

Chapter 1

The Needs For Personal Development of Synergistic Life Skills

Preparation

Developing life skills is undoubtedly the most important process we perform throughout our childhood and teenage years—and even into adulthood.

During this process we acquire personal characteristics and behavior patterns. These include perception, recording information in memory, thought or reasoning, comprehension of language, reading, speech, and many others. Without learning we could not solve problems, make decisions, and implement solutions. We could not purposefully and most effectively cope with, adjust to, or otherwise respond to our environment, thereby satisfying our needs and drives.

Many learning and memory improvement methods focus on increasing the motivation to learn, and presenting devices or “tricks” for better recording information in memory. Both inputs are important, but they alone do not systematically influence all the important factors involved in learning and memory. In order to maximize your efficiency and effectiveness as you absorb this book, you will need to deal systematically with the many variables that affect your personal development.

One of our purposes at the outset of this chapter is to outline now the basic steps you should be taking in any learning situation—steps that we will cover in more detail later. These steps are involved in the first Phase of Learning, **Preparation**. [The next phases are: (2) Acquisition (e.g., reading, listening, observing); (3) Immediate Reinforcement (e.g., rereading, reviewing, discussing, considering, using); and (4) Subsequent Reinforcement. (e.g., rereading, reviewing, discussing, using, practicing).] These Preparation steps are designed to channel abilities, structure the process, and compensate for a number of real and potential limitations. (The underlying psychology and principles are discussed in Chapter 5.)

We want you to begin practicing the phases and steps from the very beginning. A major reason: It will enable you to begin identifying in specific terms what you are doing right, and why—or, what you could be doing better, and how. Furthermore, we can all learn, think, and behave more effectively when we are aware of and think about what we are doing and how to do it better.

Start Right Now and Begin to Use These Preparation Steps

Step 1: Awareness / Think What You’re Doing — and How to Do It Better

When you are aware that you may be about to learn something that could help you reach your personal goals, you should say to yourself: “I am in a learning situation and will consciously control or at least influence the mental processes and factors involved. I am going to use my improving abilities and accomplish these steps. I am going to think what I am doing, and do it better.”

Step 2: Increase Motivation

The key here is to determine the personal goals that the material will help you to attain. Recognizing purposes or goals gives you insight into the material’s importance to you. This has the advantage of helping you to cope with “information overload” by reducing your attention to trivia.

Recognizing the importance of the material increases your desire to learn it and your interest in it. Desire and interest motivate you to initiate, concentrate, and sustain attention and effort. Sustained concentration is one of the most important results of increased motivation. If you do not pay undivided attention to what you are learning, you will not learn it as efficiently, effectively, easily, and quickly as possible. Concentration also helps you override the limiting effects of distractions that impede and often distort learning processes. Another important result of increased motivation (desire and interest) is the increased strength of a signal in the brain that starts certain of its regions to record information in memory. You can further increase the strength of this signal by imagining how you will feel when the goals the material will help you attain have been realized

Also during this step, evaluate your priorities. Compare the importance and immediacy of the situation with other

possible learning, thinking, or “doing” activities facing you at the moment.

Motivation is one of the five main factors that influence how well you learn, and thus, how well you will be able to retain and recall what has been learned. You want to increase this factor at the onset of the learning experience, so that you will initiate and use the learning process as effectively as you can.

Step 3: Seek a Conducive Environment

If possible, choose appropriate surroundings in which to learn. For example: When serious study and thought are involved, as they are now, choose surroundings that are relaxed and as nearly devoid of distractions (e.g., noise, activity) as possible. Diverted attention or interruption of concentration will lower the efficiency of the processes involved in perceiving (reading) the information, interpreting it, and storing it in memory areas.

Step 4: Get Organized

Get together the equipment, books, audio-visual aids, note paper, and so forth that may be necessary or useful during this learning situation. You want them readily available so as not to interrupt your concentration by having to find and get them.

If concentrated study or practice of an ability for more than a short period of time is involved, then plan your time. Set up a study schedule: what you will study, when, and for how long. Some experts recommend that a schedule include class time, eating, sleeping, and recreation. Schedules help you organize your time, reinforce your commitment to study times, and hold you to a plan.

Plan or set aside a block of time during which you will be least likely to be distracted or interrupted. Schedule recreation for later, or get it out of the way first, if you must. Better yet, you might use recreation to reward yourself for completing the learning situation.

Step 5: Preview the Material

For verbally-oriented material such as this book, read (or at least scan) the book’s table of contents, preface or introduction, chapter sub-headings, topic sentences, and italicized words or sentences. Familiarize yourself with the vocabulary. Acquaint yourself with the general concepts, principles, or ideas that are being presented. Previewing the material in these ways has many advantages:

A. Meaningfulness - Previewing helps you to form a general framework or structure (the whole) into which more detailed information (the parts) can be fitted together and be better understood. It enables more effective interpretation and processing of new material. It also increases your insight concerning the relationships between the parts and the whole. It gives you an advanced clue as to whether or not initially presented material must be learned well so that later material will be better comprehended. Also, it gives you a “map” for understanding where the material is going—and why.

As you preview the gist of the material, it “cues” your recall of existing knowledge and experience. This gives you an idea of just how meaningful the material is going to be to you. Thus, if you are encountering something for the first time, you know that you must particularly apply yourself to making it as meaningful to you as possible. One way to start doing this is to clarify your own ideas and information regarding the subject. If, on the other hand, you recognize that your knowledge is fairly extensive in comparison to the material, you will be more aware that (a) what you already know will be further reinforced, and (b) that you can expect to encounter additional insights through the new material.

B. Motivation - Previewing also enables you to further determine the purposes for which you will be learning and the importance of the material to you. If you were to simply look at a book’s cover, for instance, how would you know whether or not the contents would be important or useful to you? You wouldn’t. Thus, if previewing indicates that the material is more important and useful to you than you first imagined, motivation will be increased.

Step 6: Recall and Structure Previewed Perceptions

Recall and structure in your mind the initial impressions you absorbed as you previewed the material. Fix them in memory. This will make the detail you are about to learn more meaningful to you.

