

Nine Psychology Perspectives for Process Educators

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Abstract

The Process Education (PE) Framework includes many resources for enhancing the quality of growth from opportunities that become available or are self-determined for strategic purposes. The nine psychological perspectives described in this paper provide additional insights for identifying performance and growth opportunities with potential to improve quality of life (QoL). These perspectives provide guidance for recognizing important characteristics of experiences and coherently aligning responses to them with the demands of these experiences by expanding the basis for reflective exploration of personal needs, values, mindsets, and aspirational ideals. While strengthening learning skills relevant to attainment of learning, performance, and growth competencies is the basis for positive and enduring outcomes from life experiences, increased consciousness about psychological factors can transform the perception and meaning of personal and professional experiences in all contexts.

Introduction

The Process Education (PE) framework has been developed as a system of educational interventions that address many of the barriers that frustrate professional satisfaction and restrict the quality of outcomes. Since Bloom's taxonomy of cognitive educational objectives (1956), it has been clear that learning occurs at multiple levels and must be consciously explored by engaged students (Bobrowski, 2007). Process educators have worked to create a framework (Apple et al., 2016) based on constructivist principles (Wheatley, 1991; Nola & Irzik, 2005) that has produced many new tools (e.g., rubrics, design models, and methodologies) that are supported by foundational resources such as the Classification of Learning Skills (hereafter "2019 CLS"; Leise et al., 2019). The 2019 CLS does not stand alone; Soto et al. (2015) reference other educational frameworks active in the learning skills approach.

As the PE framework has been developed, the buildup of resources and methods has resulted in innovative insights about the focus of theoretical attention. An important development, discovered from years of exploration of the learning process is the current emphasis on growth and self-growth as constructs that best characterize PE. Spady (2021) and Brophy (2015) call for movement from a knowledge transmission mindset to one that attends to the needs of whole individuals in dealing with the complexities of life. The differentiation of self-growth from growth (Dweck, 2017) is important for the aims of the PE framework and is an innovation that opens the way for the addition of psychological knowledge that will deepen the insights of practitioners as they deal with learners who need better strategies not only for their educational preparation but for life itself (Apple et al., 2018).

Everyone feels pressure from the challenges of living in an increasingly complex society (Lindsey, 2013) in which old ways and choices have been superseded by unexpected experiences such as the COVID-19 pandemic. These challenges put pressure on everyone, especially educators, to adapt and change in creative ways just to maintain personal, family, and community well-being and status. This historical moment will likely be best remembered for those who met this challenge by valuing new mindsets that guided them in innovative directions in their life journeys by turning perceived constraints into opportunities for growth consistent with their aspirations and ideals, as well as those of others around them.

The PE Framework

Process Education (PE) is an educational framework focused on six process functions that can be consciously actualized (Leise, 2022). At the top of this hierarchy is self-growth (Jain et al., 2020), the conscious integration of insights from the other five levels, i.e., knowing, learning, learning to learn, performing, and growing. The six PE functions represent ways that can lead to unlimited, positive capabilities. This word choice is deliberate. Capabilities are not capacities that are fixed or limiting (Nussbaum, 2011; Robeyns & Fibieger Byskov, 2021). Self-Growth plays a special role in the PE framework because it requires action choices with much greater impact on QoL and the trajectory of life journeys (Apple et al., 2021). Growth capability-makes it possible to improve each life domain in ways that can lead to ever increasing life quality (Hurd et al., 2021). Individuals who attain self-growth capability demonstrate the self-determination, enhanced self-regulation, and expansion of growth capabilities to optimize their ideal selves (Rogers, 1961). In other words, they

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have greater control of their life journeys (Baxter Magolda, 2009; Landau et al., 2014; Lilgendahl & McAdams, 2011; Szu-Chi & Aaker 2019).

Identity factors such as self-concept, personality, attitudes, and motivation can be significant resources for growth if one consciously recognizes how to match these personal characteristics to valued growth opportunities and, equally importantly, how to avoid entrapment in one's limiting characteristics. Accurate self-knowledge and self-monitoring help with self-regulation of identity factors, including motivation (Kaplan & Flum, 2015), that are useful for responding to present opportunities. Self-knowledge is needed for setting criteria related to conscious selection and self-determination of opportunities that are likely to be a good fit for growth aspirations congruent with conceptualization of one's ideal self. Hurd et al. (2021) propose a model that includes four elements to define both real and ideal self. Self-concept is the central and holistic sense of identity that forms and changes over time and from experiences and can be imagined into the future. A person's accumulation of knowledge about self, others, and the world provides a basis for understanding what is objective compared to the subjectivity of a purely personal viewpoint. Memorable individual experiences, failures, and accomplishments highlight features of self-concept and identity that are likely to be growth areas and a basis for self-determination of a future ideal self. Finally, the capabilities acquired through growth in a wide array of learning skills empower performers to improve their performances that add to memorable experiences and direct attention to future growth potential.

As one makes decisions about how to respond to life's opportunities, desired outcomes include increased happiness, meaning, and psychological enrichment. Insights are likely to occur if one consciously assesses each opportunity (Apple et al., 2016) for how and why each of the six function could be important for strategic self-determining and self-regulating responses (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Growth and self-growth opportunities are numerous in daily life, but many are missed because of limitations such as cognitive attention, conditioned reactions, and fixed mindsets (Dweck, 2017). Optimal self-regulation of one's capabilities depends, in part, on awareness of the psychological factors that influence plans, decisions, and actions. The nine psychological perspectives were selected to provide multiple ways to conceptualize personal traits, situational perceptions, and motivational influencers valuable to incorporate into assessment and reflection work.

Introduction of Nine Psychological Perspectives

The instigation for identification and description of the nine psychological perspectives presented in this paper re-

sulted from the evolution of PE scholarship and practice focused on growth and self-growth. The earlier emphasis of the PE framework was on development of the functions of knowing, learning, learning to learn, and performing (Apple et al., 2016). Growth and self-growth functions give prominence to psychological factors such as attitudes, traits, and motivation. Many of the dimensions of growth (Hurd et al., 2021) have psychological aspects including self-awareness and setting life goals. Self-Growth is characterized by capabilities that empower self-determined quality of life (QoL) decisions that increase happiness (Seligman, 2018), deepen life's meaning, and lead to psychologically enriching experiences (Oishi et al., 2020).

Each of the nine perspectives provides a frame of reference for enlightenment about novel choices that can be self-determined and self-regulated depending upon the opportunities afforded by a situation or experience. Each of the perspectives captures only a component or feature of an experience but the meaning and operational context can produce insights for a range of strategies to increase personal and situational change. Increased understanding of the psychological factors highlighted in each perspective will provide any individual with a greater range of possibilities for metacognitive interpretation and dynamic adjustment of potential responses to the challenges of situations. Individual consciousness of psychological factors is influenced significantly by the interpersonal exchanges that are often the basis of the meaning and purpose of many experiences. Learning skills from all domains of the 2019 Classification of Learning Skills (Leise et al., 2019) become more robust if the range of influences on performance are consciously managed. As individuals increase their self-regulation of factors suggested by the psychological perspectives, their growth potential in learning, learning to learn, and performing broadens and deepens because these are the contexts in which sustainable competencies emerge for longer-range use in growth. Without this level of consciousness about what, why, and how things influence one's growth, it is not possible to fully achieve the competencies needed for self-growth.

The nine perspectives introduce many factors from the wealth of theory and research available in psychology. Each response by an individual is a result of some pattern of internal and external variables that interact in situations of varying challenge. The addition of interpersonal influences adds further complexities that trigger reactions within situations that reflect shadows from earlier development of trait and mindset patterns. These patterns result in conscious and unconscious action tendencies that are a mix of strengths and impediments that affect self-regulatory capabilities and strategies. The capability to independently determine one's decisions along life's journey

requires a high level of self-awareness, reflective attention to prediction of future challenges, realistic planning, and highly effective use of growth-related capabilities.

