

UNIVERSAL SENSE



By Balasa Prasad M.D.

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UNIVERSAL SENSE THE BLUE PRINT FOR SUCCESS

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A few words:

The essence of our existence on this planet is survival—the struggle to lead secure, productive, and gratifying lives in a constantly changing and complex world. In times marked by rising unemployment and cost of living, a fragile economy, and global competition for limited resources, the quest for survival becomes even more challenging. It is therefore a breath of fresh air to discover a method of success that requires only applying specific principles and strategies to one's life—the principals and strategies of Universal Sense. *Universal Sense: The Blueprint for Success* is a practical guide designed to help all people navigate life's challenges.

We have developed and electronically distributed this book free of charge with the intention of sharing this common-sense wisdom with the world. Universal Sense can be used by any human being under any circumstance, hence enabling those with a willingness to learn and apply these principles to succeed in whatever they do. Although some of the information may not be new to you, we hope you find the ways in which we have woven the ideas together unique, powerful, and above all, practical. Our wish is that every person who journeys through the pages of this e-book arrive at a new level of insight and thereby a better life.

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Introduction

What is Universal Sense?

What is success? Is it making a billion dollars in a lifetime, attaining a powerful position as head of a company or country, or earning a Nobel Prize? I posed this question to a group of colleagues and employees at my workplace, expecting a straightforward answer. A few people equated success with wealth—earning lots of money, owning a nice home and a fancy car, and taking exotic vacations. Others believed that the manner in which one accumulates wealth is more important than wealth itself. They cited Bill Gates as an example of success, unlike drug kingpin Pablo Escobar of Colombia. Fewer people took a philosophical view, stating that success is having peace of mind and good health. In the end, while the question was simple, the answers were not.

If power, prestige, and privilege are not true indicators of success, then what is? While I pondered the question, I remembered a conversation I had had with my mother long ago. I was a brash young man who had just graduated from medical school, and I boldly presented my ambitious plans to my mother. I told her that I would seek out the best surgical training and open up my own center. I would author brilliant research papers, conduct seminars, and in short make lots of money. Maybe the world would recognize my accomplishments and a Nobel Prize would be in the offing!

My mother listened patiently to my rambling ideas. Then she gave a small smile and commented, “Son, listen to me carefully. If you want to be successful in life, *don’t chase after fame and fortune.*” I was taken aback by her remark, but I cared for, respected, and admired her too deeply to ignore her advice. After recovering from my initial shock, I asked her, “If I’m not supposed to chase after these things, what should I do? After all, aren’t fame and fortune the measure of true success?” She replied with an emphatic “No.” She said, “If you chase after fame, fortune, power, and privilege in life, you will remain a slave to them. Instead, behave in a noble fashion by utilizing your god-given talents and opportunities to make this world a little better, while at the same time protecting your self-interest. Then fame, fortune, power and privilege will chase after you and beg you to own them.”

She saw that I was even more confused and further explained, “Son, true success is a state of mind that is reflected in your outlook and attitude, not in the trinkets, prizes, and wealth that you amass. Strive to heal the illnesses of your patients because you care for them and are sympathetic to their pain and suffering. Only after you have thought of them should you think about your bank account.” She continued, “Son, you are a bright

boy and a hard worker, and I am already proud of you! You do not have to win medals or build mansions to impress me or anyone else.”

That conversation left an everlasting impression on me. Over the years, the combination of my mother’s advice and my own knowledge and experience has culminated in the following insight into the true meaning of success:

Success is the elation and excitement triggered by a sense of accomplishment.

“Accomplishment,” however, is a relative term. Individuals feel a sense of accomplishment based on their own priorities and expectations. For example, a recreational golfer who enjoys the game and the social camaraderie that goes along with it is less likely to be disappointed about his performance compared to a professional golfer whose livelihood depends on the caliber of his game.

With my mother’s advice still fresh in my mind, at the ripe age of twenty-three, I left India with my eighteen-year-old wife in pursuit of a successful career and a bright future in England. But I was off to a shaky start, disheartened when I failed to obtain a residency in medicine or any surgical specialty. After months of hard work, I was offered a temporary assignment in a psychiatric residency program. Psychiatry was my last choice for a residency. Thus I experienced my first taste of patience and humility, which are the two most integral components of Universal Sense.

