

The Gospel Tool Kit

Skills for Increasing Happiness



Russ Seigenberg, Ph.D.

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Vision Books



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Dedication

This book is dedicated to all those who struggle with a mood disorder or problems of life and who hope to find answers within the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. Your faith does not go unrecognized by our Father in Heaven and He will amply bless you in your recovery efforts.

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The 12 Principles of Change

1. Understand the dual nature of man

The spirit of man is knit together with the body and has a powerful effect on our personality and behavior. Learning how the heart and mind interact is essential to effective emotional functioning.

2. Trust in God

Turn your life and will over to Jesus Christ by making spirituality your greatest goal. Spirituality could be defined as: 1) being obedient to the commandments and promptings of the Holy Ghost, 2) maintaining a positive emotional state by cultivating right thoughts and actions, 3) focusing on service to others and personal growth, 4) seeking to be in harmony with other people, nature, and truth.

3. Live well one day at a time

Maintain a spiritual focus. Concentrate on the experience of the moment. Keep your thoughts off the past and the future and be in the present 95 percent of the time. Constructive activities create positive emotions and disrupt negative thinking patterns. Find joy and purpose in each day.

4. Find peace through acceptance

We can find greater peace by utilizing the wisdom of the Serenity Prayer from the 12-step model. The majority of negative emotions come from our resistance to accepting our present reality (truth). We can be fortified in pursuing righteous goals as we pray to the Lord for knowledge and spiritual strength.

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

5. Let virtue garnish your thoughts unceasingly

Correct thinking is a vital element in recovery and spiritual living. Be optimistic and thankful in your outlook. Focus on the good qualities of others and appreciate the beauty around you. Learn to transform negative thoughts and more effectively manage anxiety, anger, guilt, depression, and low self-worth. The adversary strives to weaken us with powerful lies that create doubt, despair, and self-condemnation and distance us from our Heavenly Father. These self-defeating ideas must be challenged with logic, scripture, and corrective emotional experiences. The Holy Spirit can help guide us in our quest for truth.

6. Take care of the inner self

The inner self is the core part of man and the center of our emotions and desires. Greater inward harmony can be achieved by becoming more aware of deeper thoughts, emotions, and desires, and by providing effective conscious direction. Emotional success involves developing the wisdom and self-discipline to lead a moral and responsible life, while also taking care of personal needs.

7. Recognize individual worth

All souls have equal worth in the eyes of God. Cease to base your value upon the approval of others or the achievement of perfectionistic standards. Particularly avoid comparisons as this is pride. Secure self-worth comes through humility, acknowledging personal progress, and acceptance of one's value as a child of our Heavenly Father.

8. Change self-defeating inner beliefs (schemas)

Schemas are “beliefs” we developed to understand past difficult situations. If these powerful ideas are negative, they can greatly influence one's life. Lack of hope and fear of failure keep us from improving our circumstances. These self-defeating beliefs must be challenged with logic and resolved through positive emotional experiences.

9. Strengthen social connections

Love is all-important. Being part of a community of family, friends and neighbors provides joy and emotional strength. Learn to overcome fears of rejection and be a friend to all. Service is an integral part of the spiritual path and increases self-confidence. Perform acts of kindness for those around you every day.

10. Live by celestial principles in your family

Family life provides the greatest opportunity for joy, meaning, and emotional security. It is also the greatest test of our discipleship. Success in the family requires obedience to celestial laws as well as the faith and humility to allow the Savior to help us perfect our personalities. The ultimate goal is to create a home where hearts are knit in love and the Spirit of the Lord can dwell.

11. Perfect your desires

The continual monitoring of impulses in the context of rules, boundaries, and triggers is an important element in self-management. Inner attitudes that perpetuate sin must be detected and rooted out. Desires can be changed by converting to a spiritual lifestyle and educating the inner self.

12. Seek continual self-improvement

Eternal progression is an important gospel concept. Resolve to change defects in behavior and character and strive to become a better person—more kind, sensitive, honest, disciplined, and temperate. Also focus on gaining new skills, developing positive health habits, and acquiring knowledge. Goals give life more meaning and are the building blocks for our dreams. Strengthen motivational abilities and take things step-by-step. Gradual progress is real progress.

Preface

If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed;
And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. (John 8:31-32)

Emotional well-being is the long-term goal of virtually all people. The chosen method for getting there may vary, but we all share this same basic desire. Unfortunately, life is difficult and unpredictable, and disappointment can become a too frequent companion. Of particular concern to me as a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the plight of faithful members who struggle with depression or anxiety. They generally retain their faith in the Lord, but often question why their spiritual activity has not set them free from their emotional pain. Have you ever thought that if we have the truth, these things should not be so?

I have spent over 30 years as a practicing psychotherapist searching the gospel treasure trove to find those principles and practices that have the most power to heal the souls of men and women. This book is a compilation of those ideas. I have used the great majority of these concepts and techniques for many years and their effectiveness has stood the test of time.

I would suggest that spirituality (the art of creating and maintaining positive emotions) is the road less traveled that leads to a more meaningful and stable life. The only things in life we can truly learn to control are our thoughts, attitude, and behavior. Everything else is uncertain and transient. While it can be difficult at first to believe in something as abstract as spirituality, experimenting with this approach soon bears fruit. Spirituality has magic about it that will accomplish wonders and transform your life in ways unforeseen. Not only that, but you will be doing the will of your Father in Heaven who desires first and foremost that we change our hearts.

There are twelve principles of change that serve as the foundation for this book. These concepts are listed on the next page. Each chapter in this work contains an explanation of how to use a specific principle to change mood and behavior. The assignments at the end of each chapter provide opportunities to practice effective techniques and gain valuable experiential knowledge. May the Lord bless us all who read this book that they may learn how to use these powerful gospel tools to strengthen them in their spiritual journey. I have felt the Lord's love and compassion for his children who suffer emotionally. This book is for you.

***Though we travel the world over to find the beautiful,
we must carry it with us or we find it not.***

-Ralph Waldo Emerson

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Chapter 1

The Foundation

Principle # 1: Understand the dual nature of man

The spirit of man is knit together with the body and has a powerful effect on our personality and behavior. Learning how the heart and mind interact is essential to effective emotional functioning.

Man was also in the beginning with God. Intelligence, or the light of truth, was not created or made, neither indeed can be. (D&C 93:29)

The scripture above was set forth by the Prophet Joseph Smith in Doctrine and Covenants 93:29 in the year 1833. This extraordinary doctrine tells us that we are eternal creatures, that we have always existed. I believe this one truth to be of inestimable value in understanding the human personality. Consider this line of reasoning. Modern-day psychology focuses almost exclusively on our physical brain. However, our faith tells us that we have a spirit, and that our spirit is eternal in nature. If we have always existed, does this eternal part of us have a significant effect upon our present functioning? It stands to reason that if this inner core is the real self, it would have a profound effect both on who we are and how we behave. Reflect upon the following scriptures:

Now the Lord had shown unto me, Abraham, the intelligences that were organized before the world was; and among all these there were many of the noble and great ones.

And God saw these souls that they were good, and he stood in the midst of them, and he said: These I will make my rulers; for he stood among those that were spirits, and he saw that they were good; and he said unto me: Abraham, thou art one of them; thou wast chosen before thou wast born. (Abraham 3:22-23)

And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,

And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. (Revelation 12:7-8)

The above scriptures, as well as statements made by General Authorities, indicate that as spirit beings in the pre-existence we had the ability to think and act. In this pre-mortal state we learned the gospel and made decisions that influenced our eternal destiny. Even after individuals shed their physical bodies and pass on to the next life, they, as spirit beings, are still very capable of learning.

And also they who are the spirits of men kept in prison, whom the Son visited, and preached the gospel unto them, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh. (D&C 76:73)

The following scriptures speak to the dual nature of man during mortal life, spirit housed in a physical body:

And the Gods formed man from the dust of the ground, and took his spirit (that is, the man's spirit), and put it into him; and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul. (Abraham 5:7)

But there is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding. (Job 32:8)

And the spirit and the body are the soul of man. (D&C 88:15)

It seems quite clear that spirit beings have intelligence and the ability to reason. Our faith in the word of God leads us to accept that our eternal spirit currently resides within our body here on earth. *Logic suggests, therefore, that we must possess a spiritual center of intelligence, a "spiritual mind," as well as a physical brain.* Brigham Young said these pertinent words: "The spirit is the intelligent part of man, and it is intimately connected with the tabernacle."¹

Exploring psychological theory through the lens of LDS truths gives Latter-day Saints a great advantage over the rest of the world. Even so, we must be careful to continually exercise our faith so we do not exclude scriptural truths in order to fit our views into existing worldly theories.

Cursed is he that putteth his trust in man, or maketh flesh his arm, or shall hearken unto the precepts of men, save their precepts shall be given by the power of the Holy Ghost. (2 Nephi 28:31)

The Heart of Man

Spiritual truths are not always completely obvious to man. The scriptures provide clues that must be carefully pondered in order to be fully understood. For instance, there are numerous scriptures that refer to the term "the heart." At first glance this could merely seem to be a symbolic term for situations in which we experience strong emotions. An example would be Matthew 22:37 where we are instructed to "love the Lord with all thy heart." However, other scriptures appear to point to the heart (which term is used interchangeably with "inner man") as a specific part of our being. Consider the following passages:

Yea, behold, I will tell you in your mind and in your heart, by the Holy Ghost, which shall come upon you and which shall dwell in your heart. (D&C 8:2)

That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;

That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith. (Ephesians 3:16-17)

Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel;

But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. (1 Peter 3:3-4)

I would suggest that what the Lord refers to as the "heart" or the "inner man" could be an integral part of the personality. *The word heart appears 568 times in the standard works.* The frequent use of this word might indicate that it is more than just a favorite metaphor of the prophets. The Savior himself made some strong suggestions that changing the heart should be a major area of focus for us while on earth.

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:

But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. (Matthew 6:19-21)

This subject of the structure and nature of the personality is quite controversial. There certainly seem to be many points of view and discussions on this topic can bring about strong feelings. Tremendous medical research has been done in

the past century and we know much more about the human body than ever before. Within the field of psychology great emphasis has been placed upon neurotransmitters and the biology of the brain. However, if we accept the scriptures as the ultimate truth, then any theory of psychology or the personality that overlooks the spirit of man must therefore be incomplete. Remarks by modern-day prophets, particularly President McKay, provide further clarification on these matters.

President David O. McKay: Man is a dual being, and his life a plan of God. That is the first fundamental fact to keep in mind. Man has a *natural* body and a *spiritual* body. In declaring this fact the scriptures are very explicit.²

President James E. Faust: Malachi said that the power of Elijah would turn the hearts of the fathers and the children to each other. The heart is the center of the emotions and a conduit for revelation.³

Reconciling Faith and Science

In the 1960s the renowned neuroscientist Paul D. McLean proposed that the human brain could be divided into three main functional areas—the brain stem, the limbic system, and the neocortex. This concept is known as the “triune brain theory”.

The brain stem is made of the midbrain, pons, and medulla. These structures are at the base of the brain and attach the brain to the spinal cord. They allow the brain to be able to communicate with the rest of the body. These structures are responsible for basic vital life functions such as breathing, swallowing, heartbeat, blood pressure, sleep and arousal. This is considered the simplest part of the brain as it resembles the brains of animals such as reptiles.

The limbic system is sometimes considered to be the emotional brain. It is composed of a number of structures near the mid part of the brain by the inner edge of the cerebral cortex. Some of the main structures in the limbic system are the hippocampus, the amygdale, the hypothalamus, and the cingulate gyrus. The limbic system is often called the “mammalian brain” because all mammals have these basic brain components. The limbic system is involved with learning, memory, motivation, attention, and emotional processing. Also, through the hypothalamus it monitors blood pressure, hormones, and blood levels of glucose and salt, and regulates other body processes.

One of the most significant roles of the limbic system is that it places emotional value on our activities. This particular function sets up some interesting conflicts with the prefrontal cortex which will be discussed later. It is my hypothesis that the spirit’s natural expressions are especially amplified by the limbic system. Through the limbic system our emotions are given physical properties in that they affect hormones and brain chemistry. *Therefore when the Lord refers to the heart in the scriptures we could think of the spirit and the limbic system working together.*

The neocortex, the rational part of the mind, directs the brain's higher cognitive and emotional functions. It is divided into two almost symmetrical halves called the cerebral hemispheres. Each hemisphere contains four lobes—the prefrontal cortex, the parietal lobe, the occipital lobe, and the temporal lobe. Areas within these lobes oversee all forms of conscious experience, including perception, emotion, thought, and planning, as well as many unconscious cognitive and emotional processes.

The prefrontal cortex assists in motor control and cognitive activities, such as planning, making decisions, setting goals, and relating the present to the future

through purposeful behavior. The parietal lobes assist in sensory processes, spatial interpretation, attention, and language comprehension. The occipital lobes contain the brain's visual processing system. The temporal lobes assist in auditory perception, language comprehension, and memory.

Modern neuroscience has shown that the brain may not be as neatly divided in functioning as McLean proposed. The different areas of the brain are highly interconnected and may complement each other in elaborate ways. Nonetheless, the triune brain model remains useful for conceptualizing brain functioning.

The Battle Within

President David O. McKay made a brilliant statement that in my estimation sheds new light on understanding the structure of the human personality. He pointed out the dominant role our spirits play in our lives. He made it clear that the spirit is the power and intelligence behind our thoughts and decisions. President McKay said:

Personally, I have felt that nobody keeps much of a record about me, except what I keep myself in my mind, which is a part of my spirit. Thought is independent of the five senses. My thesis is that which claims the thought is the spirit. The spirit in man controls this physical body just as the driver of an auto may control that machine.⁴

By giving us a physical brain, God increased our ability to make good decisions in terms of righteousness. He set up an amazing system of two opposing command centers. The spirit expresses its desires largely through the more emotionally-based limbic system. The prefrontal cortex forms the conscious, rational mind, or ego. The prefrontal cortex gives us an increased ability to look at things objectively. This part of the brain is logical, organized, has great memory capacity, and has a good sense of time and future consequences.

In his book *Incognito* neuroscientist David Eagleman calls this arrangement in the brain, “the team of rivals.” He recognizes that the limbic system and other elements of the involuntary *emotional system* have preset ideas and patterned behaviors that help each person to manage in the world and meet personal needs. He suggests that the emotional system allows us to act more automatically using pre-established subroutines that are quick and energy efficient. This is essential for survival because life would be very cumbersome if we had to think through every motion. This emotional system is the far more powerful one and human beings tend to predictably follow their habitual patterns.⁵

The *rational system* allows us to consciously make sense of set behavioral patterns, interrupt them, and establish new, more effective patterns. However, Eagleman points out, as did Paul Maclean, that the rational system often seem to be more active in justifying unwise behavior than in actually changing behavior. He clearly views the rational system as the weak partner in the organization. *This concept helps us to begin to understand why human beings are so limited in controlling their impulses and so prone to sin.*

The Nature of the Inner Self

It is fascinating to consider that we have two separate mind systems helping us to navigate our world. However, it is not a new concept. The Greek philosopher Plato said that each person is a charioteer with two horses, the black horse of passion and the white horse of reason. In the New Testament, James 1:8 says, "A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways." To begin to use this information in a useful manner, it is essential to begin to differentiate between the workings of the two systems.

The word the Lord uses to identify the emotional system is "heart." He appears to use the word "mind" to denote the rational system of the brain. Another phrase that can be used interchangeably with heart is "inner self." The inner self is the part of our being that generates the deep emotions of love, anger, and joy. It puts the sparkle in our personality and gives us our sense of adventure and our appreciation of beauty. It is the real self, our true center, because it reflects the thoughts and desires of our eternal spirit. It manifests itself most noticeably through emotions, desires, impulses, and associations to stimuli. The inner self boldly embraces life and all its diversity and pleasures. The following scriptures will provide support for the concept that behavior good and bad originates with the heart.

A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. (Matthew 12:35)

For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders,

Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness:

All these evil things come from within, and defile the man. (Mark 7:21-23)

The Lord puts much emphasis on the need for his children to change their hearts, to turn to pure and ennobling activities that can bring lasting joy. Our very salvation is connected with becoming fully converted and developing stronger desires for righteousness.

And now behold, I ask of you, my brethren of the church, have ye spiritually been born of God? Have ye received his image in your countenances? Have ye experienced this mighty change in your hearts? (Alma 5:14)

Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? (Ezekiel 18:31)

For I, the Lord, will judge all men according to their works, according to the desire of their hearts. (D&C 137:9)

The heart is also capable of deep thought and wisdom as shown by the following passages written by Solomon and Nephi. We experience this inner self on a preconscious level; that is, we are only partially aware of its influence.

I communed with mine own heart, saying, Lo, I am come to great estate, and have gotten more wisdom than all they that have been before me in Jerusalem: yea, my heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge. (Ecclesiastes 1:16)

For it came to pass after I had desired to know the things that my father had seen, and believing that the Lord was able to make them known unto me, as I sat pondering in mine heart I was caught away in the Spirit of the Lord, yea, into an exceedingly high mountain. (1 Nephi 11:1)

And the king said unto them, I have dreamed a dream, and my spirit was troubled to know the dream. (Daniel 2:3)

The inner self does have some specific limitations. The heart appears to be quite emotional and spontaneous. The thinking of the heart tends to be more fluid and unrestrained than that of the rational mind. This quality lends itself to greater creativity and intuition, but can be a deficit if one's thought processes become overly illogical. Since the heart's perceptions are often idiosyncratic and highly influenced by emotion or desire, the inner man can be tempted to take liberties with reality, believing only what he wishes to see. Irrational thinking originating in the heart can contribute to bad decisions and can also cause conflicts in relationships.

The inner self has a limited perspective concerning time and can become overly absorbed with immediate desires. Whatever appears satisfying for the moment becomes very compelling. The heart associates most activities with short-term pleasure or pain and generates impulses to or away from things accordingly. We can easily sense those frequent desires to take the path of least resistance. Eating too many sweets, losing our temper, or avoiding difficult tasks at work or at school are common experiences. We generally know which behavior is correct, but too often allow our impulses to rule.

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?
I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways,
and according to the fruit of his doings. (Jeremiah 17:9-10)

Major sins such as sexual transgression, stealing, or drug use can be extremely enticing to those who have given in to these temptations previously. It is through disobedience that our spirits learn to associate sin with pleasure or tension release, and our inner desires become perverted. However, those who have remained true to the commandments in thought and deed have hearts that are relatively pure. The faithful will have far fewer impulses toward sinful activities and can enjoy a special protection against Satan's traps.

Every spirit of man was innocent in the beginning; and God having redeemed man from the fall, men became again, in their infant state, innocent before God.

And that wicked one cometh and taketh away light and truth, through disobedience, from the children of men, and because of the tradition of their fathers. (D&C 93:38-39)

There are many who might disagree with the above points about our spiritual nature. They think of everything emanating from their spirit as being good and the physical body (or carnal self) as bad. They view temptations as associated with having a body. We should recognize that during our pre-mortal life, one-third of the hosts of heaven, including Satan, rebelled against the Father in the great battle in heaven. These spirits are now known as devils. Clearly, the lack of a physical body is not the sole requirement for goodness.

President David O. McKay: The man who hates his brother, and kneels down for prayer with that hate in his heart, has in his spirit a disease that will impair his spiritual life. The man who fails in any way to live up to that which God and conscience tell him is right is weakening his spirituality—in other words, is depriving himself of the sunlight in which his spiritual nature will grow.⁶

The body is made from the elements, the one hundred or more basic chemicals such as oxygen and iron from which all physical matter is composed. It is a magnificent apparatus with highly developed physical, cognitive, and sensory abilities. Physical bodies are far from being bad. The body is amazingly complex in all its functions and provides another testimony to the intelligence and power of God. Bodies are given to man by God so we might experience the elements as He does and have more joy and power.

For man is spirit. The elements are eternal, and spirit and element, inseparably connected, receive a fulness of joy;
And when separated, man cannot receive a fulness of joy. (D&C 93:33-34)

Joseph Smith the Prophet said the following words about the physical body:
We came to this earth that we might have a body and present it pure before God in the celestial kingdom. The great principle of happiness consists in having a body. The devil has no body, and herein is his punishment. All beings who have a body have power over those who have not.⁷

This model of the personality seems to present a striking paradox. How can man's spirit possess such great intelligence and capabilities and yet have such a difficult time controlling its impulses and obeying the commandments? There seems to be a very large gap between our ability to gain knowledge and our power to implement correct principles. The explanation for this disparity may be that human beings are more child-like than we would wish to recognize.

The spirit also uses the rational brain, the prefrontal cortex, just as it does the limbic system. It is my belief that the heart is aware of the solutions it can derive using the rational mind, but it sometimes has a strong emotional reaction to the answers. Thus, in a vain attempt to maintain control of its environment, it may embrace a false idea and deny the truth. In the scriptures, ignoring truth or logic is called "hardening the heart" and "being blind in the mind" (3 Nephi 2:1). Thus is explained the mystery of how the spirit of man can be so intelligent, and yet at the same time so foolish in his desires. Men *choose* to not see the obvious in order to gratify their impulses, thus allowing themselves to be deceived and led astray.

If one inquired carefully of individuals with addictions regarding the thoughts they entertained before giving into their vices, most would say, "I don't think anything." A few others might utter a token phrase indicating that they should not do what they were about to do, but that would be the extent of it. The vast majority of addicts do not wrestle with each decision to indulge, nor do they think extensively about the consequences of their actions. Their inner self actually controls the conscious thought processes lest the end result be that they could not indulge themselves. There is a similar mechanism involved with spiritual truth. Individuals recognize inwardly that if they open themselves up to the truth, they might be required to give up their present lifestyle and live according to God's laws. Therefore, they "harden their hearts" and sabotage the conversion process by becoming oppositional and irrational in their thoughts and speech as they fight against the truth.

And notwithstanding they being led, the Lord their God, their Redeemer, going before them, leading them by day and giving light unto them by night, and doing all things for them which were expedient for man to receive, they hardened their hearts and blinded their minds, and reviled against Moses and against the true and living God. (1 Nephi 17:30)

O how foolish, and how vain, and how evil, and devilish, and how quick to do iniquity, and how slow to do good, are the children of men; yea, how quick to hearken unto the words of the evil one, and to set their hearts upon the vain things of the world!

Yea, how quick to be lifted up in pride; yea, how quick to boast, and do all manner of that which is iniquity; and how slow are they to remember the Lord their God, and to give ear unto his counsels, yea, how slow to walk in wisdom's paths! (Helaman 12:4-5)

The rational mind and the heart are the main parts of the personality referred to in the scriptures. According to the written word of God, the heart (the inner man) has the ability to think, has desires and impulses, and is able to sense the Holy Ghost. It can also change its desires for good or evil. The heart is a vital part of man's personality and has a major influence upon our behavior. It is noteworthy that the physical mind is not stressed in the scriptures except to emphasize the need for correct thinking. Using this dual mind model can help to clarify many of the questions that arise in the practice of psychology.

Definition of Terms

Mind - refers to the conscious thought processes of the rational part of the brain, the prefrontal cortex.

Body - is concerned with the natural drives of the physical body such as hunger, thirst, the need for sleep, and sexual tension. These are largely controlled through the brain stem and hypothalamus.

Spirit - refers to the form we took in the pre-existence as spirit children of Heavenly Father.

Heart - is associated with the *spiritual mind* made up in part by our eternal intelligence, but intimately connected with deeper parts of the brain, particularly the limbic system. The heart is the seat of our innermost desires and thoughts and our deepest emotions.

Inner self - a modern psychological expression that refers to the *heart* as defined above.

The Heart/Mind/Body Connection

It is important to recognize the difference between the appetites and senses of the body and the desires of the inner self. First of all, not every sin has to do with the body. Strivings for pride and power are significant sins that are more spiritual in nature. Some vices that are experienced via the physical body such as the drinking of alcohol are not natural drives, but learned behavior. The heart begins to associate alcohol with pleasure and develops impulses to seek it. Except for sexual sins and excessive food intake, there are actually very few transgressions that are generated by the physical drives of the body.

There is great value in recognizing the different qualities of the heart (the thoughts and intent of the spirit of man as expressed through the limbic system) and the physical rational mind and how they interact. This knowledge helps us to increase our personal motivation and strengthen impulse control. Remember that the term "inner self" is synonymous with heart. The following table helps to illustrate the differences in function.

<u>Qualities of the Heart</u>	<u>Qualities of the Rational Mind</u>
Energetic, playful, creative, emotional, impulsive, little sense of time, usually thinks in ideas and not words, intuitive, relates well to symbolism, loving, sentimental, has difficulty differentiating between fantasy and reality, prone to cognitive distortions and magical thinking, organizes its experiences by creating schemas (fixed ideas about self and the world).	Logical, organized, able to gather and categorize data, good sense of time, analytical, able to delay impulses, has a good capacity for working memory, can consider hypothetical situations and project into the future (abstract thinking). *Note that these abilities are most closely associated with the conscious mind, the prefrontal cortex.

A good example of this mind/body/heart interaction is fasting. The body via nerves in the empty stomach signals hunger to the brain stem. Other sensors signal thirst and lowered blood sugar. Within our heart, the inner self, we may have an intense *desire* to eat or drink. The rational mind tells us not to eat and why, and controls the situation.

Sin occurs when men trade their future happiness for momentary pleasures of little lasting value. The conscious mind properly educated about gospel principles can serve as a bridle to help direct the inner self and check any wayward desires. Through the use of self-talk, the mind can influence the spirit by providing reminders about future consequences. We can literally preach the gospel of common sense to ourselves!

He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls.
(Proverbs 25:28)

The inner self through obedience to the commandments and the sanctifying influence of the Holy Ghost eventually learns to change its desires to more righteous ones. It learns that only through self-discipline, sacrifice, and righteousness can individuals find true joy. It is through this process of sanctification, the purifying of the heart, that we can become one with the Lord.

The following examples will further clarify how each part of the personality influences our decision-making and subsequent actions:

Soldier on guard duty Bill is pulling guard duty in the blazing sun of mid-day. His body feels terribly hot and his heart's desire is to get into the shade. However, he recognizes with his rational mind (the prefrontal cortex) that if he briefly ducks into the shade, even for a few minutes, he is apt to be caught and punished severely. He decides that it makes much more sense to wait another hour until his shift is over to gain relief from the sun.

Staying up late watching a movie Harry's body signals fatigue via the brain stem and indicates it is sleepy. His rational mind reminds him that he will really pay for this tomorrow. The heart is so focused on the movie that it overrides the warning and Harry stays up late anyway. The next day he is miserably tired and resolves to avoid making this mistake again. The following week Harry encounters the exact same situation. With the experience fresh in his memory, his rational mind is able to

convince the inner self that staying up late is a bad idea and really not worth it. Harry goes to bed on time.

Overeating at a party After two big slices of cake, Laura's stomach hurts. The body signals to the brain that it is really full. Laura tells herself in her rational mind, "I really should not eat anymore; I am already stuffed." However, the heart has such a strong impulse to enjoy more sweets that she gives in and has a third piece of cake anyway.

A Higher Goal

As we focus on the change process, it is essential to understand how the heart and the rational mind interact. While the heart relies a great deal upon the rational mind for guidance, this is not the desired end. *It should be recognized that one of the greatest tasks of mortal life is to change the heart.* Disciplining ourselves to obey the commandments is a wonderful first step, but it is not the entire gospel. Jesus castigated the Pharisees for their outward observance of specific laws, while ignoring the “weightier matters” such as compassion and charity.

Very often man's mortal existence is described as an opportunity to get a body and pass the test of obedience. However, while this aspect of the plan of salvation is accurate, it remains nonetheless shortsighted. The main purpose of man's existence is to change the very fabric of his being, the inner man.

President David O. McKay: The highest purpose of man is to develop the spirit within him.⁸

The Prophet Joseph Smith: Search your hearts, and see if you are like God. I have searched mine and feel to repent of all my sins.⁹

President James E. Faust: The Apostle Paul's wish for the Ephesian Saints was that the Lord would grant unto them “to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man” (Ephesians 3:16). In like manner, the basic program of the Church today is to strengthen the inner self.¹⁰

Spirituality and character are developed as we focus on changing the inner man. This type of transformation occurs through the continual influence of the Holy Ghost and the positive experience of obeying the commandments. The way of faith is the higher law the Lord has chosen for us to live by. Through obedience we can learn to desire the good. A perfect man is one with only righteous aims and a deep love for God and others. Delbert F. Wright, past President of the Minnesota Stake, shared the following thought in his address at BYU in 1963: “In the Jewish tradition the heart was the seat of thought and intelligence. Hence, to be pure in heart is to be pure in mind—no room for evil desires, but full of righteous plans and ideas.”¹¹

Therefore, verily, thus saith the Lord, let Zion rejoice, for this is Zion—THE PURE IN HEART; therefore, let Zion rejoice, while all the wicked shall mourn. (D&C 97:21)

Action Steps

1. During the next couple of days choose three different situations and practice identifying the different aspects of functioning (rational mind, body, and heart).
2. I would also suggest keeping a “therapy journal” where you can record important ideas and goals, as well as problems or thoughts you get stuck on. Also, some of the

exercises at the end of each chapter require written responses. Keeping a journal can greatly enhance the change process.

Notes

1. Brigham Young, *Discourses of Brigham Young*, compiled by John A. Widtsoe (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1954), 191. Quote used by permission of the publisher.
2. David O. McKay, "Gaining the Abundant Life," in *Man May Know for Himself: Teachings of President David O. McKay*, compiled by Clare Middlemiss (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1967), chapter 14, <<http://gospelink.com>>, September 2007.
3. James E. Faust, "Strengthening the Inner Self," *Ensign*, February 2003, 3.
4. David O. McKay, "The Nature of Man," in *Gospel Ideals: Selections from the Discourses of David O. McKay* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1967), chapter 25, <<http://gospelink.com>>, September 2007.
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6. David O. McKay, *Improvement Era*, 1952, no.4, The Editor's Page, <<http://gospelink.com>>, September 2007.
7. Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, compiled by Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 181. Quote used by permission of the publisher.
8. David O. McKay, *Deseret Church News*, 2 Jan., 1952, p. 3. <<http://gospelink.com>>, September 2007.
9. Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, compiled by Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 216. Quote used by permission of the publisher.
10. James E. Faust, "Fathers, Mothers, Marriage," *Ensign*, August 2004, 3.
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Chapter 2

Choosing the Spiritual Path

Principle # 2: Trust in God

Turn your life and will over to Jesus Christ by making spirituality your greatest goal. Spirituality could be defined as: 1) being obedient to the commandments and promptings of the Holy Ghost, 2) maintaining a positive emotional state by cultivating right thoughts and actions, 3) focusing on service to others and personal growth, 4) seeking to be in harmony with other people, nature, and truth.

If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. (Galatians 5:25)

Hope and Faith

The year was 1897. Thousands of people were rushing to the small town of Dawson in the Yukon Territory of Canada, about 25 degrees in latitude from the Arctic Circle. Many of these travelers took trains to Seattle and then sailed 3,000 miles up the Alaskan coast to a port called St. Michael's. From St. Michael's they caught a riverboat that would steam nearly 1,400 miles up the mighty Yukon River to Dawson. One major challenge they faced was that the Yukon River was generally frozen nine months of the year. Travelers sometimes had to winter on their ship in weather 20 to 40 degrees below zero waiting for the spring thaw.

A less expensive route was to take a ship from Seattle to Skagway in British Columbia. Once there, however, they had to carry the ton of goods required by the Canadian Mounties by hand over the dreaded Chilcoot Pass. These provisions were necessary to avoid starvation during the long Yukon winter. To ascend the summit required a steep climb of over three thousand feet upon steps carved out of the ice and snow. A little quick math tells us that if a man carried 50 pounds at a time, he would have to make 40 trips to get his 2,000 pounds over the top!

Once through the pass, the intrepid travelers had to make their way to Lake Bennett. Here they would spend the winter, fell trees, and construct a boat built from boards they cut by hand out of logs. When the spring thaw came, they pushed off in their homemade crafts into the swollen upper Yukon River. If they somehow made it through the rapids safely, it was a relatively smooth ride the rest of the way downstream to Dawson.

Upon their arrival at Dawson, they had to live in tents until they could obtain land and build a cabin. Once they claimed their stake, the real work began. With great effort they dug deep holes in the ground, brought the earth up in baskets, and carefully sifted through the muck. The work was miserable and the living conditions crude. Life was harsh in the Yukon, but all these efforts were made willingly, and with periodic enthusiasm. There was one main reason these adventurers were so spirited. They had a bright *hope*. They had all come to Dawson to get rich in the Klondike gold fields!¹

And again, my beloved brethren, I would speak to you concerning hope. How is it that ye can attain unto faith, save ye shall have hope.

And what is it that ye shall have hope for? Behold I say unto you that ye shall have hope through the power of the atonement of Christ and the power of his resurrection, to be raised unto life eternal, and this because of your faith in him according to the promise. (Moroni 7:40-41)

Depression – The Absence of Hope

Depression is a very prevalent condition in modern society. Some studies indicate that half the population suffers a depressive episode sometime in their lives. All people experience periods of sadness or low energy, but clinical depression refers to a persistent and/or substantial decline in mood and functioning. The DSM IV, the manual for psychiatric diagnosis, provides the following criteria. Dysthymic disorder is defined as being depressed most of the day, more days than not, for at least two years, and to have at least two of six specific clinical symptoms. The criteria for a major depressive episode is to have at least five of nine specific clinical symptoms and to be depressed most of the day, nearly every day, for at least two weeks.²

Typical Symptoms of Depression

insomnia	low energy	poor appetite
poor concentration	low self-esteem	overeating
hopelessness	irritability	suicidal feelings
restlessness	social withdrawal	guilt
crying spells	decreased productivity	anxiety

There may be an inherited biological predisposition to depression. First-degree relatives of those with unipolar depression have a three times greater chance of developing the condition.³ Nonetheless, life events may also play a role. A study performed at Stanford University in 1983 showed that 409 depressed male subjects averaged twice as many negative or stressful life events as a non-depressed control group.⁴ However, 17 percent of the 409 subjects had none of the negative events measured occur to them during the past year and 59 percent had no significant losses such as death of a family member or divorce. These mixed results are consistent with the idea that some depressions are situational and tend to be resolved with time and support, while other depressions are of a more longstanding nature.

Medications can be very helpful, especially in the short-term. However, the brain is very “plastic” and the receptor cells in the neurons adjust to changes in the amount of neurotransmitter substance they receive. This is why people build up a tolerance to most drugs and antidepressants can seem less beneficial over time. The issue is not whether to take medications, but of putting all things in their proper place and taking a holistic approach to improving mental health. Every action and every thought affects brain chemistry, and so there are many possible approaches to treating emotional problems. We are spiritual beings in a physical body and any long-term solutions must include spiritual/emotional change.

In my opinion, negative thoughts and trauma from difficult events form the seeds of depression in the majority of cases. The critical factor I have observed in the most significant depressions is a sense of being trapped in a painful situation. People can bear tremendous burdens and remain relatively healthy emotionally as long as they have hope. To hope means to believe that things can change for the better. It is when we become convinced that our personal circumstances are awful and cannot be changed that depression sinks its teeth into our souls. Life loses meaning when there seems to be no future worth struggling for. In many respects, depression is a state of giving up.

In all things, it is better to hope than to despair.

-Goethe

Neuroimaging research shows that in depression there is lower activity in the left prefrontal cortex (frontal lobe) and higher activity in the amygdala in depressed individuals. Decreased activity in the prefrontal cortex is likely experienced as difficulty in thinking effectively. Higher activity in the amygdala is thought to be associated with the increased processing of negative emotions.

It is helpful in addressing depression to consider how we are biologically prepared to interact with our environment. Remember that President McKay told us that the spirit controls the body like a driver directs an automobile. The human will directs energy (and therefore neurotransmitters) to the areas of the brain and body it wishes to activate. However, this process is based upon our *perception* of the environment and not necessarily pure reality. Levels of neurotransmitters are changed by our interpretations of our present reality. For example, if one is home alone at night and hears a reoccurring noise outside, he might decide someone is trying to break in. Deciding how to deal with the threat could create a considerable amount of tension. Levels of norepinephrine would increase as the brain used its senses to try to tune into the danger. The hormone cortisol would be secreted to prepare the body for fight or flight. Blood and energy would be directed from the prefrontal cortex and other areas to the large muscles. However, more often than not, these types of noises are merely tree branches being blown against the house. As one's perception changes, the biochemical processes eventually go back to normal.

Similarly, when we are focused on goals we believe are important for our happiness or well-being, the prefrontal cortex becomes more energized. This allows us to pay attention to the goal and to use our memory and problem-solving abilities to achieve success. However, during a depressive episode people generally have a difficult time activating the higher brain centers. Accordingly, this results in decreased levels of certain neurotransmitters. Why does this occur? Generally speaking, individuals convince themselves they are irreparably flawed and success in certain important areas is no longer possible. They may feel that their hope for future contentment is severely limited, if not outright impossible. The inner reasoning says, "Since I can never find happiness, why try at all?" When the human will is discouraged and ceases to energetically pursue relevant goals, less energy will be sent to the prefrontal cortex, the chief executive of the mind. Whatever we focus on or believe has a very significant impact upon our brain functioning and symptoms.

Happiness is not something ready-made. It comes from your own actions.

-The Dalai Lama

Keep Your Eye on the Prize

In the book *Gulliver's Travels* by Jonathan Swift, the tiny Lilliputians managed to capture the gigantic Gulliver by tying him up with many ropes as he slept. In like manner, we can bind ourselves with ropes of pessimistic and self-critical thoughts that keep us in a depressed condition. Those who are depressed generally have a formidable list of problems they feel hopeless or discouraged about. As long as we remain focused on what is wrong, neither man nor God can free us from our unhappy state.

I had a neighbor whose husband died from Huntington's Chorea, an inherited nervous system disorder which kills its victims in the prime of life. The brain begins to deteriorate, and the individuals lose their cognitive and physical functioning bit by bit

until they die. Some of her children also developed this terrible illness. As I spoke to her in her home one day, I asked her if she often became depressed because of the severe problems her family faced. She assured me that she was able to cope, that she tried to be positive and remain a support to her children. Somehow she had found the emotional strength to *accept* her tragic lot in life—to know that several of her family members would deteriorate and die at a young age. In my eyes, she will always remain a heroine.

