

Chapter 3: Values and Morals: Guidelines for Living

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Introduction

If you know what you want to be, you are more likely to be it. Therefore, we start with a chapter on values, morals, life goals, aspirations, dreams, wanna-bes, etc.

Moral philosophy is hard thought about right action.
-Socrates

Goodness without knowledge is weak; knowledge without goodness is dangerous.

We have to build a better man before we can build a better society.
All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good people do nothing.

Our purpose is not to make a living but a life--a worthy, well-rounded, useful life.

Morality is not a subject; it is a life put to the test in dozens of moments.
-Paul Tillich

Why We Need Values and Morals

It is important to carefully consider your values for several reasons: (1) they could guide your life minute by minute towards noble goals, rather than your life being controlled by self-serving motives, customs, accidental occurrences, bad habits, impulses, or emotions. You have to know where you are going before you can get there. (2) Values and morals can not only guide but inspire and motivate you, giving you energy and a zest for living and for doing something meaningful. (3) Sensitivity to a failure to live up to your basic values may lead to unproductive guilt or to constructive self-dissatisfaction which motivates you to improve. (4) High values and some success meeting those goals are necessary for high self-esteem. (5) Professed but unused values are worthless or worse--phony goodness and rationalizations for not changing. We must be honest with ourselves, recognizing the difference between pretended (verbalized) values and operational (acted on) values. Of course, no one lives up to all their ideals, but values that only make us look or feel good (including being religious) and do not help us act more morally must be recognized as self-serving hypocrisy.

Thus, self-help is not just for overcoming problems; it also involves learning to become what you truly value, achieving your greatest potential. That is why your values and strengths should be considered along with your problems. For every fault or weakness you want to lose, you have a valuable strength to gain; for every crude emotion to control, you have an opposing good feeling to experience; for every awkwardness, a helpful skill to acquire; for every denial, a truth to be found. Optimally, you will identify your problems, as in chapter 2, but also decide on lofty goals that are worthy of your life. I would like to help you find out where you truly want to go. Then, I hope you and I become sufficiently discontent with our shortcomings and dedicated to our highest goals so that we are motivated to achieve our greatest potential. Trying to be good is important, perhaps more important than solving personal problems. Both are self-help.

Moral development teachers often say that becoming moral requires enough emotional development to feel guilty when we do wrong, enough social development to accept our responsibility for behaving in agreed upon ways towards our group, and enough cognitive development to be able to place ourselves in another person's shoes. But just because you develop some of these qualities, it doesn't guarantee that you will develop a wise and effective philosophy of life.

As Steven Covey (1992), the author of *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, points out, many people set goals and strive for years to achieve one after another, only to discover when they get to the end goals that they didn't want to go there. He says, "no one on their death bed ever complains that they should have spent more time in the office." In a new book, *First Things First*, Covey (1994) says everyone and every family (and every organization, every nation, etc.) should have a well thought out "Mission Statement," a set of values, or a guiding philosophy of life. At the end of life, intimate relationships and how you have dealt with others are the things that count. I recommend his books.

Are we Americans becoming more moral? Perhaps in some ways. Reportedly, more and more people are volunteering to help the poor, the sick, and the elderly. For the first 80 years of this century, US citizens have gradually paid more taxes (that *is* doing good!) but more recently political conservatives have been encouraging us to hate taxes. In addition, *there is a lot of evidence we are backsliding morally*, e.g. a few years ago 9 out of 10 defense contractors were under criminal investigation. In 1990, when tax payers were required to give the Social Security numbers for every dependent, seven million names disappeared! More evidence of backsliding:

Statement	"Yes" in 1965	"Yes" in 1990
Financial success is very important to me.	25%	75%

A meaningful philosophy of life is important.	75%	25%
I cheat on tests.	20%	37%
I'd lie about possible exposure to AIDS (with one-night stands)	---	45%

A nation-wide survey by Ralph Wexler of the Institute of Ethics indicates that 1/3 of high schoolers and 1/6 of college students admit stealing something in the last year. Over 1/3 said they would lie on their resume to get a job. Over 1/2 of college students admit cheating in some way, over 60% say they would cheat on an important test. Other surveys show that 8 out of 10 high school students admit cheating. Likewise, 1/4 Americans think it is okay to cheat on their auto insurance, 30%-50% think goofing off at work is okay, 1 in 6 use drugs on the job, and 1/3 to 1/2 cheat on their spouses. Almost 60% of American adults have used force against another person; 7% say they would kill someone if paid enough; 25% would abandon their families for money (Etzioni, 1993). Furthermore, Wexler says only 2% of students get caught cheating because teachers don't watch carefully; therefore, maybe crime does pay and maybe honesty is, in some ways, not always the best policy from a selfish point of view. What about from society's point of view?

Immoral behavior comes from somewhere. Our current environment is not highly moral or supportive of morality and our society doesn't seem to know what to do about these permissive conditions. About 20% of high schoolers feel a lot of peer pressure to do something wrong. About 80% of teens think schools should teach basic values; yet, 90% of them are already "satisfied" with their values (Ansley & McCleary, 1992) and probably don't want to think seriously about values. In general, many adults fail to provide good role models. Psychology Today (August, 1997) recently reported a survey showing that about half of American workers did something unethical at work this year--padding the expense account, stealing property, lying about what they did or did not do, using sick days inappropriately, etc. Even at the highest levels, half of the top executives admit they are willing to "fudge" figures to look good. More than that, a whopping 75% of MBA students say they would be willing to distort the facts to make company profits look higher. This lack of moral restraint, according to Secretan (1998), is epidemic in the workplace. He says we can change that. Buford & Whalin (1997) take a different approach, namely, change your goals in mid-life from success to significance. Still others suggest simplifying your life by doing what really matters (Aumiller, 1995).

In any case, all of us face temptations frequently to be dishonest and almost all of us could improve our moral behavior in some way. Avoiding being immoral is a very worthy endeavor; however, it is important to realize the immense gap *from* being "just barely on the side of the law," i.e. on the edge between moral and immoral, *to* being

highly ethical and noble. We can't all be like Mother Teresa or Albert Schweitzer, but we can recognize the highest levels of ethics humans are capable of achieving. It must, in some cases, require a long and hard struggle to get there. Examples: the parents who sacrifice greatly so their children can have advantages they didn't have. The merchant who works hard 12-hour days to be sure his/her customers are given the best possible service, not just to make money. The soldier who gives his leg, his sight, or his life to protect others. The caring person who takes a needy child to raise. The person who undergoes great personal losses in order to right a wrong or to fight for a worthy cause. It is a giant leap from deciding to tell the truth on your resume about your grades or work experience to devoting your life to a civil rights cause, fighting on the side of the oppressed against an abusive authority, opposing daily the wanton destruction of the earth, etc., etc. It takes great self-control to transform your self from the lowest level of just barely acceptable morality to the highest level. But who can say that we can't all do it?

It isn't just that so many wrong things are being done, it is an equal problem that so many right things are not being done. There are facts we can't deny (and remain moral), such as one billion people are illiterate (and it is estimated that could be corrected with 7 billion dollars, a small part of our federal budget). Likewise, 841 million people, one out of every five, are hungry (and we have surplus food). The median income of black families is lower than the income of 92% of white families. About 45% of Americans regularly attend church (36% think God has actually spoken to them), but Americans give less than 2% of their income to charity. So, don't think the world is fair and that most social problems are being taken care of adequately.



Just in case you believe that great social problems are beyond your scope, consider this story: God said to me: Your task is to build a better world. I answered: How can I do that? The world is such a large, vast place, so complicated now, and I am so small and useless. There's nothing I can do. But God in his great wisdom said: Just build a better you.

-Anonymous



The last quote helps us see that morality, i.e. being a good person, is important for our own well being as well as for the good of others. Several noted writers have recently tried to convince us that being good pays off. The better books are Sherwin (1998), Twerski (1997) and Kushner (1996), all three Rabbis. Gough (1997) has a book that is perhaps more appropriate for teenagers and apparently is well received by them. Their point is that being good is part of being successful--having self-esteem as well as being a good worker, good parent, and kind/grateful/forgiving towards others. There are so many books that can inspire you.

Everyone needs a philosophy of life. Mental health is based on the tension between what you are and what you think you should become. You should be striving for worthy goals. Emotional problems arise from being purposeless.

-Victor Frankl (1970)

Why it is hard to deal with values

In contrast with the next chapter on how to eliminate unwanted habits, dealing with values is fraught with special pitfalls. For example:

There is little research about which values yield the greatest good for the greatest number of people or about how to change one's own values or about how to live in accordance with one's basic values. Few candles have been lit here, thus far. My discipline, psychology, has not contributed much to our becoming a moral, compassionate society. Our best thinkers have not even decided the content and structure of values--what the hell is involved? See Schwartz and Bilsky (1987). LeShan (1993) tries to explain our failure to reduce wars and crime or to increase fairness and justice. One might speculate that many people do not want to research values, preferring to believe their values are the best.

Most of us have little help in developing a philosophy of life. Values tend to be picked out in a haphazard, piece-meal fashion from friends, parents, the media, teachers, popular heroes, and clergy in that order (*Behavior Today*, Feb., 1981, p. 8); therefore, values are frequently contradictory and not logically connected with how we actually behave. For example, we accept the Golden Rule (do unto others as you would have them do unto you) but at the same time we struggle for money and "the good life" for ourselves without much consideration of the needs of others. We say we value honesty but cheat on our exams (up to 67%), on our income taxes (38%), and deceive our best friend (33%). We claim to value being understanding and forgiving but sometimes become nasty and revengeful. We supposedly value hard work but procrastinate. We seek a devoted partner but are unfaithful (45%), etc., etc. (*Psychology Today*, Nov. 1981, pp 34-50). There are many moral decisions made by each of us every day and always new moral dilemmas to resolve, mostly on our own without help.

Perhaps because many people equate values and religion (yet, I hope it is obvious to you that a person can have very high values--honesty, loving, giving--without having any religious beliefs in God or salvation at all), a discussion of our values may be considered an invasion of our privacy and our personal religious beliefs. Asking a person why he/she holds a particular moral opinion is encroaching on

sacred ground reserved exclusively for "persons of the cloth" and God. The place inside where we store our values and our conscience is a scary place to which we invite few people, resenting those who intrude and question our values or preach to us. Perhaps, values are a touchy topic because our own guilty conscience, when aroused, can hurt us. It is true that many people loosely "expect" their religion to keep them moral, but, on the other hand, insist that religion shouldn't get too deeply involved in their "private" behavior or challenge their rationalizations for selfish, immoral behavior. Most importantly, I think we avoid discussing our values because we are unsure of them and afraid our self-serving denials and illusions will be revealed by an open airing of our beliefs.

From my teaching, I have an illustration of how the human mind protects its beliefs: I have indicated many times in many ways to my students that I have doubts about God. Although thousands have come to ask me about other concerns, *not one* student has ever approached me to find out more about my reasons for doubting God or my explanation of peoples' beliefs in God. Quite a few have come to "save" me, but they only wanted to talk, not listen. When was the last time you heard of a church inviting an atheist or agnostic to join them in discussing the existence of God? We maintain many of our beliefs by avoiding questions and doubts, by closing our minds. Perhaps closed-mindedness is a good coping mechanism in terms of religious beliefs, but I doubt if a locked mind is the best processor of ideas to guide our lives. It is hard to even help yourself, if you have a mind that is afraid to think.

A leading researcher of values, Milton Rokeach (1973), believes that it is often necessary to become dissatisfied with yourself before you will change your behavior, attitudes, or values. That makes sense, but it means one has to (a) create a problem (self-dissatisfaction) in order to (b) solve a problem of morals (e.g. becoming more considerate). Naturally, we will be tempted to take the easy way out and avoid dealing with both "problems," but this chapter will try to stimulate and confront our thinking in such a way that each of us can arrive at a consistent, meaningful, just, and motivating set of values to live by, day by day. If we are successful, however, each of us will surely feel some uneasiness during the process of clarifying our values. That is to be expected.