My options were to either accept the assignment or return to India. After due consideration, I chose to stay and accept the residency for several reasons. First, if I returned home to the security my parents provided, I would be acting as a dependent child rather than a grown man. Instead, I wanted to bear the responsibility of providing for my own family. Second, the world was unlikely to ever bend over backward to accommodate my whims and fancies; I would have to work hard for what I wanted. Third, I would have to make the best of the opportunity presented to me while waiting patiently for the opportunity of my choice. Fourth, in the face of adversity I could not afford to get upset and give up on my goals. Finally, looking down on the residency I had been offered—or anything or anyone, for that matter—was a mistake. I didn’t know it at the time, but it was this

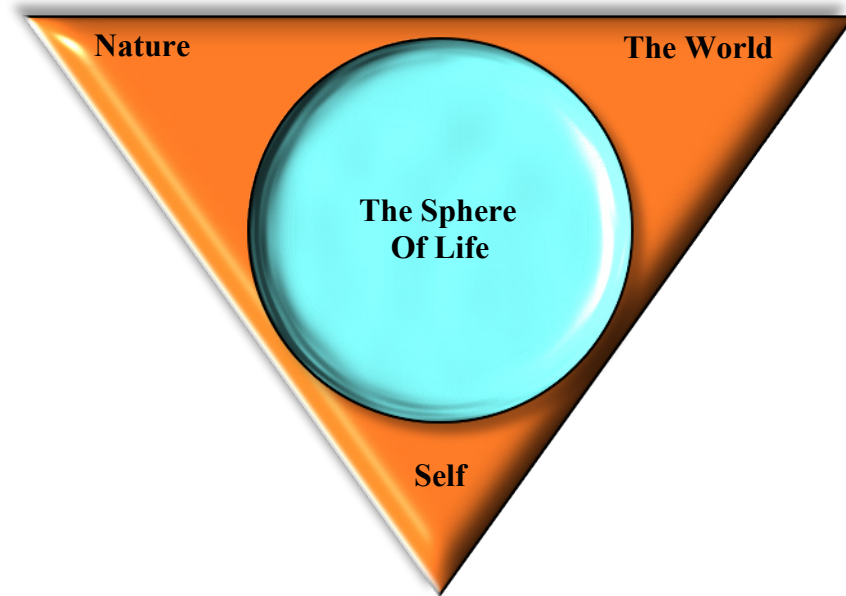
training in psychiatry that would enable me to have clear insight into the human mind. In fact, this book is the culmination of my experience and the knowledge I have gained by helping thousands of patients to combat stress and conquer addictions, fears, and phobias over the past twenty-eight years.

It was my patience and perseverance that enabled me to complete a psychiatric residency and a subsequent medical residency to become a general practitioner in one of London's prestigious family practice centers. A few years later, I completed an anesthesia residency program in New York and shortly thereafter became the chairman of the anesthesia department in a community hospital. I am proud of my accomplishments in all aspects of my life. I firmly believe that if I can succeed, anyone with pride, patience, and perseverance can be successful in his or her life.

I owe my success to Universal Sense. Universal Sense is an English translation of the Sanskrit phrase *vishwa jnanam*. *Vishwa* means "all pervasive," and *jnanam* means "knowledge." Universal Sense reflects the laws of Nature, the awareness of which can empower an individual to lead a secure, productive, and gratifying life. Once a person becomes truly aware, he or she can then choose the correct path toward success. According to the principles of Universal Sense, when one is fully aware, success comes naturally, which is why Universal Sense is "the blueprint for success."

We have no say about our arrival or our span of time on this planet. However, we have absolute control over how we lead our lives until we exit this world. Like it or not, here we are at the behest of our Maker, and we must make the most of what we have been given. To complete this assignment successfully, we must first comprehend the three dimensions that influence our lives on this earth: Self, Nature, and the World. Imagine your passage on this earth as a sphere, which I call the Sphere of Life, suspended in the center of an inverted triangle with little wiggle room. (Diagram 1)

Diagram 1



Your task is to master the art of balancing this sphere forever within the tight space, standing alone at the bottom of the triangle. The other two corners are occupied by Nature and the World, which exert considerable impact on the Sphere of Life.

Be savvy and smart and take advantage of input from Nature and the World to better balance the Sphere of Life. If you approach the task as a chore, you will be disenchanted, disillusioned and discouraged. Eventually, you will end up drifting aimlessly—from one job to the next, one relationship to the next, one place to the next. Your search for easy answers might even cause you to seek out relief in the form of prescription medications or addictive drugs. But if you consider the balancing act a worthy challenge, you will forever maintain your spirit and stamina. Take the simple example of learning to ride a bicycle. Balancing on a bike is difficult if you've never ridden one. But if you give up without succeeding, not only will you never enjoy a bike ride, you will also never experience the pride and confidence that results from completing a challenging task. If you perceive balancing the Sphere of Life as a challenge rather than a burden, and if you persevere until you master the skill, the possibilities of what you might accomplish are infinite.

