

# **YOUNG ADULT SUCCESS**

*Skills for Lifelong and Continuous Learning*

**Chris L. Wright**

**Illustrations by Ye Win**

## ပုံနှိပ်တိုက်အမည်

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Chris L. Wright

Young Adult Success: Skills for lifelong and continuous learning

ရန်ကုန်၊ မုခ်ဦးစာအုပ်တိုက်၊ ၂၀၁၈။

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မူရင်းအမည် - Young Adult Success, Skills for lifelong and continuous learning

(၁) Chris L. Wright

(၂) Illustrations by Ye Win



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# Contents

Preface   Why We Wrote This Book .....	4
Guide   How To Use This Book .....	6
1. Young Adult Success... Loading? .....	8
2. Life Skills – What's in a Name? .....	24
3. Are We More Alike Than Unalike? – Identity .....	44
4. Your Development .....	64
5. Your Psychosocial Brain .....	82
6. Thinking about Thinking .....	108
7. Bamboo or Brick? – Resilience .....	134
8. How To Help Yourself .....	156
9. Young Adult Success: It's YOUR Challenge .....	176
Acknowledgments .....	196

# Preface | Why We Wrote This Book

**Mote Oo Education** aims to promote social justice through context-appropriate materials and services for the adult education sector. We support community educators in building a just and peaceful society through teacher training and curriculum development.

Back in 2014, we conducted an assessment with partner organisations and key informants – education experts in Myanmar and those working with adults from Myanmar – about what materials they would like to see Mote Oo produce in the near future. One of the areas that was identified as having both high importance and high interest was the topic of life skills. But what exactly did that mean?

When we started this project in September 2015, everyone had their own view as to what life skills were. They all had different ideas about what should be included in a life skills book, and what young adults and their teachers in Myanmar 'had to' know. Opinions differed greatly as to what those skills should be. So we did what any responsible and inquisitive educator would do: we conducted more research.

Firstly, we conducted a programme and literature review into what state schools, courses, educational programmes, United Nations (UN) agencies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) were delivering as 'life skills' in Myanmar and on the Thai/Myanmar border. This was done for two purposes:

1. To compare similarity of definitions and content available to young adults (for the purpose of this process defined as 16 to 30 years of age).
2. To identify thematic areas not being delivered or taught in the various education sectors.

Secondly, we conducted a qualitative assessment. This was a series of semi-structured interviews with 90 key informants: partner programmes, donors, life skills course providers and members from the target age group. Additionally, one guided workshop was conducted with young adult learners.

Thirdly, we conducted a *knowledge, attitudes and practice* (KAP) quantitative assessment, to prioritise which elements should be addressed. This enabled us to

establish a kind of baseline for young adults – where they are now in relation to the prioritised skills. Additionally, we wanted to establish a baseline for teachers and care-givers to establish their capacity to guide young adults in acquiring these skills.

We conducted surveys with over 1,000 respondents from 45 programmes throughout Myanmar and both migrant and refugee camp environments on the Thai border. A broad geographical area, programme type and target-age respondent type was included.

The results of those three stages of research informed the content and design of this book.

We haven't just rewritten material that already exists, though some excellent views, theories and accepted principles are included. It doesn't follow the approach that many school-based life skills programmes take. Around the world, almost all of the various models and programming around these skills are based on working with children at the start of their school life. The courses are delivered by highly-trained educators. The courses are also mostly embedded in the curriculum, meaning they are taught as part of and across all subjects, rather than being treated as a standalone subject.

If these skills are usually introduced and fostered early on in a child's schooling and then developed and worked on through the school cycle, how do we do that with 16-30 year olds who have not had that in their previous education? How to format a book around skills that can't really be taught?

A trial version of this book was produced and distributed in April 2017. Over the following 6 months we collected feedback around appearance, format and design but most importantly, the effectiveness – did readers increase their knowledge about the skills, their view of the importance of them and their ability to use them?

After analysing and incorporating that feedback we arrived at what you are now reading: *Young Adult Success*, a self-access, guided book – not only for adolescents and young adults, but also for anyone who interacts and works with them: parents, educators and care-givers.

# Guide | How To Use This Book

To get the most out of this book you will need to work your way through it systematically. It has not been designed to be 'taught'. It isn't a textbook or a curriculum. It has been designed in such a way that you, the reader, can look inside yourself and question. Please question.

It isn't a book you can dip into. However much you might be tempted to just jump to a section that may seem more interesting, don't. You need to start at the beginning and work through to the end, but pace yourself. Don't rush, take your time.

You will be doing a lot of work. Some of this work will be easy as it will ask you about your knowledge. However, a lot will not be so easy. You will be challenged to examine yourself, your inner thoughts and past experiences. You'll be challenged to be honest with yourself and to improve, to move forward, to grow. For that reason, I have called these things Challenges and they will always appear in the same way – in a bold, brown-orange text:

## CHALLENGE 1

Read the quote again, and pick the statement that you feel most closely fits its meaning.

Definitions, facts, quotes and direct sources are in blue text like this:

1. The fact of getting or achieving wealth, respect or fame.

or like this:

'Success is 1% inspiration, 99% perspiration.'

Thomas Edison

or like this:

### **'Myanmar Basic Education'**

Life skills is a subject taught within (or alongside) the main curriculum in state schools and covers the following areas.

The narrative, the main body of the book, will always be in black text.

At the end of each chapter you will find a Remember section. This is to reinforce key points from the chapter but also to support you in developing the skills.

### **Remember**

You will also find a Recommendation section at the end of each chapter. Please follow those recommendations. You may be tempted to continue reading, but please don't. Take some time to apply what you have worked through.

### **Recommendation**

Don't be too hard on yourself. As you start using a new development skill, it doesn't mean that you will use that skill all the time in every area of your life. Find someone you can trust, someone who will support you, someone you can talk to honestly about what you have read and who will encourage you. Using the new skills will gradually become easier for you as you start to use them in more and more areas of your life – home, school, play, work and relationships.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, acquiring these skills is not automatic. There are factors that can limit or delay your development. Many of these factors can be outside of your control or relate to your health – both physical and mental. If you are experiencing difficulties in either of these areas, please know that there are people you can talk to if you reach out. It is more than OK to talk about and share those difficulties. Global evidence shows that realistically one in four of us will experience difficulties with our mental health. You are not alone.

**1.**

## Young Adult Success... Loading?

SUCCESS



LOADING...



If you are familiar with Mote Oo, you know we work with civil society organisations and post-secondary teachers and learners. Both the learners and the teachers want success; in what they are teaching and learning, and in life around them. The teachers often are young adults themselves. Some are also learners – enrolled on a further education course or generally 'upskilling'. If you are reading this book, you want success. Or at least you want to understand what success could mean for young adults today. But does success mean the same for everyone? Does it mean the same for you as it does for a brother or a sister or your parents or your friends? Does it mean the same for you now as it did five years ago? Will it mean the same to you in ten years' time?

## What Is Success?

### CHALLENGE 1

OK, let's get straight to work. Write your own definition of success.



Some definitions:

1. The fact of getting or achieving wealth, respect or fame.
2. The correct or desired result of an attempt.

Webster's Dictionary

'A third measure of success that goes beyond the two metrics of money and power, and consists of four pillars: well-being, wisdom, wonder, and giving. Together, those factors help you to take care of your psychological life and truly be successful.'

Arianna Huffington, Founder & CEO Huffington Post

'Success is peace of mind, which is a direct result of self-satisfaction in knowing you did your best to become the best you are capable of becoming.'

John Wooden, US college basketball coach

'Success is about living in accordance with your values.'

Tony Hsieh, Zappos CEO

'The more you're actively and practically engaged, the more successful you will feel.'

Richard Branson

'Success in life could be defined as the continued expansion of happiness and the progressive realization of worthy goals.'

Deepak Chopra

'Success is 1% inspiration, 99% perspiration.'

Thomas Edison

## CHALLENGE 2

Compare your definition of success with ones you've just read. Are any of them similar?

## CHALLENGE 3

Think about someone you believe is successful and write down the reasons for your belief. You can use single words and phrases or write sentences.



OK. That probably wasn't too hard; or was it? Now think about yourself. Think back to the image at the beginning of this chapter. Has your success 'fully loaded'?

Look at yourself and where you are in your life, and think about what success means for you. What are your criteria for success? Think about this for your short-term future (a few weeks), the medium term (three months to two years), and the long term (more than two years). Would success for you look the same at each time stage?

## CHALLENGE 4

Write down anything you thought about YOUR success. As previously, you can write words, sentences or short paragraphs.

Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term

Was that harder? Did you find it more difficult to write about success for yourself as opposed to seeing success in someone you admire? Is what you thought successful about them similar to what you wrote for yourself? Are you trying to follow that person's success, or do you have a different path? You'll revisit what you wrote here later in this chapter and in the book.

# Skills for Young Adult Success

## CHALLENGE 5

- a. What skills do you think you need in your life? Take as long as you like and think as broadly as you like. Write a list of these things. Don't hold back – write everything you can think of.



- b. Now tick each skill that you need to achieve your idea of success from Challenge 2.

Now you've written down the skills that you need in your life, look at the list below.



## CHALLENGE 6

Look back at your list of skills in Challenge 5 and see how many fit each category in the list you just read.

This is not a definitive list of categories of skills, and a lot of them can be merged. Additionally, there are varying levels of abilities within each one. Many people would argue that they are skills you need in your life, but many others would disagree. A lot depends on where and with whom you intend spending most of your time. For example, a lot of people say that knowing how to write computer programs is very important, but knowing the differences between certain kinds of bamboo is not. Others would say the opposite. The skills that are useful in your life are largely contextual, and a lot of people will have skills that others have never even have thought of.

We asked young adults and their teachers about skills in general and then specifically about skills that fall under three different categories:

1. intrapersonal skills;
2. interpersonal skills;
3. thinking skills.

## CHALLENGE 7

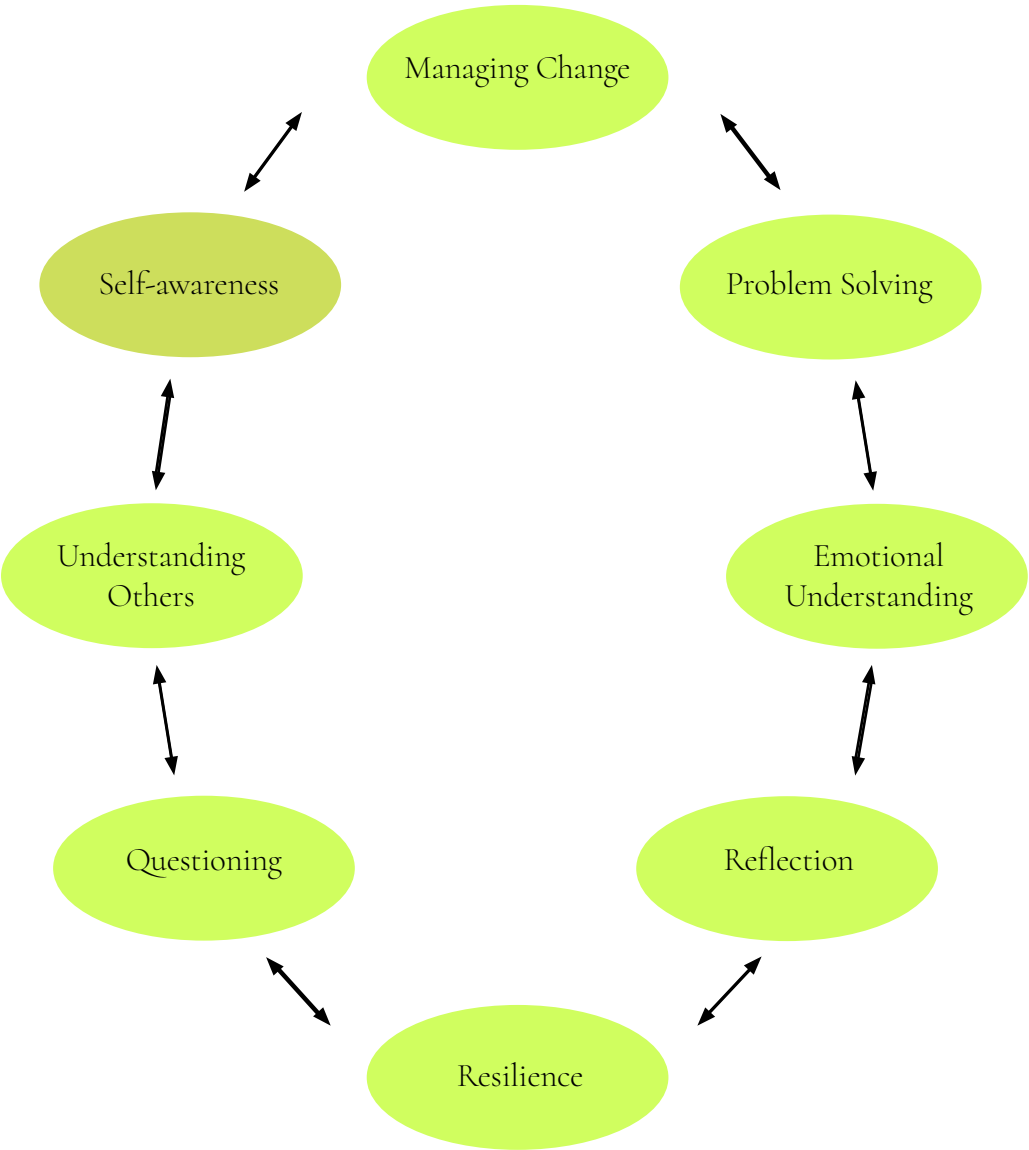
Match the three definitions below with the three categories above. (Answers on page 15)

- a. Skills to deal with other people.
- b. Skills to solve problems, make decisions and cope with changes.
- c. Skills that are internally yours.

These are not standalone skills. They are not used in isolation. All of them interact with each other. How can you solve a problem without understanding that there is one? How can you make a decision if you don't see you have choices? How can you budget your finances if you are not numerate? How can you resolve an issue with someone if you can't listen to them or communicate your understanding?

So far, you are the one who has identified your ideas of skills, and said whether you think you need them for your success. During our research,

we found out that people wanted to know the most about the skills that they knew the least about. The interesting thing is that there were no real differences between what the young adult learners prioritised and what their teachers prioritised. Here they are:



a. 2	b. 3	c. 1
Answers		

## CHALLENGE 8

Match the definitions below with the skills on the previous page. (Answers at the bottom of the page)

- a. Understanding our unique individual character and how we are likely to respond to situations.
- b. Recognising and manage our emotions, and the emotions of other people, both individually and in groups.
- c. Coping with change.
- d. Coping with challenges and problems in your life, and to come back stronger from them.
- e. Gathering information to help solve problems, to help in decision-making processes and to understand messages more clearly.
- f. Looking back on what we do, thinking about events and developing insights.
- g. Finding solutions to problems.
- h. Understanding and being interested in other people's feelings and concerns.

Look back at your list of skills in Challenge 5. Are any of the eight skills above on your list? Do you think those skills should be on your list? Do you need them?

Wherever you are, whoever you are with, and whatever you do, these are skills that you can't do without. You may not have even thought of them before, but there is now evidence that a lot of employers and teachers see these kinds of skills as more important than school grades or subject knowledge.

a. self-awareness	d. resilience	g. problem-solving
b. emotional understanding	e. questioning	h. understanding others
c. managing change	f. reflection	
<b>Answers</b>		



CHALLENGE 9

Look at the table.

- a. Read the lists. Think about the differences between the skills in each column.
- b. Think of a title for each column based on what you know so far.

1) _____	2) _____
Cooking	Self-awareness
Using bamboo to make things	Understanding other people
Using email	Self-confidence
Riding a bicycle	Persistence
Catching fish	Managing your emotions
Safe sex (avoiding pregnancy & infection)	Resilience
Memorising and recalling	Asking questions
Literacy	Problem solving
Numeracy	Growth mindset

So, what differences did you notice? Ask yourself:

- Are the skills in one column easier to learn or acquire than in the other?
- Do the skills in one column have a kind of basic set of rules, whereas in the other column the rules change depending on circumstance?

If you are following everything so far, your answers to those questions should have been YES.

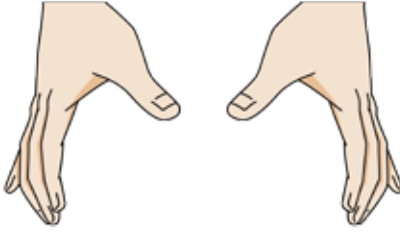
## CHALLENGE 10

- a. Look at the table again and the skills in column one.
  - i. Put a tick next to any of the skills you think you have.
  - ii. How do you know that you have successfully gained that skill?
- b. Now look at the skills in column two.
  - i. Put a tick next to any of the skills you think you have.
  - ii. How do you know that you have successfully gained that skill?

OK, you'll come back to this shortly. Many people have created many definitions and/or categories for skills. However, the following categorisation gives quite a clear differentiation between the sets of skills in the two columns.

We can call column one 'hard' skills and those in column two 'soft' skills. 'Hard' here means practical. 'Soft' means flexible or adaptive. Actually, the 'soft' skills can be much more difficult to learn and master. Look at the image on the opposite page.

## HARD SKILLS



- ✓ Rules stay the same
- ✓ Learned in school or from books, manuals, the internet etc.
- ✓ Can be mastered relatively easily
- ✓ You can use them on your own
- ✓ How you use them doesn't really change

## SOFT SKILLS



- ✓ Rules change
- ✓ Mainly learned by trial and error, experience and practice
- ✓ Take a lifetime to master
- ✓ You often need other people to use them
- ✓ How you use them depends on your emotional state, external circumstances and the types of people you interact with

Does that make sense to you? Can you relate your learning in life and the skills you've acquired to those images? Check back to your ticks on the column lists in Challenge 9. How many did you tick in column one? How about in column two? Throughout this book you'll be revisiting the skills in column two. Do you really have them? Have you mastered them?

## CHALLENGE 11

OK, based on a classification of hard and soft skills, go back to your category lists of skills from Challenge 5 and write them in the table.

All the things you wrote in column one are the hard skills that fall under categories such as financial, health, livelihood, or studying. All the things in column two (the soft skills column) should be all the personal, interpersonal and thinking skills you listed earlier.

Is that what your table looks like? If not, make these changes now.

## CHALLENGE 12

Look at your lists again and think about what you wrote about how YOU see success for YOURSELF. Be honest with yourself – how many of the skills or abilities in column one, the hard skills, do you need to achieve your success? Do you already have these skills?

- a. Tick the skills you think you need and think you have.
- b. Put a cross next to the skills you don't think you have and don't think you need.
- c. Circle the skills you think you need and don't have.

*Need* is different from *want*. We can look at wants as the nice extra things to have in our life if we have the time, patience or money. The needs are what you can't do without. Knowing what you need versus knowing what you want – and why you want it – is a very important tool for your life.

Here's the bad news. This book isn't going to give you anything you just circled in the hard skills column. Those are skills you find in other books, schools, courses, or trainings around you.

This book is about the soft skills column. It is these skills that you need to work on to help you master the skills in column one – the hard skills.

Look at your soft skills list again. Look at the classification of soft skills, at what makes them soft.

- ✓ They require the emotional part of your brain, not just the rational part
- ✓ You acquire them through trial and error, failure, disappointment, and bouncing back (resilience)
- ✓ How you use these skills changes depending on your own frame of mind, the environment you are in and who you are interacting with
- ✓ You never stop learning them. New experiences, places, people and situations will require you to be adaptive

## CHALLENGE 13

OK, now repeat for column two, the soft skills, what you did in Challenge 12. Tick, cross or circle.

How does your list look? Any crosses?

None of them should be a cross! Maybe you don't think you need it, but believe me, you do. If you want to be successful (however you define it) you will need all of those skills in one way or another.

More circles than ticks? Don't worry, that's OK. Acquiring and mastering these skills is a lifelong journey. At the time of writing, I am 46 years old and I still have a long way to go with many on my list.

These skills take practice and determination. To acquire them requires a frame of mind and attitude that says to you, 'I want to grow, not just learn. I want to move forward, not just keep up with the crowd. I want to see what's beyond the hill, not just look at the valley'. This attitude is a *growth mindset*.

The rest of this book will examine your growth mindset and these kinds of skills. You'll continue to take an active role in your reading and your responses. We'll explore these competencies and address some myths. If you encourage your growth mindset and ask yourself lots of questions, by the end you'll be well on your way to understanding your young adult success.

## Remember

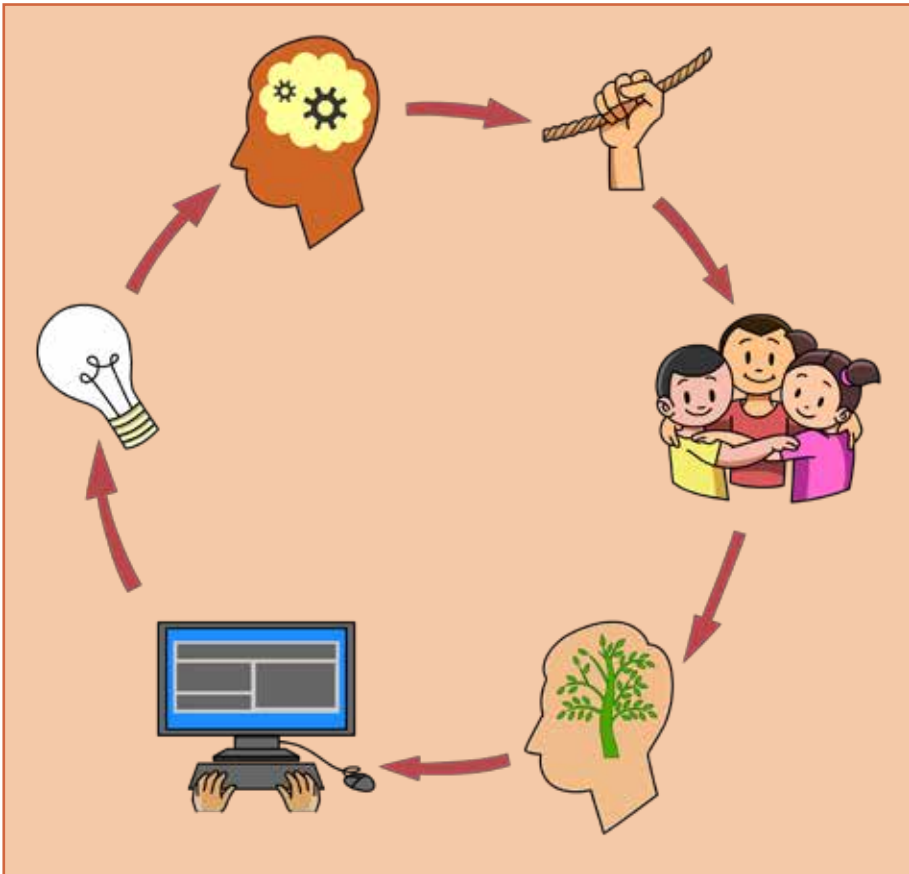
- ✓ This was just an introduction to YOUR young adult success; there's a lot more to cover yet.
- ✓ It's your thinking, personal and interpersonal skills that you are working on.
- ✓ These skills don't just get delivered in a lesson for you to acquire. They take continuous lifelong practice.
- ✓ These abilities are not used in isolation. They need to be worked on together.

## Recommendation

Go outside. Do something else. Think about what you've worked through in this chapter. Talk to your friends or your colleagues or your children or your parents or your brothers and sisters. Ask them about what they think about success. Did they know what they wanted and how to get there? Talk about change. Think about that change beyond the boundaries you set yourself. Look how that change can work positively, how you can make the most of it. Encourage your growth mindset. From now on, try listening harder, understanding more. Most of these things just take practice and the will to succeed. Close the book and come back to it in a day or two.

# 2.

## Life Skills – What's in a Name?





In the last chapter, you started looking at the idea of success, what you think it is and what it could mean for you. If you followed the recommendations, you will have talked to lots of other people about their views of success.

You also started to look at skills you may need and, specifically, the personal, interpersonal and thinking skills required.

In this chapter you will build your understanding of these kinds of skills a bit more through exploring the various names given to them. Does it matter what they are called?

In the old English playwright William Shakespeare's famous work 'Romeo and Juliet', the character Juliet at one point asks,

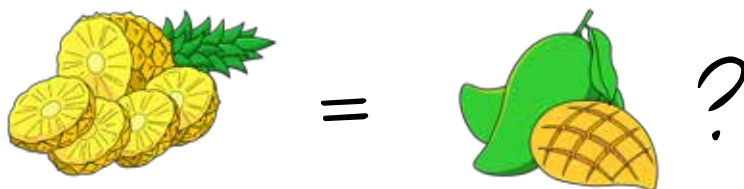
'What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet.'

## CHALLENGE 1

Choose the statement that you feel most closely fits the meaning of the quote above.

- a. Many different things are called by the same name.
- b. It doesn't matter what you call something as long as it is understood.
- c. The characteristics of something don't change even if we call it something else.

Shakespeare used an old-fashioned way of speaking, but basically he's saying that you could call a rose anything you like. It wouldn't change the fact that it smells pleasant (and looks good too); a nice idea. However, if we start calling things differently from what is the accepted name, it would all get rather confusing, wouldn't it? Imagine a stranger coming up to you with a mango and saying, 'taste this pineapple, isn't it delicious?' Well, it may indeed taste delicious, but you know it's not a pineapple; you know it's a mango.



Language evolves. Words take on new meanings according to what's 'in' – youthful slang, idioms and metaphors. But some things, technical terms for example, remain constant so we are clear as to what is meant – so we don't get confused.

## CHALLENGE 2

Where do you think the term 'life skills' originated?

- a. Mahatma Gandhi in 1935, talking about the qualities needed to build a new India.
- b. The World Health Organisation in the early 1980s, to try and prevent the spread of HIV and AIDS.
- c. 1800s Britain, to train workers in colonies to be more efficient and productive.

The term life skills originated from the World Health Organisation (WHO) in the 1980s. They devised it for a very specific purpose: to try and prevent the spread of HIV and AIDS. Back then, HIV and AIDS were the most threatening crises facing the world. They were new and spreading at a remarkable rate. The WHO understood that without education about how people catch and transmit them, AND how to prevent this, they would have serious implications for the population on a global scale.

The purpose of life skills programmes is to educate people, in particular children and youth, so that everyone in society has an organised, acceptable, and beneficial lifestyle. They cover three main areas: physical health, mental health and social harmony and tolerance.

## Who (or what) Is the WHO?

When diplomats met to form the United Nations in 1945, one of the things they discussed was setting up a global health organisation.

The WHO was founded on 7 April 1948 – a date that is celebrated every year as World Health Day. It has more than 7,000 people from more than 150 countries working in 150 country offices, in six regional offices and at their headquarters in Geneva.



It outlines the following as the principles it operates under:



- Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being. It is not just the absence of disease or infirmity.
- The enjoyment of the highest standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being regardless of race, religion, political belief and, economic or social condition.
- The health of all peoples is fundamental to peace and security, and depends on full co-operation of individuals and States.
- Unequal development in different countries in the promotion of health and control of diseases, especially communicable disease, is a common danger.
- The extension to all peoples of the benefits of medical, psychological and related knowledge is essential to the fullest attainment of health.
- Informed public opinion and active co-operation is of the greatest importance in the improvement of the health of the people.
- Governments have a responsibility for the health of their people. This can only be fulfilled by providing of adequate health and social measures.



### CHALLENGE 3

True or false? If false, explain why. (Answers at bottom of page)

- a. Health means having total physical, mental and social well-being.
- b. Not everyone has a fundamental right to health. Some groups are excluded.
- c. Peace and security requires healthy people.
- d. Peace and security requires full involvement of both individuals and the government.
- e. The knowledge of medical, psychological and related themes is essential to be healthy.
- f. It is not necessary for the public to be informed or to cooperate to have healthy people.
- g. Governments are responsible for providing the right health and social structures for their people.

The WHO defines life skills as:

... abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable humans to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life.

But do you think they are the only one using this term? Do you think that is the only definition of life skills? No. Other organisations, for example UNICEF, also have definitions.

#### Answers

- a. True
- b. False – everyone has a right.
- c. True
- d. True
- e. True
- f. False – it is essential.
- g. True.

UNICEF defines life skills as:

...psychosocial abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life.

## Who (or what) Is UNICEF?

After World War II, European children faced famine and disease. UNICEF was created in December 1946 by the United Nations to provide food, clothing and health care to them, and to work with others to overcome the obstacles that poverty, violence, disease and discrimination place in a child's path.



UNICEF promotes the rights and wellbeing of every child. Together with their partners, they work in 190 countries and territories, focusing special effort on reaching the most vulnerable and excluded children, to the benefit of all children, everywhere.

### CHALLENGE 4

Look again at the WHO's and UNICEF's definitions of life skills. Apart from UNICEF saying 'individuals' and WHO saying 'humans', what is the main thing included in one definition that is not in the other?

## What Does 'Psychosocial' Mean?

Here we need to break down the word and get into some definitions, but first turn the page for another Challenge.

## CHALLENGE 5

Read through this list of words. Tick the ones you think you will come across as you work through the meaning of 'psychosocial'.

science	mind	economics	parties	behaviour
society	people	cognitive	drugs	alcohol
sexual health	language	wellness	values	psychology
sociology	study	contraception	tobacco	brain

OK, now you've made your predictions, let's look at the word and break it down: *Psycho* is short for psychological. This comes from the Greek words *psyche*, which means 'mind', and *logos*, meaning 'knowledge or study.'

## What Is 'Psychology'?

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary gives these two short and simple definitions for psychology:

- the science or study of the mind and behaviour
- the way a person or group thinks

Simple Wikipedia explains it in a bit more depth:

'Psychology is the study of the mind and of thought, feeling, and behaviour. It is an academic and applied discipline which involves the scientific study of mental functions and behaviours.'

To summarise, psychology is really the study of the mind, people's behavior and how people or groups think.

Let's look at the next bit of the word: *Social*. *Social* has a lot of meanings depending upon the context. You may consider yourself a social person. You attend social events and socialise with friends or colleagues.

## What Is 'Social'?

It means:

- relating to people talking to each other or doing enjoyable things with each other
- liking to be with people

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary

Social comes from the word *society*, which is:

- people living together in organised communities with shared laws, traditions, and values

Adapted from The Merriam-Webster Dictionary

The study of society is *sociology*.

## What Is 'Sociology'?

'Sociology is the study of societies and how humans act in groups. Sociology is a social science. People who study sociology are called sociologists.'

'A society is the community of people living in a particular country or region and having shared customs, laws, and organizations.'

'Auguste Comte (1789-1857) was first to use the term. The problems caused by the change to an industrial society, where many people moved to cities and worked in factories, was an early focus of sociology.'

'In the 2000s, sociology looks at race, ethnicity, class, gender, the family and social interaction. It also studies results of the breakdown of social structures, such as crime and divorce. Sociology also studies worldwide societies.'

Simple Wikipedia & Wikipedia

To summarise, whenever you see the word *social*, or *socio*, it relates to society on either a large or small scale.