As you know, there is a bewildering assortment of values thrust upon each of us, e.g. by family, religion, teachers, friends, ads, media, movies, music, etc. And, many people and groups take their beliefs and values very seriously. They are certain they are right. If you reject their beliefs, you may encounter serious, real threats, e.g. "you'll burn in hell" or "get out of my house" or "you'll never be happy" or "how can you look yourself in the mirror?" or "that will end our relationship." This is playing hard ball. Sometimes, especially when the other person's values and purposes have not been clearly revealed to you early in the relationship, their moral judgments, rejection, and threats can be very powerful. I will not deceive you about my beliefs nor will

I attack your beliefs. I want you to know that I have doubts about the existence of a God, but there are certain values I believe in, especially the Golden Rule or caring for others (a central theme of most religions). I offer no threats if you don't believe as I do, instead I offer my understanding because philosophies are hard decisions... and may strip us of comfortable self-delusions and lead us to a hard life. I can not even assure you that I am certain about my own ideas regarding values, but as Mahatma Gandhi said about his beliefs, "they appear to be absolutely correct, and seem for the time being to be final. For if they were not, I should base no action on them." I have done my homework; I only ask that you consider my opinions. Your beliefs are always your choice (so long as they don't hurt others).



Strange is our situation here upon earth. Each of us comes for a short visit, not knowing why, yet sometimes seeming to divine a purpose.

-Albert Einstein



Lastly, our philosophy of life and the meaning we find in life may change as we go through life. We mature, we learn, our needs change, we have new relationships, our jobs make new demands on us, we have children, we are successful, we fail, we approach death. These things change our values. Changes in values usually result from conflicts: we act in ways we don't value, we see another viewpoint, we recognize inconsistencies among our values, we are pressured to change our values by others, and so on. In many of these conflicts, such as individual freedom vs. responsibility for others or happiness vs. achievement, there are persuasive arguments on both sides. The lady symbolizing justice carries a balance scale. Such a scale constantly moves because reasoning and the weight of moral arguments constantly changes. But logic and moral judgment are not the only factors changing our values. More important may be rationalizations, biased self-protective thinking, emotional personal needs, and even unconscious factors. So, to have true wisdom about our values requires knowledge and reasoning skills, awareness of our irrationality, insight into our emotions, and some probing of our unconscious. That is hard.

The Golden Rule

Religions claim to be the source of our values and morals. These may often be false claims, because the values are older than the religions, because many religions claim the same ideas, and because several studies provide *no evidence* that religious people are more caring, loving, generous, or helpful than non-religious people (Kohn, 1989). (Kohn cites evidence that religious folks are, on average, *more intolerant* of minorities.) Perhaps the rewards of religions--salvation,

nirvana, reincarnation--are their big attractions, not their demanding guidelines for being good. Yet, being reminded of what is good, hopefully will nudge us in the right direction.

"The golden rule," so called because it is the highest rule of life, is an important part of most religions. It is expressed in slightly different ways:

- General wording: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."
- Jesus Christ in the Sermon on the Mount: "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them."
(Matthew 7:12)
- Judaism: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." (Leviticus 19:18)
- Islam: "No one of you is a believer until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself."

Note: Traditions interpret the Golden Rule in different ways, however. The above statements say DO SOMETHING! About 1000 to 3000 years before Jesus and Muhammad, there were both positive and negative (DON'T DO) versions of the golden rule:

- Confucianism: "What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others." (Analects 15:23)
- Buddhism: "Hurt not others with that which pains yourself."
(Udanavarga 5:18)
- Hinduism: "Good people proceed while considering that what is best for others is best for themselves." (Hitopadesa)

Note: Somewhat related values are expressed by secular groups:

- Humanists: "Every person has dignity and worth, and, therefore, should command the respect of every other person." (This is in contrast to medieval scholars who taught that life on earth was to be despised and that humans were sinful creatures who should be devoting their lives to getting into heaven.)
- Communist motto: "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs."
- Indian saying: "Don't judge others until you have walked in their moccasins."

Understanding Why We Need Meaning in Our Lives:

What's Religion's Role?

Baumeister (1991), in an impressive psychological and historical analysis, says that four basic needs push us to find meaning in our lives. If all four are satisfied, we feel life is meaningful; otherwise, we

feel somewhat dissatisfied. These needs are (1) to have purpose--striving for something in the future. You may seek *goals* (good job, children, retirement) or *fulfillment* (happiness, pride, how we imagine we will feel when we reach our worthy goals). (2) A need to have value --wanting to be *seen as good* and justified in our actions. Moral systems, like the Golden Rule, originally enabled us to live together with some degree of harmony. (3) A need for efficacy -- *feeling effective*, capable, in control, and that we have made or will make a difference. Humans even need and strive for illusions of control; a myth reduces distress. (4) A need for self-worth-- finding a basis for *feeling positive about their lives*. The more of these sources of self-esteem we have, the more secure we are. (But, excessive demands on the "self" for meaning causes depression.) Unfortunately, self-worth often involves trying to feel superior to someone or groups of others, thus, for example, the poor southern white male in 1860 felt superior to the black slave and fought, in part, to maintain his status (see chapters 7 and 9 for many examples of chauvinism). These four needs (and their causes) combine with our life experiences (our culture, our family rules, our religion, and our friends' views) to produce our personal value system and the meaning attached to our life.


Baumeister contends that humans, pushed by these four needs and aided by an enormously imaginative brain, have for thousands of years created beliefs (myths) in a "higher power" which will protect and provide for us, make sense of natural events, and give purpose or meaning to our lives. That is, human needs and fears motivated the development of religions which embodied and reinforced our values. Moreover, he says that many of the promises religions have made, such as lasting marriages (with the male in charge), help avoiding or handling misfortunes, the answering of prayers, eternal salvation, etc. are very comforting ideas but pretty much illusory. He and many other scholars (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, & Tipton, 1985; Lasch, 1984) think the decline of explicit moral teachings by the church in the last 50 to 75 years has left individuals with a "values gap," without a moral base on which to build a philosophy of life. Since a complete set of values is no longer handed down to us by family, culture, or church, we now must construct our own value system (or avoid the task). Unfortunately, all of us, especially the young, are rather unprepared for this difficult and important task. Without guidance, we usually adopt just bits and pieces of values and goals from others, then to a large extent we use personal satisfaction as our guiding light: having fun, looking good, loving, working, and being successful and happy. Those aren't bad values but, surely, they aren't humans' noblest efforts either.

The remainder of Baumeister's book deals with psychological explanations of how our species got to this point, namely, moving from *having to know God* (an authority) in order to be moral to today *having to know ourselves* (self-reliance) in order to self-actualize and achieve our purposes. This psycho-history of morals (and such things as religion's treatment of women and sex) is fascinating; I recommend his book strongly. The insights provided should encourage you to reconsider the wisdom of several religions and then formulate your own

meanings of life. If a person neither accepts the values and morals of his/her family/community/church *nor* develops his/her own value system, the rest of us may suffer in the form of crime, abuse, violence, inconsiderateness, and selfishness. Thus, I believe we all have a grave responsibility to decide upon and live by our own (but an acceptable) set of morals.

It may be that religions have not given us nearly as many morals and values as commonly believed (although religion has obviously given believers some meaning, in the sense that, for Christians, believing in Christ and following "God's word" is thought to lead to everlasting life). There is evidence that religions gradually incorporate a society's morals and ambitions into what is proclaimed to be God's will (rather than correcting society's wicked ways). Thus, a pacifist religion--"turn the other cheek"--founded by the "Prince of Peace" has repeatedly supported religious crusades, wars for economic gain, and "just wars" wanted by leaders or the people. Even though it appears that religions did not "invent" good morals, religions remain very strong, far from dead. In fact, for believers, religion amply satisfies the four powerful needs for meaning, e.g. purpose, directing many lives and promising salvation and less fear; values, telling us what is right and wrong; efficacy, offering the power of prayer and some feeling of control over life and death, and self-worth, including feeling superior to others and being loved, favored, and chosen by God. Religion helps people handle life's misfortunes and our enormous fear of death. For a brilliant analysis of religion's crucial role in denying death, read Becker (1974). Religion also provides a sense of belonging and a social support system. The payoffs of religion are so fantastic that if you believe in a religion, it is extremely threatening to even question it, let alone give up its alleged advantages.

God is a delicate issue because some people need religion but others do not. The realist must ask: Did an omnipotent God create man or did insecure, frightened people create Gods? Most people might give a knee-jerk answer but thoughtful consideration of this question takes months or years. How *you* answer that question will influence your behavior somewhat, particularly in terms of church attendance, reliance on prayer, contributions to church activities and buildings, and perhaps other ways. But your basic value system may not change at all: People are just as honest, caring, gentle, good, etc. when they no longer believe in God as when they did. Religion is not the only basis for being considerate of others, being faithful, unprejudiced, and living in harmony. These values are simply reasonable and beneficial. With or without a religion, we all have the same four needs to meet and most of the same moral choices to make. We can find meaning for our lives without religion. We won't all arrive at the same meaning, but we can, with effort, all be good and do good in our own way. There is no one true meaning of life. Perhaps, as Baumeister says, "the quest for meaning, not the answer, is the real miracle of life."


 In the last analysis it is our conception of death which decides our answers to all the questions that life puts to us.
 -Dag Hammarskjöld

In chapter 14 under "helpful attitudes," I discuss the psychological benefits of a deep religious faith. For some people, the benefits are great and difficult to replace. However, because belief in a God is an emotional matter, not a rational process, it is not an issue we can decide by just "using our head." It is a conflict within each of us between the solace of total faith vs. the satisfaction of facing reality. In our culture, we can't openly debate the existence of God with most people; it is too emotional an issue. Many people can't even privately consider the pros and cons of believing in God; doubts are thought to offend God. Therefore, if religion and God are deeply established parts of your life's meaning, count your blessings but be tolerant of people who chose a slightly different life path. They are not evil.

On the other hand, if your thoughts lead you to question God's existence, do not despair but ask yourself: what are the implications for how I would live my life? Among many other things, I would suggest this--if God isn't ruling the world, seeing that justice is done, taking care of needy people, guiding our priests and leaders, answering prayers, rewarding the good, etc., then each of us shoulders more of the responsibility for those things. In short, without God, the meaning of life may shift slightly but *our lives could become more meaningful* because without an omnipotent God each individual must assume more responsibility for what happens. Therefore, the development of your own philosophy of life is even more important because only humans can learn to save the environment, live in peace, love one another, help the poor and disadvantaged, help ourselves, etc. It will not be easy to do all that we morally should.

Being Good is Hard

As scientists, we psychologists know very little about changing our values and little about how people become compassionate, generous, trustworthy, forgiving, and altruistic. See an excellent review of what we do know in Mussen and Eisenberg-Berg (1977). Everyone recognizes, of course, that certain individuals and groups, e.g. the Hopi Indians in Arizona, do develop these kind, socially responsible, considerate traits. But how? We aren't sure, but it certainly isn't easy to become an unselfish person. The Hopi family and community, for

instance, teach and model a concern for others, cooperation, and having a "Hopi good heart" from early childhood. Likewise, the Israeli kibbutz (Shapira & Madsen, 1969) and the schools in Russia (Bronfenbrenner, 1975) try to teach non-competitive cooperation and communal responsibilities for others, while we in the United States praise individual freedom and achievement, and encourage win-lose competition. By the way, what has happened to the values of caring for others since the collapse of the Soviet Union?

The "cold war" was believed by some to be a great economic experiment between communism and free enterprise. With the 1990 failure of the communist economy, some American's declared total victory for our side (even though we were having serious economic problems too). I fear what other conclusions are being drawn as well, not by logic but by emotional needs. For instance, let's not conclude that American values were and are superior to Soviet values. I still value their proclaimed cooperative group-orientation, rather than our competitive consider-only-yourself orientation. Thinking people can hardly interpret the "the Cold War" as a great *moral* victory. That 45-year "war" involved two self-centered military giants who for 45 years wasted trillions on weapons and hundreds of thousands of lives in small wars and rebellions around the world, while a billion people remained hungry, sick, and uneducated. Furthermore, if the United States or any other country now jumps to the conclusion that military might (instead of world-wide democracy) is the best way to peace and justice, the country's leaders need more training as thinkers and as moralists.

Humans, acting alone, are certainly capable of selfish, inconsiderate, hostile acts--witness our overflowing prisons. Many people would cheat others and corporations if they had a chance. A few would torture and kill others, even wipe out an entire country or race or ethnic group (witness Germany, Ireland, Israel, and Bosnia). Many children primarily think of themselves. Colin Turnbull (1972) has described a tribe in Uganda, called the Ik, who are extremely self-centered and downright cruel. Ik parents abandon their children at an early age to fend for themselves or die. Thus, it isn't surprising that all Ik steal whatever they can, even from close relatives, in an effort to survive in a harsh environment. In our culture, we believe in giving our children love, warmth, affection, and meeting their every need; however, as we saw in the introduction, this protected childhood does not guarantee that each child will not steal and cheat, and be kind, just, and generous. We are experimenting, but we haven't discovered yet how to produce good people.

