

“FROM HOLDING ON TO LETTING GO”

Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at William and Mary

Spring 2024; Tuesdays 1:30-3:30; January 30, February 6 & 13

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“Our culture promotes and rewards optimism, eternal hopes, persistence, and dogged resistance to change... even when irreversible endings or inevitable transformations overtake us. We don’t get any training or much support for how and when to give up, surrender, move on, change course or embrace the new normal.

We each will have personal experiences fitting this model, drawn from our personal histories amid family life, business ventures, career paths, health decisions, even core convictions and beliefs.

We will review a model describing the usual sequence humans follow as they identify, resist and come to accept emerging new realities (welcome or adverse). Finally we will look at guidance on how to improve or accelerate our quitting skills.”

Title of course: I'm interested in how people respond, struggle and cope when faced with a challenge or adversity that probably CAN'T be fixed, that is irreversibly heading to an unwelcome ending or a painful loss. I'm not at all against dreaming, 'reaching high' or 'holding on.' I marvel at the achievements attributable to vision, grit, hope, idealism, persistence and courage under fire. I am neither a pessimist nor a blind optimist. I am neither a risk avoider nor a fool. I am neither a cynic nor a hopeless romantic.

“When we think of loss we think of the loss, though death, of the people we love. But loss is a far more encompassing theme in our life. For we lose not only through death, but also by leaving and being left; by changing and letting go and moving on; by our conscious and unconscious losses of romantic dreams, impossible expectations, and illusions of freedom, power, and safety; and by the loss of our own younger self - the self that thought it would always be unwrinkled and invulnerable and immortal....

Losses are part of life - universal, unavoidable,
inexorable. And these losses are necessary because we
grow by losing and leaving and letting go.” Viorst 1986
Necessary Losses

Kenny Rogers: “The Gambler” 1979

"If you're gonna play the game, boy,
ya gotta learn to play it right.

You got to know when to hold 'em,
know when to fold 'em,

Know when to walk away and
know when to run.

Now ev'ry gambler knows that the
secret to survivin'

Is knowin' what to throw away and
knowing what to keep.”

PLAN OF COURSE

Day 1: Meet and greet; admin issues; bibliog.; quotes

Personal and conceptual foundations; reality checks

Factors bearing on adverse encounters

Day 2: What is usual process in facing transitions?

Day 3: How can we do better on approach & encounter?

PERSPECTIVES ON REALITY

- 1) From the outside looking at or down upon:
....we are observing from a safe distance;
- 2) Intellectual approach (i.e. not experiential):
We are 'talking about' adversity...easier
- 3) Secular/academic lens on seeing and interpreting,
even though all faith traditions offer other lenses

DOMAIN OF COURSE

Significant but common unwelcome encounters in road of life which are unavoidable, inexorable, unfixable.

Some time for discernment, judgement, agency:

NOT: Sudden blows, emergencies, freak one-offs

IN HINDSIGHT: If you 'coulda,' you 'shoulda': folded, quit, run away...or surrendered/submitted to new realities. GOING IN: Uncertainty, confusion, doubts.

