

SECTION I

MIND, BODY, SPIRIT CONNECTIONS

The life you know is a thin layer of events covering a deeper reality. In the deeper reality, you are part of every event that is happening now, has ever happened, or ever will happen. In the deeper reality, you know absolutely who you are and what your purpose is. There is no confusion or conflict with any other person on earth. Your purpose in life is to help creation expand and grow. When you look at yourself, you see only love. The mystery of life isn't any of these things, however. It's how to bring them to the surface. If someone asked me how to prove that there really is a mystery of life, the simplest proof would be just this enormous separation between deep reality and everyday existence.

Deepak Chopra (2004). The Book of Secrets: Unlocking the Hidden Dimension of Your Life (p. 5).

This section includes three chapters designed to expand the philosophical underpinnings of the Modeling and Role-Modeling theory and paradigm first presented in Erickson, Tomlin, and Swain (1983), *Modeling and Role-Modeling: A Theory and Paradigm for Nursing*. Chapter 1 addresses issues related to the spiritual drive proposed in the holistic model (Erickson et al., 1983, p. 45) including linkages among the Soul, spirit, and the biophysical body, our Reason for Being, and Life Purpose.

Chapter 2 discusses energy concepts relevant to the Modeling and Role-Modeling Theory and Paradigm. The ideas that we are energy first and that all energy comes from a Unified Field are proposed. Chapter 3 discusses mind-body-spirit relations. Relations between body chemistry, human energy fields, and Universal Consciousness are also addressed.

CHAPTER 1

SEARCHING FOR LIFE PURPOSE: DISCOVERING MEANING

HELEN L. ERICKSON

He was just a little boy, perhaps five years old, when he looked at me and asked, "Where is myself?" Looking down at him, I pointed and said, "Right there; you ARE yourself." He responded, "No, that is Me. Where is my SELF?" We had recently moved, so I interpreted this as symptomatic of some nervousness about the move and where his "things" might be. Some were still in boxes waiting to be unpacked. The other possibility was he wanted to know, "What is myself?" In either case, it seemed important I ease his anxiety.

With a glint of humor in my voice, I pulled him closer, placed my palm on top of his head, and said, "This little boy, this person you call Me, this person I love, IS your self. You are right here, by me. Your toys and other things are still in boxes waiting for us to unpack them. We'll do that soon."

With great patience he gently pushed me away, looked me straight in the eye, and slowly said, "I know where my stuff is, that's not my problem. I want to know WHERE IS MY SELF?" Looking into his eyes, I remember being a bit unsettled. What in the world was he talking about? Did he really mean, "Where is my SELF?" Our little boy had asked a question I had never thought about! One I'd never discussed with anyone, and one I didn't know how to answer. Maybe I had misinterpreted his response. Certainly this 5 year-old couldn't be thinking more profound thoughts than me at my age! After all, I was the parent! So, to clarify, I asked, "What do you mean?" And again, in a statement I will never forget, he said, "I want to know where my Self is so I'll know what I'm supposed to BE when I grow up."¹

OVERVIEW

Now I know we all ask questions about our Self and our Reason for Being. Some are direct; others are more rhetorical. Some are sophisticated and difficult to understand; others are simple and to the point. I also know answers to these questions do not lie in another person's response. Each of us has to discover our own Reason for Being. Others can only help us along the way by encouraging, supporting, and sometimes guiding us.

Answers to our questions come gradually as we learn to find meaning in day-to-day life. Each new understanding offers a glimmer of who we really are, a glimmer of our Self. Over time, information derived from looking within helps us discover a pattern in our process. As we make choices, attribute meaning to experiences resulting from these choices, and think about our responses to each, themes emerge. Woven together, they create a pattern—the pattern of our life. As we contemplate the patterns we've woven across time, we can see our Life Purpose and gain awareness of why we are on earth.

This chapter is about searching for meaning *in* life and finding the meaning *of* life. It is about discovering linkages among our Soul, Spirit, and Self. It is also about recognizing our Life Purpose and determining our Reason for Being. The first part presents some philosophical considerations; the second presents an overview of my life journey.

My comments are my views on life. I know they are consistent with the work of Deepak Chopra (2000, 2004), Elizabeth Lesser (1999), Thomas Moore (1992), Gary Zukav (1989), and others. Nevertheless, I don't expect everyone to agree with them or accept them. I hope you read this chapter for enjoyment if not for clarifying your thinking. I also hope you come away with something of importance as you continue on your journey and search for meaning in your life.

SOUL-WORK

Most people believe we have a Soul. Some believe we live many life times; others believe we only live one. No matter what a person believes, there has to be a reason for our having biophysical-psychosocial bodies. I think it is because we can only do Soul-work when we are with others, in human form.

Reason for Being

It has taken me years to discover my Reason for Being and realize it is my Soul work! This discovery was a peak experience; it reoriented me and changed

my life-view! As long as I can remember, I've tried to make decisions based on "being true to my values." I used to think being true to my values was the same as "connecting with my Soul." I thought the body, which came before birth with genetic, physical, cognitive, and psychological predispositions, was influenced *after* birth by society, significant others, and life experiences. I also thought the Soul entered the body sometime before birth or shortly after. This orientation implies we start as a body, and then somehow, our Soul merges with it. Now I know I was looking at it upside down. I know there are two ways to think about the relationship between body² and Soul, and each has a significant impact. The overall question is, "Are we body or Soul first?"

Are We Body First?

One possibility is the body comes first, and sometime during the lifetime the Soul connects with it. In this scenario, the underlying assumption is that we grow as human beings, but our Soul doesn't change. So, our life work as biophysical-psychosocial beings is to grow, and someday we link up with our Soul. From this perspective, the journey of life might include a search for the Soul, but the emphasis is on the growth of the biophysical-psychosocial being. Connection with the Soul is important, but not the emphasis of the journey. Instead, we focus on biophysical, social, cognitive, and emotional growth and development.³

Or Soul First?

An alternative perspective is that our *Soul needs to grow, it has work to do*, and that is why we are here! That is, we are Soul first, and the body is selected to carry out the Soul's work! This perspective changes the way we view the world.⁴ Rather than a body that connects at some point along the way with the Soul, we are Soul first—which chooses a body so it can further its work. This suggests that, as a Soul, we may choose relationships that will enhance the Soul's work; we integrate with the body for this reason. From this perspective, we have a body so we can have interpersonal relationships, relationships necessary to enhance growth of the Soul.

If our Soul comes first, then there must be a reason for us to exist in human form. I think our reason for becoming a human being is to continue a specific aspect of our Soul-work. It is our Reason for Being!

Life Purpose

Creating Holistic Beings

Our Soul is composed of energy vibrating at a very high level. To connect with a human body, it has to transform into energy that vibrates at a much lower level. Soul energy converted to lower level vibrations becomes Spiritual energy.⁵ Spiritual energy synchronizes its vibrations with the human body so the two can integrate. The integration of biophysical, psychosocial, cognitive, and spiritual

energy fields produces a *holistic being*, unique to this lifetime, and here for a reason.

Inherent Spiritual Drive

If we are Soul first, and the body is chosen as a “home” for us to do the work of the Soul, to carry out our Reason for Being, then there must be a force that pulls the two, the Soul and the body, together. The work of this force is to fulfill our inherent need to integrate Soul and body. I think this force is the spiritual drive (see Figure 1.1).

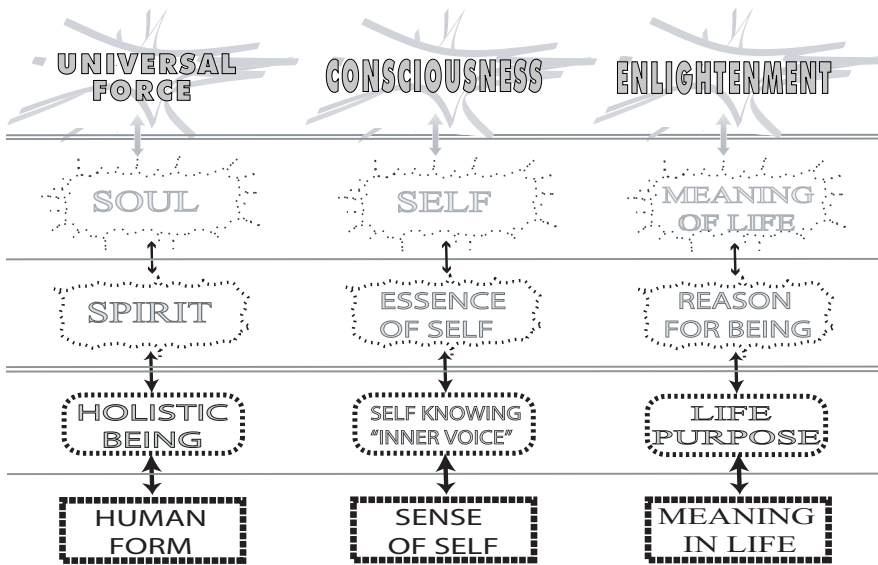


Figure 1.1 Relations among Soul, spirit, holistic being and human form.

