

Your Becoming Self

The Existential Search:

Unconditional Positive Regard, Compassion, Forgiveness, and Acceptance

Meaning, Being, and the Transformative

Table of Contents

Please Note

Each of the entries is relatively short, 500-750 words or so. You can read them in order or jump to a specific entry that strikes you as interesting or intriguing. You may find, however, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. That whole emerges because as you read, we become co-authors.

If you have any questions, suggestions, and gentle constructive comments, please feel free to write:
info@yourbecomingself.com

Laurence Robert Cohen

[Introductory: There's Nothing Wrong With Us](#)

[Child's Play—July 18, 2011](#)

[Interlude with a pronoun—July 19, 2011](#)

[How we perceive our now and the perception of form—July 20, 2011](#)

[Meaning perspectives defined and formed—July 21, 2011](#)

[On what we be or what we choose to be—July 22, 2011](#)

[Meaning perspectives and their influence—July 23, 2011](#)

[Essential smart over essential dumb—July 24, 2001](#)

[Discovering smart—July 25, 2011](#)

[The cultural and educational meaning perspective of smart and dumb—July 26, 2011](#)

[We are the story we tell ourselves—July 27, 2011](#)

[We are the story we tell ourselves continued—July 28, 2011](#)

[Retelling our story in new terms—July 29, 2011](#)

[Self-awareness as process—July 30, 2011](#)

[Interview class and the self—July 31, 2011](#)
[The importance and avoidance of self-awareness—August 1, 2011](#)
[The genesis of self—August 2, 2011](#)
[Where the self begins and a meditation—August 4, 2011](#)
[Early forces and the becoming self—August 5, 2011](#)
[Smart Love and the development of the becoming self—August 6, 2011](#)
[Middle school and inner happiness or not—August 7, 2011](#)
[Interactions with the world, caregivers and the becoming self—August 9, 2011](#)
[Parents and/or caregivers and what we learn from them—August 10, 2011](#)
[Distorted consequence as meaning perspectives—August 11, 2011](#)
[The nature and mechanism of teaching and learning meaning perspectives—August 12, 2011](#)
[What makes for punishment—August 13, 2011](#)
[Punishment as a means to a higher purpose—August 14, 2011](#)
[The dominator model and discipline—August 15, 2011](#)
[The myth of the Fall and Eve as hero—August 16, 2011](#)
[The Garden myth and its renewal in us all—August 17, 2011](#)
[When "No" becomes an affirmation of self—August 18, 2011](#)
[Punishment and teaching right from wrong—August 20, 2011](#)
[On the nature of behaving—August 21, 2011](#)
[Responses to fear and rejection—August 22, 2011](#)
[Self-blame and doubt as a response to fear and rejection—August 24, 2011](#)
[The meaning perspective influence of internalized fear—August 25, 2011](#)
[Lying as a response to fear and rejection—August 27, 2011](#)
[Blaming others as a response to fear and rejection—August 28, 2011](#)
[More unwanted consequences of punishment and fear—August 29, 2011](#)
[The arbitrary nature of adult response and the confusion it brings—August 31, 2011](#)
[On the nature of rebellion—September 3, 2011](#)
[Variations on rebellion as a response to fear and rejection—September 4, 2011](#)
[Variations on rebellion as a response to fear and rejection—Getting caught—September 5, 2011](#)
[Variations on rebellion as a response to fear and rejection—Classrooms and testing—September 6, 2011](#)
[Rebellion as a loss of freedom—September 7, 2011](#)
[What an interview looks like and feels like—September 9, 2011](#)
[Discipline and the idea of a lost child—September 10, 2011](#)