As we work to balance Self, Nature, and the World, our minds need an irrefutable, sensible system to guide them in their interactions with the universe, just as the body needs a strong backbone and a pair of legs upon which to stand. Universal Sense is such a system. It provides insight into the realities of life, enabling anyone who uses it to develop the necessary patience, foresight, and fortitude to reach his or her full potential.

Universal Sense reaches beyond religious differences, beyond ethnic distinctions and beyond geographical boundaries. Through Universal Sense, you can acquire, among many other things:

1. The skills to reach your full potential as a parent, athlete, or professional.
2. The wisdom you need to weigh the risks and rewards associated with crucial decisions.
3. The understanding you need to overcome obstacles on the road to success.
4. The discipline to combat adverse situations—including addictions, such as overeating, smoking, alcohol, cocaine, and gambling.
5. The strength to conquer fears, phobias, and insecurities.

Universal Sense can be achieved in four steps:

Step 1: Acknowledge Nature (Our Maker)

Step 2: Understand Nature's Mandate

Step 3: Know Yourself

Step 4: Find Your Place in the World



[Life's every moment is a precise calculation]

Chapter 1

Acknowledging Nature (Our Maker)

Traditionally, humans have looked to God to answer unanswerable questions, such as “Who made us?” and “Why are we here?” Unfortunately, when pious humans conceived of God, their conception was limited to a God they could see and touch, a higher power with whom they could actively interact. They assigned to God a physical form, a gender, and emotional attributes, thereby planting the seed for organized religion.

God in organized religion is often portrayed as a glorified human being—omnipotent, compassionate, and forgiving. The problem with the God of organized religion is that different groups identify God in unique physical forms, assign Him various characteristics, and create sets of rules to which they pledge their allegiance. Those who disagree with and question the veracity of one group’s concept of God become a threat to that group’s identity, beliefs, and security. Naturally, any group devoted to a certain God would protect their particular beliefs and interests at any cost.

Throughout history, priests and kings—men with influence—have used organized religion to advance their own agendas. They have found ways to control the masses by tapping into basic human insecurities and stoking passion in the name of God. In many instances, organized religion has been used by leaders as a political tool to enhance a particular powerbase. This use of religion has done a grave disservice to humankind by polarizing religious groups and nurturing mistrust among people, rather than uniting people under one banner to work for a common good.

How have we allowed religion to play such a negative role in human history? How have we failed to fix the problems that spirituality might so readily address? Religion, like a mother tongue, offers an individual identity and a sense of belonging. For fear of losing these benefits, we are reluctant to challenge an established religious ideology. We are usually unwilling to confront an entrenched concept unless it poses a direct threat to our survival.

While religious zealots were busy selling their version of God to the masses, a few intellectuals went on a spiritual expedition to understand our Maker as it exists. These philosophers and seekers remind us that neither we nor our ancestors created this world or the universe. In fact, with all the progress we have made in science and technology, we have yet to fathom the basic secrets of Nature. Consider a simple concept like gravity, which took a long time for us to theorize. Even now, we are unable to explain the source of gravity and the exis-

tence of dark matter that prevails in the universe. Who designed the universe? How do we explain our existence—the energy source that animates our bodies (i.e., our souls) and the time, place and circumstances of our arrival and departure from this earth? When we recognize the sheer number of inexplicable aspects surrounding us, in our own world and beyond, most of us conclude that there is a force much greater than us at work in the universe. I call this force Nature or our Maker, and I believe it is responsible for creating, regulating, and managing the universe and its inhabitants.

Once we acknowledge Nature and understand its attributes, we have the option to shape our actions accordingly. We all need a spiritual reference point to guide our thoughts and actions. Our Maker, Nature, serves this purpose, drawing a clear line between right and wrong. The absence of direct and corroborative evidence of our Maker's existence does not mean it does not exist. Belief and faith in a higher power is a mainstay of human cultures the world over, despite the absence of absolute proof of its existence. We might even argue that spiritual belief is an inescapable part of human culture. Believing in a perfect and absolute higher power is a crucial step in life if any of us is to enjoy stability, as it is faith that offers a firm anchor to our thoughts and a balance to our baser tendencies. Belief in our Maker encourages us to both to care for ourselves and to think of how our actions affect our fellow human beings.