One of the sad facts of life is that things do not always go according to our plans and dreams. Illness, financial problems, setbacks in careers, family conflicts, or other various disappointments or tragedies often touch our lives. We may greatly resent this apparent lack of control over our circumstances and become angry with God and fall into despair. However, here is the very moment when the gospel light can shine most brightly to show us the way. When our dreams seem shattered, hope is always available. We are not on earth to have a perfect life without disappointment or failure. Having to endure problems does not mean that God does not love us, or that He is unfair or uncaring. The scriptures, in fact, tell us that God chastens the righteous. It is important to accept that as disciples of Christ we will have to make sacrifices and likely endure trials.

Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you whom I love, and whom I love I also chasten that their sins may be forgiven, for with the chastisement I prepare a way for their deliverance in all things out of temptation, and I have loved you. (D&C 95:1)

The Prophet Joseph Smith said, "A religion that does not require the sacrifice of all things never has power sufficient to produce the faith necessary unto life and salvation."⁵ We have difficulty emotionally accepting the message that life is going to be hard at times. Most would prefer to be happy, healthy, and rich. However, the true purpose of life is to progress and become more like Jesus Christ. Our hope lies in the promise that obeying the commandments will prepare us for the celestial kingdom. Sometimes I ask people if they would expect to have fun if they went to Marine boot camp. They chuckle and admit they would not expect boot camp to be very pleasant. I then ask if they think there is any value to that experience. They reply that it is important training for military exercises. Earth life is like that as well. *Who we are to become is more important than always being happy and successful.* Obtaining salvation sometimes requires giving up cherished temporal dreams. This journey is just a very short period in our eternal existence, but oh so extremely important.

And all they who suffer persecution for my name, and endure in faith, though they are called to lay down their lives for my sake yet shall they partake of all this glory.

Wherefore, fear not even unto death; for in this world your joy is not full, but in me your joy is full.

Therefore, care not for the body, neither the life of the body; but care for the soul, and for the life of the soul.

And seek the face of the Lord always, that in patience ye may possess your souls, and ye shall have eternal life. (D&C 101:35-38)

The gospel also helps put our sufferings into perspective. It is extremely difficult to endure continuing pain, whether it is physical or emotional. It is our attitude that helps us to carry on and maintain our spiritual balance. If we view trials as mountains to climb in order to strengthen our faith and character, we re-establish meaning and hope in our lives. Comprehending God's plan is like finding water in a desert

wasteland. This knowledge can be utterly essential to our emotional and spiritual survival. I often tell people, "This is not your real life." Earth life is but a finishing school for gods in embryo. We are eternal creatures placed in this sphere to receive important life lessons and gain invaluable training. If we are faithful we will return home to a better existence, and our sorrows will be lost in the joy of our Lord.

These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world. (John 16:33)

And if thou shouldst be cast into the pit, or into the hands of murderers, and the sentence of death passed upon thee; if thou be cast into the deep; if the billowing surge conspire against thee; if fierce winds become thine enemy; if the heavens gather blackness, and all the elements combine to hedge up the way; and above all, if the very jaws of hell shall gape open the mouth wide after thee, know thou, my son, that all these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good.

The Son of Man hath descended below them all. Art thou greater than he? (D&C 122:7-8)

Admittedly, it is very hard to maintain this long-term perspective. We tend to get very absorbed in the things of this world. It seems that scripture study is an essential part of keeping our eyes on the true prize. If we forget to think about who we are and why we are here, we can easily become lost. By reading the holy writ daily, we increase our power to stay focused on spiritual goals. In the stormy seas of depression and despair, our life raft can be the hope obtained through prayer and scripture study. When all seems lost, we can find solace in our knowledge of the purpose of life and look forward to eternal glory. By fully turning to the Lord and dedicating our lives to him, we can find an inner peace that transcends worldly problems.

For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope. (Romans 15:4)

And the remission of sins bringeth meekness, and lowliness of heart; and because of meekness and lowliness of heart cometh the visitation of the Holy Ghost, which Comforter filleth with hope and perfect love, which love endureth by diligence unto prayer, until the end shall come, when all the saints shall dwell with God. (Moroni 8:26)

Walking in the Light

We may question why some good members of the church who possess a strong faith and the gift of the Holy Ghost struggle with emotional problems when there are individuals who are not religious at all who seem reasonably content? Since this is the gospel of happiness, why does such an inconsistency seem to exist? While certainly biological factors can play a role, this factor does not seem to account for all of the variance. What is the *missing ingredient*?

First of all, I believe that there is a human tendency in religious organizations to emphasize outer behaviors, these being easier to observe, monitor, and understand. In the case of the LDS church, some examples would be tithing, scripture study, temple attendance, and Family Home Evening. Obedience to the commandments is a good starting point and an essential aspect of following Christ. Nevertheless, obedience is insufficient by itself to bring either salvation or happiness.

Without diminishing the importance of following gospel guidelines, I would say it is clear that the Lord expects more from us. A profound inner change takes place as we live as true disciples of Jesus Christ. We must be "born again." As we live so as to

continually receive the blessings of the Holy Ghost, profound changes occur within our souls. These blessings occur because of our obedience, repentance, and prayers of faith. Though we may stumble on the path to perfection, the cleansing power of the atonement of Jesus Christ makes forgiveness possible. Therefore, we are able to continue to remain eligible for the transforming and sanctifying presence of the Holy Spirit. The following scriptures and quotes emphasize the necessity of changing the inner person and learning to follow the promptings of the Holy Ghost.

Have ye spiritually been born of God? Have ye received his image in your countenances? Have ye experienced this mighty change in your hearts? (Alma 5:14)

And at that day, when I shall come in my glory, shall the parable be fulfilled which I spake concerning the ten virgins.

For they that are wise and have received the truth, and have taken the Holy Spirit for their guide, and have not been deceived—verily I say unto you, they shall not be hewn down and cast into the fire, but shall abide the day. (D&C 45:56-57)

The gift of the Holy Ghost is a wonderful blessing. Infusions of divine light come periodically as we obey various commandments and commune with the Lord through prayer. Being obedient and taking the Holy Spirit for your guide will likely ensure a place in the celestial kingdom. However, even this superior lifestyle may not be enough to bring consistent happiness and peace.

There are reasons for this. Given our busy schedules, we have a limited amount of time in which to perform gospel-based activities. Worries and negative emotions can settle in and diminish our sense of well-being. We may find ourselves distant from the Spirit, but unable to drop what we are doing and read the scriptures or attend the temple. Additionally, God does not choose to remove all our negative emotions just because we think to pray for relief. Therefore, given the difficult nature of life, what can we do to maintain a high level of spirituality throughout the day?

Hidden Gospel Treasures

The pre-Incan civilizations of the Central Andes in South America lived for over a thousand years at elevations of more than 13,000 feet. Around 800 AD the city of Tiwanaku, in the Lake Titicaca basin area in Peru and Bolivia, became the capital of an extensive empire that covered some 600,000 square kilometers and existed for 400 years. The population of this empire is estimated to have been between 100,000 and 300,000 inhabitants.

The mystery surrounding this ancient civilization has been regarding its ability to feed a large population while living at such a high altitude. The modern-day indigenous peoples, likely descendants of the pre-Incans, struggled to grow any mainstay crops and the land supported relatively few people. The frequent frosts that occurred at these high altitudes made farming very uncertain, and income was largely based upon grazing domestic herd animals such as sheep and alpaca.

Scientists searching for clues regarding this mystery noted that aerial photographs seemed to indicate the existence of an ancient system of irrigation canals. These canals were 10 to 15 feet in width and ran between areas of 10 to 20 raised ridges of earth about 3 feet in height. Some theories regarding the value of these canals were developed by scientists from the United States, but they needed the support of the local people to test them out.

The scientists convinced local people to re-dig the canals of their ancestors and plant crops such as potatoes as an agricultural experiment. Placing water in the canals again increased the surface temperature of the raised ground between the canals 2 to 4 degrees Fahrenheit. This seemingly small increase in temperature made a great difference in preventing frost damage. What they found were that crop yields doubled in size, and in some cases quadrupled. In addition to using canals to mediate the temperature in their farms, the ancient inhabitants of greater Tiwanaku most likely had cultivated crops especially suited for high altitudes such as kiwicha (a protein-rich grain) and ollucu (a high-protein potato).⁶

The altiplano of Peru and Bolivia turned out to be far richer in agricultural yield than the people living there the last few hundred years thought possible. Similarly, the gospel contains far richer spiritual treasures than at first meets the eye. What is important for the Latter-day Saints is to look further inward and to realize that there is an extra measure of commitment that is required to bring us to the highest level of spirituality.

The Sanctification Process

Picture a large reservoir fed by two streams. One stream is large with a steady flow of pure, clear water. The other stream is smaller than the first and flows periodically with muddy runoff water. If conditions change and the muddy stream produces the larger flow for a time, the reservoir will temporarily lose its pure quality. The pure stream can no longer flush out the dirty water fast enough to keep the reservoir in a clear state, and the water becomes progressively murky.

Church members can dim the Spirit by polluting their personal spiritual reservoir with undesirable emotions such as anxiety, anger, guilt, envy, and pessimism. Negative thinking is the source of all these disagreeable feelings. Harsh speech, light-mindedness, unkindness, gossiping, or viewing unwholesome videos can also create adverse feelings. These spiritual miscues, though not generally major sins, can still have a very deleterious effect upon our overall spirituality. More serious incorrect behavior will, of course, have an even stronger negative impact. *Let us recognize that it is the general state of this inner spiritual reservoir that largely dictates our happiness.*

The prophet King Benjamin spoke to his people shortly before his death. The inspired words of this great leader are recorded in the Book of Mormon in chapters two through five of Mosiah. Toward the conclusion of his speech King Benjamin issued this solemn warning to the people:

But this much I can tell you, that if ye do not watch yourselves, and your thoughts, and your words, and your deeds, and observe the commandments of God, and continue in the faith of what ye have heard concerning the coming of our Lord, even unto the end of your lives, ye must perish. And now, O man, remember, and perish not. (Mosiah 4:30)

This scripture clearly suggests that we have some significant responsibility for maintaining our personal spirituality. King Benjamin warns us to be mindful of all our thoughts and actions because it is so very necessary for our sanctification. According to the American Heritage Dictionary, to “sanctify” means to purify or make holy. Thus our part in the transformation process goes even deeper than outer obedience and enjoying the companionship of the Holy Ghost, as critical as those two factors are. We

must also be highly active co-creators with the Lord as He brings to pass the greatest miracle of all, the recovery and development of the human soul.

For behold, this is my work and my glory to—bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man. (Moses 1:39)

One can be born again and yet not be fully sanctified. Being born again is a spiritual awakening where one receives a testimony of Jesus Christ through the Holy Ghost and then passionately pursues gospel objectives. One of the best examples is the conversion story of Alma the Younger as told in the Book of Mormon to his son Helaman. Alma first expressed his guilt and despair after being told to repent by the angel.

And now, for three days and three nights was I racked, even with the pains of a damned soul. (Alma 36:16)

Alma then spoke about his joy after praying to Jesus for mercy and forgiveness. Note that this great change took place within a three-day period.

And oh what joy, and what marvelous light I did behold; yea, my soul was filled with joy as exceeding was my pain!

But behold my limbs did receive their strength again, and I stood upon my feet, and did manifest unto the people that I had been born of God. (Alma 36:20,23)

Being born again is a spiritual gateway, a beginning point and not an end point. Most active LDS people would probably consider themselves born again, yet we know we are not perfect and still very much prone to sin and error. And, no doubt we must be “born again” many times as we recommit ourselves to following the Savior. However, sanctification is a longer parallel process with an end goal of reaching a point where one’s personality and desires are permanently altered and celestial habits more fully established.

Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. (John 14:6)

Men Are That They Might Have Joy

Trusting in God is an essential element in our walk of faith. People often fear this step because it means to a degree giving up their own will and desires. Making the decision to trust in the Lord is a serious one. This decision will require commitment and sacrifice. In return we can receive peace and consolation, continual knowledge and guidance, and eventually eternal salvation with our families. Those who have received the priesthood or their endowments have already promised God that they will be obedient. The question is whether or not we choose to honor those sacred covenants.

And I now give unto you a commandment to beware concerning yourselves, to give diligent heed to the words of eternal life.

For you shall live by every word that proceedeth forth from the mouth of God.

For the word of the Lord is truth, and whatsoever is truth is light, and whatsoever is light is Spirit, even the Spirit of Jesus Christ. (D&C 84: 43-45)

God is good and God is understanding. He is aware of our needs and desires, and He is reasonable. He will not ask of us more than we are able to perform. He wants us to trust him so He can help us.

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. (Matthew 11:28-30)

President Boyd K. Packer of the Quorum of the Twelve described his decision to yield his will to God and the freedom that decision gave him:

Perhaps the greatest discovery of my life, without question the greatest commitment, came when I finally had the confidence in God that I would loan my agency to him—without compulsion or pressure, without any duress, as a single individual alone, by myself, no counterfeiting, nothing expected other than the privilege. In a sense speaking figuratively to take one's agency, that precious gift which the scriptures make plain is essential to life itself, and say, 'I will do as you direct,' is afterwards to learn that in doing so you possess all the more.⁷

An individual who is admitted to a university is not truly a student until he applies himself to the learning process. In the same way someone who recognizes Jesus Christ as his Savior is not truly a disciple until he fully submits to God's will. Earth life is God's university and sometimes we stop at Obedience 101 when there is much more to learn. Discipleship includes more than obeying certain well-known commandments. The Plan of Salvation requires that we travel the steep and narrow path lovingly designed for the sons and daughters of God. Heavenly Father desires that we strive to become like Jesus Christ and to fully seek the spiritual life. This upper level course is known as the sanctification process and is the true way to stability, sobriety, and joy.

President Benson: The road lies before us. It is clearly marked. The means to travel it are richly provided. We must follow the path set for us by the Son of God in all that we desire, think, and do.⁸

Sanctification has three main elements to it. These elements are 1) obedience to the commandments, 2) being born again and experiencing the transforming effects of the Holy Ghost, and 3) bringing our thoughts, words, deeds, desires, and emotions into harmony with the Spirit of the Lord.

Though this task may seem overwhelming, it is important to bear in mind that you have a perfect support team. Also, remember that this is not a sprint, it is a long distance race. We have sufficient time to work out our salvation. To make an analogy, the circumference of the earth at the equator is 24,901 miles. If there was a path through the oceans, you could walk around the whole earth in less than seven years if you walked at the fairly relaxed pace of ten miles per day. The basic plan is to single-mindedly focus one's energies on the goal of living each day well. By doing this, each individual can learn one of the greatest lessons in life—that happiness and peace really do come more from spiritual living than outer circumstances.

Step 1: Obey the Commandments

Obedience to the commandments brings us blessings, keeps us on a safe path, and is an integral part of our walk with God. Although obedience is an outward manifestation of our faith, compliance with the commandments also allows God to

begin teaching us his ways. Human beings learn more deeply through experience than any other method. Obedience follows faith and is the first level of discipleship.

Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.

If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or *whether* I speak of myself. (John 7:16-17)

He doth require that ye should do as he hath commanded you; for which if ye do, he doth immediately bless you. (Mosiah 2:24)

Step 2: Seek the Purifying Influence of the Holy Ghost

One of the significant truths that Jesus taught the Jewish people was that they must be “born again.” As Israel had not hitherto received the gift of the Holy Ghost, this was a difficult concept for them to understand. Obtaining the influence of the Spirit in our lives is a very important part of our spiritual progression. (The Holy Ghost is a spirit personage and a member of the Godhead.) The Holy Ghost is obtained through obedience and faith, as well as diligence in our habits of prayer.

Though we may stumble on the path to perfection, the cleansing power of the atonement of Jesus Christ makes forgiveness possible. Therefore, we are able to continue to remain eligible for the transforming and sanctifying presence of the Holy Spirit. As we live so as to continually receive the blessings of the Holy Ghost, profound changes occur within our souls. Our natures begin to turn as a ship that sails with the wind. The prophet Alma asked the Nephite people, “Have ye spiritually been born of God? Have ye received his image in your countenances? Have ye experienced this mighty change in your hearts?” (Alma 5:14)

And they all cried with one voice, saying: Yea we believe all the words which thou hast spoken unto us; and also, we know of their surety and truth, because of the Spirit of the Lord Omnipotent, which has wrought a mighty change in us, or in our hearts, that we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually. (Mosiah 5:2)

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith. (Galatians 5:22)

Regular heartfelt prayer is an integral component of maintaining the influence of the Holy Ghost. Prayer is not only about the communication of words, but is also an exchange of emotions. We must develop the capacity to generate appropriate feelings of love, humility, and gratitude as we pray to our Heavenly Father. As we exercise stronger faith and contemplate the greatness of God, his love for all mankind, and all the things He has blessed us with; these higher emotions will be expressed more naturally in prayer.

Pray always, and I will pour out my Spirit upon you, and great shall be your blessing. (D&C 19:38)

And likewise also is it counted evil unto a man, if he shall pray and not with real intent of heart; yea, and it profiteth him nothing, for God receiveth none such. (Moroni 7:9)

Nevertheless they did fast and pray oft, and did wax stronger and stronger in their humility, and firmer and firmer in the faith of Christ, unto the filling their souls with joy and consolation, yea, even to the purifying and the sanctification of their hearts, which sanctification cometh because of their yielding their hearts unto God. (Helaman 3:35)

Step 3: Changing the Inner Man (the process of bringing our thoughts, words, deeds, desires, and emotions into harmony with the Spirit of the Lord)

A profound transformation in outlook may be required before an individual can truly let go of his desires to find satisfaction through worldly pursuits. This involves surrendering to God's will and fully seeking the spiritual life. This profound change requires not only being obedient to the laws of the Church, but also considering one's total way of life. This significant challenge involves taking into account our interactions with the Light of Christ.

The Light of Christ is a dynamic force that emanates from the presence of God and has a profound effect on all life. This source of energy and goodness is freely available to all who live by the laws that attract it, regardless of religious belief. This latter element is a critical component in finding happiness in this world. This access to the Light of Christ by all God's children explains why there are non-religious people who are quite content and Latter-Day Saints who struggle emotionally.

Which light proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space—

The light which is in all things, which giveth life to all things, which is the law by which all things are governed. (D&C 88:12-13)

And unto every kingdom is given a law; and unto every law there are certain bounds also and conditions.

All beings who abide not in those conditions are not justified.

For intelligence cleaveth unto intelligence; wisdom receiveth wisdom; truth embraceth truth; virtue loveth virtue; light cleaveth unto light; mercy hath compassion on mercy. (D&C 88:38-40)

Behold, here is the agency of man, and here is the condemnation of man; because that which was from the beginning is plainly manifest unto them, and they receive not the light.

And every man whose spirit receiveth not the light is under condemnation. (D&C 93:31-32)

President Brigham Young counseled the Saints to thoroughly examine their spiritual state in order to prepare for the end times. "Do not be too anxious for the Lord to hasten his work," he said. "Instead, let our anxiety be centered upon this one thing, the sanctification of our own hearts, the purifying of our own affections, the preparing of ourselves for the approach of the events that are to come."⁹

The Apostle Paul provided some very pertinent advice in Galatians 5:25 when he wrote, "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." My interpretation of this scripture is that after we obtain the Spirit through prayer, scripture study, and obedience to the commandments, we then try to *maintain* the same feelings throughout the day. In order to accomplish this goal, we must be continually filling our spiritual reservoir with good feelings and be vigilant about avoiding contamination. It is not as difficult as one might think. Joy, after all, is addictive.

For ye were sometimes darkness, but now *are* ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: For the fruit of the Spirit *is* in all goodness and righteousness and truth. (Ephesians 5:8-9)

Truth in Thoughts

This part of our spiritual development program is sometimes overlooked, although its importance is clearly delineated by the scriptures and the prophets. Our emotions and desires are highly influenced by our thoughts and perceptions. Improper desires must be considered in terms of our long-term goals and not only immediate

pleasures. Negative thoughts associated with anger, fear, self-criticism, or depression must be converted to more logical and positive thoughts using correct gospel principles.

Now to some the idea of managing thoughts might seem as likely as throwing a lasso on the wind. Thoughts do appear to arise both spontaneously and quickly. Some thoughts arise beneath the surface of our awareness and are difficult to detect. We may first notice negative emotions or desires and then have to backtrack to recognize any associated false perceptions. Providing oneself quiet time for prayer and contemplation can aid in this very important goal of changing thought patterns.

President David O. McKay: An upright character is the result of continued effort and right thinking, the effect of long-cherished associations with God-like thoughts.¹⁰

Let thy bowels also be full of charity towards all men, and to the household of faith, and let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God; and the doctrine of the priesthood shall distil upon thy soul as the dews from heaven. (D&C 121:45)

Set Goals for Self-Improvement

Learn skills for motivation and self-discipline. Establish those qualities and habits that will help you to develop character and become more like the Savior. Lasting happiness does not come from engaging in pleasurable activities, achieving success in the secular world, or in owning many possessions. True joy comes from maintaining a preponderance of those higher emotions associated with Jesus Christ—love, peace, truth, hope, and humility. Establishing achievable goals and utilizing positive self-talk help us to grow “line upon line and precept upon precept.” (D&C 98:12)

Read the scriptures often and follow the counsel of the Lord. Keep involved in positive activities and avoid sinful behaviors. Dedicate yourself to a life of service to the Lord and mankind. We can strive to live our lives so as to keep our behavior in harmony with the Light of Christ.

And I give unto you a commandment, that ye shall forsake all evil and cleave unto all good, that ye shall live by every word which proceedeth forth out of the mouth of God. (D&C 98:11)

And faith, hope, charity and love, with an eye single to the glory of God, qualify him for the work.

Remember faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, brotherly kindness, godliness, charity, humility, diligence. (D&C 4:5-6)

President Benson: Spiritual strength promotes positive thinking, positive ideals, positive habits, positive attitudes, and positive efforts. These are the qualities which promote wisdom, physical, and mental well-being, and enthusiastic acceptance and response by others.¹¹

President David O. McKay shared these inspired thoughts on the subject of spirituality.

Christ has asked us to develop the spiritual within us. Man's earthly existence is but a test as to whether he will concentrate his efforts, his mind, his soul upon things which contribute to the comfort and gratification of his physical nature or whether he will make as his life's purpose the acquisition of spiritual qualities. Every noble impulse, every unselfish expression of love, every brave suffering for the right; every surrender of self to something higher than self; every helpfulness to humanity; every act of self-

control; every fine courage of the soul undefeated by pretext or policy, but by the being, doing, and living of good for the very good's sake—that is spirituality.¹²

Keys to Spiritual Living

1. Values and principles– Strive to live according to higher laws. Treat all others and yourself with dignity and respect. Be an influence for good.

2. Meaning- Seek truth and knowledge and create a personal philosophy and life style that suits your unique personality, talents, and interests.

3. Enriching daily activities- The “4 L’s” can fill our hearts with positive emotions.

- **Love**- Love is the royal emotion. Our ability to value and care about others has the greatest effect upon our disposition.
- **Learning**- Gain knowledge through reading great books. Improve skills and talents and spend time contemplating important ideas.
- **Labor**- Work provides balance and focus, helps us to find meaning, and builds self-discipline.
- **Leisure**- Recreation adds to our joy in life and also serves as a valuable mental release.

4. Centering activities- Prayer, meditation, reading in books of wisdom, music, communing with nature.

5. Positive thoughts- Be optimistic, thankful, and compassionate in your outlook. See beauty and goodness in all your experiences. View difficulties as opportunities for learning and personal growth.

6. Mindfulness- Savor each minute and each day through mindful living. Live in the moment and divert attention from the negative.

7. Detachment- Things don’t have to be a certain way for us to be happy, we just *want* them to be different. It is fine to wish to have more as long as we are also willing to strive to be happy with what we have right now.

8. Wellness- Learn and follow the principles for maintaining good physical and mental health so you can maintain your vital energy.

9. Service- Think beyond just one’s self. Render compassion and service to family, community, and the world.

10. Continual progression- Set goals small and great. Develop the skills of self-discipline. View personal progression as the central purpose of existence, the existential pearl of great price.

Action Step

List a few areas from the Keys to Spiritual Living guide above that you could focus on to increase your spirituality.

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Chapter 3

One Day at a Time

Principle # 3: Live well one day at a time

Maintain a spiritual focus. Concentrate on the experience of the moment. Keep your thoughts off the past and the future and be in the present 95 percent of the time. Constructive activities create positive emotions and disrupt negative thinking patterns. Find joy and purpose in each day.

Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. (Matthew 6:34)

The Church was organized in 1830 in Fayette, New York. The Saints first gathered in Ohio and then Missouri, only to be forced to leave both places because of persecution. The Saints next settled in Nauvoo, Illinois in 1839 where a temple was built and the population swelled to 11,000, making it one of the largest cities in the state. The martyrdom of the Prophet Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum only briefly slowed down opposition to the Church. In September of 1845, foes burned more than 200 Mormon homes and farm buildings outside Nauvoo, and civil war appeared imminent. The state government then sent troops to provide temporary protection, but asked the Saints to leave Illinois. The Quorum of the Twelve Apostles promised that the Church would leave Nauvoo by the following spring.

However, it was in early February of 1846 that the first Saints began the evacuation from Nauvoo. The original plan was to leave in April, but false charges had been brought against Brigham Young and eight other apostles, the city charter had been revoked, and there were rumors of federal troops coming to intercept the Saints.

As a result of the haste in which the evacuation began, the refugees from Nauvoo were not sufficiently prepared or organized. Lack of provisions, snow, cold temperatures, and inadequate shelter caused great suffering as the faithful gathered to the Sugar Creek Camp across the Mississippi River. Several women had to give birth in tents. After reorganizing at Sugar Creek, the Saints began the journey west on March 1, 1846.

The travel across Iowa that spring was incredibly difficult. Melting snows and frequent rains turned the prairie into a quagmire. The mud was often up to the axles of the wagons. Difficult terrain, lack of guides, frequent creek and river crossings, and the ever-present scarcity of food made things extremely difficult. The groups were only able to travel two to three miles per day, or less. Some were assigned to stop to build way stations to help those coming behind. Other men sought work in communities along the route so they could obtain much needed cash. The advance party finally reached the Missouri River at the western edge of Iowa in June of 1846. It had taken them over 131 days to travel that torturous 265 miles. By contrast, the Pioneer Company a year later took only 111 days to travel the 1,032 miles from Winter Quarters to the Great Salt Lake Valley.

Scurvy, malaria, and tuberculosis plagued the destitute Saints on their journey. Seven hundred people died out of about ten thousand who spent the winter in Winter Quarters and the other encampments by the Missouri River. Also, five hundred able-bodied men had enlisted in the army as part of the “Mormon Battalion” and had left in

the summer. It was a time of great sacrifice for the Church, but also a time for the strengthening of faith and the purification of hearts.¹

The Saints had to maintain hope and courage, and focus their energies on the challenges that each day of the journey brought them. They had to completely trust in the Savior as they ventured forth into the frontier, far beyond the reaches of civilization. He always has the wisdom and power to provide comfort and guidance, even in the most perilous and difficult circumstances.

Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.
In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. (Proverbs 3:5-6)

Finding greater inner peace is brought about in a similar way. The basic plan is to single-mindedly focus one's energies on the goal of living each day well. Cravings for sin will be greatly decreased as one becomes converted to this truth and learns to walk in harmony with the light of the Lord. This chapter will look at several important aspects of mood management—maintaining a spiritual outlook, engaging in positive activities, and organizing and subduing negative thoughts.

Making Beautiful Music Each Day

Those who are struggling emotionally usually want things outside themselves to change first. They often feel that their social life, status, income, career, or other life conditions must improve before they can be content. However, all these concerns, except for the most extreme situations, must be temporarily suspended. Attitudes need to be changed and coping skills strengthened before people are likely to see major changes in their circumstances. Accepting this truth and letting go of the very human need to try to control everything is very difficult. There is a saying from Alcoholics Anonymous that says, “Let go and let God.” To truly follow the Lord's will, we must begin to change our life situation by concentrating on what He is likely to advise first—repentance.



As noted in an earlier chapter, repentance involves more than giving up bad behavior. Repentance is also associated with developing improved attitudes and new habits of living. Rather than miraculously changing the *circumstances* of our lives as we would desire, our Heavenly Father would first have us learn the ways of joy. In his wisdom, He knows that in order to obtain lasting happiness, we all need to focus more intently on living in a Christ-like manner. If he blessed us with riches and removed the majority of our burdens, most people would forget the Lord and unwisely pass up their opportunity to progress.

And thus we can behold how false, and also the unsteadiness of the hearts of the children of men; yea, we can see that the Lord in his great infinite goodness doth bless and prosper those who put their trust in him.

Yea, and we may see at the very time when he doth prosper his people, yea, in the increase of their fields, their flocks and their herds, and in gold, and in silver, and in all manner of precious things of every kind and art; sparing their lives, and delivering them out of the hands of their enemies; softening the hearts of their enemies that they should not declare wars against them;

yea, and in fine, doing all things for the welfare and happiness of his people; yea, then is the time that they do harden their hearts, and do forget the Lord their God, and do trample under their feet the Holy One—yea, and this because of their ease, and their exceedingly great prosperity.

And thus we see that except the Lord doth chasten his people with many afflictions, yea, except he doth visit them with death and with terror, and with famine and with all manner of pestilence, they will not remember him.

Yea, how quick to be lifted up in pride; yea, how quick to boast, and do all manner of that which is iniquity; and how slow are they to remember the Lord their God, and to give ear unto his counsels, yea, how slow to walk in wisdom's paths! (Helaman 12: 1-3,5)

Gaining a testimony of living a more spiritual life is a wonderful adventure. Not only will it change your life, but making spirituality your greatest priority will also bring forth priceless eternal rewards. One starts by focusing on this objective one day at a time. To skip the necessary mental and emotional preparation and then to expect good fortune in life is comparable to swimming across river rapids, merely hoping you will make it across. The spiritual practice of living for the day can be your bridge to success.



But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” (Matthew 6:33)

Man Overboard!

What would you do if you were a tourist on a cruise ship two hundred miles from land and you fell overboard at midnight? Imagine the ship steaming ahead leaving you all alone in the dark waters. A person might be tempted to give up in the face of such incredible adversity and just sink beneath the waves. In 1995 such a situation actually occurred and was reported in the news. United States Marine Lance Corporal Zachary Mayo was walking on the deck of his ship early one morning because of insomnia. A sudden gust of wind and a swinging door knocked him overboard, right in the middle of the Arabian Sea. He shouted, but no one heard him, and the ship sailed on without him. The Navy did look for him once he was reported missing, but gave up after a lengthy search. He stayed afloat by using a survival tactic he had learned in boot camp. He took his pants off, tied them in a knot, and inflated them to serve as a crude life preserver. He floated for a day and a half in shark-infested waters before a fishing boat came by and gave him passage to land in Pakistan.² It is essential when fighting inner battles to keep busy. We tread water emotionally by staying active—physically, intellectually, and socially. Activities provide

an important distraction from negative thoughts and help fight discouragement and depression. They also contribute to a spirit of joy and make life meaningful. Never give in to the emotions of the moment; tomorrow can be a better day!

Active natures are rarely melancholy. Activity and sadness are incompatible.

-Bovee

As briefly noted in the previous chapter, the main positive activity areas of life are the “4 L’s”—love, labor, learning, and leisure. All people can participate in these endeavors regularly in order to fill each day with spiritually positive activities. It may be helpful to make a written list of chosen daily activities. The list might include such things as prayer and scripture study, service, work (paid or volunteer), reading, walking, playing sports, taking a class, or visiting friends, etc. Happy people are active people and finding more joy starts with getting busy.

In all labor there is profit. (Proverbs 14:23)

For behold, it is not meet that I should command in all things; for he that is compelled in all things, the same is a slothful and not a wise servant; wherefore he receiveth no reward.

Verily I say, men should be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of their own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness;

For the power is in them, wherein they are agents unto themselves. And inasmuch as men do good they shall in nowise lose their reward. (D&C 58:26-28)

Mindfulness Prerequisite for Spiritual Success

As we engage in the activities of the day, it is important for our inner peace and contentment to give those pursuits our full attention. The Buddhist practice of mindfulness means being fully aware of one’s thoughts, actions, and feelings in the present moment, non-judgmentally. The end goal is to more fully and richly experience life. Not judging is important because typically judging oneself or others leads to negative emotions that cloud the moment and put a dent in our happiness. We are told in 2 Nephi 29 verses 7-12 in the Book of Mormon that the Lord gives his words to all the peoples of the world. The principle of mindfulness was included in this chapter because it seems very relevant to the goal of maintaining the Spirit of the Lord. Psychologist Jon Kabat-Zinn had this to say about mindfulness:

Fundamentally mindfulness is a simple concept. Its power lies in its practice and its applications. Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally. This kind of attention nurtures greater awareness, clarity, and acceptance of present-moment reality. It wakes us up to the fact that our lives unfold only in moments. If we are not fully present for many of those moments, we may not only miss what is most valuable in our lives but also fail to realize the richness and the depth of our possibilities for growth, and transformation.³

Living for Today (Mostly)

We can find greater peace and contentment as we are able to experience life moment by moment. Unfortunately, the beautiful music of life cannot be heard clearly if there is too much inner disturbance. Perhaps the greatest obstacle to spirituality is to dwell too much on the many problems and disappointments that encumber each person. Mindfulness helps us to become expert surfers on the treacherous waves of

life. As illustrated in the picture to the right, it is essential to stay ahead of the waves of negativity that can envelop us. The outcome can be deadly if too much thought is given to what is not right in one's life.



The challenge of learning to not dwell on difficulties may seem comparable to a person living in the jungle trying to avoid worrying excessively about the man-eating tiger seen near his village. Nevertheless, it has to be done. There is no other way. Most large problems cannot be fixed in a day, a week, or even a month. And, similar to being stuck in quicksand, struggling only makes a bad situation worse. Wonderfully though, learning the skill of mindfulness will benefit you the rest of your life. It is a skill that all people regardless of status or situation could do well to practice.

One essential principle of spirituality involves living in the present moment 95 percent of the time. This leaves each person one hour and twelve minutes per day for focusing on the problems. While people sometimes become negative and dwell on present concerns such as family difficulties, they seem to spend more time focusing on the past and future. They can fall into a trap of feeling sad, angry, or guilty about the past and anxious or hopeless about the future. In short, they make themselves miserable by focusing on things they actually have little control over.

Therefore, the idea of setting aside a daily "contemplation hour" is proposed. This hour can be in the morning, evening, or anytime that appeals to you. This hour is dedicated to finding solutions to challenges, processing emotions, developing personal philosophies, and sorting out the past. For some people making a list of the issues to go over can be helpful. It is fine to be flexible about the times and duration of the exercise. The hour can be any time of day, or performed spontaneously when problems pop into consciousness. If you are feeling good that day the time can be shortened. Some people who spend multiple hours per day fretting might actually need two periods per day. Those who strive mightily to *never* feel their negative emotions might commit to just two contemplation hours per week until they become more skilled at managing feelings.

If concerns arise after the contemplation hour, the individual mentally notes that the issues have to wait until the next contemplation period. Now, some might say that this sounds far too simplistic to actually work. However, please understand that the subconscious mind is intelligent and powerful. Once the inner self believes in the contemplation hour plan, it will automatically begin to cooperate.

It is advisable to write down a sound mental argument in order to convince the inner self to support this unique strategy. The rationale for doing things this way is very solid. Most individuals have had their share of heartaches and disappointments. There are many difficult questions about life to ponder. Present challenges may seem overwhelming or impossible to solve, and the future may appear bleak and difficult. There is little payoff for thinking more hours each day about such a complex collection of difficulties. Answers will only come after considerable work and thought, and even then they will come in their own time. Those who have troubled thoughts have everything to gain and nothing to lose by altering their patterns.

This ability to “turn the mind” can make all the difference in the world. By limiting the time spent thinking about the chaos to 5 percent of the day, the other 95 percent can be used to seek greater richness of life. We do not have to solve all our problems in order to find more joy and stability. Changing the way we think about the problems will go a long way toward changing one’s life for the better.

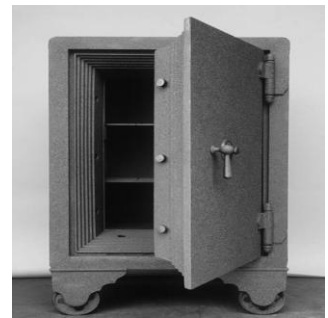
The Holy Ghost can provide immeasurable help as we try to cope with life’s many challenges. However, it is difficult to feel the effects of the Spirit if we are creating a negative emotional climate. If we are pessimistic about the future or worrying about things we have little control over, we are just getting in God’s way. A popular saying suggests the faithful attitude of “Do your best and let God take care of the rest.” If the winds of the Spirit are to fill our sails and speed our life’s journey, we need to be willing to pull up the anchor.

Wherefore, ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life. (2 Nephi 31:20)

Journey to the Center of the Mind

In order to fully utilize the benefits of the contemplation hour, there are some added instructions. Not only should we carefully monitor our thoughts after the contemplation hour, but also our emotions. We do not want to even *feel* the burden of our concerns after the designated time period. I added the word “feel” because the subconscious mind can focus on problems beneath our awareness. The negative emotions we are experiencing are a clue that this is occurring. If there are any inner thoughts about problems, we will notice feelings of tension, anger, depression, etc.

It tends to be a common practice to try to cope with problems by suppressing negative feelings and diverting one’s attention with activities. While containing emotions is a valuable adult function, it can be overdone. It is a serious psychological error to suppose one can suppress all their negative emotions indefinitely, locking them up in a safe, so to speak. Life is just not that simple. Additionally, people often have other thoughts and feelings they are not aware of at all. As noted above, the subconscious (the emotional brain)



continues to generate feelings about important issues that we push away, whether we are aware of them or not. This causes internal pressure to build up which we may notice as tension or racing thoughts. Individuals also may experience increases in psychiatric symptoms such as anxiety, depression, mania, or obsessive-compulsive behaviors. Certainly people are more prone to turn to addictive behaviors when they feel emotionally overloaded.

Mindfulness incorporates full awareness, including the subconscious. Knowing what issues are contained in the subconscious may seem like a tall order, but it is less difficult than one might think. There is an important principle of emotional management that comes into play. Emotions form a link between subconscious ideas and thoughts and the conscious mind. Barring untreated medical conditions, sustained negative emotions or tension *always* indicate internal distress. It is common for individuals to be emotionally upset, even for several days, without actually

knowing why. In order to properly process the concerns, emotions must be tied to thoughts and events.