[The question of our locus of control—September 11, 2011](#)
[Reflecting on awareness and the instrumental—September 12, 2011](#)
[Fear of the self and the truth about fear—September 13, 2011](#)
[The higher purpose as meaning perspective and judgment—September 15, 2011](#)
[The dissonance of the higher purpose and our love and care—September 16, 2011](#)
[The nature and quality of blame—September 17, 2011](#)
[Beyond blame and living out weaknesses—September 18, 2011](#)
[Transformative learning and our search—September 19, 2011](#)
[The unconditional in its many forms—September 20, 2011](#)
[The problem of the "shoulds"—September 21, 2011](#)
[Alienation, identity, and ego—September 23, 2011](#)
[Openness, the unconditional, and the search—September 24, 2011](#)
[Friendship, conditional regard, and conformity—September 26, 2011](#)
[Friendship, conditional regard, and conformity—September 27, 2011](#)
[School and the demeaning power of negative regard—September 28, 2011](#)
[Condemned to being slow and the denied self—September 29, 2011](#)
[Dominator form of education and what it teaches—September 30, 2011](#)
[What extrinsic learning costs—October 1, 2011](#)
[Competition, cheating, and their human costs—October 2, 2011](#)
[How our identity and ego work in our whole being—October 3, 2011](#)
[How our identity and ego work in our whole being—October 4, 2011](#)
[On the difference between a life of control or one of balance—October 5, 2011](#)
[On how meaning perspectives form and can limit our lives—October 6, 2011](#)
[The unity of our whole being—October 7, 2011](#)
[Continued discussion of control and balance—October 8, 2011](#)
[The metacognitive and fear of the unknown—October 9, 2011](#)
[The "Yes" in spite of diagnoses—October 10, 2011](#)
[Issues and identity in recovery—October 11, 2011](#)
[We are the story we tell ourselves—October 12, 2011](#)
[Liberation and the meaning perspective—October 13, 2011](#)
[Clarifying our whole being, facets of that whole being, and unity—October 14, 2011](#)
[Our whole being as unified and individuating which the dominator resists—October 15, 2011](#)
[On Eden, love, and the ends principle—October 16, 2011](#)

[On the usual and prevailing perception of human nature—October 17, 2011](#)
[On our perception of human nature and our expectations of the human--October 18, 2011](#)
[How identity and ego work in regard to expectations—October 19, 2011](#)
[On choosing the unconditional and high expectations--October 20, 2011](#)
[The quest of aspiration--October 21, 2011](#)
[On the realization of the becoming self—October 22, 2011](#)
[On higher purpose meaning perspectives—October 24, 2011](#)
[Competition and the dominator model—October 25, 2011](#)
[On competition, hierarchy, and the nature of power—October 26, 2011](#)
[Competition, scarcity, fear, and conformity—October 27, 2011](#)
[On having and being and lexical gaps—October 28, 2011](#)
[The language of having—October 29, 2011](#)
[I/Thou, I/IT, the Other and having—October 30, 2011](#)
[The endless need for and useless feeding of having—October 31, 2011](#)
[On the love of living beings and the love of dead things—November 1, 2011](#)
[On the interaction of giving—November 2, 2011](#)
[Suffering, the defiant human spirit, and tragic optimism—November 3, 2011](#)
[On the natural impulse toward unconditional positive regard—November 4, 2011](#)
[In the hall of meaning and Liberation—why not?—November 5, 2011](#)
[On escaping from old forms, the limits of meaning perspectives—November 6, 2011](#)
[The tension between our perceptions and others' meaning perspectives—November 7, 2011](#)
[Villains and meaning perspectives—November 8, 2011](#)
[Rediscovering the definition of self—November 9, 2011](#)
[On how meaning perspectives can do us harm—November 10, 2011](#)
[On the defiant human spirit and the power of choice—November 11, 2011](#)
[Critical moments and transformations that result—November 12, 2011](#)
[Liberation from the unfair, unfounded, and untrue comes hard—November 13, 2011](#)
[Transformation and liberation as a recognition of and return to the natural—November 14, 2011](#)
[On why not the transformative—November 15, 2011](#)
[Another inner dualism—November 16, 2011](#)
[Inner dialogues that harm—November 17, 2011](#)
[Why we can choose and not need to change—November 18, 2011](#)
[Saying "Yes" to life in spite of everything—November 19, 2011](#)