The relevance of each psychological perspective for PE is briefly described here.

1. *Self-discovery* is an essential quest to understand needs, values, and personal characteristics that holistically define who one is and who one wants to become.
2. *Independence/ownership* is associated with intrinsic motivation, the key to self-determination, and a key foundation for each of the six PE functions, especially self-growth.
3. *Initiative* requires self-regulation of motivational processes for making changes that lead to achievement of new aims.
4. *Reflection* is a process for making greater meaning from experiences and adding detail to enhance memories.
5. *Seeing the big picture* is important for making ethical and effective choices in the face of life's uncertainties by considering implications and consequences.
6. *Self-validating* is an ongoing balancing of internal and external sources of feedback to maintain a positive self-concept and ongoing progress towards one's ideal self.
7. *Maintaining perspective* requires ongoing assessment of what is important for self, accuracy in interpreting current influences on self, and putting current happenings into an historical perspective.
8. *Managing energy* is an individual challenge that requires awareness of influences that enhance energy, reduce it, and find ways to remove constraints on using or expanding it.
9. *Enhancing Quality of life* can be strengthened by developing growth and self-growth capabilities that support action plans that lead to desired personal or situational changes that enhance QoL.

The Role of Consciousness in Using Psychological Perspectives

The nine psychological perspectives address a wide array of knowledge but their value for practitioners depends upon growth in conscious self-regulation of factors that are relevant to successful management of each situation. Lonergan characterizes *consciousness* as a succession of cognitional acts such as imagining, understanding, formulating, reflecting, and judging that are very different from the unconscious bodily processes that sustain life and make perception possible (1957/1992). However, there is

consciousness of the effects of automatic biological and perceptual processes (e.g., awareness of physical wellbeing and holistic perception of sensory information). Lonergan does not give preeminence to introspective or intuitive abilities as a direct source of knowing oneself but does argue that knowers can “self-affirm” their acts of knowing—which can then be a basis for consciously increasing self-knowledge.

Lonergan proposes three levels of consciousness (1957/1992). The first, empirical consciousness, is similar to sentience (Pinker, 1997); it involves sensations and perceptions that keep one oriented in the world of experiences. The second, intelligent awareness, focuses on the types of awareness and insights that occur during the learning process. The third, rational consciousness, is self-aware reflection on the data from the first two levels as well as on personal intentionality to inquire further to fulfill the desire to have valid knowledge in general. Lonergan's philosophical viewpoint, although meant as a general framework, is consistent with the emphasis of the PE framework on learning skills as a basis for conscious creation of increasingly complex capabilities that support the growth and self-growth levels. His philosophic theory is also consistent with psychological theories and evidence about the nature of consciousness (Bertolero & Bassett, 2019; Buzsáki, 2022; Carter, 2002; Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, 1993; Goupil & Kouider, 2019; Rosenfield, 1992).

An important aspect of consciousness is *mindsets*, which are complex beliefs (Leicester, 2016) often unconsciously held and unexplored, about issues such as personal agency (Bandura, 2001; Eccles, 2009), values (Kirschenbaum, 2013) accuracy of perceptions (Marcel, 1985), situational focus (Zelazo & Carlson, 2012), and readiness or disposition to act in ways consistent with one's identity (Dweck, 2017). Mindsets are important to consciousness because they allow attention to be focused quickly and with a feeling of assurance or conviction about how to respond to situations (Dweck & Yeager, 2019).

Self-monitoring of the attentional focus of one's consciousness is very challenging because consciousness is the continual connection of self with the dynamically changing world—including one's own mind and body. Lonergan proposes several layers of consciousness that are consistent with the multiple needs of daily life, the acquisition of new knowledge through learning, and reflective insights from self-awareness about psychological factors that are influencing responses (1957/1992). Several processes that can be self-regulated are helpful as strategic viewpoints for observing or inferring how a psychological factor is a help or a hindrance to performance success and for recognizing how one can rise beyond present and past levels of capability through

growth and self-growth. The following points of focus are exemplars for how the nine perspectives can add power to self-determination of decisions and self-regulation of performance and growth processes along one's life path.

1. **Locus of control** (Ajzen, 2002) has a range from entirely extrinsic to fully intrinsic. Independence and initiative depend upon intrinsically controlled self-regulation of situations and experiences to attain intended outcomes. Sharing of locus of control in collaborative or cooperative endeavors requires a higher level of consciousness that considers the value of multiple points of view plus awareness of factors such as the relative status of individuals in such contexts. Self-control and self-management skills are in evidence when locus of control is intrinsic.
2. **Cognitive attribution** (Forgas et al., 1990) is a label for the problem of how to validly recognize the causes or motives for one's own cognitive, social, and affective responses as well as those of others. There is a strong tendency to assume that personal behaviors are logically related to circumstances. If a truly collaborative team fails, one or more members may still blame the failure on a personality trait or other stable characteristic of others. The subjective nature of attributions about personal abilities and the rapidly changing patterns in interpersonal contexts make their control very challenging. Self-discovery insights occur when the attribution process is thoughtfully explored through reflection to support better self-regulation of introspective intuitions.
3. **Growth** cannot occur without choosing goal challenges that clearly are greater than one's past achievements (Locke and Latham, 2019). Self-regulating one's decision process to consciously focus on goals more valuable from a big picture perspective will optimize use of capabilities as well as mental and physical energy.
4. **Metacognitive processing** (Gutierrez de Blume, 2022) of one's responses and attributions during performances requires conscious self-regulation (Robinson et al., 2015) of all the layers of influence and affective concern that occur while still moving toward a desired outcome.
5. **Consciousness of the sources and conditions of one's motivation** is extremely important for growth and self-growth. Willpower has a valid role in maintaining short-term persistence with applying available skills but intrinsically motivating interest in taking advantage of valuable opportunities will make them more exciting to pursue (Ryan & Deci, 2017).
6. **Learning skills** from the 2019 CLS underlies all nine psychological perspectives. The possibilities within and across the perspectives can be enhanced by reflecting

on performances to identify missing skills and predicting which learning skills must be developed for greater challenges in the future.

Nine Psychological Perspectives for Enhancement of the PE Framework

The nine perspectives apply to any developmental context, but specifically have potential to enrich the uses of PE methodologies, performance measures, and strategies. The aim is to exemplify psychological concepts and practices that learners, educators, mentors, self-growth coaches, and self-mentors can apply to enhance development of all PE functions, but with special emphasis on growth and self-growth that will increase QoL in diverse ways.

Orientation to the Psychological Perspectives

In the following sections, brief background overviews introduce each of the nine psychology perspectives to represent how psychology adds supporting concepts and practices for stakeholders working within the PE framework. Each of these nine viewpoints will be explored using the following subsections:

Definition: A brief description of the perspective

Supportive Growth and Mentoring Skills: A list of CLS 2019 skills closely aligned with each psychological perspective

Insight Quote: A succinct insight from an external author to stimulate creative thinking about the perspective

Historical Background: A brief overview of the kinds of psychological theories and philosophical concepts associated with the perspective

Journey Toward the Ideal Self: A rationale for the value of the perspective for developing personal meaning and enrichment of self-concept during the journey toward the ideal self

Psychological Models: Selection of two or three psychological theories or models that add valuable detail about psychological knowledge with potential to enhance consciousness of beliefs, mindsets, and practices for facilitating growth and self-growth

Growth and Self-Growth Insights: Conceptual insights are presented that individuals can use to elevate their understanding of how to use this perspective in their practice. The focus of the insights is at the highest PE function levels, i.e., growth and self-growth, to provide a challenging basis for reflection about the integration of all functions.

The terms in italics within the insights sections, for all nine perspectives, identify or paraphrase growth and mentoring learning skills associated with the perspective.