Track awareness, approach, encounter, initial resolution

MAJOR CATEGORIES OF ADVERSE ENCOUNTERS

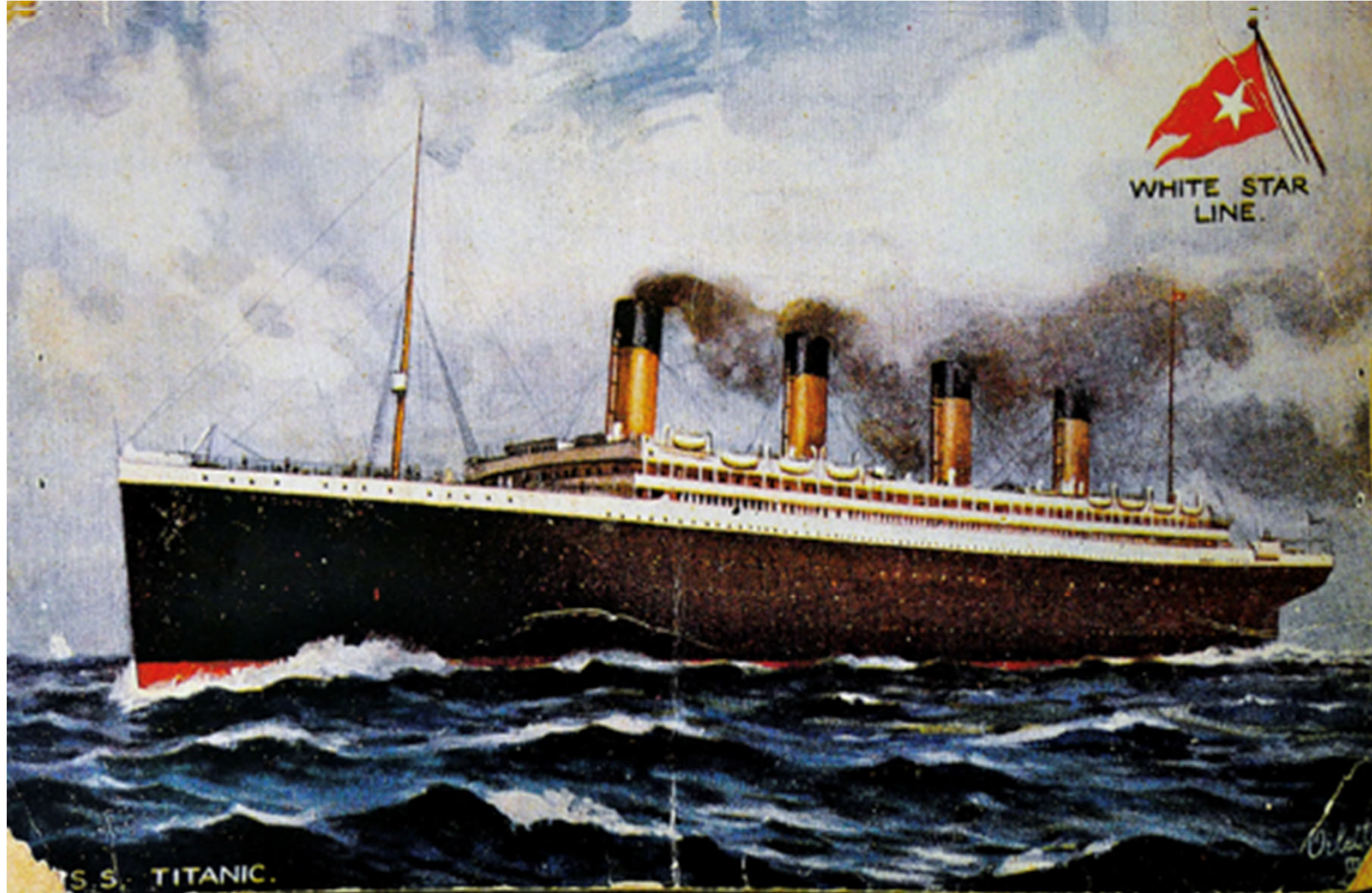
Relationships (losses, transitions, endings)

Business/Career/Military/Industry failures, collapses

Serious Health or Disabling Injury Issues in self or SO

Faith/Beliefs/Convictions ('loss of' ____, paradigm shifts)

Radical changes in technology, habitats, environments



LIFELONG EXPERIENCES

“Childhood is a series of disillusionments in which we progress from innocent belief to a harsher reality. One by one we leave behind our conceptions of Santa Claus, the tooth fairy, the perfection of our parents, and our own immortality....” Livingston



REFRAMING NECESSARY LOSSES

Most messaging in this culture advocates for pro-active efforts to forestall or overcome impending “failures”. Fine but...in this course I want us to learn better how and when to ‘fold em.’ This is a training course on giving up, moving on, surrender, acceptance of necessary endings or transitions... sometimes but rarely fatal...sometimes a gift or blessing

DUELING RULES FOR LIVING

OUT OF THE FOG:

**Comfortable, stable, uneventful, boring
middle-class suburban youth in 50s
then**

ADULT WAKE-UP CALLS

Premature death of 46 y/o
mother at my age 20

VIETNAM

“Life is what happens to you while
you’re making other plans.”