Remember that as you learn the new material, you will be reorganizing existing (nerve patterns of) information in memory. Now that you have an idea how present knowledge may be reorganized, you have an opportunity to fix in your mind what you already know. This reinforces present knowledge so that it will not be “obscured” or “overwritten” during reorganization. This is an extremely important aspect of Step 6.

The six preparatory steps are easy to learn and very easy to use. Doing them takes only a few minutes—a few minutes that will actually save you considerable time and make learning much more effective. Basically, they make you think about what you are doing and how to do it better. There is nothing magic about these steps, but they do vastly increase how well you will learn something and remember it.

We should note at this early stage that, in addition to learning processes, these first six steps are the same for these and other processes—such as: personal motivation (personal goal setting and planning); planning; problem solving; decision making; communicating; and managing time. If you begin now to use these steps regularly in all types of situations, it will take no time at all for their use to become second nature—become a habit. This gives you a big clue as to what underlies the power of the integrated or “synergistic” approach to personal development that we will be describing to you piece by piece.

Let’s review these preparatory steps once more to help you fix them in memory.

Preparation Phase Steps

- Step 1: Awareness / **Think What You’re Doing**
- Step 2: Increase **motivation**
- Step 3: Seek a **conductive environment**
- Step 4: Get **organized**
- Step 5: **Preview** the Material (meaningfulness, motivation, method, mode, and presentation)
- Step 6: **Recall and structure** previewed perceptions (reinforce present patterns)

After completing this chapter, mull it over, let it “sink in,” and then use what you have learned for about a week before going on to the next chapter.

There are no formats or exercises to complete in this chapter. Therefore, your immediate use and reinforcement of the above steps is highly recommended.

We are aware that many readers may simply skim (preview?) chapters—if they read them at all. Therefore, to help readers as we have already been doing, we will use underlining to draw attention to major ideas or important points.

What Are the Objectives and Power of Personal Development?

What do people want most out of life, the majority will say, “Happiness.” Many will say, “Success.” The quest for either—and for other lofty desires—is human and not

unworthy. We all prefer happiness to unhappiness, pleasure to pain, and success to failure. So we strive for such things as career and financial success, influence, material comforts, security, fulfilling family and social relationships, spiritual fulfillment, and personal growth. The relative importance of various areas to each person depends upon his or her own individual needs, drives, values, capabilities, goals, and expectations.

But none of the positive outcomes occurs automatically. They can only be experienced when we have made an effort to learn, think, and behave in necessary or appropriate ways. Put another way, we must interact with, or respond to, our environment appropriately. (Some would say, “functionally” or “successfully.”) However, the capabilities for doing so are not inborn. They must be learned properly and then used effectively in order to achieve results that will satisfy and fulfill us. Thus, the basic function of education and training is to provide people with the tools they need to perform their jobs and roles more successfully, and, as a result, be better prepared to get the most possible out of life.

Inputs to Successful Performance in Any Role

Behaving successfully in any particular role requires the use of a number of inputs. Many are involved in first thinking about what we should do in a given situation before actually taking any action.

Group A: The Earliest, Most Basic Abilities (for Beginning to Acquire Information)

This category contains abilities which are apparently hard-wired in our brains at birth. The primary, general ability is learning, which involves “underlying abilities” such as: looking toward movement; observing (focusing attention on an object); hearing sounds; the brain’s processing of those types of sensory information; and storing basic information about sensory input in memory.

Another basic, inborn ability is movement, which becomes more complex and purposeful during infancy. Movement enables crawling, toddling, and walking. These activities, in turn, enable the curious to roam around... and acquire and accumulate information (sensory input).

Group B: Basic Abilities That Further Enable Learning (Acquiring Information) and Thinking (Using Information)

A Major Input: The Ability to Read

While observing is an important early ability for learning, we put the ability to read tops our list. Much of what we learn is through reading. Unfortunately, it has been said that the average American reads only as well as a seventh grader. That is almost like saying most people have the mentality of a seventh grader. If a person wants to go further in life or to obtain more of what life has to offer than a seventh grader is capable of doing, then he or she must learn to read better, develop a larger vocabulary, study better, and process more complex ideas better.

Other Inputs:

Several other basic abilities that develop during childhood are communicating (learning and using language), spelling, grammar, arithmetic skills (adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing numbers), and writing. In most people, these are at least adequately developed during early education.

Group C: Informational Inputs to More Complex Learning and Thought

A General Education

The emphasis in early education is the development of the basic abilities for learning, communicating, and thinking mentioned above.

Later education—in the higher elementary grades, and especially the high school years—is focused on basic principles, methods, and facts associated with math, science (e.g., physics, chemistry, and biology), history (e.g., ancient and modern), social studies (e.g., civics); and literature.

With basic mental abilities and knowledge fairly well developed to this point, high school education to some extent, and college education to a much greater extent, can cover concepts, frames of reference, ideas, theories, principles, and facts associated with these areas: psychology, sociology, philosophy, economics, advanced-level sciences, advanced literature, and political science. These areas of knowledge are oriented to

Table 1.1: Median Lifetime Earnings by Educational Attainment (in 2009 Dollars)

Less than High School	973,000
High School Diploma	1,304,000
Some College/No Degree	1,547,000
Associate's Degree	1,727,000
Bachelor's Degree	2,268,000
Master's Degree	2,671,000
Doctoral Degree	3,252,000
Professional Degree	3,648,000

the what and why of various phenomena. They deal with “the world that cannot be seen, but can only be learned about, thought about, and discussed conceptually—in verbal terms. That is why it is so important to develop more advanced abilities to read, understand, and process information up to this point. Suffice it to say **that the more knowledge we have of the arts and sciences, the better we can understand, cope with, and adapt to an increasingly complex world.**

This may be a good place to mention that one's level of education can have a tremendous influence on whatever each of us personally calls “success” and “happiness” in life. Educational level essentially affects our earning power—that is, the amount of income we can earn to (a) provide a home, food, and clothing for a family, (b) to raise children; and (c) experience what money can enable us to have and accomplish in life. Just take a look at *Table 1.1*.