Growth Skills: Being Self-Aware, Listening to Self, Introspecting, and Exposing Vulnerabilities

Mentoring Skills: Self-Evaluating, Being Self-Honest, Analyzing Needs, and Forecasting Needs

“It is plausible that future-oriented thinking in deliberate mind-wandering [freely moving thought] is different from future-oriented thinking in non-deliberate mind-wandering; the first being possibly associated to planning, while the second one is a propensity to worry about potential outcomes. (Fossa et al., 2019)

Historical Background

Historians of psychology (Robinson, 1995; Graiver, 2019) recognize that ideas about self-knowledge and how it is attained are quite different depending on era and culture. Graver (2007) describes the ancient Stoic philosophers' concern about making sound ethical judgments despite potentially false beliefs associated with emotional reactions to experiences. Olney (1998) describes St. Augustine's theological interpretation of his introspections about personal memories in his *Confessions* as a path to understanding his relationship with God. Strongly contrasting purposes in contemporary cultures include understanding the individual in terms of character (e.g., Peterson and Seligman, 2004; Huynh et al., 2017) and potential for self-actualization (Maslow, 1971).

Journey Toward the Ideal Self

Self-discovery requires analysis of memories that results in understanding and insights about the influence of one's past developmental path on present ways of meeting needs, relating to others, pursuing goals, and being self-honest about values (Banaji & Greenwald, 2016). Desjarlais and Smith (2011) describe principles for the distinctive utilities of assessment and reflection for close examination of the growth potential of experiences. Self-discovery involves valuing and using a continuum of subjective experiences for understanding the dynamic nature of one's evolving identity, e.g., as described by William James (1890). Growth skills for this perspective such as Introspection and Listening to Self, involve conscious attention to internal representations of self and experiences (e.g., Fossa et al., 2019), which are essential sources of information about one's current self-concept and the basis for growth over time that is consistent with one's ideal self.

Psychological Models

Dweck addresses questions of how personality (e.g., McCrae & Mõttus, 2019) and other personal characteristics and response patterns emerge from how one has learned to meet psychological needs (2017). She proposes a succinct needs model with three “basic” needs that are present from infancy (*acceptance*, *predictability*, and *competence*) and four “emerging” needs: “*trust*” (a combination of acceptance and predictability), *control* (a combination of predictability and competence), *self-esteem/status* (a combination of competence and acceptance), and *self-coherence*, which is the “hub” of all the needs. Dweck also proposes a three-part model called “BEATs,” (Beliefs, Emotions, Action Tendencies) to explain how need fulfillment motivates differentiated personality development (2017). BEATs occur frequently and are triggered as part of every experience. Because action tendencies, which can be thoughts or emotions, vary in terms of effectiveness, it is essential to consciously apply growth skills to take advantage of the potential that opportunities provide for furthering one's capabilities. An additional benefit is increased awareness of one's present self-concept and of predictions about ideal self.

Sometimes your body is smarter than you are” is a pithy observation by an unknown author that puts attention on *interoceptive* (internal) feedback as with from the heart and gastrointestinal tract. This neural feedback from within the body is designed to optimize body maintenance but is also now known to be a foundation for the sense of physical “self-awareness” which directly demonstrates the meaning of “I exist” and influences all responses, conscious and unconscious (e.g., Dunn et al., 2010; Atari et al., 2020).

Barrett et al. challenge the validity of traditional assumptions about emotions (2019). Barrett's core affect model explains how emotions are “constructed” from neural processes that use both external and internal information to prepare one to respond—before a specific response occurs (2017). Many kinds of emotional and behavioral responses are possible even in situations that typically trigger a certain emotion (e.g., anger is not the only way to manage a threatening provocation). Beilock describes examples based on research that illustrate how interoceptive feedback significantly influences decisions and other reactions (2015). The implication of this new area of neuropsychological research is that self-awareness is a complex challenge that requires openness to what can be learned about how to take charge of personal affective reactions in each situation or interaction.

Related Growth Insights

1. *Introspective awareness* of how development of personal characteristics has contributed to self-concept related to performances will strengthen strategies for growth of learning skills that can contribute to QoL.
2. *Listening to self*, especially by attending to interoceptive feedback, increases awareness of the powerful potential of self to become more efficacious when ready to face challenges in one's relationships and environments.
3. *Exposing vulnerabilities* requires willingness to hear multiple interpretations of behaviors, especially under conditions that make one sensitive to the reactions of others and to negative feelings about lack of current performance quality relative to expectations.

Related Self-Growth Insights

1. The self-growth mindset depends on awareness and *analysis of needs* (current and future) and *forecasting* how they can be met without either lessening self-expectations or increasing inhibitory influences and risks to growth.
2. *Self-evaluating* without strong self-assessment skills leads to being self-judgmental and produces risks such as overly attending to self-esteem rather than to potential strategies to build and broaden growth capabilities.
3. The development of a vision of one's ideal self requires *honesty* and valid perceptions about one's real-self, as embodied by one's current self-concept, so that the aspirations represented by an ideal-self are based upon a genuine vision—not a caricature of one's real-self.

2: Independence/Ownership *Producing quality from personally valued decisions and actions*

Growth Skills: Feeling Empowered, Believing in Your Potential, Committing to Self, Committing to Success, and Accepting Consequences

Mentoring Skills: Encouraging Ownership, Being Independent, Giving Consulting Feedback, Highlighting Substandard Performance, and Transforming Strategies

“ Yet, despite the fact that humans are liberally endowed with intrinsic motivational tendencies, the evidence is now clear that the maintenance and enhancement of this inherent propensity requires supportive conditions, as it can be fairly readily disrupted by various nonsupportive conditions. (Ryan & Deci, 2000)

Historical Background

Independence has been studied as an aspect of individual self-determination (Ryan & Deci, 2017). However, more recent perspectives, e.g., Kachanoff et al. (2019) include social identity needs that become psychologically associated with group membership as an influence on self-esteem and sense of “empowerment.” A more comprehensive conceptualization is to integrate needs of relatedness, competence, and autonomy as defining characteristics of independence/ownership of one's decisions and actions.

Journey Toward the Ideal Self

Independence is a central characteristic of self-growth because it is defined by viewing goals from a personal agency perspective (Bandura, 2001). Autonomy and ownership of life decisions are essential for growth goals to become important in one's personal life vision. Self-Growth, by definition, requires ample independence and personal agency because one must be in charge of building personal growth capabilities. Feeling empowered motivates planning to strengthen performances in experience areas needed for life quality and role identity development.

Psychological Models

Self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2017) is a deeply studied multidimensional theory of motivation that developed from the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and the effects of each of these mindsets on performance and well-being outcomes. Intrinsic motivation refers to behaviors enacted for their own sake; being more autonomous is the most essential characteristic of self-growers and is supported by self-regulation capabilities. Individual motivation can become negatively “introjected” if needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness have not been met in developmentally constructive ways earlier in life (Assor et al., 2009; Higgins, 1987). Extrinsic (instrumental) motivation may increase effort in useful directions or may lead to limited appraisal of choices for achieving one's dreams. Intrinsically motivated ownership of one's decisions and independence of action is a critical factor both for overcoming unconscious motives that sabotage opportunities for growth and also for increasing the likelihood of consciously seeking and engaging with experiences that have growth potential.

Motivation to Lead (MTL; Badura et al., 2019) is an example of a meta-motivational model that assumes that leaders feel empowered and independent for multiple reasons. Three motives have been studied by MTL researchers: affective-identity—the degree to which one enjoys leadership and sees oneself as a leader, social-normative—the degree to which one views the role as a responsibility and being noncalculative—viewing leadership positively despite costs and minimal personal benefits. Both Self-Determination Theory and Motivation to Lead assume that natural interests and capabilities can be strengthened by consciously setting growth goals and by following through with identity-changing decisions associated with self-growth in consequential roles such as being an effective leader. Educational psychologists (Nolan et al., 2015; Turner & Nolan, 2015), emphasize the importance of recognizing the situative nature of motivation (i.e., it occurs as part of specific experiences rather than as a general factor).