This spiritual drive starts before our biophysical existence, continues through our lifetime, and culminates during Transformation.⁶ It is always present, and pervades our subsystems even though we may not be consciously aware of it. It inspires us to search for our Life Purpose.

That is, we become holistic beings because we have to do Soul-work within the *context of this lifetime*; this is our Life Purpose. While Life Purpose is linked to the Soul and our Reason for Being, it is different. *Our Life Purpose is the work we have to do in human form in this lifetime to enhance the Soul. Our Reason for Being is why the Soul chooses to integrate with a human body.*

We convert from Soul energy to Spiritual energy to live as holistic human beings and accomplish our Life Purpose. Spiritual energy (spirit) integrates with the human body, creating holistic human beings. Our spirit, then, is the link between our Soul and our human form. It pulls the parts together, bringing with it meaning.

Going back to the example of the five-year-old, our Son had alluded to the orientation of Soul first when he said, “No, that is Me. Where is my SELF? I want to know where my Self is so I’ll know what I’m supposed to be when I grow up.” He called it his Self. He was trying to discover his Soul’s reason for taking on a human form—his Reason for Being. He wanted to know what he should do with his life, so he could fulfill his Soul-work.

If I had been wiser at the time I might have said he needed to find his Life Purpose before he could understand his Reason for Being. While he would have been too young to understand, I might have added that he was asking the right questions, he just needed time. What I did know was that he would learn to know his Self if we facilitated him to be true to himself.

Essence of Self. It is always interesting to watch young children who are facilitated to be themselves. These children seem to have ‘free spirits.’ They know what they need and how their needs are best satisfied, providing their caregivers don’t interfere! It is as though they have an inner ‘voice’ that says, ‘You need quiet,’ or ‘You need to be nurtured,’ or ‘You need stimulation,’ and so forth.

These children often ask questions that surprise adults. Sometimes their questions seem disassociated from reality,⁷ so adults are challenged to answer them. Interestingly, because these children perceive secure affiliation, they are comfortable with their individuation.⁸ Although some people may think them ‘loners,’ they are not. They are children eager to be connected with others, but don’t have to be with someone at all times to feel safe. They often seem to transcend their biophysical bodies and grasp beauty where others fail to see it. They feel more deeply, think more creatively, and experience life more richly than others. Let me give you an example:

I remember one such free spirit, a child who did something unexpected with his blocks and toys. Perfectly content to explore his world, he always found something to do, something to play with, and something of interest. He was a happy little boy with a sense of humor. But he also noticed the beauty in a flower, a colorful sunset, or a butterfly’s flapping wings. At the age of three, he was enrolled in a playgroup so he could make friends.

Within a few weeks, the teacher commented that he seemed happy playing with other children, but also seemed happy playing alone. She wondered if he needed to be evaluated! Maybe he needed some “help” learning to get along! His mother asked if there was a problem, and the teacher said, “Not really, he just didn’t seem to need to play with others all of the time.” She just wanted to help him! The decision was to wait and see.

At the next conference, the teacher again reported he was different from the other children, but this time she said he was also more perceptive. She described, as an example, the day she came to school after experiencing a very difficult situation at home. She was upset, but tried to cover it. None of the children seemed to notice, except this one small child.

He went to her during playtime, put one hand on each side of her face and said she looked very sad and he was sorry. She explained that he did that while all the other children were running around, laughing and playing, unaware of his actions. Not only was she astounded by the depth of his perception, she was also touched by his gentleness and kindness. To think she had believed this child might possibly be unaware of how others felt!

Our Essence of Self is our spirit, derived from our Soul, and our way of Being within this lifetime. It is who we are, without the influence of others. Defined by the context of this lifetime, it does not change, but it does evolve in how it is expressed. The child described above was connected with his spirit, and minimally aware of the opinions of others. He was a ‘free spirit’; he marched to his own drum. He was aware of his needs, found ways to meet them, and interacted with others in meaningful ways. He listened to his “inner voice,” his connection with his Self.

Our Self is who we are, across time; it is the nature of our Soul.
Our Essence of Self is the nature of our spirit within a given lifetime.

We learn about our Essence of Self through spiritual experiences,⁹ which may sometimes last for only a second, and sometimes longer. In any case, we never really forget these experiences; we just file them away, often discounting their significance. They stay with us only to resurface as we search for our Life Purpose, look for our ‘Essence,’ try to find meaning in our lives, hope to understand our life choices, and wish to justify our existence. But, discovery is evasive. Just as we think we understand, the significance slips away.

I think this is normal. Most of us try too hard! We often ignore the moment-to-moment opportunities for spiritual enlightenment. We are too busy getting our work done to notice the beauty of the day, the twinkle in the eye of a child, the sadness on the face of a stranger, or even our own desire to have a quiet moment or to hear a song.

Not only do we often fail to open ourselves to personal experiences, we often fail to recognize interactions with others as important. Sometimes people say things to us, trying to express their inner feelings about who we are or how they have experienced time with us. Instead of recognizing these statements as opportunities to learn about our Self, we hear them as off-hand statements or someone else’s thoughts. They may be perceived as documentation for the self as defined by others, but not as a reflection of our “Soul-in-action” as experienced by another! As a result we lose opportunities to better understand the Essence of our Self and our Life Purpose.

Sense of Self. We also have a sense of self, formed as we interact with others. As children move from the protection of the family circle into society, responsible adults usually think they have to be socialized. That is, they have to be taught to listen to others, to pay attention to the needs of others, and to follow the rules of society.

Often these social lessons are learned at the cost of stifling the “inner voice.” This is probably because entry into the developmental stage of Initiative coincides with an expansion of a social network,¹⁰ and it is important to learn social protocols in order to develop meaningful relationships. However, it is also important to stay in touch with our inner nature, to maintain a healthy sense of affiliated-individuation. But, some children find themselves in a position where they have to sacrifice some of their individuation in order to maintain affiliation. As a result, they learn to accept the image of their self as others frame it. This type of self emerges as we take on or accept how others see us, experience us, and think of us. We have a sense of our selves formed by the opinions, values, and attitudes of others.

This sense of self, influenced by our relations with others, can change over the lifetime, depending on our relationships. On the other hand, the Essence of Self, our spiritual Self, may become obscured by the sense of self, but in reality, never changes during a lifetime.

Our sense of self is how we perceive ourselves, based on the perceptions and attitudes of others. It may be closely linked to our Essence of Self, but not necessarily.

Merging the Selves. Our vocabulary is filled with words about how we perceive others. Rarely do we indicate that a child, as in the story above, is self-actualized! Instead, such children are usually described as ‘self-involved,’ or as they grow older, ‘selfish,’ ‘self-centered’ and so forth.¹¹ The child in the story above, now a teenager, is often described as self-contained, one who doesn’t need much to be happy, one who rejects conformity for the sake of conformity, and one who marches to his own beat.

Still, that young adult’s insight into the needs of others exceeds the observations of most adults around him. He is interested in socializing with others, but is not influenced by social pressures. I think he knows how to stay tuned to his inner voice (his connection with his Self) even as he attends to the self influenced by society. The first will help him find the meaning of his life; the second will help him find meaning in his day-to-day life in socially acceptable ways. Integration of the two will help him accomplish his Life Purpose.

A String of Pearls. We might think of life as a string of single-colored pearls. The core of each pearl represents an important experience and the outer layer represents the life decision made about the experience. Some decisions are proactive; others are reactive. Some are purposeful steps taken to initiate action; others are secondary to life events we unexpectedly experience. How we interpret these experiences, how we react, and what we do with what we’ve learned, determines the color of the pearls. Some are bright and shiny; some are not.

Each pearl has significance; each adds to the one before and paves the way for the next. When examined individually, we see multiple, single-colored pearls (or life experiences), some more interesting than others, and some more fulfilling. Examined as a whole, however, a new picture emerges. A string of

unmatched pearls, previously seen as separate and unrelated to one another, suddenly reveals a pattern.