This life planning information will hopefully motivate some readers to pay serious attention to what this book can help them learn, develop, and accomplish.

General, Specialized Information

This input consists of more specialized frames of reference, concepts, and facts that are job or career-oriented. An undergraduate major in education or a Masters Degree in business both fall into this category. However, even the educational background obtained in trade and professional schools is supplemented by organizations' formal training programs and on-the-job training.

Detailed, Specialized Information

Once we are in a particular job or role, more detailed information becomes necessary. For example, production, and financial facts and figures are necessary inputs to managerial analysis, planning, decision making, and problem

solving. Students' individual capabilities and interests are important details to teachers preparing lessons. Specific customer attitudes, concerns, and needs are facts that salespeople must consider as they mentally rehearse their sales calls. Assembly line workers need to know operating and maintenance procedures regarding their machinery. Parents should have an in-depth knowledge of their children's abilities, needs, values, and interests, and how they as parents are influencing the development of these traits.

Much of this more factual information is learned in specialized training programs conducted by employers. However, much of it must be absorbed by individuals themselves, either on their jobs or in their other roles or endeavors.

Experience

All of the previous informational inputs amount to "experience." But here, let us define it as "the accumulated knowledge of possible factors and corresponding facts that are related to or underlie a given situation—and, a knowledge of what is likely to happen when various alternative actions are taken in these circumstances.

Because experience is influenced by our emotions, previous knowledge, and other factors, it is not always completely reliable. But it is always worth consideration when thinking about what to do and how.

So in all our roles we must think about (use) general and specialized frames of reference, concepts, ideas, principles, facts, opinions, and experience that are related to present or anticipated situations. The depth, breadth, and quality of all this knowledge greatly influence what we perceive, comprehend, learn, think about, and then do—and how well.

But thought alone does not get things accomplished. We must still take action, respond, or behave. Group B inputs are more action-oriented than the previous group.

Group D: Capabilities for Behaving "Appropriately," "Functionally," or "Successfully"

General/Common Skills

This category contains common skills such as coordinated movement, writing/authoring skills such as correctly using grammar and punctuation, communication skills, basic math skills, and the like. As discussed above, these are at least adequately developed in most people through education during childhood and teenage years.

Specialized Skills

This category of inputs includes particular inborn aptitudes necessary for certain jobs. Examples are clerical (perceptual) speed and accuracy, and the ability to visualize and solve mechanical problems ("practical intelligence" or "mechanical visualization"). It also includes many learned skills. For example: the ability to operate a keypunch machine; special communicative and persuasive skills involved in sales and politics; the ability to analyze statistics; or the ability to operate a heavy piece of equipment. Some of these rather action- or job-oriented skills are learned during the educational process. Many of them, however, are learned in specialized training courses, on-the-job training, or through experience.

General Behavior Patterns and Underlying Personal Traits

Everyone has their own personal levels of various specific characteristics. These include:

Needs and Drives: e.g., physiological; security; social; self-image; self-actualization; power; and achievement

Values/Motives: e.g., theoretical (intellectual); economic (business, money, material things); social (altruism); political (power, authority, influence); religious (or spiritual); and aesthetic (beauty in life experiences)

Personality Traits: e.g., dominance; self-confidence; self-sufficiency; adaptability; conscientiousness; introversion/extroversion; emotional stability; and self control

Attitudes, Beliefs, Biases, Ethics, Interests

Goals and Expectations

Personal combinations of levels of these traits underlie personal behavior patterns ("behaviors") such as "friendliness" or a "people-oriented" leadership style. Thus, they influence one's desire and ability to relate well with others. (Motivation is one thing; ability is another.) Some combinations, however, are more appropriate than others for effective interpersonal relations. People-oriented combinations are particularly important to, for example, salespeople, managers, and politicians. But they are also very desirable in students, parents, instructors, co-workers, and spouses. After all, successful activity often requires that two or more people work together. Whenever this is the case, appropriate interpersonal relationships contribute greatly to effective group effort or behavior.

We might also mention that these characteristics also greatly influence what one learns or does not learn, and what one thinks about or does not think about. Thus, they affect how well we learn and think—as well as act.

Whereas previous inputs to successful behavior are taught in educational institutions and organizations (with the exception of on-the-job experience), personal characteristics and general behavior patterns are not. They are learned or formed with very little conscious effort on our part as we mature.

In looking at the progression from Group A inputs through Group D inputs, have you noticed that each group contributes in some manner to learning or developing the next? *For example:* Basic learning abilities enable acquisition of general information concerning many areas of knowledge. Similarly, a general educational background in psychology contributes to the learning of specialized frames of reference and information involved in, say, clinical psychology. This more specialized knowledge, in turn, contributes to better learning of specialized, detailed information while on the job as a clinical psychologist. Similarly, specialized skills can be learned more easily and effectively once general skills involved in a particular job have been learned. Experience, too, is more meaningful and memorable the more the individual already knows.

Does having Group A through Group D skills and knowledge mean that we can perform successfully in all our roles? Not really. We are not always taught all the informational inputs and skills we need. Much of these two types of inputs must be learned on our own. Even when we do acquire additional knowledge and skills, we must still use them successfully. This takes two more equally if not more important inputs under “Group E.”

Group E: (More Advanced) Mental Abilities and (Heightened) Motivation

Abilities for Learning and Thinking

Few Group A and B inputs would be acquired or used without these basic abilities. For instance, specialized information needed to accomplish jobs or roles must first be identified by a teacher, an instructor, someone in an organization, or by the individual. This requires thought. Next, the necessary information must be learned. Once learned it can be recalled and used to analyze, plan, decide, and act—that is, to think more effectively in order to behave more appropriately. Similarly, specialized skills and more appropriate behavior patterns must be identified, learned, further developed, and then used appropriately. Isn't it true, then, that the most essential abilities, which underlie and enable successful, satisfying performance in any role, are the abil-

Table 1.2: The Use of Basic Abilities to Learn and Think

THINK: Identify all inputs that must be learned in order to accomplish the activities involved in various roles successfully.