Greater awareness is very possible because the emotional brain always knows exactly what is bothering us. Secondly, it wants the problems to come back out into the open to be analyzed and resolved by the rational mind. We can notice this automatic tendency to process events both in our dreams and in remembrances of past events. The magic list method is a very simple, but highly effective technique that can be used to increase self-awareness.

The Magic List Method

- 1) Tell your inner self you would like to know what the issues of concern are.
- 2) Write on a piece of paper the five greatest possibilities for what could be bothering you. Be creative and try to not censor anything.
- 3) Slowly read the list out loud to yourself.
- 4) As you read, note which issues bring forth the greatest levels of emotion. This is the way the emotional brain communicates "yes." If desired, each concern can be visualized in order to intensify the emotions.

Now when Alma had spoken these words, Zeezrom began to tremble more exceedingly, for he was convinced more and more of the power of God; and he was also convinced that Alma and Amulek had a knowledge of him, for he was convinced that they knew the thoughts and intents of his heart; for power was given unto them that they might know of these things according to the spirit of prophecy. (Alma 12:7)

What Do Human Beings and Geysers Hold in Common?

Yellowstone National Park is a great place to visit. However, it is a bit disconcerting to know that it lies over a supervolcano. According to the U.S. Geological Survey Team, Yellowstone Park in Wyoming sits on top of three overlapping calderas forming an area measuring about 34 miles by 45 miles. Calderas are large basin-shaped volcanic depressions more or less circular in form.

No one has ever seen and reported on a volcanic explosion on the scale of the previous Yellowstone eruptions, which only occur about once every hundred thousand years. However, smaller explosions from other volcanoes have been observed and their activity described. Consider Mount Tambora, on the island of Sumbawa, Indonesia in order to grasp some idea of what's involved when a caldera forms from an ash flow eruption. The eruption of Tambora caused booming explosions that could be heard on Sumatra, 1600 miles to the west. Lombok, 124 miles to the west, was covered by a blanket of ash two feet thick. Tidal waves crashed on islands hundreds of miles away. Waves and ash falls killed more than 88,000 people.

Tambora's eruption was the largest and deadliest volcanic event in recorded history. The first Yellowstone caldera eruption was seventeen times greater than that of Tambora and 2,400 times more powerful than the recent Mt. St. Helens eruption in Washington State in 1980. Yellowstone is not expected to go off in our lifetime, but if it does, hope to be in Australia on vacation!



Yellowstone is believed to lie on top of one of the planet's few dozen hotspots where hot molten mantle rock rises towards the surface. Observable evidence of this unique geographic location are the mud pots, hot springs, and geysers which we tourists like to go see. The Old Faithful Geyser is the best known of all the park attractions.

Geysers demonstrate the signs of the release of heat and pressure. The intense heat from the magma (molten rock) creates steam, which because of its increased volume seeks release. Surface water trickling down cools it and the pressure of the water above contains the steam. However, when the steam coming up finally heats enough surface water to boiling, the system becomes unstable. Soon there is a virtual explosion as the steam expands to over 1,500 times its original, liquid volume. As the geyser erupts, water is ejected so rapidly that it is thrown into the air.

Human beings also need to find ways to release inner tension or else they become more vulnerable to addictions and physical and mental disorders. The contemplation hour provides an excellent (and safe) way to help with this process of inner release. Just paying some attention to one's thoughts, emotions, and desires during the contemplation hour is enough to maintain stability. It is not essential to immediately resolve all the problems. Usually we find a way to express our emotions or are able to be more philosophical about the concerns. Tension is released as we pay daily respect to our feelings, perhaps not so unlike the way geysers in Yellowstone National Park vent steam and release pressure so they do not explode in more destructive ways.

Many people who habitually suppress their emotions find this idea of facing all their feelings rather scary. But remember, those who typically do not let their emotions out are usually experts at keeping their feelings in. Holding those perturbing emotions in until the next contemplation hour should not prove too difficult, especially when some of the pressure has already been released. At any rate, there really is no other choice. It is a fantasy that one can successfully suppress all difficult emotions and not suffer very painful consequences. Those who are particularly skittish about dealing with their emotions could take some license and experiment with having just a couple of contemplation hours per week.

Let us recognize that those who habitually suppress their feelings have their reasons. Either in the past or present they felt emotionally overwhelmed whenever they let themselves face certain problems. Acquiring effective coping tools is necessary in order to get a better outcome with the tough problems. For some it might be very helpful to work closely with a therapist in learning these new skills. No matter how this challenge of managing emotions is viewed, becoming more proficient can help individuals achieve more stability and bring them closer to Heavenly Father. Also know that He will help every step of the way!

Centering Exercises

One of the first steps toward being more centered is to become more aware of one's breathing. An easy way to relax and get more focus is to sit down with your hand

placed on your abdomen. Then take a deep slow breath from your abdomen and slowly release it. Notice how the extra oxygen makes your body tingle and feel more alive. Hold your breath as long as you comfortably can. Become aware of your surroundings and surrender to the moment. Performing this exercise in any setting for just a few minutes can help you slow things down and feel more relaxed and centered.

The following is another exercise to help you improve your ability to focus and successfully practice mindfulness.

Focused Attention Exercise

1. Sitting in a comfortable chair, focus on one small part of a picture on the wall (or an object you can place in front of you).
2. Keep all your attention on the item you have chosen. If you begin to think about anything else, switch your attention right back.
3. When your eyes begin to feel tired, feel free to close them. Breathe deeply from the abdomen about every 15 seconds or longer as possible. Say the words PEACE AND TRANQUILITY after each breath. Focus on feelings of peace and relaxation in your body.
4. If thoughts begin to interfere with your relaxation, open your eyes and stare at the object again.
5. Do this exercise for five minutes once or twice per day.

After performing the focused attention exercise, you will find that you are in a more relaxed and can pay better attention to the things you are doing. Prayer and scripture study bring a similar spirit of peace and focus. Other activities such as music or being out in nature can also help you find your center. Certainly you are free to choose and encouraged to do whatever you feel is right for you. The goal is to try and walk through your day remaining in the same relaxed state.

Attempt to stay in a peaceful flow for whatever activity you are engaging in regardless of its relative importance. Seize the moment and be single-minded as much as possible. When you are walking to the bus, enjoy the walk. When you are washing dishes, pay attention and enjoy washing dishes. While walking outside, enjoy the beauty of nature. Avoid the temptation to spend too much time thinking about other things. Be kind and loving to others you encounter during the day and accept what they can give and who they are.

Practicing mindfulness increases our ability to find joy. The more time one spends being mindful, the less time he or she spends thinking about problems. As this practice is developed, it can do much to reduce stress and thus aid recovery.

Action Steps

Experiment with increasing your spirituality by doing the following for one week:

1. Add one or two positive activities from the 4 L's provided earlier in the chapter.
2. Utilize the contemplation hour method. Plan to take a specific time period each day for resolving issues, or else let it happen naturally. Either way, strive to not exceed one hour of total time dwelling on problems. Monitor your thoughts and feelings and remind yourself of the importance of staying in the present in a positive, focused manner the rest of the time.

Notes

1. Church Educational System, *Church History in the Fullness of Times* (Salt Lake City, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints: 1989).
2. Associated Press, "Marine Recounts Sea Ordeal," *The Herald Journal*, Logan, Utah, Thursday, 30 November, 1995, 12.
3. Jon Kabat-Zinn, *Wherever You Go, There You Are: Meditation in Everyday Life* (New York: Hyperion, 2005), 4.

Chapter 4

Peace through Acceptance

Principle # 4: Find peace through acceptance

We can find greater peace by utilizing the wisdom of the Serenity Prayer from the 12-step model. The majority of negative emotions come from our resistance to accepting our present reality (truth). We can be fortified in pursuing righteous goals as we pray to the Lord for knowledge and spiritual strength.

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

Accepting Reality

Siddhartha Gautama, later known as Buddha (the Awakened One), was born a prince in what is now southern Nepal about 2,500 years ago. At the age of 29 he left his life of privilege to devote himself to learning and spirituality. After six years of experimenting with rigorous spiritual practices, he founded the middle way, a balance between carnal living and self-deprivation. This was the Noble Eightfold Path which advocated right understanding, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration.¹ This reminds us of King Benjamin's exhortation to his people.

And finally, I cannot tell you all the things whereby ye may commit sin; for there are divers ways and means, even so many that I cannot number them.

But this much I can tell you, that if ye do not watch yourselves, and your thoughts, and your words, and your deeds, and observe the commandments of God, and continue in the faith of what ye have heard concerning the coming of our Lord, even unto the end of your lives, ye must perish. And now, O man, remember, and perish not. (Mosiah 4:29-30)

Buddha then sat under a fig tree in the town of Bodh Gaya, with the express purpose of more fully understanding human suffering. After some time, he came to some profound realizations. Buddha saw suffering as an inherent part of life due to such things as physical illness, old age, and death. Ignorance and ill will toward others were also viewed as factors in the unhappiness of man. However, Buddha viewed "selfish desire" as being perhaps the main factor in suffering. He said that when people become overly focused on worldly goals and pleasures, they end up sad and frustrated when things do not work out. Buddha therefore proposed that most pain could be eliminated by letting go of desires. He exhorted people to focus on living in a righteous and positive manner, to practice meditation, and basically give up the world.

The LDS viewpoint differs in some significant ways. We see ourselves as being in the world, but not of the world. We also do not view personal desires as particularly problematic, as long as our greatest desires are for spiritual growth and service to others. We know that "Men are that they might have joy." (Nephi 2:25) If we had no earthly desires, we might struggle to find joy. Nonetheless, it is wise to quickly recognize when circumstances are not cooperating with our desires. Life is full of disappointments, and we have much less control than we would wish. The vast majority of negative emotions come from our strong reactions to life not going our way.

The thoughts we generate when we are frustrated or discouraged in our goals can make us miserable if we allow them to.

The best way to overcome this suffering is to practice acceptance of things as they actually are. One term that has evolved out of the Buddhist tradition to describe this focus on accepting reality is “radical acceptance.” The LDS way of practicing radical acceptance is accepting the truth. Doctrine & Covenants 93:24-25 says that, “Truth is knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come. And whatsoever is more or less than this is the spirit of that wicked one who was a liar from the beginning.”

He that keepeth his commandments receiveth truth and light, until he is glorified in truth and knoweth all things. (D&C 93: 28)

Acceptance does not mean being totally resigned. The Serenity Prayer petitions the Lord that we might have “the courage to change the things we can.” Hope and faith can embolden us to go forward in the Spirit, encouraged like Nephi that the Lord will provide a way if it is his will. Heavenly Father does not always perform miracles to instantly ease our burdens. Although the Spirit is always available to strengthen and support us, the Lord expects us to use our intelligence and ability to obtain revelation to search for solutions.

Now, of course, it is not the Lord’s will that everything go perfectly in life. To the contrary, the Lord tells us in D&C 95:1 as follows: “Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you whom I love, and whom I love I also chasten that their sins may be forgiven, for with the chastisement I prepare a way for their deliverance in all things out of temptation.” Additionally, we are exposed to a variety of complex life situations that we might grow in understanding and character. Joseph Smith, while in despair in the Liberty Jail, was told: “Know thou, my son, that all these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good. The Son of Man hath descended below them all. Art thou greater than he?” (D&C 122:7-8)

As we practice acceptance, we can find more of the Lord’s peace in this world. Acceptance implies not that we merely give in or fail to react to provocation, but more that we see things as clearly as possible with an unprejudiced mind. As we exercise faith and take thoughtful action, we can accomplish great things if we do it for the glory of God.

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. (John 14:27)

But learn that he who doeth the works of righteousness shall receive his reward, even peace in this world and eternal life in the world to come. (D&C 59:23)

Be a Cork in the River

Radical acceptance does take some serious reflection to understand, and much emotional resolve to practice. Human beings do not like to face certain difficult truths, such as the fact that we have limited control over events and other people. Things are as they are, but not often as we would prefer.

If we place our sense of spirituality and inner peace first, we can become like a cork in a river. A cork floats on the surface of the water. It does not resist the current, but flows with it. If a cork hits a rock or bumps into a surrounding cliff face, it just

bounces back. If a wave washes over the cork and pushes it under the water, it soon bobs back to the surface.

The Miracle Solution

Consider the problem of anger. When we are angry, we struggle to accept that others are not ready or willing to live the standards of conduct we believe in. There is one key idea that can help us to extinguish the flames of anger before they become a forest fire. It is God's miracle advice. This involves recognizing that the real cause of anger is *judging* others' behavior. It is almost impossible to get angry without judging others. We become frustrated when someone does not live up to our expectations of how we think he should act! We decide that his behavior was immoral, unethical, or socially substandard. We use the universal link words to anger "should" or "should not" and, at least mentally, demand that he change.

Judge not, that ye be not judged.

For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. (Matthew 7:1-2)

In actuality, these inner thoughts of judgment are more wishes than realistic possibilities. Other people are not running around trying to understand and then live by the "rules" we have set up for their behavior. It is a fantasy that other people will act the way we think they should. In short, getting angry is often the result of a vain wish to control our environment.

It is a waste of time and energy to focus on the fact that someone did something wrong. It is much more helpful to accept that people act the way *they really are*. We would all do well to eliminate the word "should" from our vocabularies and substitute the phrase "I wish." The more aligned with reality we are, the better we do emotionally.

This first step in letting go of anger is to recognize that people are doing their best given their values, level of knowledge, and self-management skills. The next step is to follow the Savior's example by striving to look at those who have offended us with eyes of compassion and to try to understand their pain or point of view.

Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:

And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. (Ephesians 4:31-32)

The scriptures advocate showing love to those who afflict us. This is a very powerful, proactive approach to resolving conflict that requires both faith and humility. If there is a need to set down consequences or limits to stop further offenses, we will do a much better job if we have a spirit of charity. By truly caring, we might be able to help the offender repent and find a higher path to walk. Regardless of outcomes, when our hearts are right toward others we can enjoy the wonderful gift of inner peace.

But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you,
Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you.

And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloke forbid not to take thy coat also. (Luke 6:27-29)

Situations in Which to Employ the Therapeutic Tool of Radical Acceptance

Guilt about past actions	Past difficult events or circumstances
Anxiety about the future	Limitations of present life situation
Personal inadequacies	Anger about others' weaknesses and past actions

When we are anxious, we cannot accept that unpleasant things can happen to us that we do not desire. For instance, when flying as an airline passenger, we can choose to recognize the truth that there is a small possibility that the plane could crash. If we accept that we have no control and place our fate in the hands of the Lord and the pilot, we have accomplished phase one. The second phase is to accept the inevitability of death for all and the need to surrender gracefully should our time to go arrive. Once this mental feat is accomplished, the flight will be much more relaxed and enjoyable. Since most emotional agitation comes from trying to control things that are out of our control, acceptance is generally the perfect solution for changing undesirable emotions.

Another example to consider is the common problem of low self-esteem. People feel bad about themselves because they are not as good or skilled as they would like to be. They often use the word "should," as in "I should be more successful in my career." However, our desires to instantly be more proficient, good, or wise are merely wishes. It is important to accept the reality of our limitations since getting sad or upset does not change anything. Rather than being self-critical or comparing our self to others, we can choose to focus on becoming more effective in our behaviors.

Happiness can exist only in acceptance.

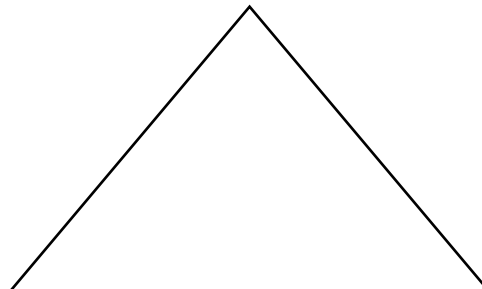
-George Orwell

The following diagram illustrates the three choices we have in facing problems. Generally speaking, trying to maintain control against all odds is the most common mistake.

THE SOLUTIONS TRIANGLE

CONTROL

A direct attempt to persuade or pressure others to change



ACCEPT

Seeing and accepting things the way they are

CHANGE

Changing some aspect of my own attitude or behavior

The Solutions Questions

1. Am I trying to maintain control of something that I have little power over?
2. What is the fantasy I am using to try to retain control?

If I diligently remind my family members about their faults, they will be sure to change.

If I think about the past enough, I can reverse history.

I should be perfect!

Everyone else must be perfect!

If I think enough about my worries, they will never happen.

Severely punishing myself for my sins and mistakes actually makes a difference.

Bad things should never happen to me because that would not be fair.

If I stay really angry long enough, things will have to change for the better.

(Feel free to add one of your own fantasies, as there are endless possibilities.)

3. What do I need to accept?
4. What changes could I realistically consider making?
5. What steps are necessary in order to make these changes occur?
6. What fears or negative ideas are keeping me from taking these steps?

Achieving Righteous Goals

The Serenity Prayer advocates changing the things we can. Heavenly Father loves us all and wants us to be successful. He will perform miracles to help us achieve righteous goals. If we have patience and vision and go to work in a positive manner, great things can happen for us.

But behold, I say unto you that ye must pray always, and not faint; that ye must not perform any thing unto the Lord save in the first place ye shall pray unto the Father in the name of Christ, that he will consecrate thy performance unto thee, that thy performance may be for the welfare of thy soul. (2 Nephi 32:9)

There is a story about a renowned musician who was told by an admirer, “I would give my life to play like you.” To this statement the musician replied, “I have.” This anecdote well illustrates an important principle. No matter the talent level, there is no substitute for practice. Depth of character is another important element of success in any field. Honesty, kindness, humility, responsibility, diligence, obedience, and the ability to cooperate with others are always valued in the workplace and at home.

Little is impossible when the Lord is on our side; however, many worthy goals take time to achieve. Personal goals such as finding a new career (or conquering an addiction) can seem out of reach. Know that faith by itself is not enough. The Lord will not fix a problem for us simply because we do not know what to do or because we have suffered a long time. If there is a solution out there or if there are some things we have neglected to take care of, He will not take away our opportunity for learning and growth. This tough love can severely test our faith. However, if we reach out in faith, we can experience his tender mercies as He helps us conquer our challenges.

Some goals are worth fighting for, even if they take years. It can take great courage, intelligence, persistence, and spirituality to keep climbing one’s personal mountains. It is very important to focus on putting together the ingredients for

success and not on what might go wrong or personal limitations. Knowledge and experience can be gained in the fields of disappointment. Familiarity conquers fear. Success comes through perseverance and the humility and wisdom to make improvements in the critical areas involved with attaining each goal. Chapter 12 will take an in-depth look at the process of goal achievement.

Face the thing you fear and the death of fear is certain.

-Ralph Waldo Emerson

Action Step

Use the Solutions Triangle and Solutions Questions to practice the art of acceptance. Take a few opportunities during the next week to experiment with using acceptance to deal with stress.

Note

1. Spencer Palmer, Roger Keller, Dong Choi, & James Toronto, *Religions of the World* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University, 1997).

Chapter 5

As a Man Thinketh

Principle # 5: Let virtue garnish your thoughts unceasingly

Correct thinking is a vital element in recovery and spiritual living. Learn to change your thoughts and more effectively manage anxiety, anger, guilt, depression, and low self-worth. The adversary strives to weaken us with powerful lies that create doubt, despair, and self-condemnation and distance us from our Heavenly Father. These self-defeating ideas must be challenged with logic, scripture, and corrective emotional experiences. The Holy Spirit can help guide us in our quest for truth.

And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. (John 8:32)

If you are ever touring New England, be sure to go to the top of Mount Washington in New Hampshire. You can drive up the mountain on the road, or you can take the Cog Railroad. However, do not expect good weather! At 6,228 feet Mount Washington is not a high mountain, but it is the tallest of the White Mountain range and lies in an area where storms from several directions collide. Some of the worst weather on earth takes place on this peak. Winds of hurricane force occur 100 days per year. Mount Washington also holds the record for the highest wind speeds ever recorded, 231 miles per hour. One of the first things you notice when you visit (besides the wind) is that the buildings are chained to the ground!

To find a measure of happiness in life, we need to have the ability to quiet down the winds of the mind. In chapter 3, you were introduced to the concepts of the contemplation hour and the magic list method. These two practices help individuals to both recognize areas of concern and also regulate the time allotted to dealing with the negative. This chapter will focus on acquiring additional skills to reduce tension and calm the mind.

Man alone, of all the creatures of the earth, can change his thought patterns and become the architect of his destiny.¹

-President Spencer W. Kimball

Tips and Tricks for Diverting the Mind

Some distance from emotions is necessary to provide the proper objectivity in which to solve problems. This is because frontal lobe functioning becomes temporarily impaired when we are emotionally upset, and we are physically unable to think efficiently. The quest is to live in the moment the majority of the time and to enjoy each day. Problem-solving should take place mainly when we *choose* to do so.

Stephen Hayes is the creator of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT). He takes the position that “trying to change difficult thoughts and feelings as a means of coping can be counter-productive.”² It is true that we can feel trapped by our negative thoughts, and struggling to resolve them may appear fruitless. In fact, obsessing on problems could be likened to falling into quicksand. Struggling only makes things worse! Certainly too much emphasis on fixing all our problems can interfere with our attempts at joyful living. It is helpful to recognize that not all problems can be resolved in a timely fashion. In order to have peace of mind it is essential to learn methods for channeling thoughts. The following are some skills to employ to better manage excessive negative thoughts.

Observation

Thoughts come in many varieties—good and bad, brilliant and common. It is difficult to screen all thoughts. In fact, the more we try to block certain unwanted thoughts the more intrusive they may become. Therefore, when undesirable thoughts enter, the best first step is to note them without a struggle. Let the thoughts slide by like clouds in the sky. Observation without interaction provides emotional distance. If the negative thoughts linger for many minutes and begin to distress us, we may need to move to other methods of thought management.

Commentary

Commenting on the type of thought may be useful. We know from experience that some of our thought patterns are undesirable. Providing labels or funny names can help us to let go. If we tend to be self-critical and we notice some negative thoughts forming, we might say something like, “Wicked witch, go away!” We could exaggerate worry thoughts by mimicking Chicken Little and saying, “The sky is falling, the sky is falling.” The process of becoming angry might be interrupted with a phrase such as “Here comes the Hulk.” ACT therapists call techniques that work like this *defusion* techniques. Defusion basically refers to the process of keeping ourselves from getting too attached to non-helpful thoughts.

Distraction

When a specific segment of information is elaborated upon, it tends to remain at the top of our consciousness for a time. Most of us have had the experience of singing a song to ourselves, and then finding that the tune won't go away. This can be a very positive feature of the mind since it aids in attention and memory. Unfortunately, in the case of anxiety and other negative emotions, this characteristic backfires on us. We want to get rid of the unpleasant thoughts, not focus on them.

Fortunately, we can also use this special aspect of brain functioning to our advantage. The principle to remember is that it is much more effective to divert our attention versus trying to stop thinking about a problem. However, we must concentrate on the new subject long enough to trigger the brain's automatic focus abilities. Once we have shifted our focus, we can then immerse ourselves in positive activities. Here are some simple formulas for disrupting negative thinking patterns. Experiment to find out which one is the most effective for your purposes.

Repetition

Every time you begin to dwell on identified problems sing a designated song to yourself (in your mind). Do this just for a minute or two and move on to a positive activity. If you don't like singing, reciting multiplication tables will work, or repeating a meaningful word such as “tranquility.”

Sensory Chorus

Drown out the negative by repeating words describing an action sequence. It can be realistic or have a bit of fantasy in it. Visualize the action while repeating the words—“three pink elephants running around the circus ring” or “two white horses pulling a carriage.” Do this for a minute or two, just long enough to distract the mind from dwelling on unhealthy thoughts.

Cataloging

The objective is to look around a room and identify seven or more objects in the room, naming both the object and its function. For example, point out a desk and say, "This is a desk. Its purpose is to provide a surface on which people can write." This small task keeps the mind busy and it is easy to do anywhere.

Logic

It is not healthy to resist negative thoughts endlessly. If they continue to linger, they are there for emotionally compelling reasons and should be addressed. If we ignore inner turbulence too long, pressure builds and psychiatric symptoms can develop. The best strategy is to seek a balance between problem-solving and living in the moment.

The greatest discovery of my generation is that you can change your circumstances by changing your attitudes of mind.

-William James

President David O. McKay well appreciated the important role that thoughts have upon our spiritual development. He counseled us to continually maintain a vision of our true purpose here on earth, the building of a Christ-like character.

Faith, therefore, is a foundation element in true character building; for an upright character is the result of continued effort and right thinking, the effect of long-cherished associations with God-like thoughts. He approaches nearest the Christ spirit who makes God the center of his thoughts and acts, and who can say in his heart, "not my will, but thine, be done." (Luke 22:42)³

Consider the following example of the effects of perceptions upon emotions. The following story was distributed on the Internet:

Wanted for Attempted Murder (the actual Associated Press headline)

Linda B., 23, a resident of San Diego, was visiting her in-laws, and while there went to a nearby supermarket to pick up some groceries. Several people noticed her sitting in her car with the windows rolled up, her eyes closed, with both hands behind the back of her head.

One customer who had been at the store for a while became concerned and walked over to the car. He noticed that Linda's eyes were now open, and she looked very strange. He asked her if she was okay, and Linda replied that she'd been shot in the back of the head, and had been holding her brains in for over an hour.

The man called the paramedics, who broke into the car because the doors were locked and Linda refused to remove her hands from her head. When they finally got in, they found that Linda had a wad of bread dough on the back of her head. A Pillsbury biscuit canister had exploded from the heat, making a loud noise that sounded like a gunshot, and the wad of dough hit her in the back of her head. When she reached back to find out what it was, she felt the dough and thought it was her brains. She initially passed out, but quickly recovered and tried to hold her brains in for over an hour until someone noticed and came to her aid.

Obviously Linda felt much better when she realized her brains had not fallen out and it was actually bread dough on the back of her head. The dramatic shift in mood this woman experienced demonstrates the ABC theory of Albert Ellis, a leader in cognitive psychology:

A (actual event) > B (beliefs) > C (consequences)

It is always our perceptions, no matter how brief in duration, that produce the subsequent emotions. Once we recognize the great significance of our thoughts, we then have the power to begin taking control of our emotions, and ultimately our lives. In his book *A New Guide to Rational Living*, Dr. Ellis made the point that: “Humans do not get upset, but they upset themselves by devoutly convincing themselves at point B of irrational beliefs about what happens to them.”⁴

Distortion, exaggeration, and fear all serve to make problem situations far worse than they actually are. It is always our perceptions, no matter how brief in duration, that produce the subsequent emotions. We can control our moods by managing our thoughts effectively. Positive and logical responses help us to safely navigate the stormy seas of life.

The physical conscious mind serves as a guide to the inner self. Our thoughts and perceptions affect not only our desires for righteousness, but also our emotional well-being. Patterns of action are set largely by the ideas we have already brought forth in our minds. Thus a person who feels frustrated and tells himself he will “never get a job” or that he will “always be depressed” experiences those thoughts as true. The heart is quite dependent on the interpretations of the rational mind.

If ye do not watch yourselves, and your thoughts, and your words, and your deeds, and observe the commandments of God, ...ye must perish. (Mosiah 4:30)

Your tools are ideals. The thought in your mind at this moment is contributing, however infinitesimally, almost imperceptibly, to the shaping of your soul.⁵

-President David O. McKay

Allow me to share the story of “Bill.” Bill was a hard-working man in his thirties with a young family. He had been significantly depressed for over a year. Therapy went very slowly for several months. I could not even understand the reason for his depression. It was embarrassing. I was about ready to tell him he should get a new and better therapist! Although Bill was a man of excellent character, I began to wonder if he was being totally open about his feelings. All lines of questioning resulted in dead ends. He would just say, “No, that doesn’t bother me.”

Then the golden day finally arrived. I was starting to give up on the idea of making any progress with this client when a moment of enlightenment occurred. Bill would often mention college and how important it was to him. He had completed one year of college, but had to stop because of financial difficulties. He was very concerned, even self-critical, about the fact that he had not yet obtained a four-year degree. I asked Bill, “You mean that unless you have a college degree, you are no good?” He said, “Yes, that’s right.” He was totally steadfast in this idea.

Realizing that Bill had to work to support his family, I asked him how many years it would take him to graduate if “everything went perfectly.” He said it would take five years to graduate if all went well. I questioned if that meant he had to be depressed for the next five years until he graduated. Bill’s eyes widened and he looked quite concerned. I presented the following concept: “No matter what our future goals are, all we can do each day is our best.” He agreed this was true. I then proposed that he set up some significant daily goals by which he could more fairly judge himself.

Bill's goals included such things as doing a good job at work, spending time with his children, exercising, and working one hour per night on a home study course.

Since Bill was very conscientious, he reached his goals nearly every day and began to accept himself. The depression subsided and we stopped the counseling after a few more sessions. I checked up on him for several months and found that he remained free of symptoms despite some significant stress.

Bill's life circumstances did not change one iota. Financial and health problems continued to afflict his family, and he was not able to attend college while I was in contact with him. However, some marvelous changes in attitude did occur as Bill began to look at his situation more logically. Instead of focusing exclusively on one negative detail (that he was not a college graduate), he learned to appreciate the positive things he was accomplishing.

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD.

For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. (Isaiah 55:8-9)

Reality and Truth

This next section introduces a very important idea about thought management. It is proposed that we can transform most negative thought patterns to the point that they cease to be of significant concern. Some believe that the incessant chatter of the mind is so impervious to psychotherapy as to almost make it not worth addressing. They advocate only methods to downplay negative thoughts and distract and refocus the mind. Similarly, many individuals try to immerse themselves in activities such as housework, exercise, or listening to music, in order to escape from problems. I would suggest that this is a significant error and it is important to use the contemplation period to whack away at the weeds of discontent. The idea is to find a happy balance between working on problems and living our lives. Problem-solving need not be performed every day. The trick is to remain aware of the degree of inner pressure that tells us there are issues to consider.

The Lord is interested in his children learning how to effectively manage their thoughts. Doctrine and Covenants 121:45 carries some remarkable promises along with a simple formula for increasing our spirituality. As disciples of Christ we are aware that we need to keep our thoughts free of sexual imagery. However, it appears that in this scripture the Lord is telling us to not only avoid carnal thoughts, but additionally any negative thoughts. Be aware that all undesirable emotions such as envy, guilt, self-condemnation, anger, and anxiety originate in the perceptions and thoughts that sow them.

Let thy bowels also be full of charity towards all men, and to the household of faith, and let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God; and the doctrine of the priesthood shall distil upon thy soul as the dew from heaven.

The Holy Ghost shall be thy constant companion, and thy scepter an unchanging scepter of righteousness and truth; and thy dominion shall be an everlasting dominion, and without compulsory means it shall flow unto thee forever and ever. (D&C 121:45-46)

Elder Dallin H. Oaks provided an interpretation of D&C 121:45 and expressed the following words on the subject of managing our thoughts.

To achieve spirituality and to reform our motives and perfect our desires we must learn to control our thoughts. The prophet Alma taught his faithful son Helaman: "Let all thy thoughts be directed unto the Lord; yea, let the affections of thy heart be placed upon the Lord forever" (Alma 37:36)

In the great revelation given in Liberty Jail, the Lord commanded the Prophet Joseph Smith to conform his thoughts to this high standard: (See D&C 121:45.) This means that in our innermost feelings we should always be "full of [love] towards all men" and that our thoughts should always be garnished with virtue, which is goodness, purity, and truth.⁶

The Editing Technique

Keep your thoughts in harmony with truth.

Man's nature is to strive mightily to change the world to suit his desires and fantasies. We hold tightly to our belief that happiness is tied to our script of how things must and should be. The great majority of negative emotions are closely connected to our ineffectual strivings to control our earthly experience. We make ourselves miserable mainly by using dramatic repetitive self-talk in response to perceived problems. Our errors in thinking fall into four general areas.

THE FOUR GREAT THINKING ERRORS

Exaggerating



Is it really that big?

Labeling



Labels are for soup cans. If we just ran faster, we could get out of here.

Not accepting reality



Predicting



100% accurate?

Instructions for the Editing Process

1. Write out your distressing thoughts about the present problem.
2. Cross out lines that contain the thinking errors of exaggerating, labeling, not accepting reality, or predicting from your self-talk.
3. Re-write the issue of concern in strictly logical, positive terms using the Key Thoughts Guide below.

Key Thoughts Guide

What are some logical and rational statements I can make to help me view this problem more clearly?

Am I being positive in my attitude? What are some encouraging declarations I can make? What things are working in my favor?

If the worst did come to pass, how could I handle it?

What are some of my personal strengths that will help me to overcome this challenge?

4. Read the new statements five times. Note how your feelings and problem-solving abilities change.

Repeating the corrected thoughts five times appears to be the most critical component in cognitive mediation. The repetition seems to help the inner self accept the reality of each situation. For some reason, human beings are only addicted to dwelling on their negative thoughts, not thoughts boiled down to the absolute truth. Negative thinking is addictive and self-defeating. Take your life back! Peace comes through the acceptance of reality and truth.

The glory of God is intelligence, or, in other words, light and truth. (D&C 93:36)

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh:

(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)

Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. (2 Corinthians 10: 3-5)

The universe is change; our life is what our thoughts make it.

-Marcus Aurelius Antoninus

Anxiety Management

Tension is the bane of modern man. Despite modern technology and conveniences, our fast-paced, competitive society and estrangement from nature seem to generate a good deal of stress. There are a variety of diagnoses related to anxiety. The principal anxiety diagnoses are generalized anxiety, posttraumatic stress disorder, panic disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and specific phobias. Lifestyle and environmental stress can also contribute to feelings of tension.

Fight or Flight

We generate tension to prepare for action. Anxiety, if not overdone, can be a useful emotion to help us mobilize our resources to tackle life's challenges. Whenever we perceive something as threatening, the body goes into an alarm reaction. Adrenaline and norepinephrine are released to combat the stress and control the situation. The muscles tense, the heart beats faster, breathing and perspiration increase, the eyes dilate, blood sugar levels rise, and the stomach may clench. This protective action called the "flight or fight response" tends to work superbly in the forest, but can be problematic in modern society. Prolonged stress can contribute to a number of health problems such as ulcers, heart disease, high blood pressure, colitis, and headaches, and possibly cancer and diabetes.

Unfortunately our personal concerns often have no simple immediate remedies. Financial problems, marital distress, and dissatisfaction with employment are just some of the difficulties we face that take time to resolve and are quite complex in nature. By overly focusing on what is wrong or could go wrong, we keep our body continually mobilized for danger. *Whatever we think, we must feel.* To be healthy physically and emotionally we must learn to be selective in our thoughts. If we do set off our inner "fire alarm" with unconstructive worrying, we also need to know how to shut it off. Excess stress can destroy our peace of mind and erode our happiness.

Managing Speculation

Speculation refers to the tendency to assume negative things will happen without any convincing evidence. It can be summed up in two words “what if.” Our powers of imagination are such that when we anticipate bad things happening, we feel scared. Speculation knows no bounds in either time or reality. People are capable of worrying over just about anything. It is important to recognize the frightening messages we give to our inner self when we focus on how terrible things might be. Cognitive theory suggests that our emotions of anxiety are caused by our thoughts. Think of the emotional impact of the following statements if taken literally:

- 1. What if I catch some really strange disease in my job as a nurse? I could die a horrible death.*
- 2. What if I sound stupid when I make my presentation at the business meeting and the boss criticizes me in front of everyone? I couldn't handle it.*
- 3. What if my boyfriend breaks up with me? My life would be over!*

Of course, most of the things we worry about never happen, and worrying is not a magic amulet that protects us from harm. When problems come, we have to deal with them whether we want to or not. Anxiety actually makes most problems worse and creates difficulties where there were none before. Test anxiety is one of the best examples of this. Therefore, it is quite advantageous to learn to decrease the quantity of fearful thoughts we entertain.

Basic Strategies for Counteracting Speculation

1. Take cognitive control (Use logical thoughts and radical acceptance.)

Often our fears are illogical, or else we focus on what can go wrong rather than on why things should turn out well. Doubt and anxiety only drag us down; it is like trying to swim with boots on. It is better to proceed boldly ahead and use our resources for constructive action rather than wear ourselves out with aimless worrying. The editing technique can be used effectively to stop speculation.

2. Plan for success

Not only is worrying unpleasant, but it can interfere with achieving goals. Anxiety decreases the functioning of the prefrontal cortex and makes us less able to think clearly and perform effectively. There is also a very human tendency to procrastinate and to avoid directly tackling problems we are apprehensive about. One way to “plan for success” is to list the reasons you can perform well. In this way you can literally talk yourself into a more positive attitude. Generally emotions get in the way more than lack of intelligence. Here are some areas to consider as you construct your *Victory Sheet*.

Victory Sheet

1. Logical statements to reduce fears
2. Past positive experiences in this area
3. Problem-solving strategies
4. Personal strengths
5. Other advantages (resources, information sources, supportive people)
6. Positive and hopeful messages

3. Face your fear

Ask yourself, “Am I avoiding doing something I could possibly handle, but feels uncomfortable for me?” Doing the uncomfortable task right away could end the anxiety! Take on easier challenges first and gradually work your way up. If you want to go back to college but have self-doubts about your academic ability, start with a couple of community education classes at the local high school. Later on you could possibly audit a class at the college.

Break each task into smaller steps. Rehearse the steps using visual imagery or role-plays until you feel more comfortable. Then go and do the task. Try to ignore your inner voice when it suggests you will never be successful and should just quit. Giving up prematurely is one of the principal causes of failure. The great philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson understood the problems associated with avoidance. He said, “Do the thing you fear and the death of fear is certain.”

A man who suffers before it is necessary, suffers more than is necessary.

-Seneca

Inner Conflict

Tension without a clear cause is a different story. Physical problems should be ruled out first. Conditions such as thyroid or adrenal gland over-activity can cause restlessness. Medicine reactions or withdrawal should also be considered. One way to differentiate between physical causes and tension produced by worrying is the variability of symptoms. Tension triggered by physical causes is likely to be much more constant.

Opposing intentions of the inner self and the rational mind can create considerable tension in the body. It reminds me of the tension created when two groups of people pull on opposite ends of a rope in a tug-of-war contest. Conflict is generally set up when the inner self desires to express itself or commit an impulsive action that the rational mind is uncomfortable with.

Individuals who grew up in situations where expressing their feelings was discouraged often may not know what they are feeling. They may especially block emotions that are less socially desirable such as sadness, anger, fear, or sexual feelings. Similarly, those with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) are often reluctant to face the feelings and thoughts associated with the abuse or trauma they suffered as well. These “hidden emotions” can generate considerable power as they build up without any outlet. The first sign of trouble will be experiencing a consistent, unexplained tension. The person who wants to master his emotions must be willing to dive in and explore the sources of his discomfort. The magic list method from chapter 3 can help in the quest for greater emotional awareness.

Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) and panic disorder invariably have their roots in unresolved issues. However, this is not easy for therapists to detect because clients are often working hard to avoid thinking about these problems and may not reveal the complete picture. It is commonly believed that these disorders are caused largely by brain abnormalities. Yes, there may often be some neurological sensitivities that medicine can partially correct, but the anxiety that triggers the symptoms is inadvertently created by the individual sufferer. Neither the obsessions nor the fear of further panic attacks is the real issue. Underneath these disturbing symptoms lay

unresolved issues that continue to produce psychological distress. These problems are generally related to social fears, moral conflicts, employment issues, or family problems. Although the conscious mind is on a wild goose chase, the heart remains focused on the genuine life problems and continues to generate emotions from these concerns. Once the overt anxiety symptoms are correctly labeled as a defense mechanism and the real issues are directly addressed, the panic and OCD symptoms will begin to decrease.

There is nothing impossible to him who will try.

-Alexander the Great

Tackling OCD

I have had several clients obtain complete remission of the symptoms of OCD. One of my favorite examples involves a client I will call "Janet." Janet had an unusual obsession. She had a great fear of knives. She would go into a state of panic if there was a knife within easy access for fear that she would somehow lose control and hurt herself. However, she was adamant about not being suicidal and had no history of cutting on herself. At least on the surface, her fear appeared completely irrational. She worried about knives and sharp objects several hours per day and prevailed upon her roommates to hide them from her. These symptoms had increased in severity during the previous year. Finally she became so incapacitated from her continual worrying about sharp objects that she had to be hospitalized.

Janet was assigned to my caseload just before her discharge. Despite the hospitalization and several medication adjustments, the OCD continued, although at a more tolerable level. During outpatient therapy, I started to press Janet with my philosophy that there is always some underlying conflict behind the OCD. I usually tell individuals there is likely some large problem that seems very scary or unsolvable that they do not like to think about. I had shared this possibility with Janet several times, but she was resistant to the idea. In fact, she was quite assertive about her opinion that there was no hidden problem. She struggled with the whole therapeutic process and when frustrated could be quite assertive. I started to not look forward to our visits.

Then one day after a few months of mutual frustration, Janet came in and told me she had figured out what the unsolvable problem was. She had no really close friends and expected to be alone the rest of her life. Although you might think this would have certainly come out before, it had not. She was active in her church and had a number of acquaintances, and I had assumed that she considered some of them friends. This is what makes treating OCD so difficult. Clients may not fully disclose the real issues because they are so uncomfortable facing them.

To finish the story, Janet did some good work on her social concerns and her OCD symptoms completely disappeared within the next few weeks. The symptoms did not reappear at all during the next year that I saw her. She then moved away to a different state and I did not have any contact for six months or so. She did come back around the holidays to visit some friends and also dropped by our center to say hello to me and other staff. Janet shared that she was working full-time and still doing well.

The results of this case demonstrate the tremendous advantage of working with the emotional system of the brain. Although this type of approach is challenging and takes time to master,

Four Basic Steps for Overcoming OCD

1. Medication

The SSRIs—clomipramine, fluoxetine, fluvoxamine, paroxetine and sertraline—are approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for treatment of OCD.⁷ Higher doses tend to be used in treating OCD. These medications provide some mild to moderate relief, but do not cure OCD. Behavioral treatments are more effective long-term. It is considered most effective to use a combination treatment of both medication and cognitive-behavioral therapy.

2. Behavior therapy

Exposure and Response Prevention Therapy (ERP) is one of the more effective behavioral treatments for OCD. The basic premise with ERP is that avoiding things we are afraid of serves to perpetuate fears. Conversely, facing things we are afraid of provides new information and internal responses eventually change. Fears can be faced directly or through visual imagery or videos. The degree of exposure can be gradual. For example, a person who is afraid of the water could start out in water up to his ankles and move up.

In the *exposure* aspect of this treatment the client is exposed for 30 minutes or more to the things (or thoughts) that generate his anxiety, such as objects with germs on them. The client learns experientially that nothing terrible happened and that he can handle it. Over many exposures the anxiety will begin to lessen.

In the *response prevention* part of the treatment the client does not give in to compulsive rituals such as checking to make sure the stove is off. He uses response prevention procedures to control the behavior and eventually learns to handle his discomfort and see that nothing dangerous has happened.

3. Acceptance

Several therapeutic approaches propose that attempts to suppress unwanted thoughts and impulses actually increase symptoms. Those struggling with OCD are advised to accept their OCD impulses and thoughts rather than directly fight them. They can note these symptoms and appropriately label them: “These thoughts are not me. They are just irrational thoughts caused by my OCD. I don’t have to pay them much attention. I can let them float by.” A mindfulness strategy such as paying attention to slowing one’s breathing can also be employed.

4. Conflict resolution

The basic strategy is to uncover and resolve hidden or ignored conflicts and anxieties. For those with OCD, these problems seem quite unmanageable. It is best to take a contemplation hour approach and think constructively about the problem or problems once per day. Even if potential solutions seem long-term, it is psychologically advantageous to be working on the important goals. Radical acceptance and/or cognitive therapy can sometimes help to reframe the problem so it looks and feels differently.

Dealing with Panic Attacks

Panic attacks are an extremely distressing manifestation of inner conflict. Individuals with this condition experience periods of intense anxiety and panic generally lasting from 15 minutes to an hour or so. During these times the person

often has distressing physical symptoms such as a racing pulse, shakiness, shortness of breath, nausea, or dizziness that are so severe that the person feels completely incapacitated. These attacks may only occur a few times a week or less, but the person lives in continual dread it will happen again.

After the first terrifying episode, panic attack sufferers generally develop an unrealistic fear that triggers future attacks. Some of these fears are that they will have a heart attack, go crazy, stop breathing, or lose control. Also, depending upon the specific fear, certain settings such as being in stores or being alone in the car can predispose individuals to the attacks. Panic episodes do not occur exclusively in these situations, but can also occur at seemingly random times.

As scary and debilitating as this disorder is, individuals suffering from panic disorder often respond very well to treatment. The trick is to not just treat the obvious (the fear of having another panic attack), but to recognize there are always underlying conflicts. These unresolved problems seem to kick up enough psychic energy to bring about the first couple of panic attacks. Of course, sometimes there are physical reasons for the additional tension such as mitral valve prolapse or a thyroid problem. In either case, the shocked sufferer then comes up with an irrational explanation for the frightening symptoms and creates additional anxiety worrying about having another attack.

Six Basic Steps to Overcoming a Panic Disorder

1. For those who wish to use medication, SSRI antidepressants are considered the most effective and safe medications for long-term use. They are indicated as the first-line treatment in the American Psychiatric Association's *Practice Guidelines for the Treatment of Patients with Panic Disorders*.⁸
2. Uncover and resolve hidden or ignored conflicts and anxieties.
3. Make up a logical thoughts cue sheet similar to the Key Thoughts Guide pointing out how the fear is unrealistic.
4. Use a breathing exercise to reduce hyperventilation. One breathing technique consists of breathing in to a count of 5, exhaling to only a count of 2, and then holding one's breath to a count of 15 or longer (if comfortably possible). This restores the carbon dioxide/oxygen balance and the person soon feels better. Breathing into a paper bag or exercising vigorously are also effective measures.
5. Develop an emergency tool. This tool would be a specific behavior that is designed to either disprove the illogical fear or prevent the symptoms from getting out of control. With one client who misjudged her panic symptoms to be the onset of a heart attack, I used an emergency procedure of running up and down the stairs. I knew it would be safe as she had recently had several EKGs. Naturally the vigorous exercise served as dramatic proof she was not having a heart attack.
6. Purposely create a panic attack by thinking frightening thoughts or by placing yourself in a situation you are afraid of. Then use the techniques you have learned to prove that you can make the panic symptoms go away. Only by doing this can full control and confidence be restored.

Anger Management

Anger is a normal human response to frustration. However, the Spirit cannot dwell where there is contention. In the realm of human emotions, our first line of defense against angry outbursts is to control our response, and take a time-out in order to think rationally about the situation. Hot emotional thoughts can be replaced by cool rational thoughts. It should be noted that some individuals will report persistent tension or anxiety when in reality they are suppressing anger. LDS individuals are not always comfortable admitting that they are angry. Nevertheless, it is better to face the issues at hand so our hearts can be made right before the Lord.

He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city. (Proverbs 16:32)

The place to begin changing our patterns of anger is to consider our attitudes about managing anger. What we have decided is right or acceptable will later dictate our behavior when we are frustrated. We will only change when we commit to taking full responsibility for our feelings and behavior. Since emotions are caused by our perceptions and not events, we can learn to change our feelings, speech, and actions. The following card provides a formula for structuring our thoughts in positive ways. All that is required is that we read the card. An improved thought process will naturally kick in.

Anger Management Card

1. Why is the person acting this way—bad mood, not understanding the situation clearly, personality trait?
2. What did I do to possibly contribute to the problem?
3. What emotion lies beneath my anger—frustration, hurt, jealousy, resentment, guilt, or insecurity?
4. What rule of mine is this person breaking? Can I accept his behavior and not judge him?
5. Am I being fully logical about this problem, or do I need to calm down or take a time-out in order to think more clearly?
6. What is my fantasy about what will happen if I act on my impulse?
7. What would the likely consequences be if I express my anger? Considering these consequences, would acting out be worth it in 30 days?
8. Is there any solution or compromise that would resolve this situation?
9. What could I say to appropriately express my feelings?
10. Is this problem so great that I can't forgive the person or just put it aside? What would Jesus do?

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment.

But I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. (Matthew 5:21-22)

When anger rises, think of the consequences.

-Benjamin Franklin

The Art of Positive Thinking

It is not enough to just be logical in our thinking. It is quite advantageous to be POSITIVE. We need to learn to notice what is good, recognize our strengths, and believe in a better future. Positive thinking means to downplay the negative and to be optimistic in one's attitude of mind. These skills usually do not come naturally, but must be developed and practiced. There are great personal advantages to being a positive thinker. Unless we believe there are exciting possibilities beyond the horizon, we will make little effort to reach them.

When we think of the Disney Corporation, we think of successful animated films, Disneyland, Disney World, and rich profits. What is not so well known is that the entertainment empire's founder, creative genius Walt Disney, had a large setback early in his career.

At age 20 Disney was employed at the Kansas City Film Ad Company. At night he spent his time working to start his own cartoon business, Newman Laugh-O-Grams. His family had moved to Oregon around this same time. When his first project *Little Red Riding Hood* did well, he quit his day job and devoted himself entirely to his new company. Walt borrowed \$15,000 from some Kansas City investors, hired a staff of six animators, and set up a small studio. Things looked as if they were going well until Walt's distribution company went out of business. They reneged on the \$11,000 he had been promised for the cartoons he had already produced. For a young artist with very limited financial resources, this was a devastating blow. All he received for six months work was a \$100 deposit.

Suddenly Disney was \$2,000 in the hole with \$400 per month operating expenses. His employees left him one by one, and he was forced to work on his own. Times were hard. He had to live in his studio and often had only beans and bread to eat. Eventually a few small projects turned up that provided some money to live on. Also, some New York distributors expressed interest in an Alice in Wonderland series that might have proved lucrative. Unfortunately, he was unable to persuade his investors to provide more funds to complete that project.

Frustrated that he could not move forward and hopelessly in debt, Walt felt he had no option but to declare bankruptcy. However, he certainly did not consider himself a failure! Undaunted, and ever the optimist, he sold his movie camera, packed his bags, and headed to Hollywood. We all know the rest of the Disney story. It is hard to imagine the world without his contributions. Walt Disney not only became a great financial success, but his artistic achievements have touched the hearts of millions.⁹

Success is how high you bounce when you hit bottom.

-General George Patton

Think Your Way to Joy

Many individuals with mental health problems have difficulty being optimistic. They have meaningful long-term goals, but view them as unrealistic or have trouble getting started. It is true that having a mental health condition creates significant obstacles and that not all dreams can be realized. Nonetheless, the future may reveal other wonderful surprises that can bring joy and meaning. A dedication to spirituality and self-development never fails to yield valuable dividends.

Becoming a positive thinker can revitalize our lives. It enlarges the horizons of

our minds, puts energy in our step, and increases self-confidence. Since we emotionally experience much of what we think, it is imperative to guard the gates of the mind. Several aspects of positive thinking will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

Focus on the good qualities of others

The comedian Will Rogers said, “I never met a man I didn’t like.” Try to notice the most outstanding quality in every person you meet. Make it a practice to share your observations with each individual. Sincere compliments are an excellent way to show appreciation.

Avoid judging

Judging others creates an abundance of negative energy. Respecting the right of others to grow and develop at their own pace helps us to accept them. Exercising compassion helps us to understand their choices better. Those who strive to love and respect all people have happy hearts.

Be grateful

Remember what others have done for you. Express appreciation and thanks. Research has shown that being grateful improves reports of subjective well-being.¹⁰ Some frequently prescribed interventions are making a daily gratitude list and saying thank you to someone who has had a positive influence on your life.

***Gratitude is not only the greatest of the virtues,
but the parent of all others.***

-Cicero

Appreciate beauty

Human beings are very perceptive and are constantly taking in information. While we cannot always change the environment, we can select what we wish to focus on. While walking through city streets, we can think negative thoughts about the person whose lawn looks like a hayfield, or we can notice the wonderful flowers in his neighbor’s yard. We can see children playing and appreciate their exuberance and ability to create joy, or we can be irritated by the noise. Historical sites can remind us of the sacrifices and vision of those who came before us. We can continually seek out things that are beautiful and uplifting so we can fill our minds with positive thoughts.

Be hopeful about the future

Work on goals great and small. Changing yourself makes the impossible possible. Those who continue to focus on self-development and value-based living will create opportunities for themselves. It is important to believe that good things can happen, even when it is difficult to see the road ahead. Nelson Mandela was imprisoned for 27 years in South Africa for struggling against the discriminatory policies of the South African government. Four years after his release he was elected president of South Africa!

Become an expert at turning negative thoughts into positive ones

Magicians are skilled at creating illusions. The world-famous magician, David Copperfield, once made the Statue of Liberty disappear. Positive thinkers should seek to become experts at making negative thoughts disappear. Most statements can be revised fairly quickly so they create a different emotional tone. Here are some examples.

I will never be able to learn this.	I can try. If I take it one step at a time it might begin to make sense.
No one at the party will talk to me.	I can say hello to people and see what happens. There are friendly people everywhere.
No one is hiring. Why even bother looking?	The situation may be difficult, but the more businesses I approach the better the chances.
No matter what I do, everything seems boring.	I can look into some new options.
I'm so disorganized and lazy. I'll never get my house clean.	If I do a little work each day, I will eventually get the job done.
People are such bad drivers. I can't stand it.	I need to focus on being a safe driver.
I never have any extra money.	I can find good things to do that are free.
No one bothers to communicate with me.	I can take the responsibility to let others know I want to be in the loop.
I've never done this before.	There's a first time for everything.
Nothing I do is any good.	I can improve if I apply myself.

Diamonds in the Rough

Even when tough things occur, there is usually something valuable to be gained from the experience. When there was a flood in my neighborhood, all the neighbors got to know one another better as we worked together building barriers with sandbags. If we are involved in a car wreck, we can always be grateful that we were not seriously injured. We could also look at an accident as a valuable lesson to help us drive more safely in the future. It pays off to find the good in disasters. We have already experienced the bad. Why not think something that helps us to feel better.

Gaining a solid belief in the power of positive thinking is an important milestone on the way to emotional health and happiness. We walk and run because as babies we did not realize we could fail in learning motor skills. We just kept trying until we got there! As adults we need to win some victories and reach some goals to feel as if we are making progress. Just like mountain climbing, life is more exciting if we are trying to reach the summit.

If you can imagine it, you can create it. If you can dream it, you can become it.

-William Arthur Ward

Thomas Edison is renowned as the inventor of the electric light, the phonograph, and many other wonderful inventions. It is not as widely known that he developed the first car batteries used in those Model T automobiles for Henry Ford. But Edison had actually wanted to go further. What he had been trying to accomplish was to develop storage batteries powerful enough to run an automobile, the first electric car.

He conducted approximately three thousand experiments with the electric light; however, he may have conducted as many as ten thousand experiments trying to perfect the storage battery. When a friend came over to offer his condolences over the

lack of results, Edison replied: "Why man, I have gotten a lot of results! I know several thousand things that won't work." Edison's tenacity and optimism were some of the personal qualities that helped him achieve his tremendous success as an inventor.¹¹

Had Edison been a doubter, had he let negative thoughts erode his belief and vision, we could still be using candles for light. We all need successes to be positive about our lives. We must persevere in the face of adversity and never let go of our dreams. Knowledge and experience coupled with practice and perseverance almost always bring forth victory. We also have the Lord to rely upon in every worthy endeavor. Faith is always a key component in receiving blessings.

Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.
In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. (Proverbs 3:5-6)

Gaining a tested and true belief in the power of positive thinking is an important stepping-stone to emotional health and happiness. President Gordon B. Hinckley made this statement about positive thinking in his book *Standing for Something*: "I am an optimist! My plea is that we stop seeking out the storms and enjoy more fully the sunlight. I am suggesting that as we go through life, we accentuate the positive."¹²

As a final thought on this subject, strive to consistently be optimistic and thankful in your outlook. Focus on the good qualities of others and appreciate the beauty around you. View difficulties as opportunities for learning and personal growth. You will notice significant differences in your mood and outlook within just a few days.

Action Steps

1. For one week make a concerted effort to notice and correct your negative thought patterns. Utilize the editing technique provided in this chapter to aid you in this endeavor. Also make a concerted effort to be more positive. Gaining a testimony of the power and significance of managing our thoughts is one of life's great lessons.
2. Practice using the Anger Management Card when frustration gets the best of you.

Note: It might be helpful to make copies of some of these thought guides and keep them in your wallet or purse for quick reference.

Notes

1. Spencer W. Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, 1969), 114. Quote used by permission of the publisher.

2. Association for Contextual Behavioral Science, home page, <http://www.contextualpsychology.org/about_act>, August 1, 2013.

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5. David O. McKay, "Determining Your Own Future," in *Man May Know for Himself: Teachings of President David O. McKay*, Compiled by Clare Middlemiss

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10. R.A. Emmons and C.A. Crumpler, "Gratitude as Human Strength: Appraising the Evidence," *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology* 19 (2000): 56-59; L. Toussaint and P. Friedman, "Forgiveness, Gratitude, and Well-Being: The Mediated Role of Affected Beliefs," *Journal of Happiness Studies* 10 (2009), 635-654.

11. Wynn Wachhorst, *Thomas Alva Edison: An American Myth* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1981).

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Chapter 6

The Heart of Man

Principle # 6: Take care of the inner self

The inner self is the core part of man and the center of our emotions and desires. Greater inward harmony can be achieved by becoming more aware of deeper thoughts, emotions, and desires, and by providing effective conscious direction. Emotional success involves developing the wisdom and self-discipline to lead a moral and responsible life, while also taking care of personal needs.

President James E. Faust: The basic program of the Church today is to strengthen the inner self.¹

The inner self is not just a construct or idea, but an actual vital part of our being. The spirit does not disappear when we are born on earth and then just reappear in heaven after we die. Your spirit is present within you and expresses itself chiefly through the emotional system of the brain. If you pay attention you can feel its presence. There is no adventure as amazing as discovering this truth. When we have strong emotions and experience sadness, anger, love, or joy, we are sensing our inner self. When we focus on an activity we have passion for such as skiing, dancing, or art, our real self is engaged and we feel alive and focused.

Chapter 1 explained how the heart is a dynamic part of the personality and the driving force behind our desires. It was also brought out that the thoughts of the mind can help bridle our passions and change our desires. This chapter will further address the relationship between the conscious rational mind and the inner self.

President David O. McKay: You know you love, and love is not part of your physical body, but a definite and divine attribute of the human soul.²

We begin to lose touch with the heart as we grow older. Children suppress their emotions and develop negative beliefs about self in response to rejection, criticism, or abuse. To conform to social pressure and avoid getting hurt further, people create a facade or social mask that they show to the world. Carl Jung called this social mask the *persona*. Sometimes we are so involved in presenting this false self that we lose sight of who we really are. If we become too removed from our inner self, we may feel detached and empty. The more real and congruent we are, the more joy we can experience from life. Those who are familiar with the scriptures and have faith can receive reassurance from the words of Job: "There is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding." (Job 32:8)

The Need for Nourishment

As we mature, we can become overly socialized and learn to ignore the desires and feelings of the inner self. There is an emphasis on being polite, controlling our emotions, disciplining ourselves to work, and taking care of others. These things are good and essential, but they can be taken to extreme proportions. Too often people neglect themselves and disregard their own needs. They can become unhappy, negative, and resentful. They live in a beautiful garden without allowing themselves to smell the flowers.

An adult with a wounded inner self struggles mightily to make life work, but the odds are stacked against him. Life just does not go perfectly, and adversity sets off old

insecurities. Adult children of dysfunctional families instinctively fear facing their real emotions and dealing with their inner pain. Getting in touch with their feelings proved disastrous in the past. Little desire now exists to repeat those experiences.

Know thyself.

-Socrates

This effort to remain in control by shutting off the emotions takes many forms. Many wounded adults have one or more addictions they use to escape feeling. An addiction is a coping mechanism that people become dependent upon, is carried to extremes, and has long-term negative consequences. Addictive substances would include alcohol, drugs, tobacco, caffeine drinks, and even food. Activities that can take the form of addictions are work, television viewing, sex, gambling, shopping, exercise, and others.

People who try to satiate themselves with pleasure are like men stranded on the ocean in a rowboat who drink salt water to satiate their thirst. There is the illusion that they will obtain real satisfaction, but afterward they are more dehydrated and in need than before. In both cases the inner self is not being sufficiently nourished. Despite strenuous attempts to find it, real joy and satisfaction elude them. They are empty inside, their needs overwhelm them, yet they stumble and cannot find the way.

Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding.
For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. (Proverbs 3:13-14)

One of the first steps to any healing is to practice better self-care. We often have dozens of reasons why we cannot do positive things for ourselves. Once we decide to begin nurturing ourselves, we communicate the powerful message that we too are important. We will have more energy, renewed interest in life, and more capacity to love others.

Make a promise to yourself that you will take care of "you" every day. If we are constantly taking care of others, we eventually end up frustrated and burned out. We cannot fully love others unless we are taking care of ourselves. Additionally, the body needs sufficient rest and relaxation or it breaks down. Being kind to oneself is a good investment. It is not selfish. It is realistic!

And see that all these things are done in wisdom and order; for it is not requisite that a man should run faster than he has strength. And again, it is expedient that he should be diligent, that thereby he might win the prize; therefore, all things must be done in order. (Mosiah 4:27)

The more real that we are, the more joy we can experience from life. Both emotionally and spiritually we function far more effectively when we are in touch with the core self. The benefits for being more congruent with our inner self cannot be measured. Creativity, passion, warmth, and faith all come from the center of our souls. True genius also comes from the heart. Those who excel in music, writing, or the arts could attest to the importance of connecting with those marvelous powers within. Similarly, in a spiritual sense, we cannot communicate fully with our Father in Heaven unless we are sincere and pray from the heart.

And likewise also is it counted evil unto a man, if he shall pray and not with real intent of heart; yea, and it profiteth him nothing, for God receiveth none such. (Moroni 7:9)

Care and Maintenance of the Inner Self

We are not, as we might believe, totally dependent upon others for nurturing and approval. Because of its unique properties, the inner self actually responds to input from the conscious mind almost as if it were another person! And because the emotional mind recognizes the physical mind (the ego) as its guardian, it really values what you have to say. True emotional healing starts from within, and not from outer sources. This is one of the secrets to greater happiness and healthy relationships!

That man never grows old who keeps a child in his heart.

-Steele

Now let's put these ideas to the test. A good experience is worth ten thousand words. For the initial structured contact with the hidden person of the heart, I would suggest a writing exercise. Write to the inner self as if he or she were a separate individual, a twin part of you who has experienced your every emotion and problem. Because this inner core of the self is so emotional and sensitive, we might imagine speaking with our self as a young person when we communicate with our heart.

This process is very safe and largely non-threatening, but actually quite helpful as an introductory exercise. The majority of individuals who experiment with this procedure have a valid emotional experience. Here is a sample letter.

Dear inner self,

I know that I have often ignored you for many years, but I would like to change that. I want to be more sensitive to your needs and feelings. I promise to be a better protector. I hope you can let me back into your life and learn to trust me. I think that you are wonderful. You have endured much and have been strong in so many ways.

I will work very hard to be more positive in the way I treat you. I will never leave you again. We will do everything together. I will guide you and teach you, but also listen. Your feelings are important to me. You are loved.

Your older self

At first glance, writing a letter to one's self may seem unusual, even absurd. However, if you leave yourself open to the experience, you will find that this inner person of the heart is really there. He or she will actually communicate to you through the gentle surge of emotion you will feel. Writing a letter is one of the most non-threatening ways to begin to reclaim the lost inner self. I believe you will find it to be the start of a wonderful adventure. Be assured that you will be in full control throughout and will get out of this experience only that which you are ready to receive. The following is a format that can be used for developing this very important message.

Format for the Letter to the Inner Self

- ♦ Greeting - Dear heart of my soul
- ♦ Recognize its existence
- ♦ Empathize with his or her difficult journey
- ♦ Point out positive actions and accomplishments throughout life
- ♦ Apologize for less than perfect parenting
- ♦ Suggest a closer working relationship
- ♦ Promise to be kinder and more sensitive in the future

Once you do the above exercise, you will gain a testimony of the reality of your inner self, if you do not already believe. A key concept is to exercise respect, concern, and compassion in your self-talk. We need to treat ourselves as well as we would a best friend or son or daughter. Self-talk should be positive. Persuasion, not force, is the always order of the day. Perhaps a good way to say this is that we should treat ourselves as we would expect a bishop to act toward us. A bishop is helpful and encouraging and leads people along the gospel path. And we know a good bishop would avoid being condemning or overly critical, and certainly not call people names. As we talk to ourselves in a more spiritual manner, we will get much more cooperation from the heart, the energy source for our actions.

Managing Emotions

Dealing with emotions has some similarities to river rafting. While afloat in an inflatable rubber boat, one must respect the power of the river. You cannot stop paddling and just enjoy watching the scenery go by when there are rocks and rapids to contend with. Managing emotions has some important similarities. When our problems are small, we can suppress our emotions and just move on. The negative energy just fades away over time. However, with larger problems the same strategy will backfire. The power of our pent-up emotions becomes too strong for us to handle. The mind becomes overwhelmed by all this poorly channeled energy, and concentration becomes difficult. We might feel like a person floating down a powerful river who recognizes he is about to go over a gigantic waterfall.

Serious symptoms can develop from pushing down emotions. Some of these are insomnia, headaches, tension, poor concentration, irritability, dissociative episodes, or even psychosis. While we must respect any defenses an individual used to survive a difficult environment growing up, we must also recognize that blocking feelings simply does not work for adults. In fact, avoiding emotions is a major factor in most addictions and anxiety disorders, complicates depression, and contributes to the development of stress-related physical illnesses. It is a paradox that giving up attempting to control our feelings brings greater control.

The executive part of the personality is our guide when dealing with emotions. Once the necessary skills are obtained, it is essential to good mental health to allow ourselves to experience and process our feelings. The thought of letting go and trying to manage these packed-in emotions can admittedly be terrifying. Typically, those growing up in dysfunctional families have not had good models for learning effective coping skills. There may also have been family prohibitions about expressing certain emotions. Nonetheless, processing emotions is an essential life skill that must be learned. It takes true courage to get in touch with the inner self and live with greater awareness, spontaneity, and connectedness to others.

***It is only when you don't run from yourself that you
begin to get somewhere.***

-Author unknown

Working Together

God gave us our marvelous physical brain to aid in our eternal progression. *The rational mind has its own sense of identity and serves as a tutor or guide to the emotional self within.* The job of this executive part of the conscious mind is to analyze

situations and plan appropriate strategies to help the inner self cope with a very complex world. Inner communication or *self-talk* is the key to changing thoughts, beliefs, impulses, and starting new positive habits. Most of us use some sort of self-talk to help us manage stress. Because the executive can distance itself from problems and has excellent logical skills, it can provide invaluable assistance to the highly emotional inner self.

Every day we should be cognizant of the need to guide and support the inner self through the many decision points we must face. Some of the tasks the rational mind can perform to assist the inner self are given below.

Executive Tasks

Logical thoughts to manage strong emotions
Supportive thoughts (self-acceptance)
Impulse control – reminders of long-term consequences
Motivation and goal achievement
Problem-solving
Taking safety measures
Finding satisfaction by meeting needs appropriately

The gods plant reason in mankind, of all good gifts the highest.

-Sophocles

We can enjoy a better future if we learn to effectively utilize the executive and its superior logic and reasoning. Remember, it is not events that cause emotional pain, but our perceptions of those same events. The following cue sheet, the *Event Card*, has been provided to help you shine the light of truth upon emotionally-based thoughts.

Passion costs too much to bestow it upon every trifle.

-Thomas Adams

Event Card

1. In reaction to the event (or thought), what is my inner self thinking and feeling?
2. What action does the inner self impulsively want to commit? Would this action create problems?
3. In thinking about the event, what is a more logical and rational response?
4. Am I being overly self-critical? What words of encouragement and support can I give to myself?

Please feel free to copy the Event Card, or make your own card that you can laminate and carry around. It is just like carrying a therapist in your pocket. Skill in using the Event Card can be developed by writing down your responses in a notebook (or therapy journal). It is suggested that the card be used to process any problem or worry that bothers you for more than half an hour. Reading the responses to yourself several times will give this card more power.

Performing the Right Actions

The scriptures and the General Authorities are very specific in telling us how the Lord desires us to behave. We have made sacred covenants with the Lord that He expects us to honor. However, as human beings we are prone to impulsivity, procrastination, laziness, selfishness, and shortsightedness. Thus the impulses that come from our spirit and emotional mind (the heart of man) can often be misguided due to immaturity, lack of knowledge, and sinful habits.

The problem many of us have with obedience is not due to insufficient knowledge of what is expected. The problem lies in increasing one's motivation to do what is right. The spirit of man is independent and willful. It cannot be forced (even by ourselves) to always do what is right. Guilt or pressure from others is never sufficient to obtain lasting behavioral changes. The natural man within us generally desires those things associated with immediate pleasure and wishes to avoid those things associated with immediate pain or discomfort. Although this shortsighted approach to life clearly leads to unhappiness and spiritual destruction, the appeal of instant gratification is very powerful.

To ensure lasting success, the inner self must be *persuaded* that each righteous action is in its best interest. Self-talk is used to break through the resistance to change. Constructive self-talk usually begins by noting the short- and long-term benefits of any desired positive action. Then we persist with kind but persuasive language until we feel motivated to experiment with these righteous goals. Conversely, by reminding ourselves of the consequences of giving into our impulses, we can feel strengthened to resist counter-productive habits and evil desires. It is also helpful to try to meet one's legitimate needs in positive ways. For instance, a good book can serve as a wonderful substitute for a questionable movie.

The spirit of man eventually *learns* that it can find true joy through obedience to the commandments and obtaining the sanctifying influence of the Holy Ghost. Once we are converted to righteous living, it becomes progressively easier to discipline ourselves. We have chosen the spiritual path and all that this encompasses over the ways of the world.

For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord, and becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father. (Mosiah 3:19)

Action Steps

1. Try the writing exercise to begin contact with your inner self.
2. Ask yourself often as you go through your daily routine, "What am I really feeling?" or "What do I really want?" and resolve to appropriately meet more of your needs.
3. Practice using the Event Card when bothered by a negative emotion for more than a half hour.

Notes

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Chapter 7

The Worth of Souls

Principle # 7: Recognize individual worth

All souls have equal worth in the eyes of God. Cease to base your value upon the approval of others or the achievement of perfectionistic standards. Particularly avoid comparisons as this is pride. Secure self-worth comes through humility, acknowledging personal progress, and acceptance of our value as children of our Heavenly Father.

Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God. (D&C 18:10)

The subject of self-esteem has become fairly controversial in the United States. During the 1970s increasing self-esteem was seen as somewhat of a panacea for many social ills, as well as an important step toward solving problems in the schools. The State of California developed a task force to study the subject of self-esteem, derive solutions, and issue a report. The final report came out in 1990 and contained the following statement, “Today many Californians have a new vision to build a society in which self-esteem is nurtured and people naturally assume personal and social responsibility.” The report also included the idea that “self-esteem and responsibility must be woven into the total education program.”¹

They believed that increasing self-esteem and personal responsibility would be significant factors in such laudable goals as rehabilitating criminal offenders, helping people get off welfare, reducing substance abuse, strengthening families, and improving education in the schools. However, as noted by one of the members of the Task Force in his final statement, the available data did not actually show clear evidence of a link between self-esteem and the social problems at issue. Additionally, it did not appear that the self-esteem programs that were developed were able to make a significant impact on any of these serious social ills.

Nonetheless, self-esteem concerns are clearly important. Although low self-esteem is not directly related to acting out behaviors such as aggression and criminal behavior, it is related to depression, suicide attempts, being bullied, eating disorders, and teen pregnancies.² Psychotherapists very commonly work with individuals on these issues, as well as on self-worth directly. However, changing self-worth is viewed as challenging work. Personality variables, in general, are thought to remain fairly stable over time and are difficult to alter.³ At present, there appears to be no widely accepted empirically validated method for improving self-concept. In his article in *Educational Leadership*, James Bean made a very telling statement. He wrote, “Clearly, enhancing self-esteem is not the soft or simple work that so many people believe it to be.”⁴

Self-Esteem Junkies

Because none of us likes emotional pain, we desperately want to build up our self-esteem. The natural way to do this is to use the strategy most familiar to us, gaining others’ approval. This *approval model* involves: 1. obtaining love and approval from significant others such as parents, and 2. competing with others for status in areas of achievement and appearance. The belief is that we will feel good about ourselves if we can just get others to give us their seal of approval.

This desperate need for boosts to the self-esteem sparks a search for outside

validation that can become all-consuming. Some good souls constantly give to others with the idea of earning acceptance. Their inner belief is that their worth depends upon pleasing others. However, their unbalanced relationships seldom bring them the security they so desperately desire.

Some other wounded individuals become perfectionists. Perfectionists are driven to extreme efforts to achieve the success they believe will bring them inner security about self. They are like the proverbial donkey that walks on a treadmill seeking (but never quite reaching) the carrot dangling in front of its nose. Even if they reach the impossibly high standards they set for themselves, the demands of staying at that level generate great stress. There are so many uncertainties, so many factors beyond our control. It is not easy to maintain the highest academic GPA, be the most beautiful, have the highest sales volume, or remain the most popular.

Additionally, the self-esteem boost obtained from any initial success does not last very long. Others must continue to recognize and validate these great achievements. Those with unfulfilled self-esteem needs are like cocaine addicts always seeking their next high. They crave daily recognition (injections) and are willing to do almost anything to get it. They constantly compare themselves to others, hoping to increase their value by finding areas they feel superior in. The theory is “the more people you surpass, the more worth you have.” Albert Ellis, the noted cognitive psychologist, had great insight into this issue. He said, “Self-esteem is the greatest sickness known to man or woman because it’s conditional.”⁵

Toxic Shame

One sad story I particularly remember involved a man who periodically served time in jail for shoplifting. He was a gentle individual, soft-spoken and polite. When he was about 8 years old, his alcoholic parents (without any real warning) abandoned their whole family of 10 children. It was several days before the problem came to the attention of the authorities. The children were all farmed out to various foster homes. My client never saw his parents again.

Child abuse casts a shadow the length of a lifetime.

-Herbert Ward

A young child is often left alone to interpret his or her painful experiences. Attempts to understand his mistreatment brings about a serious dilemma. Is he bad, or are his parents, teachers, or relatives wrong? An egocentric outlook and lack of knowledge, plus a tremendous dependent need to see adults as all-powerful and good, push the little person to blame himself. He plants some insidious beliefs deep into the core of his being such as “I am a bad person” or “No one could ever love me.” This thought then becomes part of the inner belief system.

The young person feels defective, unworthy, and separated from others. John Bradshaw calls this deep inner feeling of worthlessness derived from our childhood experiences “toxic shame.” He had this to say:

Once internalized, toxic shame is functionally autonomous, which means that it can be triggered internally without any attending stimulus. One can imagine a situation and feel deep shame. One can be alone and trigger a shaming spiral through internal self-talk. The more one experiences shame, the more one is ashamed, and the beat goes on.

It is this dead-end quality of shame that makes it so hopeless. The possibility for repair seems foreclosed if one is essentially flawed as a human being. Add to that the

self-generating quality of shame, and one can see the devastating, soul-murdering power of neurotic shame.⁶

Once the negative self-concept has been firmly implanted in the inner belief system, the individual continues to feel inferior and vulnerable as he or she goes along in life. Situations where personal performance or social acceptance may be evaluated are extremely threatening. Rejection or ridicule by peers greatly compounds the problem. Some of the most damaged individuals I have met were those singled out at school for teasing and harassment.

The self-esteem of the wounded person is constantly on the line. Avoidance and other defensive strategies such as denial, rationalization, or blaming are frequently used. The individual seldom feels secure, and life is a constant struggle. Perceived failure or criticisms from others inflict painful wounds to the already fragile self-concept. Life is a series of intense battles for emotional survival.

Paradoxically, as much as these individuals want to feel better about themselves, they filter out much of the positive feedback they receive and grasp firmly onto the bad. Compliments are ignored, and criticisms are repeatedly played over. This mental filtering represents an attempt to substantiate negative inner beliefs. We look for things in life that will prove the elements of the subconscious map to be true, even negative ones!

The only person you are destined to become is the person you decide to be.

-Ralph Waldo Emerson

The Emotional Revolution

We tend to view things in set mental frameworks. These models are called paradigms. Sometimes change is only possible by considering a problem and its solution in a totally new way. True and lasting improvement in self-esteem is only possible if there is a dramatic change in the way we conceptualize the problem.

Do you know the old story about a sailing ship blown off course by storms near the eastern coast of South America? After the storm there was a great calm, and the ship drifted for many days for lack of wind to fill the sails. The crew eventually ran out of fresh water and feared they would perish from thirst. Their hope was kindled again when they saw smoke from a steamship on the horizon. They fired their cannon to hail the other vessel and frantically cried for water when it came closer.