Initially viewed as individual life experiences with momentary meaning, the pearls can now be perceived differently. The relationship among the individual experiences creates a clearer picture of what is and is not meaningful in our lives. With this insight, we gain awareness of our Essence of Self, which we are able to compare with our sense of self. The closer the two match, the closer we are to understanding our Life Purpose, a precursor for finding our Reason for Being. Actualizing our Life Purpose, or Self-Actualizing, requires merging our sense of self with our Essence of Self.

The Reservoir

Some people have told me finding meaning in their lives is so evasive they cannot hope to find a purpose for their existence. They do not expect to ever really comprehend their Essence of Self or be connected with their Soul. Some are afraid to look deep within themselves, fearful of finding their inner self a disappointment, or worse. Some are afraid they will find their inner self empty, a void.

They have forgotten the Soul is our Reservoir. It contains information about who we are, what makes us unique, what drains us, what fulfills us, and what gifts we have to offer. This reminds me of a client I worked with a number of years ago.

We had worked together for several months. Initially, she had minimal positive residual and lots of negative residual.¹² She had a dreadful sense of self. During our time together, she had grown considerably, had achieved positive residual in Trust and Autonomy, and had decreased her Mistrust, Shame, and Doubt. One day she stated she was afraid. When asked to clarify, she expressed concern that “if she got any better, something bad would happen”; she was worried about what she would learn about herself. I said something to this effect: “Most of us are worried about looking too deeply into ourselves. We fear what might be there. It is like opening a can with a tight lid. We are afraid to look inside; we worry we might find worms.” She agreed, so I went on. “But, what if you look twice at those worms and discover they are really caterpillars? (Pausing) You do know caterpillars go through a wonderful growth process and come out as butterflies!” She seemed amazed to think she could discover something “good” about herself, something that would help her grow and actualize more of her Self. With that discovery, she was able to move on and into the next stage of development, Initiative.

We have an inherent drive to know our Self, and to be connected with others in fulfilling ways. We search for meaning in our lives, hoping to find a

purpose for our existence. But, sometimes we forget we can only discover our Life Purpose by finding meaning in day-to-day experiences. Sometimes our experiences are fulfilling and sometimes not. Our search takes a lifetime. Often, we look back on previous experiences, hoping to put them in context. Sometimes we are successful in this endeavor and sometimes not. Usually, persistence pays off! When we give ourselves time to discover, assimilate, and understand, our Life Purpose becomes obvious.

However, life is like a kaleidoscope: just as the picture becomes apparent, the scenery changes! And with each change, a new picture emerges. We are constantly evolving; our grasp of purpose evolves with our day-to-day experiences. Tomorrow we will be different from what we are today. We will have new experiences and find new meaning in them. Nevertheless, it is possible to discover our life journey has direction and purpose. We just have to stay true to our inner voice.

The Inner Voice

Each of us has an inner voice which speaks to us, sometimes when we ask for insight, and at other times when we least expect it. I have referred to it earlier as our connection with our Soul and the Universe. Our inner voice doesn't always deliver messages we understand, so we often ignore or pass these messages off as irrelevant thoughts.¹³

My very good friend talks about waking up to a message from her inner voice, listening to the message, acting accordingly (Kinney, 996), and talking about her experience with health care providers who discounted her "knowing." She also discusses the importance of her following through with her 'instincts'. Her story, published in 1996, carries important messages for all of us.

I think all of us yearn to be connected with our Soul, so we search for ways to reconnect! If that is the case, all we have to do is remember to listen to our inner voice.

Some 'listen' more than others. I think many people learn, when very young, to ignore their inner voice. Perhaps, this happens because children are socialized to be concerned about others, or they learn to be concerned about others to get their needs met. Since a person's inner voice cannot be experienced by others, no one else can really know what is best for us. Yet, we often listen to others rather than to our own Self. Maybe, it is because we emphasize the biophysical world and what is "real." For many people, nothing is real unless it can be experienced by one of the five sensory organs.

Nevertheless, the inner voice remains. Some talk about learning to listen to their unconscious or paying attention to their intuition.¹⁴ They are probably all talking about the same thing, which is learning to listen to messages from the Self and the Universe; messages about who we are, what we need, and what we know. These messages are drawn from our personal reservoir of knowledge as well as from a greater resource, the Universe or God. This is our Self-knowing.

Our Self-knowing comes from listening to our inner voice which draws from our Soul and the Universe.

Self-Knowing. Our inner voice is not our conscience; it is not massaged or shaped by society or social norms. It comes directly from our Soul. It draws energy (and, therefore, knowledge, or intelligence) from the Universe and imparts energy, created by our holistic being, back to the Universe. *Our inner voice is an aggregate of knowledge drawn from our Soul and knowledge drawn from the Universe.*

LIFE IS A JOURNEY

A Search for Meaning

Most of us agree Life is a Journey. However, our view of the journey varies. Some argue we simply live our lives and that is the journey. For them, wherever life takes us is where we are supposed to be. Others argue that fulfilling our Life Purpose is the journey. They believe there is a purpose to life, and we make choices and follow specific pathways in order to find it.

The position we take depends on many things, including the one posed above: which comes first, body or Soul? If the body comes first, then living our life creates the journey. We might compare this position with marking footsteps in the sand. After we have walked through the sand, we can look back and see the pathway. While the pathway did not exist until we took the steps, it is obvious in hindsight. On the other hand, if the Soul comes first, then there is a purpose for the journey! That is, we take the journey so we can fulfill our Life Purpose!

Going back to the footsteps in the sand analogy, there are multiple pathways laid out for us to choose from. Some will help us achieve our Life Purpose; others will have less impact. Nevertheless, we have a choice. For this model, we not only have multiple pathways ahead of us, but we can also look back and assess the ones we have taken, compare them with others, and determine how our choices have helped us accomplish our Life Purpose.

But, we all know pathways aren't quite so obvious most of the time. Even though the decision to take one over the other might be very important in the big picture, it is not always easy to "see" the best pathway, to know what to do, how to do it, or even why it is important. Sometimes, it seems life is just a matter of coincidence, so the choices we make are based on luck. I know. I've had those experiences. However, I now think there are no coincidences. Instead, there are "guides," if and when we are wise enough to pay attention. Through the years, I've come to trust my guides and inner voice. I've learned to follow intuitive pathways.

Intuitive Pathways

Since I've learned to trust myself, I've often chosen pathways based on intuition (or inner voice) rather than logic. Although I use logic to sort out alternatives, when logic cannot distinguish between them, intuition is the better choice. This is because my intuition connects my Reason for Being with my Life Purpose at an unconscious (or even out of conscious) level.¹⁵ When I let my intuition guide me, I've unearthed my capabilities, strengths, and interests. But, most importantly, I've learned what fulfills my life on a day-to-day basis. I've learned more about *the purpose for the journey*.

On the contrary, when I've ignored my 'intuition,' I've also learned important lessons. Frequently, the lessons are about what I *can do*, but don't want to! I've learned there are many things in life I can do well, and others may confirm my abilities, but they are not fulfilling. They do not help me fulfill my Life Purpose. (It is like creating a multicolored pearl).

In any case, life experiences have taught me what is and isn't important in my life work. It is so obvious when I look back! I have learned what I can do (or do not want to do) that will be personally satisfying. I've learned to distinguish pathways that will be fulfilling from those with less promise. I've discovered patterns in the process, and now know it is important to follow my intuition and to make logical decisions. We can only uncover the pattern when we have something for comparison. I had to see both sides of the issue before I could truly know the Essence of my Self and discover my Life Purpose. This discovery has helped me connect with my Soul and better understand my Reason for Being.

Disconnection. The need to be connected with our Soul, find meaning in our life experiences, and understand our Reason for Being is inherent in the human being. This "search" floats to our consciousness and disappears, sometimes forgotten for weeks, months, or even years. Nevertheless, it resurfaces as we go about day-to-day, living, and doing. Our inherent drive exists across time. We cannot extinguish it, but we can deny it. We have multiple opportunities, but, often failing to recognize them as spiritual experiences, we stay disconnected.

Sometimes, these opportunities (for spiritual experiences) come as joyous events and at other times, as tragedies. Sometimes, they are just moments in time when someone asks something, when we make eye contact with another person, or become connected with all that is around us: the beauty of the sky, trees, and flowers. Sometimes we recognize these opportunities for what they are—opportunities to resonate with our Soul. But, often they seem fleeting and therefore insignificant, and so we move on.