LEARN: Acquire necessary information, specialized skills, improved learning and thinking abilities, more appropriate behavior patterns, underlying characteristics, and various methods and principles.

THINK: Use knowledge, skills, behavior patterns, and methods—to think and act more appropriately and successfully.

ities to LEARN and THINK? *Table 1.2* summarizes the importance of these fundamental abilities.

Although the power of these basic abilities is largely a function of inborn mental potential, certain aspects of these abilities must be learned and developed. Are these abilities fully developed and maintained in most of us? Probably not. For example, according to Evelyn Wood Reading Dynamics, most adults read only as well as the average seventh grader—about 250 words per minute with 70% comprehension, which is poor.

Development of better learning and thinking abilities is receiving increased emphasis within the educational system. Arithmetic and mathematics courses, for example, are being deliberately designed to better develop abilities for logical reasoning.

Personal Motivation

Regardless of how much we know, or how fully developed our learning and thinking abilities may be, in order to learn, solve problems, and behave or perform at our utmost, we must want to do so. Motivation is a key to concentrating and sustaining attention or effort so that information and skills will be effectively learned and used. It is also essential for developing better learning and thinking abilities, for learning more appropriate behavior patterns, and for making a habit of using various principles and methods—all of which take a desire to expend some effort.

Do people have adequate knowledge, skills, basic abilities, and motivation? If they do, they should be performing successfully and coping with their problems effectively. But is this actually the case?

Problems in Our Society

Let's reflect for a moment on the questions posed above, for many problems are all too commonplace in our culture.

First, the importance or usefulness of many necessary inputs often go unrecognized, and therefore the inputs are not taught or are not learned voluntarily. For instance, many parents have not realized that, to effectively discuss drug problems with their children, they must themselves learn more about drugs.

Second, much of what we need to learn these days about politics, economics, business, psychology, and technology is becoming more and more conceptual in nature. Concepts, ideas, and principles are not visible things and can only be presented, discussed, and thought about in terms of language. Reading, therefore, is of great importance, especially to students, teachers, educators, managers, and leaders. But the average adult, as we have pointed out, reads rather poorly. Add to this the fact that knowledge is increasing at an increasingly faster rate, and it is no wonder that we are becoming very inefficient and ineffective at handling, learning, retaining, and recalling necessary information.

Third, how often have you noticed that basic and specialized skills required in various tasks or roles have not been adequately developed? It should also be quite apparent that too many persons have under-developed capabilities for replacing old skills and bad habits with newer or better skills and habits?

Fourth, have you already discovered that many more problems are unrecognized and unsolved than are recognized and solved?

Fifth, how often has it struck you that even recognized problems are not adequately thought out? That available information has not been used properly? That solutions did not seem to get at the real, underlying causes? That decisions and solutions have been poorly implemented? And that many problems have not really been solved at all?

Sixth, everyone seems to have "20/20 hindsight." What about foresight? Don't we frequently observe cases where an opportunity has been passed by because it went unrecognized at the time it presented itself?

Seventh, under-utilization of creative and innovative potential is not uncommon. In fact, are not these talents often suppressed, both knowingly and unknowingly?

Eighth, nearly everyone remarks about people's less than full application of effort on the job, in the classroom, and elsewhere. Doesn't this reflect less than full motivation to achieve or perform?

Ninth, break-downs in communication of ideas, feelings and information occur all too frequently. Can't these often be traced to lack of interpersonal sensitivity and understanding, which in turn result in ineffective interpersonal relations that hamper communication?

Tenth, we need not look far to discover anxiety, guilt, frustration, and other forms of personal conflict. More often than not these are symptoms of individuals' inability to cope and adjust. Doesn't it also indicate that they are not performing successfully in their various roles, and are unable to solve their problems?

Eleventh, isn't valuable time being wasted—in many instances for the above reasons?

We observe many of the above problems daily, don't we? Sometimes we rather painfully see them in ourselves as well as in others. Each of these problems results in less than maximum performance, productivity, and personal or organizational success. When they are all added up, the cost to individuals, organizations, and society as a whole must be absolutely phenomenal!

To what can we attribute these problems? Is it that we do not have adequate knowledge, basic abilities, skills, and motivation? Although all of these factors must be part of the answer, we believe that they can also be attributed to inadequate training in one more group of inputs. This, in fact, is the group with which the remainder of this book will largely deal.

Group F: Personal Development and Performance Improvement Methods

Techniques for Improving Learning and Thinking Abilities

Learning and thinking abilities can be improved or further developed in nearly everyone. For example, individuals can further develop their reading (learning) abilities if they spend more time reading and studying. They can further develop thinking abilities by analyzing situations in more detail and formulating more solutions to problems.

Methods for Structuring One's Own Learning and Thinking Situations

The mental processes (or abilities) involved in learning and thinking are complex. They therefore have definite limitations no matter how well-developed an individual's mind may be. Various techniques are tools for compensating for these limitations in order to improve the learning and use of other inputs.

Table 1.3: Synergistic Use of Inputs

Methods for increasing MOTIVATION for:

THINKING - Identifying Needed Groups A-E
Inputs

Methods for Improving ABILITIES for:

LEARNING - Acquiring Groups A-E Inputs

Methods for STRUCTURING:

LEARNING – Using Group F Inputs
THINKING - Using Group F Inputs

Learning Techniques: These are applied principles of learning that should be used to structure the learning process and to channel the use of one's abilities for better processing of information into memory. Proper study habits fall into this category, but they are by no means all the applied techniques available. In addition, the "how to" of learning principles can enable a person to more easily and effectively learn more appropriate behavior patterns.

Problem-Solving Methods: A major limitation to truly effective problem solving is the mind's inability to juggle (keep track of) all the variables and facts involved in even the simplest problems. This and other limitations can be compensated for by using various methods such as the analytic approach for structuring thought processes, channeling thinking abilities, and making better use of informational inputs.