Strategies for consciously increasing independence/ownership start with assessing action planning, whether formal or informal, to discover how well plans lead to goals. Assessing how closely one’s productivity is based in intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2017) expands self-knowledge and the learning needed for increasing ownership of one’s actions. Learning to learn about independence and ownership involves maintaining and self-regulating one’s sense of agency (Bandura, 2001) to increase productivity in diverse performance contexts. Greater insightfulness about empowerment factors increases the likelihood that commitment to success will be connected with a sense of responsibility for the well-being of others while meeting personal needs consistently with one’s values. As belief in personal potential increases, growth capability development is more likely to include trust in capability to mentor others. Self-determined aims become more intersubjective and compassionate as one gains in self-mentoring capabilities that include being open to self-growth coaching when unsure how to proceed.

Related Growth Insights

1. Despite the many personal, social, and cultural influences that make independence of decisions and actions difficult, *committing to self* makes it possible to own decisions that allow shifting from a constrained “ought self” to *feeling empowered* to seek a psychologically richer life.
2. An expanding sense of independence requires a *belief in personal potential* and an increase in willingness to *accept consequences*.
3. *Committing to success* with specific goals beyond one’s present talents and strengths requires one to develop one’s own capabilities to address existing barriers to success, future QoL, and identity development.

Related Self-Growth Insights

1. *Encouraging ownership*, as a teacher, parent, mentor, or facilitator, is critical when helping individuals take greater responsibility for reliably creating growth opportunities.
2. Self-Growth coaches provide *consulting feedback* to clients by addressing their unique dilemmas, especially when they are stuck, by creating new *transformative strategies* that will be contextually effective.
3. For more effective growth plans, it is necessary to admit when one’s *performances are substandard* and to seek *consulting support* to develop effective ways to produce desired changes in personal behaviors.

3: Initiative *Why and how one goes about starting to do something new*

Growth Skills: Motivating Self, Being Proactive, Changing Reactions, Changing Behaviors, and Self-Challenging

Mentoring Skills: Being Courageous, Developing Action Plans, Writing Performance Criteria, and Getting Unstuck

“Forethought enables people to transcend the dictates of their immediate environment and to shape and regulate the present to realize desired futures. (Bandura, 2018)

Historical Background

Initiative involves motivation because any organism with an inability to direct behavior to meet needs would have been eliminated during the long history of biological evolution. Despite its obviousness as a hallmark factor in all behavior, motivation is difficult to operationally define for research purposes so indirect constructs such as drives (e.g., thirst and hunger, have long been studied in animals). For humans, however, taking initiative is challenging

because there are so many possible options for using the highly flexible learning and social capabilities of our species. Many issues cause conflicts about what is practicable, valuable, and ethical—and from whose perspective—when deciding on actions.

Journey Toward the Ideal Self

Midgley (1984) believes humans have no choice but to develop ethical systems to deal with the ambiguities of the human condition because conflicting values and interpretations can, and often do, result in negative outcomes for everyone. Avoiding unethical conflict or reduction of the quality of life for others requires that one must be proactive and ready to change how one reacts to new situations, people, and challenges. The ideal self cannot be attained simply by striving harder; the actions, decisions, and performances that match growth and self-growth mindsets must also be ethically creative initiatives. Process 5 of the 2019 CLS Affective Domain (“Facilitating Growth Beyond Oneself”) includes learning skills such as Behaving Honorably and Being a Catalyst, which require taking initiative to a higher level. Using the growth and mentoring skills related to the psychological perspective of initiative will enhance the quality of goals and turn challenges into sources of emotional satisfaction.

Psychological Models

Taking initiative is usually demonstrated by goal-directed action. Locke and Latham (2019) developed their goal setting theory inductively by continually updating and integrating new findings over 50 years of research and theory development. In general, they have found that outcomes such as achievements are more likely to occur by setting specific goals that are challenging but within one’s capabilities. They define performance in terms of task accomplishment, which is different from self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986) and growth mindset (Dweck, 1988) theories, which focus on intrinsic motivation. Those with positive self-efficacy from successfully achieving goals across varied situations tend to set higher goals. That means that rather than working only to reduce discrepancies between actual and expected performance they move to a higher level. Park et al. found that complex goals are more likely to be completed if individuals use “backward planning” to avoid being confused by ambiguities that emerge from interim steps if “forward planning” is overemphasized (2017). PE methodologies are designed with both forward planning (preparation steps) and backward planning (formulating criteria for future assessment) in mind. Self-Growth mindset is exhibited by taking on challenges that seem beyond current potential and then implementing strategies to develop the learning skills needed for success.

Getting “stuck”—feeling unable to take initiative—is a common experience. Henning presented a counseling intervention for college students with writer’s block (1981). Perfectionism, which is linked to conditional self-esteem, often disrupts writing by creating anxiety about the need for a perfect product—anything less is not worthwhile and demonstrates the same about the writer. By prescribing a “paradoxical” task (similar to Writing to Think in the 2019 CLS) involving a requirement to produce the very kind of low-quality writing that they wished to avoid, Henning found that his clients soon learned that their assumptions were wrong or incomplete: there was more value in their rough drafts than they believed was the case and they could proceed, with effective assessment, to improve what they started with.

Related Growth Insights

1. Setting *self-challenging* goals aligned with values, needs, and QoL is the basis for increasing *self-motivation* for taking still greater initiatives.
2. Growth plans that include strategies for *proactively* remediating impediments to growth (e.g., ways to overcome anxiety) reveal a component of initiative that is characteristic of growers.
3. The better one’s strategy for advantageously *changing reactions* to contextual prompts, the more likely one will be able to initiate *changes in behaviors* that will improve life quality.

Related Self-Growth Insights

1. The feeling of being “boxed in”—a universal human experience—is a prompt for realizing that the situation requires fresh and creative growth-oriented initiatives to *get unstuck*, often requiring *being courageous* to attempt something very difficult.
2. Self-Growth, by definition, is only possible when the locus of control of *developing action plans* for personal growth is shifted to self.
3. Self-Growers *write* and use *performance criteria* for the development of growth capabilities aligned with their life vision and plan.

Growth and Mentoring Skills

Growth Skills: Practicing Reflection, Making Meaning, Valuing Growth, and Using Summative Assessment

Mentoring Skills: Self-Monitoring, Maintaining Objectivity, Being Metacognitive, Identifying New Qualities, and Providing Growth Feedback

“Judgment is an act of rational consciousness, but decision is an act of rational self-consciousness... the rationality of decision emerges in the demand of the rationally conscious subject for consistency between his [sic] knowing and his deciding and doing. (Lonergan, 1957/1992)

Historical Background

Broad life contexts and structuring influences such as culture produce patterns in one's reactions, choices for meeting needs, and development of values. All of these usually occur outside one's awareness until specifically examined with a mentor's help or through self-mentoring if one's reflective skills have become strong. Insights from philosophers such as Midgley (1984), who analyze social as well as intellectual history to promote understanding of human nature, allow one to step back to better monitor and assess the impact of one's culture on the types of growth goals one selects and how one thinks about the ideal self. Expansion of growth and self-growth capabilities is especially dependent on *reflection*, a process defined as taking time to examine one's past performances and experiences from alternative perspectives to augment or improve understanding and meaning.

Journey Toward the Ideal Self

Reflection skills are developmentally natural yet very challenging to grow and deepen (Leise, 2010). Goupil and Kouider summarize developmental research showing that a “core metacognitive” capability exists from the first years of life and matures slowly from this rudimentary and implicit (unconscious) beginning to more explicit capabilities during adolescence, young adulthood, and beyond (2019). Reflection includes two levels of metacognition (“second-order” awareness of one's cognitions): capturing content and meaning from one's mental processes, and articulating and communicating this knowledge to others in meaningful ways. It is not a singular or explicit skill; effective self-monitoring and metacognitive self-regulation are also important for recognizing errors and falsehoods that must be dealt with as inputs to the process of reflection. As a practical matter, even adults often fail to recognize errors in sources of information and have a tendency to be overconfident (e.g., to indicate “Yes I know”) even when unclear (Dunlosky & Metcalfe, 2009). Reflection is the primary self-regulating process for keeping self-growth focused on a purposeful journey towards an ideal self.