[When we choose "No"—November 20, 2011](#)
[Using choice to retell our story—November 21, 2011](#)
[On how anger works—and doesn't—November 22, 2011](#)
[Anger and critical reflection—November 23, 2011](#)
[On choosing our mood wardrobe—November 24, 2011](#)
[Powerless, anger, and choosing the transfixitive—November 25, 2011](#)
[On compassion, forgiveness, and choosing freedom—November 26, 2011](#)
[On wishing good—November 27, 2011](#)
[To see others in the I/Thou—November 28, 2011](#)
[On Compassionate Communication—November 29, 2011](#)
[Customer service and fulfilling essential human needs—December 1, 2011](#)
[The joy of saying "Yes" to life—December 2, 2011](#)
[Individuation, community, and the becoming self—December 3, 2011](#)
[Non-Violent or Compassionate Communication in handout—December 4, 2011](#)
[Inner and outer manifestations of Compassionate Communication—December 5, 2011](#)
[On inspiring compassion—December 6, 2011](#)
[Struggling with the interferences with the compassionate—December 7, 2011](#)
[On avoiding inherent demands—December 8, 2011](#)
[On escaping the "have tos"—December 9, 2011](#)
[On family myths as diagnosis and interpretation—December 10, 2011](#)
[On interpretations and diagnoses—December 11, 2011](#)
[The burden and harm of labels—December 12, 2011](#)
[Fear and the Compassionate Communication—December 13, 2011](#)
[What we observe and what we perceive—December 14, 2011](#)
[Full expression in action clarifies what we conceive—December 15, 2011](#)
[On knowing the thoughts of others—December 16, 2011](#)
[Heuristics that help and meaning perspectives that harm—December 17, 2011](#)
[The violence and dominator nature of gossip—December 18, 2011](#)
[Feelings and observations—December 19, 2011](#)
[On seeing, feeling, and responding—December 20, 2011](#)
[On knowing why we feel what we feel—December 21, 2011](#)
[Our right to express our needs—December 22, 2011](#)
[On what the "No" perspective means to action—December 23, 2011](#)

[On expressing unspoken needs through manipulation—December 24, 2011](#)

[The right to say "No" and the power to say "Yes"—December 25, 2011](#)

[Making choices into a do, not a don't—December 27, 2011](#)

[My example of a choice into an action—December 28, 2011](#)

[When we do the math, we find can gain but not lose—December 29, 2011](#)

[On choosing to live—regretfully—December 30, 2011](#)

[The nature of time, resolutions, and the story we tell ourselves—December 31, 2011](#)

[On the hero's journey as our story—January 2, 2012](#)

[On a long day's journey—into life—January 3, 2012](#)

[On the dimensionality of knowing and searching—January 4, 2012](#)

[The nature and question of identity—January 5, 2012](#)

[The exploitation of needs and vulnerability—January 6, 2012](#)

[Identity and dependency—January 7, 2012](#)

[The media and the becoming self—January 8, 2012](#)

[Saving ourselves from rejection—at a cost—January 9, 2012](#)

[On the commodification of ourselves—January 11, 2012](#)

[On making our human needs into consumerist material needs—January 12, 2012](#)

[On how media makes us feel worse and better about ourselves—conditionally—January 13, 2012](#)

[When the identity becomes the only life we can live —January 14, 2012](#)

[Death is dead—January 15, 2012](#)

[The life in transformation and transcendence—January 16, 2012](#)

[On living in the affirmation, on living the "Yes" and the "No" that hurts—January 17, 2012](#)

[The voices and resiliency within us—January 18, 2012](#)

Your Becoming Self—the Existential Search:
Meaning, Being, and the Transformative

Introductory: There's Nothing Wrong With Us

Once upon a short time ago, many people traveled the world in search of themselves. Interestingly, they seem to have left themselves in some foreign and very exotic places like Paris and Rome, Algiers and Katmandu, and the Himalayas and the Indian subcontinent. No one seemed to think they might find themselves in Jersey City, New Jersey, Brownsville, Texas, or Truth or Consequences, New Mexico. For many, they found something of value in all that sort of journey, and for others, they found a wonderful distraction from the seemingly endless and predictable pattern of their lives to which they eventually returned and to which they adjusted. Others entered into a dead end from which they may never have returned. It seems a little like the man who looked for the keys to his home under the street lamp rather than in front of the door where he lost them because, "There's more light here."

Our search for the self begins and ends within us. At the same time, the search takes us a long, long way because it encompasses all of our lives, all of the elements of our being, and the ways in which we make meaning and form out of the world and about of ourselves and our lives.

