

How to Handle Routine Everyday Life

By the Training, Inc. Staff

We are living in a new age—some call it a curse, others a challenge. It all depends on how we view things. We all have a world view and at some point we will be pushed to articulate it. The more we know about ours and the more we can understand ourselves and *why* we do what we do, then the more we are able to make realistic decisions about the future.

I am my view of the world; I am my view of myself.

THE WAY THE WORLD IS:

There have been many shifts in the realities of our world in our lifetimes and those of our families (see chart):

		HISTORICAL PERIOD			
		PRIMITIVE	GREEK & HEBREW	NEWTONIAN	EINSTEINIAN
World view	SUPERNATURAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> demons & spirits capricious acts man at the mercy of the powers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ABSOLUTES good or bad right vs. wrong black and white 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CAUSE & EFFECT each event has only one cause a real you could be discovered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RELATIVITY many choices; no absolutes many real you's; multiple roles
	MAGIC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> witch doctor good luck charms love potions offerings, deals cut with powers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MAKE GOOD CHOICES misfortune is life's revenge for bad choice in your or your ancestors' past 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MANIPULATION kill or change the cause get away from a bad situation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CREATIVITY create own self create structures in the world always being created/changed
Life Method					

- A shift from past to present orientation — In the town where I grew up, you were the daughter of so-and-so, granddaughter of so-and-so; today the emphasis is on who you are right now, where you live, what you *do*.

- A shift from local to global thinking — Spaceship Earth is an example; my Grandma Inez went west in a covered wagon and has lived to see the first global atlas made from satellite photos. When I try to imagine change of a similar scale in my daughters lifetimes, I just can't.

- A shift from static to constant change — One used to live in one place, have one job with one company and marry the guy from down the road. The average family now moves once every five years and changes jobs every two years. You now can have five careers in one lifetime, three of which haven't been created yet.

- A shift from absolute to relative — There used to be one right decision and your task was to find out what it was. Today you may have to choose between many 'good' alternatives as in a supermarket or all 'bad' ones as people in the 'damage containment' profession do.

Everything is different today; we all experience the rapid change of our times in such basic life arenas as getting and keeping a job, raising a family and being a woman/man. Not only do we experience ourselves as being UNPREPARED for the lives we have, but in fact we've prepared for lives that no longer exist: no more housewives married today and living happily ever after, no more one company for 40 years.

And we're torn with the question of how to be effective in this new world we have on our hands.

THE WAY LIFE IS:

We experience life as limits and possibilities. (Fig. 1)

Even with the best plan we know we're not in charge: I intend to work hard, save money for a new house and the economy turns down and I lose my job. We plan to take the kids to the zoo and it rains. I had a friend whose boy was going to be the best football player in town until he had four girls.

We can only observe, judge, weight up, decide and act on the basis of our best "educated guess." This does *not* excuse us from having a plan; neither does it permit us to sell our soul for a plan, because life will intrude (change) and require another plan.

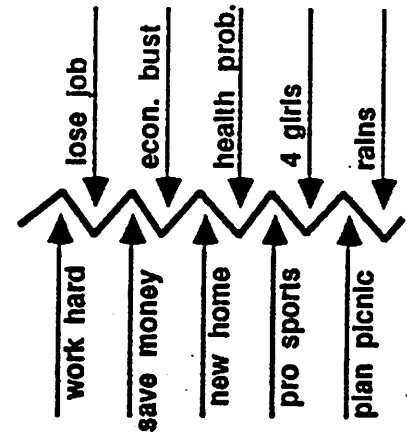


Fig. 1

About 25 years ago I ran across a new set of eyeglasses to look at life with. Without it I wouldn't be able to get out of bed in the mornings. It's not a rose-colored, naive view—it's *decisional*. (Fig. 2).

The past is approved — Wayne Dwyer in *Your Erroneous Zones* says, "Break free from the past; as it was, it's OK." Distinguish guilt (desire to change the past by rewriting history) from learning from the past and moving on. As a child I wasted a lot of my energy on regretting the past.

All is good — Learn to recognize problems as a *human condition*; don't measure happiness by an absence of problems. Accept that "Life is just not fair!"—and it never will be. It's just the way life is, but it is *good!*

All is received — Happiness means no more complaining about things over which we can do nothing.

The future is open — All is possible. Greet new experience as an honored guest who will keep showing up in your life.

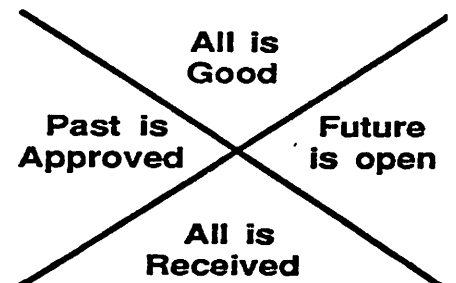


Fig. 2

continued on other side

THE WAY I AM:

My worldview only works if it is based on my real situation — not what I hope my situation is.