Belief in a higher power takes many forms. A Catholic and a Muslim both believe in one God and the possibility of a rewarding afterlife. A Jew believes in an Old Testament God and atonement during this lifetime. Hindus and Buddhists believe in God and reincarnation. While an atheist might reject the idea of God, he or she most likely has faith in the power of the Higher Self. Underlying the specific differences in these spiritual philosophies is a desire to hold individuals accountable for their actions. Good-natured Christians, Muslims, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, and atheists strive to make this world a better place by holding themselves and others accountable for the good of society. Accountability balances the opposite human tendency toward selfishness and irresponsibility. Accountability is the cornerstone of an individual's healthy attitude and the crux of a civilized society. When both individuals and cultures value accountability, the result is a peaceful, prosperous and productive world.

Let us examine what would happen if we felt accountable only to ourselves. History shows that the abuse human beings perpetrate on one another knows no boundaries. Many individuals even take advantage of a situation by asserting their belief in the greater good of humanity but acting in a way that benefits only them. We cannot expect individuals to police themselves and be accountable for their actions; the result would be disastrous.

We also cannot hold each other accountable on a spiritual level, since it is humanly impossible to survey each other's thoughts and intentions. If an individual is cunning and crafty, he or she can commit venal acts without detection, thereby escaping any legal or social penalty that might exist. The very idea that one individual can cheat another and get away with it is temptation enough for many people to act on their selfish impulses. As a result, our ancestors came up with the following strategy: let each of us be accountable to a higher power—God.

This strategy would work without a hitch if only we could demonstrate how God handles the issue of accountability. Unfortunately, there are many instances in which a crafty villain cheats, loots, commits despicable acts, and lives happily ever after incognito. It would appear in these instances that both society and God have failed to recognize the misdeeds of that individual and hold him or her accountable. But has such an evildoer truly escaped from our Maker?

No two human beings are born with the same advantages or disadvantages in life. Some lucky individuals are born healthy, attractive, talented, and surrounded by loving, caring, affluent families. For these individuals, just by virtue of the circumstances they are born into, many opportunities are available to them, and they tend to enjoy stress-free, happy, wonderful lives. On the other hand, many unlucky individuals are born with mental, physical, spiritual, and situational challenges. For instance, a baby born to an irresponsible, immature, selfish drug addict or prostitute has to fight every step of the way just to survive. Unlucky individuals may ask what have they done wrong to deserve this kind of treatment. They might wonder why are they being punished for no fault of their own. The real question here is why are some people born with all the advantages while others are not?

To explain this inequity, some religions argue that our Maker punishes an individual soul for its past deeds through reincarnation. The idea of reincarnation says that after death, each of us returns to this world or another to pay the dues for our misdeeds in this lifetime. No one can demonstrate scientifically the validity of this concept. However, logic above even spiritual certainty compels me to believe in reincarnation. This concept has certainly put me on notice and prompted me to be accountable for my actions in every area of my life. My belief in reincarnation discourages me from behaving as I please without regard for the well-being of others.

Let us now, regardless of our individual religious beliefs, entertain the possibility that our ancestors made an unfortunate error in assigning human attributes to the force that made the universe and us, its inhabitants. Let us consider the possibility that our Maker is an enigmatic, eternal, invisible but invincible entity with an agenda of its own: justice in its purest form, light in its brightest form, energy in its cleanest form, and the truth in its absolute form. Our Maker is the one and only perfect force that permeates the universe. Its domain is beyond our comprehension. Our Maker, Nature, is not human or humanoid. It has neither a physical form nor a compassionate disposition. We are accountable to Nature; Nature is not accountable to us. Nature has set terms and conditions for the existence of this world and its inhabitants. Its priorities are not the same as ours. For instance, species have come and gone over the ages, but life has continued to exist in one form or another. While we should care about the preservation of other species to protect our own interests and the balance of life on our planet, we should also understand that Nature is concerned not with any specific life form, but only with the existence of a life form.

It is in our best interest to understand Nature as it exists and relate to it on its terms. Nature is a perfect force; therefore forgiveness is not a necessary part of its vocabulary. Forgiveness is in fact human rather than divine. Because we are human and thus imperfect, we make mistakes. Resolution of our mistakes does not come from Nature. The only resolution is to acknowledge what we have done wrong, correct it if possible, and learn a valuable lesson from it. Most importantly, we must endure the consequences of our mistakes with courage and strength. Finally, we must forgive ourselves and one another to close the chapter and move forward. We must strive to be perfect like Nature but at the same time understand that we never will reach that goal. It must be enough for us to improve—to learn and grow—knowing that perfection is not possible in this lifetime.

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