And then there are times when we choose to ignore an experience because *the meaning of the experience* is inconsistent with how we think of ourselves. That is, when the implications of some experiences seem to be in conflict with our ego, our sense of who we are, or what we want to be. When this happens, we tend to disconnect or ignore our Self and instead, accept *versions of our self* imposed by others, our sense of self. We may deepen our *understanding of how others see*

us, but in doing so, we may lose touch with our Self. When we do this, we have trouble defining our Life Purpose.

I now believe our journey starts with our Soul, continues through this lifetime, and culminates when we transform.¹⁶ We need to find meaning in day-to-day events so we can discover our life patterns. When we do this, our Life Purpose presents itself and our Reason for Being is obvious. The following paragraphs describe some of my life experiences and their outcomes. I hope you enjoy my story.

Life is a journey. There are many pathways to choose from, each with an opportunity for learning. What we do on the journey determines the meaning we derive from the experiences.

Learning to Learn

I grew up in a small mid-western town, in a middle-income family. My parents worked hard to provide a home and teach us important life lessons. I learned hard work pays, goal setting is important, breaking tasks into small parts helps one achieve success, and goal achievement requires staying focused. I also learned about myself as a human being. Although shy as a child, I saw my “real self” emerge when I focused on others. I had something to offer, but first, I had to realize my own worth.

One day, when I was 5 or 6 years old, a girl in my school told me I was “poor” because my mother made my clothes and because we didn’t live in town! I didn’t understand her, but knew it was deprecating, so I told my mother. She told me, “Don’t worry about that. Just know that you are just as good as anyone else, but no better!” She went on to say what we wear and where we live are not nearly as important as how we act and think about ourselves and others. Her advice rings in my ears to this day. It prepared me for nursing.

I first *knew I would be a nurse* when I was about 5 years old. Never questioning the decision, I practiced ‘nursing’ on my sisters, dolls, and animals during childhood, took necessary courses in high school, and proclaimed I would attend nursing school. While most of my friends talked about getting married or finding jobs, these distractions were not on my mind. If anyone had asked me *why* I wanted to be a nurse, I don’t know what I would have said. I just knew.

I loved nursing school;¹⁷ I seemed to find my life purpose. I discovered aspects of myself and my abilities to help people heal in multiple ways. One memory stands out.

I had been in nursing school about 3 months when my instructor decided I needed to learn to provide “total care” for a comatose patient. I was assigned to Mrs. Cook, an elderly lady dying of cancer. During was not taking nourishment, had a catheter, and was expected to die any time. She needed a full bed bath and total care. I asked about her family and was told no one came to see her.

Immediately after report, I went to the treatment room, prepared my “treatment tray” and started toward her room. Halfway down the hall, I could hear her moaning. Entering her room, I called her by name, explained what I was going to do and did it. She moaned the entire time. When I finished, she was still moaning—a sad, lonely sound of grief and agony. Leaving her room, I, too, felt sad. I knew I had given her good physical care, but it seemed so empty. So I went to her, took her hand gently, and stroked it. Once again, I called her name and told her we had the same last name since my maiden name was Cook. I told her I was with her and would be back to see her several times that day. Stroking her forehead and hair, I quietly hummed ‘Amazing Grace’. Much to my amazement, she squeezed my hand slightly and stopped moaning.

Throughout the morning, she was very quiet. All the nurses on duty stopped to see if she was okay and always came out of her room surprised that she was still breathing, but quietly and without suffering. The wrinkles were gone from her forehead, and she seemed to be at peace. Later that morning, I went back to check her vitals. When I called her name and told her I was there, she reached for me. I took her hand, and she took one last breath. She looked so peaceful as she passed that it was hard to believe she was the same lady I had seen only a few hours earlier.

That was my first experience with Transformation. (Although we used to call it dying, I now know better.) I had begun to learn the joy of nurturing growth. A simple act of kindness, a simple expression of compassion, and Mrs. Cook was able to move on; she was able to transform. Death was not the issue. Being able to move on with peace and tranquility was *what was* important.

That experience taught me many things about nurturing growth and about myself. I had started to learn that I could learn about previously unknown things! This was an important step in my evolution. However, sometimes the most important things we learn, we don’t understand until much later. While we accumulate the “pearls,” we don’t always see the pattern! Therefore, we ignore new information. Much of what I learned through this experience I stashed away in the back of my mind until much later in life.

Being Nurtured

I met Lance, my husband-to-be, about one year before I finished nursing school. When his parents attended a conference at a nearby city, Lance arranged for me to meet them. I’ve written elsewhere (Erickson, 1988) about that meeting, so I won’t repeat it. It was an experience which altered my way of thinking about learning, about my potential, and myself.

Prior to that meeting, I had been an avid learner of any and all information regarding nursing and medicine. But I had been misguided. I believed that what was written in books, taught and tested in classes, and prescribed in the clinical laboratory was the *right* way to think about people, their health and sickness, and

their lives in general. I didn't understand that people live in a *context*, which is the key to understanding their world views.

Seeding¹⁸

My father-in-law, Milton Erickson, taught me that people live in a context. Subtly, he helped me learn new ways of thinking about human nature, of knowing myself, and of relating to others. More importantly, he helped me learn to fully appreciate the context of a person's life. He said to understand another human being, it is necessary to step into their world, to model their world before trying to plan interventions. All people have social roles, he said, which they wish to fulfill. It is our job, as health professionals, to help them. We do this by nurturing growth and facilitating development. We do it by helping them discover themselves.¹⁹

He never seemed to "teach" me anything; he simply helped me learn what I was eager to know. I will always be grateful to him for nurturing my curiosity, my need to discover my Self, and become what I had a natural propensity to be. He seeded possibilities and then nurtured my natural tendencies to grow. He was instrumental in my future learning²⁰.

Learning to Know

I married Lance; we had children and moved several times. Each step gave me new opportunities to experience life from a different perspective and explore how my values interfaced with my life experiences. By the time I was in my thirties, I had learned my view of nursing was a little different from some of my colleagues. I had *discovered* our role was to facilitate growth and healing in others, not fix or control their physical health.²¹ I knew this meant paying attention to how the mind and body worked together, rather than just focusing on the subsystems.²²

Practicing

During the late 1960s and early 1970s everyone talked about stress. Stress was the big thing! Friedman and Rosenman (1975) had been studying the behavior of persons with coronary heart disease and had concluded that a primary predisposing factor was stress. They defined a pattern of behavior they called Type A Behavior. People who had Type A Behavior were highly stressed and considered high risk for myocardial infarcts. While I totally agreed with this view, I soon decided the key issue for nurses was not whether someone was stressed or not, but how well the person could handle stress.²³

I also knew understanding one's ability to handle stress was the basis for assisting patients in their Self-care. Furthermore, to understand Self-care, we had to understand the person's view of the world. How they experienced life, what was important to them, what helped them, and what troubled them. For a number of years, I practiced this philosophy as a nurse, mother, friend, and member of society. But, I rarely shared it,²⁴ never wrote about it, and was unwilling to change it! I knew what I knew, and vowed to be true to what I believed.

Priorities

I had determined that my family was my priority. Although I continued to work part-time as a nurse, nurturing growth in my family seemed to be my purpose. My children needed me to stay focused on them, and to be their mother—to nurture them so they could discover their true nature. My husband also needed support and care; he, too, was building a career and needed a respite from the stress of life.

New Pathways

And then a series of events occurred, which built on previous life experiences and opened new horizons. Another pathway in the sand. At the time they seemed insignificant, but as I look back, I know we have numerous points in our journey where our path intersects with the pathways of others. When this happens, we make decisions about what happens next. Sometimes these choices seem incidental, so we walk parallel pathways until something else changes the course of our journey.

Parallel Pathways

My husband introduced me to a new colleague and his wife. While we had four children at the time, they were newly married and just finishing graduate school. His wife (Mary Ann Swain) had accepted her first professional position in the Research Center at the University of Michigan (U of M) School of Nursing. I was a staff nurse at U of M's Medical Center. She was eager to learn about nursing, and I was willing to share my version. We became fast friends immediately. Soon, Mary Ann an avid learner, began to ask why others didn't share my view of nursing.²⁵ I told her I believed they retained a medical model of nursing and I didn't support that view.