OK, so now you've looked at *psycho* and at *social* as two different ideas. Putting those ideas together gives us the word *psychosocial*.

### CHALLENGE 6

Based on what you just read, have a go at writing a simple definition of *psychosocial* yourself. There's no right or wrong here, it's just for you to see how you put the two words together.



## 'Psychosocial' Explained

1. involving both psychological and social aspects.

Example: psychosocial adjustment in marriage.

2. relating social conditions to mental health.

Example: psychosocial medicine.

Merriam-Webster Dictionary

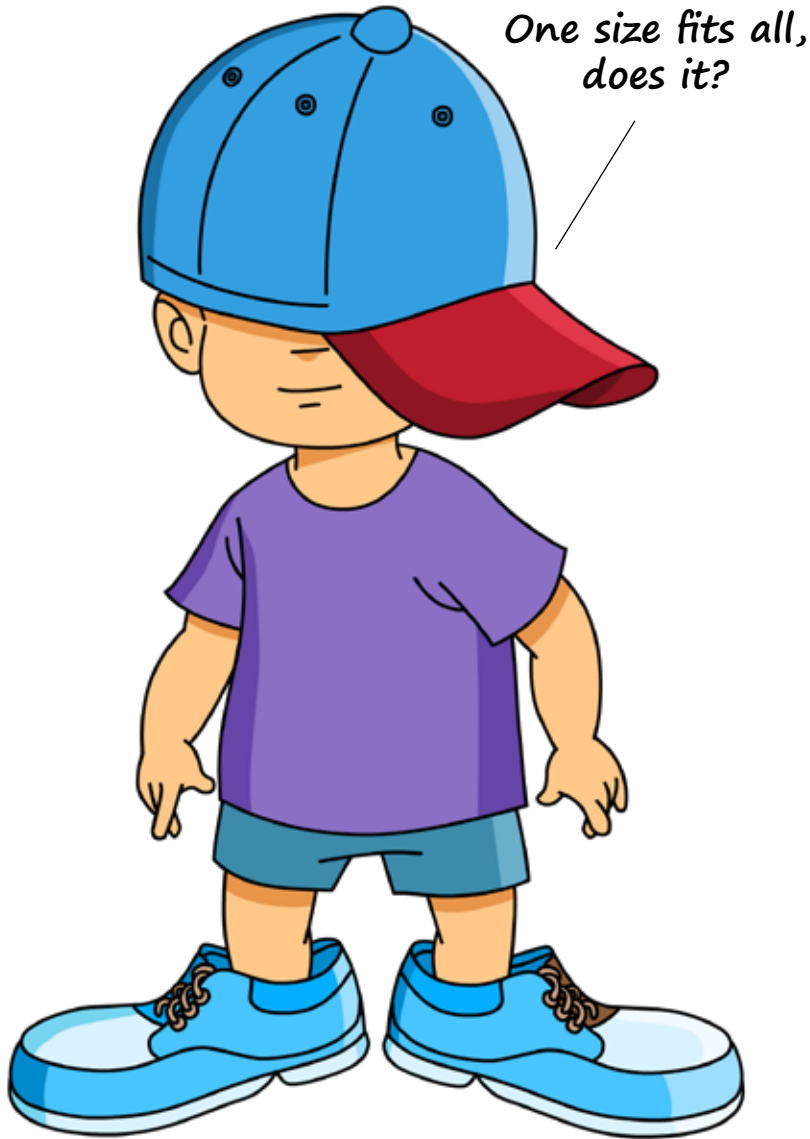
Academics have gone a bit further. The book, *'Psychosocial Studies: An Introduction'*, by Woodward & Kath, 2015, defines it as:

'The psychosocial approach looks at individuals in the context of the combined influence that psychological factors and the surrounding social environment have on their physical and mental wellness and their ability to function. This approach is used in a broad range of helping professions in health and social care settings as well as by medical and social science researchers'.

### CHALLENGE 7

- a. Look back at your own definition (Challenge 6). How close were you in getting the main ideas of the meaning?
- b. Look back at your predictions of the key words (Challenge 5). How right were you?

UNICEF defines life skills as psychosocial abilities. That means how your wellness (health) and ability to function are influenced by your personal psychological factors. It also means how you sit in your own social environment (large or small). Therefore the psychosocial approach needs to be personal and individual, right? Surely this means that a 'one size fits all' approach can't realistically be implemented. You're you – someone else is themselves. We all have different psychological and societal makeups. That said, we are all more alike than we are unlike, a notion you'll explore in the next chapter.



You read earlier how, during the industrial revolution, Auguste Comte invented the word sociology as a result of the problems related to people moving for work (internal migration), into an unfamiliar working environment.

What about you? It is highly likely that you will move (or have moved) to a different place, maybe for further education, maybe for work, maybe for love; maybe even because you were forced to.

**CHALLENGE 8**

List people you know that have moved from one place to another for long periods of time. The example is a friend of mine called Sithu.

Person	Where move from?	Where moved to?	Why did they move?
Sithu	Rakhine State	The Philippines	Work as a seaman

OK, you were probably able to think of a few people right? Now think about the psychological and sociological problems that they may have experienced in the new place. Think also of the problems of those in the place they left.

CHALLENGE 9

In the tables below, use one of the people from your list on the previous page and write down what you think those problems may have been. Again, I have used Sithu as an example.

Possible problems faced in old place	
Psychological	Sociological
Sithu's family miss him very much.	Sithu's football team have lost their best striker.

Possible problems faced in new place	
Psychological	Sociological
Sithu misses his family very much.	He doesn't understand the language.

Finished? There are no right or wrong answers for this because every single person will think of different people and places. The purpose of that challenge was to think about the mix of psychology and sociology that gives us the word psychosocial. We'll look more at this and the notion of problems in general later in this book.

## CHALLENGE 10

- a. In Challenge 5 in Chapter 1, I asked you to write a list of all the things that you considered to be skills you needed for your success. Go back to that list. Write down everything from your list that is a psychosocial ability.



Finished? OK. How does your list look? I imagine it is much shorter than your original one. Now you:

- know a bit more about what life skills actually means, and;
- have a bit more background on psychology, sociology and how the two combine to become psychosocial.

- b. Can you think of any more psychosocial abilities? Add them to the list above.

So, what's in a name? On the next two pages are some of the more prominent organisations working around 'life skills' and the categories and competencies they list under them. You'll start here with where you started earlier: the WHO.

### **World Health Organisation**

Some of the important life skills identified by WHO are:

- Decision making
- Critical thinking/perspicacity
- Self-awareness/mindfulness
- Equanimity (emotional stability)
- Problem solving
- Effective communication
- Assertiveness
- Coping with stress, trauma and loss
- Creative thinking/lateral thinking
- Interpersonal relationships
- Empathy
- Resilience

### **UNICEF**

Continued from the earlier definition around psychosocial abilities, UNICEF loosely group these into three broad categories of skills:

- Cognitive skills – for analysing and using information
- Personal skills – for developing personal agency and managing oneself
- Inter-personal skills – for communicating and interacting effectively with others

### **'The British Council – 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills'**

The British Council's work with school systems aims to improve learning outcomes for students. Research by education experts and academics explains that to participate in a global economy, young people need to have deep learning skills. These are also referred to in the literature as core/key skills/competencies or 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills. The BC has identified these as:

- Critical thinking & problem solving
- Collaboration and communication
- Creativity & imagination
- Citizenship
- Digital literacy
- Student leadership and personal development

### **'The Social Emotional Learning Challenge'**

A few years ago, a group of leading US academics, and organisations focusing on building youth capabilities got together to form the Social Emotional Challenge ([www.selpractices.org](http://www.selpractices.org)). It was designed to identify promising practices for:

- Emotion management
- Empathy
- Teamwork
- Initiative
- Responsibility
- Problem solving

They produced a guide with 32 standards and 58 criteria against the above six competencies.

### **'The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning' (CASEL)**

CASEL ([www.casel.org](http://www.casel.org)) advocates and provides leadership for high quality SEL programming and learning standards. It identifies five core competencies associated with SEL:

- Self-awareness
- Self-management
- Responsible decision making
- Social awareness
- Relationship management

### **'Lifeskills Handbook'**

The author of this book, Clare Hanbury, focuses on getting children and youth more involved in mainstream education. The book was originally commissioned by Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO) in 2002. ([www.lifeskillshandbooks.com](http://www.lifeskillshandbooks.com)). She identifies five core competencies:

- Decision making & Problem-solving
- Critical thinking & Creative thinking
- Communication & Interpersonal relationships
- Self-awareness
- Empathy

### **'The Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems (CASAS) Competencies'**

CASAS ([www.casas.org](http://www.casas.org)) provides assessments of basic skills for youth and adults, and curricular tools to target instruction. Their competencies identify more than 360 essential life skills that youth and adults need to be functionally competent members of their community, their family, and the workforce. They cover nine broad content areas:

- Basic Communication
- Health
- Mathematics
- Community Resources
- Independent Living
- Employment
- Learning and Thinking Skills
- Consumer Economics
- Government and Law

### **'Myanmar Basic Education'**

Life skills is a subject taught within (or alongside) the main curriculum in state schools and covers the following areas.

- Environment & Sanitation
- Disease Prevention
- Drugs, Alcohol & Tobacco
- Reproductive Health
- HIV/AIDS & STIs
- Social Skills
- Emotional Intelligence

Wow. You've just looked at eight organisations' categories of life skills (or socio-emotional skills). They ranged from three main ones with UNICEF to twelve from the WHO. And that's just the main categories/competencies. CASAS say there are 360 'essential' skills. Knowing WHAT they are isn't very useful. What is important is for you to know HOW to use them.

**CHALLENGE 11**

Go back through the eight lists you have just read. Write down any skills that appear on every list.

So all these organisations and structures are listing skills or competencies in a certain way but none of them are agreed upon by all. Sure, there are similarities, and some skills appear as combined forms, but not one item is exactly like another on any of the lists.

**CHALLENGE 12**

Right, so now go through the lists again and write the ones that appear most often, either as individual skills or as ones coupled with another. Show how many times they appear.

*Example:* Problem Solving appears on three of the lists. On one it is on its own; on another it is coupled with Decision Making; and on another it is coupled with Critical Thinking.



OK, got more this time right? But even so, there are not that many that are listed more than twice. So what's the point of all this?

What I want you to take from this is that through this book you will be looking at psychosocial skills; those that focus on thinking and your relationships, both with yourself and other people. Whether they are called 'life' skills, *soft skills*, *socio-emotional skills*, *21<sup>st</sup> century skills* or *skills for success* doesn't really matter. What matters is that you realise that developing and using these skills will allow you to foster that growth mindset and be better equipped to tackle the problems you will face in life.

As you have read, there are a lot of differing views as to:

- what they are;
- what's essential;
- the categories they can fit under;
- the crossover between those.

Think back to the hard skills, those non-psychosocial skills, from your list in Chapter 1, page 20 again – the things like cooking, managing your finances or driving a car. How quickly or easily do you think you could learn (or have learned) them? How long would it take you to master them – become really, really good at them? Do you think the 'rules' around those skills change? Mathematics is mathematics, right?  $2 + 2 = 4$ . In Myanmar it's 4. In Australia it's 4. In Belize (a small country in Latin America) it's 4. That doesn't change.

### CHALLENGE 13

Look at the skills you ticked on your list in Challenge 12 in Chapter 1. Be honest with yourself.

Write next to each ticked skill a number:

1 = I use this skill almost all the time

2 = I use this skill sometimes

3 = I don't often use this skill

Think about those you don't often use. Why don't you use them much? Is it because you are mostly in an environment that doesn't require them?

Let's say you spend most of your time in Yangon, Myanmar. Do you think that if you magically transported to Tokyo, Japan or Cairo, Egypt, that your use of those skills may need to increase? Say you are from Putao in Kachin State and have not travelled far from there. What skills would you need to use if you now had to move to Sittwe in Rakhine, or Mae Sot in Thailand, or Brighton in England?

What about people? If you've always lived in a city, how would you get on with rural people? Would you understand them? Would they understand you? I don't mean language – I mean experiences, views on life, what you see as being important. Do you think that might differ? Is your view 'better' than theirs, more 'correct' than theirs because it is your experience? Is theirs more 'correct' than yours?

Look at the picture below. Who is 'correct'?



The answer to this is one of perspective. From each person's viewpoint, they are correct. It is both a 6 and a 9. You could argue all day that the other person is 'wrong' and that you are 'right', but what it really comes down to is trying to understand the other's viewpoint. You'll look more at perspective later in the book.

## Remember

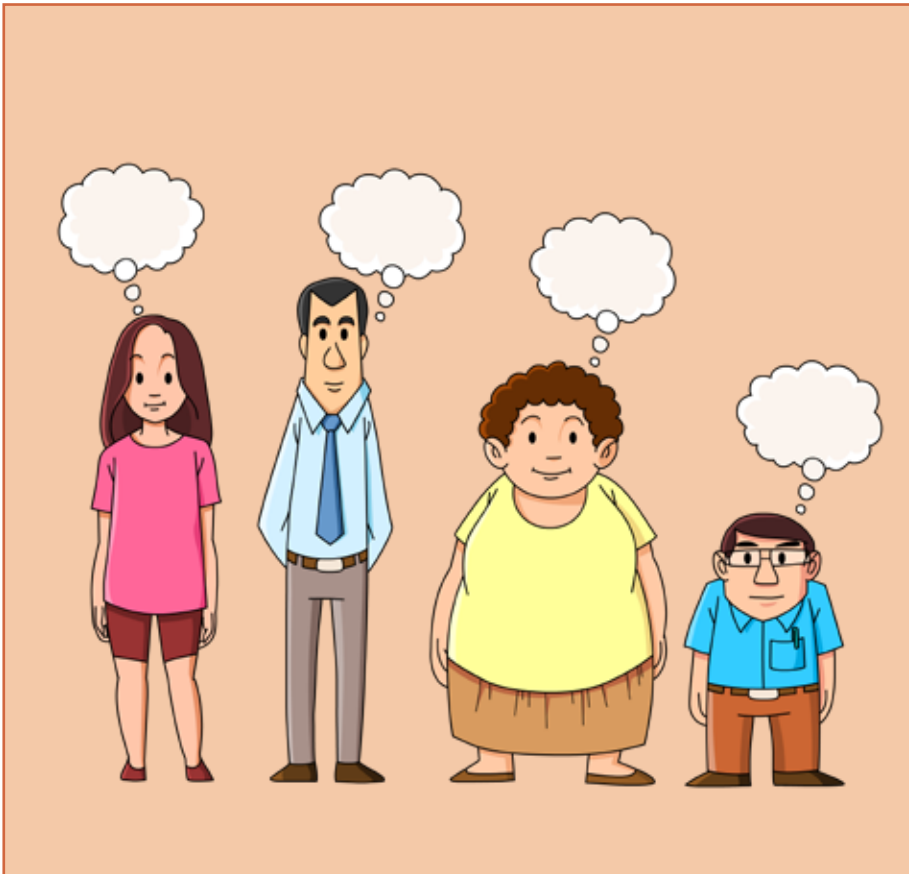
- ✓ There are lots of skills you could do with having in your life, but they are not necessarily psychosocial skills.
- ✓ Psychosocial skills are about how your wellness (health) and ability to function are influenced by your personal psychological factors AND how you sit in your own social environment – or that of others.
- ✓ Again, these are your personal, interpersonal and thinking skills.
- ✓ Look forward and beyond, but be aware of your present – this is your growth mindset.

## Recommendation

Go outside. Do something else. Think about what you've worked through so far. Talk to your friends or your co-workers or your children or your parents or your brothers and sisters. Ask them about what they think about 'life skills'. See how many different answers, definitions, or categories you get. How many are psychosocial? How many of them are those are lifelong or continuous learning skills? Ask them whether these skills are important for THEIR success. Close the book and come back to it in a day or two.

# 3.

## Are We More Alike Than Unalike? – Identity



So, you've looked at the skills that we'll be covering in this book. You've looked a little at what success could mean for you. Now you'll look at you. Who are you? What are you? What is your identity? Do you have more in common with other people than you have differences?

'Identity is the role you choose to play in the story of the Universe.'

Maria V Shall

Do you agree with this quote? Is identity really as simple as the part YOU decided to act out in life? How much choice do YOU have in defining YOUR identity? Is it one thing or many things? Do those things change? If so, when do they change? How do they change? Why do they change? Is identity that important?

Think back to your birth. Well, you won't remember it, that's for sure, but you became a person in this world on that day.



CHALLENGE 1

In the space below, write down all the things that contributed to your identity in that first year of your being on this planet.

Identity Point	Details
Age	0-1 year old
Sex	
Name	
Class	
Skills	
Knowledge	
Citizenship	
Living in...?	
Religion	
Ethnicity	
Gender	
Sexuality	
Livelihood	
Interests	
Values	
Character	
School	
Parents	
Friends	

Some things there you could probably easily write in; others not so easily or just not at all, right? From the start of this book, I've asked you to think about things from your own perspective. In that first year following your birth, were you able to think or feel from your own perspective?

Here are *my* answers to this same exercise.

Identity Point	Details
Age	<i>0-1 year old</i>
Sex	<i>Male</i>
Name	<i>Christopher</i>
Class	<i>No idea</i>
Skills	<i>Crying, going to the toilet wherever and whenever my body told me to</i>
Knowledge	<i>None</i>
Citizenship	<i>British birth certificate but born in the country of Wales</i>
Living in...?	<i>a 'nice house' in Wales</i>
Religion	<i>Baptised as a Christian</i>
Ethnicity	<i>I don't know</i>
Gender	<i>Unknown</i>
Sexuality	<i>None</i>
Livelihood	<i>None</i>
Interests	<i>Milk, mother &amp; father</i>
Values	<i>None</i>
Character	<i>Disruptive (but cute at the same time)</i>
School	<i>None</i>
Parents	<i>English father and Australian mother</i>
Friends	<i>None</i>

## CHALLENGE 2

- a. Compare your answers with mine. Were our answers similar? What were the differences? Who am I? What is my identity? Who are you? What is your identity? Are we more alike or unlike?
- b. Look at your answers again. How many did you choose for yourself? Did you choose your birth sex? Your name? Your religion? Your citizenship? How many things on that list did you actually choose? How many of those things do YOU get to change as you progress through life? Are most of those choices or are they just circumstances of being born?

## CHALLENGE 3

- a. Now do the same exercise but for when you were twelve years old. This time, add a bit more detail. Think about how you felt about those areas of your identity.
- b. Had these areas changed, were they changing, or had they remained the same?
- c. Were they your choice, they were still things that other people decided for you, or were they things that you were born with?



Identity Point	Details	Changed, changing or unchanged?	My choice, someone else's or born that way?
Age	12 years old		
Sex			
Name			
Class			
Skills			
Knowledge			
Citizenship			
Living in...?			
Religion			
Ethnicity			
Gender			
Sexuality			
Livelihood			
Interests			
Values			
Character			
School			
Parents			
Friends			

Here are some elements of my twelve-year-old self.

Identity Point	Details	Changed, changing or unchanged?	My choice, someone else's or born that way?
Age	12	Changed	Not my choice
Ethnicity	I'm part English, part Australian. I have Jewish and Chinese blood too from my mother's side.	Kind of changed	Not my choice
Gender	I can see that I don't really fit the typical image of a boy... not rough and tumble but would fight to stand up for myself against bullies. I am called derogatory names related to sexuality and not being 'masculine'. I see myself as having 'feminine' characteristics.	Changing	Not my choice
Sexuality	I have sexual awareness now and attraction. Wow, I like girls! First intimate kisses, first feelings of romantic love.	Changing	Part my choice, part physical maturity and pubescence
Livelihood	I have a newspaper delivery round in the mornings before school and on weekends and receive an income.	Changed	My choice
Values	I'm starting to get a sense that some things are 'right' and others 'wrong'. Big feelings around unfairness – especially what's unfair to me!	Changing	My choice
Character	Realising that I don't sit well with the systems I am supposed to belong to as they did not encourage individuality and that I was supposed to go along with the crowd. Becoming rebellious...	Changing	My choice
School	Actually changed five times. One kind of nursery school or kindergarten and one primary school in Wales (the country of my birth). Then another primary school for a short time after moving to England. Then another school as a boarder 100 miles away. Then another school and back living at home with my parents.	Changed	Not My choice

How do the changes between my first year of life and my twelve-year-old self compare with yours – similar or not? Who was I at twelve? What was my identity?

Who were you at twelve? What was your identity? Was that how you saw yourself or was that just the labels attached to you from birth? Were any changes your choice?

Is identity something you choose or is it formed and directed by someone or something else? Is it nature, upbringing or a combination of both? How much of it do you decide is 'yours' and how much of it is decided by other circumstances? How much of it can change, and how much stays the same?

Now that you've been through some more reflective exercises and are considering your identity, let's look at some of these elements in a more clearly-defined way.

**CHALLENGE 4**

Have a look at these terms and consider how they relate to your identity. Write what you think they are and how they might relate to you. (Answers in a table on the next page)

Element	Description/Definition
Given Identity	
Self-identity	
Boundaries	
Worldview	
Self-esteem	

OK, now check what you wrote against the following definitions.

<b>Given Identity</b>	<i>What you're born into or given by your family such as how you look, your sex (man or woman), your religion, and ethnic group.</i>
<b>Self-identity</b>	<i>How you define yourself. This includes things such as your livelihood, your creative abilities, your values, and personal interests.</i>
<b>Boundaries</b>	<i>Just like countries, people and groups also have boundaries. You will have boundaries regarding behaviour. This will include acts that you will and won't accept from others, but also boundaries you set yourself around how you act and behave toward others.</i>
<b>Worldview</b>	<i>This is how you see the world. Do you see it as being what's directly around you or do you see it on a much larger scale? How do you make sense of what you know about the world? How do you make sense of life, the mind, society and culture? Is your view the same as other people's around you? What are you learning about the past and how does it affect the present?</i>
<b>Self-Esteem</b>	<i>How is your self-worth? Do you feel positive beliefs about yourself?</i>

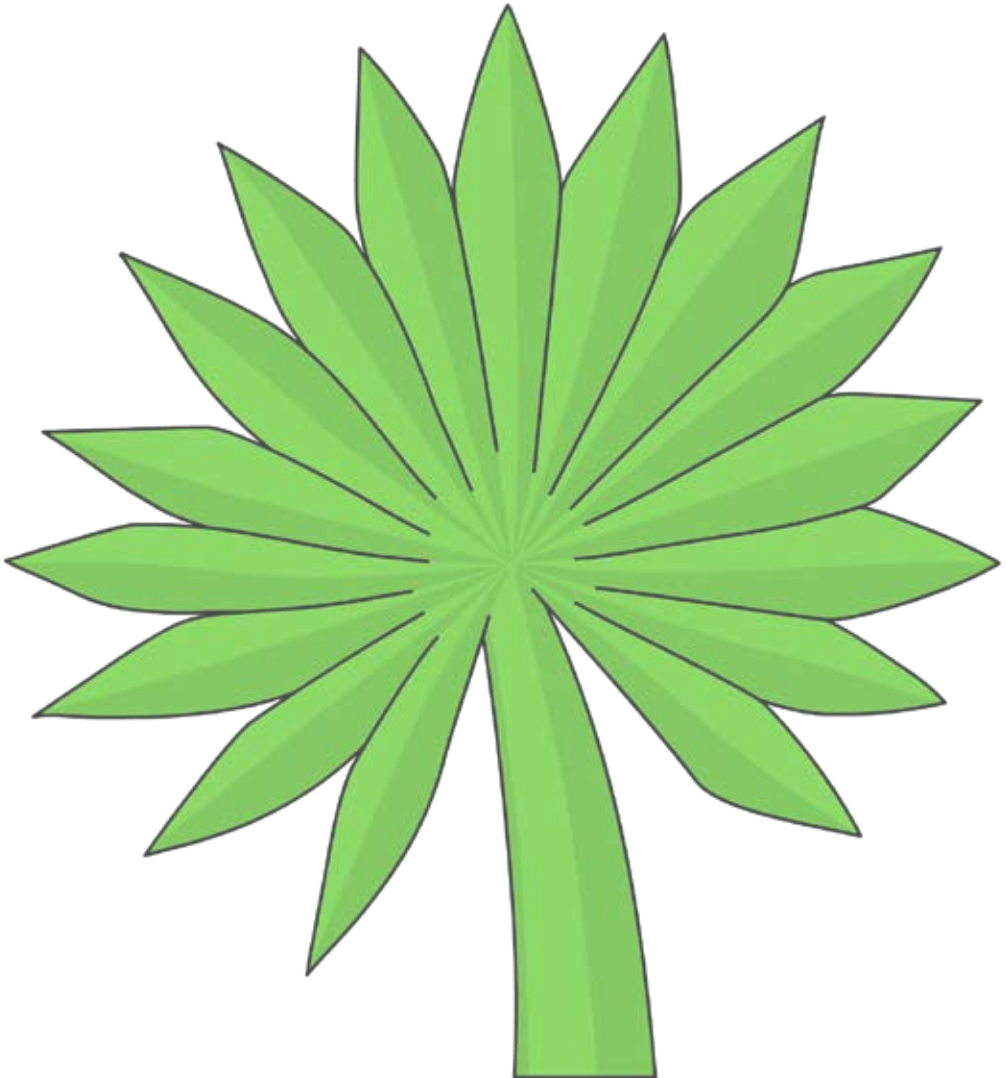
Adapted from [www.mindfithypnosis.com/who-am-i-self-identity/](http://www.mindfithypnosis.com/who-am-i-self-identity/)

Take a few minutes to think about these terms. What elements are you able to choose and/or change? Which parts can you apply your growth mindset to? Which parts do you think influence YOU and YOUR identity the most: the bits you can change or the bits that stay the same?

## CHALLENGE 5

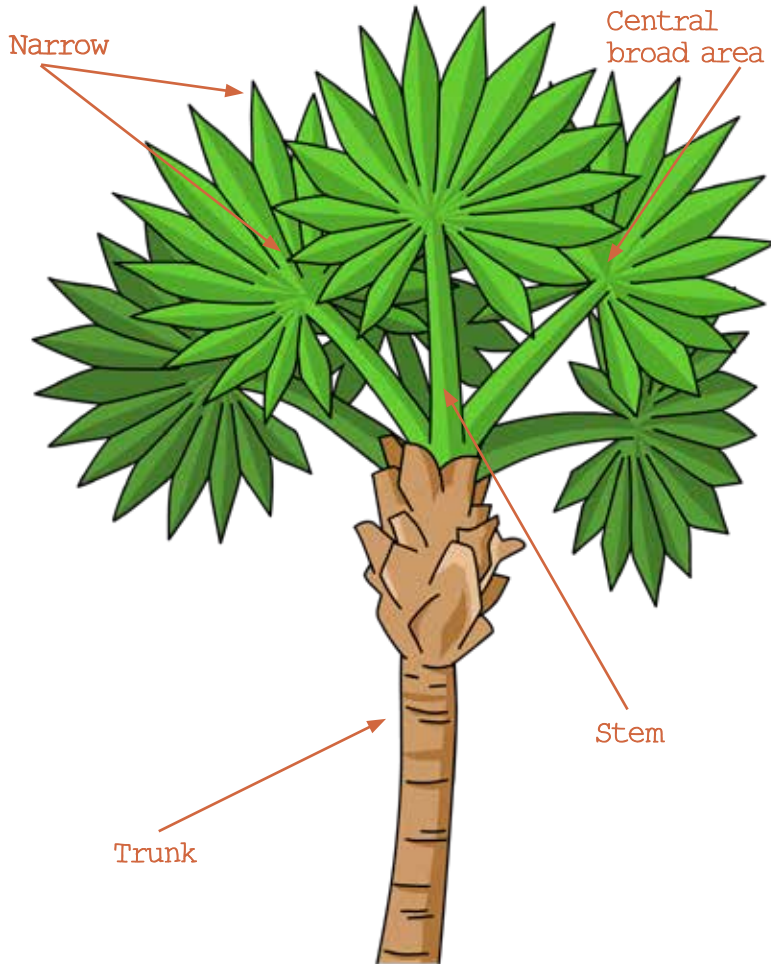
Look at the picture and:

- a. In each frond of the palm leaf, complete the sentence: 'I am...' If you are not sure what to do, look at my example on page 55.



- b. Now, go back and see if there's anything there that you have written that you don't like. Cross it off. Maybe you wrote something down that someone else said about you but you don't like it, or you disagree with it.

Now look at the palm leaf again, and notice how each part of the leaf gets narrower at the ends. Also notice how each part is connected – there's a central, broad area where all the parts connect. That area connects to the tree through a stem. Look at this picture.

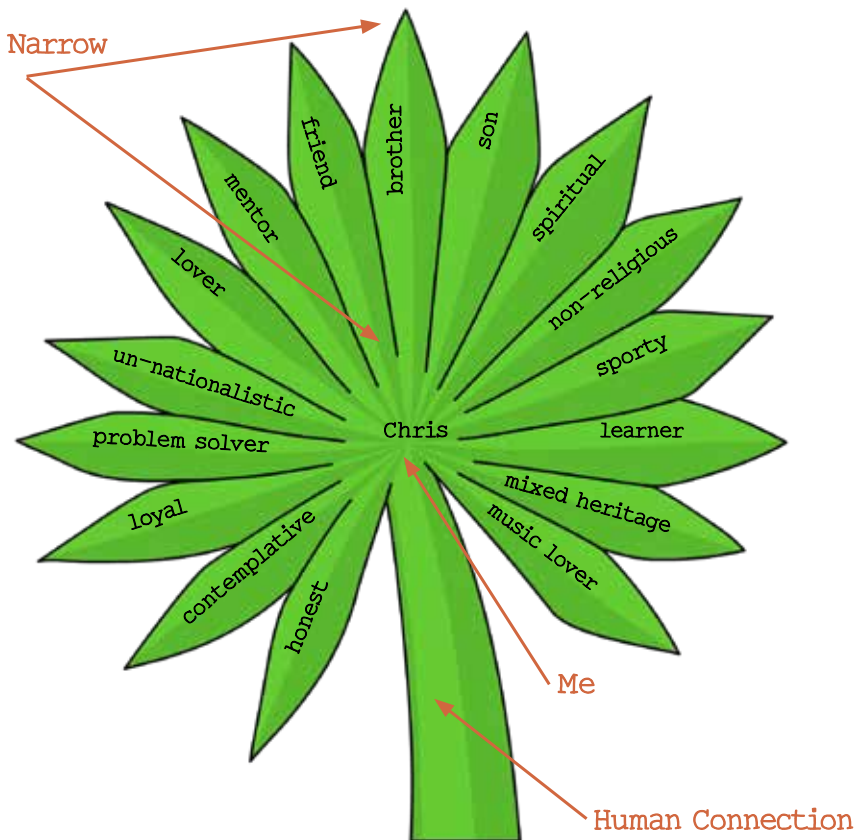


## CHALLENGE 6

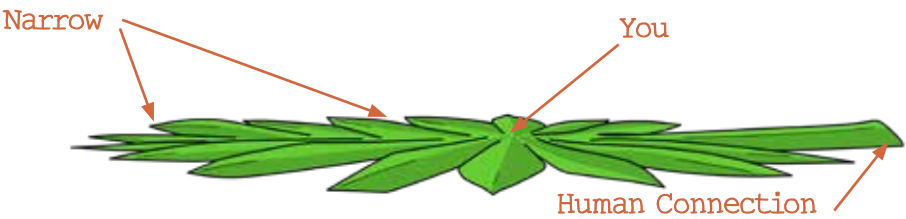
Match the parts of the tree with the following terms. (Answers on page 56).