John Lennon

Vietnam era Junior Navy Officer:
Damage Control Assistant

OUT OF THE FOG II: MORE ADULT WAKE-UP CALLS

- Early career as child psychologist: idealism didn't 'cure'
- Child development clinic – new parents first learn of catastrophe
- 'Psychotherapy' offered to Chicago underclasses – why?
- Developmental assessments of babies at CDR;
- School Psych assessments of special ed./ handicapped kids;

OUT OF THE FOG III: MORE WAKE-UPS

- Adol. Psychiatric Hospital 20 years: St. Jude of lost causes;
- 40 years PP in Clinical Psychology: 1/10 seeking Growth;
4/10 Stabilize/Fix; 5/10 Surrender/Quit/Accept/Move on;
- last 5 years as volunteer: elders in decline or crisis, and in EOL
- Pastoral care team at church; Williamsburg Hospice House



"So, does anyone else feel that their needs aren't being met?"

... the architecture that the critics n

**10 KEY CONCEPTS/FACTORS
AFFECTING UNWELCOME ENDINGS**

10 KEY CONCEPTS/FACTORS AFFECTING ENDINGS

I. Schema, mental maps, templates,
constructs: Making sense of emerging
novelty. What is this? What to do with
it? What to expect [or not] from it?

Piaget's theory of cognitive development.

“deals with how humans gradually come to acquire, construct, modify and use knowledge...a progressive re-tooling of mental structures due neuro maturation and life experience.”

He believed that children construct mental ‘**schemas**’ to organize their understandings of the world around them... then map/paste [**assimilate**] new experience to existing **schemas**... until misfit between what they assume they already ‘know’ and new findings impels them to then adjust/sharpen [**accommodate**] their **schemas** accordingly.” Wikipedia

CONSTRUCTS (AKA “SCHEMAS”)

“All of us have certain lenses, or constructs, that we use to sift through the endless flow of information we encounter...”

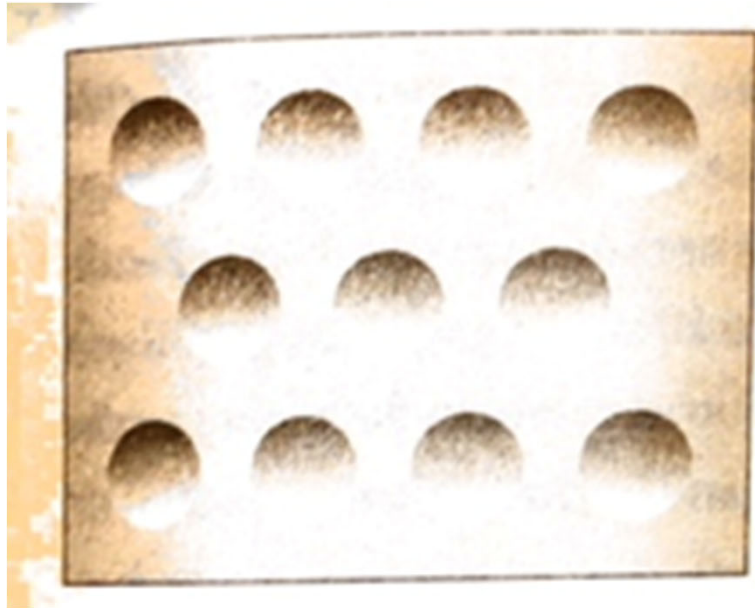
Useful insofar as they help us quickly assess a situation and form a temporary hypothesis about how to react.

Reliance on constructs is one of the ways in which we try to make sense of the world given limited time or information.” Epting

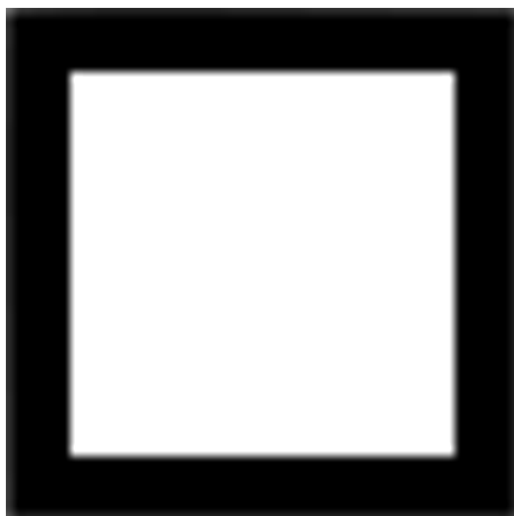
TEMPLATES (AKA “SCHEMA”)

“Templates help us use existing skills and strategies to understand new data and solve new problems.