We know there are many good people, like the Hopi Indians. Consider too: Mother Teresa helping the poor in Calcutta or the spouse devoted to a brain-damaged partner or a parent caring for a seriously handicapped child or a passerby who pulls a stranger out of a burning car or a soldier who jumps on a grenade to save his buddies or a donor who gives an organ to prolong life. The list goes on and on, perhaps almost every family has someone who can be turned to in

times of trouble. So far as we know, every one of us could become the family helper or, in the right circumstances, become a hero saving lives, helping the poor, insisting that all children be fed, treated, and educated. However, there is no scientific prescription for goodness yet; you have to find your own way. It is vitally important. The world needs more good people. Maybe the suggestions in this chapter will help you find a way that appeals to you.

As humans, we seem to have no basic overriding genetic nature; we seem capable of being good *or* evil; our unique life experiences seem to draw us in one direction or another. Our moral "decisions" are not a single, simple choice made once and forever, but rather a life-long, continuing, complex, poorly understood by others, and an almost unconscious process. There are so many ways of being good and going astray, so many reasons for behaving each possible way, and so many excuses, denials, or rationalizations that confuse the issues. All these factors make the future for each of us uncertain; we all face the temptations of being bad as well as good.

Cultures, families, and friends seem to influence our morals significantly, but these factors change from time to time. For instance, it has become popular in some sub-cultures to think that you are foolish or naive if you don't lie and cheat, when you can probably get away with it. In college today, in contrast to 50 years ago or in a Honor System, relatively few students would turn in a fellow student for cheating. The student culture, in this sense, has become tolerant of cheating. Yet, lots of people still believe differently. We have the Moral Right and other religious groups who call for the old morals. Robert Frank (1988) says that following the morals of great philosophers and religions--honesty, devotion, commitment, self-sacrifice, empathy, and love--(and *not* the modern notion that humans are always self-serving) will lead to a better world *and* to greater personal gain as a trusted, respected, sought-after person. In short, he says it pays for each individual to be moral.


The world seemed to be conducting a *moral experiment* for a while, i.e. competition between two political-moral views: capitalism, a *competition, self-oriented, materialistic, live-and-let-live* set of values *vs.* communism, a *cooperative, others-oriented, moralistic, care-for-others* philosophy. Unfortunately, there were too many uncontrolled variables, so no conclusions could be drawn (although we certainly tried to persuade ourselves that "we won"). Too bad we scientists and our governments aren't doing a better job of honestly assessing the benefits and liabilities of different moral-political-economic approaches. Again, you'll have to do the "research" yourself. Maybe the advocates on both sides don't want to know the facts but just want to put out their propaganda. Certainly, the overall advantage of one view over the other is not obvious: giving and caring for others are commendable acts but competition, independence, and greed are powerful motivations which could benefit us all. You see, the world doesn't even know, yet, which values and motives would benefit the people the most.

Hogan (1973) believes that moral behavior is determined by five factors: (1) Socialization: becoming aware as a child of society's and parents' rules of conduct for being good. (2) Moral judgment: learning to think reasonably about our own ethics and deliberately deciding on our own moral standards. (3) Moral feelings: the internalization of our moral beliefs to the degree that we feel shame and guilt when we fail to do what we "should." (4) Empathy: the awareness of other people's situation, feelings, and needs so that one is compelled to help those in need. (5) Confidence and knowledge: knowing the steps involved in helping others and believing that one is responsible for and capable of helping.

There is not much you can do now about Hogan's first factor--your own upbringing. Even though poor parenting is clearly associated with poor work habits, drug use, gangs, and irresponsibility, you have to accept whatever childhood you had. According to Mussen and Eisenberg-Berg (1977), helpful children usually have nurturing parents who frequently act on their giving, caring nature within the family and with outsiders. These parents set high demands on the child, frequently asking him or her to help or to "take care of" another person, but they do not use "power" in the form of physical force or threats to control their child. Instead, the reasons and ethics for the desired behavior or recommended morals are carefully explained. They point out the "rights" and "wrongs" of the child's daily actions, while living up to their own standards of honesty, concern for others, and fairness. If you were raised in this way, thank your parents. If you weren't, understand your parents, and set about providing yourself with the learning experiences (you can talk to yourself like a parent) you may need to become a helping person.

There are many factors that influence your daily morality, which *you can control*. Let's now explore Hogan's second factor--the moral judgments needed to develop a good value system of your own. The best way for you to do this is by starting to draft your own set of beliefs and values as you consider the following sections. At the end of the chapter, you will have an outline for a useful value system.

Writing Your Own Philosophy of Life



According to Jewish custom, a person should write two wills: one to give away property and another to pass on his or her values. What values do you want to live by and have your children adopt? I suggest you give this important matter a great deal of thought and then outline a philosophy to guide your own and your children's lives (if they should choose to listen).

First, some definitions of common terms. Beliefs are our own expectancies (realistic or not) and understandings (accurate or not)

about how things are, such as believing in certain benefits and limitations of education, medicine, science, or religions. Values are our ideas about how things should be, i.e. the ideals we hope to strive for. Values can be divided into desirable life goals (e.g. happiness or success, see Table 3.2) and guiding principles (e.g. hard working or honesty, see Table 3.3). Values could also be ranked in importance from morally crucial, like honesty and freedom and justice, to slight non-moral preferences, like a kind of music or style of dress we prefer.

For the rest of the chapter, I suggest you *concentrate on deciding the few crucial goals and most important guiding moral principles for your life*. Leave aside--for now--the great philosophical questions about how the universe was created, whether or not there is a God or life after death, whether you should seek the truth from authorities, personal experience, or through experimentation, and so on. These beliefs are much too complicated to be dealt with in an hour or so (if ever).

You can, however, decide on the basic goals and ethical principles that will direct your life day by day, moment by moment. You can do this within a few hours. It could be a very important achievement. The next section of this chapter will help you write your philosophy of life and learn how to live by that philosophy. Here is an overview of what we will be covering:

1. Become aware of Kohlberg and others' stages of normal moral development. In what stages are you right now? Make notes.
2. Consider Morris's 13 ways of living. Which ways appeal to you the most?
3. Rank Rokeach's values (Table 3.2, the end goals, and Table 3.3, the ways of getting there). What principles should guide your life? Think about who has lived life closest to your ideals. Buddha? Jesus? Albert Schweitzer? Lincoln? Martin Luther King? A great scientist? A good leader? A caring, helpful person in your community? One of your parents? Why did you make that choice? What are the implications for your philosophy?
4. Resolve the conflicts among your basic values, such as between seeking personal happiness vs. doing good for others. Does this establish your top priority?
5. Write *your own philosophy of life*-a clear explicit statement of important guiding principles. Not just something that sounds lofty, but realistic, honest *guidelines you will try to live by every hour of every day*.
6. Learn to live according to your highest chosen values, which will test your "will" and require many of the skills described throughout this book.

Kohlberg's stages of moral development

If you have an understanding of the normal stages of moral development, it should help you to develop or improve upon your own morals or values. This is especially true if the characteristics of highly

moral people are clearly described. The following six stages are taken mostly from Piaget (1932), Kohlberg (1975), and Rosen (1980).

Stage 1: Respect for power and punishment.

A young child (age 1-5) decides what to do--what is right--according to what he/she wants to do and can do without getting into trouble. To be right, you must be obedient to the people in power and, thus, avoid punishment. Motto: "Might makes right."

Stage 2: Looking out for #1.

Children (age 5-10) tend to be self-serving. They lack respect for the rights of others but may give to others on the assumption that they will get as much or more in return. It is more a matter of "you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours," instead of loyalty, gratitude, or justice. Motto: "What's in it for me?"

Stage 3: Being a "Good Boy" or "Nice Girl."

People at this stage (age 8-16) have shifted from pleasing themselves to pleasing important others, often parents, teachers, or friends. They seek approval and conform to someone else's expectations. When they are accused of doing something wrong, their behavior is likely to be justified by saying "everyone else is doing it" or "I didn't intend to hurt anyone." Motto: "I want to be nice."

Stage 4: Law and order thinking.

The majority of people 16 years old and older have internalized society's rules about how to behave. They feel obligated to conform, not any longer to just family and friends, but also to society's laws and customs. They see it as important to do one's duty to maintain social order. Leaders are assumed to be right; individuals adopt social rules without considering the underlying ethical principles involved. Social control is, therefore, exercised through guilt associated with breaking a rule; the guilt in this case is an automatic emotional response, not a rational reaction of conscience based on moral principles (as in stage 6). People at this stage believe that anyone breaking the rules deserves to be punished and "pay their debt to society." Motto: "I'll do my duty."

Stage 5: Justice through democracy.

People at this stage recognize the underlying moral purposes that are supposed to be served by laws and social customs; thus, if a law ceases to serve a good purpose, they feel the people in a democracy should get active and change the law. Thought of in this way, democracy becomes a social contract whereby everyone tries continually to create a set of laws that best serves the most people, while protecting the basic rights of everyone. There is respect for the

law and a sense of obligation to live by the rules, as long as they were established in a fair manner and fulfill an ethical purpose. Only about 20-25% of today's adults ever reach this stage and most of those that do supposedly only get there after their mid-twenties. Motto: "I'll live by the rules or try to change them."

Stage 6: Deciding on basic moral principles by which you will live your life and relate to everyone fairly.

These rather rare people have considered many values and have decided on a philosophy of life that truly guides their life. They do not automatically conform to tradition or others' beliefs or even to their own emotions, intuition, or impulsive notions about right and wrong. Stage 6 people carefully choose basic principles to follow, such as caring for and respecting every living thing, feeling that we are all equal and deserve equal opportunities, or, stated differently, the Golden Rule. They are strong enough to act on their values even if others may think they are odd or if their beliefs are against the law, such as refusing to fight in a war. Motto: "I'm true to my values."

General criticism of Kohlberg's Stages

Kohlberg's conception of moral development is based on thinking and logic, not on feelings for others. Surely feelings can not be neglected. Likewise, Kohlberg believed that morals were based on age and "wisdom," rather than real life experience and empathic identification with others. The truth is that children of 3 or 4 can and do empathize with others and try to help. Caring doesn't require Ph. D.-level, middle-aged reasoning! It requires feelings. Coles (1986) describes some impressively moral children and teenagers. Some children have stood up to mobs of unfair adults. Lastly, Kohlberg's focus is on the individual, not on what makes for a moral community. Thus, he doesn't balance a self-orientation as opposed to a group-orientation. He doesn't ask, as the Greeks did, the question "what would accomplish the greatest good for the greatest number of people?" And, he doesn't question, as do the Quakers, the morality of settling issues by voting (resulting in as few as 51% imposing--often with glee--their preferences on the remaining 49%) rather than by consensus (everyone agreeing to a carefully considered compromise). Yet, these stages can be a useful way to begin assessing one's own morals.

Discussion of Kohlberg's Stages 5 & 6

Kohlberg's evaluation of moral decisions was based on the quality of the reasoning behind a person's decision, rather than whether or not some specific behavioral decision was made. The thinking process used by some in stage 6 to decide what is fair and reasonable in a moral dilemma is called "second-order Golden Rule role taking" (Kohlberg, 1984). There are two steps: (1) Understanding how each person involved sees the situation and (2) imagining how each person would feel if placed in each other person's situation. The aim of this

empathic process is to find a "reversible" solution, one that would be seen as *equally just from each person's perspective and considered fair by a high percentage of rationally thinking people*. Example: (1) Imagine the situation of a poor dying patient, her husband, and a druggist who wants \$1000.00 profit (10 times its cost) for an effective drug and (2) imagine how each would feel in the other's shoes, e.g. how the patient would feel as the druggist, the druggist as the dying patient, the patient as the husband thinking about stealing the drug, etc. A solution that might result from this process would be for the druggist to give the patient the drug, and the couple, in turn, would agree to pay for it by working part-time for the druggist after the patient gets well. As we will see later, an 11-year-old girl in Gilligan's study (1982) arrived at a similar solution.