- a. Society = \_\_\_\_\_
- b. Human connection = \_\_\_\_\_
- c. Individuals = \_\_\_\_\_
- d. Parts of identity = \_\_\_\_\_

So, your identity palm leaf is just one of many attached to the tree. Other leaves are other people. Those leaves are attached to a central broad area. That then connects to the stem, and then to the tree. One way of looking at identity, is that the central, broad area of the leaf is the 'whole you'. It's the place where all the different parts of you come together and make you who you are, and make you have things in common with other people. The stem is the human connection. Like the stem that connects all the different leaves to the tree, being human connects you to all people everywhere. Look at my identity palm leaf below.



Now, those tight, narrow points represent the places where you (probably) forget about that human connection. Those are the places where you only identify as one thing – your religion, your gender, or maybe your ethnicity. In order to have perspective on yourself, you need to look at yourself from the human connection point to see all the many things that make you who you are. Look at the next image:



This palm leaf is not so clear, is it? Looking at it this way, you can see the wide part that connects to the tree – the human connection part – but the individual parts of the leaf are not so obvious. Again, if you imagine you are this leaf, when you are trying to see all of yourself from just one part, you can't. You can only see the elements next to or opposite each one. You only get a sense of all of you when you are looking from the stem – the human connection part.

# Identity: Status- or Value-oriented?

You can classify most parts of your identity as either:

- 1. Status-oriented: Focused on your social position (student, shopkeeper, husband, daughter, rich, village head person).
- OR
- 2. Value-oriented: Guided or directed by certain beliefs or standards (caring, clever, free, generous, motivated etc.).

Neither of these types is 'better' than the other. However, by identifying whether or not you are more status- or more value-oriented, you can better understand your choices and priorities in life, leading to better self-discovery and self-awareness.

## CHALLENGE 7

- a. Earlier, you looked at 0-1 year-old self and your twelve-year-old self. Do that same exercise again for the age you are now.

Answers

a. trunk

b. stem

c. central broad area of frond

d. leaves on frond



Identity Point	Details	Changed, changing or unchanged?	My choice, someone else's or born that way?
Age			
Sex			
Name			
Class			
Skills			
Knowledge			
Citizenship			
Living in...?			
Religion			
Ethnicity			
Gender			
Sexuality			
Livelihood			
Interests			
Values			
Character			
School			
Parents			
Friends			

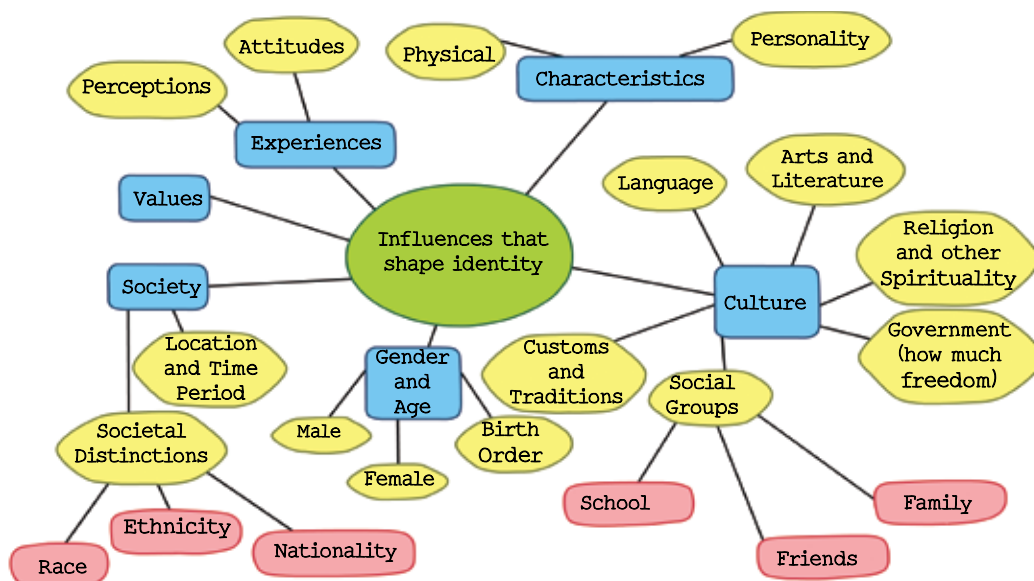
b. Now examine those elements through the perspective of values or status. Write them in the table.

Status	Values
E.g.: Age	

Based on this, which are you now; value or status oriented? Are you surprised by this? What do you think this says about your identity now? How have your priorities changed over time?

As you get older, you can choose how to define yourself and not be labelled by others.

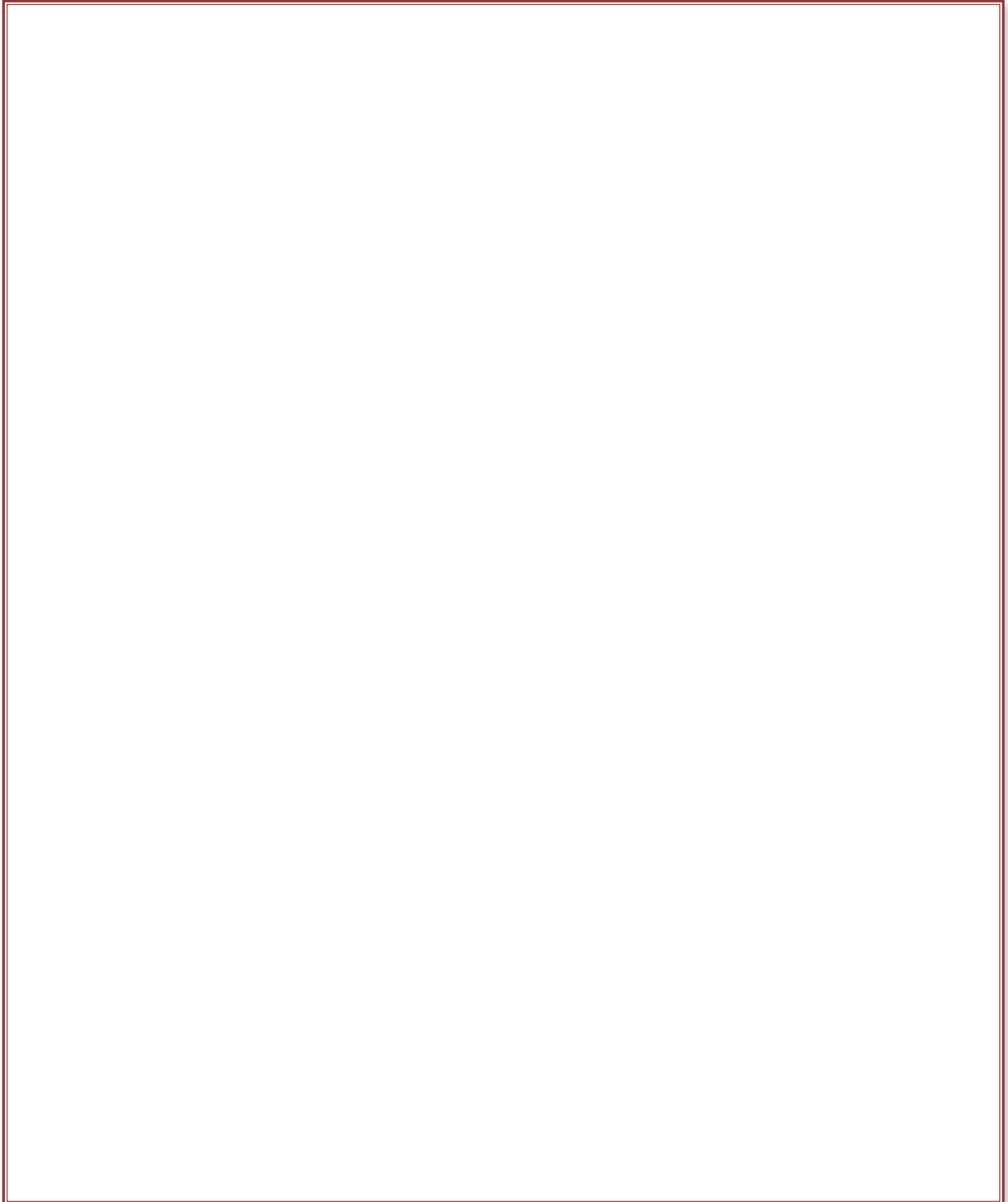
OK, so by now you've looked at a variety of elements that make up your identity. Some of those elements you can't change, but many you can (and will). Take a look at the image below. How does it relate to you now at your current stage of life?



Bonner Curriculum. Identity Circles. A Personal Exploration of Diversity

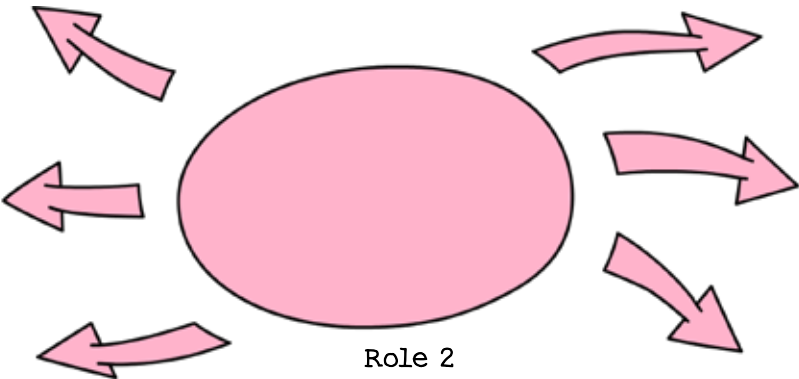
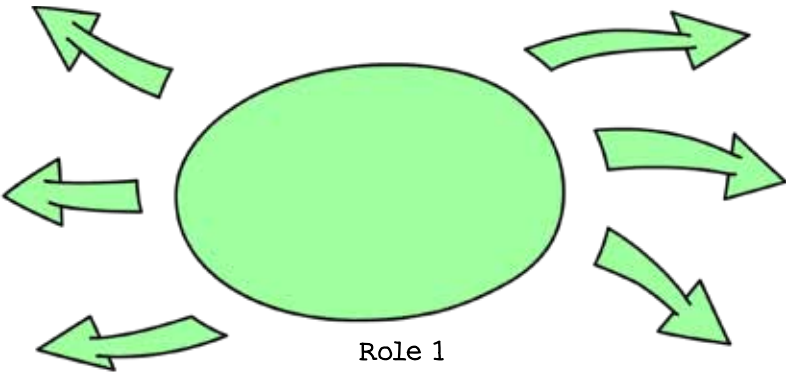
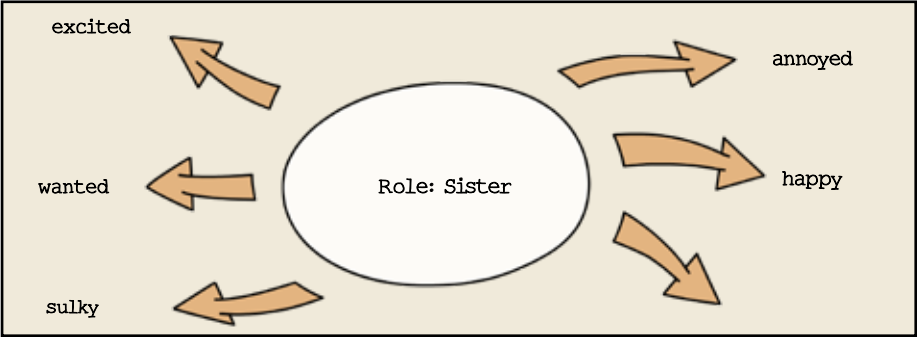
## CHALLENGE 8

Make your own identity map based on the example. Put your name in the centre. You can use the same categories in the example, or think of your own. Include all the elements you can think of that contribute to your identity.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for a student to draw their own identity map. The box is centered on the page and occupies most of the lower half of the page area.

CHALLENGE 9

Reflect on your identity Map and the different roles you play in your life. Choose two of these roles. How do these roles make you feel? Use the template to record the positive and negative emotions you feel in your different roles. For example:



Remember this chapter title? Read the following poem and see if it fits with what you are discovering about your identity.

I note the obvious differences in the human family. Some of us are serious, some thrive on comedy.	Mirror twins are different although their features jibe, and lovers think quite different thoughts while lying side by side.
Some declare their lives are lived as true profundity, and others claim they really live the real reality.	We love and lose in China, we weep on England's moors, and laugh and moan in Guinea, and thrive on Spanish shores.
The variety of our skin tones can confuse, bemuse, delight, brown and pink and beige and purple, tan and blue and white.	We seek success in Finland, are born and die in Maine. In minor ways we differ, in major we're the same.
I've sailed upon the seven seas and stopped in every land, I've seen the wonders of the world not yet one common man.	I note the obvious differences between each sort and type, but we are more alike, my friends, than we are unalike.
I know ten thousand women called Jane and Mary Jane, but I've not seen any two who really were the same.	We are more alike, my friends, than we are unalike. We are more alike, my friends, than we are unalike.

Human Family by Maya Angelou

So, you have all these parts of you. You've been working through your identity. Is it just one thing? Do you have only one identity or do you have multiple identities? Who are you? Are you how you see yourself, or how others see you? Is it both? Is it neither? Are you the same 'you' as you were fifteen years ago, ten years ago, five years ago, last year, last month, last week, yesterday? Are you the same 'you' when you talk to your friends as you are when you talk to your parents? Are you the same with your students (or teachers) as you are with your colleagues? Are you the same you with strangers as you are with people familiar to you? Are you the same you in your day-to-day life as you are when you go for a vacation, or a weekend away?

No, of course you're not. You change according to how you feel you need to, to the people you are with and the environment around you. However, if you integrate your identity from looking at yourself from a *human connection* perspective rather than from a *human differences* perspective, you'll be part of a larger tree, not just a leaf all on its own.

The thing about your identity is that it can, does and will change. You have all these multiple parts of you based on a whole bunch of factors; they are not fixed. Your emotions are not fixed, your thinking ability is not fixed, and many of the multiple parts of your identity are not fixed. The trick is to integrate all the parts of your identity, and to reintegrate them, and then to do it again: Throughout your life. You are not the same person you were at twelve and you are not the same person that you will be when you are 30 or 50 or 90. You are still you though. In today's world, there isn't really much about you that you can't change if you really want to.

We are all different, yet not. You ARE unique, your identity is yours, but you share common ground with so many people. Is it better to focus on the similarities or fight about the differences?

## Remember

- ✓ You have your birth identity which you really had no choice about.
- ✓ You have the ability to choose other elements of your identity.
- ✓ Your identity is not fixed – you can change it if you want.
- ✓ There are many parts to your identity.
- ✓ Integrating those parts is key to understanding who you are.
- ✓ You are uniquely you but primarily you are human.
- ✓ We are all more alike than unalike.

## Recommendation

Go outside. Do something else. Think about what you've worked through so far and build this chapter in with all of that. Revisit the recommendations made throughout the book. Talk to your friends or your co-workers or your children or your parents or your brothers and sisters about identity. What elements are most important to them and why? What is most important to you and why? Are those elements more important than being human? Look for the things that you have in common with other people, not the differences. Close the book and come back to it in a day or two.

# 4. Your Development





So, you've looked a little at what success can be and at the idea of psychosocial skills (those skills which relate to you, those people around you and your ability to face and overcome problems). In Chapter 1, you also thought about whether success looks different for you at different times in life. If you're understanding the idea of a growth mindset, then your success will look different at different stages.

You've also looked at who you are and that your identity is made up of many different elements and that they can and will change. In this chapter, you will look at how some of those changes are related to life stages and how and when your brain develops.

As humans, we develop. It starts when we are born, in our infancy, with our physical selves and our senses. When we are two years old, sensory development is usually in place (if we are fully healthy). We then develop greater perception and motor development. There is also social and emotional development; very early in our lives we start fitting into some kind of social world and experiencing emotions. There is also cognitive development, which includes our abilities to reason and to know things, and our memory.

**CHALLENGE 1**

Match the phrases or words from the paragraph above (1-6) with the definitions (A-F). (Answers on page 66)

1.	Physical self	A.	Seeing more deeply
2.	Senses	B.	Family, friends, school
3.	Greater perception	C.	Your body
4.	Motor development	D.	Thinking
5.	Social world	E.	Seeing, hearing, tasting, touching and smelling
6.	Cognition	F.	Reflexes and coordination



As we go through our childhood and into our adolescence, all of these areas keep developing. However, our physical development (how our bodies grow) slows down as we start to reach young adulthood. But does our brain also slow down in its development?

CHALLENGE 2

Below are the stages that I have just mentioned, and some more. Predict the ages of these stages. (Answers on page 68)

Stage	Age
Infancy	
Early Childhood	
Childhood	
Adolescence	
Young Adulthood	
Middle Adulthood	
Late Adulthood	
Old Age	

1. C	3. A	5. B
2. E	4. F	6. D
Answers		

### CHALLENGE 3

In the last chapter, you looked at some definitions of psychology. Without looking back, can you remember what psychology is?

A simple explanation is, 'the study of the mind and of thought, feeling, and behaviour...'

So, it's the study of the mind (brain), thought (thinking), feeling (emotion) and behaviour (how we act).

Psychologists don't disagree on human development; development happens. They also don't really disagree on the stages of life and those ages. If your stages look similar to the ones at the bottom of page 68, well done.

However, there is a lot that psychologists don't necessarily agree on, in relation to adulthood, and cognitive development in adulthood. In fact, there are now almost too many 'stage theories' to count.

Isn't something a little odd when we look at those stages? Surely they cannot be global can they? After all, life expectancy varies dramatically from country to country.

### CHALLENGE 4

Predict the answers to these questions.

- a. What was the average life expectancy at birth of the global population in 2016?
- b. What was it for women?
- c. What was it for men?
- d. What was Myanmar's average life expectancy?
- e. What was it for women?
- f. What was it for men?
- g. Which country in the world has the highest average life expectancy?
- h. Which country has the lowest life expectancy?

	Global Ranking	Total Average	Women Average	Men Average
World	n/a	69	71.1	67
Myanmar	171	66.6	69.2	64.2
Japan	3	85	88.5	81.7
Laos	182	64.3	66.4	62.2
Cambodia	181	64.5	67.1	62
Thailand	116	74.7	78	71.5
Monaco	1	89.5	93.5	85.6
South Africa	190	63.1	64.6	61.6
Chad	224	50.2	51.5	49
USA	42	79.8	82.1	77.5
Denmark	47	79.4	82	77
UK	33	80.7	83	78.5

The World Factbook – [www.cia.gov](http://www.cia.gov)

CHALLENGE 5

- a. Compare your answers about life expectancy with the table. How close were you?
- b. What factors do you think make Monaco the country with the highest life expectancy?
- c. What factors do you think make Chad the country with the lowest life expectancy? (Answers below)

**Answers, Challenge 2**

Infancy: 0-1 and a bit;  
Early childhood: roughly 2-5;  
Childhood: 6-11  
Adolescence: 12-19  
Young Adulthood: 20-25  
Middle Adulthood: 26-40  
Late Adulthood: 41-65  
Old Age: 66+

**Answers, Challenge 5**

B – Very small population to begin with, wealthy country, lowest infant mortality rate in the world  
C – Very high maternal mortality rate, very high infant mortality rate, poverty, war.

# Brain Development

OK, we are talking about your development right? So, let's talk about your brain's development.

One of the earliest pioneers in cognitive psychology was Jean Piaget (1896-1980). He spent about 60 years researching the development of children's thinking. He believed that, by the time a child reached the end of their adolescence, their thinking had stabilised. Since Piaget, there has been significant evidence to show this is not true – that your thinking can develop throughout your adulthood.

I don't know how old you are. As you are reading this book, you are probably older than sixteen, maybe in your late teens or twenties. Many of you will be older. Think back to your middle childhood years (6-12). If you are as old as me, that's a long way to go back...

## CHALLENGE 6

- a. Can you remember how you thought when you were six years old?  
How you viewed things?
- b. What about when you were twelve?
- c. Now think about your teens. Was the way that you thought in your teens different from your middle childhood? HOW did your thinking change? Do you know WHY it changed?
- d. What about from your teens to your young adulthood? Is your thinking changing or is WHAT you think about changing? Or is it both?

There are no right or wrong answers.

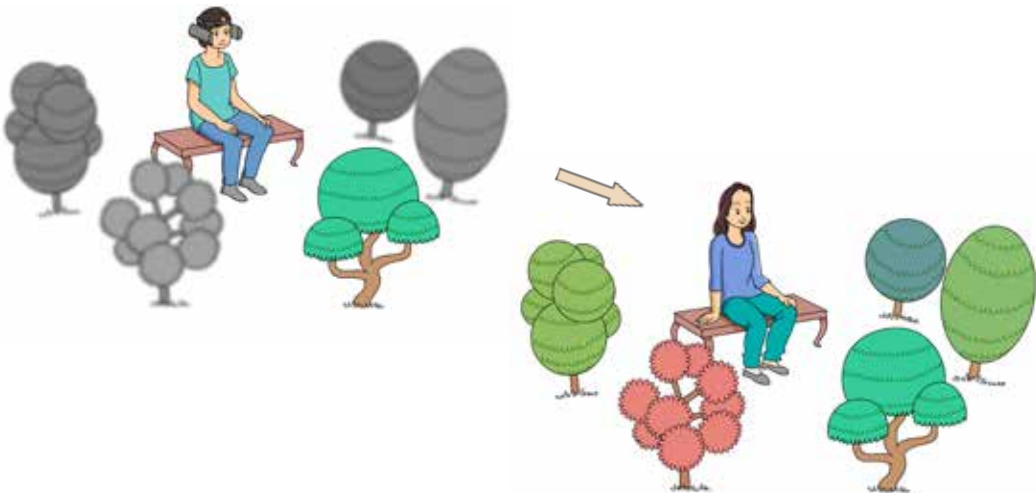
In 2005, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) created the Young Adult Development Project. MIT defined young adulthood as being 18-25 years of age. The project looked at all areas of life including education, community work, relationships with parents, employment choices and mental health. They specifically looked at three main areas of research:

- **COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT** — the changes in thinking patterns that affect behaviour.
- **BRAIN DEVELOPMENT** — the changes in the structure and function of the brain, and how they affect thinking and behaviour.
- **INFLUENCES ON DEVELOPMENT** — the role of colleges and universities, parenting, peers, and other factors that shape the brain's development.

The project found that young adulthood is a time of dramatic change in basic thinking structures, as well as in the brain itself. An eighteen-year-old is not the same person as they will be at 25, in the same way that an eleven-year-old is not the same as they will be at eighteen.

It sounds obvious, doesn't it? However, do YOU think of those years in the same terms? Do YOU expect the late teenager to be a fully developed adult? If you are in this stage yourself, do YOU expect or believe you should be a fully developed adult in the way you think?

According to MIT, we all have a mental 'visor' that screens out some ideas and events from the brain, and encourages others. As you develop, you can see and think about a wider range of things. You can consider more complex and abstract relationships and moral problems. This gives you more powerful thinking tools.



MIT, after all their research in this project, stated that:

'...when teens enter young adulthood, their thinking capabilities, relationship skills, and ability to regulate emotions are unlikely to be at a developmental level where they can cope easily with the demands of a diverse, global, technological, rapidly-changing world.'

So, if teens entering young adulthood are unlikely to be at a developmental level where they can cope easily with the demands of the world, are we expecting too much from them? And is this the same for all people? What is this like for:

- a 22-year-old couple with a baby and another on the way?
- a sixteen-year-old who has to support his sick mother and younger siblings?
- a fifteen-year-old with no family who leaves school and has to find a job?
- a girl starting university, living with her parents?
- a nineteen-year-old joining the army?

## CHALLENGE 7

How does this relate to you? Do you think you are under too much pressure to succeed too early? If you are older, did you feel 'ready' to cope with the demands of the world when you were a late teenager? Write down some of the things that you feel/felt pressure about at around 16-18 years old.

MIT went on to say that, 'If all goes well, biology and environment bring a surge of growth paralleling those of childhood and adolescence'.

So, if all goes well people grow in young adulthood just as much as in their childhood and teens? That sounds a bit like luck. However, we can use our

growth mindset to acknowledge difficulties if we have an understanding all round of what those difficulties are.

MIT acknowledged that, as this project was conducted in the USA, there are cultural expectations around 'adult' roles such as financial independence and family formation that could be very different from other cultures. Do you think that 'adult' roles are the same in Myanmar as in other countries?

CHALLENGE 8

The table below outlines some 'adult' roles and the legal ages you can do these in different countries. (Answers on page 76.)

- a. Write the legal age that you think each law says in Myanmar.
- b. Write whether you felt/feel 'ready' for that role or responsibility at the 'legal' age.

	U.S.A	U.K.	India	China	Myanmar	Are/Were You Ready?
Buy tobacco	18	18	18	18	a. _____	
Buy alcohol	21	18	18-25	18	b. _____	
Marry	18 (16 with parent's consent)	18 (16 with parent's consent)	Girls 18, Boys 21	Girls 16, Boys 18	c. _____	
Have sex	16-18	16 (17 male to male)	16	14	d. _____	
Motorbike license	14-16	17	18	18	e. _____	
Car license	16	17	18	18	f. _____	
Open bank account	18	11	10	Bank policy	g. _____	
Buy land	18	18	18	18	h. _____	
Vote	18	18	18	18	i. _____	



Look again at Challenge 8 and what you feel/felt pressure about. Were those pressures coming from people around you, or were you putting pressure on yourself? At what ages were you were ready for these things?

Think back to elements of your identity (see the last chapter). Think especially about status and values.

CHALLENGE 9

- a. For each stage of your life that you have lived through so far, decide whether you were more overall status or value oriented. Tick the most appropriate box for each.

Age	Status-oriented	Value-oriented
Infancy (0-1 and a bit)		
Early Childhood (2-5)		
Childhood (6-11)		
Adolescence (12-19)		
Young Adulthood (20-25)		
Middle Adulthood (26-40)		
Late Adulthood (41-65)		
Old Age (66+)		

- b. Look at your adolescent years and the 'adult' roles from the previous challenge. Identify if those roles related to your status or your values.
- c. Think back to Challenge 3 in Chapter One, and the person who you identified as being successful. What do you admire about their success? Do you admire their status or their values? Why?

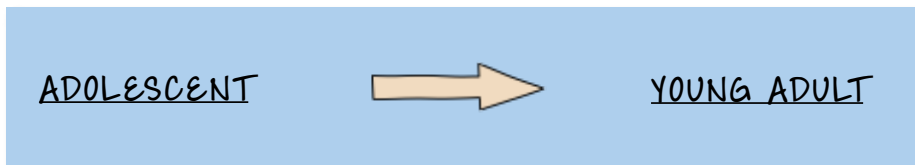
So, what is it that allows you to feel ready for some things and not for others? Why might you be more status- than value-oriented at certain life stages?

## Developmental Changes

After their young adult development research, MIT wrote:

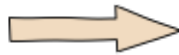
'The years from 18 to 25 are a time of stunning accomplishments and chilling risks, as a roller coaster of internal and external changes, including brain changes, propels young adults from adolescence to full maturity'.

The following summarises some of the key psychosocial changes when adolescents become young adults.



### Thinking

Abstract  
Thinking



More Complex  
Thinking

Generally, when we are children, we think in a concrete or firm way. We think about what we can see and the here and now. For example, we can look at a black cow, be told that it's a cow, and think about that cow. If we were shown a white cow, we might say, 'that's not a cow because cows are black'. It is literal thinking, fixed by definitions and our brain boundaries.

As you progress through adolescence, your thinking becomes more abstract; you can see patterns and make generalisations. You can think of a white or brown or multi-coloured cow and understand that they are cows, even though they are not black.

In childhood, you will be able to perform simple mathematic tasks such as addition and subtraction, though in adolescence you'll be able to see them as opposite things.

In young adulthood, if your abstract thought develops enough, you will move onto more complex thinking by developing systems for organising abstract thoughts and applying them to different perspectives, values and ideas.

## Points of View

Right/Wrong  
Framework



Appreciation for  
Diverse Views

In adolescence, ideas tend to be either right or wrong. Mostly adolescents will only 'see' one solution to a problem. This is often reinforced in school where a student has to learn the 'right' answers expected by a teacher.

In young adulthood (if development is 'on track') you will be able to 'see' many points of view. You will realise that there may be many solutions or 'right' answers to a problem. You will start to more fully appreciate the differences in people, their viewpoints and ideas.

## Relationships

'Instrumental'  
Relationships



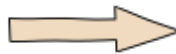
Relationship  
Mutuality

As an adolescent, even though you may be able to see more than one point of view, the ideas or needs of others will quite often get disregarded when addressing your needs. Your relationships will mostly be about, 'what can you do for me and what can I do for you in return' – you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours. This is known as 'instrumental' thinking.

As a young adult, you will be more able to see different points of view – multiple perspectives – at the same time. Therefore your relationships will develop based on shared values and mutual respect. This means you will move from back-scratching relationships to more mutual relationships based around treating others as you would like to be treated.

## Emotions

Intensity of  
Emotion



Emotional  
Regulation

In adolescence your hormones really start kicking in. You experience more emotions and these are triggered more easily. This goes across the range from happiness to anger or from excitement to boredom. You might not 'feel' these more than you did in childhood, but it is clear that you feel them more strongly.

In young adulthood, once your hormones have calmed down, you gain a much better ability to integrate your emotions and thought. You will have more of an ability to think about the present and the future at the same time. This will allow you to balance or regulate how you feel. You will be able to consider delaying immediate pleasure by balancing that pleasure against possible future consequences.

Decision Making

Sensation  
seeking



Risk-taking and  
Decision making

As an adolescent, your emotions are triggered more easily. however, you often actually seek to trigger them too. At this stage of your life you are not typically able to regulate those emotions – you just go looking for the thrills. You can look at this like jumping on a bike and riding really fast down a hill without checking first that the brakes work.

In young adulthood, you are better able to think about consequences and you will be able to think about risks more responsibly and measure your choices more effectively. This increased ability to regulate your emotions and measure risk will also lead to more thoughtful decisions regarding both your present and future work, relationships and health. You'll check the brakes.

Answers

a. 16

b. 18

c. 18

d. 16, but 14 with parents' consent

e. 16

f. 18

g. 18

h. 18

i. 18

CHALLENGE 10

Are these changes similar to your experiences? Match the pressures you wrote down in Challenge 7 to these five change areas:

Changes in...	Pressures
Thinking	
Points of view	
Relationships	
Emotions	
Decision making	

Understanding stages of development as a natural process can help you to apply that understanding to other areas of your life. So far, we've looked a little at what this development is. You now know a bit about it, have some understanding of it and have begun to apply that to your own experiences and life. When you know WHY you behave, act and feel the way you do – not just WHAT you feel – then you're on your way to self-awareness. But remember, self-awareness is a psychosocial ability, and therefore a lifelong practice. Your self will change throughout your life, and reflecting on that – who YOU are now versus who you used to be – is essential to your growth mindset and your idea of success.