Psychological Models

Kegan's (1982) “developmental-constructivist” theory integrates the research and insights of major theorists, including Piaget's knowledge development (1952), Anna Freud's personality and psychopathology (1936/1992), Jung's psychology and the meaning of life (1934/1964), Erikson's life-long stages of development (1963), Kohut's self-psychology (1971), and Kohlberg's moral development (1976). Kegan concurs with Fingarette (1963) that humans are “meaning-makers” whether this is expressed as formulation of prediction-oriented theories or as an existential process of generating new visions. Kegan describes a “zone of mediation” where meaning is made by the ego, the self, or the person. The self as the zone of meaning making is one among many functions that make up the person.

Reflection is influenced by many factors including biased perceptions and differences in how life experiences become represented in memory. Tulving pioneered research on *episodic memory*, which is the automatic (“autonoetic”) record of experiences that makes “time travel” (going to the past or imagining the future) possible (2005). He considers episodic memory to be a specialized extension of *semantic memory*, which is the general ability, shared with other sentient beings, to learn and retain knowledge. Rosenfield asserts that consciousness is the continual reprocessing of many stimuli, including memories of knowledge and experiences (1992). Recollections include not only the remembered event, person, or object, but also the person who is remembering. It has long been known that memories are filtered to fit one's existing “cognitive scripts” (Bartlett, 1932; Schacter & Addis, 2007) and can be false (Van Damme et al., 2017). Memories from adolescence and young adulthood are characterized by a “reminiscence bump” (Østby & Østby, 2018) for novel and meaningful experiences such as first relationships, initial life successes, and life

decisions that are more significant than those remembered from childhood. Shum (1998) found that people generally think of life as a series of episodes, which means that memories are organized around transitional “landmarks” that are times when individuals are likely to be more open to change.

Grossman et al. have demonstrated the empirical validity of *distanced self-reflection* (writing reflection diaries in third person rather than from the egocentric first-person perspective) as a practice that increases wise reasoning in daily life (2021). Moving away from the subjectivity of a self-centered viewpoint tends to enhance ability to perceive and assess experiences with greater reliability and with more consideration of the long-term implications of current responses.

Cultural influences create varying reasons for examining memories. Olney, for instance, contrasts St. Augustine’s total confidence that truth can be extracted from memories with those of playwright Arthur Miller who presents ways that memories seem superseded, distorted, and destroyed in contemporary society from living with discontinuities and contradictions regarding trust, truth, and meaning (1998).

Related Growth Insights

1. *Quality reflection* supports planning and execution of growth of selected capabilities through *summative analysis* of needs, weekly assessment of progress, and annual measurement of growth.
2. The *meaning of growth* continues to increase as one achieves *valued outcomes* that one attributes to growth plans, personal efficacy, and a sense of ownership.
3. Growth capability increases each time one takes stock to *gain insights* about how growth has enhanced QoL and motivates planning of new opportunities to develop one’s growth-oriented life scripts.

Related Self-Growth Insights

1. Growth in *self-monitoring* skills during new and different experiences will enrich reflective analysis by *improving recognition of new personal qualities* with potential to expand the breadth and depth of one’s QoL.
2. A self-grower’s aspiration is to *preserve objectivity* as much as possible by selecting a frame of reference for reflection on past experiences that will be most relevant for forming inferences about growth of future capabilities.
3. The existential process that mediates creative insights about meaning and QoL—a self-growth mindset—entails using metacognitive *reflection on feedback* to develop transformative plans for future growth and self-growth.

5: Seeing the Big Picture *Extrapolating from the moment to gauge its significance for one’s long-term goals and life plans*

Growth Skills: Updating Life Vision, Setting Growth Goals, Focusing on Self-Improvement, and Analyzing Performance

Mentoring Skills: Being Philosophical, Determining Future Match, and Determining Unmet Needs

“Many of the things people seek are achievable only by working together through group effort. In the exercise of collective agency, they pool their knowledge, skills, and resources and act in concert to shape their future. (Bandura, 2018)

Historical Background

Life’s complexity has significantly increased every half century over the past three centuries and now increases even more during every generation and every decade. Although humans have always adapted their behavior to meet the conditions of their lives, the powerful contemporary forces of change can cause individuals to lose sight of their life direction because they are unable to size up what they are experiencing so they can step back to consider what to do. For example, contemporary society greatly influences the way work and family situations “spiral up” or “spiral down” depending on whether circumstances are advantageous or disadvantageous (ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012). What provides satisfaction in the present may not be beneficial or sustainable for the future one has in mind. Use of societal opportunities to overcome risk factors through education, job opportunities, and support systems will succeed to the extent that individuals manage to make sound choices even under conditions of uncertainty (Kahneman, 2011; Kahneman et al., 2021).

Journey Toward the Ideal Self

Midgley, in considering the sources of “human nature,” argues that humans have evolved significant cognitive and social capabilities which make possible harmful—as seen in the history of war and aggression—as well as beneficial decisions, beliefs, and behavior (1984). Her position is that a constructive path has the most promise for increasing our capabilities to produce good and ethical outcomes that benefit self, others, and the world. One of the implications of the wide scope and complexity of human responses is a need to formulate ethical values and principles that provide some guidance for self-consistency of choice-making. Merleau-Ponty, known as an existential philosopher, was also a psychologist who analyzed the phenomenology of perception and succeeded Jean Piaget in 1949 as Professor of Psychology and Pedagogy at the Sorbonne (1945/2002). Bakewell comments that Merleau-Ponty

...saw quite calmly that we exist only through compromise with the world—and that is fine. The point is not to fight that fact, or to inflate it into too great a significance, but to observe and understand exactly how that compromise works (2016).

Self-Growers take this worldview with every life activity as they seek the special meaning of who they are within the moment.

Psychological Models

Heath and Heath (2013) and Redish (2013) emphasize that seeing the bigger picture is important in effective decision making because it expands the options being considered. It is less likely to find relevant big picture information to assess the future opportunity value of a present situative choice if a yes/no decision frame is used. Hess & Queen explore adult capabilities for making sound judgments and decisions, i.e., seeing the big picture, in life situations (2014). For example, *hot cognition* (versus “cold cognition,” meaning basic mechanisms), focuses on dynamic processing of affect, motivation, and goals relevant to energizing and directing cognitive attention to relevant information (see Brand, 1985; Zelazo & Carlson, 2012). Growth in social capabilities gained from life experiences therefore plays a significant role in how well persons at any age handle social and emotional challenges that are relevant for considering the bigger picture—even in specific situations that typically bias perception. More psychological detail has emerged from empirical research that clarifies how relevance and meaning are useful criteria for sizing up how to proceed on one’s life journey when faced with uncertainties.

Priniski et al., in a review of research centered on what is known about how to make education relevant and meaningful, propose a unifying conceptual continuum including three phases—not rigidly defined—of meaningfulness: personal association, personal usefulness, and identification. School learning is often “associated” with some interests that are not important for one’s personal life—and therefore are not high in personal meaningfulness (2018). *Personal usefulness* refers to goals of importance to an individual such as learning a new skill. *Identification* means that the learning has value because of its connection to significant roles or personal characteristics, as in the case of enhancing a specific value. Priniski et al. focus on three major theories (interest development, expectancy-value, and self-determination) in motivation literature to demonstrate that their relevance continuum provides commonality of terms, integration of scholarship, and increased potential for creative intervention. Among their many examples is culturally relevant education, which emphasizes positive assets rather than deficits, and is a model of how to increase “affordances” (opportunities) for women, members of minority groups, and first-generation college students, all of whom find it difficult to keep their individual goals in focus because of the substantial value they place on helping their families and communities. Harackiewicz et al. found that the intervention of writing about the personal meaning of course material is especially effective to stimulate first-generation college students who are also underrepresented minorities (in higher education) to identify relevant insights about how learning may be important and attainable for themselves while they also maintain connections to their cultural values and communities (2016).