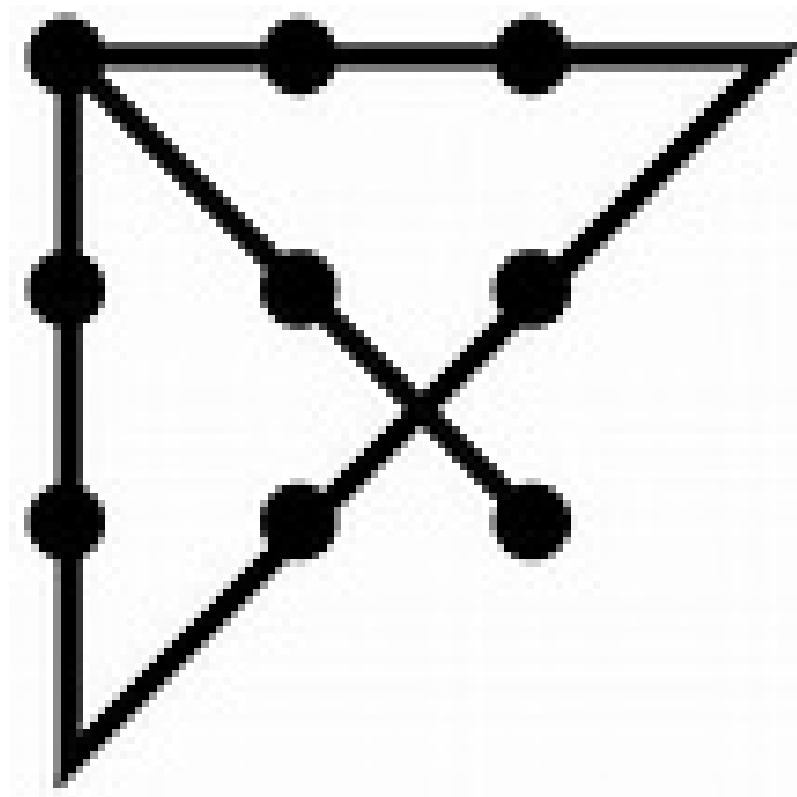
However, our need for the certainty, control and simplicity [offered by templates] makes thinking complexly seem too arduous and time consuming.” Pernow: Normal Accidents











II. Epistemology: How do you come to know and believe in what you think you know? Where do you go to look for answers or fixes? Why are you so sure you get it? Why is accommodating or chucking the current understandings and frameworks so difficult, so resisted?

WE DON'T KNOW WHAT WE DON'T KNOW

“There are **known knowns**; there are things we know we know (with some precision). “Sunrise at 6:31 am on 1/31.”

We also know there are **known unknowns**; that is to say we know there are some things we do not know [or don't know with certainty or clarity]. “When/how/where will I pass away”?

But there are also **unknown unknowns** – the ones we don't know we don't know... it is the latter category that tend to be the difficult ones.” D. Rumsfeld 2002 “Titanic sunk at 2:20 am”