CHALLENGE 11

Apply this developmental knowledge and understanding to someone else's life – someone else you know that is in this life stage.

- If you are a young adult, think about a teenage brother or sister or friend.
- If you are a teacher or caregiver of young adults, think about what your students may be going through.
- If you are a parent, think about your teenage children and their journey.

Changes in...	Pressures
Thinking	
Points of view	
Relationships	
Emotions	
Decision making	

Also think about how much the world has changed from five years ago, ten years ago and, if you are old enough, what it was like 20 years ago. Did you face the same kinds of challenges or pressure then as you do today?

By doing this exercise, by applying your awareness of your development to people you know at those stages, you are starting to use the skill of understanding others. However, you are still doing it through your perspective and your experiences. You need to ask other people questions and listen carefully to their answers. Only then will you understand THEM better, and from THEIR perspective. Understanding others is a psychosocial competency and therefore one that takes a lifetime of practice.

There was a picture of a rollercoaster at the beginning of this chapter. Can you see how that relates to this time of your development? Think of all the ups and downs you've had. Think of all the crazy twists and turns your life has gone through. Think of all those times where you felt your stomach was falling away from you, that blood rushed to your head, where there was pressure like you'd not experienced before. What were your stunning accomplishments? What were your chilling risks?

**CHALLENGE 12**

- a. Write some of your accomplishments and reflect on those times and what it was that allowed you to make them. Use whatever language you like – write words, paragraphs or sentences.

Stunning accomplishments	What allowed you to make them?

b. Write some of your risks and reflect on those times and what it was that got you through them. Use whatever language you like – write words, paragraphs or sentences.

Chilling risks	What got you through them?

Reflecting on what you have accomplished, as well as the unnecessary and maybe dangerous risks you have taken, will allow you to better understand how you are developing. As your psychosocial brain develops, you don't take those risks. Or perhaps you are more cautious or responsible about taking them. You are learning.

You've started looking at that brain and how at different stages in your life your thinking, points of view, relationships, emotions and decision making all change. You'll explore this in more depth in the next chapter.



## Remember

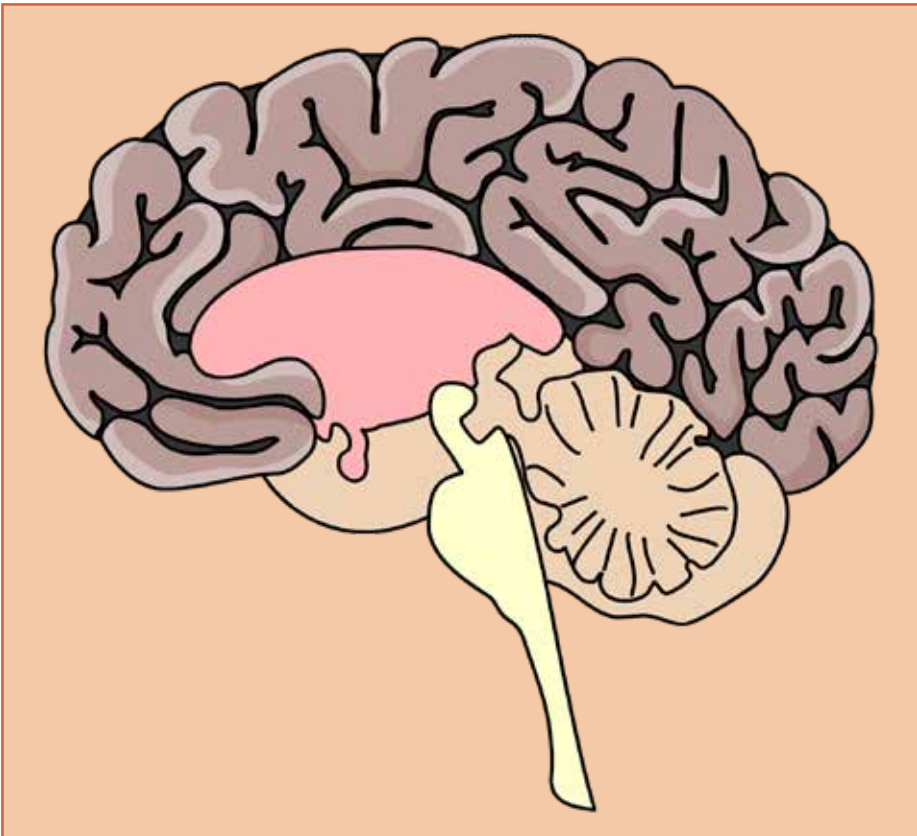
- ✓ Your eighteen-year-old self is very different from your twelve-year-old self. Likewise, your 25-year-old self will be very different from your eighteen-year-old-self.
- ✓ Even though your physical development slows and stops as you leave late adolescence, you will go through many changes in your:
  - thinking;
  - points of view;
  - relationships;
  - emotions;
  - decision making.
- ✓ Your environment can play a big part in how much you develop
- ✓ Different people are ready for different roles at different times.

## Recommendation

Go outside. Do something else. Think about what you've worked through so far. Talk to your friends or your co-workers or your children or your parents or your brothers and sisters about how ready they are/were for certain adult roles at certain ages. Think about how your success may be linked to your development. Think a bit more about how your psychosocial abilities are linked to your development and, to your success. Start putting together all the things you have been working through. Close the book and come back to it in a day or two.

# 5.

## Your Psychosocial Brain



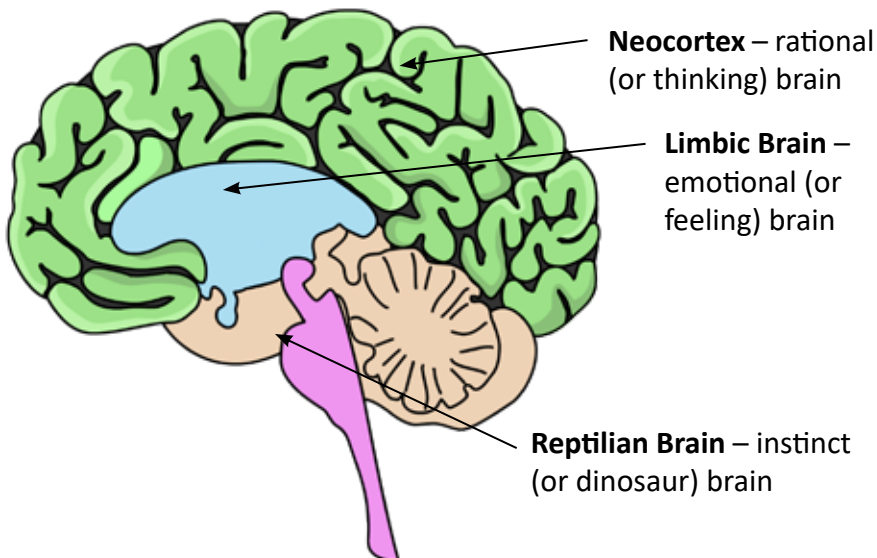
We've been talking about your development, and about a big, new (2005-2015) body of research that has been addressing the young adulthood stage. This development occurs at a cognitive (rational) and emotional (feeling) level, both of which relate directly to your brain.

### CHALLENGE 1

How much do you remember from Chapters 1-4? Are these statements true or false? If false, explain why. (Answers on page 84)

- a. Psychosocial is made up from the words psychotic and sociopathic.
- b. There is no difference between hard skills and soft skills.
- c. Psychosocial skills can be easily taught and learned.
- d. It is not important to integrate the multiple parts of your identity.
- e. Your identity remains the same throughout your life.
- f. Your cognitive abilities are fully developed by sixteen years of age.
- g. There are no significant changes between adolescence and your mid twenties.
- h. 'Adult' roles occur for everyone at the same age

This chapter is about your psychosocial brain right? So let's take a look at it. Rather than cutting your head open, we'll just take a look at a simplified image.



The brain is an incredibly complex organ. There are three main areas of the brain that affect how you think, feel and act. *Neuroscience* is the study of the brain, its parts and how they all link together to make it work. It is an ever-changing field of study that is constantly making new discoveries. The brain actually has billions and billions of parts – not just the three outlined here. Before we look into these three main parts of your brain, let's start with intelligence – what we often think the brain is about.

## Intelligence

Has anyone ever called you 'stupid'? Have you ever called someone an 'idiot'? Do you ever think you are 'foolish'? Ever thought that someone else was 'unintelligent'?

### CHALLENGE 2

What does 'intelligence' mean to you? Write your own definition of intelligence.

'Intelligence is the ability to learn or understand things or to deal with new or difficult situations'.

Merriam-Webster Dictionary

#### Answers

a. False – psychology and sociology or social; b. False – lots of differences around rules, ease of mastery, how you use them, etc; c. False – they are lifelong learning; d. False – it is very important; e. False – it can change throughout your life; f. False – That was Piaget's theory, but now believed to be in mid-20s; g. False – major changes in emotional and cognitive thinking; h. False – occur at different stages for different people in different places.

'Intelligence has been defined in many different ways including one's capacity for logic, understanding, self-awareness, learning, emotional knowledge, planning, creativity and problem solving.'

Wikipedia

So is there a universal, agreed-upon definition?

'The definition of intelligence is controversial'.

Wikipedia

Read the following statements about intelligence.

'The ... capacity of an individual to act purposefully, to think rationally, and to deal effectively with their environment.'

David Wechsler

'To my mind, a human intellectual competence must entail a set of skills of problem solving — enabling the individual to resolve genuine problems or difficulties that he or she encounters and, when appropriate, to create an effective product — and must also often entail the potential for finding or creating problems — and thereby laying the groundwork for the acquisition of new knowledge.'

Howard Gardner

'Goal-directed adaptive behaviour.'

Sternberg & Salter

Sound familiar? Think back to Chapter 2 and 'life skills' and the 'competencies'. Was there worldwide agreement? Does everyone agree, or were there lots of definitions and lists from various experts?

### CHALLENGE 3

Look again at your definition of intelligence from Challenge 2 and compare it with the definitions that you've just read. How closely does yours match?

Can you see the similarities in UNICEF's definition of life skills and the definitions of intelligence you've just read? Think about the meaning of psychosocial. Think about the three parts of your brain we will focus on in this chapter.

'Life skills are psychosocial abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life'. (UNICEF)

So, your psychosocial brain is really about your emotional thought and your rational thought. The abilities are the skills or competencies around using your psychosocial brain. Make sense? OK, the 'demands and challenges of everyday life'; what would they be? Could we say they are 'problems' or 'issues'?

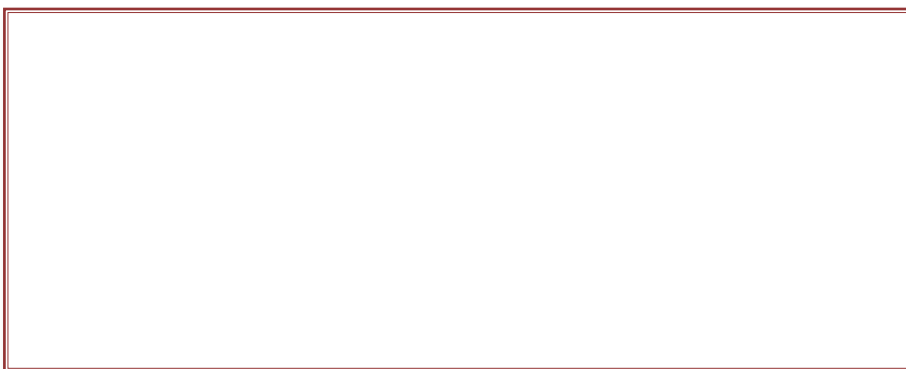
'Life skills' means using your mind to effectively solve the problems you face.

## Habits of Mind

What does this phrase mean to you? What do you think 'habits of mind' are? Think about your emotions, your cognitive thought, situations, people and, yourself.

### CHALLENGE 4

Write a definition of 'habits of mind'.



'Habits of mind' means knowing how to behave intelligently when you DON'T know the answer – when you have problems, but no easy solutions. There are generally four areas with which this can occur.

### CHALLENGE 5

Here are the four areas (types of situations) where you don't immediately know the solution. Match the situations with the definitions. (Answers at the bottom of the page)

Situation	Definition
1. Uncertainties	a. things or people that are difficult to explain
2. Dichotomies	b. situations in which you have to make a difficult choice
3. Enigmas	c. things you are not sure about
4. Dilemmas	d. the differences between two opposite things

The term 'Habits of Mind' was developed by Arthur L. Costa. He acknowledges that there is no complete list of habits of mind (similar to UNICEF saying that there is no complete list of psychosocial abilities). But he did come up with sixteen main habits. These are a useful starting point for developing your thinking and problem-solving abilities.

'Only by routinely practicing these habits of mind can we assure ourselves that we are thinking clearly, confronting problems intelligently, and making wise decisions'.

Arthur L. Costa, Co-founder of the Institute for Intelligent Behavior at the California State University, USA ; Co-founder of the Center for Cognitive Coaching; Co-founder of his own Institute for Habits of Mind.

**Answers**  
 1. c  
 2. d  
 3. a  
 4. b

# THE 16 HABITS OF MIND



LISTENING TO  
OTHERS WITH  
UNDERSTANDING



TAKING  
RESPONSIBLE RISKS



THINKING ABOUT  
YOUR THINKING



THINKING AND  
COMMUNICATING  
WITH CLARITY  
AND PRECISION



PERSISTING



THINKING FLEXIBLY



APPLYING PAST  
KNOWLEDGE TO  
NEW SITUATIONS



QUESTIONING AND  
POSING PROBLEMS



CREATING,  
IMAGINING &  
INNOVATING



MANAGING  
IMPULSES



FINDING HUMOUR



THINKING INTER-  
DEPENDENTLY



GATHERING  
INFORMATION  
THROUGH ALL  
YOUR SENSES



STRIVING FOR  
ACCURACY AND  
PRECISION



RESPONDING WITH  
WONDERMENT &  
AWE



LEARNING  
CONTINUOUSLY

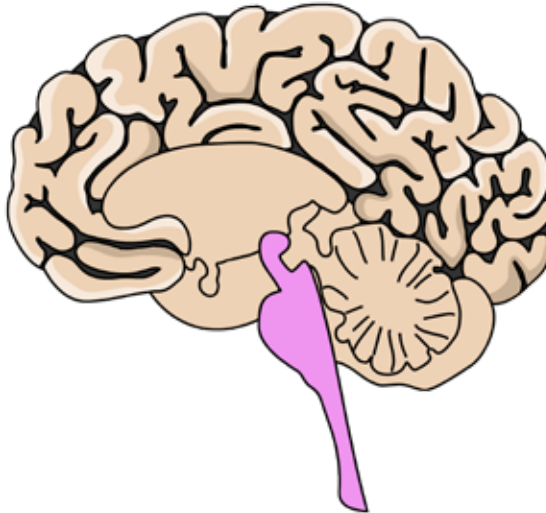


So, is your brain only about thinking or intelligence? Sure, you use your brain to think, but 'thinking' and 'brain' are not interchangeable words. Your brain does much more than just thinking. Remember how we started this chapter, with your three brains? Let's start with the most basic of them, the bit that's been around since before we became human – your reptilian (or dinosaur) brain.

## Your 'Reptilian' Brain: Basic Instinct

### CHALLENGE 6

- a. Predict the answers to the questions.
  1. Why do you think it is called your reptilian brain?
  2. What do you think its functions are?
  3. When this part of your brain is working, is it the same as thinking?
- b. Read the three paragraphs below and check your predictions.



The brain stem is the oldest and smallest part of your 'three brains'. It is at the base of your skull, coming from your spinal column. It evolved about 200 million years ago and is similar to the total brain of reptiles around today. That is why it is often called the 'reptilian' or 'dinosaur' brain.

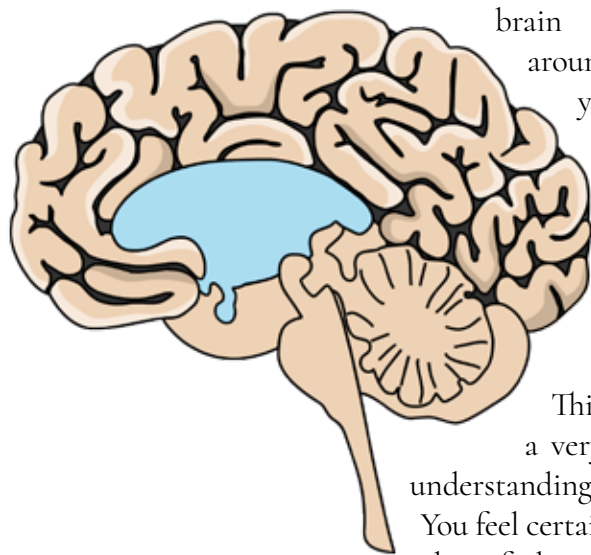
This part of your brain controls breathing, heartbeat, body temperature and balance. It also generates your fight or flight mechanism. It works

instinctively and is concerned with your survival, dominance (or lack of it) and mating. Your basic ruling emotions of love, hate, fear, lust, and contentment come from this first stage of the brain. Over millions of years of evolution, layers of more sophisticated reasoning have been added upon this foundation in your other 'two brains'.

Your intellectual capacity for complex rational thought makes you smarter than other animals. However, when you are out of control with anger, it is your reptilian brain taking over your other main two brain components. When this happens, you literally are not thinking. Does this mean that your reptile brain rules you or that you have no control over your feelings? No. It does not, and you'll look more closely at why that is now.

## **Your Limbic Brain – 'Emotional Brain'**

Your limbic, or emotional, brain developed when the first mammals evolved from reptiles. This part of your



brain records your memories around the behaviour that gave you both agreeable and disagreeable experiences.

The limbic brain is responsible for the value judgments you make, often unconsciously, that influence how you behave.

This part of your brain plays a very large part in emotional understanding and emotion regulation. You feel certain things at certain times – those feelings are your emotional brain working.

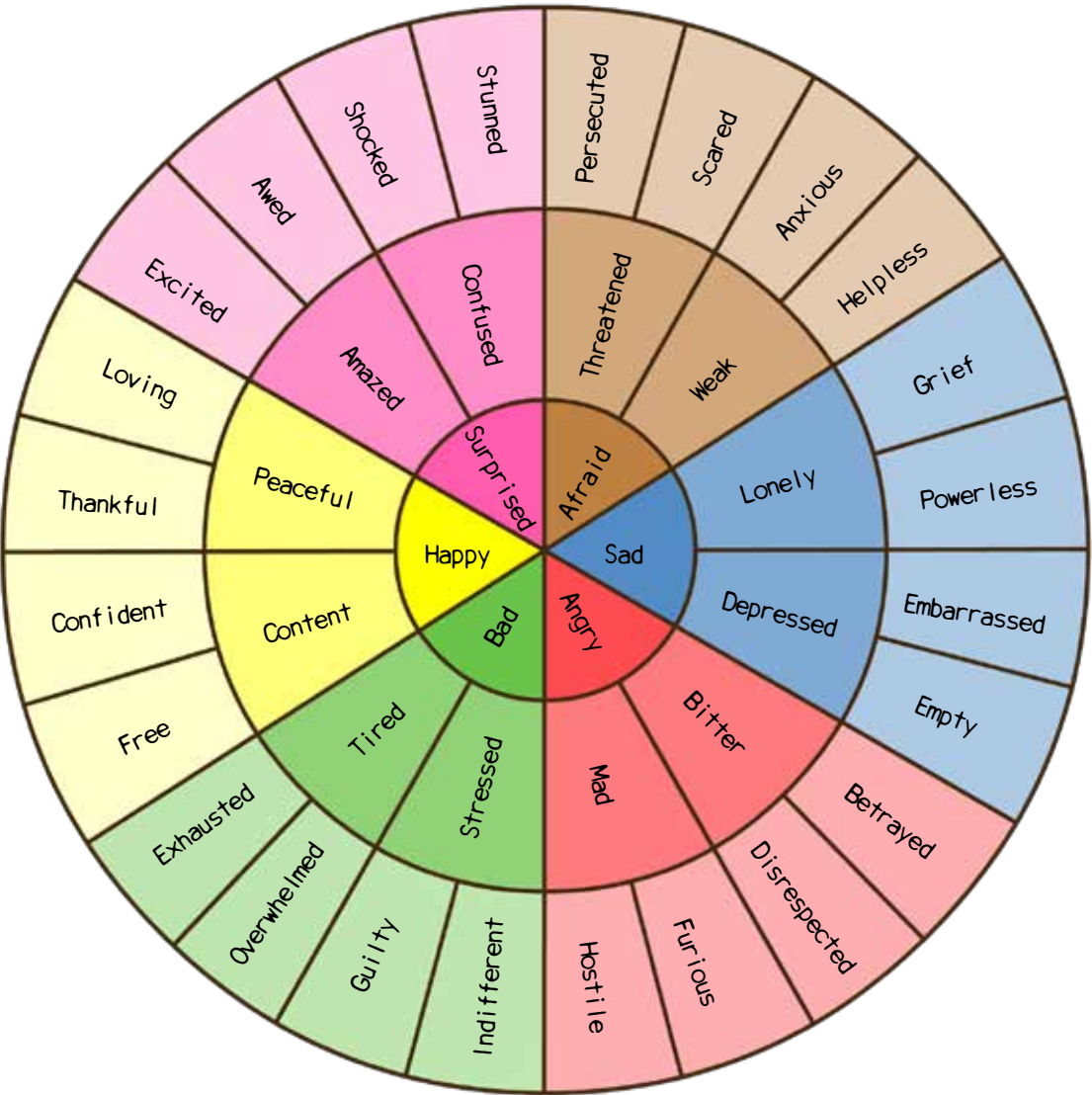
**CHALLENGE 7**

Think about the last time you felt the following emotions and what was happening

Emotion Felt	What Was Happening?
Happy	
Sad	
Surprised	
Angry	
Bad	
Afraid	

Were those emotions actually what you were feeling, or can you be more specific about them? For you to practise self-awareness, emotional understanding and understanding of others, you will need to be able to examine your feelings and those of others in more depth.

# Emotional Vocabulary Wheel



## CHALLENGE 8

Relabel your emotions from Challenge 7 with a word or words from the wheel that more accurately describes what you were feeling.

Original word	More accurate word or words
Happy	
Sad	
Surprised	
Angry	
Bad	
Afraid	

OK, so you've looked at labelling your emotions more effectively. When you feel, it is because something has squeezed a 'trigger' in your brain (like squeezing the trigger on a gun that launches a bullet) it launches a specific emotion – happiness, anger, loneliness or frustration for example. Most of the time you know WHAT you feel. Sometimes you might not be 100% sure, as you can have a mixture of feelings, but you can usually identify and label those feelings.

However, do you know WHY you feel the way you do? Do you take responsibility for your own feelings, or do you credit (if they are pleasant) or blame (if they are unpleasant) other people or situations? These feelings are linked to some part of your memory, but without you necessarily knowing it.

To have the ability of emotional understanding, first you have to recognise and label your own feelings. You then need to understand WHY you feel as you do – what triggered the feeling and how that links to memories you have. Emotional regulation is to take your emotional understanding and then control the level you express your feelings. This is not at all easy for people to do. This is again why psychosocial skills require lifelong practice and learning.

## CHALLENGE 9

- a. Complete the emotional understanding questionnaire. Circle the answer that fits you best. Answer every question.

1 = Never 2 = Sometimes 3 = Half the time 4 = Frequently 5 = Always						
1.	I realise immediately when I lose my temper	1	2	3	4	5
2.	I can 'reframe' bad situations quickly	1	2	3	4	5
3.	I am always able to motivate myself to do difficult tasks	1	2	3	4	5
4.	I am able to see things from the other person's viewpoint	1	2	3	4	5
5.	I am an excellent listener	1	2	3	4	5
6.	I know when I am happy	1	2	3	4	5
7.	I can control showing my emotions	1	2	3	4	5
8.	I am able to prioritise important activities and get on with them	1	2	3	4	5
9.	I am excellent at understanding someone else's problems	1	2	3	4	5
10.	I never interrupt other people's conversations	1	2	3	4	5
11.	I recognise when I am stressed	1	2	3	4	5
12.	Others can rarely tell what kind of mood I am in	1	2	3	4	5
13.	I meet deadlines	1	2	3	4	5
14.	I can tell if someone is not happy with me	1	2	3	4	5
15.	I am good at adapting and mixing with a variety of people	1	2	3	4	5
16.	When I am being 'emotional' I am aware of this	1	2	3	4	5
17.	I keep control of my temper with other people	1	2	3	4	5
18.	I manage my time well so I never waste time	1	2	3	4	5
19.	I can tell if a group of people are not getting along with each other	1	2	3	4	5
20.	People are the most interesting thing in life for me	1	2	3	4	5
21.	When I feel anxious, I know the reason(s)	1	2	3	4	5
22.	Difficult people do not annoy me	1	2	3	4	5
23.	I do not speak or act to hide what I really feel	1	2	3	4	5

24.	I can understand why people are being difficult towards me	1	2	3	4	5
25.	I love to meet new people and get to know who they are	1	2	3	4	5
26.	I know when I'm being unreasonable	1	2	3	4	5
27.	I can consciously alter my frame of mind or mood	1	2	3	4	5
28.	I believe you should do the difficult things first	1	2	3	4	5
29.	Other individuals are not 'difficult', just 'different'	1	2	3	4	5
30.	I need a variety of people around me to make my life interesting	1	2	3	4	5
31.	Awareness of my own emotions is very important to me at all times	1	2	3	4	5
32.	I do not let stressful situations or people affect me once I have left them	1	2	3	4	5
33.	I see the value in delaying getting pleasure from something	1	2	3	4	5
34.	I can understand if I am being unreasonable	1	2	3	4	5
35.	I like to ask questions to find out what it is important to people	1	2	3	4	5
36.	I can tell if I have annoyed or upset someone	1	2	3	4	5
37.	I don't worry about work, study or life in general	1	2	3	4	5
38.	I believe in doing things as soon as I know that they need doing	1	2	3	4	5
39.	I can understand why my actions sometimes offend others	1	2	3	4	5
40.	I see working with difficult people as simply a challenge, to try and get them on my side	1	2	3	4	5
41.	I can 'let anger go' quickly so that it no longer affects me	1	2	3	4	5
42.	I can control my emotions when I need to	1	2	3	4	5
43.	I can motivate myself even when I feel low	1	2	3	4	5
44.	I can see things from the points of view of others	1	2	3	4	5
45.	I am good at reconciling differences with other people	1	2	3	4	5
46.	I know what makes me happy	1	2	3	4	5
47.	Others do not know how I am feeling about things	1	2	3	4	5
48.	Motivation has been the key to my success	1	2	3	4	5
49.	Reasons for disagreements are clear to me	1	2	3	4	5
50.	I generally build solid relationships with those I work with	1	2	3	4	5

- b. Write your scores for each statement in the grid below. This organises the previous statements into five 'emotional competency' categories.

Self – Awareness		Managing Emotions		Motivating Oneself		Understanding Others		Social Skills	
1		2		3		4		5	
6		7		8		9		10	
11		12		13		14		15	
16		17		18		19		20	
21		22		23		24		25	
26		27		28		29		30	
31		32		33		34		35	
36		37		38		39		40	
41		42		43		44		45	
46		47		48		49		50	

- c. Calculate your totals for each competency by adding up each column.

Tot. SA		Tot ME		Tot. MO		Tot. UO		Tot. SS	
------------	--	-----------	--	------------	--	------------	--	------------	--

- d. Interpret your scores for each area of competency with this guide.

<b>10 – 17</b>	This area is a development priority for you.
<b>18 – 34</b>	This area requires some attention by you.
<b>35 – 50</b>	This area is an area of strength for you.

[www.londonleadershipacademy.nhs.uk/sites/default/files/emotional\\_intelligence\\_questionnaire\\_LAL1.pdf](http://www.londonleadershipacademy.nhs.uk/sites/default/files/emotional_intelligence_questionnaire_LAL1.pdf)



e. Tick the appropriate box for each emotional competency.

	Development Priority	Needs Attention	Strength
Self-Awareness			
Managing Emotions			
Motivating Oneself			
Understanding Others			
Social Skills			

f. This table provides definitions of these skills, except some words are missing. They are under the table. Use them to fill the gaps. (Answers are on page 98)

<b>Self-awareness</b>	The ability to understand what you are feeling, your habitual emotional responses to events and how your emotions affect your _____ <sup>1</sup> and performance. When you are self-aware, you see yourself as others see you, and have a good sense of your own abilities and current limitations.
<b>Managing Emotions</b>	The ability to stay focused and think clearly even when experiencing powerful emotions. Managing your own emotional state is essential for taking _____ <sup>2</sup> for your actions. This can save you from hasty decisions that you later regret.
<b>Motivating Oneself</b>	The ability to use your deepest emotions to guide you towards your goals. This enables you to take the initiative and to _____ <sup>3</sup> in the face of obstacles and setbacks.
<b>Understanding Others</b>	The ability to sense, understand and respond to what other people are feeling. Self-awareness is essential to having an understanding of others. If you are not aware of your own _____ <sup>4</sup> , you will not be able to read the emotions of others.
<b>Social Skills</b>	The ability to manage, influence and inspire emotions in others. Being able to handle emotions in relationships and to influence and inspire others are essential skills for successful teamwork and _____ <sup>5</sup> .

Remember the Habits of Mind that were discussed earlier? Here is the first one:



## HABIT OF MIND – LISTENING TO OTHERS WITH UNDERSTANDING

Many effective problem solvers spend a lot of time observing and listening to others. Some psychologists believe that this ability to listen deeply to others – to try to understand and appreciate their points of view – is one of the highest forms of intelligent behaviour. Key characteristics of this habit of mind are:

- You can accurately paraphrase or restate what other people have said.
- You can perceive their emotions or feelings through what they are saying and how they are saying it.
- You can correctly interpret their ideas, emotions or problems.
- You can appreciate the different perspectives that other people have.
- You demonstrate your understanding by paraphrasing, clarifying, giving examples or building on the ideas of the other person.
- You can listen to what is *between* the words – not just what is being said but also the implications of what people are saying or not saying.

### Answers

Challenge 9: 1 – behaviour, 2 – responsibility, 3 – persevere, 4 – emotions, 5 – leadership.

**CHALLENGE 10**

Think about the last time you were talking to someone with a different point of view from your own. Answer the questions about that conversation.

Ability	What You Did
Did I paraphrase what they were saying to show understanding?	
Did they show me that I correctly interpreted their feelings?	
Did I understand their emotions or problems?	
Did I really try to understand their viewpoint?	
How did I demonstrate my understanding of the other person's ideas?	
Did I infer or did I just hear words?	
If I did infer, how did I show this?	