Mueller surveyed creative innovations in science, academia, music, and patents to identify where good ideas come from (2019). Increasingly, it appears that more intensive work within an already well-defined field has less productive impact than taking a larger viewpoint (e.g., by seeking out interdisciplinary challenges). New knowledge now tends to be produced by research teams and involves recombination of ideas in a field with crossovers from adjacent areas of knowledge. The implications for individual growth and self-growth are that the increasingly complex conditions for innovative work described by Mueller mean it must be considered normal to share ideas, success is increased by joining working teams, working with a performance coach can expedite finding of a creative focus and avoidance of blocks, and combinations of ideas from areas of knowledge that complement one’s own are likely to be stronger than staying within one’s discipline.

Related Growth Insights

1. Writing to think can expand one's *life vision* by drawing connections between one's cultural attitudes and one's desired areas of growth by identifying cultural sources of strength as well as cultural impediments that influence pursuit of full and meaningful QoL.
2. Creating a *life vision* based on a wide range of experiences increases ability to clarify *decisions about growth goals* that will improve performances in situations involving a diversity of people and opportunities.
3. The complexity of contemporary life makes it necessary to keep *analyzing key performance areas* for which one needs *self-improvement* and to seek mentoring and coaching when complexity exceeds one's current growth capability.

Related Self-Growth Insights

1. Self-Determination is enhanced by increasing considerations of life's uncertainties in one's assessments as part of increasing the validity of one's selection of growth areas likely to *match future life needs*.
2. Self-Growth must be based on thoughtful and realistic ethical judgments about how to *address potentially unmet needs* so that one's life activities and efforts are self-consistent now and into the future.
3. One's personal QoL gains more meaning by *using philosophical and cultural insights* to help focus one's increases in growth and self-growth capabilities toward contributing to broader societal and world needs.

6: Self-Validating *To recognize, understand, and accept new feelings, thoughts, and values as real*

Growth Skills: Interpreting Feedback, Accepting Feedback, Being True to Self, and Having an Assessment Mindset

Mentoring Skills: Validating Personal Impact, Defining Characteristics, Validating Added Value, and Ensuring Reliability

“By maintaining distinctions among various aspects of the self, one is more likely to maintain positive feelings about some aspects, which act as a buffer against negative happenings or negative thoughts about other specific aspects. (Linville, 1985)

Journey Toward the Ideal Self

The capability to self-validate one's feelings, thoughts, and values is significant for self-coherence, the central need in Dweck's (2017) model, but also for another central capability: realistic self-assessment of growth and self-growth. Personal subjectivity is a source of risk for biased memories, and therefore, interpretations, of what has occurred in life situations. Kegan observes the “embeddedness” of individuals in specific and limiting mindsets, especially in early stages of development (1982). Niese et al. describe how personal beliefs based on stereotypes such as “Women don't do well with math,” can bias memory of actual life experiences by excluding many experiences inconsistent with present negative beliefs (2019). Their research verified that first-person imagery results in greater use of sensory information in reconstructing life events, which reduces the potentially problematic role of abstract beliefs such as stereotypes which provide overly general descriptions (see, for instance, Fiske et al., 2007). As noted in the discussion of seeing the big picture, Grossman et al. found that taking a third-person standpoint for reflections can enhance their objectivity, which is valuable for self-validation (2021). Consciously selecting reflection strategies, as with first person versus third person writing, helps with addressing subjective biases such as falling into stereotyping and other abstract representations that decrease accessibility of details likely to stimulate new insights from situated experiences.

Psychological Models

Weinstein et al. examine the “integrative process” that must occur to increase the consistency between one's current self-concept and a future self-concept (2013). Awareness, ownership/autonomy, and non-defensiveness are three main process elements for positive integration of the self. Individuals with these three characteristics also tend to have more energy, maintain wellness, and experience relational benefits. An avoidant coping attitude, in contrast, results in ignoring or distorting interpretations of experiences and situations such as by assuming one cannot meet expected standards, that may be the growable moments needed for strengthening self-coherence. Being able to resolve challenging situations leads to greater emotional resilience— “tougher self-esteem”—and increased

capability to integrate all aspects of self in a transcending way. Prakash et al. found that accepting present emotions tends to guard against the negative feelings that often follow evaluation, thus increasing goal-directed behavior and self-regulation (2017).

Self-Affirmation theory and research (Steele, 1988; Howell, 2017) contends that the capability to maintain and even boost self-worth under conditions of threat (for instance after a negative evaluation of a performance) is valuable for securing one's self-image and increasing the likelihood of personal growth and psychological flexibility. Steele argues that if positive images of the self are at least as strong as negative images associated with threat it becomes likely that individuals can maintain and even improve their optimism and resilience. Borman et al., in an experiment involving a large school district, found substantial effects on GPA and rate of HS graduation from a series of self-affirmation writing assignments offered intermittently from middle school to senior year of high school (2020). Matched peers who were equally influenced by stereotype vulnerability (racial) effects, but did not receive the treatment intervention, failed to experience the improvements in outcomes. By carefully timing self-affirmation assignments just before important achievement testing events, these researchers demonstrated that large-scale interventions could provide a "foot-in-the door" effect. A few assignments asking them to write about their values and aspirations started a "developmental cascade" for the Black and Latinx students in the treatment condition. Self-Affirmation strategies are similar to Yeager and Dweck's (2012) growth mindset interventions in that they target self-awareness of personal potential to reduce the acuteness of specific threats to development. These research examples make clear that small but timely self-affirmation and growth mindset interventions can improve performance by creating general and persisting optimism about personal potential.

Related Growth Insights

1. Growth experiences that maximize positive self-validation involve consciousness of level of mastery, sense of personal control, and perception of needs as contingent factors that are important *for being true to self*.
2. A self-affirming individual can move beyond the limiting effects of social and personal norms by *interpreting feedback* for growth that is aligned with the journey towards one's ideal self.
3. Individuals who become motivated about growth have developed *an assessment mindset* that enhances their capability to create meaning about experiences by *accepting feedback* to positively affirm competence, emotional stability, and self-consistency.

Related Self-Growth Insights

1. Self-Growers consciously strengthen role identities by recognizing and *defining characteristics* of experiences that add meaning and value to life roles by increasing the influence of these roles on QoL.
2. Self-Growth capability involves reflective reinterpretations of how self-concept and identity development can *ensure reliability* of self-determination of one's personal characteristics, such as personality traits, developmental stage, locus of control, and interpersonal skills.
3. Self-Growth involves becoming consciously aware of how well one is self-monitoring psychological flexibility in all areas of growth, so one can reliably determine *personal impact* and realistically assess the *added value* one has contributed.

7: Maintaining Perspective *Externally, seeing a situation for what it is and knowing the current time-dependent limits of what can be; internally, to attain a sense of balance of one's most valued emotional and spiritual self with personal mindsets, actions, and behaviors*

Growth Skills: Trusting Self, Toughening Self-Esteem, Maintaining Balance, Seeking Feedback, and Defining Performance Characteristics

Mentoring Skills: Being Nonjudgmental, Pre-Assessing, Designing an Assessment, and Being Fair

“ Why would Openness [from the Big Five Trait Theory] only be important for growth in the context of negative events? One possibility is that Openness is especially important for negative events in contrast to positive because it keeps people from defending too strongly against negative emotions, which could result in attempting to avoid thinking about negative events and even write them out of the life story entirely. (Lilgendahl & McAdams, 2011)

Historical Background

Maintaining perspective requires growth skills such as Maintaining Balance and mentoring skills such as Being Fair. Anna Freud (1936/1992), Carl Rogers (1961), and Abraham Maslow (1971) focus on how individuals strive to maintain a positive sense of self by gravitating toward experiences that raise self-esteem and by avoiding experiences or roles that have been found to lower self-esteem. Dweck's (2017) description of *self-coherence* points to the need for balance in meeting the multiple needs important for the self. How one reacts to psychological threats and conditional regard can disrupt self-trust and make it difficult to toughen self-esteem.