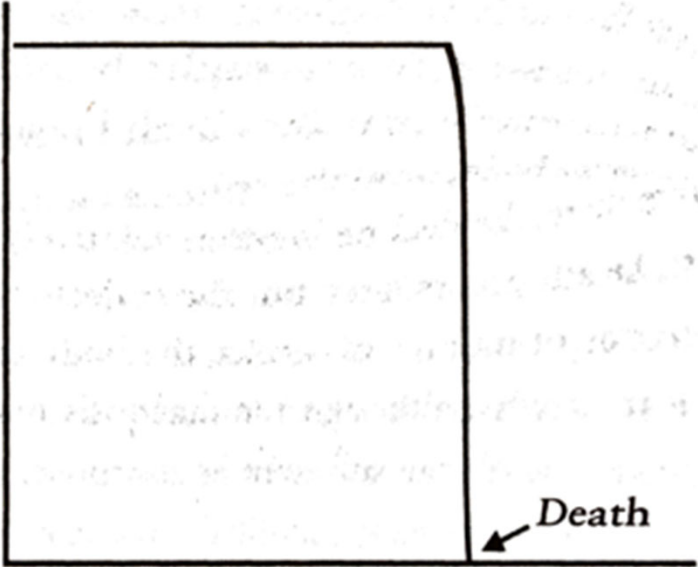
A SEARCH FOR KNOWN UNKNOWNS

Gen. Colin Powell's directions to his intelligence officers before his briefings during Iraq war:

“Tell me what you know. Then tell me what you don't know. Only then can you tell me what you think. Always keep those three separated.”

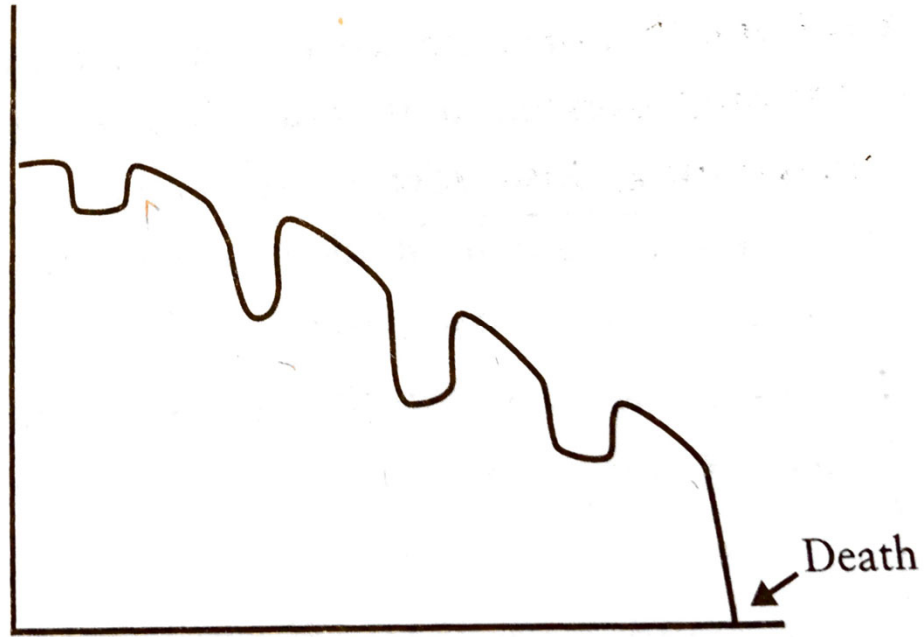
Taleb (and Hopkinson) would add #4: “tell me what you have not considered or imagined. What **might** happen?”

III. Process and pace of collapse: precipitous...roller coaster...insidious/incremental? How a necessary transition comes in at you affects coping strategies.



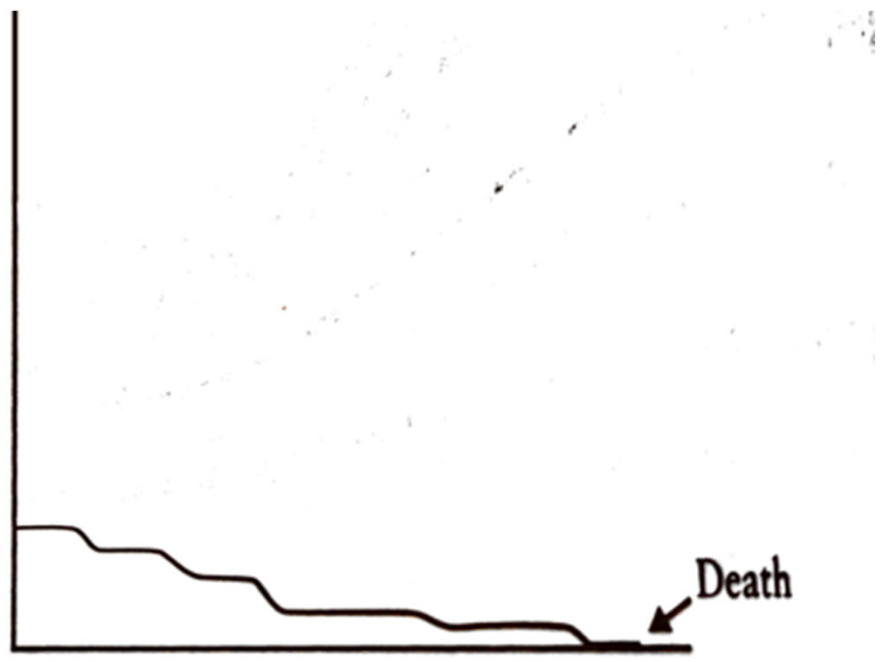
“Life changes fast.
Life changes in an instant.
You sit down to dinner and life
as you have known it ends.”