Listening to others with understanding, like most of the skills in this book, isn't usually taught in school. Even if your teacher encouraged opinions, the person speaking might often have been interrupted or laughed at. You may not even have really been listening to the speaker's views but thinking about what you wanted to say next.

This is a hard skill to acquire. It is even harder to consistently put it into practice, because your impulses get in the way. I am terrible at this, particularly in conversations on topics I have strong opinions about or have a passion for. To acquire this skill and to practise it throughout your life you must be able to regulate your impulses and AT THE SAME TIME pay proper attention to what the other person is saying. You don't have to agree with them, just try to understand their perspective.

So, you've looked at your limbic brain and done an emotional inventory, – you should now be a bit more aware of yourself and the areas which you need to work on. However, you need to keep practising even if you scored quite highly in all areas of your self assessment. All of these areas change throughout your life.

**CHALLENGE 11**

Without looking back, write what your understanding of the following elements is. (After you write them, check them.)

Intelligence	
Reptilian Brain	
Limbic Brain	

So far in this chapter about your psychosocial brain, you've looked at intelligence, at your reptilian brain and your limbic or emotional brain. But there's that third part, the part you might think your brain is all about.

**Your Neocortex – 'Thinking Brain'**



The neocortex first became important in primates. It became more important as humans evolved. It is responsible for the development of human language, abstract thought, imagination, and consciousness. It is what allowed human cultures to come into being. The neocortex is flexible and has almost infinite learning abilities; however, genetic factors, the environment in which you live and your actions can all prevent that from happening.

The human brain has the amazing ability to reorganise itself by forming new connections between brain cells (neurons). This is called neuroplasticity and it happens :

1. at the beginning of life: when the immature brain organises itself;
2. in case of brain injury: to compensate for lost functions or maximise remaining functions;
3. through adulthood: whenever something new is learned and memorised.

The brain never stops changing through learning. Plasticity is the capacity of the brain to change with learning. Therefore, as you start to master something, or are on your way to becoming an expert, the areas in your brain that deal with this will grow.

### CHALLENGE 12

Think back to the last chapter about your development. Can you remember what the MIT study about adolescence-to-young-adult development showed about cognitive development? Write your understanding of that. (Once you have written your answer, check back on page 74)

## Decision Making & Risk-taking

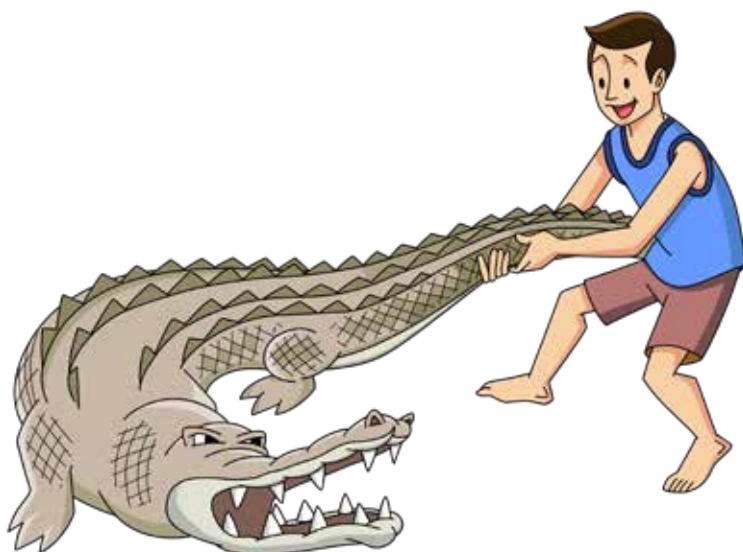
No specific age has been identified as when the human brain is fully mature. Some scientists agree that the brain does not reach maturity until at least the mid-20s. Some studies suggest that the brain continues to develop into the early 30s.

The prefrontal part of the neocortex, which helps with impulse control and organisation, is not fully developed until the mid-point of a person's 20s. This incomplete development leads to greater risk-taking among adolescents and young adults. The Washington Post reported in May 2012 that teenagers (in the USA) are four times more likely to be involved in car accidents than older drivers.

Although physical brain development ends at around 25 years of age, neural changes can occur for many years beyond that point.

'What? My brain is/was still growing until around 25 years of age? The elements that allow me to make decisions more sensibly, to control my urges, to be more aware of risk, to process information... I'm still on that journey (or only recently got there)?'

If you were thinking something like that, then good. It's an important part of understanding yourself and an even more important part of understanding others, especially if you are a teacher, caregiver or parent.





## HABIT OF MIND – TAKING RESPONSIBLE RISKS

'One cannot refuse to eat just because there is a chance of being choked.' - *Chinese Proverb*

The key to this habit is the word *responsible*. It's not about taking uncalculated risks. It's not about being impulsive. With responsible risks, you go beyond the limits and boundaries around you. You need to consider the consequences and make a decision about the outcome and the possible rewards.

By now, I hope you see that these habits, just like all the competencies we are talking about, are not used in isolation from each other. They are integrated. Responsible risk-taking involves using other habits too. Like other habits, these are not learned through a 45-minute lesson or from reading this book. You have to practise them, push yourself and learn from your experiences. To be a responsible risk-taker you need to:

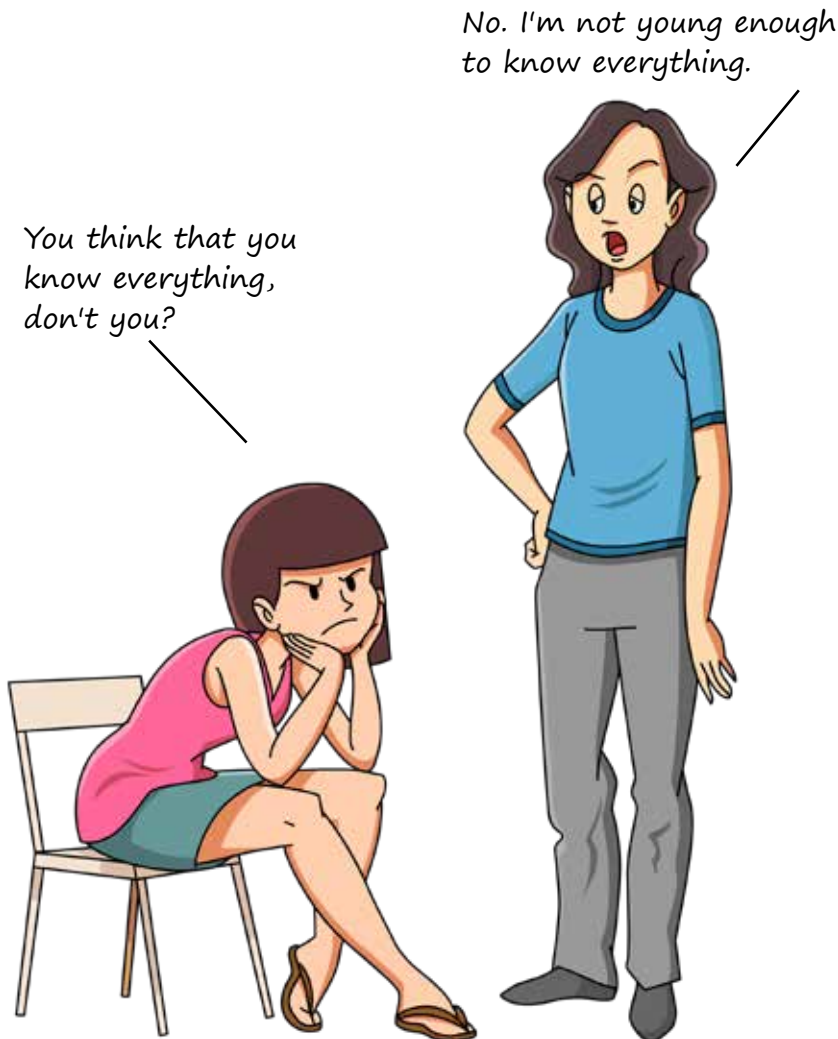
- know what you want to achieve;
- be a flexible thinker;
- manage your impulses;
- accept confusion and uncertainty;
- see failure as acceptable;
- view setbacks as further challenges that lead to your growth;
- study the risks carefully;
- ensure that you are not harming yourself or others.

If you don't take risks you'll miss opportunities. If you are more interested in finding the 'right' answer than challenging and exploring the question, you're not taking a risk.

### CHALLENGE 13

Look back at the chilling risks you addressed in Challenge 12 (Page 80) in the last chapter. How many of them could have been dangerous or harmful to you or others? How many of them were about you not managing your impulses? Could you have been more responsible about taking those risks, or could you have not taken them at all?

Adolescents who are growing into young adulthood are sometimes overly confident and self-assured, and often dismissive of elders around them. They believe themselves to be adults (because of those key age landmarks you looked at in the last chapter) and that reaching adulthood is the completion of their transition from child to 'grown up'. They now believe that they know who they are, and that their opinions are important – even if those opinions differ from common knowledge/fact/science/elders' experiences.



How does taking responsible risks relate to your brain? Think back to the developmental changes from adolescence to young adulthood. Does it relate to your emotional brain or your cognitive brain?



The answer is a bit of both! That sensation seeking you look for in your teens is certainly related to how you feel. However, as you move into young adulthood, you become better at assessing risk and making responsible decisions, therefore using your cognitive brain more. So, this part of your brain – the neocortex – is what you use to 'think-think' as opposed to 'feel-think'. But what does it mean to think? Is thinking hard?

'Teachers often say to students, 'Now, think about it' or 'Think hard'. Teachers rarely agree, however, about exactly what they expect to go on inside a student's head. Often, students don't have a clear idea of what it means to think, and, as they progress from teacher to teacher throughout their school years they realise that each teacher means something different by this.'

Arthur L. Costa (adapted)

## CHALLENGE 14

**More reflection:** How does that quote relate to your experience?

Now time for another Habit of Mind.



### HABIT OF MIND – THINKING ABOUT YOUR THINKING

Thinking about thinking is a process which involves: a) knowing what you know and; b) knowing what you *don't* know. It's your ability to:

- be aware of what you already know;
- be conscious of what you don't know;
- make a plan to get missing information that you don't have;
- identify steps and strategies that can help you to get the information that you need;
- evaluate how productive your thinking was;
- realise that you could have improved on your thinking.

Isn't life really just a series of problems to solve, and a process of resolving doubt about what to do, what to believe and what to value? Part of it is about inquisitiveness and looking at possibilities. Part of it is searching for

evidence. But mainly, it's about open-mindedness on all sides of a situation. It's having that growth mindset to see new possibilities; to not just look for things that strengthen your current view but to have curiosity and to ask questions to go beyond your current view.

The neocortex is the part of your brain that you use when you define things and recognise, identify and label them. It's what you use to understand something by explaining it, describing it or summarising. It's the part of your brain you use to apply understanding to other areas of your life through predicting outcomes and experimenting. It's the part that permits you to analyse things through making connections and comparisons, to check things. It's the part of your brain that helps you to evaluate through being critical and making decisions. It's the part that allows you to propose new ideas, to plan, to design and to create new meaning.

## Remember

- ✓ There is no universally agreed upon definition of 'intelligence'.
- ✓ You have three major parts to your brain, that all work with each other.
- ✓ Thinking about, and understanding, your emotions is essential for:
  - self-awareness;
  - managing emotions;
  - motivating yourself;
  - understanding other people.
- ✓ WHY you feel what you do is more important than WHAT you feel.
- ✓ Your basic instincts can be controlled and managed – but you have to recognise them and try. Hard.
- ✓ Take risks, challenge the way things are, but be RESPONSIBLE.
- ✓ Changes in your 'thinking' brain cells can continue long into your life, if you let them.

## Recommendation

Go outside. Do something else. Think about what you've worked through so far and build this chapter in with that. Talk to your friends or your co-workers or your children or your parents or your brothers or sisters about how they view their 'three brains'. Expand your vocabulary by being more accurate about what you feel. Examine yourself further with regards to your emotions and WHY you feel as you do. Practise the habits of mind: Do you know what you don't know? Close the book and come back to it in a day or two.

# 6.

## Thinking about Thinking



So far through this book you've looked at psychosocial skills – the skills that you acquire and refine throughout your life. You know that your brain has three main areas. You've looked inside your psychosocial brain and now have a better understanding of where your feelings come from. You also understand more clearly how you can develop your emotional brain to lead to stronger self-awareness and understanding of others.

You may have previously thought that your feelings were 'from the heart' and that your brain was all about 'thinking'. You will now have a more complete notion of how this is developed through your rational brain and how your cognitive abilities won't stop growing unless you think they have – or you just won't let them.

In the last chapter we introduced Habits of Mind. One of these – Thinking about Thinking – is the title of this chapter. We'll explore more about your rational brain and about negotiating problems.

### CHALLENGE 1

Without looking back, summarise what the Habit of Mind 'Thinking about Thinking' was about. Once you've written your summary, go back to Page 105 in the previous chapter to check how close your summary was.

## Essential Thinking Skills

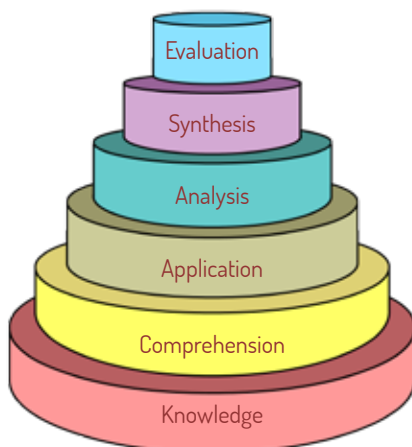
There are lots of definitions and lists of 'life skills' and 'intelligence'. Similarly, there are a lot of definitions for thinking. Your thinking needs you to be actively involved. Your brain generates jumbled ideas and random thoughts. Unless you engage with them, organise and process them, you're not really thinking.

One of the most recognised lists of cognitive thinking skills comes from Benjamin Bloom, an American educational psychologist. The purpose of

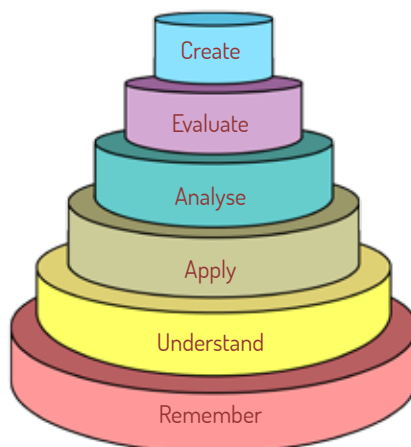
his list was to describe the cognitive processes by which thinkers deal with knowledge – to show that thinking requires active participation.

Lists like this are often called taxonomies. A taxonomy is a classification of how different things under one theme are related. The two images below show two versions of Bloom's taxonomy.

**Bloom's Original Taxonomy (1956)**



**Bloom's Revised Taxonomy (2001)**



## CHALLENGE 2

Look at the two lists again and compare them. Apart from word changes, what other difference is there between the two? (Answer on page 111)

For the remainder of this section, we will only consider the 2001 revised list.

## CHALLENGE 3

Look at the definitions below and match them with the correct element of Bloom's Revised Taxonomy. (Answers on page 111)

- |               |  |
|---------------|--|
| 1) Remember   | a) Implementing                                    |
| 2) Understand | b) Planning and producing                          |
| 3) Apply      | c) Classifying, summarising, comparing, explaining |
| 4) Analyse    | d) Checking  |
| 5) Evaluate   | e) Differentiating and organising                  |
| 6) Create     | f) Recognising and recalling                       |

So, when you plan something or make something or generate ideas, you are creating. When you compare things, explain them, classify or summarise

them, you are demonstrating understanding. Likewise, when you can recognise something or recall information, you are showing that you can remember.

These six processes deal with knowledge. Knowledge is the start of it all: you need to 'know' before you can remember, understand and then apply, or analyse, etc. When Bloom's taxonomy was revised, the people took knowledge out of the list as it is required before cognitive processes can begin. When they did that, they also created a new taxonomy: a taxonomy of *types* of knowledge used in thinking.

## Knowledge

### Taxonomy of Knowledge

1. **FACTUAL KNOWLEDGE** means knowing terminology and specific details.
2. **CONCEPTUAL KNOWLEDGE** means knowing categories, principles and theories.
3. **PROCEDURAL KNOWLEDGE** means knowing subject-specific skills and methods, and knowing the appropriate use of them.
4. **METACOGNITIVE** (Thinking about Thinking) **KNOWLEDGE** is knowing strategies, context and conditions and, most importantly, knowing yourself.

Anderson et al., 2001

So there are four kinds of knowledge that you can have *before* you even start to engage in basic thinking procedures. Don't worry too much about this as we all have knowledge of some kind and, if you have understood one of the Habits of Mind, you'll also be able to recognise what you don't know.

**Answers, Challenge 2** Evaluate and synthesis / create swapped  
**Answers, Challenge 3** 1. f 2. c 3. a 4. e 5. d 6. b



## HABIT OF MIND – THINKING AND COMMUNICATING WITH CLARITY AND PRECISION

One characteristic of intelligent people is the desire to communicate accurately. Part of this means listening to ensure that you have understood someone correctly, and part is the way that you write and speak.

Remember the Shakespeare quote earlier in this book, the one about 'what's in a name'? That is relevant to this habit. If things aren't defined clearly, if there is inconsistency in an argument, people will get confused.

Part of developing this competency is through developing your language; partly through expanding your vocabulary. The more complex but also specific your language is, the better equipped you are to think more effectively. Growing your language ability will grow your thinking capabilities. This helps explain things more clearly.

### CHALLENGE 4

Look back at the list in Challenge 3. Try adding some more words to the definitions given. Like your vocabulary expansion for emotions, this is expanding your vocabulary to be more precise about your thinking. You can check your answers using a reference to synonyms.

So, is there a definitive list of basic thinking skills – the skills you need BEFORE you can use more complex skills? The answer is NO. There are many different views and theories and taxonomies about thinking skills. Educators, researchers and psychologists have differing approaches. However, most agree there are five main categories. Using these skills is essential to your cognitive, emotional and social development.

## A Taxonomy of Essential Thinking Skills

This classification starts with skills that are quite simple to develop, and gradually works through to more complex competencies.



## CHALLENGE 5

Read each competency and think about how often you use it. Tick the column that describes your use. As always, be honest with yourself.

Skill	Competency	Often	Sometimes	Rarely
<b>1. Qualifying</b> (Finding unique characteristics)	Recognising units of basic identity			
	Defining			
	Gathering facts			
	Recognising tasks or problems			
<b>2. Classifying</b> (Determining common qualities)	Recognising similarities and differences			
	Grouping and sorting			
	Comparing			
	Making 'either/or' distinctions			
<b>3. Finding Relationships</b> (Detecting regular operations)	Relating parts and wholes			
	Seeing patterns			
	Analysing			
	Synthesising			
	Recognising sequences and order			
<b>4. Transforming</b> (Relating known to the unknown)	Making deductions			
	Making analogies			
	Creating metaphors			
	Making initial inductions			
<b>5. Drawing Conclusions</b> (assessing)	Identifying cause and effect			
	Making distinctions			
	Inferring			
	Evaluating			


Adapted from fig 9.1, page 49, *Developing Minds*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition

Finished? OK, that was a quick look at essential thinking competencies. Don't worry if you found that you rarely or only sometimes use these skills. Through practice, and by putting to use what you are covering in this book, you will find that many of those will become 'often'. These skills, when used often, will help you deal with more complex thinking processes. So, what are these?

## Complex Thinking Processes

### CHALLENGE 6

What words and phrases do you know about 'complex thinking processes'? These are processes that use your essential thinking processes for a specific purpose. Write a list.



The key to that was for a specific purpose. If your answers included any of the following, you are moving in the right direction.

- Problem solving
- Decision making
- Critical thinking
- Creative thinking

These four skills are considered very important in today's world. If you look back to the various definitions of life skills in the second chapter, you will find these four on many of the lists. The essential thinking skills you've just covered are not on those lists. However, you need the essential skills before you can use the more complex strategies effectively.

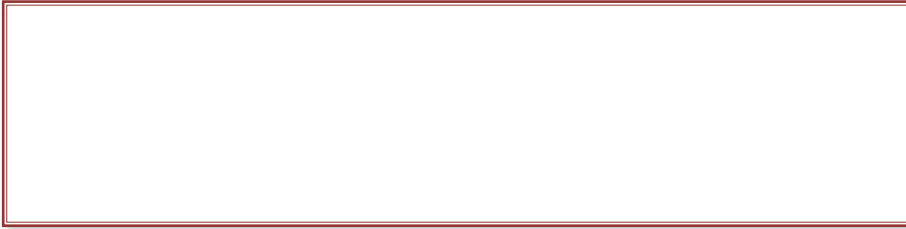
The higher-order thinking skills of problem-solving, decision making, critical thinking and creative thinking use your essential thinking skills for a specific purpose.

There are many different situations where you need to use these skills. However, we can define what they are and outline some approaches to using them.

## Problem-solving

### CHALLENGE 7

What is a problem? Think of your own definition of one.



Compare your definition to these:

1. A question raised for inquiry, consideration, or solution
2. a: an intricate unsettled question  
b: a source of perplexity, distress, or vexation  
c: difficulty in understanding or accepting

Merriam-Webster Dictionary

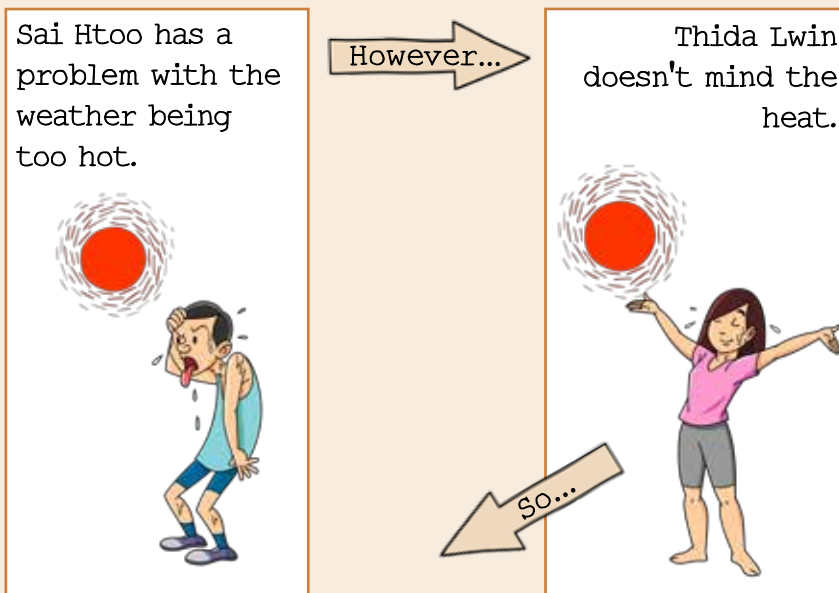
A situation, person, or thing that needs attention and needs to be dealt with or solved.

Cambridge Dictionary

A problem is a situation that is difficult in some way; that requires questioning and thought to solve. How effective you can be as a problem-solver will depend on your approach.

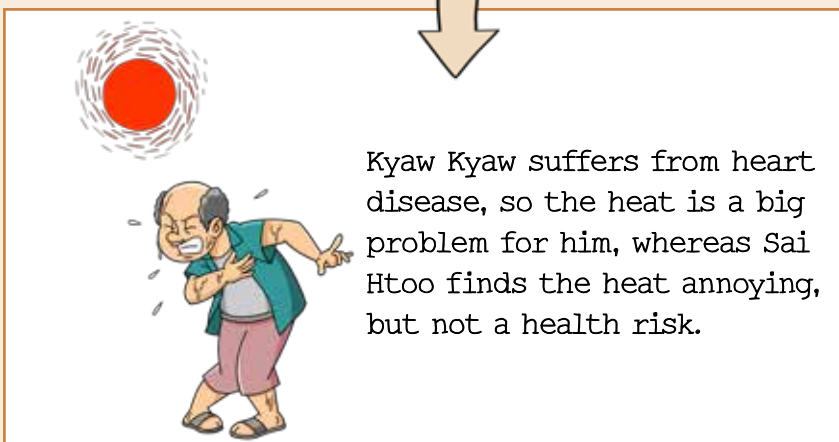
Almost every problem is related to dissatisfaction about something. Because satisfaction is subjective, problems are also subjective.

For example:



...although the temperature is the same, Sai Htoo sees it as a problem but Thida Lwin doesn't.

Similarly, a small problem for one person may be a big problem for someone else.



Problems have solutions. Some solutions may be found quite quickly and easily, whereas others may take much more effort and time.

In 2000 the Clay Mathematics Institute announced seven Millennium Prize Problems. These are seven mathematical problems. Each person who finds a correct solution to any of the problems gets a US \$1 million prize. At the time of writing, only one of the seven Millennium Prize Problems had been solved.

From Wikipedia

So, by 2018, only one of these problems had been solved, and that took three years. Not quite the same as figuring out how to get somewhere on time when your bicycle has a flat tyre! In time, it is likely that the other six Millennium Prize Problems will get solved. The person who does this will certainly need to use this next Habit of Mind.



### HABIT OF MIND – PERSISTING

This is probably the most important part of problem-solving. It has a lot to do with your growth mindset. It's about keeping going and not giving up easily. To be an effective problem-solver, you

will need to:

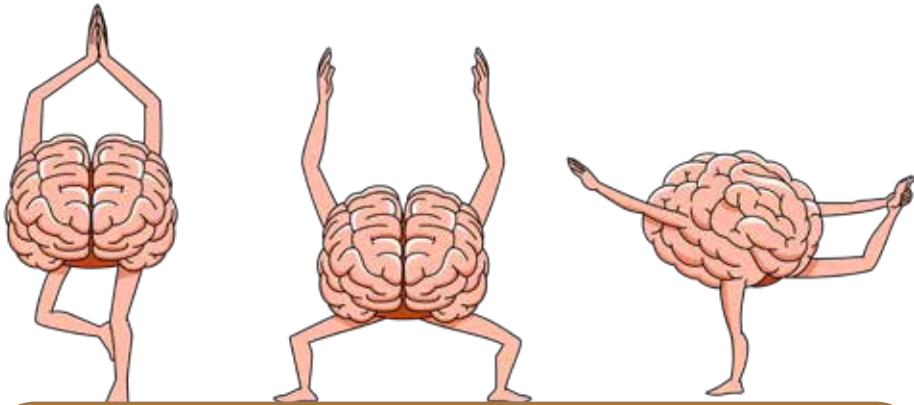
- stick to your task until you finish it;
- analyse a problem and develop strategies to attack that problem;
- have a range of those strategies and be able to use them;
- gather evidence about whether a strategy is working or not;
- be able to slow down, take a step back, and put a different strategy into action;
- have approaches to problem solving that are systematic:
  - Where to start?
  - What steps to go through?
  - What information do you need to get?
- become comfortable with things that are ambiguous or unclear.

CHALLENGE 8

Think of a time recently where you faced a problem. Ask yourself these questions.

QUESTIONS	WHAT YOU DID
Did I stick to my task?	
How did I analyse the problem?	
Where did I start?	
What steps did I go through?	
What information did I get?	
What strategies did I use?	
What evidence did I gather about my strategies?	
Did I use alternative strategies? What were they?	
Was there ambiguity?	
Was I comfortable with that ambiguity?	
Did I solve my problem?	

The key question here is, 'were you persistent?' Did you stick at it and not give up easily? If not, why not? Knowing these things and asking yourself these questions will help you develop your persistence and also help in developing your resilience, self-awareness, problem-solving, and planning abilities. It's all back to that growth mindset.



### HABIT OF MIND – THINKING FLEXIBLY

Think back to your psychosocial brain. You now know that your brain isn't just used for thinking – there's also a lot of other stuff that it does to keep your body working. Your brain changes and repairs itself and continues growing to allow you to be more intelligent. Being flexible is to adapt, bend or move when needed. So, just like you can have a flexible body, you can have a flexible mind. To be a flexible thinker – like being persistent – needs a variety of strategies to approach problem solving. You need to know when to think in broad, general terms and, on the other hand, know when to be detailed and specific. To be a flexible thinker you will need to:

- look at problems in new and creative ways;
- consider different points of view;
- be comfortable dealing with many sources of information AT THE SAME TIME;
- consider arguments or information that goes against your beliefs;
- not mind confusion and ambiguity;
- identify when to take a break from a problem and revisit it another time.

CHALLENGE 9

When was the last time you faced a really challenging problem or internal conflict? These questions are about developing your approaches to problem-solving. Think of a problem you have had recently. Go through the questions, focusing on this problem.

QUESTIONS	WHAT YOU DID
How did I look at the problem in new or creative ways?	
What different viewpoints did I consider it from?	
Did I take on many sources of information?	
Was I comfortable with holding these viewpoints and sources at the same time?	
Was I allowing myself to have my mind changed?	
Was I prepared to question and challenge my own beliefs?	
Did I have any intuition and, if so, was I correct?	
Did I tolerate confusion and ambiguity?	



Do not think badly about yourself if you find this difficult. Quite possibly, you are seeing these ideas for the first time. It's quite OK to find out that you could be doing things better. NOBODY is born with all of this. We all have these possibilities, but it is up to YOU to see them, build on them and allow yourself to develop them as much as you possibly can.

The opposite of a flexible thinker is a person who looks at problems from only how it affects them. These people look at problem solving as being only one way – their way. Would you want to be like that? Would you want your students or your children to be like that?

Again, like all the things we are going through, you don't magically gain these skills, as they require lots of practice and patience. You need to be persistent, manage your impulses and listen to others with understanding.

## Decision Making

Very early in your life, you started making decisions. You most likely have already made more than a hundred decisions just today. Did you really think about the possible consequences of those decisions, or did you make them instinctively? For example, in the first five minutes of my day I'd already made a decision to get out of bed rather than stay in it, to drink coffee rather than tea, to not eat breakfast as I wasn't feeling hungry, to wash my hair but not to shave, to brush my teeth after my coffee. This is not a complete list – I made many, many other decisions in those first five minutes. All of these were easy decisions to make.

### CHALLENGE 10

Read the examples of decisions I made again and see if you can identify why they were 'easy' to make. Think about the first five or ten minutes of your day. What decisions did you make?

Hopefully you recognise that my decisions were 'easy' because a lot of them related to routine, and also because they were 'either/or' choices. Whenever you want to do something, you consider whether you have choices, look at your choices, and then try to decide on one. You are in this position and make decisions almost constantly when you are awake. But, how many of the decisions that you make are really so easy?

CHALLENGE 11

- a. List the decisions you made in the first five minutes of your day.
- b. Think about the consequences of those decisions. Did it really matter whether you drank coffee or tea? Did that decision affect anyone else? Write some of the decisions you made and answer the questions.

Decision You Made	Number of Choices You Thought of	What were the consequences to you?	What were the consequences to others?	Short- or Long-term Effect?

I expect that many of those decisions were 'either/or' decisions, or the consequences of those decisions did not affect you or other people in any significant way. Many of the effects would have been very short term,

perhaps instant. However, how many of the decisions you make in a day are that easy? What about bigger decisions that have long-term consequences and can significantly affect others around you?