Journey Toward the Ideal Self

A growth mindset as recommended and researched by Dweck (2017) is the capability to be realistic in perception of growth opportunities by sizing up situations along with one's emotional reactions to them. A major impediment to growth occurs when an individual is unable to step back—“be nonjudgmental”—when processing negative feedback. During an assessment of a current performance or summative assessment of one's pattern of outcomes, one must be fair to oneself by not discounting strengths that will support what can be done next and why. The feelings that occur when one feels criticized (negatively evaluated) tend to be further amplified if one tries to suppress them (Buckingham & Goodall, 2019). Doing so often leads to a “rebound” effect (Wegner, 1994) characterized by rumination, which is associated with depression and other mental health problems.

Psychological Models

Participants in a study by Bergsieker et al. (2012) found it easier to omit negative descriptions than to fully report their opinions for fear of offending others. These results suggest that individuals with stronger habits of present-focused mindfulness and resilience may be more likely to recognize and make corrections to how they are reacting in the situation. Recognition of the role of subjective error when assessing reactions to negative feedback increases the probability that one can step back to process the experience and to reflect on what may have distorted the accuracy of one's representation of what occurred. Although accuracy of assessing affective processes is always approximate, it remains highly important for quality of life to consciously work to change the perspectives one habitually uses because others are possible and important to discover.

Buckingham and Goodall support a balanced perspective about feedback because of what they have discovered about a “feedback fallacy” in employee evaluations (2019). Direct and harsh feedback that focuses on weaknesses leaves individuals feeling untrusted and unaccepted for who they are. Rather than encouraging improvement, this leads to “overreaching” of evaluators who assume that how they understand their own performances is generalizable to those they are evaluating. Employees reject feedback, even if valuable, if their need for affirmation is ignored during an evaluation process. Growth and self-growth depend upon a more open mindset about evaluation so feedback can be used for accurate self-assessment.

Related Growth Insights

1. When there is evidence that one's perceptions, reactions, and behaviors within real-time contexts are not congruent with ideal self, one must seek mentoring guidance to more accurately *define performance characteristics* that need stabilization or strengthening to increase *trust of self*.
2. *Toughening of self-esteem* results from growth in self-observations, self-analyses, and self-assessments of experiences in dynamic situations in which one has trusted self in responses to failures.
3. *Maintaining balance* requires a combination of growth in logical reasoning—despite experiencing cognitive dissonance—and growth in successfully recognizing when emotional reactions are peripheral rather than central to success with a performance or experience.

Related Self-Growth Insights

1. Self-Growth in maintaining perspective increases as one becomes stronger at *pre-assessing* situations for opportunities that have potential to increase one's capability to recognize larger patterns—including the need to deal with incongruities—that occur across growth experiences.
2. A self-growth mindset is characterized by the capability to independently *design* and use *assessment methods* that allow one to *be nonjudgmental* even when upset about feedback that appears to be unfair or is sharply different from one's perception of what happened.
3. By modeling *fairness* and balance, individuals can support openness of others to potential self-growth opportunities.

Growth Skills: Prioritizing, Being Passionate, Seeing Prompts, Persisting, and Valuing Performance

Mentoring Skills: Raising Expectations, Being Patient, Describing Performance, and Self-Mentoring

“The reason it is not a contradiction to be open and focused at the same time is that these contrary ways of using psychic energy share a similarity that is more important than their differences. They require *you* to decide whether at this point it is better to be open or to be focused. They are both expressions of your ability to control attention, and it is this, not whether you are open or focused, that matters. (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996)

Historical Background

Managing one's physical and psychological energy requires understanding of the conditions and processes that are energizing and sustaining rather than depleting motivation. The Managing Energy perspective is related to the Initiative perspective because any significant endeavor takes energy and there will be ups and downs in mood, physical energy, drive, and focus during the whole process. Examples of effective management of psychological energy include “flow” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), which occurs when one is deeply engaged in a highly valued activity or experience. Molden and Dweck argue that self-regulation of behavior must be examined on an individual basis rather than with an assumption that the choices and reactions of most people are accurately represented by average findings of research studies (2006). The 2019 CLS and the models of growth and self-growth provide innovative knowledge and processes for moving away from the static assumptions that have restricted applications of psychology for maintaining energy in daily life.

Journey Toward the Ideal Self

Relying on personal willpower alone is an unreliable way to manage psychological energy as everyone knows from New Year's resolutions that were not sustained. Duckworth et al., review the evidence for many useful strategies—including self-control and “grit”—that can strengthen responses needed for change (2018). Although individuals tend to focus on themselves as the originators of control, energy often emerges from collaboration, preplanning, setting conditions, reframing situations, creating optimistic images of one's future self, and using therapy or coaching to help one resolve blocks to moving ahead with goals. In addition, sustained energy comes from maintaining balance between work and personal life, attending to physical health, renewing readiness for action by getting enough sleep and rest, and by nurturing valued relationships.

Psychological Models

Baumeister, in a review of research on willpower, finds that it is a real and sometimes powerful resource for getting things done by simply pushing forward; however, willpower is effective only for actual capabilities (2011). Baumeister (2011) and others, such as Vohs et al. (2008), report that intense decision-making can cause “ego depletion,” a lessened ability to manage cognitive load, which has been ascribed and measured in some studies as related to lowering of brain glucose. However, Forestier et al. conclude that ego depletion is not an accurate explanation of willpower failures because multiple self-control components must be included such as capacity, resources, and willingness to act (2022). In addition, self reports of fatigue can easily be based on cognitive interpretations of motivational depletion when the measurement of self-control occurs in an emotionally conflicting situation.

It is well documented (see, for example, Shin & Ariely, 2004) that deciding can be difficult because it means one must forego alternatives—it often feels less risky to “keep the door open” to one's present mode of operation. Thomson et al. (2015) have explored the mental resources required for vigilance and controlling of mind wandering. Research by Rosenbaum, et al. on “pre-crastination” (choosing low-priority tasks) offers an alternative interpretation of cognitive load management that occurs when one quickly completes a task so it can be checked off one's list (2019). A risk of this strategy is that a routine task may be prioritized over a critically important one. Assessment of inclinations to proceed in ways that cause ego depletion or involve pre-crastination helps with recognition of the effects of these and other flawed strategies on authentic passion and energy. In contrast, increases in growth capabilities related to QoL make it possible not only to sustain, but to increase one's energy level for wise pursuit of outcomes aligned with one's interests, values, and goals (Milkman, 2021).

It often requires longer-term planning to set up conditions and capabilities that can reduce stress reactions and increase resilience. Meichenbaum's stress inoculation training incorporates many skills found in the 2019 CLS Affective

Domain related to emotional self-management, especially monitoring of self-statements, modification of beliefs, and changes of performance in stressful situations (1985, 1993). All of these are consistent with the emphases of the constructed emotions and mindset research (e.g., Barrett, 2017; Dweck, 2012) in that they are strategies that help one step back rather than acting impulsively. Meichenbaum's typical training procedures include phases for knowledge/education, skills acquisition, and follow-through. The specific goal of *relapse prevention* is achieved by strengthening performance capabilities in increasingly challenging and stressful situations. Saunders et al. (1996), in a meta-analysis of 37 studies, found stress inoculation training to be an effective means for reducing performance anxiety, reducing state (situational) anxiety, and enhancing performance under stress in applied work settings (1985, 1993). The results also indicated that effects could be achieved by less experienced trainers and with diverse populations. Motivational Interviewing is another counseling intervention that helps individuals learn to focus on actual needs and avoid ineffectual emotional reactions to their life situations (Miller, & Moyers, 2017).