Current theorists believe it takes time (40-50 years), experience with different cultures and values, emotional maturity, self-control and self-esteem, considerable thought about values, and/or moral development training to acquire this kind of moral reasoning. I suspect stages 5 and 6 will be achieved at age 12 or 14, when we know enough to provide the proper training and experience at that age. Good but extraordinary examples of stage 6 morality are Jesus Christ (he spoke cogently of universal principles but he died at age 33!), St. Francis of Assisi, Albert Schweitzer, Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King (he became a civil rights activist at age 26!), and Sister Teresa of Calcutta. Don't let this awesome list of saintly people scare you or discourage you. Try to become a stage 5 or 6 person by finding some good causes you are willing to argue for, decide what lifestyle you most value, and start doing it.

As you understand these stages better, you may understand more about why you have made certain moral decisions in the past. Also, you will realize that you and everyone else operate on several levels at the same time. For example, you may avoid shoplifting for the fear of punishment (stage 1), you may watch your little brother carefully to be sure he doesn't get more attention than you (stage 2), you may want to impress your parents or a teacher (stage 3), you may unthinkingly enforce school rules as a monitor (stage 4), and you may be active in the women's movement or help support a child in India through CARE (stage 5 or 6). Furthermore, you may find your moral reasoning on one level and your behavior on another: 20% of the people at stage 6 of moral reasoning still conformed (stage 3 or 4) when asked by an authority to hurt another person (Kohlberg, 1984). Likewise, my value system says I should share most of my worldly possessions, but often I don't (partly because most people would think I was weird and stupid).

Are women's values different from men's values?

This section is based in large part on a book by Carol Gilligan (1982), who as a research assistant with Lawrence Kohlberg became aware that women responded differently than men to moral dilemmas. She decided to study these differences more closely rather than

disregarding women's views because they don't fit the theory, as some theorists (including Kohlberg) have done, or instead of assuming that women are morally inferior, as some males (including Freud) have done. The moral differences between the sexes are real and important but not clearly understood by most people. For example, using Kohlberg's 6-point moral development scale, women frequently score low, often at stage 3 (where there is an emphasis on interpersonal relationships and helping or pleasing others). Yet, women ordinarily consider themselves just as moral as men if not more so. Let's see if we can clarify our own values by understanding exactly how women's values differ from men's.

According to Kohlberg, the childhood concern of males for "pleasing others" gives way in stage 4 to "living by the rules," in stage 5 a few people "build a better world" and in stage 6 even fewer live by "universal principles of justice." According to Gilligan, females often remain concerned with relationships, progressing as they grow older from pleasing others for personal gain to building close, intimate, selfless, giving relationships in which they do good for others (and get pleasure from doing so). Thus, many women adopt the basic moral principles of the Golden Rule and act on those principles by giving to people in need (which Kohlberg assumes only a few middle-aged men do in stage 6). In short, women's morals seem to develop differently, even though they may end up doing the same things as highly moral men. What are these developmental differences?

Men become much more involved than women in intellectually figuring out what is fair and what are individual rights, such as in making rules (in religion and the family) and laws (in politics). For men, differences of opinion ought to be worked out via logical arguments and courts of law; for women, differences should be worked out by talking to each other, considering each other's viewpoints, and understanding each other's needs. Men are more concerned with becoming independent, "being their own man," being free to do their own thing, and being as successful as they can be. Women tend to be more concerned with fulfilling their responsibilities to others than with assuring their own rights, more involved with building caring relationships than "breaking away" to make their own way, more into helping others than getting ahead themselves. Thus, one can see why women could become concerned that men's vigilant defense of individual rights and "freedom" might undermine our sense of responsibility for others and lead to indifference to others in need.



Men and women: 90% use both care and justice values; however, 65% focus on one value more than the other, as follows:

Men: 93% have a justice focus; 7% have a care focus; 0% have justice absent; 38% have care absent (62% have some care).

Women: 62% have a care focus; 38% have a justice focus; 23% have justice absent; 8% have care absent (92% have some care).

One conclusion: if all our values are to be accurately represented in Congress and the legislatures, half of our representatives should be women. We need their emphasis on caring.



Gilligan illustrates how males and females see the world differently, starting at an early age. Consider the moral dilemma mentioned above of the dying patient and the profit-making druggist. She quotes an 11-year-old male, Jake, who reasons that life is more important than profit, so the husband should steal the medicine. However, an 11-year-old female, Amy, sees the problem as the druggist's lack of sensitivity to the dying patient's needs. She doesn't reason, as Jake does, in terms of the businessman's rights or the husband's moral obligation to steal. Amy simply concludes that the husband shouldn't steal "because it's not right" and the wife shouldn't die either, so all three people will have to talk it over and reach an understanding. Jake and Amy obviously think about the dilemma differently. Unfortunately, the male moral development theorists, like Kohlberg, would probably consider Amy's answer inferior to Jake's. Indeed, she almost sidesteps the examiner's question: "Should he steal the drug?" To her, that isn't the issue. Instead, she concentrates on finding better ways via relationships, not power, to get the drug. Gilligan, a female moral development theorist, considers both Jake's and Amy's views valuable. Jake relies on individual action (stealing) to avoid a personal confrontation. He sees the situation as an impersonal conflict of individual rights rather than a conflict of personal needs. Jake uses logic (life above profit) and the law (the judge will understand) to decide who is right. Amy is less concerned than Jake with who is most right but seeks a practical solution that will hurt no one very much. Her solution depends on people relating and caring for each other.

Keep in mind that boys must gain their masculine identification by separating from mother, while girls attach and take on the characteristics of mother. Thus, for this reason and others, males may tend to see danger in connecting with others--in getting too close or too dependent on someone or in confronting someone. Doing battle in court is more a man's style. Females may see danger in *d*isconnecting with others--in loneliness or successful advancement or rejection. Intimacy is scary to males but a source of security to females. Autonomy is scary to females but a source of pride to males. To males, human relationships are seen as a hierarchy based on power and status; they want to climb to the top and feel afraid if others get too close to them (the sociobiologists point out the similarity of this view to the male struggle for sexual dominance in many species). Most men do not have an intimate relationship with a male nor an intimate non-

sexual relationship with a female; achievement takes priority over intimacy until mid-life when suddenly males realize what they have been missing. Males identify themselves and their success by their accomplishments; females identify themselves by their relationships. To females, relationships are (or can be) more like a network of safety and care among equals; they want to be in the center of the network and fear getting too far out on the edge (like being caught outside the camp in hostile territory). Women recognize more openly their interdependence on others and see the powerful person as being able and willing to help and nurture others. Men see power as the ability to control others. To males "being responsible" in a relationship means *not doing* what you want to do out of consideration of others. To females "being responsible" means *doing* what others are counting on you to do, regardless of what you want to do. There is a difference.

Surely the male concern with individual rights and the female concern with caring for others are both important. Each sex has important contributions to make to moral reasoning, certainly neither sex has a monopoly on morals. The concept of rights is based on the notion of fairness and equal opportunities. This kind of justice is vital. The concept of responsibility for helping others is based on a compassionate understanding of human needs. Loving one another is also vital. Perhaps a combination of (1) respecting everyone's rights (including one's own), (2) personal integrity (being true to one's beliefs), and (3) assuming responsibility for helping others may define moral maturity for all of us--men and women. Justice tells us that everyone should be treated the same; personal caring tells us to do more than just not hurt anyone--we must help everyone who needs it. Women, giving us a different moral perspective from males, can help all of us be more caring, more responsible, and less aggressive. Thus, we all need to "learn to think like a woman" as well as like a man (see straight thinking in chapter 14). Think of the changes that might occur if world leaders were committed to justice and to responsible caring, rather than just to defending our rights and possessions with weapons.

Selecting your guiding principles

Moral dilemmas, like the dying wife vs. the profit-seeking druggist, are often discussed in schools and groups in order to "clarify values." There are also exercises in which a group must decide which three people out of six will be allowed to stay in the lifeboat. These activities are supposedly for "moral education." However, the participant's task is to select one value over another (when both are quite important) and then glibly argue for your point of view. These are good verbal exercises or games but, as Etzioni (1993) points out, they, in most cases, do not teach us great moral truths. A true moral truth should be obvious and undeniable, not a topic of serious debate. What are examples? Honesty. Fairness. Caring (as in the Golden Rule). Using your talents to help others.

Etzioni argues for teaching a variety of "accepted values" in schools. But this must be done through meaningful experiences, not

via lectures or sermons. An example would be teaching about prejudice and discrimination through a "Brown-eyed, Blue-eyed experiment," as discussed in chapter 7. Values must be internalized, i.e. made part of your basic living philosophy or your core "self." This is usually done by having real life emotional experiences: concern for the sick is learned as a volunteer in a hospital, concern for the poor is learned during a year in National Service in the inner city or on an Indian reservation, concern for migrant laborers is learned in the fields, concern for single mothers is learned babysitting in small shabby apartments, etc. But first you have to decide to have real experiences. This is based on certain values you tentatively believe in. Let's move on to selecting those values.

It should be clear to you from Kohlberg's description of the higher stages that you can only be most moral if you have decided on and dedicated yourself to a set of values: for instance, a commitment to democratic decision-making for stage 5 or to a fair, clear cut philosophy of life for stage 6. My objective here is to encourage you, even though you may not be over 40, to select some basic, guiding moral principles that you will actually use to guide your life, as described in stage 6.

To give you some structure for deciding on your guiding principles, I will first provide you with three lists of major goals pursued by others around the world. These are some of the choices you have, i.e. philosophies, goals, principles, or means to an end you might value and follow. Table 3.1 lists 13 "ways of living" from many cultures (Morris, 1973). Table 3.2 lists 18 "ends" or objectives or outcomes to which you might devote your life (Rokeach, 1973). Table 3.3 lists 18 "means," i.e. ways of being that are considered most moral and most likely to yield the "ends" you seek.

Please don't rush through these lists as though they were just another cute little personality test in the Sunday supplement. They are the best lists of guiding principles available. Your serious consideration of each value is required because you must decide on your highest principles by weighing one against the other; otherwise, you are in danger of vaguely feeling a lot of goals or principles are acceptable and, thus, never really deciding what your highest and most worthy goals are. Since each value or philosophy of life takes you in a different direction, not deciding on your major reason(s) for being is the same as being unguided or morally lost. Go through the lists twice, first giving your initial reactions and, then, go back and make a final judgment about which "way" is most moral--the best way for you to be the best person you could possibly be. These decisions should form the basic outline for your philosophy of life...an idealistic plan for your life. This is no trivial task. See Table below.

Table 3.1: My preferred way to live

Rating			Ways of living
Agree	Mixed	Disagree	
_____	_____	_____	Way 1: Cautiously and intelligently preserve the best of our culture in order to develop an orderly, active, just world.
_____	_____	_____	Way 2: Be self sufficient, "go it alone," avoid close social ties.
_____	_____	_____	Way 3: Be loving, sympathetic, concerned, respectful, and helpful with others, not greedy or controlling or aggressive.
_____	_____	_____	Way 4: Have fun without getting too involved with others. You can't control the world so enjoy life, for tomorrow you may die. To fully enjoy life, think of "number one" first; let yourself go!
_____	_____	_____	Way 5: Get involved with others for fun and achieving common goals. Give of yourself to others to make this "the good life," don't withdraw or be self-centered.
_____	_____	_____	Way 6: Work hard to solve the problems we face. Don't follow the past or merely dream of the future, do something! Science can solve many of our problems.
_____	_____	_____	Way 7: Accept all philosophies, not just one. Fun, action, and contemplation in equal proportions is the best way to live.
_____	_____	_____	Way 8: Enjoy the simple, available, daily pleasures of home, relaxation, and friends.
_____	_____	_____	Way 9: Stop seeking, be receptive, then wisdom and the good things of life will come freely.
_____	_____	_____	Way 10: Constantly seek self-control, firmly directed by reason and high ideals. Guard against seduction by comfort, selfish impulses, the urge to "cop-out" etc.
_____	_____	_____	Way 11: The internal world of ideas, dreams, sensitivity, and self-knowledge is a better place to live than in the external world.

_____ _____ _____
 Way 12: Use all one's energy to build something, to overcome obstacles, to climb a mountain because it is there. Use all the power you have.

_____ _____ _____
 Way 13: Let yourself be quietly and serenely used by others, by the world, and by the great powers that be, for their purposes are good. Let the true purposes of life be fulfilled.