**CHALLENGE 12**

Think of a difficult decision you made recently that didn't work out the way you'd thought, hoped or planned.

QUESTIONS	WHAT YOU DID
Did I consider everything I possibly could before making the decision?	
Did I get all the information I could before making it?	
Did I just go with the first thing that came to mind?	
Did I fail to consider alternatives because I only saw an either/or?	
Did I carefully consider consequences of long-term effects?	
Did I consider consequences to other people or only to myself?	
Did I look at advantages AND disadvantages or only at one side?	

You may have really considered things, examined all options, invited other people's contributions, thought long term rather than just about an immediate outcome. However, sometimes situations outside your control can make your decision not work out. Be careful though – if you usually blame things outside your control, it probably means your decision-making process has flaws; often because you haven't fully considered those things. Steps you can take to reduce this include asking yourself the following questions.

1. Am I being too hasty in making this decision?
2. Am I thinking too narrowly about this?
3. Is my thinking focused or am I jumping from one idea to another?
4. Am I exploring ideas fully?
5. Am I only thinking of an either/or, without considering other alternatives?

Asking yourself these questions will reduce problems with your decisions and reduce the faults in your thinking about them.

So, what makes a good decision maker? Like being an effective problem solver, this all comes down to you thinking about your thinking. It involves actively engaging your thought processes, employing your growth mindset and developing those Habits of Mind. To help you become a better decision maker, you can talk yourself through certain steps.

# Decision-making Checklist

Primary Question	Secondary Questions	Tick When Answered
What makes this decision necessary?	Why do I need to make this decision?	
What are my options?	Are there any unusual options I should consider?	
What are the consequences for each option?	What are the long-term consequences?	
	What are the consequences for others?	
	What consequences might there be that I have not thought of?	
	What evidence do I have for thinking they are likely?	
	Is this information reliable?	
How do these consequences affect my options?	Do they count in favour for the options?	
	Do they count against the options?	
How important are the consequences?	For me?	
	For all those affected by them?	
	Do some of the consequences mean I should consider them more?	
Am I comparing and contrasting the options considering all consequences?	Which option is best?	
How can I carry out the decision?	What actions must I now take?	

## CHALLENGE 13

Think about an important decision you will have to make soon. Work through the above checklist around that decision.

There are no rules as to how you acquire this thinking skill – it requires you to use all your essential thinking skills in a deeper way. Decision – making, like everything we are talking about, isn't a skill that you magically gain, it is something that you will spend your life learning, improving on and refining.

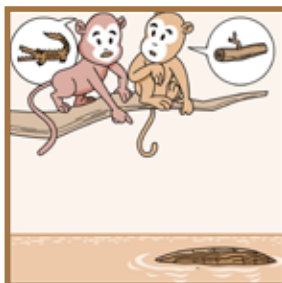
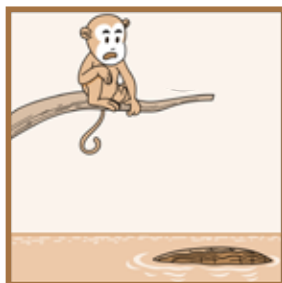
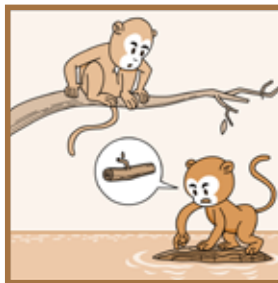
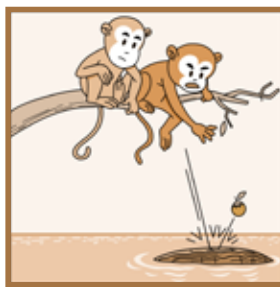


## HABIT OF MIND – APPLYING PAST KNOWLEDGE TO NEW SITUATIONS

Experience isn't what happens to you, it's what you do with what happens to you. You have knowledge.

You have your experiences. You have skills that transfer to other situations. So why, when faced with something new, do people often say 'I can't' or 'I don't know how'?

What's worse, however, is refusing to adapt old ideas, and therefore applying knowledge incorrectly.



A wonderful example of appropriate application is the story of someone in a grocery store in a foreign country. The man doesn't know much of the language at all. He was looking for chicken but couldn't find it. However, he did find eggs. He picked up the eggs, walked to the sales counter and, pointing at the eggs asked, 'Where's mother'?

## Critical Thinking

The term 'critical thinking' is probably one you have heard used a lot, by many different people, in many different contexts. The problem is that it is often used incorrectly, explained confusingly and not actually practised by a great deal of people who claim to have this skill. It's a complex thinking skill that is used for a specific purpose.

### CHALLENGE 14

What do you think critical thinking is?



Just like many other things you have looked at, there is no universally agreed upon definition. Wikipedia gives the following examples of definitions:

'Disciplined thinking that is clear, rational, open-minded, and informed by evidence'

'Reasonable, reflective thinking focused on deciding what to believe or do'

'Includes a commitment to using reason in the formulation of our beliefs'

'Thinking about one's thinking in a manner designed to organize and clarify, raise the efficiency of, and recognize errors and biases in one's own thinking. Critical thinking is not 'hard' thinking nor is it directed at solving problems. Critical thinking is inward-directed with the intent of maximizing the rationality of the thinker. One does not use critical thinking to solve problems—one uses critical thinking to improve one's process of thinking'.

Look back at your definition of critical thinking. How similar were you to any of those definitions?

Critical thinking plays a big part in building understanding of others, your own self-awareness, your own knowledge, how to improve your own ideas and how to make your arguments more effective. It is important that you use, practise and refine the elements involved.

'Actually, the essence of critical thinking lies in asking questions and to keep asking them until you are satisfied with the answer.'

Ho Lok-sang, Director of the Centre for Public Policy Studies at Lingnan University, Hong Kong.



## HABIT OF MIND – QUESTIONING AND POSING PROBLEMS

Why do you never see baby pigeons? How can I feed my family and put a roof over their head when there are no jobs? How can I improve my skills for life when school only teaches me how to memorise things? Why is Myanmar's average life expectancy 66 years when Japan's is 85 years? Why is it that men are encouraged to have a lot of girlfriends but women are only supposed to have one boyfriend? To be an effective thinker you have to ask questions. You will be inquisitive by seeing contradictions around you and have the desire to think about and fill the gaps between what you know and what you don't know. You will want explanations. You will want evidence. You'll want to ask the right questions to get the information you were looking for.



One thing that annoys me is the question, 'Where are you from?' It's vague and imprecise. Without me totally guessing and making assumptions of what the person asking that really wants to know, the only honest answer I can give is 'I'm from my mother'. You explored this 'from'-ness a little earlier in the book when you looked at identity.

### CHALLENGE 15

What is a better question than 'where are you from'? Write some questions that could more accurately give you the information on you really want. (Answers on page 132)



If your questions were something like the ones at the bottom of page 132, then you are asking stronger questions. The answers you get lead on to other questions, which lead to further questions, and so on. As a result, you will get to the information you wanted. Asking questions means knowing your purpose – what you want to find out – and involves structuring those questions accordingly.

But what about being creative? Critical thinking requires you to follow rules of logic and your rational brain. Is it compatible with creativity, which

often requires you to break rules? Yes, it is. Critical thinking is a necessary part of creativity because you need to be able to analyse, evaluate and refine your creative ideas. But is creativity the same as creative thinking?

## Creative Thinking

Creative thinking is mostly about self-confidence and attitude. Creativity is frequently less ordered, predictable and structured than critical thinking. Creative thinking, like critical thinking, is regularly misunderstood and confused. There are, as usual, a lot of different definitions.

Creative thinking is a way of looking at problems or situations from a fresh perspective that suggests unusual solutions.

Adapted from Business Dictionary

Creative thinking bridges the gap between what is dreamt and what is desired; it knows no bounds and is not restricted by possibilities.

<http://www.transformnursing.eu/>

Creative thinking is a rational process that enables useful responses to open-ended challenges. Creative thinking involves specific cognitive, metacognitive, and affective skills. Although creative thinking is initially an individual process, it is affected by factors like the surrounding environment and the task you need to do. Finally, creative thinking is not rare. All normally functioning people have the ability to think creatively.

Adapted from Developing Minds p.70-71

The abilities associated with creative thinking utilise very different approaches, more imaginative and open ones compared with critical thinking abilities.

Creative thinking is about the steps and cognitive skills that move you forward from a problem to a creative solution. It can be a process with clear actions that outline the stages you go through. For example:

1. identify the difficulty;
2. search for solutions, make guesses or develop hypotheses about the difficulty;
3. test and retest your hypotheses;
4. modify and retest them if necessary;
5. communicate the results.



### HABIT OF MIND – CREATING, IMAGINING & INNOVATING

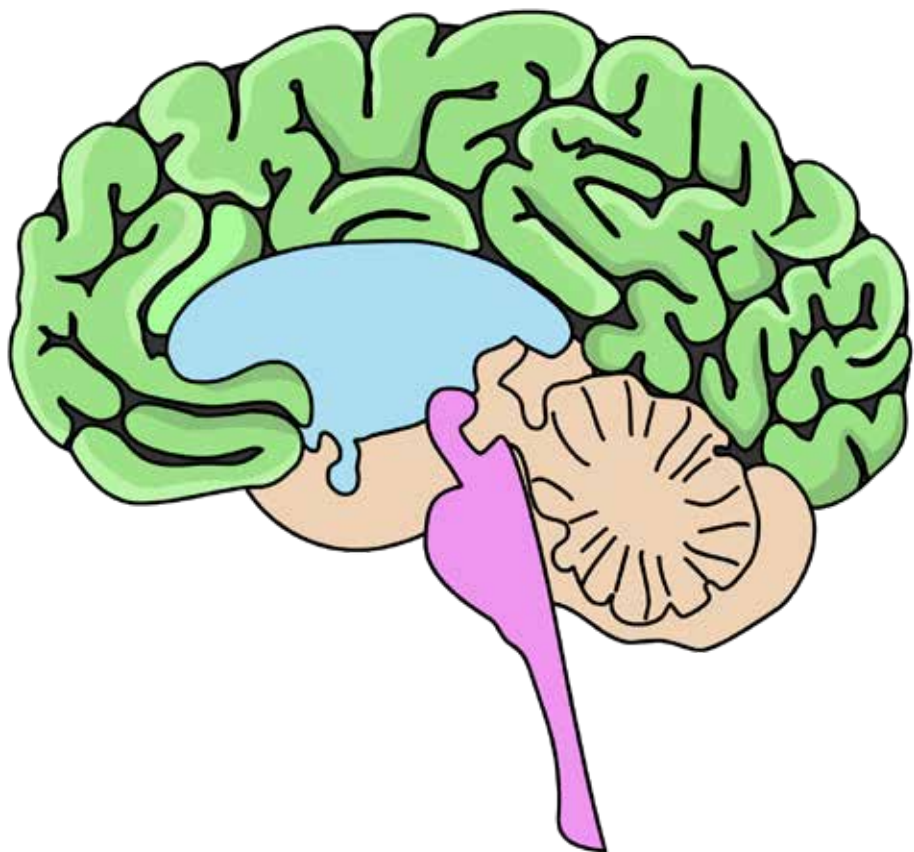
There's a Latin phrase used in English: 'the status quo'. It means 'the way things are'. How many times have you heard someone say something like 'well, that's just the way things are'? How many times are you not happy to hear that? Few, if any, problems in the world ever got solved by doing the same thing over again. If you don't challenge the status quo you won't create or innovate. Both of those things start with imagination.

Like all of the competencies we are talking about, EVERYONE has the ability to acquire and use them. YOU have that ability to come up with something new, clever, more efficient or original. To be a creative thinker you only need to develop it and let it grow. The things you can do about this are similar to other elements in this habits list, but you must make them a habit:

- Try to find many different solutions to a problem.
- Examine options from as many different perspectives as you can.
- Take risks.
- Push your own boundaries – go beyond them.
- Get used to feedback. Welcome it.
- Challenge the status quo.

Creative thinking is necessary for you, organisations and society as a whole. Many historians believe that for a society to both preserve important parts and at the same time to grow, creative thinking is essential.

The whole point of thinking, and thinking about your thinking, is you need to actively engage. It is necessary for you to use essential thinking skills, You need to work through them before you can effectively work on the more complex thinking skills. Critical thinking will allow you to identify problems and creative thinking will allow you to find solutions to those problems. Being a flexible thinker is to keep questioning, to keep being curious and to look at things from as many different perspectives as possible.



Answers

What country were you born in? Where do you live? In what country do you spend most of your time? Where did you spend your childhood? What place do you consider home? Where is 'local' for you? What passport do you have? Where does your ID card state that you are registered?

## Remember

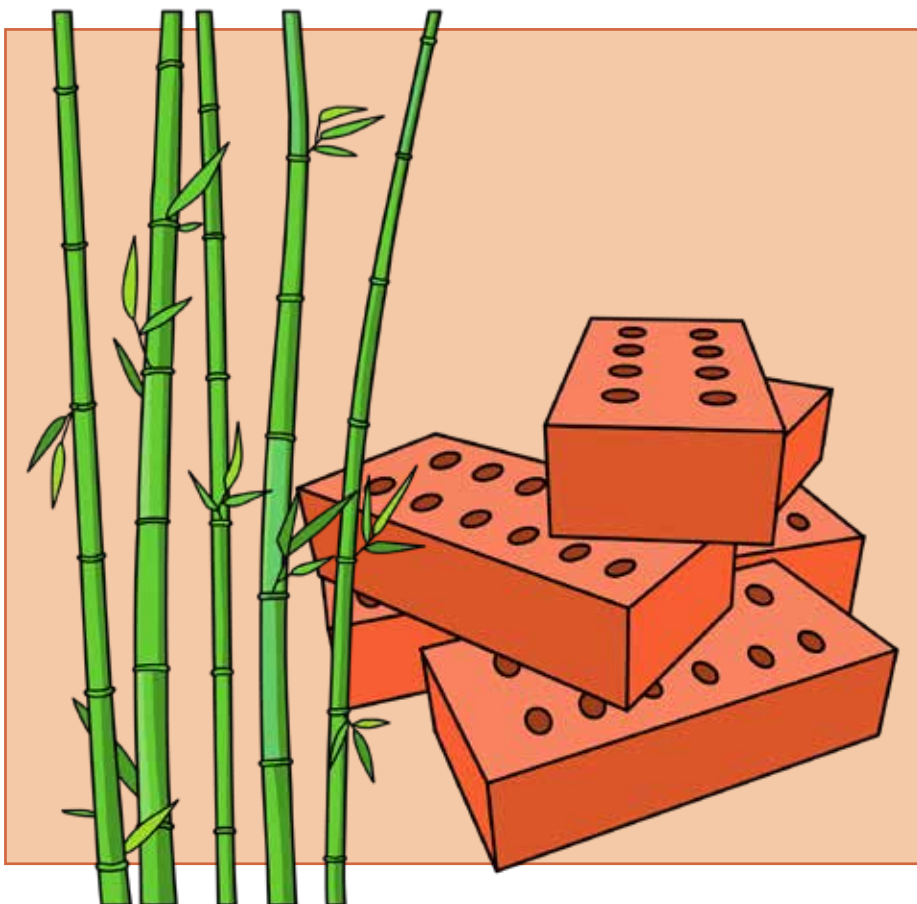
- ✓ There are different kinds of knowledge.
- ✓ Knowledge is the starting point for your basic or essential thinking skills.
- ✓ You need to have a strong grounding in the basics before moving on to complex thinking.
- ✓ To develop your thinking skills you must:
  - question;
  - persist;
  - be inquisitive;
  - use your growth mindset.
- ✓ Thinking skills only means being able to effectively solve problems you face.
- ✓ Your thinking skills can develop throughout your life if you allow them to.
- ✓ You can always improve on your thinking.

## Recommendation

Go outside. Do something else. Think about what you've worked through so far and build this chapter in with all of that. Talk to your friends or your co-workers or your children or your parents or your brothers and sisters about what they think about thinking. Look for and recognise as many options and solutions to problems as you can. Make choices when you have thoroughly explored those options. Take your time: don't just go with the first solution that comes to mind. Do puzzles. Push yourself. Let your creative juices flow. Close the book and come back to it in a day or two.

# 7.

## Bamboo or Brick? – Resilience



You've covered a lot in this book. You've looked at life skills, at what they are and what they aren't. We narrowed that down to psychosocial abilities and looked at what some of those are and how you can develop them. You've examined your development and know that it is actually life long. You've been through some Habits of Mind – these will, if you practise them, develop your thinking in general terms and help you to be a more effective problem solver. One of those habits, persistence – your ability to keep going – is most linked to this chapter.

So what is resilience? It's come up a few times in this book so far, but have you heard this word somewhere else before, maybe in a science class? Scientists talk about resilience as how much force, pressure or stress something can take before it breaks. If we look at this from a human perspective, the same thing applies. How much force, pressure or stress can you take before you 'break'? Well, surely the idea is not to break so, in psychology and mental health, resilience refers to the ability to not break AND to return to a balanced state stronger or at the same level as before the stress and pressure was applied.

### CHALLENGE 1

Look at the picture opposite. Which one of these two materials do you think is more resilient? Why?



Bricks look strong right? They are hard, firm and heavy. However, if you put enough stress on a brick, it breaks and cannot be repaired. It may be strong initially, but because it can't repair itself, it's not resilient. Once it's broken, it's broken.

Bamboo, especially when it is young or sprouting, doesn't necessarily look strong, but if you step on it, cut it, or tear off a leaf, it can heal itself and grow again. That's resilience; the ability to repair yourself and keep growing after damage, pressure or stress.

Scientists create all sorts of new materials that they want to be strong but also very flexible so that they won't break under pressure. They build in qualities that stretch and twist and bend and bounce back. Can these qualities be built into people? Can they be built into you? In this section you'll explore more about resilience, why you need it and some ways that you can build it into yourself.

## Pressure, Stress and Coping

All of us feel pressure and stress in varying amounts throughout our lives. A large part of building resilience is recognising when you are feeling under stress or pressure.

### CHALLENGE 2

Think about some major life events when you felt stress or pressure. Not day-to-day things, but the big ones. Write a list of these. In the box are a few of my examples:

*ANY exam I've ever taken    1st job interview*  
*Leaving home    Moving abroad*

Are the things on your list similar to mine? Did you get through these events? Are you still alive? Well, of course you are if you are reading this – you survived, you managed; you coped. This means you already have some resilience. Like all the abilities we are talking about, you all already have it – this is about how you build on it. Being resilient isn't only surviving and coping, but about thriving and growing during hard times.

So how do you cope? You've looked at problem solving in the last few chapters. Well, coping is when you make a conscious effort to solve your own problems. You do this to reduce stress or pressure. How well you manage this depends on the type of stress you are facing, the circumstances, and, of course, you yourself. In reality, there are two kinds of coping: proactive and reactive. The image opposite gives you some idea of these.





**Proactive Coping:**

Involves anticipating a problem and preparing a strategy on how to confront it before it occurs.

**Reactive Coping:**

Confronting the problem only after it has happened, which requires having a quick, often unprepared strategy.

### CHALLENGE 3

- a. People respond in various ways to challenges and stress in their life. Read through the list and tick the ones that you often use. If you think of any that are not included, add them in.

Talk to a friend	Hope it will all be okay
Play sport or do exercise	Eat comfort food
Work out how to solve the problem	Give up
Practise a healthy lifestyle	Pretend it's not happening
Use Habits of Mind	Use substances
Listen to music	Blame yourself
Ask someone to guide you	Keep it to yourself
Do something to relax	Just do what others are doing
Socialise	Tell yourself you've done your best
Think positive	Worry
Get professional help	Watch TV, a DVD, play video games
Plan	Use social media
Make a Pros and Cons list	Make a joke out of it
Get organised	Procrastinate (do something else instead)
Read informative books	Get sick
Try harder	Self-medicate
Meditate or pray	Isolate yourself
Other:	Other:
Other:	Other:

Adapted from Emotional Intelligence Activities for Teens Age 13-18, 28 Jan 2003, page 29

- b. Label each response as either Proactive Coping (PC) or Reactive Coping (RC).

- c. Now count how many PC versus RC responses you have. Be sure to include any 'others' you added in. Insert the number of each you have below. This will allow you to see which kind of response you use the most.

PC	RC

So, what does this tell you? Are you more of a proactive copier or a reactive copier? Are you a mixture of both? Which do you think is more effective? Understanding this helps you understand yourself; increasing your self-awareness and helping you become more resilient.

### CHALLENGE 4

What part of your brain is being used the most when you think about your coping style?

If you answered 'emotional (or limbic) brain', you'd be more correct than not. So how can you understand your emotions better?

## Emotional Understanding & Awareness

As you learned in Chapter 5, you have a very complex thinking system, linked to your reptilian brain as well as your emotional and thinking brains. Being aware, and listening to and understanding your emotions, is very important in responding to challenges you face.

### CHALLENGE 5

- a. Write down as many emotions as you can think of. Think of ones that you have felt recently or have seen other people feeling.

- b. Look back at the Emotional vocabulary Wheel on page 92. Choose a few more that are relevant to you and add them to your list.
- c. OK, now identify how they make you feel when you are experiencing them – either positive or negative. Underline the ones that make you feel negative and circle the ones that make you feel positive.

The best way to increase your awareness of your own emotions, and how you respond to situations, is by first acknowledging them.

## CHALLENGE 6

Record some of the emotions that you have felt throughout your week. For each day, think of an emotion you experienced, and fill in the table about it.

	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
What were you feeling?							
Was it a negative or positive feeling?							
What was happening?							
How did you react?							
Was there a physical reaction?							
What will you do next time?							

Adapted from: Karen Reivich & Andrew Shatte, Building Resilience in Young People, Reach Out! Teachers' Network (2002)


People often talk about the 'power of positive thought' and it isn't wrong to do so. However, it is important to understand negative thoughts and emotions. Feeling sad or angry is not 'bad', as long as you are able to understand why you are feeling that way. It is just as important to acknowledge your pain as it is to acknowledge your joy. Understanding WHY you feel sadness or anger is an important part of understanding emotion. This self awareness contributes a lot to your resilience.

## Controlling Impulses

Along time ago, I used to work in marketing. One of the things that we looked at was the way people shopped; how they bought things.

### CHALLENGE 7

- a. Think about the last time you went shopping. List all the things you bought.



- b. Look at your list and write the letter P next to everything you had planned to buy. Maybe you'd written them on a list or you just knew you had to buy them.
- c. Look at your list again. Are there any things on it that you hadn't planned to buy? These are called impulse purchases – the things we saw that we decided there and then that we wanted.

Have you ever noticed that there are often candy bars or promotion items near where you pay for your shopping? They are placed there to appeal to your impulses – things you hadn't planned to buy but just decided to because they were there.

In the same way that we make impulse purchases, we have our own impulses – sudden strong desires to do something. Impulses are a normal part of human thought processes, but they can become problematic. The ability to control impulses – especially the desire to act on them – is an important factor for your self-awareness, understanding your emotions and developing your resilience.



### **HABIT OF MIND – MANAGING IMPULSES**

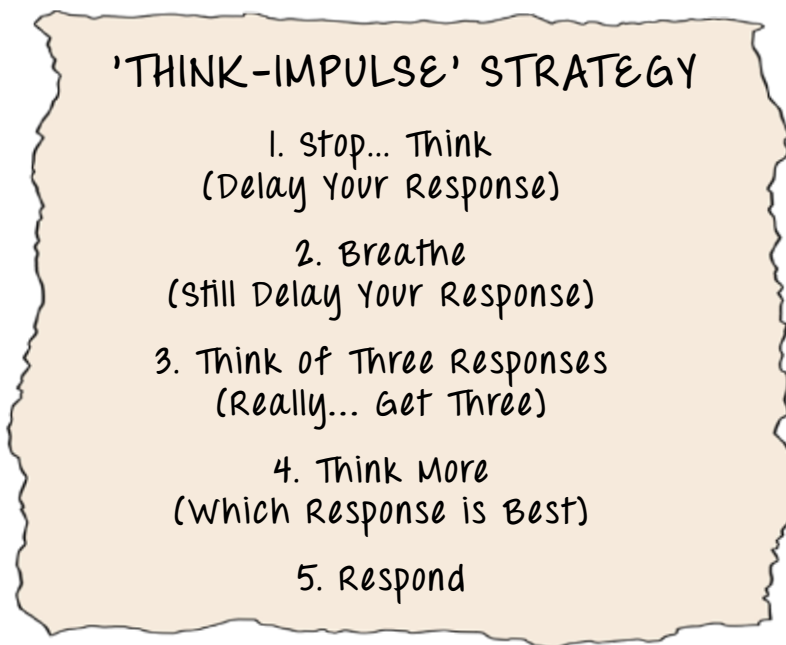
To be an effective problem solver, you need to be deliberate. You need to think things through before you act. Don't be impulsive; plan or set goals. Clarify your understanding of the problem before you try to solve it and develop strategies about how to deal with it. Don't make judgments based on your values or beliefs until you fully understand what is happening. Consider alternatives and consequences before making decisions. Gather information from all sides, check instructions and reflect before giving an answer.

### **CHALLENGE 8**

Back in Chapter 6, and looking at another Habit of Mind – persistence – you thought about a recent problem or challenge. Use the same situation or think of a different one. Ask yourself the questions below and write down some things about that situation.

QUESTIONS	What You Did
Did I fully think things through?	
Did I plan?	
How did I develop strategies?	
Did I make judgments based on my values/beliefs?	
Did I really fully understand what was happening?	
What alternatives did I consider?	
How did I think through the consequences before deciding?	
Did I gather information from all sides?	
How did I check information?	
How did I reflect?	
Did I solve my problem?	

The key question here is, 'were you deliberate or were you impulsive?' Asking yourself these questions will help you manage your impulsivity – to not hastily react. This will also contribute to you developing self-awareness, problem solving, understanding of others and planning abilities. It's all back to that growth mindset. The following image highlights a process that you can use to help you regulate the way you respond to people or situations.



## CHALLENGE 9

- a. Pick three scenarios that you can identify with.
- i. You have been in line at the bank an hour and, when you are near to the front, someone pushes in front of you.
  - ii. You are in a teashop and one of the servers accidentally spills a drink on you.
  - iii. The person you are talking to has the opposite political views to you and is insulting your viewpoint.
  - iv. You are online and you've noticed that a friend on Facebook has unfriended or blocked you.
  - v. You have been saving up for a new phone and your friends ask you to go out to dinner at an expensive hotel.
  - vi. Your friend asks you to do a favour that you're not very comfortable doing for them.



- b. Fill in the table with your possible responses to each scenario
- c. Look at your responses and choose one for each scenario. Why did you choose this one?

	Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Scenario 3
Response 1			
Response 2			
Response 3			
Chosen response			
Reason for Choosing this response			

Adapted from: Karen Reivich & Andrew Shatte, Building Resilience in Young People. The Reach Out Teachers Network (2002)

Take another look at your chosen responses and your 'whys'. Think back to Challenge 3 in this chapter: Are your responses positive or negative? Will they lead to understanding or will they lead to conflict? Will they help you have more self-awareness, confidence, resilience or understanding of others?

**CHALLENGE 10**

- a. Think back to when you were going through a difficult time in your life. Now think about how people who were aware of your challenge responded to you. List some things they said and did that you found to be very understanding and comforting for you.

Words Said	Things Done

- b. Now think of a time when someone you knew was going through a difficult time in their life. Think about how you responded to their challenge. List some things you said and did to show you understanding of and support for them.

- c. Are there things you could have said or done better? List these. Use the understanding you've discovered so far through this book.

Words Said	Things Done	Could have said or done better

Adapted from: Karen Reivich & Andrew Shatte, *Building Resilience in Young People*. The Reach Out Teachers Network (2002)

Looking at things in this way helps you to understand yourself and other people. It allows you to look at the positive things that have been said

and done that lead to building resilience, because you are reflecting and concentrating on improvement. It's that growth mindset again.

## Knowing Your Triggers

We all have certain things, situations, or people that cause us stress from time to time. When you can identify your stressors, you become more skilled at preventing negative consequences or unhealthy responses.

### CHALLENGE 11

Here are some common triggers for people that often lead to unhealthy responses. Cross each factor that causes you stress. Add more of your own.

(X)	Stressors	(X)	Stressors
	Others being late		Losing something valuable
	Speaking in public		Parents arguing
	Arguments with friends		Overload at work
	Restrictions at home		Overload in school
	Lack of sleep		Interruptions from others
	Others being rude or disrespectful		Arguments with parents
	Lack of money		Arguments with partners
	Lack of transportation		Being in closed-in spaces
	Discrimination		Harassment

Adapted from Emotional Intelligence activities for teens age 13-18, 28 Jan 2003, page 29

In Challenge 2 in this chapter, you looked at major life events that put you under pressure or when you felt stressed. But that didn't look at the root causes – WHY you felt those things – it only looked at WHAT they were.

**CHALLENGE 12**

Think of a time that you jumped to a conclusion and said or did something that you regretted.

<b>T</b> rigger Event - (what happened)	
<b>R</b> eference - (how you incorrectly evaluated the situation)	
<b>U</b> nhealthy Response - (what you did or said that you regret now)	
<b>T</b> ruth - (what was really going on)	
<b>H</b> ealthy Response - (what you can do or say better next time)	

Adapted from Emotional Intelligence activities for teens age 13-18, 28  
Jan 2003, page 29

Like all the things we are going through, looking at your triggers through only doing exercises or reading this book will not help you achieve your success. It is something you have to continually and continuously apply to your life. Going through the 'TRUTH' exercise above helps you make better choices. Recognising this and understanding it shows you are on the way to self-awareness, emotional understanding and understanding of others and will contribute to your resilience.

You've gone through a lot of positive processes here, mainly relating to situations or other people. Keep trying to develop all of the strategies that you've been working through. However, sometimes it isn't other people that are the problem. Sometimes it is an internal thing.

# Self-Talk

Do you talk to yourself much? What kind of things do you say? What conversation are you having inside your own thoughts now?

I talk to myself almost all the time. It helps me identify problems, look at different perspectives, allows me to go through options and contributes to my decision making.

Self-talk is the talk that goes on inside your head. Good and bad. The talk you do inside your head with yourself can affect how you cope with challenges. Your self-talk affects your performance when you are under pressure. We can divide self-talk into three types:

- **Negative self-talk** is when we say negative things to ourselves
- **Positive self-talk** is when we say positive things to ourselves
- **Technical self-talk** is when we tell ourselves how to do things while we are doing them

Positive self-talk is a key ingredient for resilience and is necessary for your growth mindset. Most of you will have positive and negative feelings towards yourself that appear during your 'self-talk.'

## CHALLENGE 13

- a. In the table below, list five examples of negative self-talk that often flows through your mind.
- b. Once you've done that, try to make them into positive self-talk.

Negative Self-Talk		Positive Self-Talk
E.g.: Everything in my life is awful and it's not going to get any better.	>>	E.g.: I'm not feeling great right now, but I'll keep going. Things could be worse.
	>>	
	>>	
	>>	
	>>	
	>>	

Technical self-talk and positive self-talk are tools for dealing with performance pressure such as job interviews, making a presentation at a conference, or meeting new people.