Your Becoming Self—the Existential Search: Meaning, Being, and the Transformative helps that search make sense and become natural and doable. This book offers a belief in the inherent ability for each of us to make successfully make this journey as an individual. It's our self after all. We don't need all kinds of regimented exercises to do so. Some thoughts and ideas about the self, its development, and its repression can open a world of choice to us in terms of how we choose to live our lives every day and through those choices and actions, find our search in progress. Not only we will find our search productively in progress, but we may well find that other choices we wanted to make in our lives also happen as a natural outgrowth of the choices we make in our search toward the self each day.

If we feel concerned with making changes in our lives and in ourselves, we needn't worry or feel overwhelmed with the idea. There's nothing wrong with us. We just need to know that our selves can make choices that make all the differences we need in life, one choice at a time.

Your Becoming Self—the Existential Search: invites us into awareness, transformation, and liberation where we find we no need for changing ourselves. Instead, we can make choices which search for and fulfill our becoming self. We can deeply enjoy the result along with all the others in our lives. We search to find the self not to lose it. In finding the self, we become who we have always been—ourselves.

What would happen if you found out that every negative thought and feeling you ever had about yourself were unfounded, unfair, and untrue?

Child's Play—July 18, 2011

Imagine a game someone might have gifted to us as a child. We open the box and turn it upside down. Hundreds of pieces fall out all higgledy-piggledy on to the floor. We feel quite excited at first. The sight of all those pieces seems to offer limitless possibilities. All of a sudden, we might feel something else: fear. Limitless possibilities can mean limitless confusion, indecision, and failure. We don't know if we should shout or cry, jump into, or run away. Children, frankly, live through some very hard moments like this.

It probably happened that something else fell out of the box but demanded our attention less than the pieces. It came as writing on paper. Its form could vary from a single sheet with just pictures to go by all the way to a rather long booklet full of writing. When we finally get to that document, we find that it gives us instructions, patterns by which the seemingly random pieces take form.

We try to fit the pieces to the patterns. We may struggle mightily to do so, but we mostly persevere (a word we would not know but would enact every day). After many a spurt and stop, we arrive at something that looks exactly, or very close to, what we saw in the instructions. Oh frabjous day. We made something take shape, to take on a form, to have some meaning. As children, we desire the power to do, to make, to change, and we receive precious little of such things. No matter how loving others mean it, we get ordered and pushed about a good deal. All of a sudden, in playing with this toy, we sense our own power to manipulate other things into a form that we choose. We don't consciously say to ourselves, "Wow, power like this really does something for me" and flex our muscles. We just feel the power within us and our minds and our hands, and then we flex our muscles. It just feels good to do the dominating rather than always being on the dominated side of things.

Then the "Oh boy!" sense of things turned up, or maybe the "Oho!" or even the "Oh no!" moment turned up. We, all of a sudden, sense that the instructions we followed helped us in one way, but also dominated us in another. We made form out of the chaos of all those liberated pieces on the floor, but the order belonged to the instructions. The instructions told us what to do in its terms, and we learned it and executed it. It did not give us the slightest idea about how to make order out of the chaos we find around us for ourselves. When we really wanted power within self and within the world around us, we needed to know how to make form for ourselves.

We need to know how to make such form out of chaos for the rest of our lives. We need to know now. It is in us to know. It's our gift. It's our essential power. Like language, we enter the world with the potential. It isn't a technique. We still need a right environment to make it fully happen.

Interlude with a pronoun—July 19, 2011

Anytime someone writes an essay, that person has to choose a pronoun or other noun to represent and refer to the writer and the reader. That just happened ("someone" as a choice). Above, the writer becomes "that person." The writer (another choice) can become an "I" and the reader a "you" or "they." Readers and writers can appear as "she" or "he." "One" may refer to both writer and reader. The choice comes harder than we might think (another choice, "we") because as with all choice, it takes on a signification and a result, a consequence. Generally, in this writing, I (the writer) choose "we" to represent both the writer and the reader. The reader (you) can also read this as the "authorial we," simply a way of staying away from writing "I" which someone told someone who told us that we have to avoid using "I" in our essay writing. One problem with that choice comes in the distance and abstraction of the "we" and its possible resonance with the royal rather superior sounding "we" (as in the Victorian cliché "we are not amused").