Adapted from Morris, C. *Paths of Life*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1973.

Table 3.2: What life goals do you want to achieve?

Importance to you		Final ranking of guiding principle	Values or Purposes
Higher	Lesser		
_____	_____	_____	1. a world at peace (free of war and conflict)
_____	_____	_____	2. freedom (independence, free choice)
_____	_____	_____	3. equality (brotherhood, equal opportunity for all)
_____	_____	_____	4. happiness (contentedness)
_____	_____	_____	5. an exciting life (a stimulating, active life)
_____	_____	_____	6. wisdom (a mature understanding of life)
_____	_____	_____	7. a comfortable life (a prosperous life)
_____	_____	_____	8. self-respect (self-esteem, feeling good about yourself)
_____	_____	_____	9. salvation (religiously saved, eternal life)
_____	_____	_____	10. mature love (sexual & spiritual intimacy)

_____	_____	_____	_____	11. social recognition (respect, admiration)
_____	_____	_____	_____	12. a sense of accomplishment (I've made a lasting contribution)
_____	_____	_____	_____	13. national security (protection from attack)
_____	_____	_____	_____	14. true friendship (close companionship)
_____	_____	_____	_____	15. a world of beauty (beauty of nature and the arts)
_____	_____	_____	_____	16. inner harmony (freedom from inner conflict)
_____	_____	_____	_____	17. pleasure (an enjoyable, leisurely life)
_____	_____	_____	_____	18. family security (taking care of loved ones)

Adapted from Rokeach, M. *The Nature of Human Values*. New York: Free Press, 1973. How others rank these values is described after Table 3.3.

Table 3.3: What personal characteristics do you most want?

Importance to you		Final ranking as Guiding Principle	Values or Traits
Higher	Lesser		
_____	_____	_____	1. Self-controlled (thinks first, restrained, self-disciplined)
_____	_____	_____	2. Honest (sincere, truthful, disclosing)
_____	_____	_____	3. Loving (affectionate, tender, caring)
_____	_____	_____	4. Ambitious (hard working, aspiring)
_____	_____	_____	5. Cheerful (lighthearted, joyful)

_____	6. Responsible (dependable, reliable)

_____	7. Independent (self-reliant, sufficient)

_____	8. Broad-minded (open-minded, able to see other viewpoints)

_____	9. Polite (courteous, well mannered)

_____	10. Forgiving (willing to pardon others)

_____	11. Intellectual (intelligent, reflective, knowledgeable)

_____	12. Helpful (working for the welfare of others)

_____	13. Obedient (dutiful, respectful)

_____	14. Capable (competent, effective, skillful)

_____	15. Logical (consistent, rational, aware of reality)

_____	16. Courageous (standing up for your beliefs, strong)

_____	17. Imaginative (daring, creative)

_____	18. Clean (neat, tidy)

Adapted from Rokeach, M. *The Nature of Human Values*. New York: Free Press, 1973. How others rate these values is now discussed.

Ratings of Ends and Means Values by 1960 students

College students in the 1960's ranked freedom (#2) as the highest "end" value in Table 3.2, then happiness (#4), wisdom (#6), self-respect (#8), mature love (#10), a sense of accomplishment (#12), and so on with the rest of the even-numbered values followed by the odd-numbered values, ending with a world of beauty (#15) and pleasure (#17). Numbered in a similar way, the highest ranked "means" values (see Table 3.3) were honest (#2), ambitious (#4), responsible (#6), broad-minded (#8), forgiving (#10), and helpful (#12), with logical (#15) and imaginative (#17) being at the low end of the list. Compare your ratings with their ratings; the ratings have remained fairly stable over the years, except that a concern about equality has gone down during the 80's as the gap between the haves and the have-nots widened. Think about these matters. Read more and talk to friends, parents, ministers, teachers, and especially to people who have *different* values than you do. But, make your own final decisions.

Self-centered vs. others-centered

After working through Tables 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3, you should have a better overall view of the possible meanings of life, the possible purposes of life, and the possible personality characteristics. There is a meaningful distinction, however, between finding meaning in life and finding the meaning of life. For example, you might find meaning in life while making new friends, observing a beautiful sunset, being close to relatives, being good in sports, reading a good book, having a fantastic sex life, etc., but it is not likely that you will choose any of these activities as being your one ultimate purpose in life. Deciding in advance the major purpose(s) of your life is different from experiencing some additional meaning(s) in life as you go along. I'm suggesting that you decide what should be, the *major* purpose(s), the *primary* objective(s) of your life.

In my opinion, there are two fundamentally different life goals: (1) personal happiness and (2) doing good for others, i.e. self-oriented or other-oriented. They are both very appealing values but, unfortunately, they usually take you in opposite directions. If you seek happiness in self-serving ways, you will miss many opportunities to serve others. The 42,000 children dying needlessly every day probably can't be saved without giving up much of your partying and material wealth. If you "love thy neighbor as thyself," as implied by the Golden Rule, you will surely miss out on a lot of luxury and frivolous fun. Becoming an effective helper or a scientist or an intelligent leader requires sacrifices. You can't go full steam both ways--recreation and commitment--at the same time; choices, and usually compromises, must be made (see Branden, 1980, and Wallach & Wallach, 1984). Now, some help in making this tough choice.

I have asked hundreds of college students to answer this basic question for themselves:

Is it morally just and fair for me to be free to have plenty to eat, nice clothes, luxuries, time and money for fun, TV, and comforts, while others in the world are starving, uneducated, and in poor health?

Yes No

About 50% in 1970 used to say yes, in 1990 about 75% say yes, it is fair. Then I asked them to give their reasons for answering yes or no. I have summarized those reasons into ten statements so you can more carefully think through your reaction to being self-oriented or others-oriented. Indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with these statements by rating each one from 1 to 5.

Statements

1. To be so self-centered that I would forget the hungry, sick, uneducated, unhappy people in the world is rejecting the Golden Rule (do unto others as you would have them do unto you). I could not live with myself and do this, since I consider one of the highest goals of life to be "...Love one another..." (John 15:12).

Agree Disagree
1 2 3 4 5

2. The more advantages I have--or hope to have someday--the more obligated I am to give to others and to fight for equal opportunities for everyone. "From each according to his/her ability; to each according to his/her needs (communist motto)." "Don't just sit there in your hot tub and say, 'There's nothing I can do about the poor' (student comment)."

Agree Disagree
1 2 3 4 5

3. It is only fair for me to share my resources with others until everyone has their basic needs met. "He who has two coats, let him share with him who has none..." (Lk 3:13). Frankly, I don't think I would freely (on my own) give up my advantages and luxuries, but I should vote for a government that would make me (and others) do what is right.

Agree Disagree
1 2 3 4 5

4. I am very confused about this issue. I want to help others, but I don't know what to do. It is a terrible waste when people starve, or a good brain is neglected, but what can I, as an individual, do? I'd really like to know.

Agree Disagree
1 2 3 4 5

5. Of course, everyone ideally should have an equal opportunity to have a good life. And, I should contribute to making this situation become a reality, but I think the system is pretty fair as it stands today. Consider all the taxes we pay in this country already. I have done and will do my fair share.

Agree Disagree
1 2 3 4 5

6. I have never seriously considered this type of question--and frankly, I don't like being made uncomfortable and asked to respond to these rather one-sided, simplistic statements. You sound like a liberal.

Agree Disagree
1 2 3 4 5

7. The problems of the poor are largely caused by poor governments and big business: bureaucracy, dictatorships, inflation, unemployment, mismanagement, greed of the people in power, etc. I certainly can't do anything about all the bad governments around the world.

Agree Disagree
1 2 3 4 5

8. Do-gooders preaching about our obligations to the poor upset me. Let everybody take care of themselves. The poor have too many children and often don't even try to help themselves. They could get out of poverty if they wanted to. "The poor are always with us," the Bible says, so it must be God's will. People usually get what they deserve.

Agree Disagree
1 2 3 4 5

9. I want to do well, to have "the good life," nice home, cars, luxuries, etc. In this country we have "freedom," which always results in some people having more than others. That's the way it has to be if we are free. Why should I suffer just because others are unhappy? Besides, our country couldn't possibly feed all the hungry in the world, educate everyone, care for all the sick, etc.

Agree Disagree
1 2 3 4 5

10. My goal in life is to be happy, to have a good time. I care about others, yet I also have a right to whatever I can earn or achieve through my own honest efforts. I want to enjoy life. My first obligation is to see that my family and I have everything we want. I can't help others unless I am happy, so that comes first.

Agree Disagree
1 2 3 4 5

If you answered the basic question "no," you would be more likely to agree with the first 3 or 4 statements which support the Golden Rule. If you feel positive towards the basic question, you will agree more with self-centered statements like 5 to 10. These latter statements are the common rationalizations in our culture for not helping others in need; check to see if your answers reveal some of your self-excuses or escape mechanisms (as discussed by Bandura below).

Obviously one could pursue both happiness (choices 7, 8, & 9 above) and the Golden Rule (choices 1, 2, & 3) on a part-time basis (and most of us do), or, if one were very fortunate, one might experience great happiness in life while helping others. The reverse is very unlikely, i.e. doing great good while primarily seeking personal enjoyment.

What is wrong with putting your happiness and financial success first? (i.e. get yours first, like trickle down economics.)

You often hear comments like, "you have to look out for yourself" or "those people really know how to live...how to party" or "you have to be happy yourself before you can help others be happy." All are very common justifications for happiness. But, who is happiest, the person devoted to having fun or the person devoted to helping others? Rimland (1982) did a very simple experiment. Why don't you try it right now. List the 10 people you know best. Rate each one as either happy or unhappy. Then, rate each one as self-centered or others-centered. Rimland found that happy people were ten times more likely to be unselfish than selfish. I rest my case. It is strange that happiness comes to people who have decided not to seek it as their main purpose in life. It comes as a fringe benefit to helpers.

There is accumulating evidence that striving for power, fame, wealth, and material goods--big parts of the "American Dream"--more than for good relationships, personal growth, and altruism is associated with more anxiety, more depression, and poorer general functioning (Kasser & Ryan, 1993). In short, materialism may be bad for your mental (and spiritual?) health. As Fromm (1976) observed, a focus on "having" distracts us from "being" our best person.

Chase after money and security and your heart will never unclench. Care about people's approval and you will be their prisoner. Do your work, then step back. The only path to serenity.

-Lao-tzu, 500 BC

The superior person thinks always of virtue; the common person thinks of comfort.

-Confucius

Your choice between (1) happiness or wealth and (2) helping as your highest purpose could have a profound impact on your entire life. Keep in mind that few people are able to follow their highest values all the time; the caring person is selfish in some ways, and the dedicated hedonist occasionally helps others. However, without your highest value in the forefront of your consciousness, day by day, your life is not likely to be well directed. If selfish materialism continues to be your dominant value, try reading Lerner's (1995) *The Politics of Meaning* and Kozol's (1994) *Amazing Grace* (about the poverty and problems of poor children in this country).

Conscience and Escape from One's Own Conscience

When we don't do what we feel is right (moral), we feel guilty. Our conscience hurts. We feel self-contempt, according to Bandura (1977). To avoid this discomfort, we usually do what is right (as we see it). But sometimes when we want to do something against our values strongly enough, we can deceive ourselves, "con" ourselves, so that we don't feel badly about doing it. We humans have a variety of self-excusing, guilt-escaping mechanisms (from Bandura, 1980b):

1. **Moral justification** --believing our actions are for a just cause. "I stole to provide for my family" or "I lied to protect my friend" or "I cheated because I just had to pass" or see statements #9 and #10 above.
2. **Euphemistic labeling** --using a mild term to hide the actual harmfulness. "I took it" or "sort of borrowed" instead of stole. "I messed them up a little" instead of brutally assaulted. "I didn't tell him/her everything" instead of lied. "We have to take care of our own country first" instead of disregarding others' needs. "Freedom" is often a handy justification for doing whatever you want to do; see #9 above.
3. **Looking good by comparison** --"I didn't cheat nearly as much as John/Mary did." "A lot of millionaires don't pay any taxes." "The rich in India don't give to their own poor, so why should I?"