Personal Motivation Techniques

These are tried and true techniques that (a) increase personal desire and motive strength (motivation), (b) increase self-confidence and a "positive attitude," (c) channel behavior in intended directions, and (d) reduce the human inclination to satisfy immediate desires at the expense of long-term best self-interests. In short, these methods are designed to "goal-orient behavior," and are obviously of great value.

We all use some aspects of these methods. But too often we use them without realizing it and thinking about what we are doing. We can also use them improperly without knowing it. In addition, we can be using many bad habits rather than proper methods. However, by learning explicitly what we are doing right, or what we should be doing that we are not, we can more purposefully and effectively think what we are doing and how to do it better—

while we are doing it. As a matter of fact, even though we may know these methods backwards and forwards, we will not use them most effectively unless we stop to think what we are doing. (There are even techniques for increasing the probability that we will do so.) In other words, if we do not use these methods purposefully, we must be willing to accept the fact that we are not maximizing our efficiency and effectiveness in learning and thinking situations.

What We Call "Psycho-Synergy"

Learning, problem solving, motivation, and behavior adjustment activities are all interrelated and interdependent. This is because the mental processes underlying these activities are all interrelated and interdependent. For example, has it occurred to you that the more you learn and the better you learn it, the better you will solve problems? Isn't problem solving, in turn, a mode of learning? (That's because, as you gather, sort through, and make sense of information about a problem situation, you can't help identifying more possibly causal factors and facts associated with those factors.) Doesn't this mean that to improve learning abilities, one must also improve problem-solving abilities? Isn't it also true that more effective learning or problem solving depends upon increased personal motivation?

When you stop to think about it, these points become rather obvious. But what about adjustment of behavior patterns? First, we must determine what is wrong by thinking about our behavior and the traits that underlie them. Then we must formulate solutions to the problem(s). Since forming improved behavior patterns amounts to learning, would it not make sense to incorporate the use of learning principles into solutions in order to more easily and effectively bring about the desired change? Thus, behavior adjustment activity is composed of problem solving and then learning activity—all of which are improved when personal motivation is increased.

There are other equally important relationships among learning, problem solving, motivation, and behavior adjustment processes. However, the important point is that the efficiency and effectiveness of any single process or activity cannot be maximized without also increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the others. This in turn means that the methods and principles for improving activities and processes must themselves be interrelated and used together in an integrated fashion in order to maximize performance in any role.

This, in fact, is the concept of Psycho-Synergy. It is the purposeful, systematic, combined use of all inputs in an integrated manner—especially the methods of personal development and performance improvement. By learning to use these techniques together, the learning and use of all

inputs can truly become more efficient and effective. This is the same thing as saying that people's performance can only be improved to the extent that they improve their minds, what is in them, and how they use them.

Topics Covered in This Book

The following areas are covered in this one book on personal development:

- Chapter 2: (Increasing) Self-Awareness
- Chapter 3: (Increasing) Personal Motivation (Personal Goal Setting and Planning)
- Chapter 4: Problem Solving and Decision Making (How to further develop and reinforce basic abilities for thinking, and how to structure thinking situations to compensate for mental limitations)
- Chapter 5: Learning (How to further develop and reinforce basic abilities for learning, and how to structure learning situations to compensate for mental limitations)
- Chapter 6: Interpersonal Relations (How to be more sensitive to other people and behave more functionally in social situations)
- Chapter 7: Communicating Effectively
- Chapter 8: Behavior Modification (How to improve or adjust general behavior patterns and personal characteristics on one's own)
- Chapter 9: Time Management (Plus ways to increase the probability that one will stop to think what one is doing and then purposefully do it better.)
- Chapter 10: Summary and Integration (How to use all these techniques and principles together, each complementing and assuring the effectiveness and efficiency of the others)

There are many books and courses covering personal motivation, learning and memory methods, behavior modification approaches, and problem-solving and decision-making techniques. Do these separately, or even all together, present all the inputs and perspectives necessary for performance improvement?

All motivation courses are designed to “goal-orient behavior.” However, many of them are mostly a “psych-job,” and can leave a person “all wound up, but spinning his or her wheels.” Why? Because they are not also designed to “means-orient behavior”—that is, to give the individual the tools or inputs necessary for actually reaching goals—and doing so more successfully. They do not cover how to learn more quickly and effectively, how to solve problems

better, or how to learn more appropriate behavior patterns. Without these inputs many people have become frustrated when initial desire, positive attitude, and self-confidence have not been reinforced with positive feedback and satisfaction resulting from greater success. Motivation programs, then, should be followed up with training in other inputs. Usually they are not. This is doubly unfortunate, because the increased incentive to learn other inputs is wasted.

Moreover, these programs do not ordinarily discuss how motivation techniques can also be used in conjunction with time management techniques to increase the probability that a person will stop to think what he or she is doing so that he or she will do it better. Other important relationships with thinking, learning, and behavior adjustment are also seldom taught explicitly.

Problem-solving programs do not generally aim at improving mental abilities that underlie thought. Unfortunately, these abilities are taken for granted, even though they can be improved. These courses do, however, concentrate on principles of the “analytic approach”; but they often leave out other useful tools for structuring thought and compensating for mental limitations. Furthermore, they usually omit how these techniques can also be used to improve learning and behavior adjustment.

Taking these separate commercial courses or reading the various books available can be rather costly, and generally require more time and effort than many people are willing to devote on their own. Thus, few individuals expose themselves to more than one or two of these valuable inputs. Even the organizations for which they work will not train them in all of these methods for approximately the same reasons.

We can now add several observations to, and draw several conclusions from, the above discussion. First, most people do not receive comprehensive training in personal development and performance improvement during their formal education. Second, what they do learn on their own or in organizational training programs is learned rather haphazardly in bits and pieces. Third, because this is true, it is very unlikely that anyone learns how to use all the frames of reference, principles, and methods together in an integrated fashion, each increasing and assuring the effectiveness of the others. So is it any wonder that performance in all roles is less than fully effective and efficient? Is it any wonder that people can not or will not make better use of what they have learned?