Choosing "we" and "us" in writing also risks sounding as if the writer and the reader are the same sort of person. Actually, it can sound like the writer thinks of the reader as an extension of the writer, as if the writer defined the reader in most if not all particulars. This comes as a kind of modified solipsism. In a full solipsism, the only sure entity in existence is the self. Everything else serves as a projection of that self. Why anyone would bother writing to all those projections of self becomes another question. A modified solipsism allows that others exist, but all those others think and feel exactly as the self, the writer thinks and feels. That sort of writing seems to endlessly suggest that the reader already knows what is being said, but the writer simply brings the thoughts and feelings a clarity the reader doesn't have, but immediately upon reading, the reader will think and feel the same way only better informed about the reader's own thoughts. That certainly can strike the reader as egotistical and intrusive. The reader has the right to think her/his (choice) own thoughts and feel her/his own feelings.

The use of "we" in this writing doesn't seek to deny that independence of thought and feeling, the essential individuation of each of us. The use of "we" and "us" in this writing wants to suggest that in all of our individuation and separation, we share certain experiences and desires, certain needs and wants, drives and realities although we perceive them and respond to them differently. In all our differences as human beings, we share certain similarities because we are, simply stated, human and a being. This commonality supports us and makes for connection even in our inevitable isolation as individuals. These connections keep isolation from becoming alienation from one another. In alienation, we become Others to each other, and we can slip into suspicion and even fear of one another. We can despair of our individuality as an isolation that leaves us each and only suffering alone with no one to hear our cries of loneliness and sorrow—certainly no one to care. The "we" here suggests that your individual self and my individual self exist with unifying and connecting understandings of each other and our shared experiences when we can get to them through our shared isolation. Even when we only share our isolation we can find ourselves less isolated. So here we go.

How we perceive our now and the perception of form —July 20, 2011

We often ask this question about our lives: "Where do we go from here?" That answer often feels essential to getting out of bed and out the door each morning. Another way of posing that question may reach for something even more essential: "In what way, in what form, do we see the here we're in?"

Like the child with the toy in random pieces, we feel uncomfortable with formlessness. Formlessness brings us to the face of chaos. The face of chaos brings us to face the unacceptable, if not the untenable. It brings us close to an existential nothingness, a vacuum in which our sense of identity cannot come into being, as with the child, or cannot maintain its integrity, as we can feel we face each day, can experience every day.

Until we reach an almost unimaginable state of internal stability or surety of self, we sense our existence as a self against the background of the world and the others in that world. We arrive at our sense of self because the rest of the world, the world in which our identity exists, exists in itself. We experience the world as a relatively stable place on which our self counts for its reference points. We need such points of contact which allow for and support the existence, the growth, and maintenance of that self, our sense of self.

In some very substantial way, we endlessly take our measure from the world around us. The child playing with the new toy and all its many pieces, measures her/him self and her/his ability to act productively and effectively in the world by doing something with those pieces, bringing them into some form. When that child cannot make anything out of those pieces, she/he may accept that fact and simply play with them as pieces to be grabbed, hoarded, thrown about, and generally abused. Paradoxically, that child just made some form out of those pieces by assigning them the function of pieces-to-be-thrown-about-and-abused. Even frustration can lead us into form because we need to perceive the existence of form so deeply that we find or make it happen in spite of all appearances. Making a mess may come to some as making form.¹

The child may feel temporarily satisfied with assigning pieces-to-be-thrown-about-and-abused as a form for the new toy. However, we really strive to make not only form out of the world. We strive to find or make meaning out of that form. That sense of meaning about form links directly to our sense of our meaning, our self, through participating with and in that form. When making a mess out of seemingly random parts satisfies the child permanently, it might mean that child will live quite chaotically as she/he grows into adulthood if emotionally that child ever reaches adulthood. Most of us know someone who lives seemingly comfortably in a state of seeming formlessness with apparent ease and satisfaction. Living with such a person can prove difficult because that person cannot or will not see what we see as disorder as disorder. That person feels a rightness about such disorder in our terms because that person may feel no essential confidence in getting beyond the pieces-to-be-thrown-about-and-abused stage of her/his identity. The child with the formless toy prevails. That meaning perspective, early formed, has become part of the self of that person, part of the vision of the person, and has become an essential way of seeing and experiencing the world—a meaning perspective.