4. **They told me to do it** -- "They talked me into going with them." "I am told what sales pitch to make, don't blame me if it isn't all true." "He/she just kept pushing until I gave in." "I do whatever the law says to do; if I was supposed to do more they would tell me to." See statement #5 above.
5. **Denial of responsibility** -- "I just went along with the crowd." "I felt certain someone else would help her, there were people all around." "One person like me can't do anything about poverty." "I'm going to cheat on my taxes because of all the free-loaders on welfare." See statements #5 and #6 and #7 above.
6. **Denial of consequences** -- "I just dropped the bombs on the coordinates I was told and flew back to the base." "I only shoplift from big chain stores; they never miss it." "Paying farmers to not grow food doesn't really affect hunger." "TV just sensationalizes about hunger; there is enough for everyone to eat."
7. **Dehumanization** -- "There is nothing wrong with taking their land; they are just savages." "If they are that dumb, it's their fault they are taken advantage of." "Those godless Communists kill anybody in their way; we'd better get them before they knife us in the back." See statement #8 above.
8. **You (the victim) caused me to do it** -- "If you hadn't been so nasty, I wouldn't have hit you." "You seemed like you were mad, so I went out with _____." "Those poor countries would take over this country if they could, I wouldn't give them a damned cent!" "The poor cause their own problems." See statement #8 above.

Bandura believes that most inconsiderate, immoral behavior is due to these self-excusing mental mechanisms rather than a faulty value system. So one could "believe in" and espouse a highly moral philosophy of life and still find many ways to cop out. "To thy own self be true." Hopefully, by recognizing some of these defense or escape mechanisms, i.e. ways to escape from your own conscience, you are in a better position for judging if you are being cognitively honest with yourself and behaviorally true to your values. Do you use any of the rationalizations above? See chapters 4, 11, & 15.

Pitfalls: repressing our moral standards or remembering our morals only if we are observed

Besides using rationalizations to avoid the responsibilities imposed on us by our own morals and values (remember the Golden Rule is very demanding), we may have experiences that desensitized us to human cruelty and suffering. As Jerome Kagan (1984) observed, we are in danger of losing our moral standards when our emotional reactions decline, e.g. when we see violence on TV or in horror movies and are not repulsed, when we see starving children and do not scream "this must stop," when we realize that someone is cheating on taxes, a test, or their spouse and let it pass. Negative emotions--indignation when injustice occurs--are a vital part of being moral. We

should treasure and encourage these intolerant emotional reactions to immorality, not mimic the psychopath's indifference to law breaking. Moral action is based on emotions, not just on ideas of justice. The seven deadly sins are *all* based on emotions: *caring* for others instead of greed, *admiring* achievements instead of laziness, *hating* injustice, etc. Wrong-doing, our own and others', should offend us (Keen, 1992b).

Is it important to avoid lying or cheating or being cruel even if you know you won't get caught? Yes! Why? Because *you* would know you did wrong. How could a person believe he/she believes in a certain value or moral if the moral is freely disregarded whenever no one is looking? Obviously, even to the wrong-doer, such professed morals are simply gimmicks or lies to impress others, not guidelines for living. Morals must be practiced in order to grow strong (perhaps practice in situations where you are *not* observed is especially valuable in establishing a moral character). Furthermore, Frank (1988) suggests that looking like a good person, which both the honest and dishonest strive for, is best achieved by actually being good. In short, a person should be honest and faithful and considerate, even when he/she won't get caught, because by doing so he/she cultivates the emotions and moral principles that help him/her be good in other situations. Don't cheat on your taxes, don't lie about your accomplishments, and don't pretend to be something you aren't; instead be honest and proudly tell yourself you are building your moral character.

Other guidelines for living

Many books have been written about values and ways to live. I have cited several helpful ones at the end of this chapter.

I have pushed loving one another, following the Golden Rule. Aren't there other good "rules" for living? Of course, but none, in my opinion, as important as the Golden Rule. What are some of the other rules?

Have hope, courage, and self-direction. Without hope, we would do nothing. It helps us through hard times (Pines & Aronson, 1981). Having high hopes gives us the zeal and drive to do our best. Where there is little hope, it takes courage to do what you think is right. The soldier asked (by all of us) to assault a machine gun bunker must have enormous courage and devotion. The person who has different ideas from others must have courage to speak up.



Courage is the mastery of fear, not the absence of fear.
-Mark Twain

One doesn't discover new lands without consenting to
lose sight of the shore for a very long time.
-Andre Gide



Emerson and Thoreau, offered us the idea that societies progress, not so much by the will and ideas of the masses or rulers, but by the power of the independent, self-reliant thinker, who discovers new inventions, knowledge, solutions, and ways of living. That idea lived 100 years and influenced Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., the resistance to the Vietnam war, the Women's Movement, and the Nuclear Freeze Movement. Maybe Eisenhower will eventually be right, perhaps it will be independent, thinking, caring persons all over the world who drag their governments into peace.

Cynicism and pessimism abound today. Nihilistic intellectuals tell us that we have lost our way because religion no longer tells us what is good, that our "minimal self" can't find meaning and, therefore, has lost hope, that our "saturated self" is overwhelmed by information, ideas, and choices, that we can't really ever know the "truth" because every view has some basis in reality, that science only creates myths in the same category as religious or political dogmas, that ultimately life is meaningless. Against this gloomy view are calls for "remoralization," the development of values and goals that provide meaning and hope to every life (Bellah, et al., 1985; Etzioni, 1993; Prilleltensky, 1994; Wallach & Wallach, 1990; Smith, 1994). The use of psychological knowledge in the caring for others is central to all these views. If your life plan ignores morals, scientific truths, and reality, it will probably not serve you well.

As with the intellectuals, there is a tendency everywhere--workers, students, poor, affluent--to pessimistically ask, "What can I do?" or say, "You can't do anything about it." We all have excuses: "I'm too busy," "it's not my fault," "Somebody should do something; *they* will." And, thus, *we* do nothing. Yet, some people, acting on their conscience, have done a lot for the rest of us. It takes thought, courage, and commitment to an ideal bigger than oneself. If your cause is self-serving, you will not persuade many. If your cause is others-serving, almost everyone respects that.

We all need a cause, a dream, a hope for something better. We need a plan. There is a thrill, a satisfaction, a feeling of fulfillment when we struggle to achieve our dream, if it hurts no one and helps others. Many of us cry with joy and feel pride in being human when we see someone struggle for a great cause and/or overcome adversity or misfortune. Don Quixote faced overwhelming odds; Lincoln and 529, 272 others died in the struggle to free the slaves and save the union; President Kennedy said, "Ask not what your country can do for you..." and we joined the Peace Corps by the thousands; Jill Kinmont, a

paralyzed skier, became a teacher; the abused woman next door with five small children leaves her alcoholic husband and starts college. It takes determination and courage to act.

Be open to new ideas, experiences, and emotions. Live! Life is a series of new challenges: how to eat, crawl, walk, potty, talk, count, read, etc. How to find our place in the family and in school. How to accept ourselves and our growing bodies. How to get along with the opposite sex, how to handle our sexual and overwhelming love needs. How to cope with children. And the challenges go on and on. Some people stay young and continue to want new adventures, new ideas, new experiences, while others want quiet, familiar security, and decide they know "the truth."

Be not just open to adventures in the world, but more importantly be open to adventures with ideas and with emotions. There are tests of sensation-seeking which show it is related to having more fun *and* being better able to handle unhappy events in life (Zuckerman, 1979). From Freud to Jourard (1971), psychologists have proclaimed the wholesomeness of expressing our feelings. As we hold back the negative feelings--sadness, anger, fears--we stifle the positive ones--joy, humor, excitement, love for humanity. How sad.

Perhaps worst of all is a closed mind, one that does not welcome in new ideas. There is some wisdom, some justice, some validity in every belief, every theory, every ideology. Absorb every idea you can, love it (like George Washington Carver, who studied and "loved" the peanut) until it reveals its secrets, its gems of wisdom, its usefulness to you. Especially study the ideas and values and beliefs you have an aversion to or dislike. After hard thought (Socrates) take the best ideas for your own.



"The hardest thing of all in life--
The conquest not of time and space,
But of ourselves, of our stupidity and inertia,
of our greediness and touchiness,
of our fear and intolerant dogmatism."



Be good to yourself. Take care of your body, your mind, and your soul (Moore, 1993; Canfield & Hansen, 1994). Enjoy today *and* remember the important things in life, the sacredness of life. There is a saying: "If we fill our hours with regrets over the failures of yesterday, and with worries over the problems of tomorrow, we have no today in which to be thankful." Prepare for the future, but value the preparation enough that you will not feel cheated if you never achieve the goal you are seeking. Don't value a degree or promotion or income

so much that you desert friends and family and joy altogether. Thinking little of yourself is self-humiliation; thinking of yourself little is humility.

Some find solace in religion; some find moral guidance and inspiration; some find hope beyond this earthly life. Others find guilt; others find excuses for doing very little except seeking their own dubious salvation. Some see God giving us the potential and responsibility for doing good and loving; others see humans as helpless and believe that all progress is up to God. (A caution: Thomas Moore, a former monk, says that everything that happens in the heart--emotions and relations--can only be understood through religion, poetry, and fate. This is at odds with science.)

If you believe that God is responsible for everything that happens, it may be hard to understand "*When Bad Things Happen to Good People*." Rabbi Kushner (1981) wrote a book by that title after his teenaged son died from a rare disease. He says God gives relief from suffering, not protection from tragedy. Illness, failure, hunger, quarrels, unfaithfulness, hatred, loss of love, greed, death, and so on are acts of nature, not acts of God. God does not start or stop them for us. What does God do? According to Kushner, God gives us strength and courage to get through and go on after a tragedy; God gives us love and helps us forgive and love others.

Finding meaning in life



This is the true joy in life--the being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one; the being a force of nature instead of a feverish, selfish little clod of ailments and grievances, complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy.

-George Bernard Shaw



Like Shaw, many wise people have observed that a life of meaning makes us happy. O'Connor & Chamberlain (1996) have shown people who lack meaning in their life tend to have more mental/emotional difficulties, more addictions, and more suicidal thoughts. So, how do you find meaning? The Existentialists make several good points: (1) to have a deep investment in the meaning our own life we must have thought about it very seriously, it can't be actions merely directed by parents or friends or teachers or ministers or anyone else. We must decide what has meaning for us (although we don't have to be an entirely original thinker about what is meaningful). Until we settle on a purpose, our life is in danger of having little meaning except for self-gratification. (2) Unless we think of ourselves as self-directed--as making choices about our life rather being determined by the genes, the past, and our social environment--we can't take great pride in the good we do. (3) It is pretty obvious that, given our personal limitations, individuals aren't mystically assigned a clear mission that changes the universe 1000 years from now. So, in some sense, we have to decide on and "make" our own life's meaning. People do, for example: I gave birth to and raised five fine children. I was a Christian minister for 50 years and preached over 3000 sermons and saved over 1500 souls. I worked in

the coal minds from the time I was 16 until I got too sick to work when I was 67. And the "meaning" can be less noble: I did the best I could but never found any meaning in life. I started using drugs a 13, had AIDS by 16, and gave AIDS to 25 or 30 people before I died. I've been a really successful con all my life. Clearly, some lives have desirable "meaning," other lives serve little purpose or evil purposes.

Goodrick (1999), writing about finding meaning, makes some simple but sensible points. For one, he notes that fulfilling a noble purpose requires us to act, to DO SOMETHING, that is, to devote one's time to the cause. Thus, he states the obvious: a meaningful life requires good behavioral self-control and time management. For example, it is hardly a meaningful life if you earnestly but only occasionally think your purpose is to serve God but otherwise very seldom think of God or do little to serve others. Goodrick believes that TV is the greatest hindrance to living a meaningful life; it is a time robber. Thus, for many, religion and TV may be the opiates of our time. Self-control is discussed in chapter 4.

Second, while it is possible for a notable few to accomplish meaningful and commendable things while being depressed and self-disdaining, there is a much stronger relationship between accomplishing good goals and feeling happy, optimistic, and being self-accepting. Happiness and doing good may facilitate each other. A Jesuit philosopher, de Chardin (1966), studied happiness 40 years ago and concluded that it (a) usually involved work and discipline to self-improve and accomplish worthy goals, (b) efforts to avoid selfishness (in yourself and others), and (c) a diversion of our focus from our lives to the problems of others or of the world. Certainly, most people would prefer to do good things while being happy, rather than unhappy. See chapter 6 for ways to increase happiness.