Resistance to Direction. She repeatedly encouraged me to go back to school, suggesting nursing needed me. I thought this was silly. I *was* nursing, I was at the bedside, I was attending to people, and *they* needed me. I knew nurses I worked with didn't like what I had to say and didn't want me to 'preach' to them. So, I scoffed at her suggestions of returning to school.

Reframing.²⁶ One day, she said, "If you could only find some way to help nurses think like you, you'd make an important contribution." Never before had I even considered helping nurses think like me! My view of nursing was based on a belief system about people and life—I had always thought of that as a way to feel about life and nursing. Besides, whenever I talked about my views, nurses often seemed puzzled or put out. I had decided the best thing to do was to keep quiet and do my own thing. After all, nursing was between my patients and me, not between my colleagues and me!

Confirmation. Not long after that exchange, a life changing experience at work built on what Mary Ann had said.²⁷ Discussing this experience with my husband, I described what was wrong with the way a client had been treated, and

shared my frustration, anger, sadness, and helplessness. I decided I needed to quit nursing. He confirmed my feelings, reassuring me that such an experience would certainly change how a person thought about life, but insisted that nursing needed me and, furthermore, I probably needed nursing! We concluded that I should go back to school in order to learn to articulate what I knew to be true, how I thought about nursing, and how to practice nursing from my view. This was a big decision. We had four young children, he had just completed his Ph.D., and we were trying desperately to build stability for our children. The decision for me to return to school had many implications for us as a young family. Nevertheless, we both knew it was the “right” one.

Merging Paths

So, I started on a new pathway, expecting a BSN would help me articulate what I knew. It didn't take long to realize the BSN was a way to legitimize what I knew, but it did not give me ‘the right’ to talk about nursing differently from others! To do this, I needed to have a Master's degree. And so the next decision was made, and with it a new colleague was found.

I had decided, at this point, that a degree in Medical-Surgical (Med-Surg) Nursing was appropriate for me, but U of M organized their graduate programs around medical specialties at that time. I approached the chair of the Med-Surg area, explained my belief system, and asked permission to combine the Med-Surg program with the Psychiatric Nursing program, so I could study the ‘whole person’. My request was initially denied. However, after seeking approval from the Chair of the Psychiatric Nursing program, I was granted permission to combine the programs. Naturally, this made me the ‘odd duck;’ I didn't really fit in either program. The other students were either true Med-Surg students or Psych students! Nearly all of them seemed confused about my need to know about mind-body relations! Only one other Medical-Surgical graduate student, Evelyn Tomlin, understood what I was talking about.

Within a few weeks of our first semester, Evelyn also combined her programs. Now I had three other people who believed in what I was trying to articulate—my husband, Mary Ann Swain and Evelyn Tomlin. It is amazing what happens when someone else believes in you, encourages you to “follow your bliss” or “think outside the box.”

Expanding Horizons

Evelyn and I graduated in 1976. My master's thesis was the first articulation of the APAM model (Erickson, 1976; Erickson & Swain, 1982; Erickson et al., 1983). Mary Ann invited me to participate with her and Susan Steckel in a research study, proposing two models that would be considered as ways of dealing with hypertension. Susan was interested in contracting and I was interested in applying the concepts I had derived from my clinical practice; ideas that were soon labeled as Modeling and Role-Modeling concepts. I requested Evelyn's participation and Mary Ann agreed. A number of us worked closely

together, studying the effects of our nursing models on the well-being of our clients. Within a few years, I was being asked to do guest lectures and then keynotes, and to describe my model of nursing. I began to travel within and outside Michigan.

Challenges

In the early 1980's, Evelyn Tomlin was asked to author a chapter in *Introduction to Person-Centered Nursing* (Lindberg, Hunter, & Kruszewski, 1983) entitled 'Nursing Concepts of Self-Care'. She briefly mentioned Orem and Kinlein²⁸ and then expanded on what she called Helen Erickson's Concept of Self-Care (pp. 54-57). She provided a preliminary overview to what would later become *Modeling and Role-Modeling*.

With each invited lecture, I became more uncomfortable with a single question and comment that seemed to end the Question/Answer portion of the presentation: "Where is this written? I want to read more about it!" My discomfort grew; my colleagues were saying they wanted to learn more about this way of thinking! But, I was so busy with work, school, and my family it seemed impossible to take time off to write! Evelyn insisted; it had to be done! She and Mary Ann wanted to help. Now the project seemed less formidable.

Self-care Action

The decision was made. A book would be written. It was time to reach down deep, to explore my reservoir, and put into words what *I* knew to be true about people and nursing. Once the decision was made to start on one more pathway, to speak out, the words simply flowed. Within a few months, a book was written and published. A new theory and paradigm were born; the ideas took on a life of their own.

In the interim, my children were growing and becoming independent. While they still needed me, the demands had changed slightly. My world had expanded. While I still focused on nurturing growth in my family, my family had expanded! Now, nurses and colleagues were included. My Reason for Being seemed to be to nurture growth in others, including my family!

Self-Actualizing

When we wrote, *Modeling and Role-Modeling (MRM): A Theory and Paradigm for Nursing* (1983), we decided some concepts were so important they had to be presented in figure form: Adaptation, Health, Holism, Affiliated-Individuation, Self-care, Nurturance, Facilitation, and Unconditional Acceptance. (Erickson et al., 1983) Articulation of these concepts served as a description of my view of nursing (see Figure 1.2). Relations among them created a theory. Application of the theory created a paradigm. Repeatedly, we stated that a model of the client's worldview is the base for applying these concepts and our job is to nurture growth and facilitate development.

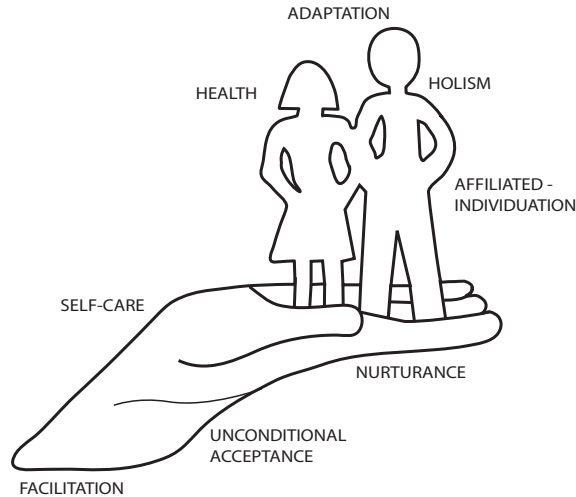


Figure 1.2 Major concepts in MRM theory and paradigm. Reproduced with permission, *Modeling and Role-Modeling: A Nursing Theory and Paradigm*, 1983, EST Co: TX.

Self-Care and Holism

Self-Care. Two concepts presented in MRM were Self-Care and Holism. We argued that Self-care was not the ability to manage activities of daily life, but the ability to take care of oneself in multiple ways—ways that facilitate holistic growth and development. We proposed that people know what they need, but don't always have the *resources* to bring their “knowledge” to conscious awareness or to articulate it. People also don't always have the *resources* to take the *action* necessary to satisfy their needs. While we have an inherent drive toward Self-actualization, we often have difficulty getting in touch with what we know about our Self and exploring what we know, *but aren't aware we know!*

Holism. We also talked about holism as a factor in our ability to connect with our Self. We argued that human beings are holistic with mind, body, and spirit interactions that influence how we think about ourselves and affect our well-being (see Figure 1.3).

A person is not just a head and a body, a thinking mind without feelings, or physiological needs...the human is a biophysical, psychosocial, spiritual being...the human is a holistic, multisystem being...When needs are not met within one subsystem (to some significant extent and from the person's perspective), a potential exists for the individual to draw energy from another subsystem...to maintain himself...As a result, individuals have a propensity to become physically sick when experiencing psychosocial stressors or emotionally distressed when experiencing biophysical stressors (Erickson et al., 1983, p. 55).