There is much talk these days about “goal-orienting behavior.” What we are stressing here is that there needs to be more comprehensive, integrated training in “means-orienting behavior.” The less-emphasized methods of personal development and performance improvement are the

tools for one's own and others' further development. They are the **means** through which all inputs can be better acquired and used.

Postscript on the Future

As if the limits of our present mental capabilities are not already challenged by rapidly increasing change and uncertainty, let us consider a future-oriented rationale for further developing mental capabilities now.

Science is "Unlocking the Mind"

The mind is a frontier as vast as the heavens, and most of its depths have not yet been fully explored. However, within the last eighty years (or so), research has brought us to the very brink of transcending our present mental limitations.

Biologists and chemists have already provided us with psychoactive drugs that are capable of reducing mental disturbances such as schizophrenia. Recent genetic research has broken the molecular "codes" of RNA and DNA, the building blocks of human life and heredity. Experts are anticipating that these discoveries will lead to correction of genetic defects and control of hereditary factors such as intelligence potential—before birth. Even now researchers are beginning to test drugs that improve the electro-chemical reactions in the brain known to underlie memory, learning, and thought.

Psychologists and neurophysiologists constantly reveal complex brain structures and mechanisms. They foresee direct stimulation of brain areas with "cerebral pacemakers" to induce total recall and otherwise boost learning and thought processes. Brain wave studies are helping to identify the most effective periods during the day for learning and thought. "Biofeedback" or "operant (auto-) conditioning," now being used to condition one's control of brain wave rhythms and involuntary processes such as heartbeat and blood circulation, may eventually be used to condition one's control of processes affecting learning and thought.

The fields of electronics and engineering have contributed the complex instruments which have facilitated many of the above breakthroughs. Here is a perfect example of a "technology-technology spiral" at work. Research in these fields has given other scientists the intricate apparatus with which to simulate and study brain cell characteristics, brain structures, brain mechanisms, and learning and thought processes. In addition, these researchers have already developed some of the most widespread practical applications of mental research—teaching devices and the computer.

For now, the computer is primarily used as a peripheral system for complementing mental capabilities—an extension of the mind like paper and pencil. An analog of the mind, it can accomplish mind-like functions faster and more reliably, but in a less complex manner. Can the brain's complex structure in such a compact area be "programmed" to operate as efficiently and reliably as the computer? Perhaps, but this is many, many years away, if it happens at all. We may be on the road, however, since neurophysiologists are beginning to understand the brain's complex circuitry and processes.

The list of discoveries, innovations, and anticipated applications becomes more extensive almost daily. One need only pick up a newspaper or magazine to learn of them. The above are but a handful that signal the approach of once unimagined mental capabilities. As each technology contributes to advances in the others, discoveries and innovations will continue to multiply in a spiral fashion, soon to culminate in the "unlocking of the mind." If each of the innovations now being explored can improve mental activity by a significant factor, just think what systematic use of them all may be able to do for us! If each innovation were to enhance the effects of the others, the resulting increase in mental efficiency could feasibly be exponential (rather than just the sum of each's mental improvement factor).

But "Magic Keys" Are Not Enough

You have undoubtedly noticed that such innovations will require little effort on the part of the user. Actually, they will be improving the organic efficiency of the brain and its mechanisms. This will be analogous to building a more efficient switchboard or computer. However, a faster, more efficient computer is not much better than the old model without the use of improved or advanced programs. Even with advances in artificial intelligence, the computer must still be told what to do and how—at least for now.

Similarly, with regard to mental activity, simply introducing the use of drugs and electronic devices to increase the organic efficiency of the brain will not be enough. At least into the foreseeable future, no drug or electronic device will interconnect brain cells into the patterns or "circuits" that represent and enable perception, focus of attention, learning, thought, motor responses, and other learned abilities and behavior patterns. Thus, even as the above innovations become available over the next ten to twenty years, as I am convinced they will, advanced development of mental abilities and the use of principles and methods for improving mental activity will become absolutely necessary. If they are not employed, we may simply have minds that are capable of less than fully effective behavior at faster speeds.

Therefore, mental development and performance improvement must be regarded as a system, and must be accomplished systematically. To further develop or improve mental performance for maximum efficiency and effectiveness, all “levels” of mental activity must be improved together. These levels include the electro-chemical activity of the brain, the mental sets (patterns of interconnect brain cells) involved in mental activity, and the use of methods, principles, and disciplines discussed herein that channel and improve brain mechanisms and processes.

What Advanced Mental Power Would Mean to You

Assume for a moment that we have begun a concerted effort to train ourselves, our children, managers, scientists, and employees in advanced mental development techniques that are available to us right now. Assume, too, that during the next two decades we begin using various technological innovations. What do you think this will mean to you personally?

Essentially it will mean that you will be able to learn, think, and behave more quickly and effectively than you have ever dreamed you could. This, in turn, will enable you to keep up with the explosion of information in the areas of your special interests and role requirements. You will be able to more quickly and effectively update or improve skills related to your interests, tasks, or roles. You will be able to delve into and learn more about other specialized areas of knowledge that you presently do not have the time to pursue. With greater knowledge and improved thinking abilities, you will be more creative and better able to solve problems and make decisions. You will be more aware and knowledgeable of your own and others' behavior, and will be better able to adjust or improve it. In other words, you will be able to perform much closer to the potential that is locked in your mind. Your behavior or performance will become more successful, and you will be able to experience greater satisfaction and fulfillment.

But there is a “catch.” Although you will perform better than ever before, others will be able to do so, too. So, competition among individuals and organizations will be keener and more sophisticated than ever. Those with advanced mental capabilities will be many giant steps ahead of those without them. This is true even today.