The reply from the other ship's captain was short and to the point, "Lower your buckets into the sea and drink." The sailors did not respond at first. This did not fit their model for obtaining water at sea. They knew that drinking salt water when dehydrated can cause death. The other captain shouted again, "Lower your buckets into the sea." Finally they complied. They filled their buckets and carefully tasted the contents. To their amazement it was fresh water. The ships were floating near the mouth of the Amazon River. The outflow from this mighty river is so prodigious that the water in the ocean at its mouth is fresh seventy miles out to sea.

It is important that we be willing to "lower our buckets" and consider a totally new paradigm that is truly awesome in its implications. The world is very focused on the concept of building self-esteem. However, this is not a true gospel principle. The Lord does not believe in self-esteem in the popular sense of the word. In fact, what the world considers self-esteem, the Lord generally considers to be pride. Pride exists

when worth is determined or earned through comparisons with others or personal achievement. The Lord loves his children perfectly. All individuals are of equal worth to our Heavenly Father regardless of beauty, stature, or accomplishments. We do not have to *do* anything to earn our value. To believe otherwise is to deny the word of God and to limit his goodness.

I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High. (Psalms 82:6)

The worldly view of self-esteem suggests that people are only valuable if they meet certain conditions or are validated by significant others. It also seems that there is a measuring system and that some people have more value than others. This notion that we must earn our worth is a great deception and causes untold grief in the world. The gospel emphasizes unconditional worth and humility as the answer for the widespread problem of low self-esteem.

About the same time the state of California was winding up its self-esteem project, the Lord's prophet President Ezra Taft Benson gave his memorable talk on pride in a 1989 LDS Spring Conference address. It is not likely that the timing of President Benson's address was a coincidence. In his initial remarks he said, "This message has been weighing heavily on my soul for some time. I know the Lord wants this message delivered now."⁷

The Prophet noted that the Nephite civilization fell because of pride. He then provided the following clarification, "In the scriptures there is no such thing as righteous pride—it is always considered a sin."⁸ He emphasized the concept that, "the central feature of pride is enmity—enmity toward God and toward our fellowmen."⁹ President Benson went on to explain that pride places us in a state of opposition. He said that when we are prideful in our hearts, we resist the authority of God and suppose that we know more than him. He stated that the proud "pit their perceptions of truth against God's great knowledge."¹⁰ President Benson further explained that pride is essentially competitive in nature. Men and women feel they have no worth unless they surpass others in a myriad of worldly contests and competitions. In this same talk, President Benson also stated the following:

We are tempted daily to elevate ourselves above others and diminish them. The proud make every man their adversary by pitting their interests, opinions, works, wealth, talents, or any other worldly measuring device against others. In the words of C.S. Lewis: "Pride gets no pleasure out of having something, only out of having more of it than the next man...It is the comparison that makes you proud: the pleasure of being above the rest. Once the element of competition is gone, pride has gone."¹¹

The Prophet then went on to declare something else that was extremely profound. He made the point that even those with low self-esteem and a lack of the worldly trappings of success can be guilty of pride. President Benson suggested that gossiping, fault-finding, murmuring, coveting, envy and other such sins are all related to pride because they are associated with *competition*.

Pride is a sin that can readily be seen in others, but is rarely admitted in ourselves. Most of us consider pride to be a sin of those on the top, such as the rich and learned, looking down at the rest of us. There is, however, a far more common ailment among us—and that is pride from the bottom looking up.¹²

Seeking glory for oneself leads to evil. If only winners can have self-esteem, then ultimately there must be a lot of losers. The battle for pride produces many casualties. *In many ways pride appears to be Satan's greatest weapon.* It makes men fight among

themselves for recognition. It causes people to hate themselves when they cannot achieve greatness or perfection. Worry about gaining others' approval creates constant tension and turmoil. Pride is a thorn in the side and can greatly interfere with the quest for eternal salvation. Individuals who feel they are worthless are very vulnerable and become easy prey for Satan's temptations. They forget who they really are and give up on their eternal goals out of pain and discouragement.

President Benson: The proud do not receive counsel or correction easily. Defensiveness is used by them to justify and rationalize their frailties and failures. The proud depend upon the world to tell them whether they have value or not. Their self-esteem is determined by where they are judged to be on the ladders of worldly success. They feel worthwhile as individuals if the numbers beneath them in achievement, talent, beauty, or intellect are large enough. Pride is ugly. It says, "If you succeed, I am a failure."¹³

Satan even wins when people compete successfully and feel really good about themselves. These individuals can become so puffed up and self-assured that they feel they know more than God and do not need him. They may stop caring about those who are less fortunate and, in their eyes, less important. The Lord has given us many warnings about the dangers of pride.

And the hand of providence hath smiled upon you most pleasingly, that you have obtained many riches; and because some of you have obtained more abundantly than that of your brethren ye are lifted up in the pride of your hearts, and wear stiff necks and high heads because of the costliness of your apparel, and persecute your brethren because ye suppose that ye are better than they.

And now, my brethren, do ye suppose that God justifieth you in this thing? Behold, I say unto you, Nay. But he condemneth you, and if ye persist in these things his judgments must speedily come unto you. (Jacob 2:13-14)

Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 18:4)

Differences between Pride and Self-Worth

Conditional self-esteem (pride)

Distorted view of self
Competitive
Only a minority can win
Trying to stay on top creates stress
Those of lower status treated differently
Dependent upon the approval of others
Enemy to God
Causes alienation and conflicts
Rejects counsel
Vulnerable to depression
Value is measured by status and talents

Secure self-worth (humility)

True estimate of self
Self-directed
Values effort and teamwork
Brings peace
All treated equally
Sets one's own achievable standards
Gateway to spiritual power
Brings love and unity
Teachable
Resilient
Intrinsic worth as a child of God

Our society is so enamored with the idea of building self-esteem that it can be difficult to accept that this is a false doctrine. Many people are perplexed when they begin to more fully comprehend the concept of forsaking pride. They say such things as, "Why would you try to succeed at all?" or "Why have goals then?" The answer is that we should have goals for righteous reasons. Personal growth, taking care of our families, and service to others should be our chief objectives in life, not seeking fame. Pride is no more capable of making us happy than is cocaine. It is all an illusion, a

great deception. It is the absence of comparisons and self-condemnation that frees us to enjoy life.

Pride is the universal sin, the great vice. The antidote for pride is humility—meekness, submissiveness. It is the broken heart and contrite spirit.¹⁴

-President Ezra Taft Benson

And other directions concerning my servant Martin Harris shall be given him of the Spirit, that he may receive his inheritance as seemeth him good;

And let him repent of his sins, for he seeketh the praise of the world. (D&C 58:38-39)

The commandment to be humble is clear. What may be lacking is the understanding and faith to believe that humility is actually a prerequisite for true happiness. Let us consider the following blessings the Lord promises for the humble and stir up some real enthusiasm. Remember that Heavenly Father has created worlds without end. He speaks only perfect truth.

The Blessings of Humility

They did fast and pray oft, and did wax stronger and stronger in their humility, and firmer and firmer in the faith of Christ, unto the filling their souls with *joy and consolation*. (Helaman 3:35)

Teach them to never be weary of good works, but to be meek and lowly in heart; for such shall find *rest* to their souls. (Alma 37:34)

Humble yourselves even in the depths of humility,...(and) be *filled with the love of God*, (Mosiah 4:11-12)

Be thou humble and the Lord thy God shall give thee *answers to thy prayers*. (D&C 112:10)

If they humble themselves before me, I will *make weak things strong* unto them. (Ether 12:27)

He that humbleth himself shall be *exalted*. (Luke 14:11)

Let him that is ignorant *learn wisdom* by humbling himself. (D&C 136:32)

By humility and the fear of the Lord are *riches and honor and life*. (Proverbs 22:4)

Pride exists when worth is determined or earned through comparisons with others or personal achievement. Rather than attempting to increase self-esteem, the primary objective should be to transcend self-esteem, to move away from questioning our value. The ideal state is to have a sense of self-worth based upon the universal worth of mankind, an appreciation of our own strengths and progress, and acceptance of our earnest efforts to run a good race in life.

Humility is the true key to self-esteem problems as well as a gateway to greater spirituality. Though it seems a paradox that it could be so effective, I believe that humility is one of the more powerful psychological tools available. Humility is also relatively easy to explain or practice.

I would like to share one particular story that illustrates the effectiveness of humility as a tool in therapy. I had a client several years ago who continually fretted about not being as good a housekeeper as her neighbors. “Jill” became so obsessed with her weaknesses in this area that she became severely depressed. Eventually she took an overdose of pills and had to be hospitalized. Cleaning the home had been so strongly emphasized when Jill was a child that it became a huge self-esteem issue for

her. Logical discussions with her about this concern seemed to have little effect. Her husband had been trying to reason with her for years.

I decided to try using humility to fight this obsession. I suggested the reason she could not be a spotless housekeeper was that she was not a high-energy person who was physically capable of working 12 to 14 hours per day. Jill agreed this was true. I had her repeat out loud after me that she would never be as good a housekeeper as some of her neighbors and she was only an average housekeeper, but still had worth. We did note that she had many other wonderful talents and attributes. As simplistic as this technique sounds, it worked! She immediately felt better and was able to let go of the cleaning issue. It took only one session. Over the next year (during which I had occasional contact with her), she was much less depressed and no longer experienced thoughts of suicide.

Stable self-worth does come at a price. To keep level in our esteem of self, we must give up the quest to feel superior to others. To feel superior and to think one's rights and happiness count more than others allows man to justify indifference, discrimination, and even violence. On a more personal level, arrogance leads to the devaluing of others' contributions and strengths, and serves to create hurt feelings and lowered morale. Self-value must always be counterbalanced by humility lest we begin to think of ourselves as having more worth than others. Sailing ships would topple over from the weight of the mast if heavy material (ballast) was not placed in the lower part of the ship. Humility provides ballast to mankind as we go about the process of acquiring more knowledge, skills, possessions, and status.

Improving Self-Worth Step-by-Step

Element 1: Accept the Gift of Self-Worth

All have equal worth by virtue of our status as Heavenly Father's children. Worthiness does not depend upon our efforts. Our value to God is relationship-based. Our power and goodness is so small that we cannot even begin to give back what we have received from the Lord. Heavenly Father has given us this earth to live upon, our physical bodies, sustenance, scriptures, prophets, the gift of the Holy Ghost, and the Atonement, as well as the very power to live and breathe. And besides all these blessings, He will reward us with unlimited riches and power if we are faithful in this life.

I say unto you, my brethren, that if you should render all the thanks and praise which your whole soul has power to possess, to that God who has created you, and has kept and preserved you, and has caused that ye should rejoice, and has granted that ye should live in peace one with another—

I say unto you that if ye should serve him who has created you from the beginning, and is preserving you from day to day, by lending you breath, that ye may live and move and do according to your own will, and even supporting you from one moment to another—I say, if ye should serve him with all your whole souls yet ye would be unprofitable servants.

(Mosiah 2:20-21)

Men try to pretend that they can increase their worth merely because they surpass others of the Lord's children in some small ways. However, earth life is not a worldly contest, but a school for gods. We are celestial beings in training. We should compare ourselves to Jesus Christ, the Great Exemplar, and not to other men and

women. Our job is to follow the Savior and continually try to improve. Comparisons to other people bring forth pride and take us off the true path.

Oftentimes individuals will say, "I don't deserve to be happy (or forgiven)." The best answer for this is to agree that they indeed do not deserve it! It is a gift of God, and Christ suffered that we might inherit the joy of the celestial kingdom.

For we labor diligently to write, to persuade our children, and also our brethren, to believe in Christ, and to be reconciled to God; for we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do. (2 Nephi 25:23)

Our main choice is whether or not we elect to receive the gift of worth. Consider the options. What will happen if we refuse the gift and try to deny our worth as children of God? What will be the life consequences if we ignore the Atonement and insist on trying to be perfect or punishing ourselves for our sins?

On the other hand, what will the results be like if we accept the Lord's gift of worth? What would our attitude be? I believe we would be as Alma the Younger who gratefully accepted the mercies of the Savior and rose from the depths of guilt and despair to mightily serve the Lord the rest of his days. Accepting the gift of worth is the first step toward developing a positive self-concept.

Heavenly Father does ask some things in return for his gifts. The sacrifice the Lord asks from each individual is to give up willfulness and pride. He seeks our obedience and not our opinion regarding how we should live the gospel. His instructions include how we should view ourselves and others. Though individuals may feel emotionally driven to be self-punitive (or prideful), they can turn things around more quickly if they are willing to accept the Lord's love and direction.

Thou shalt offer a sacrifice unto the Lord thy God in righteousness, even that of a broken heart and a contrite spirit. (D&C 59:8)

Element 2: Use Self-Affirmations

In the February 2003 First Presidency Message, Elder Faust clarified several extremely important points of doctrine in a very straightforward and eloquent manner. Some of the main points he made were:

1. Man's spirit is not perfect, but must be "purged and cleansed of transgression."
2. The basic program of the Church is to transform the spirit within man, "to strengthen the inner self."
3. The inner soul with all that is stored within it is what continues beyond this life.¹⁵

In addition to the effects of the Holy Ghost, a part of strengthening the inner self comes from speaking words of truth to ourselves. We must teach our spirit within that he or she has great worth, that error and sin are part of the plan and the very reason we needed a Savior.

Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth. (Luke 15:10)

The first step in changing a negative self-image is making the decision to strive to be kind to the inner self. To be kind means to be supportive and positive. Many people express negative feelings, even hatred, toward themselves for their imperfections and mistakes. This is self-defeating behavior of the highest degree.

Consider whether this behavior helps you to be more productive, helps you to be closer to others, or makes you hopeful about the future? Clearly, the answer to all of the above questions is a resounding “no.” Self-haters are on a crusade to punish themselves. This may also be a way to express their disguised inner anger toward those who have hurt them. It may be the only control they feel they have.

Despite the strong emotional pull toward self-abuse, it may be helpful to point out that it is clearly selfish to spend so much time and energy thinking about yourself. It hurts those who care about you and prevents you from being effective in serving others. The past is too heavy to continue to carry around. A new chapter begins when we accept reality and start to make our life work one day at a time.

For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. (Matthew 16:25)

Would it not be wonderful to free yourself of guilt, shame, and insecurity? Assume your adult responsibility as the caretaker of the heart, the inner person of the soul. You and only you can provide the twenty-four hours per day acceptance and guidance you need to thrive in life. Your inner self will listen to you more than anyone else. Your happiness depends upon your willingness to accept the inner self as a wonderful, vibrant, essential part of your being. You must recognize that you are in a developmental state that involves exploration and, oftentimes, learning by trial and error. Looking for some other person to improve your self-esteem is like searching for the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. Be confident that your own sincere efforts will be more than adequate. Perfection is not a requirement for increasing self-worth. Everyone wishes they were better and that they had made fewer mistakes. Though the concept of positive self-talk may still seem unusual, persevere and it will eventually seem like the most natural thing in the world.

So much is a man worth as he esteems himself.

-Francois Rabelais

a) The Emotional Bill of Rights

The following is a personal bill of rights we can read to our inner self. As adults we literally have the power to give ourselves permission to enjoy these essential emotional freedoms. Some of these may strike a deep chord. For the purposes of this exercise, read each freedom out loud and speak to your heart using the following procedure. Before *each* personal freedom, repeat the words, “I have the right.” Say the permissions slowly and with meaning.

to be safe	to be loved	to be responsible
to have feelings	to love others	to be competent
to explore new things	to make mistakes	to be strong emotionally
to say no	to gain knowledge	to express my emotions
to have friends	to relax	to be happy
to live without fear	to work	to take care of my needs

b) Lifetime Achievement Award

Most individuals have made very significant progress in developing their character over the years. The problem is that we generally do not recognize this progress, seldom give ourselves credit, and tend to compare ourselves to others. This exercise highlights change over time and provides a good opportunity for recognizing growth. There is a train of thought that says it is bragging or prideful to consider our strengths. However, for those who are self-critical, positive self-talk mainly serves to counterbalance the frequent negativity we feed ourselves. It is refreshing to be able to appreciate strengths and talents without giving into the temptation to feel superior to others.

The procedure is to simply check the attributes that *mostly* apply to you on the list below. Then slowly read out loud the list of good qualities placing "I am" before each one. This experience is invariably a very safe and positive one. It can be repeated many times. The inner self always appreciates positive feedback.

Personal Strengths Inventory

appreciative	aware	calm	chaste
cheerful	compassionate	confident	conscientious
considerate	cooperative	courageous	creative
curious	disciplined	energetic	enthusiastic
fair	faithful	firm	flexible
forgiving	fun	generous	genuine
grateful	happy	honest	humble
independent	industrious	insightful	kind
likable	listener	logical	obedient
optimistic	organized	patient	quiet
realistic	receptive	respectful	responsible
serious	sensitive	sincere	spiritual
strong	temperate	tolerant	trusting

Add a list of special talents. I have skills in...

After this initial positive contact, one must follow through on the commitment to continually guide and support the inner person with constructive self-talk. It cannot be emphasized enough that this decision is a prerequisite for achieving emotional stability and peace of mind.

c) Noticing the Positives

Another type of inventory involves listing recent positive behaviors. Giving oneself credit for small, but important actions makes a great difference in mood and confidence. Too often we are so focused on our glaring faults that we downplay any progress. This pseudo-humility does little to energize or motivate us. I would suggest a few minutes be taken each day to inwardly celebrate recent accomplishments. They need not be huge triumphs; noting small, positive efforts or good deeds will work very well.

I define comfort as self-acceptance. When we finally learn that self-care begins and ends with ourselves, we no longer demand sustenance and happiness from others.

-Jennifer Loudon

Element 3: Pledge Self-Respect

When Franklin Roosevelt was elected president of the United States in 1932, the country was still struggling in the grip of the Great Depression. Millions were out of work and it was a very difficult time for the country. Roosevelt promised the people a “new deal.” The first days of Roosevelt's administration saw the passage of banking reform laws, emergency relief programs, work relief programs, and agricultural programs. These various measures provided jobs, stimulated the economy, and helped place the country back on the right footing.

We can make a *new deal* with the inner self and stop using labels to put ourselves down. Labels are exaggerations and therefore invariably inaccurate. The only point of using words like stupid, worthless, or loser is to cause pain to ourselves because we feel frustrated about not reaching our goals. Self-castigation is not in harmony with spiritual living or our Heavenly Father's will. Self-punishment is a very poor motivator and actually one of the devil's favorite tools. He can more easily trick us when we feel discouraged and unworthy of God's love and assistance.

This one decision (to give up using labels) can have a very powerful impact on decreasing feelings of low self-worth. It is almost impossible to have low self-esteem without resorting to labeling oneself in negative ways. We would hardly remain friends with someone who called us vicious names and cut us down every time we made a mistake. One of the first steps toward establishing a relationship with our inner self is to promise respect. Instead of using labels to put ourselves down, we can attempt to *describe* situations just as they are without exaggerating. This places us in greater harmony with the process of self-development where limitations are recognized and corrected.

Element 4: Achievable Standards

What would you have to do in order to accept yourself? Too often people have perfectionistic standards, or else have decided to hate themselves forever because of past errors or problems. Here are some examples of common, unrealistic goals: “Everyone must like me. I must be perfect. My parents must approve of me. I must be rich and successful. I must weigh 115 pounds. I must have a college degree and a professional career.”

It would be terrific if we could simply accept ourselves as having divine worth as children of God, and then just move on, never again to be bothered by self-esteem issues. Unfortunately, people are more complicated than that. Although it may be doctrinally correct, few individuals seem able to accept themselves unconditionally. We are far too aware of our imperfections to offer ourselves blanket immunity from personal prosecution.

Since most people insist on standards to judge themselves by, I suggest we switch to standards that are achievable and associated with short-term goals. We actually have the power to do this. After all, we decided upon the ones we are using now. While everyone is free to choose for themselves, I would like to suggest some criteria that I think are reasonable. These are the same standards I use for myself: “I will accept myself if I give a good effort on the tasks of each day and strive to be kind to others.” Once we logically agree to the new standards, we need to diligently monitor our thoughts lest we become self-critical and desert the new pact. It is essential to build a relationship of trust with the inner self. Only then can we enlist the

cooperation of the spirit within and energetically march forward in the quest for eternal salvation.

He that getteth wisdom loveth his own soul. (Proverbs 19:8)

Element 5: Practice Humility

Because of man's fallen nature and inexperience, we are prone to sin and error. Additionally, those who have experienced significant shame or abuse have a painful core feeling of not being good enough. To avoid the additional pain caused by recognizing weaknesses, many people choose not to think about their faults, pretending they do not exist. If criticized they become defensive and angry. The sad reality is that sooner or later the charade must end. Like an inflated stock pushed beyond its true market value, the bubble of false pride must eventually burst. When this occurs, individuals often feel devalued and depressed.

Attempts to feel better about ourselves through achievement and gaining the approval of others ultimately fail. Other people are often stingy or inconsistent in giving praise or acceptance. Sometimes we do not make the cut. Not everyone can be a star. There is also an inner pressure to explain our frequent mistakes and past failures. Too often the answer we come up with is that we are bad or worthless. We can deal with this kind of criticism by accepting our imperfect nature. There is awesome power in humility! It cushions our eternal soul from much of the pain of a very harsh and competitive world. By accepting our personal weaknesses, we can overcome fears of the judgment of man and concentrate upon progressing as our Heavenly Father wishes us to.

Even so I would that ye should remember, and always retain in remembrance, the greatness of God, and your own nothingness, and his goodness and long-suffering towards you, unworthy creatures, and humble yourselves even in the depths of humility, calling on the name of the Lord daily, and standing steadfastly in the faith of that which is to come, which was spoken by the mouth of the angel. (Mosiah 4:11)

Young, pampered seedlings that were grown either indoors or in a greenhouse need a period to acclimate to outdoor conditions prior to planting in the garden. This transition period is called "hardening off". This process gradually exposes the tender plants to the elements and toughens them up by thickening the cuticle on the leaves. Hardening off usually involves placing plants outdoors in partial sun for a few hours per day for about a week. This helps prevent transplant shock.

Most people spend a good deal of energy avoiding being honest about their faults. Therefore, to begin squarely facing one's deficiencies can be a bit of a shock to the human psyche. Just as plants need to adjust to sunlight, people need to adjust to the bright light of truth. And the truth is that we all fall short of the standard of excellence set by the Savior and we all have need to improve. So rather than trying to avoid the reality of human imperfection, we are going to focus on identifying and accepting personal weakness.

The value of reminding ourselves of our limitations is to provide emotional balance. Once we adjust to the reality of who we truly are, we become somewhat immune to the noxious effects of criticism and setbacks. The person who is not troubled by fears of failure can conquer any obstacle and reach any goal. His direction is always forward.

***If you are humble, nothing will touch you, neither praise
nor disgrace, because you know what you are.***

-Mother Teresa

Hardening Exercise A The Worth Protection Formula given below is a tool that can be used to deal with our reactions to setbacks or perceived criticism from others. It seems to work instantly and has no negative side effects. We must never let a negative thought go by unchallenged. We *feel* what we *think*. The Worth Protection Formula gives individuals a powerful weapon for dealing with setbacks or criticism from others. It simplifies the task of learning how to be sufficiently humble.

Worth Protection Formula

1. Is this criticism 100% accurate, or do I just strongly *feel* that way? What is the evidence that it is not totally true?
2. Describe the specific weakness or limitation that actually does exist. It is true that I: (Make sure to avoid using negative labels.)
3. But I still have worth. I am a human being. I am a child of God.
4. Say something positive about yourself, past efforts, or future plans for change.

Example for Use of the Worth Protection Formula:

A person gets a C on a big test and calls himself a stupid loser.

1. This is not totally true. I am not a complete loser. Sometimes I do OK academically. Some of the professors in the program seem to respect my abilities. I have an overall 3.2 GPA.
2. It is true that I am not the brightest person in the program. I certainly struggle with physics.
3. However, I still have worth. I am a human being. I am a child of God.
4. There is still a chance to get a B in this class. I received an A- on the first test. I think I will see a tutor a couple of times to get help with the difficult material.

Hardening Exercise B Many people struggle with the idea that they are “not good enough.” This is another insidious label and it causes people untold pain. Humility and acceptance can be used to neutralize this poisonous idea. The solution is fairly simple, surrender to the truth. Of course we are not as good as we would like to be! All human beings are in a process of self-development. We all have weaknesses, past disappointments, and goals for change. This is the human condition.

I have found that the best way to begin taking the sting out of this troubling phrase is to carefully define what it means to each person. Make a list of the items on your “not good enough” list. Then rewrite each concern in a logical, factual way making sure to take the drama out of the language. It can be helpful to describe limitations in a logical manner. I am not as effective in _____ as I would like to be. I could improve by _____.

Element 6: Rewrite History

If your practice of the techniques provided in this chapter has helped you to gain the conviction that you are a person of value, keep it up. On the other hand, if

you encountered strong inner resistance to self-acceptance, then some deeper work may be required. It is helpful to appreciate that our self-esteem was formed largely in reaction to our perceptions of how others viewed us in the past. These ideas, or schema, can become so deeply impressed that we later respond to them automatically. Without identifying and revising these faulty beliefs within the subconscious, improvements are often superficial and there is a constant battle to avoid falling back into negative thought patterns.

To begin to get in touch with the critical events that contributed to your damaged self-worth, you can begin to construct a “wall of shame.” This is in essence a list of those situations that appeared to be the most damaging. Writing them down helps provide greater objectivity, and the list also can be used as a reference. Over time more logical interpretations can be gained.

Tools from previous chapters such as the contemplation hour, radical acceptance, and the editing technique can help one work through the troublesome thought patterns associated with past painful events. A deeper explanation of the process of changing inner beliefs is provided in the following chapter. The Critical Events Analysis at the end of that chapter provides some specific steps. Readers are strongly advised to go through chapter 8 before doing the wall of shame exercise.

The Wall of Shame

Somehow, viewing the monster in broad daylight helps place the problem into perspective. It can be very helpful to try to construct a philosophy that reduces the impact of a troublesome personal history. Some simple examples might be: “Many people make serious mistakes when they are young. No child deserves to be abused. A person is not his past. All people have value and deserve respect. I am not going to let others determine my worth.”

When working through one’s history, deep feelings of hurt, anger, guilt, or sadness may arise. It is important to validate and express these feelings in safe ways. Attempting to suppress emotions indefinitely can carry serious consequences and certainly trigger desires to revert to addictive behavior in order to escape. For those who are afraid to let their feelings out, plan short periods of an hour or so where you can feel your emotions and express yourself. Besides talking to others, writing feelings out in a journal can be helpful.

We may have tried to avoid thinking about the painful events of earlier times, but the inner self struggled on alone to understand the source of its pain.

Unfortunately, there is no way the inner person could ever succeed without your help. You are the hero armed with logic and knowledge who can set the prisoner free from his undeserved "jail of shame." You are the only one with the necessary power and influence. It is your mission and destiny to rescue your inner self from the lies and distortions of the past! Although this work of reclaiming the past is difficult and challenging, the rewards can be life-changing.

Element 7: Build Greater Self-Confidence

We have discussed how to work through the negative elements that contribute to low self-worth. Now a new world of possibilities opens up. We are free to accept our intrinsic value as children of God as a strong foundation for self-acceptance. Nevertheless, despite the reassurance we receive by appreciating our true worth, we may still feel like something is missing. We naturally want to feel more than just neutral or okay about ourselves. How can we build a greater sense of inner strength and confidence without becoming prideful and falling into the trap of comparing ourselves to others? The key lies not in trying to surpass others, but in doing those things that help us *relate* better to others. As you become the type of individual who exerts a positive influence on the world, you will develop true confidence and self-respect.

There are three precious stones that form the jewels in the crown of self-worth. The center stone is service to others. The outer stones are virtuous thoughts and productivity. Note how different these standards are from the usual worldly criterion people use. Materialism (the pursuit of riches, possessions, comfort, and recreation) has never had the power to bring people true happiness. Neither pride nor fame nor carnal pleasures can bring us lasting happiness either. These bring only a temporary satisfaction that soon fades. Cultivating positive emotions and a noble character should be our chief aim in life. It is the intangible elements involved with being a force for good that really can make a difference in the way we feel about ourselves. Conduct a personal experiment by investigating the riches of the spiritual way.

This chapter will be appropriately concluded with the memorable words of President Uchtdorf from the priesthood session of Fall 2010 Conference. He confirmed the importance of President Benson's inspired talk on pride and added his thoughts and testimony.

Pride is a switch that turns off priesthood power. Humility is a switch that turns it on. So how do we conquer this sin of pride that is so prevalent and so damaging? How do we become more humble? It is almost impossible to be lifted up in pride when our hearts are filled with charity. No one can assist in this work except he shall be humble and full of love. When we see the world around us through the lens of the pure love of Christ, we begin to understand humility.

Some suppose that humility is about beating ourselves up. Humility does not mean convincing ourselves that we are worthless, meaningless, or of little value. Nor does it mean denying or withholding the talents God has given us. We don't discover humility by thinking less *of* ourselves; we discover humility by thinking less *about* ourselves. It comes as we go about our work with an attitude of serving God and our fellowman.¹⁶

Action Step

Work through the seven elements to change self-worth. Be aware that the process is complex and may take several weeks.

Notes

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Chapter 8

Beliefs and the Subconscious

Principle # 8: Change self-defeating inner beliefs (schemas)

Schemas are "beliefs" we developed to understand past difficult situations. If these powerful ideas are negative, they can greatly influence one's life. Lack of hope and fear of failure keep us from improving our circumstances. These self-defeating beliefs must be challenged with logic and resolved through positive emotional experiences.

Our every action is but a reflection of our beliefs. According to *Webster's New World Dictionary* a belief is "a conviction that certain things are true." Beliefs provide a frame of reference for interacting with our complex world. We must have faith that our ideas are valid and that acting on them will bring positive results. Some beliefs are scientific in nature and easily tested. Others are more philosophical or personal. Many individuals strongly hold onto self-defeating ideas. Reason and logic do not seem to help these people overcome their negative patterns. They already know that their thoughts and/or actions do not make sense, but feel powerless to change. Fortunately, there is an explanation for this puzzling human behavior.

There is a part of our functioning and intelligence connected with subconscious processes that is little understood. However, it is so important that it alone can dictate success or failure in our lives! It can be called the *subconscious map*. This aspect of our intelligence is composed of the collection of beliefs the inner self uses as a frame of reference in order to operate in the world. Since the subconscious is much more powerful than the conscious mind, its preferences tend to prevail.

As we move through life, our inner self makes conclusions about the world based upon its experiences. It associates various stimuli and situations with either pleasure or pain and makes simple approach-avoidance decisions. It also develops concepts regarding complex issues such as socializing, work, and religion. These ideas, or *schemas*, can become so deeply impressed that we later respond to them automatically without any conscious effort. The basic rule of thumb would be "the more powerful the experience, the stronger the schema." Low self-worth, jealousy in relationships, fears of being alone, suspiciousness, and inappropriate anger all have their roots in childhood conflict. In order to maximize our potential and find more inner peace, there must be some resolution regarding past conflicts. Learning how to perform this important task of reprogramming is of immeasurable worth. It provides limitless possibilities for growth, and opens doors that previously seemed totally shut.

The subconscious map functions as an effective survival mechanism. It tells us how to think and behave without having to fully evaluate every situation. It works almost like a computer program. These ideas and beliefs can be non-personal such as "fire burns" or personal, "I can't do anything right." Our awareness of the origin of each idea is often limited. Every time we get close to situations we link with pain, inner alarm bells ring. We become uncomfortable and generally initiate a hasty retreat. On the other hand, when we think about items we have learned to enjoy such as specific foods, we generate impulses to obtain them.



Let us consider the example of someone suffering from claustrophobia. The claustrophobic knows logically that nothing will happen to him in a small closet or room. Nevertheless, the prospect of being confined is terrifying. The idea that small, enclosed places are dangerous was most likely formed when he was shut in a dark closet as a child. Fears conjured up in his imagination made it a terrible experience. The incident may have happened at a very young age, or else been so repressed that later in life the individual would have no conscious memory. Despite the present lack of awareness, the inner program still remains active. Each time the adult phobic feels enclosed, he experiences overwhelming feelings of terror.

This example of claustrophobia illustrates one of the greatest limitations of the subconscious map. Programs can be necessary and advantageous at one point in time, but counterproductive years later. *Our world and the rules of life change as we go from child to adult, but the inner beliefs do not.* The inner self judges new situations almost entirely from the past, and so has difficulty projecting different outcomes into the future. Barring mountains of new evidence, everything will continue to be viewed the same way. These negative associations to past events can cause us to live a fear-based life. These inner beliefs can affect our productivity, our social life, our ability to be intimate, and our self-esteem. In a very real sense we can be conditioned to fail.

The heart has its reasons which reason knows not of.

-Blaise Pascal

Common Mistaken Beliefs

I will never have friends
I am stupid
I am worthless
I will always be depressed
You can't trust anyone
I am unlovable
I cannot change
I will never be successful
Everyone leaves me, why get close and get hurt
My sins can never be forgiven
I am unworthy unless I have my parents' approval
I cannot do anything right
I am weaker than other people
I am not good enough
I don't deserve to be happy

Notice how these statements tend to be absolutes. They can easily become self-defeating prophecies because our actions tend to follow our beliefs. The person who believes he is stupid will likely not attempt to attend college. The person who believes that no one could ever like him will not seek out friends. It takes true courage to overcome fears and risk the uncertainties of change. The subconscious map has a tremendous influence upon our lives. It must be reckoned with or we will make the same mistakes over and over again.

We can become aware of programs from our subconscious map when we approach related situations. Individual "programs" are consistent and can be detected by the presence of intense emotions and illogical thoughts and behavior. Although

these programs never wear out, they can be changed through insight and corrective experiences.

Rewriting Subconscious Programs

Once we have identified some of the faulty programming in our subconscious map, we need to begin to work on altering this negative conditioning. Learning how to perform this important task is central to real change. The prison doors of the past can then be unlocked and we can walk out into the light, free to choose our desired path in life. This knowledge is of immeasurable worth. For the individual it is comparable to the deciphering of the extraordinary Rosetta Stone. The history behind the Rosetta Stone began with the invasion of Egypt by Napoleon in 1798. During the subsequent three-year French occupation of the Nile Valley, European scholars were able to collect great numbers of antiquities and much historical information. The Rosetta Stone was discovered in the Fort of St. Julian among the different treasures at Rosetta, a town on the west arm of the Nile.

The stone was found to have identical messages carved on it in three languages—first in hieroglyphics (the picture script used by the Egyptian priesthood), next in demotic (the common written language of ancient Egypt), and third in Greek. Scholars worked on this language puzzle for several years until Jean Francois Champollion successfully deciphered the hieroglyphic script in 1832. He made not only a dictionary, but also a grammar of the language. Because of the key knowledge extracted from the Rosetta Stone, the hieroglyphic writings of ancient Egypt became accessible to modern man.¹

Before explaining how to alter past conditioning, it should be noted that it is not always necessary to go through therapy or to perform elaborate techniques in order to change. Engaging in *experiences* that disprove our past perceptions is sufficient for change in many cases. I remember one patient from a psychiatric hospital where I worked who made some dramatic changes in about a week. He was a very paranoid, surly individual who had served time in a state correctional institution for attempted murder. If he felt frustrated by anyone, he would scream at them with a startling degree of anger. He seemed unapproachable, and most of the other patients avoided him. All the members of the staff were afraid of him except one very experienced nurse.

One day when he was complaining about how badly people treated him, she challenged him and said, “Of course no one wants to be around you. You scare them away with those mean looks. Why don’t you smile once in a while?” Amazingly, this really tough, frightening guy took her up on the suggestion.

He was totally surprised when people were actually receptive to him. He walked around beaming for a week and was very willing to talk with the staff about his newly discovered social skills. He had shattered his perception that no one liked him by creating a different experience. Over the next year I had other opportunities to interact with him and saw that he never did regress to his former negative social patterns.

Once the faulty beliefs within the subconscious map have been identified, we can look forward to altering this negative conditioning. Without this type of deep change, improvements are often superficial, and there is a constant battle to avoid falling back into negative habits. Learning how to perform this important task of reprogramming is of immeasurable worth.

While psychotherapists tend to focus on correcting negative beliefs, we should note that there are schemas that are very positive. The greatest personal changes occur when we make firm inner decisions to change a pattern of behavior. These types of changes are both emotionally-based and enduring. An example might be a person who has made a life-long commitment to exercise or to some important cause. The knowledge of how to both create positive schemas and deactivate and replace negative schemas is essential to success in life. The conscious mind and the heart can then work in concert to enable us to progress far beyond our own expectations.

The business of life is to go forward.

-Samuel Johnson

Insight and logic are essential for correcting the distorted interpretations of past events. The following technique will get you started in untangling the past. Write down the answers for each part in a notebook. It is important to add a precaution. If there has been significant abuse or trauma in your history, or if the prospect of exploring your past seems frightening or overwhelming, please seek the assistance of a competent professional therapist.

Critical Events Analysis

1. Select an undesirable behavior pattern or negative belief.
2. Tie the behavior or belief to a past significant event(s). Sit in a quiet place and ponder the different periods of your childhood to help with recall.
3. Recognize what your younger self was feeling and thinking in response to this situation.
4. What explanation or belief did you develop at the time to understand those events?
5. Was this belief totally logical? Can you interpret things differently now? (Use the editing technique. See instructions for the brief version below.)
6. How would you act or think differently if you had your present adult knowledge and intelligence and were back in the same situation?

Instructions for the Editing Technique

- a. Write out your distressing thoughts about the past problem.
- b. Cross out lines containing exaggerating, labeling, denial of reality, or predicting from your self-talk. Re-write the issue of concern in strictly logical and practical terms.
- c. Read the new statement five times. (Say the words out loud or silently mouth them.)

Special Instructions

There are a couple of important tips to share about doing this history work. If there is a history of serious abuse or trauma that is related to the formation of negative schema, unpleasant emotions may be triggered as you begin to work through the past. Courage and determination are required because once you commit to exploring the past there is no turning back. Think of this endeavor as running the

emotional rapids. Once you start the process, the emotions that come up may be so powerful that they can no longer be controlled and have to be expressed. Generally, people experience such emotions as guilt, shame, anger, fear, disgust, sadness, and grief. There seems to be an emotional need to experience and express those emotions that were suppressed and then buried. Some of the ways feelings can be expressed are through talking, writing, art, music, or exercise. Your heart knows what it needs. Your job is to discover what that may be.