Third, Goodrick says that two integral parts of a meaningful life are (a) close, caring relationships and (b) worthwhile work. Being a good friend, a trusted helper, and an effective worker requires many skills which you can learn (see chapter 13). Meyers (1992) says happiness comes from sharing, loving relationships, not from material wealth. In fact, Goodrick argues that materialism leads to unhappiness because we never get enough and because striving for "things" robs us of the time and inclination to relate to and help others. He further buttresses his argument by citing Jesus and Buddha: Jesus-- "Don't gather a lot of materialistic possessions. Focus instead on spiritual values, giving to, caring for, and loving one another." Buddha-- "Unhappiness comes from wanting what you don't have. So, stop wanting things to be different. Be happy with what comes to you." There are several books on Living the Simple Life (St. James, 1998).

I like Goodrick because he suggests doing hard, noble things, such as giving up much of our material wealth (big TV, expensive sound systems and cars, big houses, fashionable clothing, etc.), managing our time (spending 30% of one's free time volunteering at a charity, 40% working for the church, 10% reading inspiring literature, 10% in artistic/creative activities), reading and relating so we learn to be happier with ourselves and more empathic, more forgiving, and more giving to others, and insist on work that contributes to others, not takes from them. A meaningful life is a tough, demanding life, not an easy one, no matter how wealthy the country you live in.

Examples of philosophies of life

Start selecting your basic principles. Pull together your basic ideas from the above exercises and comments. I will give two examples of a philosophy of life. Both may appeal to you and should be useful. The first is a philosophy written by a student which emphasizes self-acceptance, being your true self, self-responsibility, and self-direction. It is comfort and happiness oriented (although the Golden Rule is mentioned).

A happiness philosophy

- I am _____ and no one else. I am unique. I am myself and do the things I do because of me, not because of anyone else. If I ever find myself being displeased because of something I have done, I will realize that the behavior has to be changed by me and no one else. The only person that I can expect to do anything is myself.
- I am one person and will take on the responsibilities of one person, not the rest of the world. I am capable of doing only what I am able to do and will not expect more.
- I will respect others for being what they are, not for what they have. I will accept others for being themselves. I am superior to no one and no one is superior to me.
- I will not let people run my life. My life is my own and I will treasure it for all it is worth. And it is worth everything.
- I will be honest with myself and with others at all times. I will do the best I can in all aspects. I will try my hardest to accept all of my traits--good or bad.
- I will respect my parents and give them all the love they deserve, which is a whole lot. I will try to accept their ideas and listen to them open-mindedly, even if I don't agree. I will explain to them why I believe in the things I do and ask them to accept me with those beliefs. I will cherish them always.
- I will treat others as I want to be treated. I will listen to others' ideas and respect their opinions, even if I'm in disagreement.
- My goal in life is to be happy to the best of my abilities. I am me and I am real. I will live my life as the real me.

A helping philosophy

- I believe it is satisfying and a moral duty to help others. I want to give. It does not seem fair that I should want and/or have so much--a big home, a car, a good education, nice clothes--while many others have so little. I feel compelled to do what is right, even though it is hard for me to give up some things. I want to follow the Golden Rule; if I don't, I won't be happy with myself when I die.
- I would also like to be accepting of myself and others, even when I or they fall short of my ideals. I want to forgive. I believe one way of doing this is by believing in the "lawfulness" of all things, to assume there are necessary and sufficient

reasons for everything that happens, for anything anyone does or feels. If I carefully explore every life experience, I can learn to understand these "laws of behavior," become tolerant, and even discover how to change myself and some of the things I don't like. I want to be wise.

- I want to be honest, both with others and myself. I want to live my life with a full awareness of the truth, no delusions or fantasies. I don't want to shut my eyes to anything but least of all to my self-centeredness and greed and to others' frustrations and needs. If I can see clearly through my selfish blind spots, I will be loving, giving, responsible, and self-disciplined. I want to care for others face to face and at a distance by making this a better world.
- I want to love--and show it! I will love my family, my friends, strangers, people who are very different, and, in fact, everyone. A life-long duty is to learn enough so I can give my children security, confidence in their own judgment, and a loving spirit. I will help my friends grow for I will profit from good, thoughtful, able, devoted friends. The heart that gives, gathers. I will fight injustice. As long as there is a good mind wasted anywhere in the world, as long as a potentially loving heart is self-centered or filled with hatred, the world is being cheated. I want to make a difference.

Comment: this philosophy of life emphasizes caring for and doing for others more strongly than the last one. It is more demanding. It does not mention happiness or "doing your own thing." It explicitly opposes self-centeredness and assumes that long-range satisfaction with life rests on doing good rather than having fun.

Writing your own philosophy of life

You have studied enough now--Kohlberg's stages, Morris's Ways of Living (Table 3.1), Rokeach's Means and Ends (Tables 3.2 and 3.3), my comparison of happiness and helping, experts' opinions, and two sample philosophies--to write a first draft on your own philosophy of life. Take only 30 minutes or so. Start with a basic decision about which will take top priority in your life--your happiness or helping others. Both are valuable and must be considered. Then decide on other important values for you. Socrates and Plato thought that wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice were the cardinal virtues. Similarly, modern moralists have emphasized doing good, happiness, wise and just use of knowledge, appreciating beauty, affection (love and friendship), fair distribution of wealth, achievement and the good use of power, personal freedom and rights, and other values. At the other end of the continuum were the Christians' seven "deadly sins:" greed, lust, sloth, envy, gluttony, hate, and pride.

Seven sins: wealth without work, pleasure without conscience, knowledge without character, commerce without morality, science without humanity, worship without sacrifice, politics without principle.

-Mahatma Gandhi

Just describe the 2 or 3, maybe 4 or 5, major values that will determine the basic meaning and purpose of your life. Write them down--thoughts are too ephemeral. Write quickly, don't polish. Your philosophy will and should change as you grow. Remember: you are deciding on your ideals, your highest possible goals, your noblest spirit and dreams, your hoped-for accomplishments, your most inspired visions of your future. Don't worry at this point about how to achieve these ideals. That's the next step. Now, write your philosophy.

Putting Your Philosophy Into Action: Research Findings About Helping Others

A philosophy of life that doesn't influence your behavior isn't worth much. In fact, values can be used in harmful ways: a source of guilt, a cop-out that appeases your conscience ("I'm not doing much but I have wonderful values"), a device for putting down others ("my values are better than yours"), etc. But, a set of values, firmly believed and followed with dedication, is the basis for goodness, maybe even greatness. In terms of interpersonal values--charity, love, tolerance, etc.--you have an equal chance, no matter who you are, to be among the best. You can have praiseworthy values without having money (in fact, being poor may make it easier), without being educated, without travel or culture or worldliness. Others will respect and admire you, if you act out high values. We are, of course, talking about a life-long process of continual re-evaluation of your values and re-appraisal of how to optimally live your values day by day. However, today is the beginning of the rest of your life. So, let's decide what we can do to live up to our highest values.

I will assume you have already drafted your philosophy of life. Now, let's see how research can help us live the ideal of helping others (if that is not one of your values, read on anyway). See Kohn (1992) for an excellent review of the good side of people. What kinds of people are good to others? They tend to be more confident, happier, positive, more achieving, and not very self-centered or dominant (Myers, 1992; Wilson, 1976; Whiting & Whiting, 1975). Caring people also tend to be more active, assertive (cooperative but not competitive), more free to express feelings, more gregarious (Mussen & Eisenberg-Berg, 1977), and not surprising, more sensitive

to others' needs and empathic with others' feelings. Actually, if we ourselves have experienced the same stressful situations as a troubled person is experiencing, we are more likely to show concern for them (Dovidio & Morris, 1975). Altruistic people are more honest, have greater self-efficacy and self-control, and feel more responsible and integrated (Ruston, 1980). The research just cited tells us some of the interpersonal characteristics that are associated with being considerate; perhaps self-help projects developing some of these related traits would help you gradually increase your altruism.

Parents, who discourage aggression and are sharing, caring, and empathic themselves, showing the child how and why to help others, are more likely to produce altruistic children (Kohn, 1988). Such parents often give the child practice caring for a sibling or a dog and encourage the child to see him/herself as sensitive to others' needs. At an early age, girls and boys are curious, gentle, and helpful with a baby. Helping comes natural to most humans if they have had good interpersonal relationships. Etzione (1993) says the evidence is clear that youngsters close to their parents are less likely to become delinquent. Divorce often disrupts the relationship with one parent. Other relationships are also less meaningful: children have babysitters rather than nannies. Larger schools afford less bonding with teachers and perhaps with peers. There are fewer and fewer master craftsmen/women for young people to relate to at work. The world is becoming less personally caring.

More recent research (Tangney, 1988; Betancourt, Hardin & Manzi, 1988) suggests helping is related to: guilt feelings ("I feel badly about what I did") but not shame ("I am an awful person"), believing the helpee is *not* to blame for his/her problems, focusing on the helpee's feelings (rather than remaining "objective"), and having other emotions, both positive (sympathy, grief, pity, or sadness) and negative (upset, worried, or angry about the circumstances). Perhaps as a society we are less personally involved in relationships than we used to be. Emotions and values are closely connected.

What factors in the environment help us become a giving person? Naturally, caring more frequently occurs where the helpee is liked and where helping similar persons has been modeled by others and is rewarded, e.g. when a person really needs help and shows their appreciation. However, bystanders will often deny or overlook the needs of others, such as a person who is sick, drunk, or being attacked. We assume others will step in and help. But others don't. This occurs even when the hurting person is right in front of us, so is it any wonder that we don't think much about the poor in the slums along the freeway as we speed by or that we quickly forget about the sick or uneducated child we see on TV who is 10,000 miles away? (McGovern, Ditzian, & Taylor, 1975; Weiss, Boyer, Lombardo, & Stich, 1973; Mussen & Eisenberg-Berg, 1977)

Research has also documented the obvious, namely, that a warm, friendly community or environment encourages more helping

responses than a cold, suspicious, punitive situation. So be friendly and choose friends who are generous to others. As you might expect, if the situation poses some danger--like intervening in a family fight--we are less likely to offer help. There *is* some danger there. But, as you might not expect, research has also shown that the more people present at the scene of a crisis (and, thus, less dangerous), the less likely it is that a person will offer help, presumably because each person assumes that someone else will call an ambulance or give first aid, etc. (Staub, 1975). So look for things *you* can do. Don't assume that someone else will come to the rescue.

Perhaps the most important awareness for you to have is this: knowing the steps involved in helping someone increases the likelihood (from 25% to 42%) that you or I will actually offer help. Thus, training programs are important; there one can practice by role-playing helpful, empathic, and caring responses. "Affective education" where one listens to moral stories and discusses morals and moral dilemmas in small groups increases behavior considerate of others. Haan, Aerts, & Cooper (1985) concluded, however, that strictly academic or intellectual discussions of moral principles don't help us much. Instead, getting involved in a real group where *real* interpersonal conflicts arise and are worked out fairly is a great learning experience. We need to get emotionally involved and experience the feelings, intentions, and actions of others when in conflict; we need to observe the consequences of others' actions when in moral dilemmas. Making a commitment to be helpful to others is also important (Staub, 1975; Maitland & Goldman, 1974; Vitz, 1990).



The heart has its reasons that reason doesn't know.
-Pascal

Altruism depends first on your liking and accepting others, second on your being concerned for others' welfare, and third on your feeling responsible for helping others in need.
-E. Staub



Latane' and Darley (1970) have described five steps in the complicated decision to help someone: (1) notice when someone is in trouble. Fears and shyness can cause us to ignore the needs of others. (2) Carefully determine if the person actually needs help. We are often prone to quickly assume they are all right. (3) Decide to personally take responsibility for helping the other person. Don't avoid a person in need. (4) Decide what you can do. Knowing first aid or having dealt with alcoholics, drug users, epileptics, flat tires, engine problems, divorces, parent-child conflicts, etc. increases the chances we will offer our help. (5) Perform the helpful deed. In short, if you feel more

confident and trusting of others and less scared, you are much more likely to be helpful (85% vs. 50% of the time) to a person in crisis (Wilson, 1976). You can't wait until a crisis occurs to get this knowledge, confidence, trust, and courage; now is the time.

What are some of the other barriers to helping? Research indicates that people vary greatly in their awareness of their own values; you aren't likely to be dedicated to your basic principles unless they are in the forefront of your thinking all the time. In fact, what seems to usually happen, if you do not keep your values in mind, is that you will be influenced by friends (see chapter 9). Unfortunately, friends are more likely to undermine your values and persuade you to not study rather than to study hard, to play rather than help out at home, to spend money having fun rather than giving to a good cause, etc., so beware. Be independent! Have your own life goals; in that case, Thomas Berndt at Purdue says you will change friends, rather than change your values.