How This Will Change Our World

There is another “catch” that will be the result of better minds. No sooner will we begin to catch up with the complexities and uncertainties of our present rates of change than this complexity will increase in an enormous quantum jump. Why? Because those in the fields of research and de-

velopment will also learn more information more quickly and effectively. They, too, will solve problems and think creatively better than ever before. Improved inventive and innovative capabilities will then give birth to tremendous technological advance in all fields, and the rate of advance and change will increase at a rate faster than we have ever experienced or imagined. Some of the results will probably include:

- * An avalanche of new or improved products, services, methods, and equipment to learn about and learn to use. This will mean increased and more technical information concerning all our roles, from career to parenthood.
- * Burgeoning companies in such fields as research, electronics, drugs, information and computer systems, traditional and developmental education, and many others. There will undoubtedly be new organizations in industries yet to be born. The tasks in all of these organizations are bound to be more technically oriented, and will require advanced education, training, and development of mental capabilities.
- * Much more rapid obsolescence of products, equipment, and methods. The new will be innovated and replace the old at a faster pace.
- * A widespread redefinition of jobs, roles, responsibilities, and positions, because each person will be able to learn more, think better, and accomplish more. Many tasks or jobs will be combined. Some jobs or positions will be completely eliminated. New roles and tasks will be established. There will be some restructuring of decision-making levels and responsibilities within organizations. Decision making may well reside in fewer individuals who are capable of assessing information provided by research staffs and computerized information systems (which would have replaced middle levels of management). Some of these phenomena are already beginning to occur in businesses in order to facilitate greater responsiveness to rapid change.
- * Employers will no longer be able to assume that, because an individual has a higher than average intelligence, a large repertoire of job-related knowledge and experience, a good academic and work record, and ambition, that he or she will necessarily perform as well as could be expected. Although performance is and will be a function of these variables, employers will have good reason to expect more from their personnel in terms of capabilities for improving learning, thought, and behavior adjustment. Hiring and training policies will reflect these expectations.

- * Much more rapid change in life styles, social needs, and customs, all of which tend to accompany technological change. Greater affluence and mobility will result in less stable interpersonal relationships. Because of increasing specialization in jobs and roles, individuals will probably be much more dependent upon each other. Social institutions and political machinery will have to be revamped and streamlined in order to meet quickly changing social needs and phenomena.
- * Not only will we be faced with information and circumstances that could change in the next moment, but we will also face a much larger number of products, methods, life styles, and so forth from which to choose. Greater uncertainty will confront everyone. Choices and decisions will be more difficult to make. For example, businesspersons will experience more difficulty in assessing capital requirements and return on investment in research, development, plant, equipment, products, and methods—each of which could be quickly outmoded soon after their introduction. Individuals and families will be hard-pressed to anticipate all the changes and forces in the environment that could completely and instantly rearrange their lives. They will have to try to answer such questions as: Which industries will grow, and which will die? What good jobs will exist in five to ten years, and where will they be located? Which career should a high school or college student pursue? Will technology or national priorities put you out of work, or will they create new opportunities for you? Will you have to acquire new knowledge and skills necessary for the new directions your employer and/or industry may be taking? Will you be able to acquire the knowledge, skills, and inputs you will need to cope with the future?

Hopefully, these few questions have prodded your serious consideration of the future, because nearly every person's and organization's plans and projections for the next ten to twenty years can be obsolete at this very moment.

Although we have certainly not covered all the bases with these few broad examples and generalizations, we must conclude that successful behavior in the future will require that we process more information at an increasingly faster rate, that we continually develop and improve upon skills and behavior patterns, and that we make many difficult decisions and solve many complex problems. The energy required will be great. The stress will also be great. Few individuals and organizations are aware that their present mental capabilities for meeting these demands are

far short of being adequate. They are not even what they could be right now.

The Paradox of Better Minds

Most estimates of future rates of change have been predicated based on the observation that advances in one technology contribute to advances in other technologies, which then contribute to other advances—and on and on in a “technology-technology spiral.” The rate of technological change increases and influences a faster rate of change in social, economic, and political aspects of our lives. The future situation just described above is quite similar to what others, including Alvin Toffler in his book *Future Shock*, have predicted. Given his observations and predictions, Toffler said that....

We must learn how to learn better, think better, and relate better.

But what most prophets of tomorrow have not taken into account is the fact that we are very close to “unlocking the mind.” More advanced mental capabilities will propel us into rates of change that are virtually unimaginable today. They will give us the future much sooner than we have previously anticipated.

More efficient, effective minds will not only bring about innovations more quickly than we have expected, but they will also discover and apply better methods for mental improvement. Using these methods we may again be able to catch up with complexity, but these same improved minds will be cranking out a new round of even greater complexity. A **“technology-mind spiral”** will develop. In fact, it has already begun. And herein lies the paradox. Complexity becomes too great to handle, so we turn to technology to improve mental capabilities so that we can cope with complexity. But, ironically, more efficient, effective minds also contribute to increased technological advances and the complexity that goes with them. Once the spiral begins, it is self-perpetuating.

You may be asking yourself if all this really must happen. Can this spiral we are beginning to experience be stopped? Can progress be contained and life be kept at least no more complicated than it is already? It is my personal opinion that it can—but will not—be stopped. The main reason is that human beings have been searching many centuries for means (and easy ones at that) for getting ahead of the other person or the other company, group, or nation. Often we challenge nature out of greed or boredom. Now we are beginning to see that the mind and our use of it may be the keys to such dreams.

The Ultimate Instrument for... Everything

After all, our minds and our use of them are our ultimate instruments for invention and innovation, and more successful performance or behavior. The mind is also the ultimate weapon for war, inasmuch as it creates the weapons, counter-weapons, strategies, and tactics of war. It can be the ultimate instrument for peace—if we use it to learn more about ourselves, to understand each other better, to tolerate each other through understanding, and to resolve our differences and common, shared problems more wisely.

Man's systematic improvement of his own mind will be similar to picking himself up by his own bootstraps and projecting himself beyond the limits of the evolutionary process. "Unlocking the mind," we believe, will represent man's most significant revolution. We are already across the threshold of the "Age of Mind," and human nature is bound to thrust us toward its promise.

Rising to the Challenge

The challenge of which we are speaking exists not only in the future, but today as well. Practical tools for purposeful personal development and performance improvement are, and always will be, the keys to greater productivity and fulfillment.

