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About The Author

The author, Dennis R. Curyer, is a professional speaker and is available for speaking engagements and consultations. He speaks on winning in business and personal development.

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PREFACE

This book has been written to empower people to live with excitement and energy.

Its principles are based on ancient and modern wisdom from a variety of sources. The author has had a difficult, but interesting and exciting life. He shares his personal experiences with his readers in the hope that whatever years they have left, it will be the best years of their life. It is about living to the fullest, not just watching life go by as a spectator or living through the experience of someone else. It was Helen Keller who said, “Life is either a daring adventure or nothing.”

Life is a banquet table. Upon it we find every delicacy imaginable. The lamb, beef, venison, duck, chicken, turkey and pheasant have been cooked to perfection in sauces that tempt the taste buds (unless you are a vegetarian). A cornucopia of vegetables, pumpkin, potatoes, carrots, cauliflower, and broccoli are to be found in a state of perfection. Exotic seasonings, poppy, wild marjoram, thyme, capers, and ginger enhance the flavor of the dishes. Fruits of every kind, the common and the uncommon, even the exotic quince, currant, mango, durian and pomegranate grace the table for taste and decoration. For the wine drinkers, there are reds and whites of every kind and vintage that would make Bacchus jealous.

We have all been summoned to attend the banquet of life. As special guests we arrive in anticipation and yet, instead of sitting on the gold embossed chairs provided for our comfort, we elect to sit on the floor and eat the crumbs that fall from the banquet table. Too many of us, for far too long, have sat on the floor eating the crumbs that fall. This book is about getting up off the floor and feasting at the banquet table before it is too late. To waste a day would be to waste our inheritance.

The final words of this introduction are left to Henry David Thoreau, who said, “Oh God! To reach the point of death only to realize you have never lived.”

1. Maxers Know the Big Picture While Not Ignoring The Small One

Live to Fulfill the Measure of Your Creation

Observation tells us that we live in a well-ordered universe. Each day the sun rises in the east and sets in the west. Its rays give light and warmth to all the creatures of this earth. At the end of the day, night arrives. This twenty-four hour cycle never ceases. One season follows another. Spring is always followed by summer; summer is always followed by autumn, etc. This course is unchangeable.

All vegetation and animal life fulfill the measure of their creation. When I stand in my vegetable garden I know I will not find cabbages hanging from the tomato plants, only tomatoes. The tomato bush must fulfill the measure of its creation in producing an abundance of beautiful red tomatoes. It is doing what all tomato bushes do. It is doing what its ancestors have done for generations.

Have you noticed when sunrise and sunset approaches, there is a chorus of birds that chirp and sing? They cannot avoid this. Nature, if you like, has programmed this into them and they must fulfill the measure of their creation. If we can observe order and beauty in the creation of nature, then should we not consider the order and beauty of our creation, the greatest of all the species?

We, like nature, also have to fulfill the measure of our creation. In doing this we experience true happiness because we are living at the most ethical and productive level. For each of us the measure will be different according to the role we have to play.

An American Psychologist

The American psychologist Abraham Maslow called this concept ‘self-actualization.’ Some schools of philosophy use the term ‘self-realization.’ Maslow loosely describes self-actualization as “the full use and exploitation of talents, capacities and potentialities”. Self-actualized people are those who have developed or who are developing to reach their full stature.

Whatever it is called does not really matter. What does matter is that we understand that our purpose in life is to rise to our highest level of development.

Maslow was interested in what motivated successful people. He undertook a study of people living exceptionally effective lives. His study included Albert Einstein, William James, Eleanor Roosevelt, Abraham Lincoln, John Muir, Walt Whitman, and other creative people, artists, writers, and poets. He wanted to know what made them different from what we might call the ‘average person’.

Hierarchy of Needs

In Maslow’s research he discovered what he called ‘the hierarchy of needs’. He said that our needs have to be satisfied at a lower level before we can move to a higher level. The pinnacle of the hierarchy is self-actualization. Maslow believed that self-actualization is an innate drive, i.e. something we were born with.