Guilt is usually the first emotion to be worked through. Although it is a marvelous thing to finally begin to let go of the burden of shame and self-blame, other strong emotions soon begin to surface. Anger generally follows next as people realize that they were violated. Many individuals who have been abused turn anger inwardly as they begin to get in touch with these feelings and can become self-destructive. It is essential to form a plan to handle these powerful emotions. These feelings build up so much energy over time that it is almost impossible to just forgive and move on without some outward release!

The objective is to recognize the feelings of anger and develop a plan to safely express them. To manage anger, cathartic activities such as vigorous exercise may be necessary. I generally propose that my clients perform an "anger ritual." This involves choosing a safe physical way to express anger such as hitting a pillow on a bed or doing shadow boxing (punching the air). The anger exercise should be done vigorously every day to the point of moderate fatigue whether you feel angry or not. You continue to do this until you are ready to move on and work on letting go of the anger. Most people take a week or two to complete the process.

Sadness can be handled by scheduling time for feeling sad and crying a few days per week. An hour or so each day till the cup of sorrow is poured out is generally sufficient. Although the prospect of facing these difficult emotions sounds unpleasant, it is actually a very valuable investment toward enjoying inner peace in the future.

This next tip is a great one. It is simple and makes the whole process much easier. If you are having flashbacks or strong emotions about a past traumatic situation, simply tap your hands on each leg during the memory, alternating from one leg to the other. The right hand hits the right leg and the left hand hits the left leg—right/left, right/left etc., about 20 taps each 10 seconds. It is a natural rhythm, so do not worry about counting. This technique works because the bilateral movements seem to interfere with memories. Everyone I have had use this method said it was effective and easy to do. With the emotional intensity of the memories reduced, it is much easier to cognitively process past events and come up with more correct interpretations.

When working through past issues, the invaluable tool of humility can be used to gain perspective. Rather than only focusing on the events that produced feelings of shame or guilt, we can acknowledge and accept the lack of knowledge, skills, or abilities that contributed to the problem. By accepting personal limitations without resorting to the use of labels or absolutes, the meaning of past negative events can be dramatically changed.

In a similar way, those who were offenders can also be viewed differently. We can strive to look with eyes of compassion to recognize the individual's limited level of moral development. It is important to accept the reality of how very *deficient* the offending party was in his or her ability to be loving, reasonable, and empathetic. Acceptance of others' weaknesses and compassion for their pain can free us from our

own anger. While it can be difficult to see how abusive individuals can be in pain; recognize that the worse a person's behavior, the further away they are from the Spirit and positive relationships. Evil people often feel depressed and lonely, and unless they repent, they face a very difficult time in the hereafter. By exercising true charity and feeling compassion for those in spiritual darkness, forgiveness becomes possible. Know that forgiveness does not free you from the requirement to take care of yourself. Boundaries must be maintained with those who have not learned to treat others with respect. Keeping a safe distance may be the only barrier to further abuse.

Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.

Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven. (Luke 6:36-37)

It is important to not fear this natural process. Flashbacks represent the attempts of the inner self to communicate its distress about the past. It wants the conscious mind to help it process the emotions and meaning of difficult events. The inner self recognizes that being tied up with pain and negative ideas from the past interferes with finding fulfillment in the present. Once this challenging work is accomplished, the flashbacks and memories will largely cease, and you will have a much richer and more fulfilling emotional life.

Do the heroic thing. Make spirituality and emotional wholeness your greatest goal. Learn how to apply the change principles explained in this book and effectively manage your symptoms. When you are ready, go on a mission to rescue your inner self from its prison of the past. After accomplishing all these things, you will be in a wonderful new territory, more free than ever before to pursue your goals and find a measure of peace and happiness!

Action Steps

1. Most of us are aware of some of our negative beliefs. A list of common mistaken beliefs was provided earlier in this chapter. To discover other conditioned beliefs, consider situations where you experience illogical thoughts or inappropriate emotions such as fear or shame. Write out one or two ineffective beliefs from your subconscious map if you are aware of any.
2. Modify one segment of your subconscious map using the critical events analysis. I suggest attempting this first in therapy. If you are not in therapy, begin with something that should not prove too challenging.

Note

1. Wikipedia s.v. "Rosetta Stone" <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rosetta_Stone>, June 12, 2014.

Chapter 9

Finding Joy in Friendships

Principle # 9: Strengthen social connections

Love is all-important. Being part of a community of family, friends and neighbors provides joy and emotional strength. Learn to overcome fears of rejection and be a friend to all. Service is an integral part of the spiritual path and increases self-confidence. Perform acts of kindness for those around you every day.

This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you. (John 15:12)

From the very beginning of our lives human beings require more than food and shelter. A newborn's first contact with his mother sets off cascades of hormones in his body that benefit his health and help him regulate his body temperature. Human touch lowers the levels of the hormone cortisol in a baby's body, leading to reduced anxiety and better sleep patterns. Physical contact between a baby and his parents stimulates release of the hormone oxytocin and increases feelings of bonding among the family members.

Infants who are touched gently on a regular basis gain weight and grow at better rates than babies who lack this contact. They also spend less time in the hospital after birth and have fewer medical complications in their first year of life. Babies who do not receive human contact in their first days or weeks of life often suffer from health problems related to this deprivation. Social scientists found in the early 1900s that babies in orphanages had much higher mortality rates if deprived of significant adult interaction and touch. Although adequately fed and diapered, without sufficient love they seemed to lose the will to live.

Relationships are the finest part of life. Though we had all other things, we could not be truly content without the warmth and meaning friends and family provide. Regardless of our different experiences, we all recognize relationships have the *potential* to bring people great joy. People have an intrinsic need to make connections with others, and socialization appears to profoundly affect the biochemistry of adults as well as infants.

Love is also the most important element in a spiritual life. The gospel, in its essence, is concerned with relationships. Loving relationships with friends, family, and co-workers do much to bring us joy. Service represents our compassion for all mankind and is integrally connected with discipleship.

Many who struggle with mood disorders or addictions have unbalanced relationships or difficulty feeling emotionally intimate. They may feel unworthy to be loved for themselves due to a history of impoverished or conflict-ridden emotional connections. These developmental experiences can lead to such issues as difficulty with trust, emotional distancing or clinging behavior, selfishness or excessive pleasing behaviors, impaired empathy, control issues, or fears of abandonment.

The Lord has compassion for those who struggle forming close relationships. He understands our fears and insecurities and wants each person to develop his social abilities and find joy in rich relationships. We can seek the Savior's assistance with full confidence that He will provide ample support. One of the primary purposes of the Plan of Salvation is to teach us how to develop and maintain enriching relationships.

The intent of this chapter is to provide some basic principles of relationships that really work. The rest will be up to each individual.

So love is Lord of all the world by right.

-Edmund Spenser

Making Friends

Since relationships proceed in a fairly predictable pattern, it is quite advantageous to become more aware of this social order. I find it useful to conceptualize the changes in relationships in terms of closeness and commitment as people move from one social level to the next. In the beginning phases of relationships there is actually little to lose, and the perception of risk is generally overrated. If we have not invested much except smiles and a few conversations, our losses should be minimal.

Forming relationships has some similarities to playing poker. The relationship game involves a series of decisions about how much to bet or invest in each relationship. The chips in this case are the sharing of time, energy, and emotion. The further we go in a friendship, the more cards we obtain to help us size up the potential for a winning hand. However, the risks increase as well. The more chips we put into the pot, the greater the potential loss. Relationship poker takes strong nerves, and we might wish we never had to play!



There seem to be three basic styles in relationship poker. The *timid* individual does not like to risk at all. He is so afraid of losing that he will not bet unless the hand is a sure thing. Since others must make all the first moves, he often ends up feeling lonely. The next type of player is extremely *impulsive*. She continually bets almost all her chips when she wants to win a pot. She has a hard time dropping out even when her hand is not developing well. This individual puts considerable pressure on others to accept her. She often ends up driving people away. The last and most desirable style requires a good *balance* of risk-taking and wisdom in playing the cards of life.

Relationship Etiquette

Wolves in a pack will bare their throats to the leader as a sign of subservience. This behavior decreases the need for fighting to maintain discipline. Human beings also have a social protocol. There are certain unspoken rules for making friends that are most beneficial to understand. Protocol is an issue of politeness and respect.

Human beings have different levels of intimacy with the various people in their lives. Intimacy in this usage refers not only to emotional closeness, but also includes a complex set of expectations. For example, people tend to share their deepest feelings with relatives and close friends, but not so much with casual acquaintances. If I had a nice conversation with someone at a bus stop and he asked if he could move in with me, a polite “no” would seem appropriate. However, if my brother lost his job and made the same request, I would say “yes.” People tend to be cautious about making friends, so it is important to consider the various levels of intimacy in determining where we stand with others.

The beauty of looking at relationships on a hierarchy of intimacy is that it enables us to gain our bearings. We do not have to be lost in confusion, fear, and anxiety. Once we learn to recognize the signs, we can make good decisions by considering whether or not others are giving the social signals that indicate a desire to move to the next level. The chart below lists what I consider the seven basic levels of relationship intimacy.

The Seven Levels of Intimacy

Level 1 **Saying hello** Smile, say hi, make eye contact.

Level 2 **Getting acquainted** Occasional contact with superficial conversation.

Level 3 **Becoming friendly** Meet periodically in the context of a group situation (work, church, social club, friend's house, etc.). Both make a special effort to be animated and to make the communication enjoyable.

Level 4 **Casual friendship** Enjoy occasional social activities such as lunch, phone calls, or movies. Few demands are made and there is limited sharing of personal information.

Level 5 **Good friend** Greater range of social activities and more frequent contacts. There is more sharing and emotional support on a reciprocal basis.

Level 6 **Close friend** Involvement deepens and problems are shared. Sacrifices are made to help each other out as necessary. Contact can be quite frequent.

Level 7 **Committed relationship** Expressions indicating deep commitment to each other are made. The relationship is expected to continue indefinitely. Expectations for closeness and support are high, and a willingness to sacrifice for each other is understood.

Understanding the *Seven Levels of Intimacy* chart helps keep our expectations realistic. If Josh believes his new acquaintance, Bob, is his best friend and Bob goes hunting without even telling him, then Josh could feel painfully rejected. On the other hand, if Josh recognizes that he just speaks with Bob at work and their connection is only a level three relationship, then he should reduce his expectations. It is up to Josh to invite potential friends like Bob to activities outside of work in order to assess their real interest in moving up the ladder of friendship with him.

The threat of risk-taking in relationships can be greatly diminished once we accept the principle of selectivity. This concept suggests that each person has different tastes. Just as we do not enjoy the company of every person we know, not everyone wants to be friends with us. Once we give up the unrealistic idea that all people must like us, we can relax and try to find people we are compatible with. Popularity is not a measure of worth.

A friend may well be reckoned the masterpiece of nature.

-Ralph Waldo Emerson

There is etiquette involved in traversing the levels of intimacy as well. There is a fairly subtle system of social signals we must pick up. For instance, if we are trying to get to know someone better (level 3 goal) and they keep looking out the window and mumbling short replies, they are telling us something. The proper protocol then is to

back off and return to level 2 (just making occasional polite conversation) and wait for them to initiate more substantial communication.

Generally speaking, it is important to cover the steps in sequence. Pushing too hard, or expecting too much from others will create instant interpersonal distance. People like to feel in control of their social interactions and highly resist pressure. Skipping levels is certain to cause problems in most cases. For instance, trying to share our most intimate secret or asking to borrow \$1,000 from a casual level 4 friend would put a great deal of strain on the relationship. Reciprocity is a key ingredient at all levels. It takes two to make a friendship. We must be keenly aware of signs of encouragement, as well as signs of disinterest.

Other Tips for Making Friends

How else can we develop better friendships? We can make friends by welcoming newcomers, deepening relationships with longtime acquaintances, and being more worthy friends to others. Friendships develop in different ways during different times in our lives, but each stage of life brings with it unique opportunities to make friends. The following is what President David O. McKay had to say about friendship:

Among life's sweetest blessings is fellowship with men and women whose ideals and aspirations are high and noble. Next to a sense of kinship with God come the helpfulness, encouragement, and inspiration of friends. Friendship is a sacred possession. As air, water, and sunshine to flowers, trees, and verdure, so smiles, sympathy, and love of friends to the daily life of man! To live, laugh, love one's friends, and be loved by them is to bask in the sunshine of life.

One of the principal reasons which the Lord had for establishing his Church is to give all persons high and low, rich and poor, strong and feeble an opportunity to associate with their fellow men in an atmosphere of uplifting, religious fellowship. This may be found in priesthood quorums, auxiliaries, sacrament meetings. He who neglects these opportunities, who fails to take advantage of them, to that extent starves his own soul.¹

Dale Carnegie's classic book *How to Win Friends and Influence People* has sold over 15 million copies. He suggested that we strive to do the following behaviors: be genuinely interested in others, be a good listener, talk in terms of the other person's interests, and compliment others. The point of his book is that we can change by employing simple principles that will bring us much more success in making friends. The main emphasis is on turning the focus away from ourselves and giving others what they need. This unselfish attitude is the *magic* that truly activates relationships.²

We are interested in others, when they are interested in us.

-Publilius Syrus

Negative beliefs are the greatest obstacles toward developing new relationships. When we truly believe that others will not like us, and that making overtures of friendship will result in painful rejection, we understandably avoid getting close. It is the "flawed self" concept, the idea that there is something intrinsically wrong with us that creates the most problems. It is better to reach out to all with no set expectations and a willingness to accept whatever level of friendship others offer.

True friends enrich life. If you would have friends, be one.³

-President David O. McKay

It is important to give our friends empathy, support, unconditional love, and our time. A true friendship is a celestial relationship. One of the great friendships in the scriptures was that of Alma the Younger and Amulek. When Alma was told to return to the city of Ammonihah, an angel appeared to Amulek in a dream and told him to feed Alma. Alma taught Amulek and then they went out together to preach the gospel. Though they had much success, they suffered a great deal doing the Lord's work. They were placed in prison as well as seeing many of their recent converts put to death. Amulek lost his wealth and was deserted by his friends and family. Alma's magnanimous response was that of a true friend.

Therefore he took Amulek and came over to the land of Zarahemla, and took him to his own house, and did administer unto him in his tribulations, and strengthened him in the Lord. (Alma 15: 18)

A friend loveth at all times. (Proverbs 17:17).

Five Aspects of Strengthening Relationships

Establishing a Foundation for Positive Relationships

Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

This is the first and great commandment.

And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.
(Matthew 22:37-39)

Let us consider five aspects of establishing better relationships: friendliness, sensitivity, communication, charity, and character.



1. Friendliness

Let others know you are a social person who is interested in them. Remember others' names. Greet them and inquire about their interests, activities, and well-being. Provide compliments, caring, and encouragement. Share time with others through activities such as recreation, work, and learning. Share your thoughts and feelings in a balanced and sensitive way.

2. Sensitivity

It is important to remain aware of others' experience and comfort as well as our own effect upon them. Human beings have delicate feelings and are invariably appreciative of those who consider their well-being. Being self-centered does not play well in friendships.

Elder Neal Maxwell: Some of us have a tendency to use others, even for beneficial purposes, without their consent or in ways that are inappropriate. Remember the simple but searching self-query suggested earlier: "Whose needs am I trying to meet?" To answer honestly is to achieve some emancipating empathy.⁴

- Recognize social signals and body language.
- Checking in – asking how others are doing in a sincere accepting manner.
- Courteousness – please and thank you, find ways to express appreciation.

- Accept feedback and requests. Be cooperative.
- Place others' need and wishes on a high level.
- Be cautious about making jokes at others' expense.
- Acknowledge growth, change, and improvement in others.

If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another. (Galatians 5:25-26)

3. Communication

The words we speak have great power to either uplift or offend. We want to communicate in an effective manner so that others value our company. It is also essential to learn to diplomatically negotiate with others so our needs are considered. It is said that there are two languages—logic and feeling. It is best to first validate others by respectfully listening to what they have to say. We can also express interest, empathy, or support depending upon the topic. There will be sufficient time for our point of view afterwards.

But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. (James 3:8)

- Seek first to understand.
- Listen before speaking.
- Inspire versus criticize.
- Strive for balance in speaking, only taking your portion of the conversation.
- Be a good listener and remember to actively engage others.

Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.

And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:

And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. (Ephesians 4:29-32)

Proper Assertiveness

The ways of the fallen world are very different than the Lord's ways. In D&C 121:43 we are told to only speak sharply when inspired to do so. The main two things we can do to be assertive are 1) share our feelings, and 2) just say "no." We need to stick up for ourselves. Usually there is a positive way to do this in a relationship. However, if you feel trapped and not listened to, you may be in an abusive relationship, or at least a one-sided relationship.

Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. (Matthew 18:15)

4. Charity – Empathy and service

Elder Bruce R. McConkie: Above all the attributes of godliness and perfection, charity is the one most devoutly to be desired. Charity is more than love, far more; it is everlasting love, perfect love, the pure love of Christ which endureth forever. It is love so centered in righteousness that the possessor has no aim or desire except for the eternal welfare of his own soul and for the souls of those around him.⁵

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. (1 Corinthians 13:1-3)

Awareness and concern about others' inner experiences is known as empathy, and it is crucial to good relationships. We would be wise to follow the admonition of Aristotle, "We should behave to our friends as we would wish our friends to behave to us." However, we ought to remain sensitive to individual differences as well. The first level of empathy is recognizing that other people have emotions and reactions to events just as we do.

The next level of empathy is appreciating that others may feel different than us about the same experience. For instance, going to a basketball game works for many men, but some women might not be as excited about that opportunity. We might find a book, movie, new food, or exercise plan we think is great, but a friend or partner might not appreciate it at all. People are very different, and we must learn to respect (and even appreciate) these important differences.

To maintain relationships over time, we must always be sensitive to the feelings of those around us. When those we care about are in physical or emotional distress, we are obligated by the law of love to share in their emotions. If we struggle with this form of caring, it is possible to get more in touch by imagining how we would feel in the other person's position. *Only as we vicariously experience another's pain are we able to generate true compassion and understanding.*

These emotional sacrifices narrow the distance between ourselves and those we love. As we continue to develop true empathy, our human tendencies to be selfish or cruel decrease. With an active concern in the happiness of those around us, we will find a greater sense of intimacy and joy. Those who choose to focus mainly on themselves will remain empty and dissatisfied, whether in a relationship or not.

And it came to pass that he said unto them: Behold, here are the waters of Mormon (for thus were they called) and now, as ye are desirous to come into the fold of God, and to be called his people, and are willing to bear one another's burdens, that they may be light;

Yea, and are willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort, and to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that ye may be in, even until death, that ye may be redeemed of God, and be numbered with those of the first resurrection, that ye may have eternal life. (Mosiah 18:8-9)

Pierre Anthian is an LDS dental technician now living in Montreal, Canada. While serving meals as a volunteer at a homeless shelter in Paris, he felt the desire to help beyond meeting basic needs. He wanted to find a way to help the homeless find more dignity and self-confidence, and he contemplated how this might be done through music.

After moving to Montreal in 1995 to live near his family, he continued his path of service. Pierre began to volunteer at Accueil Bonneau, a shelter on Montreal's waterfront that provides meals to homeless men. It was here at Accueil Bonneau that he decided to place his vision of a homeless choir into motion.

The project has been a great success. The choir of 22 men meets twice per week at the shelter for practices and puts on regular performances at Montreal subway stations. The group has also traveled to Calgary, Winnipeg, Vancouver, and even Paris, France to perform.

They collect donations and split the profits among themselves. Besides offering them a way to help support themselves, being in the choir has given their lives more meaning and structure. Almost all of them now accept the social assistance they need and maintain permanent living quarters. Pierre Anthian has shown us all the power of love in action and he has truly taken to heart the words of the Savior as recorded in Matthew 25:40: “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”⁶

The Prophet Joseph Smith: It is a time-honored adage that love begets love. Let us pour forth love — show forth our kindness unto all mankind, and the Lord will reward us with everlasting increase; cast our bread upon the waters and we shall receive it after many days, increased to a hundredfold. Friendship is like Brother Turley in his blacksmith shop welding iron to iron; it unites the human family with its happy influence.⁷

The Golden Rule: Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets. (Matthew 7:12)

And He sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all. (Mark 9:35)

5. Character – Following the Savior in our moral development

We must accept that if we want meaningful relationships, there is a price to pay. That price entails a willingness to 1) sacrifice our own desires to the needs of others within reasonable limits, 2) be genuinely empathetic and allow ourselves to feel others’ emotions and pain, 3) examine our shortcomings and make appropriate changes, 4) love freely and deeply.

Character is the glue that keeps relationships and families together. Love is not always enough. There are high expectations for adults to be productive and responsible. Character cannot be put up instantly like a set in a movie, but like a diamond needs the press of time. Character implies a built-in consistency. Controlling one's temper, making sacrifices, honesty, dependability, and loyalty are always mini-victories over the impulses of the moment. These decisions can become relatively simple tasks if a person has already trained himself to do what is right and good. There are no shortcuts to maintaining positive relationships. Good habits represent the moral successes of past days.

Friends and family members have a right to depend on us to do what is right. This type of loyalty can include such things as keeping confidences, not saying negative things behind their backs, being available when needed, including them in activities, and working to maintain a friendly and positive attitude during interactions.

People often resist changing because of resentments, selfishness, or fear that others will not respond in kind. Whatever our inhibitions, the Lord expects us to change anyway. He has placed us here on earth to change our natures and He knows that all good things follow our willingness to become more like the Savior. Some of the positive qualities that help us to be effective in relationships include:

Loving, giving, kind, gentle, empathetic, respectful, responsible, communicative, loyal, honest, dependable, faithful, practical, appreciative, humble, temperate, thrifty, forgiving, and peace-loving.
--

And I give unto you a commandment, that ye shall forsake all evil and cleave unto all good, that ye shall live by every word which proceedeth forth out of the mouth of God. (D&C 98:11)

Making friends is a question of character and social skills, and not a predetermined fate. As we focus more on how to be a good friend and less on our fears, we will find splendid success on the relationship playing field. The following inventory is designed to help identify areas of strength and weakness.

Social Skills Inventory

Rate yourself in each area A, B, or C accordingly
(A—excellent B—good C—needs improvement)

- ___ 1. **Friendliness** Smile, say hello, call people by name, wish them well, perform small acts of kindness.
- ___ 2. **Recognition** Give sincere compliments and express appreciation.
- ___ 3. **Listening** Pay close attention, empathize with others' feelings, let others talk more than yourself, ask questions about their hobbies, ideas, and experiences,
- ___ 4. **Social sensitivity** Be sensitive to body language, voice inflection, and social signals. Seek permission before giving advice; validate others' ideas and opinions; and love and accept people for who they are. Be a peacemaker and soothe hurt feelings and resolve misunderstandings.
- ___ 5. **Humility** Be modest about your achievements, admit weaknesses, treat others as being as important as yourself.
- ___ 6. **Taking social chances** Engage others, ask questions, share feelings, ask them to join you in social opportunities, look for opportunities for service.
- ___ 7. **Appeal** Make continual efforts for self-improvement: Keep your appearance up, maintain good hygiene, exercise regularly and maintain good health habits, read on a variety of subjects, remain intellectually curious, have an interest or hobby you excel at, keep up on current events, be involved in your community, cultivate a positive attitude.

Action Steps

- 1. Fill out the social skills inventory.
- 2. Set one or two goals in areas in which you could make improvements.

Notes

- 1. David O. McKay, "The Blessings Of Friendship and Fellowship in the Church," *Conference Report*, April 1940, p. 116.
- 2. Dale Carnegie, *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, (New York: Pocket Books, 1990).
- 3. Llewelyn R. McKay & David O. McKay, "From Father's Talks and Writings," *Home Memories of President McKay*, <<http://www.gospelink.com>>, March, 2010.

4. Neal A. Maxwell, *Wherefore Ye Must Press Forward*, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1977), chapter 6, <<http://www.gospelink.com>>, September 2007.
5. Bruce R. McConkie, "Charity," *Mormon Doctrine*, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1977), <<http://www.gospelink.com>>, September 2007.
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Chapter 10

Relationship Riches

Principle # 10: Live by celestial principles in your family

Family life provides the greatest opportunity for joy, meaning, and emotional security. It is also the greatest test of our discipleship. Success in the family requires obedience to celestial laws as well as the faith and humility to allow the Savior to help us perfect our personalities. The ultimate goal is to create a home where hearts are knit in love and the Spirit of the Lord can dwell.

And Zion cannot be built up unless it is by the principles of the law of the celestial kingdom; otherwise I cannot receive her unto myself. (D&C 105: 5)

A major change in perspective is required in order to strengthen most marriages. There is only one way to ensure greater success in one's marriage and family—doing things the Lord's way. The following is an excerpt from the Proclamation on the Family:

Happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. Successful marriages and families are established and maintained on principles of faith, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, respect, love, compassion, work, and wholesome recreational activities. By divine design, fathers are to preside over their families in love and righteousness and are responsible to provide the necessities of life and protection for their families. Mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children. In these sacred responsibilities, fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal partners.¹

Marriage is Governed by Celestial Law

Marriage is a challenging enterprise for the best of people. Far too many marriages are in trouble, even among the more faithful. One way to conceptualize this difficulty is to recognize that we too often turn to worldly methods to handle a celestial problem. Marriage is a celestial institution and can only be managed well by employing celestial principles. We can accept the Savior as the presiding figure in the home by showing a willingness to try and live by all correct principles. A partial list of principles that pertain particularly to marriage is given below.

Celestial Marital Principles

Unity and partnership	Balance in giving
Spending quality time together	Helping out without being asked
Being responsible	Showing kindness and respect
Observing agency - the right to choose	Providing love and affection
Continuing the courtship	Healthy sexual life
Willingness to make sacrifices	Valuing your mate's needs and views
Honesty	Loyalty
Accountability	Providing emotional support
Gratitude- giving thanks	Humility
Order and cleanliness	Cooperation
Being positive, giving compliments	Personal time for recreation
Working on self-improvement	Avoiding harmful activities

And they who are not sanctified through the law which I have given unto you, even the law of Christ, must inherit another kingdom, even that of a terrestrial kingdom, or that of a telestial kingdom.

For he who is not able to abide the law of a celestial kingdom cannot abide a celestial glory. (D&C 88: 21-22)

Marriage is a covenant relationship

Sacred obligations are made in the temple that bind us to correct conduct in our families. Behavior must be based upon God's standards rather than dependent upon the actions of a spouse. Ideally, our relationship with the Savior is the cornerstone of our marriage and He is viewed as presiding over the family.

And as pertaining to the new and everlasting covenant, it was instituted for the fulness of my glory; and he that receiveth a fulness thereof must and shall abide the law, or he shall be damned, saith the Lord God. (D&C 132:6.)

President Harold B. Lee gave the following counsel:

If young people would resolve from the moment of their marriage, that from that time forth they would resolve and do everything in their power to please each other in things that are right, even to the sacrifice of their own pleasures, their own appetites, their own desires, the problem of adjustment in married life would take care of itself, and their home would indeed be a happy home. Great love is built on great sacrifice, and that home where the principle of sacrifice for the welfare of each other is daily expressed is that home where there is a great love.²

Priesthood leadership and oneness

President Marion G. Romney: A husband and wife should be one in harmony, respect, and mutual consideration. Neither should plan or follow an independent course of action. They should consult, pray, and decide together. Remember that neither the wife nor the husband is the slave of the other. Husbands and wives are equal partners.³

The husband is the assigned head of the home. Each priesthood holder has the responsibility to teach his family the joy of living by celestial principles. He has agreed to obey every word out of the mouth of God (D&C 84:44) and his wife is to follow him in righteousness. Through her gospel study and inspiration, she can know what is good and true, as well as offer valuable counsel.

Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord. (Colossians 3:18)

The priesthood leads through righteousness and persuasion, and not by force. The wife is not expected to blindly obey the husband, but instead shares power as the queen of the family. The priesthood holder points out general gospel areas (respect, work, etc.) for the family to make improvements in. Maintaining power is never the goal. Naturally, at times the wife will be the one to suggest a gospel direction. The couple then uses a team approach to determine the specifics of implementing change. No final decision should be made where strong opposing views exist. Decisions need to be *unanimous*. Therefore, both the wife and husband have veto power!

When there are disagreements, the couple can pray, ponder, and search the scriptures and other sources to find what principles can guide them. Principles are fundamental rules or concepts upon which actions and other ideas can be based. Individual feelings need to be placed aside as the couple seeks truth and inspiration. The best decisions will be made when the couple is united. The husband and wife must strive to be one as led by the Spirit of the Lord.

And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: (John 17:22)

And every decision made by either of these quorums must be by the unanimous voice of the same; that is, every member in each quorum must be agreed to its decisions, in order to make their decisions of the same power or validity one with the other. (D&C 107:27)

Strengthening the Marital Relationship

The eternal rewards for obedience to our temple covenants are greater than we can imagine. The blessings we can enjoy in this life are wonderful as well. However, all too often individuals allow selfishness, resentments, and lack of faith to get in the way of their fully keeping the promises they have made to the Lord. Contention and/or emotional withdrawal are the inevitable result, and the strength of the marriage will be weakened.

There is a positive approach that can be taken to end marital stalemate. The couple can agree to make a total commitment to live by celestial standards. Three very important areas to focus on would be love, responsibility, and respect. Showing greater love would include such things as expressing love and affection, spending time together, and making those small and large sacrifices that help our mate know he or she is first in our heart. The area of responsibility takes in major roles such as wage earner, managing the home, and parenting; but also encompasses related areas such as financial management and church activity. Respect includes being sensitive and honoring our mate's feelings. The goal is to concentrate on behaving as the Lord would have us do, allowing Jesus Christ his proper place as the superintendent of the family unit.

Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband. (Ephesians 5:33)

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it. (Ephesians 5:25)

The most important ingredient in building a celestial marriage is changing one's heart. The key to a happy marriage generally lies in changing ourselves, not our mate. Consistent adherence to the highest standards of attitude, emotion, and behavior can only be made possible by submission to the Lord's perfect plan of repentance and growth.

Elder Robert E. Wells: As we invite the Lord to soften our hearts toward one another and as we sincerely repent of our weaknesses, he will change our hearts. He will turn us from our selfish, petty, worldly attitudes and fill us with pure, Christlike love.⁴

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. (Galatians 5:22-23)

This mental renewal of covenants with the Lord and each other helps both spouses start at the same time to make important changes. Personal motivation and harmony increase, and a positive cycle begins. As long as the couple continues to obey higher laws, their marriage will enjoy the wonderful blessings of a celestial spirit.

President Ezra Taft Benson: Marriage, designed to be an eternal covenant, is the most glorious and most exalting principle ordained for the mature development of man. It has the greatest capacity to develop to the fullest the positive virtues of life—unselfishness,

tenderness, compassion, love, devotion, integrity, honesty, service, purity, nobility, and a host of others. No ordinance is of more importance and none more sacred and more necessary to the eternal joy of man.⁵

Keeping the love alive

It is ever so important to continue the courtship after being married. Spending quality time together and doing special things for each other will fan the flames of love and keep the marriage vibrant. A weekly date, couple's prayer and scripture study, and regular temple attendance all help increase the strength of the marriage. Shared recreational activities can also be very positive. It can be very helpful to understand the love language of your mate. That is, what are the most meaningful expressions of love for him or her? Five main ways to show love include gifts, words (verbal or written), physical touch, romantic activities, and acts of service. We must not assume our partner has the same preferences as us, but should discover his or her true favorites.

Physical intimacy is a wonderful part of married life. This special love is ordained by God to both create life and to bond couples together. It is important that the sexual relationship be approached with love and sensitivity. Too many individuals are overly focused on what they want versus having a mutual goal of beautiful and spiritual lovemaking. Couples should be careful to not sacrifice the holiness of their union and let carnal excitement dominate. Love should always be the presiding force.

Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity, which he hath given thee under the sun. (Ecclesiastes 9:9)

The desire to maintain a celestial spirit in the home is a major motivation for continuing a high rate of positive behaviors. Another reason for appreciating this approach is that it likely advocates cooperation in those specific areas most important to you. Perfect compliance with celestial behavior is not required, only an open and willing attitude regarding change. It is more possible to be patient (and even long-suffering) if one sees that his or her mate is making a sincere effort to progress. I firmly believe that couples who try the Lord's way for even a few weeks will never want to return to their previous patterns.

And it came to pass that there was no contention in the land, because of the love of God which did dwell in the hearts of the people.

And there were no envyings, nor strifes, nor tumults, nor whoredoms, nor lyings, nor murders, nor any manner of lasciviousness; and surely there could not be a happier people among all the people who had been created by the hand of God. (4Nephi 1:15-16)

Agency

Since we are all imperfect, our weaknesses and shortcomings can affect our spouse's sense of happiness and eternal direction. It is human nature to be able to see the faults in others better than we can see our own deficiencies. Therefore, the most common problem in marriage is to attempt to fix the marriage by *coercing* our mate to change. We are usually quite sure that our spouse is to blame for the problems, and if he or she would just change, things would be fine. Typical negative methods of influence include shame, guilt, nagging, shouting, arguing, manipulation, intimidation, withdrawal, verbal abuse, and even physical force.

These efforts to control one's mate through coercion almost always cause resentment and bring about only small changes at a great price. Regardless of our thoughts and feelings on any specific issue, each partner must be allowed to freely choose to do the right thing. Agency is the most important of all the celestial principles and violation of this law results in serious consequences. Contention must be completely done away with or the marriage cannot enjoy the full blessings of the Spirit of the Lord.

Nevertheless, my servants sinned a very grievous sin; and contentions arose in the school of the prophets; which was very grievous unto me, saith your Lord; therefore I sent them forth to be chastened. (D&C 95:10)

No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned. (D&C 121:41)

President Gordon B. Hinckley: I have long felt that happiness in marriage is not so much a matter of romance as it is an anxious concern for the comfort and well-being of one's companion. That involves a willingness to overlook weaknesses and mistakes.

Unfortunately, some women want to remake their husbands after their own design. Some husbands regard it as their prerogative to compel their wife to fit their standards of what they think to be the ideal. It never works. It only leads to contention, misunderstanding, and sorrow.⁶

Neither partner will find lasting marital satisfaction if either one chooses to dominate the other. Agency is a precious God-given liberty over which the battle of heaven was fought. Using control and taking away the freedom to choose was Satan's plan, and such tactics grieve the soul of man. Regardless of our thoughts and feelings about any specific issue, each partner must be allowed to willingly choose to do the right thing in the marriage.

Managing anger

Some people believe that they cannot control their tempers. To begin to better manage one's anger requires two simple steps. First, adopt the personal belief that displays of anger are *never* acceptable or effective except when "moved upon by the Holy Ghost" as we are told in Doctrine and Covenants 121:43. Having accepted this philosophy, take full responsibility for your anger by avoiding blaming others or rationalizing inappropriate behavior. Secondly, when not in good control, take a time-out and *reason* with yourself until you are calm. Use the Anger Management Card provided in chapter 5. Pray for assistance in this great task of taming your passions. Seek the peace and counsel of the Spirit of the Lord when aroused.

Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercy perceived, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;

And let the peace of God rule in your hearts. (Colossians 3:12,15)

Any attempt to impose your will on another is an act of violence.

-Mohandas Gandhi

Handling serious sin

Unfortunately, many families experience behaviors that threaten family stability. Crime, alcohol dependence, illegal drug use, addiction to pornography, infidelity, and emotional, physical, or sexual abuse are examples of behaviors that

cannot be tolerated long-term without very serious consequences to individuals in the family. It should be recognized that many of these activities are illegal, and all are so serious that the bishop should be involved when possible.

The non-offending spouse has a responsibility to set limits for the protection of family members. It is *not* taking away agency to give individuals necessary choices. To be too kind and soft when your partner makes no effort to change is to condone serious sin and limit the family's opportunities for happiness and personal growth. The message should be as follows: "Get help and demonstrate a willingness to change, or I will have to leave you some day." Certainly marriage vows, and especially temple covenants, should be honored, and individuals deserve a chance to change. However, if the offending party does not take the limits seriously, a temporary separation is sometimes necessary to drive the message home that immoral and dangerous behavior will not be tolerated. Reconciliation can then be considered if the individual shows that he is taking responsibility for his behavior and is invested in treatment. Counselors and ecclesiastical leaders can help by providing support and advice. The Lord's counsel should always be sought as well, for only He fully knows the hearts of men and women.

Addictions and serious behavior problems are often related in part to childhood abuse or deprivation. Family conflict can also impact one's ability to communicate effectively or form close attachments with others. If we look with compassion upon others, we will recognize that they did not knowingly choose their limitations and problems. Mercy is represented by being patient and long-suffering while one's mate works out his or her issues. Justice is represented by a firm attitude that family members should not have to continue to suffer because one person refuses to grow. If there is little cooperation over a lengthy period of time, divorce may become the only viable alternative.

Dealing with a spouse's problems can be a very sore trial. However, despite the pain and sorrow, there are rich opportunities for growth. Faith can be enhanced as the Savior embraces the broken-hearted with his love and support. Coping skills and great patience and compassion can be developed as individuals support their mates in their recovery. And finally, the Lord will provide opportunities for service for those who have acquired wisdom forged in their own furnace of affliction. Helping others with similar struggles instills joy and purpose, and can be a great balm for emotional wounds.

Marital Paradigm Change

If couples were asked to describe the reasons for their marital conflict, they would usually say they are defending their rights or trying to get their legitimate needs met. They would describe their partner as inflexible and stuck in particular views and habits. Therefore, in their thoughts and actions, they view their partner as "the problem" and focus almost all their efforts on getting him or her to change.

Susan Johnson is one of the founders of emotionally focused therapy (EFT) and an expert on marital therapy. Her research has caused her to conclude that conflict in marriage is due in large part to the couple's distress about feeling emotionally distant from each other. She believes that the need to experience safety, security, and connectedness in relationships (attachment) is one of the strongest and most basic of human needs.

We know that distressed couples settle into rigid interaction patterns. But it is only through the lens of attachment that we come to understand what makes such patterns of behavior so devastating. The answer is, they block emotional engagement; they stand in the way of contact and exacerbate attachment fears. As partners hurl anger and contempt at each other or withdraw, emotional engagement becomes more and more difficult. Patterns of attack—defend or attack—withdraw are highly corrosive to a relationship because they preclude a safe way for a couple to emotionally engage each other and create a secure bond.