Likewise, in the struggle between conflicting values inside each of us, certain attitudes or values may be used to "cut down" other values, e.g. Rokeach (1973) has shown that people who wanted to stay superior and "keep the niggers in their place" rated freedom much higher than equality (see Table 3.2). Thus, a belief in "freedom" is sometimes used to justify our having advantages and opportunities that are denied to others, just like a preoccupation with seeking happiness or wealth can blind us to the good we could do for others. It is interesting to note that President Reagan's speeches referred to "freedom" and "liberty" twenty times as often as "equality" or "equal rights" (Ball-Rokeach, Rokeach & Grube, 1984). So, don't be pushed around by your politicians, your friends, or by your own emotional needs and cop outs. Stick to your basic values. A recent book by Hass (1998) may be particularly helpful with mastering self-control in this area. He emphasizes how our emotions frequently lead us astray, luring us to do the wrong things or to forget to do the right things. Emotions need to be controlled before our values can dominate.

Becoming helpful yourself

In summary, you must by now realize that becoming and remaining a caring, loving person is very complicated (though no more complicated than becoming a greedy, angry person). I hope you don't feel overwhelmed or pessimistic. The truth is that many people have learned to be altruistic or it is our nature in comfortable circumstances (Kohn, 1992). Examples: About 45% of wallets left on a New York street (containing \$5 and personal papers) are returned intact (Hornstein, 1976). Circumstances influence when people will return a wallet, e.g. positive feelings increase the return rate to 60% and a minor negative experience reduces the rate to 20% (on the day Robert Kennedy was killed, June 4, 1968, *none* of the 40 "lost" wallets were returned). People helped a man with a cane who collapsed on a subway 95% of the time, but if he acted drunk, the response rate dropped to 50% (Piliavin, Rodin & Piliavin, 1969). If you ask for a

dollar, a stranger on the street will give it to you 35% of the time; if you ask nicely, saying, "My wallet was stolen," 75% will give (Latane' & Darley, 1970). About 85% of American households give (an average of \$200) to charity. Even a majority of blood donors, say 60% to 65%, volunteered to give bone marrow when the procedure and needy cases were carefully described. Being a bone marrow donor is no simple matter. It involves staying overnight in the hospital, getting an anesthesia, cutting into your bone, digging out the marrow, and recovery! In the right situation many people are very giving. You and I can be too.

There is evidence that personally helping someone makes people feel good--calm, less stressed, and self-satisfied, something like a "runner's high." These benefits from helping others don't occur when you merely give money, pay taxes, help without having close personal contact, or feel compelled to help (Luks, 1988). 97% say they want to help but less than half of us do. If an abandoned child were left on our door step, we would help--and love doing it. Why should it make any difference if the needy child is at our door or 10,000 miles away? It would be weird if our morals told us to only help people in our family, our community, our ethnic-religious group, our country, our race, etc.

There is a simple, easy place for you to start: DO SOMETHING! Just realize that making the world a better place requires a community effort--probably a world-wide effort--and each of us is partly responsible for the world and almost totally responsible for our own behavior. What can you do?

1. There are personal traits to be developed further: (a) confidence, (b) independence from friends, (c) keen awareness of others' needs and of our own emotions and self-centeredness, (d) empathy for others, (e) self-esteem and the courage to offer your help, etc. These traits lead to altruism. Insecurity leads to distrust and dislike of others.
2. There is endless knowledge each person needs to know: (a) the steps in helping, (b) how to handle many kinds of crises, (c) how to gain the self-control necessary to carry out our own lofty ideals, (d) exactly where and how to offer help, etc. Knowledge gives us more ability to do good.
3. There is a need to create an environment (a) that models and rewards caring, (b) that discourages prejudice and hostile competitiveness or even isolation and overlooking the needs of others, (c) that provides ways of helping that do not offend or discourage the person being helped, etc. Any society that makes it difficult or unpleasant to give to others is surely in deep trouble; for instance, in this country *we hate to pay taxes although taxes are our principle way of helping others* outside the family. This anti-helping (taxes) attitude is a major problem but it goes largely unrecognized. In the last few years, however, schools have started to emphasize community service again (something like the Peace Corps ideas). Thousands of

students are volunteering at local kitchens for the homeless, agencies for the mentally ill, Big Brother/Big Sisters, McDonald Houses, etc. What a wonderfully enriching, broadening, and meaningful experience. Even politicians are talking about community service again. Humanity can be our community.

There is a lot of help that needs to be done all over the world, enough to fill the lives of several generations. Yet, there is a simple place for each one of us to start: namely, moving from good intentions to good deeds. DO SOMETHING!

Don't cop out by saying "I don't know what to do." With a little thought we can all find endless things to do. Examples: mow the neighbor's lawn when they are on vacation or have a death in the family, help a friend move, offer your friendship to a new person in school or your community, offer to baby sit for a family who can't afford a sitter, take an old person to the grocery store each week or to his/her doctor, give some flowers to someone, etc., etc.

Developing a specific plan of action

Your philosophy of life is merely a statement of valued intentions or hopes. Now, you need to decide exactly how to achieve some progress day by day towards your ideal goals. *First Things First* by Covey, Merrill, & Merrill (1994) does not help much in deciding what should be "first" in your life, but it is an excellent book for helping you put your life mission into action. Also see time management in chapter 13. For each of your major values, make a list of daily or weekly activities to be done.

For example, one person, who is trying to live up to the helping philosophy, might have a list of activities (or self-help projects) like this:

1. Follow the Golden Rule. I will (a) volunteer to be a candy striper or to help in a local teen center. (b) Seek out lonely, unhappy, rejected people near me and be their friend. (c) Waste little money (say less than 20% of my earnings) on junk food, special clothes, partying, and luxuries for me; give 50% of the money I would spend on meat to support vegetarian causes.
2. Accept myself and others. I will (a) stop and figure out why I am resentful before yelling and fighting with my brother and my mother. (b) Carry out at least one self-help project at all times, using as much scientific information as possible.
3. Be aware and honest. I will (a) write in my diary every day, describing as best I can my true motives and deepest feelings. (b) Encourage my friends, especially by my example, to be generous, friendly, and respectful to everyone, and to learn and use as much knowledge as they can. (c) Explain and defend my values to friends. I will not change my morals just to keep a friend.

4. Be loving. I will (a) show the special people in my life that I love and need them. I'll say "I love you" often. (b) Ask at least one person every day if I can help them--and really mean it. Life's greatest joys are to love and to be loved. Be loving to many people, not just to one person or to your family.
5. Treasure life. In spite of the focus in this chapter on major values and over-riding goals, I will also value hundreds of wonderful little events in life: observing beauty, enjoying music, watching a sunset, giving compliments, sharing candy, smelling a rose, taking a warm bath, etc., etc.

These are just general examples. They do not include the specifics (when, where, and exactly how) you will need to consider. Now it's your turn to write down specific ways you can start living your values. Be concrete about what you will do, when you will start, how often, with whom, etc. so that you have a practical to-be-done list to work from each day.

Concluding Comments and Recommended Reading



I hope it is clear to you now that self-help methods can help you become your best possible self as well as deal with serious problems or just change the things you'd like to see happen, like being a better conversationalist. Any self-improvement requires daily or hourly attention (but once done, it may last forever). However, coming up with the list of ways and specific plans at this time to carry out your moral principles is not a once-in-a-lifetime chore, it is only the beginning. You will probably need to learn a lot about yourself and self-help to do what you think you should do; you will occasionally--every few months--want to re-evaluate your major values relative to other pressing desires and urges you experience; you will need to re-affirm and re-dedicate yourself to your highest values; you will need to periodically re-assess your goals and the payoffs to others and to yourself, then decide if your current lifestyle is the best you can do.

You can find thought-provoking ideas about life's purpose in many places. In chapter 14, helpful attitudes are discussed, including the idea of *finding meaning* in whatever life situation you happen to be in at the moment. Also, how we can use beliefs, such as religious beliefs or faith in science or some political system, to bolster our feelings of certainty and security, is discussed in that chapter. The classic book in this area is Frankl's (1970) *Man's Search for Meaning*. I'd also recommend reading one of Scott Peck's books (1993), although he has become quite religious. Etzione (1993) and Lerner (1995) speak eloquently about the spirit of community--caring for one another. They say our culture has emphasized materialism and individual rights to the point of demanding getting certain benefits, such as welfare, farm subsidies, unemployment compensation, special education, health

care, etc. But, they say that as individuals we neglected to define and fulfill our social responsibilities, i.e. helping.

Others have taken up the cry for responsible behavior (Branden, 1996; Bly, 1997). Baumeister (1992), as cited earlier, insightfully discusses how needs determine the meanings we seek in our lives. Haan (1985) also discusses our development of practical morals. Averill & Nunley (1993) depict meaningful journeys based on caring. But, if you think our social-economic conditions are fair, read Kozol's (1994) description of children living in the slums of South Bronx and compare their life with the Wall Street brokers just a few blocks away. How can we level the playing field?

William Bennett (1993), once the leader of the nation's war against drugs, tries to tell kids the difference between right and wrong by sharing stories about honesty, self-discipline, courage, commitment, etc. Remember: setting noble goals does not tell you how to behave so you will reach the goals. Robert Coles (1996) interviews children and tells parents how to raise moral children. Check out <http://www.ffbh.boystown.org> for several books for children about values and good character. For pure inspiration it is hard to beat Canfield & Hansen's (1991, 1993, 1995, 1996) *Chicken Soup for the Soul* series; the short stories make you feel good about yourself and the whole human race. They build your spirit.

In an interesting, easy to read, relevant book, Halberstam (1993) has tried to help people think through everyday moral dilemmas, such as "is it wrong to have sex with someone you don't truly love?" or "are mean thoughts bad?" (In regard to the last question, Halberstam asks: can you imagine Jesus Christ drinking a beer, watching a football game, jumping up and yelling, "Get that quarterback! Smear him!") Much of McKay and Fanning's (1993) guide to being a man centers around values. Finally, 30 of the best thinkers of the last century have shared their philosophies of life with us (Fadiman, 1931, 1990); that should stimulate thinking about your own philosophy. It is worth your time to think about morals.



The shoe that fits one person pinches another; there is no recipe for living that suits all cases. Each of us carries his own unique life form--which cannot be used by any other.

-Carl Jung

Be your own person--live your own life--you are unique, one of a kind--
-the world needs you--you have many choices--you can be many things.



For those who think I've been too preachy in this chapter, I want to share with you a fable told by Elie Wiesel. It takes place in Sodom and Gomorrah--the cities eventually destroyed by God because sin was rampant. In fact, the Bible says less than 10 good people could be found there among thousands. Four of the good people were Abraham's son, Lot, his wife, and their two daughters. You will remember the story says they were saved by angels... but contrary to God's instructions, Lot's wife looked back and, consequently, was turned into salt. Another good person in Sodom was an old preacher who had come to the cities as a young man fifty years before and was appalled by the greed and gluttony all around him. The major interests of the people were money, partying, and sex. They had forgotten the Golden Rule; they did whatever benefited and pleased them. When someone was ill in the street, they looked the other way. They were indifferent to the poor and homeless among them. They only wanted more and more for themselves. The young man was so disturbed that he started to preach on the streets about caring for others. But no one paid attention to him. This went on for years; he became an excellent speaker and was known as "the preacher." He spoke of the joys of loving everyone and helping the poor. He helped the homeless. He warned of God's wrath. No matter how hard he tried to get them to change, the people of these two cities wouldn't listen. Instead, they thought he was weird. When he was an old man and very tired, a young boy listened to a part of one of his sermons and then shouted, "Why do you preach so much old man? Don't you know people won't change?" The old man said, "Oh, by now, I know that." "So why do you keep on preaching?" asked the boy. "So they won't change me," said the old man.



If you really love another properly, there must be sacrifice.

-Mother Teresa

Those who bring sunshine into the lives of others cannot keep it from themselves.

-Sir James M. Barrie



Bibliography

References cited in this chapter are listed in the [Bibliography](#) (see link on the book title page). Please note that references are on pages according to the first letter of the senior author's last name (see alphabetical links at the bottom of the main Bibliography page).