Related Growth Insights

1. Choosing from life activities, experiences, relationships, and decisions those that energize *passion* will make obstacles seem like challenges rather than barriers that do not deplete energy.
2. Ongoing motivation for projects and performances, even under stressful conditions, can be sustained when self-statements about the *value of performance* are combined with previous growth from *persisting* to drive resoluteness to achieve even more.
3. Productivity is an energy generator. *Setting priorities* to do urgent and important tasks first and pre-thinking about situations to readily *recognize the prompts* for efficient decision-making, will increase efficiency, preserve energy, and prevent declines.

Related Self-Growth Insights

1. Recognizing what one can productively evolve in relationships, improve in environmental conditions, increase in performances, and augment in growth capability allows one to *be patient* about everything else so one can use self-growth development to work its magic over time to conserve and eliminate energy waste.
2. Fundamental to *self-mentoring* is self-challenging and moving beyond current capabilities; the way to maintain energy in the long run is to use the motivation that growth generates.
3. *Raising expectations* of what one expects from life roles motivates careful *description of* new areas of *performance* and development of self-control skills to focus energy on achieving QoL benefits that match these expectations.

9: Enhancing Quality of Life *To maximize, short and long-term, one's personally defined quality of life*

Growth Skills: Strengthening Role Identities, Applying Criteria, Maintaining Standards, and Identifying SII Opportunities

Mentoring Skills: Writing Measurable Outcomes, Setting Criteria, Selecting Measures, Being Compassionate, and Establishing Standards

“ At the level of self-actualizing, many dichotomies become resolved, opposites are seen to be unities and the whole dichotomous way of thinking is recognized to be immature. For self-actualizing people, there is a strong tendency for selfishness and unselfishness to fuse into a higher, superordinate unity. Work tends to be the same as play; vocation and avocation become the same thing. When duty is pleasant and pleasure is fulfillment of duty, then they lose their separateness and oppositeness. The highest maturity is discovered to include a childlike quality, and we discover healthy children to have some of the qualities of mature self-actualization. The inner-outer split, between self and all else, gets fuzzy and much less sharp, and they are seen to be permeable to each other at the highest level of personality development. (Maslow, 1962)

Historical Background

Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi introduced *positive psychology* as “A science of positive subjective experience, positive individual traits, and positive institutions promises to improve quality of life and prevent the pathologies that arise when life is barren and meaningless.” (2000). Positive psychologists initiated a scientific field of research that has successfully addressed the main topics of the older humanistic psychology. Seligman agrees with Maslow that capabilities must be self-developed and involve growth in increasingly challenging roles and areas of performance and

experience that are valuable from a personal perspective (2018). Seligman's PERMA model (positivity, engagement, relationships, meaning, and achievements) has become a prominent formulation for measuring subjective well-being.

Journey Toward the Ideal Self

Thich Nhất Hahn, a contemporary Buddhist, believed that an integrated ethical frame of reference is the ultimate goal for quality in living (2014). Stanley and De Brigard caution that everyone can highlight praiseworthy deeds and forget or minimize moral transgressions (2019). Readily believing, without careful assessment and reflection, that one is currently better than one used to be can distort reality by allowing a sense of satisfaction with the status quo.

Recognizing and using opportunities for effective use of the PE SII assessment technique (identifying strengths, improvements, and insights for a performance and its outcomes; Wasserman, & Beyerlein, 2007) strengthens capability to engage with the reality of one's present functioning so growth toward an ideal self can be reliably planned. The QoL perspective is subjective and varies by individual, but new tools such as the Self-Growth Methodology (Jain et al., 2020) describe practical steps for creating a personalized life plan with criteria, standards, and measures for the quality one desires from life represented by one's personal framework (King-Berry et al., 2021).

Psychological Models

Fredrickson's "broaden-and-build" theory proposes that special moments marked by positive affect have an accumulative effect on *flourishing*—living within an optimal range of human functioning—by inducing a widening effect on thoughts and actions through increased creativity and exploration (2001). Reflexive or avoidant reactions ("fight or flight"), which happen quickly and require little cognition, have a place—if carefully monitored—because these help with meeting basic survival needs and are energizing in the moment. However, it is the positive skills that must be carefully built to increase QoL. Being Positive is a learning skill that plays an important role in flourishing by increasing attention to development of capabilities, improving mental, physical, and emotional functioning, and challenging fixed mindsets. Flourishing also requires success in dealing with negative experiences and emotions that create important challenges that can be overcome by developing new capabilities (Fredrickson and Losada, 2005; 2013).

Neff contrasts self-compassion, which has roots in Buddhism, with self-esteem, the cognitive representation of self-worth (2016). Self-compassionate individuals realize the importance of accepting themselves as human and of being non-judgmental in interpreting experiences, especially negative events, when reflecting on self-worth. *Self-esteem* was described by William James (1890) as a judgment about competence in life domains important to a person—and it has long been considered an essential characteristic of mental health. More recent research, however, suggests that a focus on self-esteem can also be a risk factor if it influences individuals to be less autonomous, especially when social influences are significant. Growth skills such as "Strengthening Role Identities" and "Maintaining Standards" are much more likely to occur if mindfulness is tempered with kindness toward self and respect for common human needs and aspirations.

Related Growth Insights

1. *Flourishing*, as defined in positive psychology (Keyes & Haidt, 2003), requires prioritizing, aligning decisions to QoL, and focusing on broadening and building capabilities that *strengthen role identities*.
2. A person's QoL can be enhanced by *applying* broad *criteria* that support daily improvement in decision making and *maintaining standards* that are consistent with positive self-worth.
3. QoL growth opportunities can easily pass unnoticed without a life plan that includes conscious *assessment* of *opportunities* for making distinctive—even dramatic—changes.

Related Self-Growth Insights

1. Self-Growth requires that one autonomously *select* and self-manage carefully thought-out *criteria* for defining the growth capabilities needed for one's life journey.
2. *Being compassionate* is highly valued because it refocuses consciousness beyond self to the universality of the human need for positive self-regard. Even for those who have *established high standards* in their growth, it is important to avoid self-judgments that decrease QoL due to lack of self-compassion.
3. *Selecting measures* for achievement of *written QoL outcomes* is an individual process for use during quarterly and annual summative assessment and reflection that requires personalized (customized) indicators to measure progress.

Conclusion

The PE framework evolved from an emphasis on the functions of knowing, learning, and learning to learn to an emphasis on the performance foundations of growth and self-growth. This expansion has created the need for greater awareness of the psychological aspects of contexts and situations that offer opportunities for development and self-development of capabilities. Conscious strengthening of distinctive mindsets and capabilities has become central not only to the educational aims of PE but also to the personal life journeys of individuals. An innovative resource introduced in this paper is nine psychological perspectives that identify psychological factors that challenge individuals in varied ways depending upon their history of development and their range of competencies with learning skills from all domains. The perspectives are psychological

factors or constructs that are well-represented in psychological scholarship and are presented to provide enough information and insight to support their use in planning, performing, and assessing of learning, performance, and growth experiences that align within each perspective. The self-validation perspective, for example, highlights the importance of building a resilient self-concept as a buffer for negative experiences. Managing energy as a perspective brings out insights about the importance of making situative choices such as consciously deciding whether it is more valuable to expend mental effort on an open exploration of an issue or on a focused analysis of an element of the issue. By having a broadly based range of psychological perspectives to consider, anyone interested in personal and performance growth will discover new ways of conceptualizing assessment targets and of using reflection to enhance QoL along the life journey.

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