Joan Didion, 2005, on morning
after sudden death of her spouse



Relapsing and Remitting Illnesses

“This is a modern tragedy...our every impulse is to fight...the fact that we may be shortening or worsening the time we have left hardly seems to register.” Gawande



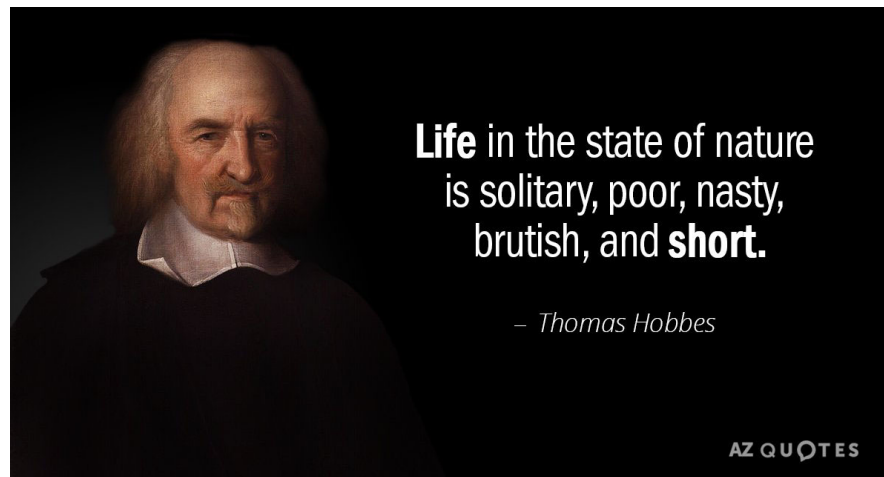
“I’m not afraid of death. I just don’t want to be there when it happens.” Woody Allen

IV. Stages of life span: When did an adverse challenge or forced transition arrive in your life? What tools/supports/resources/limits were available to you?

- A. Historical context: Where/when did this development unfold?
- B. Individual stage: infancy, retirement, young old, old old, eol.?
- C. Psychological maturation level and ego development?

20th CENTURY AMERICAN HISTORY: SHORT VERSION

First half: A relentless series of epidemics, tragedies and extended disasters, usually unforeseen...mankind was helpless in the face of life-altering adversities: Galveston hurricane; San Francisco earthquake; 1906 Measles; WWI; Spanish Flu; Depression; Communist revolutions; Polio Epidemic; WWII; H-Bomb. RESULT – Stoicism & Insecurity: “S..t happens...We are helpless.”



Second half of 20th: Relative peace; good public health; widespread prosperity; culture of naive optimism, a false sense of security based on faith in science, our powerful national defenses, and our booming industrial capacity.

RESULT- Prevalent and presumptive OVER-confidence:
“We are invulnerable and invincible....We can achieve anything we set our minds to...failure is not an option.”