At the base of the triangle are our basic needs - oxygen, food, and water. We will take whatever steps are necessary to secure these requirements just to survive. In our Western society most of these needs are fulfilled with little effort. Few of us would have experienced real hunger and thirst. In third world or less affluent countries people struggle daily to meet these basic needs.

The second level is the need for safety and security, shelter and protection. We all need somewhere to live, a home that will protect us from the elements, an environment that provides safety and security.

Once we have reached this level we are now prepared to move to the third level, which is the need to belong, to bond with people who are like-minded, people who believe in the things we do and see life in the same way. Belonging to these

groups we are more likely to feel that these people love and care about us. This group gives us self-expression beyond our immediate family.

The fourth level is the need for self-esteem. We want to feel good about ourselves and have others feel good about us. When we succeed at some difficult challenge we experience deep feelings of satisfaction.

At the highest level Maslow says our need is to self-actualize. In developed nations we have the luxury of being able to strive for the higher levels in this hierarchy.

At the higher level we become creative because we are free to develop our gifts and talents, to write, to sing, to paint, to concentrate on the spiritual aspects of life. To reach this pinnacle we must make full use of our potential. This is living life to the max.

Characteristics of Self-Actualizing People

For those who reach this level, Maslow's research showed that these people had similar characteristics, habits and actions. Self-actualizing people can be identified by the following characteristics.

These people can see reality for what it is. They have the ability to separate their hopes, fears, anxieties and theories from what is real.

They are people who have been able to accept weaknesses and imperfections in themselves and other people. They consider weaknesses to be a part of human nature. They see them as a part of the growing process and so they allow people to be themselves. They do not get upset or disturbed because of other people's behavior.

These people are naturally spontaneous and open with their feelings. They avoid pretence although they do act tactfully in areas that might hurt other people's feelings.

Self-actualizing people do not need permission to laugh. They have a well-developed sense of humour. Laughter is spontaneous and they are prepared to laugh at themselves. They see certain foolishness in taking themselves or life too seriously.

These people are solution-focused rather than ego-centered. They see the world outside themselves rather than within themselves. They normally have some mission in life or some higher task to fulfill. Actions are based on the deeper issues of life that may center around religious, philosophical, social, or ethical issues. This gives them a defined purpose for life.

They do not depend on others for their security and satisfaction. Their security comes from within. They do like moments of solitude and privacy as this allows them time to meditate and think about the important issues of life.

They are self-starters, and control where possible, their own destiny. They have a level of humility that enables them to learn from anybody who has something worthwhile to teach them.

They have the ability to see newness in the ordinary events of life. Sunsets can be enjoyed over and over again. There is newness in flowers, food, weather, nature, relationships, etc.

These people generally have deeper and stronger relationships. Although their friendships are more intense, they are fewer in number. They have many associates but very few true friends because, in some ways, they expect more of friendship than other people do. Friendships are built regardless of class, education, and political belief, color or race, they are not xenophobic, that is they do not fear people from other countries.

Ethical behavior plays a large role in self-actualizing people. They have a clear concept of what is right and wrong. In general, their principles are ethically based, and although they may be religious they may not be what some would call 'orthodox'.

Maslow labelled these people 'The Peakers' - those who have peak experiences in life. These peak experiences generate intense feelings of achievement, success, and passion. They are likely to be felt when something of value has been achieved, when one's creative abilities have moved to a higher level. It may be in areas like leadership, sport, religion, intimate friendships, music and art. These conclusions have made Maslow's teachings important in the area of personal development and human performance.

Competition in Life

We live in a very competitive world. Everybody seems to be competing with someone at some level. Each week we spend hours playing or watching others compete in sporting activities all over the world. We cannot help being impressed by the level of excellence that these people achieve.

In sport and business, competition encourages excellence in performance. Where there is no competition, improvement in performance is less likely. We have lived through an era where governments have held monopolies in business. With no competition from free enterprise, services deteriorate. Monopolies create sloppy business practices, less innovation and higher prices. Business performs better with competition. Costs and prices decrease. Some level of competition is necessary in all aspects of life.

The following story makes this point.