CHALLENGE 14

Think of a situation coming soon in your life, that you could use some confidence for. Develop a positive self-talk script for each of three time periods leading up to this challenge.


Scripting for Success: A Self-Talk Exercise			
The Challenge: _____			
The Pattern	Days Before	Hours Before	Minutes Before
I AM: (describe some of your strengths)	I will tell myself I AM:	I will tell myself I AM:	I will tell myself I AM:
I CAN: (describe a way you have managed some type of performance pressure before)	I will tell myself I CAN:	I will tell myself I CAN:	I will tell myself I CAN:
I WILL: (say what you will actually do – this is technical self-talk)	I WILL:	I WILL:	I WILL:

Building Resilience: Social & Emotional Learning Materials. Year 11-12 VCE/VCAL. Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) by the Youth Research Centre, Melbourne Graduate School of Education, University of Melbourne: Page 47

So, those last few challenges were about confidence, mostly. Being able to tell yourself that you can do something, and thinking and behaving positively is a great starting point. However, is it enough to just be confident about succeeding, or do you need to do more?

## Flexibility

As you read earlier in this chapter, scientists who try to build resilience into a material that they create have to look at flexibility. In the same way, for you to build resilience, you need flexibility too. Seeing different perspectives requires flexible thinking, which is one of the Habits of Mind you went through in the last chapter. A resilient person can think of a lot of reasons for being successful in something. Flexible, emotional and rational thinking allows multiple solutions to a problem. To be a flexible thinker you need a variety of strategies to approach problem-solving. You need to know when to think in broad, general terms, and on the other hand know when to be detailed and specific. It means having your Plan A but also having a Plan B and a Plan C. This is essential to resilience and to your success.

A quote on a torn paper background. The text is in a black, handwritten-style font. The background is a light beige color with a dark brown border that looks like torn paper edges.

"Failing to plan is planning to fail."

What does that statement mean? Have you ever tried to do something but it all went horribly wrong? Were you able to get out of the problem(s)? Did you prepare well enough beforehand to see the problem(s)? Did you consider your options and have an escape route? Did you have any backup options? How many?

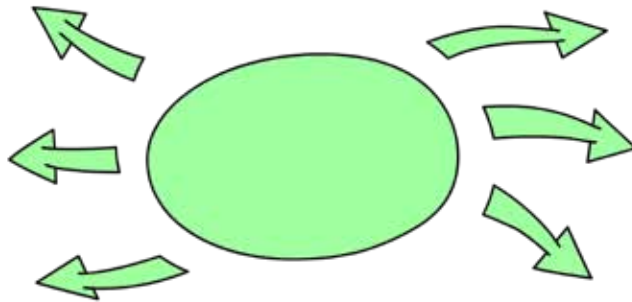
## CHALLENGE 15

Read the scenarios and answer the questions.

### Scenario 1:

You created a presentation with handouts for a class project and had someone print them from your USB at school. About 15 minutes before the class, you realise that the print-outs are incorrect.

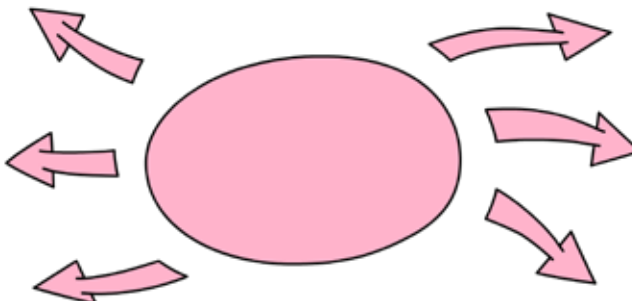
- What backup options did you allow for? Write them on the arrows to the right.
- How could you have planned better to not require the backup options? Write your ideas on the arrows to the left.



### Scenario 2:

You were traveling to another city for an important meeting the next day and missed the last bus of the night.

- What backup options did you allow for? Write them on the arrows to the right.
- How could you have planned better to not require the backup options? Write your ideas on the arrows to the left.



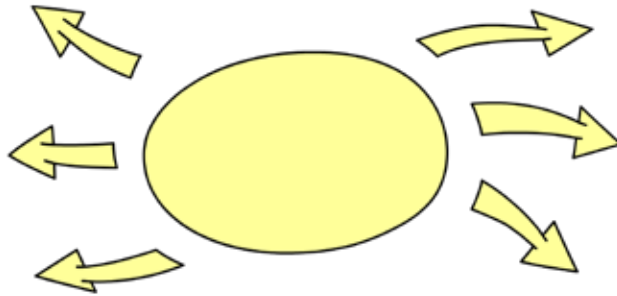


**Scenario 3:**

Write your own scenario using an experience where you hadn't planned well enough ahead.

What if... (add your own scenario here)

- a. What backup options can you allow for? Write them on the arrows to the right.
- b. How can you plan better to not require the backup options? Write your ideas on the arrows to the left.

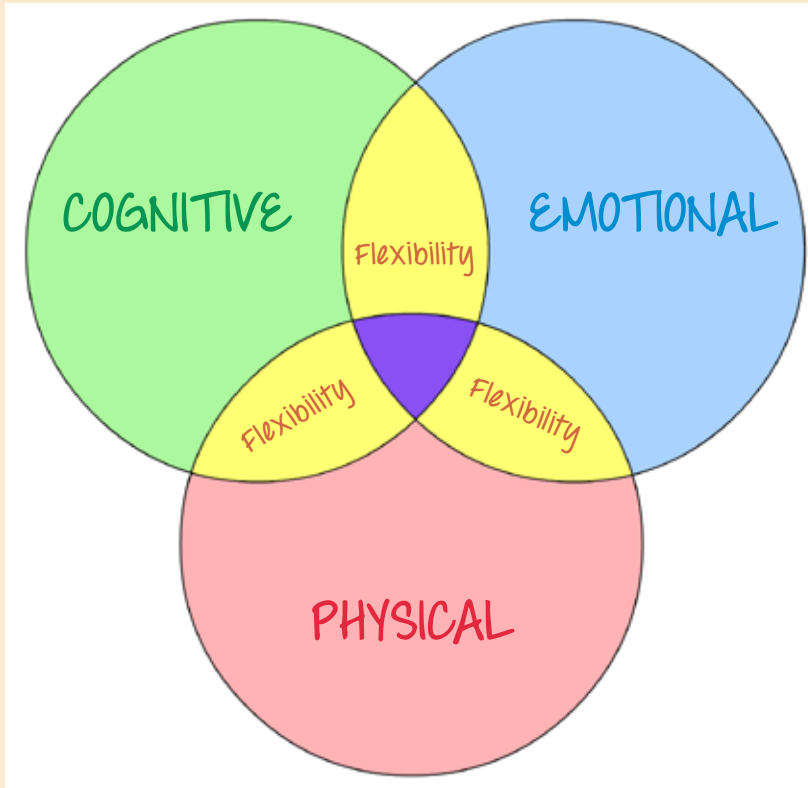


So proper planning and having multiple options will encourage your flexibility and help you better overcome pressure, stress and challenges.

It's not just your emotional and rational brain that needs to be flexible. Keeping physically fit and flexible helps you overcome pressure and stress. Back in Chapter 2, you read about the WHO and its principles. The first of those was about health being a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing. As this book is about psychosocial skills, those skills related to mental and social well-being, you won't be examining in detail anything about how to keep physically fit and flexible. However, it is included in the following image that summarises the elements that will help you build and develop your resilience.

- \* Growth Mindset
- \* Self-awareness
- \* Habits of Mind
- \* Persistence

- \* Control Impulses
- \* Regulate Emotions
- \* Understand others
- \* Positivity



- \* Fitness
- \* A Good Diet
- \* Enough Rest
- \* Healthy Relationships

■ RESILIENCE

## Remember

- ✓ Resilience is mainly about flexibility
- ✓ You need to develop strength with that flexibility too
- ✓ It involves the use of many of the Habits of Mind characteristics, such as:
  - imagining possibilities;
  - persistence;
  - managing and controlling your impulses;
  - taking responsible risks;
  - being comfortable in challenging the status quo;
  - more persistence.
- ✓ Make plans and having back-ups
- ✓ Reflect on how you can do things better

## Recommendation

Go outside. Do something else. Think about what you've worked through so far and build this chapter in with all of that. Revisit the recommendations made so far. Talk to your friends or your co-workers or your children or your parents or your siblings about being strong, bouncing back and persisting. Practise being resilient right away by making plans and looking at your back up options. Turn negative self-talk into positive self-talk. As always, use your growth mindset. Don't buy that candy bar just because you are waiting in line: control your impulses. Look at others around you and take note of things you think make them resilient. Can you bring those things into your own life? Close the book and come back to it in a day or two.

# 8.

## How To Help Yourself



By now, you've worked through a lot of ideas; some I've presented to you, and others you thought of yourself as a result of asking and answering questions. Many of those questions have been easy: the WHAT's, the WHO's and the WHERE's. You've looked at the WHEN's: when certain things happened, when to use your psychosocial abilities. You've had recommendations as to when to put this book down and stop reading; when to reflect and when to practise. You've also asked and answered harder questions, those that challenge you to think more deeply, to apply, to analyse, evaluate, to create new meaning, knowledge and understanding – questions about the WHY's and the HOW's. But WHAT happens WHEN you get stuck?

**CHALLENGE 1**

Think of some times when you've hit a barrier with something you were trying to learn or do. What did you do to get over that barrier? Write some of those things down.

What I got stuck with	How I got unstuck
<i>Eg. In writing this book I had difficulty around how to effectively explain some concepts</i>	<i>Eg. I spoke with people who were experts regarding those concepts who showed me a clear way to explain them</i>

There are times when things are tough – when you just get stuck. Sure, you've worked through things about resilience. You've practised being resilient: you'll keep on practising it throughout your life, although life throws us unexpected situations. The rollercoaster from Chapter 4 is not limited to your transition to young adulthood. It, like all the competencies we've been talking about, happens throughout your life.

There are times – and plenty of them – when life's demands, the complexities of other people, situations and circumstances will make you hit a wall. You'll get stuck. That's OK, it's going to happen. You have your psychosocial skills to draw upon and you have those Habits of Mind. All of those are very useful for you. However, it's useful not to be serious all the time.



## **HABIT OF MIND – FINDING HUMOUR**

You like to laugh; right? Why? Take a few moments to think about that. Seriously!

All over the world, laughter is seen as a form of medicine. It has positive effects on both your mental health and your physical health. It makes your pulse lower. It releases chemicals into your brain and oxygen into your blood. This goes through your reptilian brain. The effects on your emotional brain are obvious, but it also affects your rational brain. Humour allows creativity and encourages you to appreciate humour in other people.

## **CHALLENGE 2**

**WHY** do you like to laugh? Write your thoughts.

You are now thinking about your feelings, which are emotional thoughts. So again, you are thinking about your thinking.

Did you write something like 'It makes me feel happy' or, 'I feel better when I laugh'? There is a saying that the best solution for any problem is a cup of tea and a good laugh. I can't agree that it's the best solution, but there is science behind it – well, the laughter bit anyway.

However, laughing at differences in race or sexuality; laughing at misfortune or living circumstances; finding humour in someone else's disability or appearance – that is using humour as a weapon. Use humour to ease hostilities, to help think creatively, to encourage team spirit or to build positive relationships. Then it is a tool, not a weapon.

The appropriate use of humour, when used correctly, can help you become a more effective thinker and problem-solver. However, just having a good laugh isn't, on its own, going to get you through the tough times.

## Difficulties



Look at the image above. Your journey of growth is a bit like a tightrope walk. On the one hand, it's exciting, on the other scary; on one hand it's pleasing, on the other it annoys; there are times it will appear easy, at other times very hard indeed.

### CHALLENGE 3

- a. What do you think might happen if you are challenged too much in school, work, home or play?
- b. What do you think might happen if you get too much support, or not enough of a challenge at school, home, work or play? (Answers for both on page 161)

Often there are many solutions to a problem. Certainly, with creative thinking, there is no one 'right' way. Throughout your life, there's not necessarily any 'right' way to get over feeling 'stuck'. Hopefully, people that you ask for advice realise that there isn't necessarily any 'right' way to help. If someone is saying, 'If you don't do it my way, you are wrong', they are probably are not people to rely on.

Certain things are helpful. An environment that encourages your growth – one that allows you to push yourself and to practise your psychosocial skills – helps. Remind yourself and others around you that these abilities require lifelong practice to fully develop. There's no race to the finish line, as there isn't a finish line.

Don't be too hard on yourself or others. Nobody can be their best all the time – that's true for everything in life. It applies just as much to our thinking, feeling and behaviour as it does to our examination scores, careers and relationships.

Just as we looked at triggers for our emotions, there are circumstances that can negatively affect your psychosocial development.

### CHALLENGE 4

Look at the scenarios. Can you relate to them? Have you experienced them yourself? Write about how you might feel if you were in these situations.

- a. Your family and school classes taught you not to have unprotected sex. You 'know' that you should use contraception while having sex to prevent pregnancy or sexually transmitted infections, but in the heat of the moment, your impulses caused you to 'forget' that.
- b. You have only had five hours of sleep each night for four nights in a row and you have a big exam to take. When you sit the exam, you feel confused and you can't really think straight.



Both of the above scenarios can negatively affect you. Scenario A is that you 'know' better, but do something anyway. Following impulses rather than rational thought can often get you into trouble. With Scenario B, sleep deprivation actually causes similar effects to being a little drunk – it affects your thinking, especially your memory and decision-making abilities.

OK, that's enough about negative factors for now. There are a couple of positive factors we've already looked at that affect your psychosocial development.

## CHALLENGE 5

Look at these scenarios. Can you relate to them? Have you experienced them yourself? Write about a time when you were affected and what the consequences were.

1. **PRACTICE:** You want to learn the guitar. A friend starts you off by showing you some chords. You practise. You then learn to read tablature and start playing more complicated tunes. You practise some more. You learn to hear when it doesn't sound right and then learn how to tune your guitar. The more you practise, the closer you get to mastering it.
2. **SUPPORT:** You are writing a long assignment for an important class. You finish, and give it to your teacher. Your teacher looks at it, goes through it and points out what parts need improving and suggests ways to improve it. She gives it back to you to make changes. You make the recommended changes and return it to your teacher for final marking.

### Answers

a. You will end up going back to your old ways of thinking, feeling and behaving. You need to feel safe to use your ever-developing (if you allow it) psychosocial brain. b. You won't get the opportunity to experiment or gain the experience that will allow you to push beyond the boundaries of your old ways. Your thinking, feeling and behaving won't be able to develop.

# Know Your Allies

You've been given challenges all through this book, and life will put many more in front of you every day. After you finish this book, keep searching for these challenges. One of the best things you can do is to push your growth mindset and all the Habits of Mind that develop your emotional and rational thinking. But do you have to do it on your own?

## CHALLENGE 6

Look at this list. Think about how these people and places could help your growth mindset. Think about how they might make problems for your growth mindset. Write your ideas.

If you are a teacher, parent or other older adult, do this exercise from your perspective – how might you help another person develop a growth mindset, and how might you make problems

	Help	Make Problems
Teachers		
Parents		
Other older adults		
Friends		
Acquaintances		
School		
Other life experiences		

## Use teachers and other adults

In your learning and discovery, one of the greatest groups of allies you can have is your teachers, parents and other influential adults. If they have developed and practised these competencies, they should be able to talk to you with more understanding and in a more meaningful way. If you permit them to challenge you, they will be able to help you develop your cognitive and emotional brain. This goes both ways – your teachers, parents and elders need to allow YOU to challenge, to question and to develop.

### CHALLENGE 7

Write a list of people who demonstrate that they have deeper thinking and feeling than you, AND who you believe can challenge you in your development.



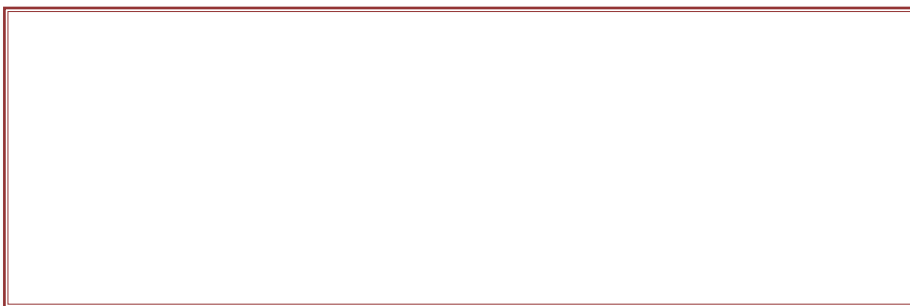
OK, now you have your list of more experienced allies – use them!

## Have a diverse peer group

If you only interact with people like you, your influences are narrow. Sure, you get approval and agreement, but you are limiting yourself. Find more friends or peers from diverse backgrounds. Engage with people with different perspectives. They can challenge you and encourage more variety of thoughts and feelings. This is more useful than just sticking with who or what you know. Celebrating diversity expands your views.

## CHALLENGE 8

Write a list of people that you know, but are not close with, and are from very different backgrounds from your own. Think of people you would like to share and exchange stories and ideas with.



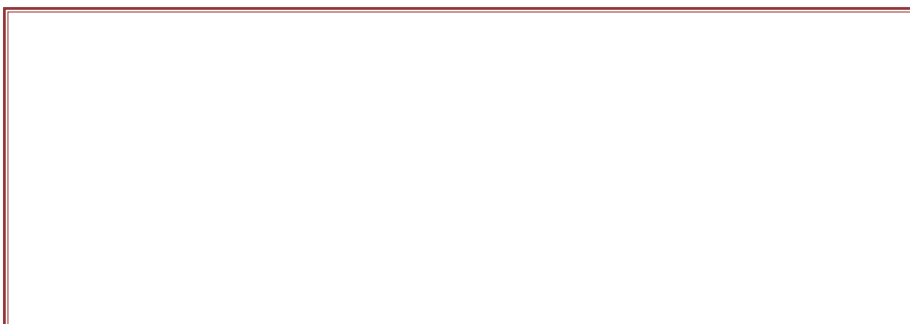
Now you have your list of different people – use them, or rather, use each other.

## Integrate your education across disciplines

Lots of people think that education is just schooling. They see the ability to memorise and recall as being a 'good' student. It's not. If you want an education, it's up to you to get it. You can't expect school alone to deliver education. Just as I asked you to think of diverse people, your best education is the one that allows diverse ideas and experiences. It challenges a view of right vs wrong, black vs white, us vs them.

## CHALLENGE 9

Write down some ways you think you can develop your thinking and Habits of Mind in school (if you are at a school or university) and in your education outside the classroom.



Now you have your list of 'education' environments to practise your thinking – do it!

## **Beyond school experiences**

Challenge yourself to go further. Going somewhere that you have never been will strengthen your psychosocial abilities, similarly to interacting with people from different backgrounds. And it's not just new localities; it's also new environments within your existing locality. If you're from a rural place, have you ever been to a city? If you are from the city, have you ever experienced deep rural life, or have you visited the other side of the city? Have you ever left your state/division? Have you left the country?

### **CHALLENGE 10**

Make a list of places you could go that would challenge your world view.



## **Get some instruction around your psychosocial skills**

Just by reading this book you have chosen to be challenged. However, this is only one book covering a wide range of areas. There are multiple books, courses and online materials out there on these. While this book hopefully encourages you on your journey of lifelong learning, it is YOU that needs to take charge of it.

## CHALLENGE 11

Think of the topics that you've worked through. Think about the competencies and Habits of Mind that we have looked at. Write a list of a few that you would like to explore in more depth. Think about the skills that perhaps you find more confusing or difficult – the ones that challenge you the most.



Right, now you have these lists of WHOs, WHATs, WHEREs and maybe WHENs, HOW will you go about learning more about them or practising them more? Hopefully it will be through the combination of challenges that older people, diverse peers, more 'schooling', and new experiences can bring. Additionally, you'll also need to discover more through research, reading and developing your thinking.

## Get Support

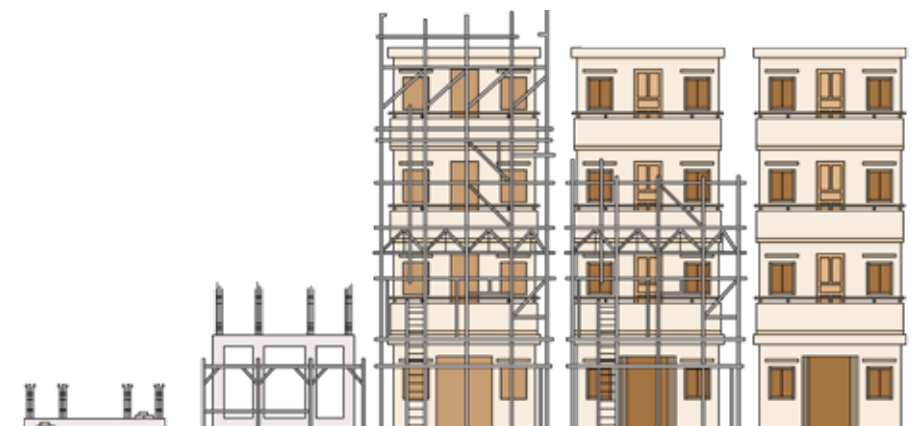
Remember that image of a tightrope walker from earlier, and the balancing act required in developing, practising and acquiring these skills? Sure, you

need all the challenges we've just been through, either from yourself or from others, but you must also have support. Without support you can find yourself struggling with it all on your own.

## Know Where Your Support Is

### CHALLENGE 12

Look at the images below. What process is happening? What's changing? What is developing and what is being removed?



Your journey on acquiring the competencies we've been going through is very like the building of a house. You need that scaffolding, that framework of support. Bit by bit it gets added as the building becomes taller and stronger. Then, bit by bit gets removed when each part of the building is strong enough. This scaffolding could be as important as the challenges. The building will not be strong without it. Would it even get beyond the foundation stage? Here are three ways that you can support yourself and seek support.

### 1. Don't try to run before you can walk

What might happen if you push yourself too much? What happens if the challenges are too hard for where you currently are? Well, you'll probably try to find a way to take all these new ideas and just try to merge them with your old thinking and feeling. Don't. Look at the images over the page. These reflect what I mean by this process.



Imagine you are this house. What you are trying to do is add extensions to your house, to make it bigger and stronger. The psychosocial skills and Habits of Mind you've been going through are the extensions you want to add.

You may like these extensions, and try to add them as they are. That won't work. The skills and Habits of Mind are in a different style and are made from different materials from your existing house



— from the existing you. Adding these extensions too quickly could destabilise your original house. Heavy glass, brick and metal tagged on to bamboo, could weaken the main building.

## 2. Structure balance with flexibility

Young people need space where they can safely experiment, respectfully challenge and make both decisions and mistakes. Hopefully teachers, parents and community leaders provide these space and opportunities. Young people also need boundaries, so they can learn where or when it's not safe.



This isn't always possible. You'll sometimes need to do this on your own, by going through the processes behind all the skills. Don't underestimate the need for this. There are times to push boundaries and times to not. Self-awareness and understanding others is important here.

### 3. Know who will monitor your development

Making mistakes is necessary. However, some mistakes will push your resilience to the maximum. You are not alone. Look for an environment where you can get help. Earlier, you identified your teacher/parent/elder allies that can challenge you and allow you to challenge. Can they also support you in this?

The message here is that, even though sometimes you'll be on your own, certainly in practising the skills, having people around you that you can share thoughts with, ask questions of and grow with, is very important for your psychosocial development. It is your brain, but how you use it with others, that social bit, is important.



#### HABIT OF MIND – THINKING INTERDEPENDENTLY

**'No person is an island, entire of itself; every person is a piece of the continent, a part of the whole.'** – *Adapted from John Donne*

So far, we've looked at understanding your brain, looking at your ideas of success, understanding your emotions and examining competencies. These are all internal processes. However we are social beings. Most of us want to be part of a group. We do this for many reasons – for friendship and solidarity and to save time on a task. You are a part of many groups right now, and will be part of other groups in the future. In fact, for many people, being left out of a group or being sent away from one is devastating.

### CHALLENGE 13

Look at the quote in the Habit of Mind above. What does it mean to you?  
Paraphrase the quote.

To answer this you needed to use the skill of inferring, seeing what is implied – reading between the lines. The quote doesn't literally mean no person is an island: of course they are not. What it is saying is that nobody is on their own, separate from other people. Everybody is a part of something bigger. Every group is part of something bigger. You are part of something bigger.



#### HABIT OF MIND – THINKING INTERDEPENDENTLY (CONTINUED)

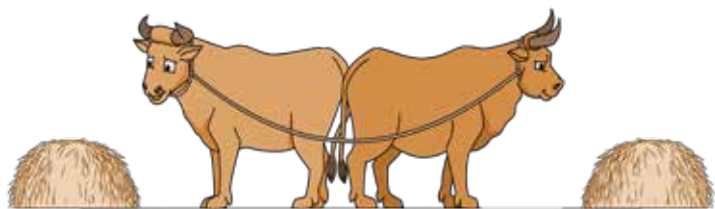
Often with problem-solving, many heads are better than one. People working together will come up with far more possibilities than you can on your own.

To think interdependently is to contribute to, and be part of, a group. To do this successfully you will need to:

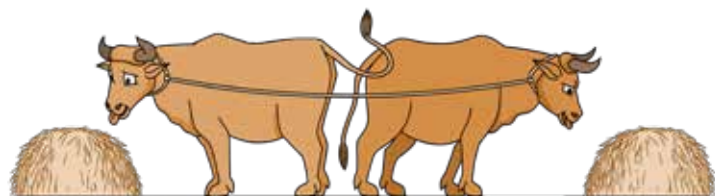
- justify your ideas to others;
- check your strategies with others;
- test your solutions with others;
- be open to critical feedback;
- listen with understanding to others;
- seek agreement from all;
- lead and also follow;
- support the efforts of the group;
- act in the interests of the group;
- sometimes give up your ideas to work with someone else's.

All these behaviours are characteristics of intelligent problem solvers and cooperative human beings. Through acting in these ways both you and your group will grow.

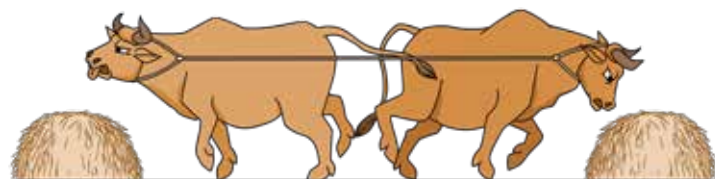
1.



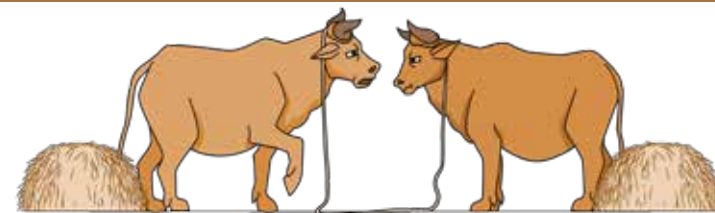
2.



3.



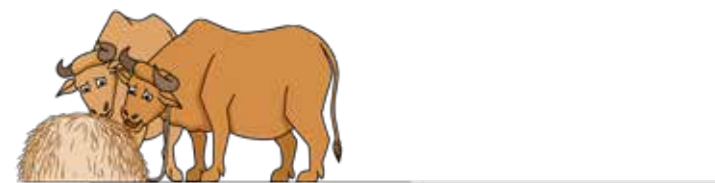
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5.



6.



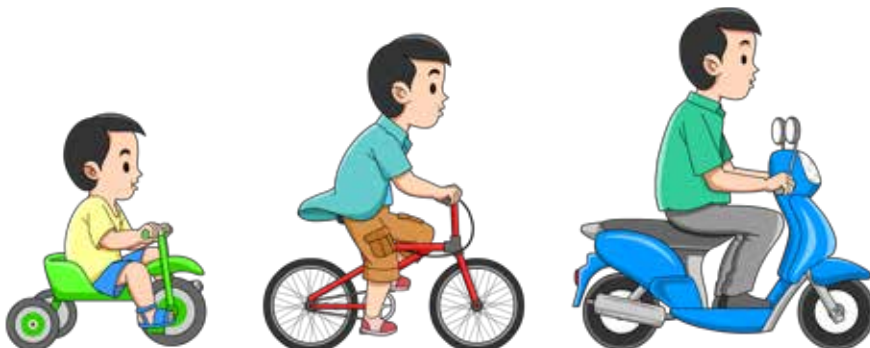


### CHALLENGE 14

Look closely at the image above. Without looking back, how does it differ from the one on page 159? What are the major differences?

OK, you can look back now. There are two major differences – the long stick to help balance, and the net underneath. Working on these skills is very similar. You need something to help you balance and you need something to catch you when you fall.

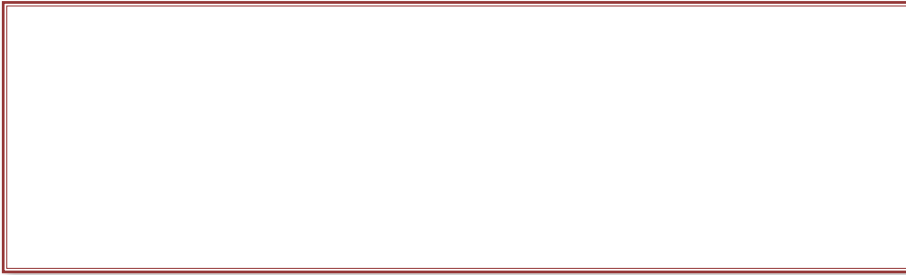
When I first learned to ride a bicycle, it was actually a tricycle as it had three wheels. As my balance got better, I could move onto a bicycle. Working on all these skills – especially the cognitive ones – is very similar to learning to ride a bike. Look at the images below. It's very hard to go from the first picture to the last picture without the stage in between.



You can go from three wheels to two, but it's still a good idea to wear a helmet and protective clothing, especially with a big, powerful motorbike. Protective clothing is a safety net. People can be safety nets for you too.

### CHALLENGE 15

- a. Write a list of all the people you can think of that help you



- b. If the list of teachers, other adults and peers that you wrote in Challenges 8 and 9 is an appropriate one, those names will also appear on the list you just wrote. Check back now.
- c. If they don't match, take a moment to really consider whether they are the best people to help YOU on your journey.
- d. Now I want you to think about them together. Do you use them purely as individuals or do they talk to each other? Do your teachers, parents and community leaders have some kind of integrated support for you?

Think of the safety net again. It's there, it's underneath you and it's attached at numerous points. If it wasn't, it would be weak. If one attachment comes loose it will probably still work, but what if several of the attachments broke? Same with the training wheels on the bike. If the nuts and bolts come loose, the wheels will fall off – and then so will you if your balance isn't right yet.

In an ideal world, there would be a coordinated approach. Teachers, parents and young people would talk to each other about the best methods of support. There would be a shared responsibility for that safety net – for everyone. But it's not an ideal world – sometimes you will need to check yourself that the nuts and bolts aren't coming loose, or are getting rusty. Know your allies and put your own safety net in place. The tricky part is to know when you don't need the safety net or your allies: Lifelong learning again.