The Book's Objectives and Uses

This book is meant to be used as a comprehensive manual on personal development and performance improvement methods and principles. It is the first reference to present the basics of many valuable techniques and then relate each to the others explicitly, so that they can be used together (synergistically) in any role.

We have four main objectives:

The first is to increase the reader's awareness and appreciation of the need to teach and use these principles and methods.

The second is to give the reader a comprehensive knowledge of practical tools that can be used personally and be taught to others.

The third objective is to show how separate techniques can and should be used together purposefully, so that the reader can use them all in an integrated fashion and be able to teach others how to do likewise.

The fourth is to give those who teach and train a comprehensive, integrated reference which can be used by participants in courses and programs.

This book has been written mostly for seventh through twelfth graders, although the text will challenge some. It has also been written for their parents, teachers, and school administrators, so that they can help (a) teach the book's contents to their children and students, and (b) reinforce what the young are learning. The book can even be read and used by personnel involved in organizational training and development and by well-educated individuals who want to improve themselves and their performance in various roles.

Needless to say, having such a wide and heterogeneous audience definitely complicates writing this book for so many people with different backgrounds and levels of education. However, we have at least attempted to make it readable enough, but in-depth enough for those who need or want the detail.

We might mention that earlier editions of this material have already been used in many management development programs for industry, and in courses attended by parents, college students, faculty members, counselors, Civil Service personnel, and Army and Navy officer personnel.

The Book's Structure

The chapters in this book could be divided into three main "parts."

Chapter 2 is a general frame of reference for understanding and evaluating one's own and others' behavior. It amounts to a boiled down introductory psychology course. It ties together into general perspectives the bits and pieces that people normally learn about psychology.

More detailed and technical background information relating to Chapter 2 is covered in Appendices A, B, and C in the back of the book. They review the fundamentals of mental processes and their relationships, and, especially for parents, the process of mental development from child to adult.

Chapter 3 deals with a method for personal motivation (goal-orienting behavior).

Chapters 4 through 10 cover "means-orienting behavior." They discuss how to influence or modify specific personal characteristics and general behavior patterns. Equally as important, they explain various factors and limitations that influence learning and thinking, and then incorporate improvement principles into practical, structured methods. Finally, Chapter 10 explicitly relates all these inputs and structures them into a single, integrated perspective.

Most of the frames of reference and principles presented here are not necessarily new, although several are.

Much of what is known about the mind and its use has been discovered through years of laborious research by many learned people. What we have attempted to do here is to translate research findings and theory into practical methods. Many of these methods are tried and true. In this book, however, we will discuss them using recent perspectives on what they are, why they work, and how to use them.

Although this is a comprehensive, systematized manual, it has a rather inescapable disadvantage. In order to cover the basics of many methods, we can not say all that has ever been said about them. For this reason we have included a list of selected references at the end of the book for those who wish to read further on these subjects. Many readers will probably find, however, that what they want and need to know will be adequately presented here. However, you will not find amusing anecdotes that make some non-fiction material fun to read. For this we can only apologize, remind the reader of our serious intents, and again point out that there is much material to cover.

Tips for Teachers and Instructors

Each chapter should be read or instructed in the order presented. Chapter 3 through 10, for example, will not be as meaningful if the basic frames of reference and vocabulary of Chapter 2 have not been absorbed. Furthermore, the frames of reference and vocabulary of Chapter 2 are meant to be reinforced in all subsequent chapters through their repeated use in various contexts.

The style of presentation combines those of textbooks and somewhat lighter non-fiction materials. The loose outline form is used to enable readers to more easily structure the material in their minds as they read, and to more easily and effectively review it later. Important points are underlined to focus attention on them and to make subsequent review easier. Many tables, summaries, and diagrams are provided for these same reasons.

Each chapter has a section at the beginning called “Reviewing What You Already Know.” This is a group of questions that can be used in courses as a study guide. Course participants may be asked by the instructor to fill in the answers to these questions as they read. This is one means of assuring that the material will be read. In addition, it is a means for reinforcing what is being learned as it is being learned.

Permanent performance improvement is difficult for anyone to achieve and maintain. Programs covering the methods presented here are only capable of giving people

an initial understanding of the tools they need, and an initial appreciation of the need to use and practice them. Learning to habitually use these principles and techniques takes time and effort. Persons in organizations have an advantage over individuals who take programs completely on their own. Organizations can employ several elements to help their personnel acquire and use these inputs.

First, it is advisable to have people actually use the frames of reference, concepts, and methods during their presentation. Immediate use increases appreciation of them, helps assure that they have been learned properly, and reinforces learning. It also presents an opportunity to do what many individuals cannot or will not do: stop and take the time for some in-depth thinking about themselves, the people around them, what is going on around them, why, and what, if anything, could stand improving..

Second, if an organization is truly committed to effective child or adult development, it must be prepared to get all levels involved—particularly management. There are at least four main reasons. *First*, if all members of the class, family, or management group are using the same principles and frames of reference, each individual can help the others to habitually use what they all have learned. Mutual reinforcement among people is an important principle in itself. *Second*, it is the parent, teacher, or line manager or supervisor who is in a position to help reinforce his or her child’s, student’s, or personnel’s use of these inputs on a day-to-day basis. The teacher or instructor is not in such a position. This, in fact, indicates that the role of the teacher or instructor must evolve into training children, parents, and managers to not only further develop themselves, but their people as well. *Third*, teachers, instructors, and managers cannot help their people learn and use methods unless they themselves understand and use them. *Fourth*, there is relatively less incentive for people to learn and use various methods unless their superiors use them, are enthusiastic about their use, and expect their people to use them also.

Third, people perform more or less in terms of how they perceive that their performance is being evaluated by others. Therefore it is essential that performance appraisal of personnel (and students for that matter) include evaluation of, for example: (a) the person’s use of the methods and principles; and (b) whether or not he/she is actually using the principles and methods in this book to learn better, think better, and relate better. This means that teachers, instructors, parents, and managers should design personal development programs for and with their students, children, or personnel.

To significantly improve performance in any role, we must improve the mind, what is in it, and how it is used—all together—systematically.