As two friends are hiking in the forest they encounter a huge, ferocious and obviously hungry Grizzly Bear. Its next meal has just come into sight, and they are it! The first friend calculates that the bear will overtake them in 27.3 seconds. At that point, she panics; realizing there is no escape. She faces her friend, with the fear of death in her eyes. To her amazement, she observes that her friend is not scared at all. To the contrary, her friend is quickly but calmly taking off her hiking boots and putting on jogging shoes. "What do you think you're doing?" the first hiker says to her companion, "You'll never be able to outrun that grizzly." "That's true," says the companion, "but all I have to do is outrun you."

We all compete when the motivation is strong enough. However, competition is not the real purpose of life. Fulfilling the measure of our creation can only be achieved individually. We are not in competition with any other person, so we do not have to compare ourselves with others. We do not have to become discouraged because we think that someone else is better than we are in a particular area. The essence of our being is equal to that of any other person. There is only one person that can fulfill our role and that is us. This means that others cannot beat us to the finish line because there is no race. This is not to say that others do not have a similar role to us, but it is never the same. This is important to understand if we are going to enjoy life. Every human being is

unique and cannot be duplicated. In this, I am not referring to the body, only to the spirit, soul, or the essence of a person.

Nature and Environment

The great debate that has taken place for many years among psychologists and others interested in human behavior is that of ‘nature versus nurture’. Or, in other words, “Are we born a certain way or does our environment determine what we are?”

The answer to this question helps to explain the motivation behind human behavior.

The middle ground is that nature and nurture influence behavior. On the one hand we are genetically predisposed to act a certain way. On the other hand our environment will set the stage for the play. For example, one person may eat without restraint and never put on weight, while another person will put on weight just by looking at food. The latter is genetically predisposed to putting on weight; however, this does not mean they have no choice in the matter. People like that can decide to be moderate in their eating habits (oh, but the food looks so good!) It is much harder for them because of their genetic make-up, but it is not impossible. A level of discipline is required to achieve this.

You might conclude that this is unfair. Why should skinny people be able to eat whatever they like and you cannot? The fairness is that skinny people have other predispositions that they are struggling with, things you do not have to worry about. We all have predispositions in some form. Life always sees that we have problems to work through.

The real issue is to what degree genetics and environment influence our behavior. This has not been satisfactorily answered.

The Eagle School

In business the example is often used of the eagle school. If you send a duck along to the eagle school for an intensive training course, will the duck graduate as an eagle? There are those who believe in the affirmative while others, the negative. In my opinion the duck will never become an eagle, no matter how

many eagle schools it may attend. It may even be taught how to act like an eagle, but the duck would only be masquerading as an eagle. The measure of its creation is to be a duck. It does not have the killer instinct of the eagle, nor its eyesight or speed. It is not and never will be carrion, i.e. a dead meat eater. It does not eat the flesh of dead or dying animals. Its diet is mainly plant life.

The middle ground is, “No, the duck will never become an eagle but it will become a better duck.” Well, maybe, but would it not be better for the duck to go to the duck school where it can be taught how to become a better duck? There would be no acting then. The duck would be learning how to fulfill the measure of its creation.

What duck wants to kill? Who says the duck has to be an eagle anyway? This presupposes that the eagle is superior to the duck. In some ways it may be. In other ways it is not. It depends on where you are. The eagle may be faster in the air but the duck is faster in the water. In the world of birds, all are necessary. Each playing their role, so it is with humanity.

As the maxim says, “Whate’er thou art, act well thy part.” We all are a part of the whole and you cannot have the whole without all of its parts.

We Are All One

Someone famous once said, “Inasmuch as ye do it to the least of these my brethren ye have done it unto me.”

This idea comes from a lofty source. It teaches us that there is a unity within humanity and that you cannot do something to someone without it affecting all. You cannot hurt the powerless without it affecting the powerful. Whatever you do to another person is but another stroke on the canvas of your life.

Another way of explaining this may be to consider the building industry. For a home to be built there is a succession of actions that must take place. Footings must be poured before the bricklayer can lay bricks. The walls must go up before the roof can go on, etc. When a supplier or tradesperson fails to complete a necessary task by the agreed time, this then affects every other person involved with the project.

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