ingredients are:

1. A positive attitude.
2. Good health.
3. An awareness of the financial picture.
4. An open mind.
5. A desire to stay connected.
6. Self-knowledge.
7. Meaningful interests or a desire to discover them.
8. Intellectual curiosity.
9. A willingness to explore.
10. Flexibility.

When working with their clients, Sedler and Miners help identify the major "drivers" that motivate them to action. Some examples include the need for accomplishment, creativity, fulfillment, identity, lifelong learning, recognition, self-esteem, and visibility. These drivers, among many others, are the basis for making choices among different types of activities, organizations, relationships and commitments on which the clients will spend their time and energy. Given that each of us has only limited time in life to learn, develop, achieve and contribute, learning to prioritize our efforts is most valuable.

Once Sedler and Miners have gotten their clients to accept that (1) their rewiring helps them go to a new mental place and capability, and (2) that their prioritized drivers are the foundation for moving forward; they (3) help them choose the activities that support those drivers, (4) help them create a vision for the new person and career that is evolving, and (5) help them prepare an action plan to ensure real progress is made toward the *new way of working and being*.

Your Professional Presence. No matter how much knowledge or experience we have as individuals or as team members, the social nature of our work and relationships makes it essential that we adhere reasonably well to the code of dress and manners generally accepted in our organizations and communities. Notwithstanding the current trends in American society toward more casual dress and informal conversation, the majority of people holding the reigns of power and influence expect to work with people whose dress, attitude, and conversational style appeal to the sensibilities of co-workers and customers. In all but a few business environments a tendency toward what might be termed “conservative” or “respectful” presentation of oneself is desired. An unclean or disheveled appearance, exposed tattoos or body piercing, loud or annoying speech, or improper decorum or manners communicates to others that we might not be the “right fit” for teamwork or customer contact. While some might argue that “personal rights” in terms of these and other factors are at stake, there is little to be gained by going to an extreme to win a point with others who can affect our employability or opportunity to do the career we truly seek to pursue. Common sense indicates that a degree of care be employed when operating in our public arenas.

It is not our purpose in this text to delve into the details of individuals’ professional presence or executive image other than to provide a couple of excellent sources for readers to get specific information and to make their own personal adjustments as they deem to be appropriate. Two books that are filled with contemporary information are: (1) 5 Steps to Professional Presence (2001) by Susan Bixler and Lisa Scherrer Dugan, and (2) Your Executive Image (2000) by Victoria Seitz. For those transitioning their mid-life/career phase of development it is especially useful to Note that while “age is just a number” as many say, we still live in a society that likes to celebrate the healthy, vibrant, and cheerful attributes of people. Developing and/or maintaining these characteristics in our social activities help us in building friendships and collegial relationships with those both younger and older than ourselves.

Conclusion

Every act of creation is first an act of destruction.
Picasso

Self-Assessment and Renewal. A major focus of this book is on the interests and needs of mid-life and career adults. For readers in that demographic group this chapter has hopefully served as a opportunity for reflection, learning, and renewed commitment to make the second half of your life even better than the first. If you are a part of the baby boom generation, you never were going to be satisfied with the status quo. Now with some living under your belt you may have the mindset to really make a difference for yourself and others. If so, you are invited to participate in

the American Learnership Forum.org program under construction. The primary requirement is for individuals to read this book, answer the questions at the end of each chapter, complete the Learnership Journal and required Learnership Project (at the Epilogue), and join our web-based organization. From then on, you will have the opportunity to be an active participant in many of the learning and development projects being developed.

Personal Reflection. This topic appears at the end of each chapter and is meant to serve two purposes: (1) be a reader's guide to main points and "takeaways," and (2) to encourage everyone to take a moment to engage their mental cognition and intuition on what the chapter means to them – especially at this time in their lives. Questions for chapter reflection follow immediately below; and for those readers inclined to maintain a self-assessment, your thoughts may be recorded in your Learnership Journal for Life and Career Reflection and Renewal which is located in the epilogue.

Questions for Discussion:

1. How prepared are you to renew yourself and seek a more *meaningful life* and/or a more *rewarding career*? What are the major speed bumps holding you back?
2. Which of the authors and subjects introduced in this chapter spoke to you most forcefully? Do you now know how to take some steps forward? What are they?
3. Have you received your "calling" yet? If so, what do you now need to do to let go of some things and embrace some others so that you can begin making progress? If not, are you open to doing research and data gathering so as to prepare for your calling when it comes?
4. Are you financially secure enough to take some risk and redirect your life energy and career goals? If not, are there actions you can take to increase income or reduce expenses to eventually put yourself in a state of preparedness? Is there someone you can work with to achieve your objective?
5. Can you list two to three major learning points from this chapter that you want to keep in mind to improve your ability to manage your life and career transition?
6. Can you identify two to three topics, models, or perspectives in this chapter you would like to learn more about?
7. Should you be making an entry into your learnership journal at this time?

As a reminder, if you have read the other chapters and answered the questions at the end you are ready to complete your Learnership Journal. If this is the first chapter you read, you now need to start at the beginning and read the rest of the book. Because everyone has different needs and interests, skim reading may be most appropriate allowing yourself to stop occasionally to reflect on topics most useful to you.

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