That's quite a perspective to live with. We all have them—meaning perspectives—just not that same one.

Meaning perspectives defined and formed—July 21, 2011

Our perspective refers to the manner in which we see something, anything, everything. Our meaning perspective refers to how we interpret what our perspective allows us to see. Our meaning perspective offers us a way of taking the apparent chaos that surrounds us from time to time and giving it some form which we have predetermined before we see what we see. Oddly, we operate in this way, generally, while remaining remarkably unaware of the existence of that meaning perspective. Our friend who lives in what we see as a mess doesn't say to her/him self, "Oh, this is really a mess, but I see it through a meaning perspective that tells me it's the best kind of order I can have being the unorganized kind of person I am." Our limited awareness of meaning perspectives often comes in the form of "I am" statements:

"I am lazy."

"I am a procrastinator."

"I am angry."

"I am stupid."

"I am wonderful."

"I am lousy."

"I am smart."

"I am a liar."

"I am always late."

When we speak the "I am" phrase, we refer to something that we believe forms an essential, definable part of us—what we present to ourselves and the world as our identity. When one of the being statements feels threatened or defensive, the person who holds it will say, "Don't try to change me. That's just the kind of person I am." Or "Don't try to change me. You have to accept me that way I am."

All this refers to a state of being. It's a very existential grammatical form that speaks of the reality of existence our self and our role in that reality. When someone says in the jargon form, "It just be's that way, bro" that person refers to something that person believes and recognizes as an unchangeable part of the universal structure of reality. That's a truly existential statement although the speaker may well see it more simply, clearly, and directly than that. However the speaker perceives these statements, it doesn't change their startling, revelatory quality. We must leave whatever is under discussion alone, it says, because it represents an unchangeable, immutable, and incorrigible reality.

When we use the "to be" statement, we limit the way we see ourselves and the world. That limits how we act in the world. That limitation of action often supports and validates the meaning perspective that determined the action, so we feel validated in our belief. It works in this neat way with its own self-generating justification mechanism always part of the process. That does a lot to keep the problem and the profound benefit of cognitive dissonance² at bay. Statements of being simply seem to settle all questions about our self and the world in which that self operates.

Meaning perspectives often if not always, operate in this powerful, existential, and unquestioned manner, but are all these statements even true? Not when we examine them, reflect on them critically. Meaning perspectives using the "To be" form makes for a surety about how everything works in us and around us. We can find something very comforting in such form making. However, meaning perspectives come from our past or from someone else's past. If they come from the past and determine what we see in the present, then we live to a greater or lesser degree in the past, inside the meaning perspective produced in the past. In that way, meaning perspectives limit or determine the choices that we can and do make, or they eliminate choices we might wish to make from even the remotely possible. That's why we often talk about how we have to "change," so we can make a new choice. That always sounds very daunting if not frightening and self-hurtful. Meaning perspectives can keep us from realizing that we can make choices that will change outcomes but not necessarily ourselves. We may not need to change ourselves at all to make such choices which feel a great deal less frightening and nearly impossible than "change."

What do we "be"?

On what we be or what we choose to be—July 22, 2011

In our lives there exist certain immutable elements which, in honesty and reality, simply "be" part of us. When we critically reflect on such "to be" or "I am" statements, they settle out as a very precious few.

We "be" born in a certain place. Whatever we say, if we were born in a nameless place of no interest to anyone, that's where we were born. Our birthplace offers no choice, so we be born where we were born. "I am (be) from . . ." somewhere inescapably and unchangeably.

We live within the physical constraints of our biological sex. Whatever we may do to alter our gender performance, or surgically and hormonally our physical appearance, we remain unchoosing with the same biological sex. We can choose a great deal that surrounds it, but biological sex offers no real choices. We "be" male or female.

We reach a certain age, and aside from getting older, that's how far in time we are away from our birth. No matter what we do to improve our life or extend our life, we cannot choose our age. It just "be's".