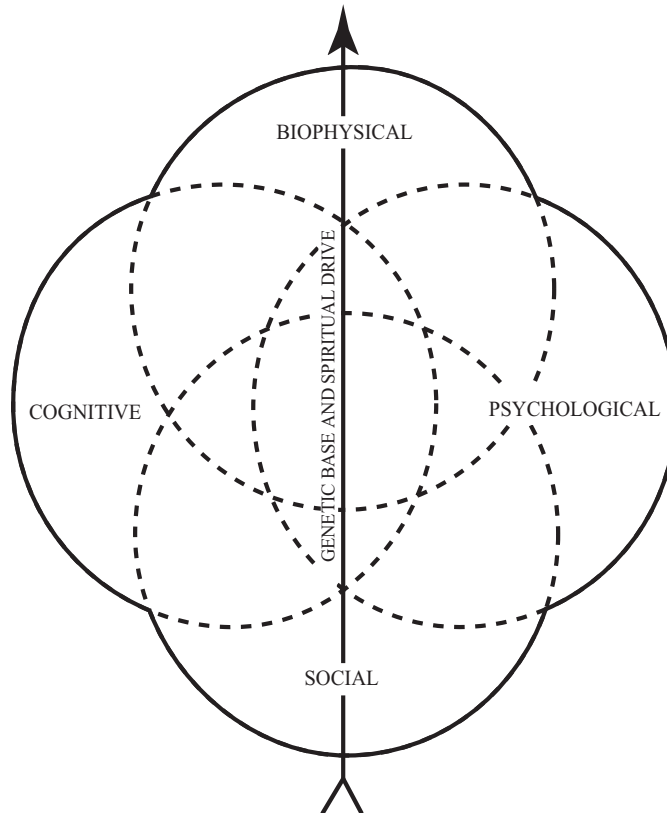


Figure 1.3 Holism as defined in the MRM nursing theory and paradigm. Reproduced with permission, *Modeling and Role Modeling: A Nursing Theory and Paradigm*, 1983, EST Co: TX.

Self-Knowledge. Throughout our work we indicated Holism and Self-care were intertwined. The body and mind were inseparable; what affects one affects the other. We emphasized an individual's perspective, beliefs, and expectations as the key to understanding biophysical observations. The implications were that an individual's "knowledge" about Self was invaluable in understanding what would help that person grow.

Spiritual Drive. Our figure (see Figure 1.3) depicting Holism showed an inherent spiritual drive permeating all aspects of the human being. This model was purposefully chosen over a model that indicated the spirit was another subsystem of the person, interacting equally with all others. I personally believed our spiritual drive is greater than any of the subsystems (or drives related to them) and has a bigger influence on our total well-being. This view differed from some of the other nursing depictions of holism at that time. I believed it essential we be clear about this difference.²⁹ I wanted to be certain a model of the holistic person illustrated the difference between the subsystems and the spiritual drive, and showed the spiritual drive expand beyond the confines of the subsystems. It was important to show the spiritual drive drew from the Universe and gave back to the Universe, and permeated all the subsystems, influencing their processes. At the

time, I did not know the importance of this decision, but I did know it had to be! I could not agree with any other model of holism.

Only with time have I been able to see the larger picture. While the entire original book was written to help nurses comprehend the importance of viewing life from another person's perspective, several key decisions were made, helping me discover my own purpose in life. I will address two of these decisions. The first was to specify Aims of Nursing and the second was to write the last chapter, "What Do You Need to Practice Nursing?"

Aims of Nursing

Prior to MRM, nursing theorists talked about Goals of Nursing, but did not differentiate between Aims and Goals of Nursing, perhaps because nurses focused on what we do *to or for* our patients or clients. Some believed the process was more important than the outcome and some believed the outcome was more important. Others agreed the process might well predict the outcome, but couldn't distinguish between the two. Most considered the skills, techniques, and strategies learned in nursing school and polished with experience, the essence of nursing. While I recognized the importance of such knowledge, I thought our *intention*, was more important than our "bag of skills." Our *intention* determines how we interact with our clients, which affects their holistic well-being.

It was very important to me that we clearly express the difference between intent and goals. Goals are specified in respect to what a patient can do within a given time, while intent focuses on our own motivation as we help people meet their goals. Since MRM is about helping people grow, develop, heal, and self-actualize, I believed *the intent had to be connected with the outcome*.

The aims gave us direction for the process—what we needed to think about as we aspired for the outcome. The goals gave us ways to assess our relationship with our client as we worked toward our goals. We specified five aims of nursing: build trust, promote client's positive orientation, promote client's control, affirm and promote client's strengths, and set mutual goals that are health directed (p.170). The relationship between these Intervention Aims, the Principles of MRM, and the Intervention Goals are described in the original book (pp. 160-222).

What was not specified was the relationship between the Aims and finding one's Self. Interestingly, one might argue it was implied! For example, our Aim, *Promote client's positive orientation* was linked to our Intervention Goal, *Facilitate a self-projection that is futuristic and positive*. The related Principle was that *Affiliated-Individuation is contingent on the individual perceiving that he or she is an acceptable, respectable, and worthwhile human being*.

In our discussion on Promoting Positive Orientation (pp.186-195) we discussed issues related to this aim and possible solutions. For example, we suggested nurses might use statements such as "Thank you for being you," "I enjoy our interactions," or "The world is a better place to be in just because you have been here." We went on to state:

The intervention, 'Thank you for being you,' is sometimes followed by the client's asking the question, 'What's so great about me?'...Some answers we have found useful have related to the client's model and strengths. 'Your gentleness makes it a nice world to live in.' 'Your art adds beauty to the world.' 'Your smile brightens my day.' 'Your courage gives me strength.' 'Your love for life is delightful.' 'You are! That makes you special and important to me' (p.187).

We stated our goal was to help people feel they are acceptable, respectable, and worthwhile human beings. We might have added that these are the attributes of a self-actualized person—a person who “dares to listen to himself, his own self,...” (Maslow, 1982, p. 46).

Nurturing Growth in Nurses

As the work approached completion, I realized every time I talked about this way of thinking, someone would ask a simple question: “What do I need to do to practice this kind of nursing?” They didn't want to know more about the theory. They wanted to know how to move outside the box. How to think differently. How to grow and have confidence needed to be more of what they want to be. And so, the last chapter in our book was written overnight! I wanted to encourage nurses to have a foundation for understanding themselves and with that foundation search within themselves for answers. We stated:

When we talk about a philosophy and a belief system...we mean an in-depth searching in your heart, mind, and soul of what you really believe...As you work on this task, you will want to remember that you are human and that you will probably change some of your beliefs over time. Perhaps, you won't change the essence of your philosophy, but you may change the way you operationalize it...To hold different views does not mean you devalue yourself for the views you held five years ago. Those changes directly reflect that you, like all other humans, have an innate need to know, to grow and to develop. Rejoice in your development and in what lies ahead (pp. 225-226).

Later we said: “Believe in yourself....You are an essential, valued human being....We believe in you; believe in yourself” (p. 231). It was important to help nurses discover their gift to their clients—their gift of themselves. While their purpose in life may not be to nurture growth in others, many of them had a “calling” to be a nurse and many were drawn to our way of thinking about nursing. They just needed to be nurtured, so they could be more of what they had a natural propensity to Be. Nurturing growth in these nurses was another way for me to fulfill my Reason for Being!

What's In a Name?

When it was time to title the book we'd just written, several ideas were discussed, including "Erickson's Self-Care as presented in Lindberg, Hunter and Kruszewski" (1983). I vetoed all possibilities, except Modeling and Role-Modeling. I wanted to be sure readers remembered the ideas, not the conceivers of the ideas! In my view, it all came down to truly believing that nurses help people uncover their sense of self and discover their Essence of Self, a Self that is spiritually-based and has an inherent drive toward Self-actualizing.³⁰ We do that by stepping into their world, trying to understand the implications,³¹ and then facilitate them to fulfill their desired life roles. This helps people fulfill their Life Purpose; and when we fulfill our Life Purpose, we find Meaning.

I had learned as a young nurse that *being with* people helped them connect spirit with body, so they could articulate what they needed in order to grow and heal. I had also learned a spiritual connection gave life meaning, and often, with meaning came healing. The title for our work was determined; it would be "Modeling and Role-Modeling."

Higher Integration

My String of Pearls

My journey over these past 20 some years has led me to believe we have an inherent need (or motivation) to connect our Soul with our biophysical-psychosocial being. This is what our spiritual drive does—it pulls us toward *Integration* of body, mind, and Soul. It draws from the Universe (where all intelligence exists) bringing Universal Energy³² to our subsystems. *This facilitates our ongoing need to find meaning in our life experiences. It starts before birth and continues throughout the lifespan. I call this spiritual enlightenment.* Spiritual enlightenment helps us uncover our Reason for Being or our Soul-work for this lifetime. When we encounter a conflict between needs, so that satisfaction of one type of need mandates sacrifice of another, there is greater harm done when Soul-related needs are unmet than when biopsychosocial needs are unmet. It is more devastating, in the long run, to lose sight of the Soul than it is to be hungry! I learned this a number of years ago, when I had the privilege of speaking with Viktor Frankl (1984).