What couples are really fighting about is rarely the issue they seem to be fighting about—the chores, the kids. It is always about separateness and connectedness, safety and trust, the risk of letting someone in to see the exposed, vulnerable self.⁷

I believe most couples are very tired of conflict, emotional distance, and failed attempts to communicate. In order to break up these long-standing maladaptive patterns of marital interaction, I would propose a radical change. First we must recognize that it is the emotional brain, the heart, that becomes upset and chooses poor strategies to communicate and get its needs met. The most effective way to get the heart to change is to provide it with powerful new experiences. Accepting the few guidelines listed below can provide a framework for discussion that brings entirely different results. All the couple needs to do is experiment! Because this more spiritual way to resolve differences is far more productive, they will soon become converted.

1. Covenant-based marriage

Agree to accept the Savior as the presiding authority in the home and to live by all correct principles. Following the Savior does not mean becoming perfect overnight. It means making an honest effort to be open-minded and to take steps in the right direction. Trusting that your mate will follow the Savior simplifies communication and reduces conflict.

2. Vulnerability

Give up debating, coercion, and withdrawal and display a readiness to use only positive means to motivate your mate to change. Be compassionate toward your partner needs and express a personal willingness to make desired changes. Additionally, be open about your own desires and feelings. ***Focus primarily on empathy, vulnerability, and support.***

3. A willing heart

Follow the Savior by doing those things for your mate that the Lord would have you do. Do not keep score or allow past resentments to slow you down. Create a positive cycle by better meeting your partner's needs. Demonstrate a real commitment to progress by making some significant behavioral changes. Gaining knowledge and developing effective self-talk can help surmount barriers that block progress in challenging areas. Where appropriate write out detailed plans for personal change. Use only encouragement and reinforcement if discussing your mate's change process.

Just Say No

Some might ask a very important question. "What should I do if I make all these changes and my mate does not reciprocate?" Since many people like the idea of getting a "free ride," this can certainly happen. It is vital to recognize that serious imbalances in giving cannot be sustained over time. The partner who is sacrificing the most will inevitably become resentful and love will diminish in that union. Nevertheless, this type of situation provides an excellent opportunity for some meaningful communication. The person who has been making all the changes is standing on higher ground and has acquired significant "positive power." He or she can ask the spouse who is holding back some important reality-based questions, "Don't you want

to have a good marriage? Both partners have to give to make things work. What is holding you back?"

If discussing the issue does not result in a change of heart, the more progressive spouse is forced into taking a stronger position. He or she must now inform the mate that since there has been little willingness for reciprocity or sacrifice, much of the desired behavior must now be pulled back immediately. This can be done in a soft, regretful way with an invitation to resume a more positive direction at any point. If this tough love approach does not work after a reasonable amount of time, professional counseling should be considered for the resistant spouse so that faulty attitudes or hidden blocks can be worked on.

Communication

Do you know what people argue the most about in relationships? There is much power for good contained in understanding the answer to this one simple question. The thing people argue about the most with their partners is *who is right*. Controversy arises over attempting to determine whose perception of the problem is correct.

The most natural thing to do in an argument is to try harder to get our own point across. Unfortunately, this generally guarantees that we will neither be heard nor understood. Most of us have had enough frustrating experiences to recognize instantly that this is the sad truth. The reality of interpersonal relations is that we will have little success until we learn to talk with each other, and not at each other. *The most powerful form of communication is good listening.*

A marital researcher named John Gottman found that he and his colleagues could predict in 93 percent of cases which couples would be divorced within 14 years. They did this by watching videos of the couple trying to solve marital problems and looking for certain communication errors.⁸ We need to first listen and show respect for the other person's point of view before they will feel inclined to hear us out. Once there is mutual understanding, it is a relatively simple step to problem-solve and come up with workable solutions for concerns.

President Ezra Taft Benson: Restraint and self-control must be ruling principles in the marital relationship. Couples must learn to bridle their tongues as well as their passions.⁹

President Gordon B. Hinckley: I hear so many complaints from men and women that they cannot communicate with each other. They must have communicated with each other when they were courting. Can they not continue to speak together after marriage? Can they not discuss with one another in an open and frank and candid and happy way their interests, their problems, their challenges, their desires?

But let that talk be quiet, for quiet talk is the language of love. It is the language of peace. It is the language of God. The voice of heaven is a still small voice. The voice of peace is a quiet voice.¹⁰

A Formula for Resolving Differences

1. Sharing portion

Practicing good listening skills is the Mt. Everest of self-control and wisdom. There is probably no relationship skill that requires more attention and determination. It is amazingly hard to hold one's tongue when you think the truth is not being well

represented. However, the rewards of this kind of patience and love are incalculable. If both partners maintain a diplomatic respect and try very hard to understand, a wonderful middle ground will eventually be uncovered.

The following method entitled *Listening Skills* is a straightforward formula to improve communication. As you practice, you will eventually become more adept at going through the four steps. The rules must be strictly observed. Any interrupting or attempting to impose your point of view before your turn will severely compromise the effectiveness of the communication. However, if patience, respect, and caring prevail, resolving problems becomes markedly more simple.

One person shares his or her feelings about the problems with a 3 minute limit on sharing. The other person practices listening skills. Then they switch roles. Make sure to follow the step-by-step format as outlined below.

Listening Skills

1. Find common ground - Search for something that has been said that you can agree with, or else paraphrase (restate in your own words) what was said in a soft, clarifying manner.

2. Show concern - Reflect back the other's emotions. *You must feel...* (Use emotion words such as sad, hurt, frustrated, anxious, disappointed, angry, discounted, overwhelmed, hesitant, lonely, rejected, or discouraged.)

3. Seek to understand - Ask questions. Sincerely try to find out what your partner *thinks, feels, and wants*. Feed back the information you have acquired to make sure you are correct.

4. Provide support - Tell how you would like to help.

Avoid attacking, defensiveness, or making your own points - Wait until it is your turn. It is essential that your partner feel thoroughly understood before you add your concerns.

He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him. (Proverbs 18:13)

A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger. (Proverbs 15:1)

Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised is wisdom. (Proverbs 13:10)

2. Problem-solving portion

In this segment of communication, it is essential for the couple to act as a team, working together to identify general principles and guidelines for both to follow. This is an exercise in logical thought, and emotions and biases need to be left out of the discussion. It is generally a fantasy to believe one can convince their mate to change unilaterally. The object is to establish a framework of behavior guidelines under which each feels he or she can thrive. Rather than each person striving for control or for needs to be met, security is found within covenant laws.

Discussion rules

- No strong emotions
- No debating
- No manipulation or slanting the discussion toward one's objectives
- No labels or disrespect

- Use a time-out strategy to cool down if necessary

Guidelines

- Pray for assistance learning Heavenly Father's principles.
- What do the scriptures or General Authorities have to say about this subject?
- How do most people handle this kind of problem?
- What seems right and reasonable?
- Are there any suggestions from professionals in books or other media?
- What celestial principles are involved in this issue?
- What would Jesus do?

3. Resolution phase

In this segment, the couple works with the principles that have just been established. On more important matters, the couple can pray for a confirmation from the Holy Spirit on decisions. Generally, a *quid pro quo* agreement (If you will do this, I will do that) or some kind of compromise can easily be reached. In this covenant approach to marriage, each person agrees to respect and follow all correct principles. Therefore, once an agreement has been established, each continues to make a good effort to live by those guidelines.

Families – The Building Blocks of Zion

On December 28, 1993, a drama that would capture the hearts of the nation was about to unfold. Jim and Jennifer Stolpa and their five-month-old baby Clayton set out from Paso Robles, California to attend the funeral of Jim's maternal grandmother in Pocatello, Idaho. Severe winter snowstorms had been raging in Northern California, and Jim's mother, already in Idaho, urged the couple not to make the trip. But the two young people, only 20 and 21 years old, ignored her warning and impulsively decided to forge ahead with their plans. As Interstate 80 was closed, they took a detour onto a country road near the Nevada border trying to connect with Route 140.

The snow continued to fall heavily until finally the truck could go no further through the ocean of white. The Stolpas were stranded in a remote area with no homes nearby and no other vehicles to be seen. They stayed in the truck with nighttime temperatures as low as zero degrees. The snow continued to fall for three days and finally stopped on January 3rd. Having given up hope of someone finding them, they decided they would have to walk out to Route 140, an estimated 20 miles away. Wearing only tennis shoes, the Stolpas walked all that day without ever seeing any signs of the road. They found shelter for the night and then set out again, dragging little Clayton behind them in a makeshift sled. However, before they were able to reach their goal, Jennifer found herself overcome with fatigue and totally unable to go on. Fear struck the center of their souls as they realized that Jim would have to leave Jennifer and the baby and go for help by himself.

They found a small cave-like indentation in the rocks for Jennifer and the baby to shelter in, and they said their tender goodbyes. Jim walked the 14 miles back to the truck and then traveled all through the next day looking for help. All he could think of was his wife and baby alone in the cave. He knew that if he did not make it, they would not likely survive. They were his motivation as he walked on in the cold, mile after mile, with very little food and only snow for water. Finally, on the third day of

Jim's trek, the miracle he was seeking occurred. The Washoe County Roads supervisor happened to drive by and was hailed by the frozen and exhausted Jim.

They quickly drove off to find his family and were thankfully able to locate Jennifer by the blue sweatshirt she had tied to a bush to mark the location of the cave. Jim had walked over 50 miles through the snow, an incredible ordeal under some of the most difficult circumstances imaginable.

The Stolpas' survival under such circumstances was remarkable. Both had to have parts of their frostbitten feet amputated, but they have been able to walk again with prosthetics. Baby Clayton suffered only a case of diaper rash.

This is a story about family. Only Jim's love and devotion to his wife and son could have motivated him to push on to complete his rescue mission. Jennifer, alone in the dark cave, was sustained by her faith that her husband would do all in his power to save them. This wonderful story powerfully reminds us of something we already know, "Families are everything."¹¹

The word "Utopia" apparently comes from Greek words meaning no place or good place (depending upon how you spell it in Greek). Utopia was a fictional island off the Atlantic coast in the book *Utopia* written by Sir Thomas More. The main character, Raphael Hythloday, recounts his experiences in Utopia and explains the island's perfect social, legal, and political system. Since the 1500s, when the book was written, the name has come to mean an ideal society.¹² The Prophet Joseph Smith was inspired to try to create an ideal society called Zion. However, he knew that Zion could not be created merely by forming new political or economic structures. He recognized that forming this unique society would require the changing of men's souls.

Joseph Smith and the prophets of the restored church who followed him also knew that the individual building blocks of Zion would be family units. Our job as parents is to create our own mini-Zion society where the inhabitants live by celestial principles. After all, this life is a preparation for the next world, and all who wish to live in the celestial kingdom need to follow God's laws.

Therefore, verily, thus saith the Lord, let Zion rejoice, for this is Zion—THE PURE IN HEART; therefore, let Zion rejoice, while all the wicked shall mourn. (D&C 97:21)

President Gordon B. Hinckley: The family is a creation of the Almighty. It represents the most sacred of all relationships. It represents the most serious of all undertakings. It is the fundamental organization of society. Through the revelations of God to His Prophet came the doctrine and authority under which families are sealed together not only for this life but for all eternity.¹³

Teaching Celestial Principles

1. Modeling

There is no greater teacher than example. Our children not only copy our behavior, but even our personalities and coping skills. People often describe this aspect of parenting as a little frightening because they recognize it as an awesome responsibility. Paul's exhortation to Timothy applies very well to young parents who as role models form the blueprint for their children's souls.

Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. (I Timothy 4:12)

After Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans in 2005, the entire nation spent several days painfully viewing the bogged down relief efforts on television. Gary MacLaughlin of Santa Cruz, California must have grown tired of seeing people suffering without receiving adequate assistance. Despite living a good distance away, he decided to do something about the problem. He flew to Nashville, Tenn., where he bought a diesel-powered 1990 yellow school bus for \$2,000. He charged \$1,500 worth of water, diapers, granola bars and peanut butter crackers on his credit card, teamed up with several people from the Plenty organization, and set out for New Orleans. By Sunday evening (four days after the levees broke), he was driving loads of evacuees from the New Orleans Airport to a rescue shelter in Covington, Louisiana. Gary MacLaughlin certainly taught his family and many other people something about charity that week.¹⁴ Parents must undergo the “mighty change of heart” emphasized in the scriptures if they are to be shining examples to their children.

Man's actions are the picture book of his creeds.

-Ralph Waldo Emerson

2. Teach the Word of God

And again, inasmuch as parents have children in Zion, or in any of her stakes which are organized, that teach them not to understand the doctrine of repentance, faith in Christ the Son of the living God, and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the hands, when eight years old, the sin be upon the heads of the parents. (D&C 68:25)

Instruct your children in the word of God often. Daily scripture study, lessons during Family Home Evening, church attendance, and daily prayers will do much to instill your children with gospel knowledge. However, knowledge of gospel concepts is not enough. Children learn more from doing than hearing. As the Apostle James said, “Faith without works is dead.” (James 2:20)

The father of the home has a special responsibility as a priesthood holder to teach and inspire his family to build their Zion society. All things should be done with the support of his wife as she functions as his helpmeet and counselor. President Spencer W. Kimball taught that fathers “must preside as Jesus Christ presides over his Church—in love, in service, in tenderness, and in example.”¹⁵ President Hinckley as First Counselor in the First Presidency declared to fathers:

Yours is the basic and inescapable responsibility to stand as the head of the family. That does not carry with it any implication of dictatorship or unrighteous dominion. It carries with it a mandate that fathers provide for the needs of their families. Those needs are more than food, clothing, and shelter. Those needs include righteous direction and the teaching, by example as well as precept, of basic principles of honesty, integrity, service, respect for the rights of others, and an understanding that we are accountable for that which we do in this life, not only to one another but also to the God of heaven, who is our Eternal Father.¹⁶

The parents, united as one, can suggest to their family that they have the wonderful opportunity to more fully practice gospel living in the way the Lord intended. Explain that the idea is to create a heavenly atmosphere in the family and that success in this great undertaking will require the cooperation of all. Ask for each person’s commitment to this magnificent family adventure of living by celestial law. Promise the family members that dedication to this goal will produce greater

happiness and personal growth. Help them to understand that the presence of the Savior will be felt, that He loves them, and that He will guide the family to success.

Elder Boyd K. Packer: The center core of the Church is not the stake [center]; it is not the chapel... The most sacred place on earth may not be the temple, necessarily. The chapel, the stake [center], and the temple are sacred as they contribute to the building of the most sacred institution in the Church—the home—and to the blessing of the most sacred relationships in the Church, the family¹⁷

3. Create a Principle-Based Environment

Children can gain a strong testimony of the strength of gospel living as the parents provide a vision of celestial life through their daily family experience. Their motivation and spirituality can be enhanced as they correctly recognize that Jesus Christ presides over the family. Then they will see that their parents are loving counselors responding to the divine mandate to help them learn celestial laws. These divine principles should be the common language of the home. As they are repeatedly applied to family life, your children will take the concepts into their hearts. Since consistency is a difficult item for most parents, I would suggest putting your plans down in writing as much as possible.

Like a beautiful garden, children need continual care and nurturance, or they will grow wild. It is common for parents to disagree on how to discipline their children because of different backgrounds and personalities. However, parents intent on working together to establish their own family Zion society will avoid some of these conflicts. This is because parents can consistently ask a very unifying question, “How can we teach our children this principle?” A partial list of celestial principles is provided below. We can accept the Savior as the presiding figure in the home by showing a willingness to try and live by all correct principles. Love and harmony come from seeking effective solutions together.

Love	Agency	Forgiveness	Empathy/kindness
Responsibility	Honesty	Work	Accountability/consequences
Faith	Repentance	Wisdom	Sensitivity/respect
Chastity	Temperance	Self-reliance	Emotional management
Justice	Mercy	Courage	Loyalty
Service	Gratitude	Self-discipline	Positive communication
Worth	Humility	Peace	Obedience
Creativity	Cooperation	Recreation	Knowledge/learning
Beauty	Physical health	Community	Order/cleanliness

And ye will not suffer your children that they go hungry, or naked; neither will ye suffer that they transgress the laws of God, and fight and quarrel one with another, and serve the devil, who is the master of sin, or who is the evil spirit which hath been spoken of by our fathers, he being an enemy to all righteousness. (Mosiah 4:14)

President Thomas S. Monson: If we really try, our home can be a bit of heaven here on earth. The thoughts we think, the deeds we do, the lives we live influence not only the success of our earthly journey; they mark the way to our eternal goals.¹⁸

Richard and Linda Eyre are the creators of a program called *Values Parenting*. Their book *Teaching Your Children Values* was the first parenting book in fifty years to be number one on the New York Times best-seller list.¹⁹ Their website *Valuesparenting.com* provides numerous examples of how to teach celestial principles

to children. There are lessons on many of the topics listed above. Most of their lessons include basic instruction, stories, metaphors, games, and ways to practice the principles. One can access their website for free and look at some of the sample lessons. Although there are many books on parenting, I singled out the Eyres because I think they utilize an excellent approach for teaching true principles to children. The Church also has many materials available, including the various Family Home Evening manuals.

The secret, of course, is not just teaching these principles in a verbal or didactic manner, but of incorporating them into daily life so that your children gain an intimate working knowledge. Training equals teaching, understanding, practice, feedback, and repetition. It is very important for children to understand that they are learning Heavenly Father's ways, and not only submitting to the authority of their parents. *Discipline thus becomes the natural application of principles versus the exercise of the parents' will.*

It is important to recognize that everything we do teaches our children something. They learn more from what we do than what we say. Hugs, attention, and encouragement teach children they are loved and valued. Abuse teaches children to disrespect others, mistrust authority figures, and to believe that they are flawed and bad. Spoiling children teaches them that their needs are more important than others. Autocratic controlling parents teach children that their feelings do not count. Parents who read good books teach their children that knowledge is important and that there is joy in learning. The ways we influence our children are indeed endless.

President Gordon B. Hinckley: Never forget that these little ones are the sons and daughters of God and that yours is a custodial relationship to them, that He was a parent before you were parents and that He has not relinquished His parental rights or interest in these His little ones. Now, love them, take care of them. Fathers, control your tempers, now and in all the years to come. Mothers, control your voices; keep them down. Rear your children in love, in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Take care of your little ones. Welcome them into your homes, and nurture and love them with all of your hearts.²⁰

And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. (Ephesians 6:4)

Children will be willing to discuss the principles of the home when it affects them personally. They often want to question and challenge expectations for chores and schoolwork, or complain about their siblings' behavior. This expected family tension provides fertile ground for discussions about rules and principles. It is important to frequently use a Socratic dialogue. What do you think...? What would happen if there were no rules, no cooperation, etc...? What do you think a solution might be...? What do the scriptures or the General Authorities have to say on this subject? Of course, all these types of discussions need to be age appropriate. Very small children will usually accept simple explanations without having a need for discussion.

I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth. (3 John 1:4)

Children are like moldable clay that gets progressively drier and harder to work with over time. Young people require more than positives; they also need to develop self-control. There is an essential need for limits and ample doses of vitamin N (no).

Every time a child has to delay gratification or follow a rule, his immature spirit is learning patience and cooperation. Every time he shares or defers to others' needs, he is learning empathy and deepening the understanding that he is not the center of the universe. Parents are wise to withdraw blessings when there are infractions in order to simulate consequences that people may receive from society. The small bruises children receive from running into family boundaries are preferable to the more serious consequences that the world delivers to those who do not heed the rules of society.

President Brigham Young: Bring up your children in the love and fear of the Lord; study their dispositions and their temperaments, and deal with them accordingly, never allowing yourself to correct them in the heat of passion; teach them to love you rather than to fear you.²¹

Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.
(Proverbs 22:6)

If parents gain a vision of motivating and teaching their children about celestial rules and place Jesus Christ in his proper place as the presiding authority in the home, they will reap eternal benefits. The time is short. Children are most malleable between the ages of birth to 4. The latency ages of 5 to 11 are also a great opportunity. Teenagers can still learn, but it is certainly much more work if you start their training late. I believe that in little children the emotional system of the brain is predominant and the influence from the ego (as associated with the still developing physical mind) is still fairly small. Therefore, changes that occur with small children tend to be fixed changes that will not alter very much the rest of their lives. The patterns in personality, beliefs, and behavior that become established in the early years can be for both good and bad. Is there any wonder why the prophets have counseled mothers to stay home to raise their children? Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said this:

As a mother guided by the Lord, you weave a fabric of character in your children from threads of truth through careful instruction and worthy example. You imbue the traits of honesty, faith in God, duty, respect for others, kindness, self-confidence, and the desire to contribute, to learn, and to give in your trusting children's minds and hearts. No day-care center can do that. It is your sacred right and privilege.²²

Wherefore, be not weary in well-doing, for ye are laying the foundation of a great work. And out of small things proceedeth that which is great. (D&C 64:33)

Children need to not only be verbally taught, but also to learn by *experiencing* love, work, sharing, play, respect, self-control, discipline, appropriate expression of emotions, and positive communication at young ages. It is through practice that these concepts and skills are written in their hearts and become part of their personalities. The challenge for parents is to create a family Zion atmosphere where these types of things routinely occur. If that mighty miracle can be accomplished, children will grow to naturally do that which is good, and family life will be richly rewarding.

And it came to pass that there was no contention in the land, because of the love of God which did dwell in the hearts of the people.

And there were no envyings, nor strifes, nor tumults, nor whoredoms, nor lyings, nor murders, nor any manner of lasciviousness; and surely there could not be a happier people among all the people who had been created by the hand of God. (4 Nephi 1:15-16)

I recognize that I have not said much about my own family and the raising of our children. I can probably summarize by saying my wife and I did a lot of things right, but plenty of things wrong as well. I, for one, look back with some regret because I did not fully understand the role of the priesthood in inspiring and teaching the family to live by celestial law. We did have daily family prayer and scripture study, and also held regular Family Home Evenings. I now see those activities as a foundation for righteous living, but not the complete package. We have had some problems and trials along the way as many families have. My wife and I wonder if some things might have turned out differently had we done a better job in our stewardship. However, in the Lord's wonderful way, trials can teach us many important things. I know I could not have adequately written this chapter had I not struggled through my own family challenges. I firmly believe that by accepting Jesus Christ as the presiding authority in the home and seeking to live by celestial standards, we can experience miracles in our family life. I know because I have seen it happen.

And now, my sons, remember, remember that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation; that when the devil shall send forth his mighty winds, yea, his shafts in the whirlwind, yea, when all his hail and his mighty storm shall beat upon you, it shall have no power over you to drag you down to the gulf of misery and endless wo, because of the rock upon which ye are built, which is a sure foundation, a foundation whereon if men build they cannot fall. (Helaman 5:12)

In Summary

Social relations are an integral part of full gospel living. Friendships are optimally developed and maintained as we emulate the Savior by focusing on being loving and sensitive with a primary goal of brightening others' lives. We will develop many profitable associations as we serve others while respecting their agency to choose the level of friendship they desire. Marriage is a celestial institution and can be best managed by employing celestial principles. Greater motivation for change occurs when the couple accepts that the Lord's way provides the perfect pattern for a happy marriage. Couples can also appreciate that attempts to circumvent these principles can only result in misery and frustration. Likewise, parents will be most successful in rearing their children when they create a home environment where the children can experience, discuss, understand, and apply celestial principles. Establishing a Zion society in our own home is a major purpose of this earthly existence.

I realize that there are many readers who have never married or who have suffered disappointing, or even tragic circumstances in their family life. Please allow our Heavenly Father to provide comfort and hope to you as you read these promises by the Lord's servants.

Elder Boyd K. Packer: Any souls who by nature or circumstance are not afforded the blessing of marriage and parenthood, or who innocently must act alone in rearing children and working to support them, will not be denied in the eternities any blessing—provided they keep the commandments. As President Lorenzo Snow [the 5th President of the Church] promised, "That is sure and positive."²³

President Brigham Young: Let the father and mother, who are members of this Church and Kingdom, take a righteous course, and strive with all their might never to do a wrong, but to do good all their lives; if they have one child or one hundred children, if they

conduct themselves towards them as they should, binding them to the Lord by their faith and prayers, I care not where those children go, they are bound up to their parents by an everlasting tie, and no power of earth or hell can separate them from their parents in eternity; they will return again to the fountain from whence they sprang.²⁴

Elder Orson F. Whitney: The Prophet Joseph Smith declared—and he never taught a more comforting doctrine—that the eternal sealings of faithful parents and the divine promises made to them for valiant service in the cause of truth, would save not only themselves, but likewise their posterity. Pray for your careless and disobedient children; hold on to them with your faith. Hope on, trust on, till you see the salvation of God.²⁵

And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible. (Mark 10:27)

Action Steps

1. Experiment for one month using the following five steps in order to improve your marriage. If your spouse is unwilling because of trust or commitment issues, begin by yourself. Your positive behavior can inspire him or her to join in. You can then explain the plan and ask for a cooperative effort. The most compelling question to ask is, “Do we want to have a great marriage?” If so, do we not need to follow the Savior?

Five Steps to a Celestial Marriage

1. Be true to your covenants

Make a commitment to Jesus Christ allowing him to preside over your marriage.

2. Change your heart

Work on changing yourself first. Strengthen your marriage by resolving to act in a Christ-like way towards your spouse.

3. Respect agency

Relinquish all attempts to control, pressure, or manipulate your mate.

4. Strive to be one

Utilize gospel principles as a team and heed the direction of the Spirit.

5. Stay committed to excellence

Remain continually aware that the celestial way is the only way to achieve true satisfaction in marital relations.

2. Create a Zion family. A good way to begin the lofty goal of living by celestial principles is to have the executive council (husband and wife) conduct a study. Analyze what principles are being taught during one weekend, good and bad. Remember that each and every interaction teaches something. Some concepts are taught by inaction. Say a prayer and bring your humility and faith with you because this is a test that no one gets an A on. Partners will need to be very supportive of each other as well. Once you understand the picture more clearly, you can go to the Lord and request his powerful assistance as you continue the great task of strengthening your family.

Involve the children as much as possible and construct a plan to begin instituting celestial living in your home. Write out a family mission statement that

captures your feelings about living by God's laws. Then establish some general guidelines for expected behavior. If desired, add in a system of rewards and consequences. (This may be a philosophy rather than a highly specific plan.)

Notes

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Chapter 11

Improving Impulse Control

Principle # 11: Perfect your desires

The continual monitoring of impulses in the context of rules, boundaries, and triggers is an important element in self-management. Inner attitudes that perpetuate sin must be detected and rooted out. Desires can be changed by converting to a spiritual lifestyle and educating the inner self.

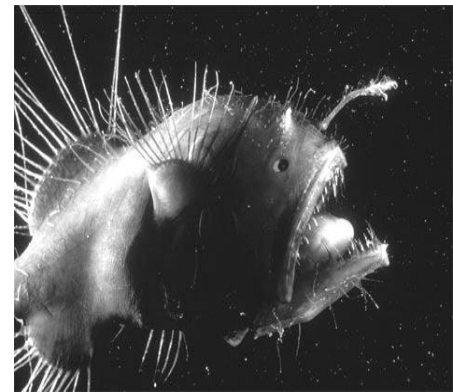
Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. (Psalms 51:10)

The greatest conflicts we ever face are those within ourselves. Man is confronted with a constant struggle between impulse and reason. Millions are enslaved to cigarettes, gambling, food, video games, spending, drugs, alcohol, or sexual pleasures and are daily casualties in the battle of willpower. Habits that are out of control have the power to seriously alter the course of one's life.

Even some of the greatest men have had great weaknesses. The famed novelist Ernest Hemingway who wrote *The Old Man and the Sea* and *For Whom the Bell Tolls* succumbed to alcoholism and eventually committed suicide. The Russian author Dostoyevsky penned the magnificent novels *Crime and Punishment* and *The Idiot*, but was unable to manage his passion for gambling. King David was a great conqueror and ruler, and authored the majority of the Psalms in the Bible. Nonetheless, he had difficulty controlling his passions and lost his exaltation when he committed adultery with Bathsheba and then had Uriah killed.

The angler fish lives in what is easily Earth's most inhospitable habitat: the lonely, lightless bottom of the sea, up to a mile below the surface. Generally dark gray to dark brown in color, they are one to three feet in length with grotesque features, massive heads, and crescent-shaped mouths filled with sharp, translucent teeth.

Their most distinctive feature, worn only by females, is a piece of dorsal spine that protrudes above their mouths like a fishing pole—hence their name. Tipped with a lure of luminous flesh, this built-in rod attracts prey close enough to be snatched. This light displays highly advanced technology—it gives off no heat! A compound called Luciferin is oxidized with the help of an enzyme scientists named Luciferase, and this reaction produces heatless light. Their mouths are so big and their bodies so pliable, they can actually swallow prey up to twice their own size.¹



Much like the angler fish, Satan tempts individuals with sins that can initially appear very enticing. His bait provides short-term pleasure and relief from stress. His unique method of entrapment is to prevent individuals from being able to think clearly enough about their predicament to extricate themselves. Because of the power of conditioned habits, the attractive pull of sin grows greater and individuals become increasingly less able to maintain their perspective. They become partially “blinded” to their dangerous circumstances.

Unfortunately, by the time many individuals realize their behavior is no longer working for them, they may already be hooked. Satan, the great fisherman, knows that if people rely upon sin to meet their emotional needs, they eventually become highly conditioned to seek their outlet during times of stress. They will find themselves regularly plagued by strong cravings for gratification, even when consciously trying to avoid these behaviors.

***The chains of habit are too small to be felt until they
are too strong to be broken.***

Samuel Johnson

It is important to see the “big picture” and recognize that negative habits are serious business. Any behavior that could be labeled an addiction requires thought, faith, and careful planning in order to overcome. The next few sections will provide an overview of some of the important aspects of addictions.

Compulsivity: Preoccupation in thoughts, strong cravings, and ritualistic patterns of behavior cause the person to begin to feel out of control.

O that ye would awake; awake from a deep sleep, yea, even from the sleep of hell, and shake off the awful chains by which ye are bound, which are the chains which bind the children of men, that they are carried away captive down to the eternal gulf of misery and woe. (2 Nephi 1:13)

Loss of perspective and honesty: Denial, rationalization, justification, and minimization are tools the corrupted heart utilizes to avoid squarely facing the problem. Strengthening one’s ability to see things truthfully leads to change.

And the angel spake unto me, saying: Behold the fountain of filthy water which thy father saw; yea, even the river of which he spake; and the depths thereof are the depths of hell.

And the mists of darkness are the temptations of the devil, which blindeth the eyes, and hardeneth the hearts of the children of men, and leadeth them away into broad roads, that they perish and are lost. (1 Nephi 12:16-17)

Dependency: A strong false belief is the idea that a person cannot manage his life without relying upon the crutch of the addiction. However, by exercising faith in the Savior and seeking greater knowledge through learning and revelation, he can develop new understanding, strength, and skills. Additionally, he can receive the healing power of the Spirit through heart-felt prayer, repentance, and greater obedience.

If they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then I will make weak things become strong unto them. (Ether 12:27)

The consequence of sin is unhappiness: Transgression of the laws of God brings the loss of the Spirit, troubled relationships, and loss of hope.

Do not suppose, because it has been spoken concerning restoration, that ye shall be restored from sin to happiness. Behold, I say unto you, wickedness never was happiness. (Alma 41:10)

The Great Escape

Establishing Truth in Thoughts

Becoming more aware of present patterns of behavior and self-deception is crucial to victory. Satan’s most successful strategy is to alter men’s thoughts. The battle between light and darkness, truth versus falsehood, that began in the pre-

existence rages on in this life. Some of Satan's favorite specific tactics are the 3 D's (denial, deception and discouragement). The exercise below is designed to help you better understand yourself. For the sake of confidentiality, it would be better to fill this sheet out on a separate piece of paper.

Truth Exercise

1. I have an addiction that affects my life.

- a) Consequences I am already experiencing are: _____
- b) Serious consequences that are likely to occur if I do not change are: _____

2. I am practicing self-deception that perpetuates the problem.

- a) Evidence that I sometimes use denial is: _____
- b) My favorite things to say to myself to rationalize or minimize my addictive practices are: _____
- c) Some ways I deceive other people are: _____

3. My addiction follows this pattern:

- a) Most common time of day, place, circumstance: _____
- b) Triggers that tend to set me off are: _____
- c) The emotions that are most likely to lead me to indulge are (stress, anger, boredom, feeling rejected, etc.): _____

4. Positive practices:

- a) The most effective rules and boundaries I could set are: _____
- b) Healthy practices I could develop that would help substitute for the addiction are (scripture study, exercise, reading, hobbies etc.): _____

Strategies for Change

Having identified certain patterns of behavior associated with one's addiction, the next step is to interrupt the sequence. When people with a habit begin to develop cravings, they often move themselves into position to indulge without full conscious awareness. It is important to be aware that there are certain *triggers*, or stimulating situations, that make an episode more likely to occur. Someone with an alcohol problem might be used to having a beer with lunch when he eats at a restaurant. People who smoke have many patterns such as having a cigarette during their break at work. Triggers can also be associated with certain emotions such as anxiety or anger. Once one has identified his triggers, it is prudent to be especially vigilant when these occur and to take pre-planned emergency measures to get back into a safe mode. Someone who has an eating disorder should not trust himself to keep an open bag of chips next to him while watching TV. Resistance to temptation makes us spiritually stronger just as lifting weights make muscles stronger.

It is helpful to recognize that we cannot always prevent having undesirable thoughts enter our minds. Our responsibility is to manage them once they enter. Satan is the great fisherman and he has the power to put ideas into our minds. If we

become excessively critical because of these thoughts, we are playing into the devil's hands. Inappropriate guilt ruins our peace of mind and actually makes us more vulnerable to temptation. We can take heart by remembering that even the Savior was tempted by Satan. Our job is to resist temptation with all our strength. It is what we do in those few seconds after we know problematic thoughts are there that counts.

Recovery and healing are a process, and if a lapse occurs it is part of that process. A lapse is a mistake. A relapse is a sign of discouragement in the recovery process. A lapse provides an opportunity to learn more about personal patterns and to strengthen one's coping skills. Thus, every setback can potentially make one stronger. Armed with faith and determination, there is no doubt that the Lord can help us all to achieve victory over self.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY IN FIVE SHORT CHAPTERS ***by Portia Nelson***

I walk down the street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk
I fall in.
I am lost ... I am helpless.
It isn't my fault.
It takes me forever to find a way out.

II

I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I pretend I don't see it.
I fall in again.
I can't believe I am in the same place
but, it isn't my fault.
It still takes a long time to get out.

III

I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I see it is there.
I still fall in ... it's a habit.
My eyes are open.
I know where I am.
It is my fault.
I get out immediately.

IV

I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I walk around it.

V

I walk down another street.²

Balance in All Things

There is one other important element to consider in the battle against impulse control problems. Success is unlikely if all the emphasis is placed on merely stopping the problem behavior! The addictive behavior is a symptom and not the root cause of the problem. People who are susceptible to addictions almost always have weaknesses in the way they cope with life. Insecurity, perfectionism, social fears, unresolved anger, poor health habits, and difficulty managing stress are just some of the problems that can contribute to a chronic state of emotional discomfort.

Addictions provide temporary relief from tension as well as a moment of pleasure. *The addictive behavior remains enticing until new skills are learned to bring about greater peace and contentment.* The spirit of man wants to enjoy life. If we cannot find happiness and peace through normal means, we are easily tempted to look elsewhere. Once an individual is further along the path of spirituality and healthy mental living, addictions become much less captivating because a better way has been found.

I count him braver who overcomes his desires than him who conquers his enemies, for the hardest victory is victory over self.

-Napoleon Bonaparte

Change of Heart

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve wrote a book called *Pure in Heart*, which was published in 1988. In this work he explained in detail the complex process of perfecting the human soul. He made it very clear that this change is neither instant nor easy.

We can suppress evil desires and substitute righteous ones. This involves education and practice. Through our divinely granted willpower we have ultimate control over our desires. But the desires of our hearts are so deep-seated that it may take many years of practice for us to be sure that education and practice have perfected our desires to the point where all are entirely righteous.³

One common approach used to overcome impulse control problems is to try to force the heart to do what it should. This "get tough" approach generally works for a while, but fails over time because the heart of man is too strong and too willful. *We can only control the inner self when it lets us.* It can rebel at any time. That is why so many people are unable to diet successfully or give up smoking. Whipping ourselves with guilt for giving into impulses is another popular method for gaining more self-control. While this has some effect, we find that the inner self is too often willing to accept some future guilt for the pleasure of giving into desire now. This very human problem of managing impulses is more complicated than it appears to be on the surface.

Habits are at first cobwebs, then cables.

-Spanish proverb

Higher Education

The real key to self-control—and quite possibly the cornerstone of true happiness—lies in educating the inner self. Our only power lies in *persuasion*, not force or guilt. Once the heart *believes* that something will not bring real satisfaction, it has less drive toward it. The strength of our impulses will actually decrease because our mental associations have changed. In a similar way, we will be more motivated to perform difficult behaviors such as exercise if we have strong positive associations.

And herein lies true freedom. Once we harness the power of the inner self and work as one toward our goals, we will achieve inner peace and self-mastery. We become the architects of our own fate rather than the victim of our bad habits.

Gaining control over impulses does involve much more than the rational mind directing the heart onto the right paths. The heart of man, through obedience to the commandments and the sanctifying influence of the Holy Ghost, can eventually change its desires to more virtuous ones. The inner self learns that only through self-discipline, sacrifice, and obedience can individuals find true joy. The overall goal is to become converted to righteousness. The heart and the mind must become one. This is the Lord's will for us. This process is called sanctification, which means "to make holy."

And unto him that repenteth and sanctifieth himself before the Lord shall be given eternal life.
(D&C 133:62)

The Prophet Joseph Smith: The nearer man approaches perfection, the clearer are his views, and the greater are his enjoyments, till he has overcome the evils of his life and lost every desire for sin.⁴

Formula for Changing Desires

Step 1: Make a decision

The first step in changing habits is to examine the belief system that is attached to particular behaviors. This involves taking a thorough look at one's life and evaluating which patterns work and which do not. Here are some pertinent questions to ask yourself:

- a. Does the behavior in question fit in with my personal values?
- b. What benefit does it give me?
- c. Does it work over time? That is, do the benefits for me outweigh the costs in the long run?
- d. What are the consequences of my behavior on others?
- e. What are the most compelling reasons to change?
- f. Am I ready to make a real and lasting commitment to change?

Once we make a firm decision with real passion, we are out of the starting gate and into the race. There is tremendous power in the human will when we are clear in our goals and purpose.