I grow and develop from my mistakes and from the problems I solve. Life without problems would be a boring, unchallenging life. Most of us think, though, that life should come to us nice and easy. Not so:

We create illusions about the way we want life to be — they get broken. We create new one, and *they* get broken. (Fig. 3)

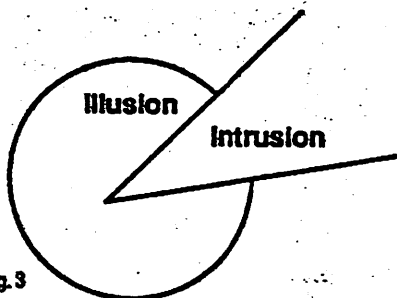


Fig. 3

It works like this: First, an event occurs. Then, an intrusion breaks our illusions as though they were bubbles; it always comes as an offense—"You can't do that to me!" "It's just not true!" The time comes for a decision—accept this new image about life or find a way to deny it's true, pretending to convince oneself it isn't really there.

A friend who is a college pastor knew a student who always wore long hair, walked around with her neck pulled into her shoulders, her head down, wearing turtlenecks. One day when she was complaining about her unfair life, he told her, "Your trouble is, you won't admit you have a long neck." She clawed his face with her long nails and ran away. Later though he saw her on campus and could hardly recognize her. She had a short, cute haircut and was walking tall, really beautiful.

My own bubble: I wouldn't marry until and unless I absolutely found the right guy, and could life happily ever after. So I waited until 26 to marry, and then I'd known him for 5 years, now he came from a good family, was smart, considerate, wanted me to have my own career. My illusion was that I had it made.

Then came the intrusion. When we'd been married two months, our first Christmas, and he landed in jail for drunk driving! My response was, "This is not true; it can't be happening to me! I was always a good girl — I did everything right." I fought it for five years, expended all my energy fighting and denying while I was going down the drain. "I can't do this, that, etc. until he..."

Then one day somebody said, "You need to accept that you have an alcoholic husband; realize the fact that *you* have gone to pot, and start living *your* life again." I had to decide to live my life as who I was and stop wallowing in self pity and anger over what couldn't be changed. They showed me how by giving me methods. Surprisingly enough, as I changed so did he. Today, life is better than ever, I'm stronger than ever and he is a new man!

A WAY TO RESPOND:

What is needed in the midst of this life is methods — a way to respond, to be effective.

First, there is a choice: decide to accept the fact that I can't change anyone else and only I can change me—or choose to cause myself needless pain and worry over things I can't change while continuing in a rut.

Second, the situation is not the problem, my *relation* to the situation is the problem, and that is what I'm in charge of. Hurricane Elena produced two types of responses from people who lived in her path: some started rebuilding the next day but some felt their lives were over.

QUALITIES OF EFFECTIVE PEOPLE

Care — Taking a decisional relation to life is to care for every situation we find ourselves in, doing what the situation needs, operating out of our second reflections instead of emotional responses.

Courage — The willingness to try, to risk failure, to move *without* having all the answers. (Fig. 4)

Creativity — The ability to say,

when faced with an issue, "What are the 20 ways to win in this situation?" And if those 20 don't work, to come up with 20 more. The answers of our parents and grandparents probably won't work: it is a day to come up with our own answers.

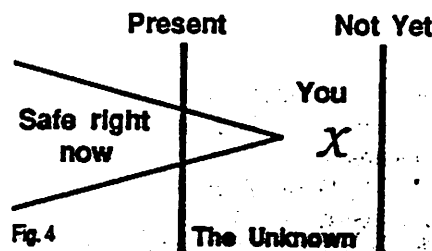


Fig. 4

Community — Each of us needs others to hold us accountable to our dreams and goals, to remind us of our decision to be effective. It may not be those you first think of—sometimes family and friends *don't want us to grow, to change, because then they might have to change.* Churches, support groups, mentors, professional organizations are all options for that supportive community.

A philosophy of life can be chosen and is important because it affects how we see ourselves, who we are and who we become. Choosing a stance toward life that allows us to be all we can be requires: 1) deciding to look at the changes in the world, to see the world as it really is **RIGHT NOW**; 2) deciding to face one's real situation; 3) deciding to take responsibility for that situation and live with it as it is—changing what can be changed, accepting what cannot; 4) using effective methods to sustain us in our new decisions. And my experience is that when one does this, regardless of the external situation, life can come daily as a blessed gift.

Acknowledgements

The "Life Philosophy Spin" as used by Training, Inc. draws from the background of two courses developed by the Ecumenical Institute of Chicago, "Religious Studies I" and "Cultural Studies I". The Spin also uses methods and content that were developed by Alcoholics Anonymous and Alanon.