## Slow Down and Take a Break

Remember the life stages from earlier? Remember the time it takes as a baby to develop your motor skills? What about as you move from your adolescence to young adulthood – that rollercoaster? All of this takes time. A mistake you can make is to think that your school/college/university/workplace/family will recognise the time you need to continue your lifelong learning and development journey.

When I was in my early twenties I thought of myself as an adult; but a brand new one: a baby adult. When I turned 40, I looked at it like I'd just finished my teenage adult years. My thirties were a time of immense change in how I viewed almost everything in the world. As my cognitive and emotional abilities grew, I discovered new knowledge and understanding, I applied that to what I already knew, analysed it, evaluated it and arrived at a whole new meaning. That still happens now and I know it will continue to happen.

However there are also times when we need to switch off and take time to reflect on everything that has been happening.



### HABIT OF MIND – GATHERING INFORMATION THROUGH ALL YOUR SENSES

Your brain is not just for thinking and feeling right. You are exposed all the time to tastes, sounds, sights, smells and sensations of touch. A lot of your knowledge isn't gathered because you consciously decide to look for it. A lot is absorbed through your senses. This is particularly relevant in your early-years of development. However it also develops throughout your life, especially if you encourage it.

Think about your language, dance, music, sport and food. You don't know what those really are through thinking about them. You've got to practise, act, play, taste. You have to taste coconut water to know if you like it. You have to smell the flower to know what it smells like. You have to dance to be able to dance. Keeping your senses alive and working well will allow you to be more observant and more alert.

With continued practice of all of the Habits of Mind, through challenging yourself and knowing who your allies are, what at first was difficult will become easier and what may have seemed impossible will just become difficult.

## Remember

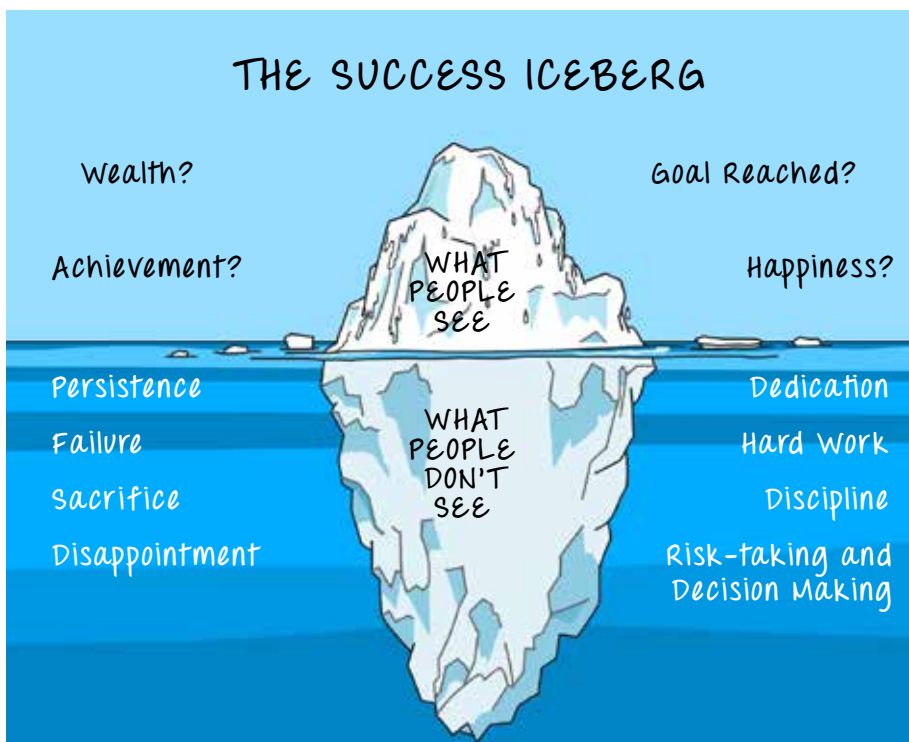
- ✓ You will get stuck – that's OK.
- ✓ You need the right balance of challenges – from yourself and others.
- ✓ You need the right balance of support.
- ✓ Put your safety nets in place.
- ✓ Know your allies – who can help you.
- ✓ Don't go too fast.
- ✓ Find humour.
- ✓ Work with groups.
- ✓ Take breaks.

## Recommendation

Take that break or time-out we've just been talking about. Do it, even if you don't think you need the break or don't want to. Go outside. Play. Do something else. Eat or drink something new. Listen to music you haven't listened to before. Touch a tree. Stimulate your senses. Laugh. Do all of these things with the people you identified that can help you; your peers, your parents, your teachers. Look at how you help yourself. Look at how others help themselves. Explore together how you can help each other. Close the book and come back to it in a day or two.

# 9.

## Young Adult Success: It's YOUR Challenge





Welcome back. You are reaching the end of this book. You've examined skills you might need in your life, focusing on the psychosocial ones. You've looked at your identity and the importance of integrating its multiple elements. You've explored your development from both a cognitive and emotional perspective. You've thought about your thinking and hopefully you are now on your way to incorporating those Habits of Mind into your life: making them a habit.

You started this book by looking at success and what it might mean for you. Now you'll look at a few more ways that you might refine and firm-up your success.

## You Are In Charge of You – Agency

Success depends on taking control of the direction of your life. This is agency. Agency is a psychosocial term similar to personal leadership. We can break it down into four elements:

1. **Having intent:** Having an action plan and the methods to make it happen.
2. **Planning:** Setting goals and thinking ahead about how they might work.
3. **Adaptability:** Having the abilities, strategies, flexibility and self-discipline to carry out your course of action.
4. **Self-reflection:** Questioning your own effectiveness, the purpose of your actions and making adjustments to your behaviour and your plan as needed.

So, agency means taking an active and controlling role in shaping and managing your chosen path in life. This is the opposite of believing you are at the mercy of other people or the situations that happen to you.

## CHALLENGE 1

Look at the list of 'who decides' questions and answer them honestly. Is it you, or are you heavily influenced by others?

Who decides...?	Answer
What time I eat my dinner	
Whether I can go on holiday	
Whether I can go to a party	
What time I can leave the party	
What I can study at university	
Whether I can go on a date (and who with)	
What happens with money I earn	
What I give for family support	

Agency happens when you start to make your own choices in life. Many of those choices will be influenced by your own view of yourself, your understanding of others, your environment and your worldview.

Think back to your multiple identities. You looked at a lot of elements that contribute to those. You looked at ways of combining those into an integrated identity. Once you have that sense of integrated identity and are practising all the competencies in this book and making your own choices and decisions responsibly, you are on your way to having agency.

Look back at the four elements of agency from the previous page. How can you use them so that you are really able to steer your own life course? Is it as simple as just being able to make your own decisions?

CHALLENGE 2

- a. Match each stage with one (or more) of the four elements of agency on page 177. (Answers are at the bottom of the page.)
- b. Answer the questions for and about yourself.

Questions	Answer
a) Who am I and what do I value?	
b) What is my purpose?	
c) What are my goals?	
d) Do I know what I need to do to accomplish them?	
e) Do I believe I can accomplish them?	
f) Am I realistically capable of accomplishing them?	
g) Who are my allies in this and how can they help me?	

You've looked at making plans at a few places through this book. This process is just another way of planning, but it focuses more on you and your life. If you ask yourself these questions whenever you are setting out to do something, you can check that you CAN actually do it.

IF you want to lead others, first you will need effective personal leadership. This is about your self awareness and your growth mindset. It's about practising and refining the Habits of Mind you've been looking at. It's also about your interests and passions, the values you adopt and reflecting on the choices and decisions you make.

a. 4	b. 1, 2, 4	c. 1, 2	d. 1, 2, 3	e. 3, 4	f. 1, 2, 3, 4	g. 1, 2
Answers						

CHALLENGE 3

Being on the path to having agency means knowing the answers to the questions in Challenge 2 AND working with them throughout your life. The following questions reinforce that. Answer them now.

Questions	Answer
What are my core values?	
What is my vision for my life?	
What are my strengths?	
What are my weaknesses?	
What are my talents?	

Remember when you looked at your sense of identity at different ages, and how it changed throughout your life? So do these elements. If you are practising the skills and habits covered in this book, if you are reflecting and questioning yourself, if you have your growth mindset, you'll see that your values, strengths, weaknesses, talents, and even your vision for life will change too. Know what you want and know WHY you want it. Knowing what you don't want and why can be a good starting point. That means knowing what you want to change.

## Managing Change



Is this familiar to you? It can seem that everyone wants change, but who is responsible for creating that change? It starts with you. Don't wait for other people to begin before you decide to do something. Start as best as you can and the change will begin. This will also encourage others to create positive change.

In order to successfully manage change, and for you to become your own version of success, you need to use all the skills you've worked through in this book, and more. Effective thinkers, problem-solvers and change-managers need to be accurate and precise.



## HABIT OF MIND – STRIVING FOR ACCURACY AND PRECISION

This is mostly about being not lazy, and taking care with the things you do. It's about setting high standards for yourself and constantly trying to perfect what it is that you are doing. This habit of mind involves continuous learning and building new knowledge and experiences into what you do. Using this habit of mind means checking and rechecking whatever you are making or doing.

If you are not practising this, you are likely to lack focus in what you do and produce substandard or incomplete work. If you want to just get a task done, but not want it to be the best it can be, you are doing the opposite of striving for accuracy and precision. This is one of the easiest habits to adopt – if you can be bothered!

There are other characteristics of managing change too. Many you have already covered in some depth. You've looked at managing changes in yourself. However, all of this relates to other people as much as it relates to you. So what can you do to not only cope with change but influence it in others and in society?

### CHALLENGE 4

List some social changes you believe would benefit all those around you.

If you are interested in social justice and societal change, you'll need to have the curiosity to find out why people behave the way they do. When you

understand why you behave the way you do, it is easier to look at behaviour in society around you. Likewise, once you understand contradictions in yourself, you will be better placed to understand the contradictions around you. Some will be cultural, some will be economic, some will be about values, and others will be about personal and geographic boundaries. Discussing and debating social issues will help you to see the bigger picture and understand where change could occur.

- You can use the Habits of Mind of Flexible Thinking and Interdependent Thinking to embrace diversity and work collaboratively.
- You can develop networks and relationships across different levels of society, enabling you to analyse and tackle inequality.
- The most effective agents of change also demonstrate the characteristics of patience, persuasion, integrity and courage.

For you to do this you'll need to be ethical and authentic in how you work and deal with people. You'll be committed to working toward and realising the positive future you see.

## Perspective – How You See things

Remember the image from the end of Chapter 2 of the people pointing at a number and disagreeing about what the number was? That's a form of perspective, of how you see things.

### CHALLENGE 5

Read the story and answer the questions on the next page.

There was a father who had two sons. The father was very mean and abusive to his sons – he beat them, he drank a lot, he was angry all the time. He couldn't get a job or provide very well for his family.

Years later, one of the sons grew up to be just like this father – he drank too much, was angry all the time, beat his wife and children and could never provide for their needs.

The other son grew up to be the complete opposite – he was kind to everyone, he ate healthy foods and exercised, and had a lot of responsibility for himself and the community around him.

When people asked either son why they were like this, they both replied, 'It's because of my father.'

- a. What is the difference between these two sons?
- b. Why did one son grow up to be angry and unhealthy and abusive, and the other to be kind and healthy and successful?

You usually don't have a choice about what happens to you as a child, as you realised when you examined your identity. However, when you grow up you do have choices to make. Will the bad things that happened to you motivate you to be a better person? Or will you be just like the people who hurt you? Do you see that hurt as damaging and something to blame, or as an opportunity to learn, to grow, to move forward and beyond?

What about good and bad? Here's a story:

A farmer has a wonderful, beautiful, prize-winning horse. One day his horse runs away. His neighbour comes over and says, 'I'm so sorry about your horse, what bad luck', and the farmer says, 'Who knows what's good or bad?' The neighbour is confused because this is clearly terrible. The horse is the most valuable thing that the farmer owns.

But the horse comes back the next day and he brings with him twelve wild horses. The neighbour comes back over to the farmer and says, 'Congratulations, what good luck!' And the farmer replies again: 'Who knows what's good or bad?'

The next day the farmer's son is trying to tame one of the wild horses but the horse throws him off and the son breaks his leg. The neighbour comes back over and says, 'I'm so sorry about your son, what bad luck.' The farmer repeats, 'Who knows what's good or bad?'

The next day the army comes through their village and is forcing able-bodied young men to go and fight in a war, but because the farmer's son has a broken leg, the army leave him behind. Again the neighbour comes over and says, 'What good luck you have, all the other sons have been taken.' The farmer replies...

...and this story can go on and on like that. Good. Bad. Who knows?



## CHALLENGE 6

Think about the following questions and about perspective. Is rain good or bad? Can rain always be one or the other? What do you think? When the price of rice goes up, is that good or bad? Read the story.

A person from the city and a rural farmer are talking to each other about the advantages and disadvantages of country and city life. They talk about air quality, traffic, noise, roads; all sorts of things. As they are talking, it starts to rain. The person from the city says that the rain is bad because it makes traffic worse, and it will take her longer to get home. The farmer says that the rain is good because the crops will be watered and there will be a good harvest.

However, if it doesn't rain (which the farmer says is bad but the city person says is good) there will be a small harvest which means he can't get as much money. However, with a small harvest everywhere, the price of rice will go up, which means the farmer will get more money for his rice. Also however, when the price of rice goes up, the person in the city will be unhappy because she has to pay more for her rice.

So there aren't really any right or wrong answers there. A different perspective equals different 'good' and 'bad'. We all see things differently, depending on the situation we are in. However, we can always change our position, go somewhere else, talk to different people and alter our perspective.



# Success – Young Adult or Otherwise

Back in Chapter 1, I asked you to write down some people you thought were successful. I also asked you to start thinking about your own success.

## CHALLENGE 7

- a. Write down some examples of good leaders that you have known in your life AND the qualities you feel make them good.

Good leaders	Qualities

- b. Now do the same but for all the bad leaders you've known and what makes them bad.

Bad leaders	Deficiencies

- c. What are the differences between the characteristics of the good leaders and the bad ones?

d. Now think about how you lead yourself. Do you think you lead yourself well? What characteristics do you have that demonstrate good personal leadership? Are there characteristics you'd like to change about how you live your life? What are they?

My personal leadership characteristics	Characteristics I would like to change

You have the potential to improve your life and improve on the way you look at the world. If you don't recognise your potential then you can't make it happen. You have to look for the good in yourself, and in others. This will allow you to lead both yourself and other people better.

But you need to balance this. You need to be critical of your ideas and processes too. There has been a lot of emphasis on positive thinking, but there is a downside. Unfortunately too many people believe they just need to think positively and good things will happen. Sometimes people don't put enough effort into a task, or overestimate their own abilities, value and importance. Then they wonder why things didn't work out as hoped. This is often because they don't consider the barriers, problems or obstacles enough; they only really look at what they want. Recognising the possible obstacles will help you reach your goals. Here is a technique that can help you with this.

<b>W</b>	First, you name a <b>wish</b> .
<b>O</b>	Then you name the very best <b>outcome</b> and imagine this outcome.
<b>O</b>	Then you name your main inner <b>obstacle</b> and imagine this obstacle.
<b>P</b>	Finally, you make a <b>plan</b> , an 'if x -then y' plan of how to overcome the obstacle.

[www.woopmylife.org](http://www.woopmylife.org)

## CHALLENGE 8

Complete each stages of the technique to increase your motivation to achieve your goals.

### a. Wish

Think about the next four weeks. What is your most important wish? Pick a wish that feels challenging but that you can reasonably fulfill within the next four weeks.

Write your Wish in one sentence:

### b. Outcome

What would be the best thing about fulfilling your wish? How would fulfilling your wish make you feel?

Write your best Outcome in one sentence

Imagine this best outcome as fully as you can. Write your thoughts:

### c. Obstacle

What is it within you that holds you back from fulfilling your wish? It might be an emotion, an irrational belief, or a bad habit. Think more deeply; what is it really? Identify your main inner obstacle; the thing inside your psychosocial self that is the biggest barrier.

Write your Obstacle in one sentence

Imagine your main inner obstacle as fully as you can. Write your thoughts down:

d. Plan

What can you do to overcome your obstacle? Identify one effective action you can take to overcome your obstacle.

Write your action or thought in one sentence

Make the following Plan:

If... (your obstacle) \_\_\_\_\_, then I  
will (your action or thought to overcome obstacle)

You can use this for short-term as well as for long-term wishes and for small as well as for big wishes.

Practise this technique as often as you like as it will help you overcome those inner barriers. Take time to celebrate winning the battle with yourself; it's quite OK- to feel pleased with improving yourself, to feel happy with crossing those obstacles and to celebrate that victory. Enjoyment is a large part of success. If you aren't happy with your achievements, what's the point of it all? If you think back to Chapter 1 and the definitions of success, several of the quotes included self-satisfaction, liking yourself, the expansion of happiness and wonder. We need to be amazed; we need to see the splendour in things around us, we need to soak up those wow moments.



## HABIT OF MIND – RESPONDING WITH WONDERMENT & AWE

A lot of the habits of mind you've been through so far involve processes or steps you can go through to acquire that habit. However, what about enjoyment? Do you really need stages or processes to enjoy something? Think of a time where you found something really cool or amazing. What was it about that thing which allowed you to enjoy it so much? Looking at the world around you, using all your senses, you can produce those feelings often. A double rainbow, a butterfly emerging, a really amazing artistic performance, a fantastic sports' achievement – they are all basically 'wow' moments. Those moments can happen with your thinking and problem solving too.

Many people have told me that their love or passion for a subject in school came from the teacher allowing them to experience these 'wow' moments. They were shown that, for example, physics is amazingly cool through the teacher giving student experiences that appealed both to the brain and the senses. I had the opposite experience in my physics school days. My teacher was dull, seemed not to like it very much and was only interested in the students memorising, for example, Boyle's Law; I never saw a practical way of 'experiencing' that law. Later in life, through other people's love of physics, I now understand (a bit) about how amazing it is.

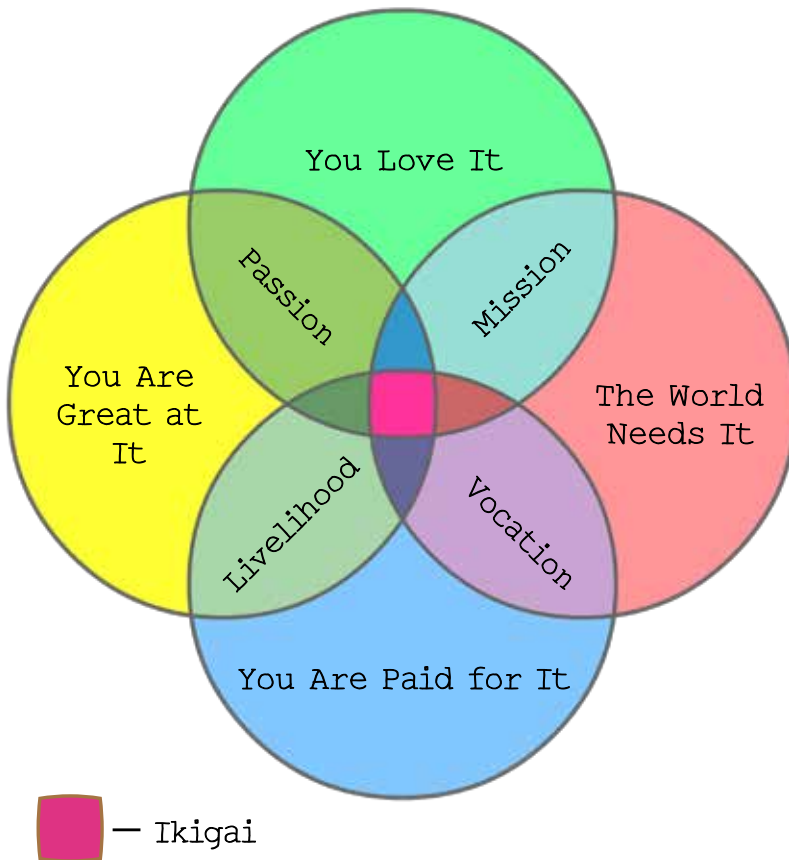
Having a passion for what you do is important. To be effective you will have a positive attitude towards the situations you face but also enjoy the challenge. You will enjoy finding solutions yourself and enjoy finding puzzles that challenge you. You'll do this throughout your life. Be inquisitive, be enthusiastic, be involved; use your growth mindset.

## What Is Your Purpose?

Look back at your idea of success from Chapter 1 and look back at your goals from Challenge 2 earlier in this chapter.

What is Your 'reason for being'?

The Japanese have a word for this – ikigai. According to the Japanese, everyone has an ikigai. However, it is not something you will just happen across. To find it you will have to search and this might require deep questioning of yourself. Throughout this book you have been doing exactly that. You've been looking inside yourself and asking yourself lots of questions.



The term ikigai is composed of two Japanese words: *iki* referring to life, and *gai*, which roughly means 'the realisation of what one expects and hopes for'. Ikigai is seen at the centre point of where four main elements crossover:

1. What you love (your passion)
2. What the world needs (your mission)
3. What you are good at (your vocation)
4. What you can get paid for (your livelihood)

CHALLENGE 9

- a. Write down all the things you can think of that you have a passion for.  
('What do I love?')

- b. Write down all the things that you can think of that the world needs.  
('What does the world need?')

- c. Write down all the things you can think of that you are good at.  
('What am I good at?')

- d. Write down all the things you can think of that you could get an  
income from. ('What can I get money for doing?')

- e. Look at your four lists. How many things that you wrote appear twice  
(in two lists)? How many things appear three times? Are there any  
that appear four times?

Two Times	Three Times	Four Times



If there is anything that appeared four times then that may be your reason for being; your purpose. It is what motivates you to get out of bed in the morning. It's much more than being about money or status. It's about your emotional brain and your rational brain directing you around what makes your life worthwhile. It is also dependent on circumstances. You can confidently go through tough times, challenges around you, heartache and disappointment if you have this purpose. Ikigai comes from within you and your connection to the world around you. It doesn't come from other people's expectations of you. It is your calling, your goal: YOUR reason for being.

### CHALLENGE 10

Look again at Challenge 2 from earlier in this chapter. What did you write as your purpose? Does that purpose match what you found here? If so, great! If not, repeat your goal setting exercise using the purpose you came up with just now.

Your agency, your human integrated identity, your goals, your growth mindset: This is why I've framed this book as I have. It's about you, your integrated identity, your sense of agency, acquiring and practising those Habits of Mind. It's about having a purpose framed by your passions, your talents and what the world needs.

### Many Things Take Time

So what do you do if your purpose isn't clear to you? Does everyone need a purpose? Some people discover a purpose early on and it becomes their life's work. Other people don't discover it until much later in life. Lots of people we consider successes today did not achieve that success until they were in their 40s or even later. Many other people have different purposes at different stages through their life. A purpose does not have to be one thing and one thing only. Maybe it is not completely that Ikigai where all four circles meet. What is important though is to always try to enjoy what you do. Too many people spend too long pursuing a notion of success that they believe will "make" them happy while forgetting to find happiness and enjoyment along the way. Like those adult roles from Chapter 4 when you looked at your development, everyone has their own timetable and pace at which they are ready for certain things.



## HABIT OF MIND – LEARNING CONTINUOUSLY

Here is the main point of all of this. Change is constant and you need to change with it. Mastering all the competencies discussed in this book does not happen through knowledge of them, but rather through your continuous practice of them.

Why are we more comfortable with what we already know rather than with what there is to learn? Why do we so often defend our own point of view, beliefs and knowledge rather than embrace the unknown, invite possibilities or challenge the status quo? Is it just that that's the 'way things are'?

Perhaps it is that from an early age we are 'taught' that learning is what you do from your elders; your parents, brothers and sisters, teachers and political and religious leaders. Perhaps you have been taught that learning is about being an educated person; someone who has knowledge. Perhaps you were taught that knowing answers is more important than asking questions; that to be 'right' was all that mattered. However, does this prepare you for life? Does your 'learning' stop with graduation certificates?

Learning continuously means that **THROUGHOUT YOUR LIFE** you will:

- seek new and better versions of yourself and others around you;
- have curiosity **AND** the confidence to pursue it;
- actively seek improvement;
- seize the chance to tackle problems;
- know that difficulty is a great opportunity to learn;
- be enthusiastic about challenges;
- be unafraid to question the status quo;
- realise you don't have all the answers;
- never stop asking questions.

Knowing what you don't know is the first step on your journey for knowledge as it leads to everything else.

You've now reached the final part of this book. You've worked through many elements starting with how you envisioned your success and ending with this chapter about taking control of the direction of your life. It's never too early or too late for you to do this.

If I could offer you only one tip for the future, thanaka would be it. The long-term benefits of thanaka have been proved by scientists, whereas the rest of my advice is questionable. I will dispense this advice now.

Enjoy the power and beauty of your youth. Oh, never mind. You will not understand the power and beauty of your youth until they've faded. But trust me, in 20 years, you'll look back at photos of yourself and recall in a way you can't grasp now how much possibility lay before you and how fabulous you really looked.

Don't worry about the future. Or worry, but know that worrying is as effective as trying to solve an algebra equation by chewing betel nut.

Do one thing every day that scares you.

Sing.

Don't be reckless with other people's hearts. Don't put up with people who are reckless with yours.

Clean your teeth.

Don't waste your time on jealousy. Sometimes you're ahead, sometimes you're behind. The race is long and, in the end, it's only with yourself.

Remember compliments you receive. Forget the insults. If you succeed in doing this, tell me how.

Keep your old love letters. Throw away your old bank statements.

Exercise.

Don't feel guilty if you don't know what you want to do with your life. The most interesting people I know didn't know at 22 what they wanted to do with their lives. Some of the most interesting 40-year-olds I know still don't.

Maybe you'll marry, maybe you won't. Maybe you'll have children, maybe you won't. Maybe you'll divorce at 40, maybe you'll dance the Hnit Par Thawar on your 75th wedding anniversary. Whatever you do, don't congratulate yourself too much, or berate yourself either. Your choices are half chance. So are everybody else's.

Enjoy your body. Use it every way you can. Don't be afraid of it or of what other people think of it. It's the greatest instrument you'll ever own.

Dance, even if you have nowhere to do it but your living room.

Read the directions, even if you don't follow them.

Do not read beauty magazines. They will only make you feel ugly.

Get to know your parents. You never know when they'll be gone for good. Be nice to your siblings. They're your best link to your past and the people most likely to stick with you in the future.

Understand that friends come and go, but with a precious few you should hold on.

Travel.

Accept certain truths: Prices will rise. Politicians will plunder. You, too, will get old. And when you do, you'll fantasize that when you were young, prices were reasonable, politicians were noble and children respected their elders.

Respect your elders.

Don't expect anyone else to support you. Maybe you have a trust fund. Maybe you'll have a wealthy spouse. But you never know when either one might run out.

Don't mess too much with your hair or by the time you're 40 it will look 85.

Be careful whose advice you buy, but be patient with those who supply it. But trust me on the thanaka.

Adapted from "Wear Sunscreen" by Mary Schmich

## Remember

- ✓ Success depends on taking control of the path and direction of your life.
- ✓ Believe you are NOT at the mercy of other people or situations that happen to you.
- ✓ Change is always happening.
- ✓ Develop networks and relationships across different levels of society.
- ✓ Be ethical and authentic.
- ✓ You can always alter your perspective.
- ✓ Thinking positively is not enough – you need to see barriers and obstacles.
- ✓ Find your Ikigai – your reason for being: your purpose.
- ✓ Continuously learn.

## Recommendation

Accept the challenge to reach your success. Help other people achieve theirs. Develop your integrated identity and your agency. Do this by combining all the abilities you have worked on throughout this book – and keep working on them. Identify the things that you know you need to develop and practice them more. Practice continuously and learn continuously. Aim to be precise and accurate in all you do. Think and act positively AND identify obstacles as part of your planning process. Accept that change is always happening and adapt. Find your purpose. Make, and be, change.

# Acknowledgments | Credit

## Where Credit Is Due

There is very little research available on life skills in young adults in Myanmar or in other Southeast Asian nations. When writing *Young Adult Success*, it was necessary to utilise what was available, without simply assuming models elsewhere would work in the Myanmar context. The process has been one of research, testing and evidence. We drew largely on three main bodies of work which are US/Western originated (this wasn't from a lack of trying to find regional examples). These were chosen because they question whether certain elements would apply to other cultures and, perhaps more importantly, that to be a successful young adult you will be able to transfer, apply, and have coherence and consistency regardless of the environment you are in.

1. **The University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research's (UCCCRS) concept paper for research and practice from June 2015: 'Foundations for Young Adult Success: A Developmental Framework'.**

The paper defined young adult success as being around three key factors which would allow a young adult to 'manage and adapt to changing demands and successfully navigate various settings with different cultures and expectations'. These were:

- a. Agency – how a young adult ready for success interacts with the world around them;
  - b. Integrated identity – decision making that aligns with a young adult's values, beliefs and goals and;
  - c. Competencies – the skills a young adult has and how effectively they use them in various tasks.
2. **Massachusetts Institute of Technology's (MIT) Young Adult Development Project, 2008.**

The researchers on this project 'gathered and analysed over several hundred books, journal articles and other materials, interviewed leading neuroscientists, and attended major conferences on young adulthood, parenting of college students, and developments in neuroscience'. They specifically examined:

- a. Cognitive development – the underlying changes in thinking patterns that affect behavior;
- b. Brain development – the changes in the structure and function of the

- brain and their correlation with changes in thinking and behavior and;
- c. Influences on development – the role of colleges and universities, parenting, peers, and other factors in shaping the way development occurs and plays out

### 3. **Arthur L. Costa's Habits of Mind: A Developmental Series, 2000**

The Habits of Mind are a set of sixteen problem-solving, life-related skills, which the creators say are necessary to effectively operate in society. These habits encourage reasoning, insightfulness, perseverance and creativity. Through understanding and using these lifelong and continuous learning skills, individuals will be equipped to work through real life situations and gain positive outcomes by responding with awareness, thought and planned strategies.

In addition to these three main sources, I am grateful and thankful to the following people (in no particular order) for their support, input, expertise and general awesomeness: Child's Dream Foundation for funding the project; all 1,000+ participants in the original needs assessment; Esther Ze Naw Bamwaw for all her data collection and entry work of that needs assessment; Molly Ferra and Joanne Lauterjung Kelly for their digging and sourcing of potential challenges, especially around emotions, identity and, resilience; Ma Khant for all her support through the piloting and feedback process; all the late adolescents, young adults, teachers and care-giving professionals that read and gave feedback on the pilot version; Katie Julian for her editing prowess and for allowing me to keep the narrative format; May Htut Pan Moe for her design and layout wizardry; Ye Win for his patience and persistence with all the illustrations; Kaung Hla Zan for the far-from-easy translation to Myanmar and, finally; my strongest allies, my parents and friends, for supporting and encouraging me on my own journey of continuous and lifelong learning.

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