The secret of success is constancy of purpose.

-Benjamin Disraeli

Step 2: Boundaries

When I was a boy we often went to Horseneck Beach in southern New England during the summers. I loved to bodysurf and felt quite confident in the ocean waters. One day I had just arrived at the beach and had barely stepped into the surf when I saw everyone leaving the water. I approached the lifeguard who was busily waving people ashore and asked him what the problem was. He explained that there was a bad rip tide and everyone needed to get out of the ocean.

He proceeded to go farther down the shoreline to warn others, and I saw that I was alone by the water. I was hot from the long drive in the car, the water temperature was perfect, and the waves looked great. I had a very intense desire to go swimming and was quite frustrated by the restrictions. I decided that since I was young and strong, these silly precautions did not apply to me. I went back into the water, oblivious to all concerns. At knee level there was no problem. At waist level there was

no problem. I dove and swam feeling quite cocky. I was the only one I could see in the water anywhere on the beach. I was having a great time and felt sorry for those poor people who were not good swimmers and had to stay on shore!

When I reached chest level in the water, the riptide seized me. I was quickly swept out about 50 yards, and then the current thankfully stopped. There I was, floating in water over my head, well out from shore. "Okay, don't panic," I said to myself, "just swim back to shore." However, I was dismayed to find the outgoing riptide was traveling as fast as I could swim. I was making no headway at all. I started to get very anxious as I realized I might actually drown. That idea got my adrenaline really flowing, and swimming as strongly as I possibly could, I began to make progress. Foot by foot I moved slowly ahead until I was finally able to touch the sand. I fell on the beach spent and exhausted like a survivor from a shipwreck.

I believe that experience made me a wiser person. I have used this incident as a reminder that there are forces in the world that will overpower us if we get too close to them. I learned not to overestimate my own abilities and strength. Had I respected the force of that aberrant tide and stayed out of the water, I would not have had a problem.

There are forces in the world that will overpower us if we get too close. Those who choose to place themselves on the edges of the rivers of life's perilous attractions are likely to find themselves swept away with the current. Few who take drugs *plan* to get addicted; it just goes with the territory. The closer we get to what we desire, the stronger the attraction. We must learn to respect the power of the currents of life because they can pull us away from safety and security.

In order to maintain good control over impulses, it is necessary to set firm boundaries and limits. Boundaries might be connected to places or situations. Limits involve self-control, such as how many pieces of pie to eat or how much money to spend. Planning boundaries and limits in advance is essential. Without boundaries the inner self becomes very impulsive and is hard to rein in.

Another part of setting boundaries, in addition to physical distance or numbers, is keeping our minds off our vices. What we tell ourselves whets our appetite. The inner self is quite suggestible. It is always looking for a good time! We can set mental limits by keeping busy with distracting activities. If we feel like having a cigarette or a snack, we can break our attention from our desires by cleaning the house, doing yard work, or reading a good book. Even singing an uplifting song can help us to refocus. *The more we resist, the stronger we become.*

Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned?

Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned? (Proverbs 6:27-28)

Step 3: Spirituality

Prayer and obedience to the commandments bring the promised "living waters" which cleanse and renew us. The Holy Ghost works in a different way than self-talk. In self-talk the rational mind engages in a persuasive dialogue with the inner self. The Comforter works directly on the heart and changes us from the inside out. When we have the Spirit with us, we just do not *feel* like sinning. We feel happier and cope better with our problems. Our testimony is renewed daily and we are able to focus on eternal goals. Having the Spirit of the Lord as a constant companion will actually purify our souls over time and help purge us of evil desires.

Keeping our spirituality up is the essence of being "born again." What a great blessing the gift of the Holy Ghost is. It is essential to maintain this spiritual connection as we allow the Master to heal and strengthen us. We must be aware, however, that Satan is always waiting to wrap his chains around any who dare give him an opening.

Now they, after being sanctified by the Holy Ghost, having their garments made white, being pure and spotless before God, could not look upon sin save it were with abhorrence; and there were many, exceedingly great many, who were made pure and entered into the rest of the Lord their God. (Alma 13:12)

Step 4: Persuasion

To change our desires and impulses to righteous ones, we must educate the inner man. To accomplish this, we must change our associations. We desire those things we associate with pleasure and avoid those things we associate with pain. Sin by its nature tastes sweet going down, but afterwards is a poison to the belly. Therefore, it is essential to use correct advertising in our thoughts and fantasies so as to remain continually aware of the consequences of transgression.

Impulse Control Techniques

Covert conditioning Make a movie in your mind using visual imagery. Picture yourself for just a few seconds about to commit a sin you are troubled with. Then as dramatically as possible, portray yourself suffering the resulting consequences of that sin. For example, a smoker could visualize himself in the hospital suffering from the pain and agony of lung cancer.

Self-talk Whenever you are confronted with temptation or sinful desires, remind yourself in your thoughts that this action won't make you happy, but will instead cause serious problems. We can in a kind manner speak reason to ourselves. PERSUADE, ENCOURAGE, SUPPORT.

Symbolism If a temptation enters your mind, choose a symbol to visualize such as fire, poison, a gun, or an angel with a flaming sword to remind you metaphorically of the consequences that would follow.

Emergency Life-Saving Kit

This step involves increasing one's awareness of the real dangers of engaging in a particular addictive behavior. Allowing one's impulses to reign supreme can bring about significant temporal and eternal consequences. Some things are too important not to remain fully aware of. The purpose of this "kit" is to provide powerful direction and reminders about staying out of temptation's way.

Part A Write out a convincing message to yourself about the positive reasons why you wish to stay free of your addiction.

Part B List all the possible consequences for continuing in this perilous behavior. Do not pretend that they cannot be serious. Add some personal messages to yourself that highlight not just what can happen, but how you will feel about these consequences should they occur.

Part C Add other information that can inspire you. These can be scriptures, statements by General Authorities, quotes, encouraging statements from loved ones, pictures of family members, or anything else that touches your heart.

Part D Add some last minute instructions to yourself suggesting what to do when sorely tempted (e.g. pray, read scriptures, call someone, take a walk, get involved in

work or a hobby). You may also wish to add a couple of especially pointed remarks aimed at encouraging you to do the right thing immediately.

Read and ponder the things you have collected in your emergency kit at least once per day and especially when in a crisis situation. Visualizing the potential consequences in graphic detail can add power to your review of the kit (covert conditioning technique).

For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he. (Proverbs 23:7)

Step 5: Experience

It has been said that experience is the greatest teacher. Experience may teach slowly, but she does teach well. As moved as the inner self may be by positive advertising, it can only be *convinced* by experience. Many do not vigorously strive for self-control because they do not clearly appreciate the rewards. Despite the consequences they are experiencing, they view stopping their bad habits as a deprivation. This type of conflict can seriously impact motivation!

Consequently, some faith is required up front. In order to become more fully committed to the goal of self-mastery, the fruits of change must be sampled. The further along we go toward overcoming an impulse control problem, the greater the benefits. Focusing on a reasonable goal for a period of sustained behavior change such as one month affords a chance for valuable feedback to occur. If we can maintain our momentum during the first phase of change, we will find that it becomes progressively easier to manage our impulses.

All experience is an arch to build upon.

-Henry Adams

Another part of creating a different experience is using substitution. If, for instance, we find we can enjoy low-fat ice cream almost as much as the regular varieties, it is not very hard to change. Soup and salads may help us cut down on our portions of meat or pasta. Sugarless candy may help us deal with cravings for sweets. New hobbies such as sports, crafts, art, or music can provide joy and relaxation and help substitute for drug or alcohol use. It is quite difficult to stop a negative behavior if alternative ways to meet essential needs are not explored.

In Summary

The degree of seriousness with which a person attempts to manage an addiction can be seen by his willingness to take initial steps to regain control. A key to recovery is interrupting the cycle in as many ways as possible. Compulsive thoughts and actions can then be replaced with spiritually healthy substitutes.

But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.

Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. (James 4:6-8)

We can overcome impulse control problems by learning to alter our inner advertising about the problem behavior. Setting boundaries to clarify safe limits and finding new, more positive ways to get our needs met are other important elements of this process. We can also learn to focus more on the many short- and long-term

rewards of self-control. Subsequent experiences will reinforce these benefits. Make the Lord a partner in your recovery process.

I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. (Phillipians 4:13)

Action Steps



1. Acting out does not usually happen spontaneously. There is a *chain* of behavior that leads up to sin. These behaviors include not only actions, but also thoughts. Unless a person is totally steeped in sin, he will have reservations about committing transgressions. To manage these pricks of conscience, people distort the truth so that their actions no longer appear to be so wrong. Using the format given in the following table (but on a separate piece of paper), list one of your more common sequences of behavior that leads up to acting out. Also list the accompanying thought error (rationalization, etc.) that accompanies each step.

	ACTION	FALSE THOUGHTS	CORRECTED THOUGHTS
Link #1			
Link #2			
Link #3			
Link #4			
Link #5			

2. Having listed and analyzed one pattern that can lead to addictive behavior, correct each false thought. Then decide at which link you could most effectively interrupt the behavior chain.

3. Experiment with each of the impulse control techniques given in this chapter and continue to practice those that work best for you.

4. Fill out your personal Emergency Life-Saving Kit and read it daily and whenever seriously tempted.

No man can be free until he conquers himself.

-Thomas O'Shaughnessy

Notes

1. Angler Fish, <<http://www.animals.nationalgeographic.com/animals/fish/anglerfish.html>>, December 2009.

2. Portia Nelson, *Autobiography in Five Short Chapters*, <<http://www.mhsanctuary.com/healing/auto.htm>>, January 2010.

3. Dallin H. Oaks, *Pure in Heart* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988) chapter 9, <<http://www.gospelink.com>>, September 2007.

4. Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, compiled by Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 51.

Chapter 12

Eternal Progression

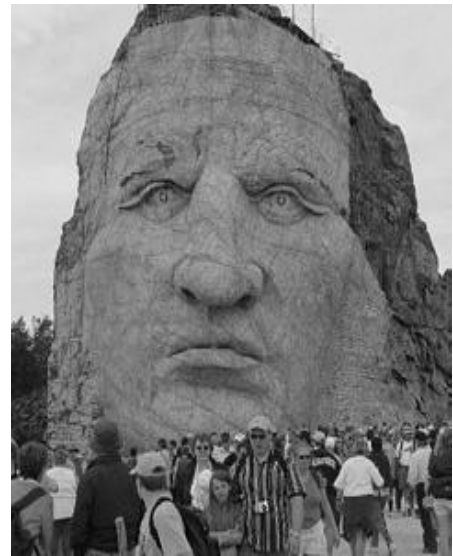
Principle # 12: Seek continual self-improvement

Eternal progression is an important gospel concept. Resolve to change defects in behavior and character and strive to become a better person—more kind, sensitive, honest, disciplined, and temperate. Also focus on gaining new skills, developing positive health habits, and acquiring knowledge. Goals give life more meaning and are the building blocks for our dreams. Strengthen motivational abilities and take things step-by-step. Gradual progress is real progress.

And if your eye be single to my glory, your whole bodies shall be filled with light, and there shall be no darkness in you; and that body which is filled with light comprehendeth all things.
(D&C 88:67)

The Sculpture

Sculptor Korczak Ziolkowski was an orphan who grew up in foster homes in the Boston area and was largely self-taught in art. His sculpture *Paderewski: Study of an Immortal* won first prize at the New York World's Fair in 1939. In 1947 Korczak was asked by Chief Henry Standing Bear of the Lakota Sioux to carve a monument of the Sioux Indian hero Chief Crazy Horse. Korczak began work on the memorial in 1948 and worked on the project until his death in 1982. Ziolkowski started carving the mountain with dynamite and bulldozers and blasted away millions of tons of granite, roughing out the basic shape of the statue. He knew he would not live to complete the project, but he let his large family know that he expected them to continue the work.



His family did not disappoint him. Ruth Ziolkowski, who turned 83 years old in June of 2009, and most of the ten Ziolkowski children continue to work on Korczak's "impossible dream." The huge statue is being constructed on the top of Thunderhead Mountain in the Black Hills of South Dakota. When completed, the sculpture will be 563 feet high and 641 feet wide, the largest sculpture in the world. By comparison, the Washington Monument is 555 feet tall and the Great Pyramid at Giza 451 feet tall. The head of Chief Crazy Horse was completed in 1998 and is 87 feet in height. The presidential heads at Mt. Rushmore, 8 miles away, are 60 feet high each. The eyes of the face are 17.9 feet wide and 8.6 feet high, large enough for a car to fit. The outstretched arm of the chief, pointing to the Indian lands, will be 263 feet long, almost the size of a football field.

The head of Crazy Horse's stallion will be 219 feet high, as tall as a 21-story skyscraper. The nostrils will be 25 feet in diameter and 9 feet deep. A giraffe, the world's tallest land mammal at 20 feet in height, could fit comfortably inside its nostril. The eyes will be 16 feet wide and 13 feet high.

The Ziolkowskis say the sculpture honors all Native Americans. Every year a million tourists visit the work in progress and marvel at the magnitude of the statue,



the product of one man's great vision. Grand plans for the monument include a university and medical training center for all North American Indians. The center will be funded by money collected from visitors' fees. In 1952, Korczak wrote his children a letter and asked them to reread it every month if they chose to carry on the project. The letter ends: "You will find in the darkest hours a feeling of great strength, of great satisfaction, of great joy and happiness, in carrying out even the mundane tasks that go towards living for something far greater than yourselves."¹

Values and Character

We plot our course according to our values. Values are the code of conduct we profess to believe in and follow, our rules of life. Our values guide us through a confusing world of temptations and difficult circumstances. They form the basis for the specifications for our self-sculpture. Painstakingly we chip away at our faults and weaknesses trying to form a more perfect image. The qualities inherent in a worthy character are clearly prescribed in the scriptures. Once our character is sculpted, it will hold its form for years and years unless we ignore its upkeep. When we are energetically engaged in this magnificent work of transforming our souls, we are obeying the will of our Heavenly Father.

And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge;
And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness;
And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.
For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:5-8)

Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect. (Matthew 5:48)

Oliver Wendell Holmes, the Supreme Court Justice, once said, "What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us." Benjamin Franklin, the great American statesman and one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, well understood the importance of actively building one's character. He kept a journal in which he noted his ongoing efforts in cultivating virtues such as humility, kindness, and honesty. He would give himself a daily grade in each area. We are not born great. Men and women become great from the small improvements they make each day. Those who are wise enough to plan for the future by investing in character development will yield great dividends.

President Thomas S. Monson: In a very real sense, we are builders of eternal houses. We are apprentices to the trade—not skilled craftsmen. We need divine help if we are to build successfully. The words of instruction provided by the Apostle Paul give the assurance we need: "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the

Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" It was said of Jesus that He "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man." Do we have the determination to do likewise?²

See that ye love one another; cease to be covetous; learn to impart one to another as the gospel requires.

Cease to be idle; cease to be unclean; cease to find fault one with another; cease to sleep longer than is needful; retire to thy bed early, that ye may not be weary; arise early, that your bodies and your minds may be invigorated.

And above all things, clothe yourselves with the bond of charity, as with a mantle, which is the bond of perfectness and peace. (D&C 88:123-125)

And I give unto you a commandment, that ye shall forsake all evil and cleave unto all good, that ye shall live by every word which proceedeth forth out of the mouth of God.

For he will give unto the faithful line upon line, precept upon precept; and I will try you and prove you herewith. (D&C 98:11-12)

Success through Self-Mastery

It seems to be a law of nature that the things that bring the greatest rewards require the greatest effort. Being valiant in church service, succeeding in school or business, raising a family, and maintaining one's health all require discipline and perseverance. The rewards are not immediate, but can take weeks, months, and even years to come to fruition. We all want the important successes in life, but many lose track of their long-term goals and are unable to persevere.

How is it that some individuals can be so highly disciplined, while others struggle to get even their basic responsibilities accomplished? As explained in previous chapters, our inner drives are highly influenced by our mental/emotional associations. Our success is largely determined by how we feel about the activities we are engaged in. If we are enthusiastic and motivated, we will be much more likely to accomplish what we desire. People spend substantial amounts of time and energy on their favorite hobbies or pastimes. *Increasing self-discipline is not a process of using more will power, but of learning to redirect the will.* This chapter focuses on establishing positive patterns of behavior, an essential ingredient for success.

Anyone and everyone can learn how to develop self-discipline. It starts with vision, but the key is learning how to motivate and energize the inner self. Small steps, positive self-talk, advertising the rewards of discipline, and techniques for disarming fears and negative beliefs are tools which can be utilized to gain control. We must convince the inner self that each goal is really a great opportunity. Positive habits lead to a brighter future. The person who can direct his will to energetically pursue worthy goals has the power to progress in the gospel and in life.

He doth require that ye should do as he hath commanded you; for which if ye do, he doth immediately bless you. (Mosiah 2:24)

***Enthusiasm is the mother of effort and without it,
nothing great was ever accomplished.***

-Ralph Waldo Emerson

Visions of Tomorrow

Given the realities of life, we all have a mandate to progress. There are always mountains to climb in the form of new skills and habits that need to be developed. Eternal progression is an integral part of the gospel. Though we may avoid change out of fear, our spirits are never ready to accept anything less than victory. Change is seldom comfortable, but stagnation is deadly.

We cannot achieve the goals of tomorrow unless we first think that they are possible. We must believe in our personal capacity to grow and develop. Otherwise we consign ourselves to a bleak and limited future. It is important that we recognize the seeds of greatness within us. With God (the master shaper of souls) behind us, we can do far more than we might envision. Heavenly Father wants us to succeed, and He is willing to bless us in all our righteous endeavors.

We can exercise faith that, with God's help, there is little we cannot accomplish. An airplane taxis at a high rate of speed down the runway in order to create enough air resistance on the wings to push the plane aloft. The pilot must have faith in the laws of aerodynamics or he would not keep the throttle open, but would panic and hit the brakes. We have the same challenge as the pilot as we try to lift off our present plateau in life. We need faith and momentum to establish new positive habits. Our doubts are greatest at the beginning when we are trying to get off the ground. Lack of confidence and inner conflicts must be overcome before we will dare to fly toward success.

We are what and where we are because we have first imagined it.

-Donald Curtis

Success Comes One Step at a Time

One of the great acts of faith in the scriptures was Nephi building a boat. His brothers laughed at him for undertaking such a complex project because they knew he had little or no previous experience. However, Nephi knew that he had an assignment from the Lord and he would be entitled to divine assistance.

Nephi broke the task into steps and got to work. We know from the scriptures that the first thing he did was ask the Lord where he could find ore for making tools. After he got the problem of making tools out of the way, he relied upon the Lord for additional help in the design of the boat.

And it came to pass that the Lord spake unto me, saying: Thou shalt construct a ship, after the manner which I shall show thee, that I may carry thy people across these waters.

And I said: Lord, whither shall I go that I may find ore to smelt, that I may make tools to construct the ship after the manner which thou hast shown unto me?

And it came to pass that the Lord told me whither I should go to find ore, that I might make tools.

And it came to pass that I, Nephi, did make a bellows wherewith to blow the fire, of the skins of beasts; and after I had made a bellows, that I might have wherewith to blow the fire, I did smite two stones together that I might make fire. (1 Nephi 17:8-11)

And it came to pass that they did worship the Lord, and did go forth with me; and we did work timbers of curious workmanship. And the Lord did show me from time to time after what manner I should work the timbers of the ship. (1 Nephi 18:1)

Intelligent planning and meticulous execution resolved all the various challenges inherent in the shipbuilding project of the sons of Lehi. Many of life's problems can be approached and solved in a similar manner. It is wise to break down difficult tasks into small segments and focus on each step separately. Worrying about a whole project at one time can be emotionally overwhelming.

It is helpful to "get your feet wet" before you talk yourself out of moving ahead. Becoming actively engaged in a task and completing even one step buoys one's confidence. Additionally, the deeper we get into a project or new habit, the more information and feedback we can obtain. This data is often indispensable to dispel fears and strengthen motivation. While positive thinking is important, only success and experience can bring true confidence. In short, "Don't worry, get started!"

The man who removes a mountain begins by carrying away small stones.

-Chinese proverb

Another reason to break a task into steps is that sometimes skipping a step almost guarantees failure. One of the top reasons new businesses fail is because of poor accounting practices. People taking up golf often neglect to study the mechanics of the golf swing and develop bad habits as they practice.

Sadly, when people fail because of not taking all the variables into account, they often feel there is something intrinsically wrong with them. They label themselves as "losers" or "failures," as if they came into the world without the right genes for success. Fortunately, there is a formula for success that will work for the majority of individuals.

Eliminate the Word "Failure"

The Prophet Joseph Smith had mixed success in the beginning of his ministry. Although he was able to translate the Book of Mormon, he promptly lost the first 116 pages of the translation. He had ignored the Lord's original advice and allowed Martin Harris to take the manuscript home to show it to his wife. Brother Harris reportedly showed it to several people besides his wife, and this poor judgment resulted in the manuscript being stolen. Although Joseph was distraught and humbled by the experience, he did not allow that setback to defeat him. He used the experience to strengthen himself by incorporating a valuable principle. He developed an important motto, "When the Lord commands, do it."

Positive attitudes and determination are essential to being successful in achieving goals. Focusing on fears and doubts can cripple our ability to perform up to our potential. At the first sign of trouble we convince ourselves that we will not be successful. If we allow ourselves to believe that our value as a person depends upon immediate success, we increase the pressure upon us ten-fold. We tell the inner self that failing would be horrible to bear. We might think, "Why try if I am going to fail anyway?"

After experiencing some setbacks, it often becomes more difficult than ever to take risks. Anxiety builds as new challenges are contemplated. When we inwardly anticipate failure and disaster, attempts to progress may be thwarted by an emotional bombardment of doubt and fear. The individual may begin to label himself as the problem. He tells himself he does not have what it takes to be successful, or decides

he has no talent or ability in the area of interest. This type of labeling is the kiss of death. The endeavor has now been diagnosed as completely hopeless.

Unfortunately, since many individuals do not appreciate the power of self-talk, they do not realize that they have created a mountain of fear. The inner man of the heart does not like to take emotional risks. It likes a sure thing. We may have done such a good job of convincing ourselves that there is no hope of success that the heart resists following us back into the battle. This type of inner conflict can cause a loss of enthusiasm and concentration. We must appreciate that the inner emotional self is many times stronger than the logical mind. There can be no victory until we are first *inwardly* convinced that success is possible.

They conquer who believe they can.

-Virgil

It is generally our emotions that get in the way and not our abilities. One way to “plan for success” is to write out the reasons we can be successful. In this way we can literally talk ourselves into a more positive attitude. Use the guide in the box below to provide cues on what types of supportive statements to list.

Victory Sheet

1. Logical statements to reduce fears
2. Past positive experiences in this area
3. Problem-solving strategies
4. Personal strengths
5. Other advantages (resources, information sources, supportive people)
6. Positive and hopeful messages

There is always a chance of failure, but successful people are willing to take risks. We must be willing to experiment with new goals, recognizing that there is no disgrace in failure, only in lack of effort. The truth is, as adults we invariably possess the intelligence and experience to make most things turn out successfully. However, we must provide ourselves the time, opportunities, and emotional freedom to learn the knowledge and skills required to achieve our goals. Confidence is the key byproduct of doubt-filled struggles transformed into hard-earned victories.

It does not matter how slowly you go, so long as you do not stop.

-Confucious

Start Small - Finish Big

Many individuals become discouraged about reaching their goals simply because they have expectations that exceed their abilities. When we set goals that are unrealistic, we usually fall short of our desired pace and can become emotionally or physically fatigued. At that point, we typically get self-critical, become even more discouraged, and then give up.

The key element is to correctly assess the amount of effort and discomfort our inner self is willing to tolerate. We must be honest with ourselves and ask, “What am I *really* willing and able to do each day?” This means we have to ignore what others are

doing and accept where we are, even if that means limiting our jogging to just the mailbox and back. Competition and perfectionism only defeat the main purpose, which is to progress. *If we push the inner self too hard, it will rebel and take away the power it supplies toward our current and future efforts.*

If we proceed gradually with our self-discipline, wonderful things will start to happen. Our confidence in our ability to succeed grows, and we will begin to feel a sense of satisfaction in our achievements. We will also find that these new positive habits bring significant rewards, even at the beginning of the change process. Most importantly, it soon becomes progressively easier to do the same tasks.

And see that all these things are done in wisdom and order; for it is not requisite that a man should run faster than he has strength. And again, it is expedient that he should be diligent, that thereby he might win the prize; therefore, all things must be done in order. (Mosiah 4:27)

Consider a different example involving jogging. As we stick with a reasonable training program, our leg muscles get stronger and our wind capacity increases. We become able to run our normal workout distances with very little fatigue. It is this conditioning effect that allows long distance runners to cover incredible distances that most of us could not imagine traveling by foot. In 1976 Joss Naylor of England's Lake District set a record that still stands. He ran 108 miles in twenty-four hours at the mature age of forty. Not only that, his route also included scaling seventy-two mountains, all over two thousand feet in elevation.³

It is said that a habit can be formed in six to eight weeks. If we can just hang in there at the beginning, we will soon start reaping the benefits of consistency and conditioning. At first, practicing the new behavior will seem like climbing a steep mountain. However, over time that mountain becomes a gentle hill. If we set small, achievable goals, few tasks will be beyond our reach!

That which we persist in doing becomes easier, not that the nature of the task has changed, but our ability to do has increased.

-Ralph Waldo Emerson

The Power of Advertising

There is a natural tendency for people to avoid doing anything that takes effort. Most of us are long on good intentions, but short on motivation. Besides death and taxes, procrastination is the one thing that can be counted on in life. We do mankind a disservice by ever using the word "lazy" to describe anyone, especially ourselves. People are not lazy, they are merely uneducated as to the rewards of hard work and discipline. They have incorrect mental associations regarding work, productivity, and self-improvement. There are few things so satisfying as accomplishing a significant goal through intelligent planning and hard work. People who seem undisciplined just have not had the right life experiences to get them excited about self-mastery.

Advertising is a key aspect of motivation. Ads are designed to motivate people to buy the seller's product. They want folks excited about what they have to offer. It works! Advertisement spots during special athletic contests go for millions of dollars because the television ads pay for themselves by boosting sales. Most people will pay more for a name brand without really knowing why it is different than less expensive comparable products. Advertising not only works well in business, but also can be quite effective on a personal level.

To generate enthusiasm within the heart, one must be a *super salesperson* and point out the advantages of performing desired behavior. There are several aspects to these benefits.

The Advertising Cue Card

1. Present benefits - how we feel as we perform the behavior
2. Intermediate benefits - how we feel afterwards (that same day)
3. Long-term benefits - the eventual reward (the big payoff)

Unless we focus on the positives, there is a good chance our goals will never amount to much more than wishes. We must convince the inner self that each goal is really a great opportunity. We must be persuasive and generate some inner energy and enthusiasm for the task. It can be done, but it takes creativity.

In the Middle East the prices in stores are not always set. One haggles with the merchants to get a good price. It is the same way when dealing with the inner self. We have to sell the projects we are interested in to ourselves (rewards), and then haggle about the prices (expenditure of energy) until we get some cooperation. It is always to our advantage to consider our inner feelings and not "run faster than we have strength." In the long run it gets us much further.

Initial investments of hard work and discipline reap tremendous dividends. There is nothing like the hard-earned sweet taste of success. The more we experience positive outcomes and the accompanying rewards, the easier it is to summon the power and energy of the inner man. Willpower increases as we develop some firm beliefs about the value of discipline and hard work.

Obedying the commandments can provide plenty of opportunities to exercise our spiritual muscles. Service is not always convenient or easy. A regular routine of prayer and scripture study requires diligence and concentration. Family history and missionary work require considerable initiative and perseverance. However, as we follow the Lord's ways, we will discover the many sweet blessings that obedience brings. Commitment and willpower grow greatly when we conclude that the gospel fruits are worth sacrificing for.

All victory and glory is brought to pass unto you through your diligence, faithfulness, and prayers of faith. (D&C 103:36)

Knowledge

Change is difficult for mankind. We seem to prefer to do things in the old patterned way, regardless of outcome. This is referred to as *persistence of set*. Although it is uncomfortable to try things in a new way, we are certainly guaranteed poor results if we continue to use the same faulty methods.

One dramatic story of improvement and change in the sports world can be seen in the career of baseball legend Sandy Koufax. The Brooklyn Dodgers signed Koufax right out of high school in 1955 for \$20,000. He went directly to the major leagues, but for six long seasons was unable to produce anything noteworthy. His record for those 6 years with a powerful team was an unimpressive 36 wins and 40 losses. He, as well as his manager Walter Alston, began to wonder if he had what it takes to be a

good pitcher. The team had so little confidence in him that he had only been pitching every few weeks. Although Sandy could always throw very hard, he had little control of his pitches and walked many batters. He contemplated quitting baseball and getting into another line of work. However, he decided with some resolve to keep working at pitching for a while longer.

Two significant things occurred after this decision. First, Koufax asked the general manager Buzzy Bavasi for more starts. His veteran catcher Norm Sherry then gave him some very helpful tips. Sherry told Koufax paradoxically to throw his fastball less hard (for more control) and to throw more curves and change-ups. Koufax was open-minded enough to try something different, and the results were nothing less than spectacular. In that season, 1961, Sandy won 18 games and struck out 269 batters, breaking the National League strikeout record of the great Christy Matheson.

From 1961-1966 Koufax won 129 games and lost only 47. His earned run average (runs allowed per game) was a sparkling 2.24, as compared to 4.04 his first six seasons. In 1965 he broke his own strikeout record for the second time by striking out an amazing 382 batters. Koufax is now known as one of the greatest pitchers of all time, and at age 37 was the youngest player ever inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame. I remember seeing him pitch on television when I was a young boy. His talent was so immense that he was larger than life, a Michael Jordan of baseball. However, had Sandy not been humble enough to accept those valuable pitching tips from catcher Norm Sherry, it is likely that few people would remember him today.⁴

Whenever we are unsuccessful in some behavior, we will continue to fail unless we begin to use a more effective method. People seem so much more willing to blame themselves than their technique or lack of knowledge. Over the years I have seen numerous college students become discouraged with their grades because they repeatedly made the same mistake in their studying technique. They read the appropriate chapters in their textbooks several times in preparation for tests, and then were dismayed when their performance was mediocre. They often attributed the problem to their being less intelligent than the other students. In actuality, the problem lay in their approach to studying.

Mnemonics, the study of memory, tells us that our retention of information is better if we first organize it into batches of information. Key words represent each batch. This organization is comparable to using several post office boxes, each with a different number. Once we get the information into the boxes, it stays put. Reading the material again only duplicates our efforts. The trick is to practice finding the right boxes. This is called *retrieval* (testing ourselves to see if we can get the information back out). Many colleges now offer study skills courses that include mnemonics to help their students be more successful.

The Lord is very interested in our progression in all aspects of life. He is a wondrous teacher in that He has a perfect knowledge of all things. In every enterprise He can help us learn true principles that will bring us success. Heavenly Father wants us to think, plan, and move forward so He can inspire us as we proceed. Whether our concern is making friends, raising children, fixing our car, or getting good grades, we will do better to focus on *faith and solutions* and not personal inadequacies. Labeling ourselves as stupid or incompetent only brings forth feelings of anxiety and hopelessness. Limitations, unfortunately, are part of our reality and cannot be vanquished by displays of emotionality. The sooner we accept our level of ability, the

sooner we can get going. The highway to success invariably involves gaining more knowledge and experience.

***Knowledge is essential to conquest, only according to
our ignorance are we helpless.***

-Annie Bessant

Emotional Blocks

Sometimes we find ourselves going absolutely nowhere despite our best intentions to change. Our resistance to progress is too great to overcome, and we can be left defeated and frustrated. Rather than give up, we must recognize that this resistance tells us to closely examine our feelings and attitudes. Illogical thoughts or strong emotions serve as clues that there is an inner block to be reckoned with.

I remember one client who had a strong desire to lose weight. She decided to ride a stationary bicycle each day as the exercise component of her program. She seemed quite motivated, but when I checked on her two weeks later she reported that she had already quit. As I inquired about the reasons behind this unexpected surrender, she admitted that her husband infuriated her each time he asked her how far she had pedaled. She interpreted his questioning as an attempt to judge or control her, and she lost all interest in using the exercise bicycle.

A negative self-image can also play a major role in blocking the development of positive habits. Essentially, to believe in our goals means we must have confidence in ourselves. Low self-worth affects the ability to grow by limiting the capacity to project positive future outcomes. A person who believes he has "no will power" will not put much effort into dieting since he expects to fail anyway. A person who feels he is a "loser" may inwardly struggle against doing something positive, and possibly even sabotage his own efforts. Many people fear success because they believe they will ultimately fall from the heights of victory. *Any change that impacts self-image can create internal conflict.*

A number of years ago I had two different clients with the same academic problem. Both were very bright, but performing far below their abilities. Each had taken one or more extra years in pursuit of their bachelor's degree because of a high number of failed or incomplete courses. They shared some common beliefs that apparently contributed to their poor academic performances.

Each grew up in circumstances that predisposed them to believe that unless they were the best, they were worthless failures. Consequently, they were very competitive. If they began to feel that someone else would obtain a higher grade or impress the teacher more, they would lose all interest in going to class. On a subconscious level the game was already over. Their inner program dictated, "If you can't be the best, why try? Nothing else matters!" They then lost almost all ability to motivate themselves, and became very sporadic in class attendance and completion of homework. Naturally these reversals greatly affected their confidence and left them confused about their true abilities.

Fortunately, once my clients realized how this programmed response was sabotaging their education, they were both able to alter their behavior. One individual decided on a new, more modest goal of being a competent student versus the top performer in the class. He also utilized a strategy of only answering in class when called upon so he could resist the temptation to show off. The difference was dramatic.

Within a couple of weeks, he went from about 20 percent attendance at classes to over 80 percent attendance. He was also able to keep up on his reading and assignments, something he never could do before. He aced his first two tests that quarter and was very pumped up about his new success and his increased ability to motivate himself.

The other individual had taken six years to get enough credits to be a senior. He estimated that he was only working at 5 percent of his capacity, able to study less than one hour per day. He had seven incomplete courses he needed to finish up over the summer, and was so discouraged that he despaired of ever graduating. He had the added pressure of a family to support, and was depressed and suicidal over his failures. As is typical of people who are this discouraged, he did not have a great deal of hope that counseling would even help.

By the sixth therapy session he finally agreed to shoot for the goal of merely being competent. (I tipped him off to this idea because of the success of my other client with the same problem.) He used a personal strategy of focusing more on learning and less on worrying about grades. Within a few weeks he was able to study six hours per day and was making a dent in those incomplete courses. He told me soon after that he again had hope he might be able to complete his degree.

How can one tell if there is a subconscious program interfering with success? This is like asking how you can tell if there has been a serious auto accident. Just look for the wreckage! These programs, as discussed in chapter 8, are so powerful and so consistent that an individual might literally fail in almost every attempt in certain areas of life. Thus, it is important to examine past behavior and look for patterns. Additionally, one can observe negative emotions and irrational thoughts that crop up whenever the specific area of conflict is approached. Once the problem has been detected there is hope for change.

Whether you believe you can or believe you cannot, you are right.

-Robert L. Backman

Remain Faithful and Diligent all Your Days

Never give up! Continue to strive to progress. Analyze any problems that come up and use logic, faith, and positive self-talk to overcome fears and negative thoughts. Make the Lord the chief partner in your personal progression and stay close to him through constant prayer. The Lord as a good father knows that our happiness, effectiveness, and success are closely tied to self-development. For that reason, he will never fail to answer an earnest prayer when we are seeking assistance in our growth process. Every good goal we attain and every virtue we acquire brings us further toward oneness with Christ.

President David O. McKay: Spirituality, our true aim, is the consciousness of victory over self, and of communion with the Infinite. Spirituality impels one to conquer difficulties and acquire more and more strength. To feel one's faculties unfolding, and truth expanding in the soul, is one of life's sublimest experiences.⁵

Daniel from the Bible is an excellent example of a man of God who was appreciated for his character and good qualities. He and three other youth of Judah were chosen to be trained in the language and learning of the Chaldeans, the dominant culture of Babylon at the time. Despite his lesser status as a young man from a conquered nation, he rose to become president of the vast Persian Empire, second only to the king in authority. The Lord blessed him and strengthened him in all he did because of his faithfulness. Our abilities to acquire knowledge, to act

righteously, and to get along with others are all greatly enhanced by the Holy Spirit and our obedience to God's laws.

It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes, which should be over the whole kingdom;

And over these three presidents; of whom Daniel was first: that the princes might give accounts unto them, and the king should have no damage.

Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm. (Daniel 6:1-3)

Wherefore, ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life. (2 Nephi 31:20)

Action Steps

1. Choose a goal you wish to work on and pray for the Lord's assistance.
2. Using visual imagery, project into the future and see yourself having established this positive habit. Imagine how good it will feel.
3. Set small, achievable steps that you know you can perform daily. Get started, then progressively move forward to other realistic steps.
4. Write out an Advertising Cue Card listing the benefits of the behavior. Read the card each morning as part of your daily preparation.
5. Actively seek greater knowledge about the goal you are interested in. Pray for inspiration, read books, watch others with more experience, ask questions, be creative, and ponder new ideas.

Notes

1. *Crazy Horse: the Journey within the Vision*, <<http://www.amorenaturalway.com/pamphlets/detail.asp?ID=145>>, August 20, 2011; Crazy Horse Memorial, <http://www.crazyhorsememorial.org/>, August 20, 2011.

2. Thomas S. Monson, "The Master's Blueprint," *Ensign*, January 2006, 2.

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4. John Grabowski, *Sandy Koufax* (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1992).

5. David O. McKay, "Something Higher than Self," in *Man May Know for Himself: Teachings of President David O. McKay*, compiled by Clare Middlemiss (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1967), chapter 13, <<http://gospelink.com>>, September 2007.

Use Gospel Tools to Enrich Your Emotional Life!

This book combines both religious and clinical ideas to provide a powerful approach for helping individuals to thrive emotionally. True joy comes from following the commandments and embracing those higher emotions associated with Jesus Christ—love, peace, truth, hope, and humility. Become skilled at managing your inner world so that negative thoughts and behavior do not interfere with your spiritual walk.

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And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. (John 8:32)



Russ Seigenberg is a licensed psychologist with over 30 years experience. He has spent the majority of his career providing direct clinical service in hospital and community mental health settings. He is a frequent speaker at regional conferences and has written four books.

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