If we find no choice about something that forms an inescapable part of our being, we "be" it, and that's done.

No equivalency exists between those forms of personal being and "I am a liar." Whatever number of times we may have lied, we can still tell the truth. We never "be" a liar. Even if we have lied countless times beyond all reckoning, so that we have no memory of ever telling the truth, each lie we tell still operates as a choice we make. It doesn't matter how unconscious that choice may seem, the choice remains ready to become part of our awareness. At any point, we can recognize the dangers and problems with lying and choose to speak the truth. Paradoxically the one statement that we might want to make as a statement of truth about our self, "I am a liar," would still form part of the cluster of our lies. We do not "be" a liar. We choose to lie. The wonderful thing about such a realization comes in recognizing that we can choose to stop lying anytime we want. Knowing we can always make new choices can liberate us from past choices and habits better left in the past. Such a realization³ offers us empowerment of the personal kind.

We may not stop lying, however, until we critically reflect on the meaning perspective represented by the phrase, "I am a liar" that we feel forms part of our self and our identity. However we feel about our lying, we will not make a new choice until we question the validity of that meaning perspective.

When we speak even more self-defining and self-defaming statements such as "I am stupid," we do even more damage to our self by making "I am stupid" an essential part of our identity, our self, part of our very being. As a teacher, I have found that many if not almost all of my students felt that they were stupid or, at least, feared that if the truth were known they could say "I am

stupid" quite truthfully. It didn't cheer them up much, but there it was—deeply and painfully inside them. ⁴

Meaning perspectives and their influence—July 23, 2011

It can feel quite natural for us to question the above in this way: "How does that 'I am stupid' meaning perspective get inside those students and inside us?" As with much if not almost all in life, we learn it. We aren't born with any idea of our dumbness or inadequacy. It's not genetic. We get taught it. Our teachers are everywhere in our lives, and they teach what countless others have taught them over and over, time out of mind. If we return to our child on the floor with all these pieces around her/him, we can see how such a feeling can start. It starts from "I am right and you are wrong" statements which amount to "I am smart and you are dumb" statements.

Our child decides to make some sort of form out of the chaotic pieces spread around and risks it. She/he puts one piece into another, and it works. She/he follows with another piece, and it works—sort of—but good enough for starters. The child begins to feel some confidence in the process, and she/he is mostly interested in the process rather than the result. It might even begin to feel powerful, and power in terms of making form out of chaos can feel just like smart. Along comes a caring but result oriented adult. The adult has lived long enough and been taught enough to feel and believe in results as the primary if not only real concern (another meaning perspective—ends rather than means are important). This adult sees the child at work and lovingly and caringly corrects what the child has done explaining all the while how this is the way it's really done, and when you do it this way, you get this result. The adult means no punishment, and the child may show no hurt, but the child has learned or begun to learn. There is a right way to do things, inherently the smart way, and a wrong way to do things, inherently the dumb way.

At some very real level, the child may learn that she/he is inherently dumb because she/he did not know how to get the right result. The fun and power she/he felt in the other process probably came from the same dumbness. That makes the child all the more dumb and incompetent. The child may have also learned that she/he has enough smart to pretend to know what to do by pretending to the skill and smart the adult has shown, but that would begin as a pretence and end as a pretence. The original dumbness that our child feels can swiftly become an incorrigible meaning perspective which will grow over her/his lifetime. Most if not all of her/his learning experiences will validate that original experience and make of that meaning perspective a truth of the very nature of the child, of the identity of that child, and operate as the essential part of the identity of that child well into adulthood and to the end of life itself.

When we enter the educational system, if not before, the essential question the system asks us sounds, like this even not if actually spoken: "How smart are you?" Words don't just make sounds. They make feelings. After discussing this question and the resulting feelings with many students, I know how much these words hurt. I have felt it myself. "How smart are you" works as the first learning and part of a growing meaning perspective.

Thank You for previewing this eBook

You can read the full version of this eBook in different formats:

- HTML (Free /Available to everyone)
- PDF / TXT (Available to V.I.P. members. Free Standard members can access up to 5 PDF/TXT eBooks per month each month)
- Epub & Mobipocket (Exclusive to V.I.P. members)

To download this full book, simply select the format you desire below