A Self-Actualized Man

Viktor Frankl talked about his experiences as a concentration-camp prisoner. Describing the horror of the experience, including the deaths of many of his family, friends, and neighbors, he insisted he did not hold animosity toward those who selected who should die, or toward the executioners. He stated, instead, that these experiences and losses were part of his journey. He did not deny the difficulty of the losses, or the pain and suffering of the journey, and said he had been able to make meaning of the experiences, even as he was having them. He

went on to say he “knew” they were a part of his life journey, and they had helped him to fully understand the Meaning of Life.

Man's search for meaning is the primary motivation in his life and not a 'secondary rationalization' of instinctual drives. This meaning is unique and specific in that it must and can be fulfilled by him alone; only then does it achieve a significance which will satisfy his own will to meaning...Man...is able to live and even to die for the sake of his ideals and values (Viktor Frankl, 1984, p. 121).

I have often thought of his attitude and demeanor. We were at a conference where world-famous icons were speaking. There was a crowd of nearly 8000 people. Everyone wanted to hear him talk, catch a glimpse of his face, or just be in the same room as he. Yet, he was untouched by all this attention. Patient, kind, and respectful of questions sent his way, he was also unflappable. Some would challenge him saying they didn't believe anyone could possibly live through such an experience and not have animosity toward those who caused the suffering. He simply responded with a patient discussion about learning to *find meaning in our life experiences, no matter how difficult.*

He had transcended experiences that would have driven many of us to giving up or left us with the strength to do little more than survive. He had not only survived; he had thrived. He had sought meaning from his experience rather than trying to make the experience have a purpose. Because he was able to find meaning in the moment, meaning in the experience, he was able to grow and help us grow. He clearly knew the difference between finding meaning in life and knowing the Meaning of Life.

Frankl's life and life-work are a testimony to possibility. He exemplified Being. I suspect he knew his Reason for Being. He knew how to stay in touch with his Soul-work, and allow others to travel their pathways in their own time. He was a truly Self-Actualized man.

My Life Purpose

As I reflect on my writing and think about numerous life experiences, some reported here, some not, I realize a few concepts repeatedly emerge. First, Nurturance, Facilitation, and Unconditional Acceptance have always been key words in my view of nursing. Over and over, I have made life decisions (sometimes not popular with significant others) based on a simple truth. *It is more important to be than it is to do.* Doing is important, I grant you that! But, being is more important. Key concepts in holistic nursing such as Centering, Empathy, Unconditional Acceptance, Facilitating and Nurturing, Affiliated-Individuation, Mutuality (and others) all require Being. They all require that we think, feel, and act from our spirit, that we are present spiritually as well as physically, emotionally, cognitively, and socially. *Doing without Being is empty, it lacks Presence.* Being can be Doing, because Presence can help people feel cared

about, mobilize their resources, and grow. These things can happen without us taking any other actions other than to Be.

To Be is to emanate spiritual energy; Being is to be spiritually present; to Become is to achieve maximum integration of body, mind, and Soul.

Second, I believe we *need* to be connected with others (or other energy sources) as well as be individuated, that is, we need to experience affiliated-individuation. I don't think we can have affiliated-individuation without Being. Being mandates we stay connected with our Self even as we connect with another. This is a type of transcendence of the physical environment. Transcendence can happen whenever we become fully connected: Self with another, Self with Environment, or Self with a Higher Power.

Reflection on these beliefs and my "string of pearls" has led me to conclude that my Life Purpose is to nurture growth in others. When I first thought about this, it seemed so insignificant I decided an entire life could not be about that. Clearly, there must be something more important, something more profound! However, looking back on my life, revisiting my "string of pearls," attaching meaning to significant experiences and memories, I've concluded that *nurturing growth is tantamount to facilitating self-actualization or finding-of-Self* in others. I have decided this is a worthy purpose for living.

I am satisfied this is my Life Purpose; it is my Soul-work. My Reason for Being is to learn that Unconditional Acceptance of others precedes nurturing growth. With this in my mind, I now understand the Meaning *of* my life.

When we find meaning in our daily life, we catch a glimmer of our Life Purpose. Frequent "glimmers" help us view the bigger picture and capture the Cosmic View. With this comes an understanding of our Reason for Being. When we are able to capture the Cosmic View and understand the implications, we can make Meaning of our Lives. We know why we are here and what we need to do to continue our Soul-work.

My Gift to You

Discovering one's Reason for Being and Life Purpose does not happen overnight. It comes with years of introspection, years of searching for meaning in experiences sometimes too painful to think about, sometimes too trivial to be important, and at other times, too joyous to have deep meaning. It is a personal, private experience, which happens as you interact with those you love, those you don't like, and those you don't know. It is not a metamorphosis, but more of an unfolding. It happens when you listen to your inner voice and be true to your Self. It doesn't come with a big ah-h-h, but with a gentle seeping of nourishment into your Soul until it awakens with new knowledge.

As I found meaning in my individual experiences, I was able to view my Life Purpose. As I did this, I was freed to become more completely who I was meant to be, and in doing so, I found my Reason for Being and the Meaning of my Life.

Which Gem Do You Wish to Pass On?

You have read about many ideas in this chapter and will read more in the following chapters. Some ideas you will enjoy and embrace. Others you will put aside. Some you will fully disagree with. This is an important part of the process—learning what is you and what is not. Learning where you interface with others and where you don't. In any and all cases, it is my hope that you discover your Self and come to know the beauty of that discovery. This is my hope for you. My gift to you is this: I know the True You, your Self, is quite remarkable; it has many treasures to be shared with others, and as you discover those gems—those parts of your Self that are you and only you—you will pass them on. Only as you pass them on will they continue to grow. As they grow, they will light the path for others.

The True You, your *Self*, serves as a glowing light for others as they take their journey.

ENDNOTES

¹ As a young unknowing mother, now fully unsettled, but eager to ensure he didn't need to worry about such things at his age, that he had a whole lifetime ahead of him, I tried to respond to the *reason he gave for asking the question, not the question itself*. I automatically changed the meaning of his question! I told him he had lots of time to decide what to *do* with his life, that he was just a little boy and someday when he was much older, he would know what he wanted to *do*, but first he had to go to school and then college. I assured him he'd know what to do when he finished college, but he didn't need to worry about that now. Although he accepted my response, he seemed a little disappointed. I hadn't given him any new information. I hadn't responded to his question. I'd just reaffirmed he needed to go to college and then assured him he'd know what to do. I didn't tell him that we can't *find* our Self; we have to *discover it!* Nor did I tell him *discovery of Self is a gradual process, one he had already initiated, but one that would take a lifetime.*

He'd asked a question about how to *create a fulfilling life*, and I'd responded that he had to *do things* first, but I didn't tell him that by doing, he would learn about himself. I didn't tell him life is a process of making *choices, living experiences* (that result from the choices), and *attributing significance to the experiences*. I didn't tell him *we could only discover our Life Purpose by finding meaning in our life experiences*. He'd asked about finding the Essence of his Self, so he would know how to BE, how to have a fulfilling life—to do his *Soul-work*—and I had reassured him he had to go to college first. No wonder he was disappointed!

At some level, our son understood *life is a journey with optional pathways*. He knew we have to make decisions about which path to take, and that our decisions influence what happens next. My response may have diverted his attention and sent him down an alternative path for a period of time. I may have encouraged him to put aside his yearning to “find his Self.” But true to human nature, he, just like everyone else, would revitalize his search as he traveled the pathways of life.

² I still believe our biophysical, psychological, cognitive predispositions are genetic.

³ A natural question to ask when we view life like this is where does the Soul come from? And how does it know it has the right body?

⁴ For example, I recently talked with a young acquaintance, who said she was going to her parents' home for the Christmas holidays. Her tone of voice was rather reserved, so I asked her if she looked forward to it. She replied she enjoyed seeing everyone, but it didn't last long, so she didn't look forward to their time together. She then stated her family had never accepted her. They criticized how she looked, acted, thought, and so forth. She said she either had to go into her "shell" or defend herself the entire time.

When I asked her if she had any idea why she had chosen her mother, she was taken aback, and said she never thought she had any choice; she was just born and that was all there was to it. I asked her what would happen if she discovered she had chosen her mother because she needed to help her mother learn something important or she had something important to learn from her mother? What if she was here to help her mother learn to have fun? She immediately teared up, proceeded to tell me how her mother and sister had recently told her they wished they were more like her, that they envied her ability to have fun and be happy.

A few days later she talked about going home for the holidays, and taking a new game with her. She said she planned on staying for three days and just having fun. She said she had decided maybe she was here to help her mother, and all these years she had thought her mother was supposed to be here to help her! I suggested maybe it was a bit of both, and that left the door open for many possibilities.

⁵ See Chapter 2. Soul energy vibrates at a level too high for it to connect with the human body, therefore, some of it needs to separate into energy that vibrates at a lower level. This is Spiritual energy.

⁶ See Chapter 5, Developmental Process, for a discussion about Transformation, the final stage of human development in a given lifetime.

⁷ Too often our reality is about doing and thinking what others say is okay or is important! Reality, usually, does not mean thinking outside the box. It means thinking, talking, and acting within the norms of society, as others would want us to be, or as others will accept us.

⁸ If this is a new word for you, I recommend you visit the original MRM book and read the sections discussing affiliated-individuation. Then, read Chapters 6 and 7 in this book.

⁹ When we have fulfilling experiences in our lives, we energize our spirit, transcend the human body, and connect with our Soul. Transcending is a dynamic, ongoing, ebb and flow of energy, with high and low points of understanding. It happens over a few seconds or minutes in time. It does not last long, but when it happens, it helps us understand our Self in new ways. We are able to connect with our Self, to experience Self-actualizing.

¹⁰ *Keep in mind a social network is not the same as a social support system!* (Erickson et al., 1983, pp. 125-132).

¹¹ When I reviewed words in the Random House Dictionary that started with self (e.g., self-abasement), I was astounded to discover there are several pages of such words, but self-actualized was not one of them! There were many that could be construed to be a compliment, such as self-taught, self-starter, but the majority of the 'self' words had a pejorative meaning, e.g., self-serving, self-conceit, self-centered.

¹² I'm referring to developmental residual. If you are new to this theory, you might want to review pp. 54-70, 86-92 in the original book, and then read Chapter 5 in this book

¹³ My daughter exhibited an interesting behavior a number of years ago that demonstrated her willingness to 'sometimes' listen to her inner voice. Her brother came home from a great day rollicking in the river near his home. He had left his car at the river, because he had lost his keys. He said he'd looked and looked, but simply couldn't find them. He also commented that everyone else there at the time had helped him, but he thought they were gone. His sister suggested going back with him and helping him search; he said there was no point, but he would appreciate a ride back to get his car. We drove to the site. She immediately got out of the car, walked into the river, waded past her waist, bent down, and picked up the keys! We stood there with our mouths open! I

had barely gotten out of the car. When asked how she knew where they were, she simply said, "My inner voice told me!"

¹⁴ My Father-in-law, Milton Erickson, taught me to attend to my Reservoir! He taught me ways to listen to my inner voice, to connect with my Self, and to enjoy my knowing.

¹⁵ The idea of an unconscious level suggests that our understanding is buried somewhere in the brain or body, while the out of conscious notion implies understanding may be at a spiritual level.

¹⁶ Transformation is described in Chapter 5, Developmental Processes.

¹⁷ I went to Saginaw General Hospital School of Nursing, a training program. We started our clinical rotations 6 weeks after school started.

¹⁸ This is an important technique used to help people learn about themselves. It is discussed in Chapters 10-12.

¹⁹ This is the essence of Modeling and Role-Modeling, first told to me by Milton Erickson, MD, in the early 1960's.

²⁰ While Dad, i.e., Milton Erickson, was instrumental in my learning about hypnosis and myself, Mom, i.e., Elizabeth Erickson was instrumental in my learning about Unconditional Acceptance. Her ability to find good in everyone and to accept people as they sets a standard I have always tried to meet. I will always be grateful to her for her open arms and unconditional acceptance of me

²¹ Keep in mind, in hindsight, I learned this in part from Milton Erickson, but remember he didn't really teach. He facilitated learning and as a result, only with hindsight was I aware of the source of my learning! So, I had many discoveries. I will never know how many of them were initiated by my father-in-law. Perhaps, none of them; perhaps, all of them. At the least, I know he 'turned on my learning engine' and from there I took off!

²² I had also learned that colleagues didn't always want to hear what I thought, so I kept my insights to myself.

²³ Later this led to my work on the APAM and the first study in 1976.

²⁴ You have to remember in those days, a practitioner who thought out of the box was considered a radical and was often ostracized by coworkers. I have written about these experiences in Lynn Keegan's book on Nurse Healers (1998).

²⁵ Keep in mind Mary Ann was interacting with faculty and graduate students at this time and I was a diploma prepared nurse providing bedside care.

²⁶ In essence, reframing is a communication technique in which we help someone think about something from a different perspective. It is discussed in more detail in Chapters 10-12.

²⁷ We had a D.O. admitted to our unit for diagnosis of stomach pain. He soon learned he had cancer. He was told he had to have a gastrectomy and bowel resection. The night before surgery he told me he wished he had known what he had before he came to the hospital. He said he would never have allowed it to go this far. He didn't want his wife and son to see him sick and suffering. He thought it would have been better to have 'just lived until I couldn't any more.' After surgery he did poorly, infected and had to have debridement surgery. But he didn't recover; the doctors told him he needed to have a colostomy. He wouldn't sign for surgery, so the doctors coerced his wife to do it.

After that surgery, he again infected and had to go back for one more surgery. Neither his wife nor he would sign, so the doctors cornered his son and told him he would be responsible for his father's death if he didn't sign. So he did, tears running down his face, hands shaking, and totally distraught. A few days later the patient was comatose, gurgling from lung infection, terminal. The doctors wanted to do a tracheotomy. The wife and son refused to sign the permission paper. The doctors came out to the workstation and talked it over. They decided they could insert a temporary breathing tube to suction him, knowing he would have difficulty when they withdrew it. This would create an emergency, giving them permission to do a tracheotomy with signed permission. Throughout this patient's admission, I had tried to discuss the ethical and humanistic issues with the doctors. They would have nothing to do with it. I lacked the language and scientific research to be able to communicate appropriately. By the time the discussion regarding the tracheotomy emerged, I was fed up and told them that. I will always remember their

response—they laughed! The next evening when I came to work, I found my patient with a tracheotomy and his family in despair. His last few days were miserable; his family had been traumatized in ways we will never fully know. I felt a complete failure. I had not been able to comfort my patient or his family, and I had not been able to communicate what I knew to be ‘true’ to those who had the power—to let nature take its course.

²⁸ Orem (1959; 1971) presented the concept of self-care to nursing as early as 1959, but didn’t widely distribute her ideas until 1971. Kinlein (a former student of Orem) followed in the mid seventies (Kinlein, 1977). These authors presented ways of thinking about my earlier (but unpublished) orientation to nursing. Orem talked about self-care from a nurse’s perspective, including activities of daily life, need assets and need deficits (all accessed within the context of the nurse’s view of the sick client’s world). Kinlein, on the other hand, talked about those who were healthy and reached out for nursing assistance. She argued that client’s could verbalize what they wanted as she attended to their expression of needs. Neither of these seemed to be fully consistent with what I had decided about nursing. For example, Orem had mentioned needs as a basis for nursing practice, but then went on to discuss nursing care as though the mind and body had nothing to do with one another! Kinlein implied mind-body relations, but didn’t bring in the holistic possibilities. She emphasized that what nurses attend to must come from the client, but didn’t mention how this interfaced with medicine or other nurses. As the first modern day private practicing nurse in the United States, she focused on problems healthy persons brought to her attention, not mind-body relations, understanding of the past and predictions for the future, or how we needed to work together as a health care team.

²⁹ As I write this chapter, I realize this was one of *those choices* made as we continue our journey—a choice that prepared the way for today’s writing. I also realize this choice and many others like it were made because I had learned to trust my Inner voice.

³⁰ According to Maslow, Self-Actualizing (or Being) is the process we use to become Self-Actualized. He describes Self-Actualization as “...experiencing fully, vividly, selflessly, with full concentrating and total absorption.... At this moment of experiencing, the person is wholly and fully human. This is a self-actualizing moment...Self-actualization is an ongoing process....It implies that there is a Self to be actualized (Maslow, 1982, p. 45).

³¹ Another publication that might help you better understand this view was published in 1990: Erickson, H. (1990). Theory Based Practice. In *Modeling and Role-Modeling: Theory, Practice and Research*; Vol. 1, No. 1, pp.1-27.

³² We will discuss this further in Chapters 2 and 3.