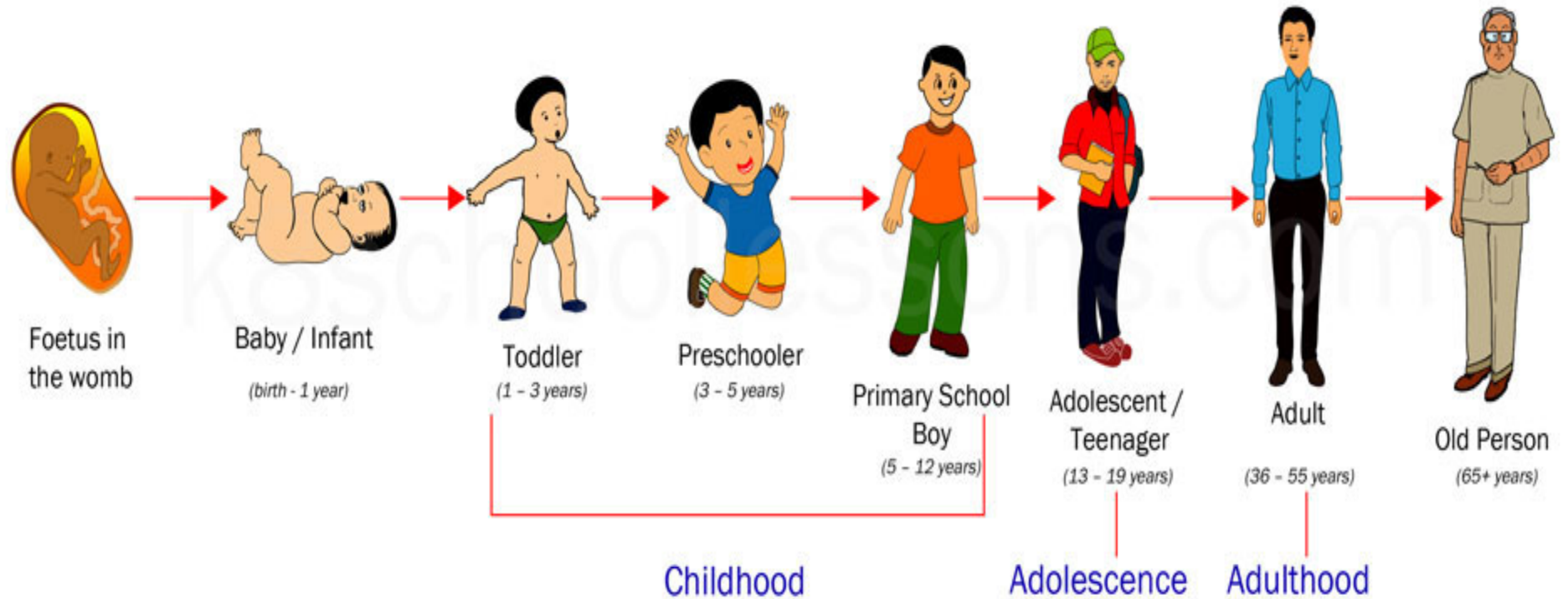
B. Historiography...we move along in cohorts (e.g. 'boomers'):
When in history did the adverse encounter arrive? What stage of life were you in when it did?

1930 1940 1950 1960 1970 1980 1990 2000 2020
***** keys events in your lifetime*****

What was our age in that year? What stage of life?

What were key cultural resources/constraints re the issue at that time?

B. Developmental: infancy, toddlerhood...middle age... retirement age, young old, old old, eol., after?



Lakota Sioux:
Stage Theory of Personal Development

birth - age 20: "child"

21 - 40: "youth"

41 - 60: "man" / "woman"

61- 80: "real man" / "real woman"

81- 100: "wise man" / "wise woman"

C. Psychological stages:

- Freud's ego development
- Erikson's dilemma's over life span
- Viorst's sequential necessary losses.

What was your level of maturity or sophistication when..?

What tools/strategies/experience/limits did you have?

V. Personality dimensions:

- Tolerance for risk and/or failure.
- Adaptability/flexibility/resilience.
- Hubris/egotism/pride/arrogance
- Need for clarity and certainty to feel secure
- Openness – perhaps gender differences



VI. Impermanence in reality...Nothing lasts

VS

Persistence, continuity, longevity in fantasy.

IMPERMANENCE IS REALITY

“Accept life cycles...nothing lasts forever...loss built into the nature of everything.

When we accept that fundamental truth, we can align our actions, feelings and behaviors to accept how things are, even when they die.” Cloud

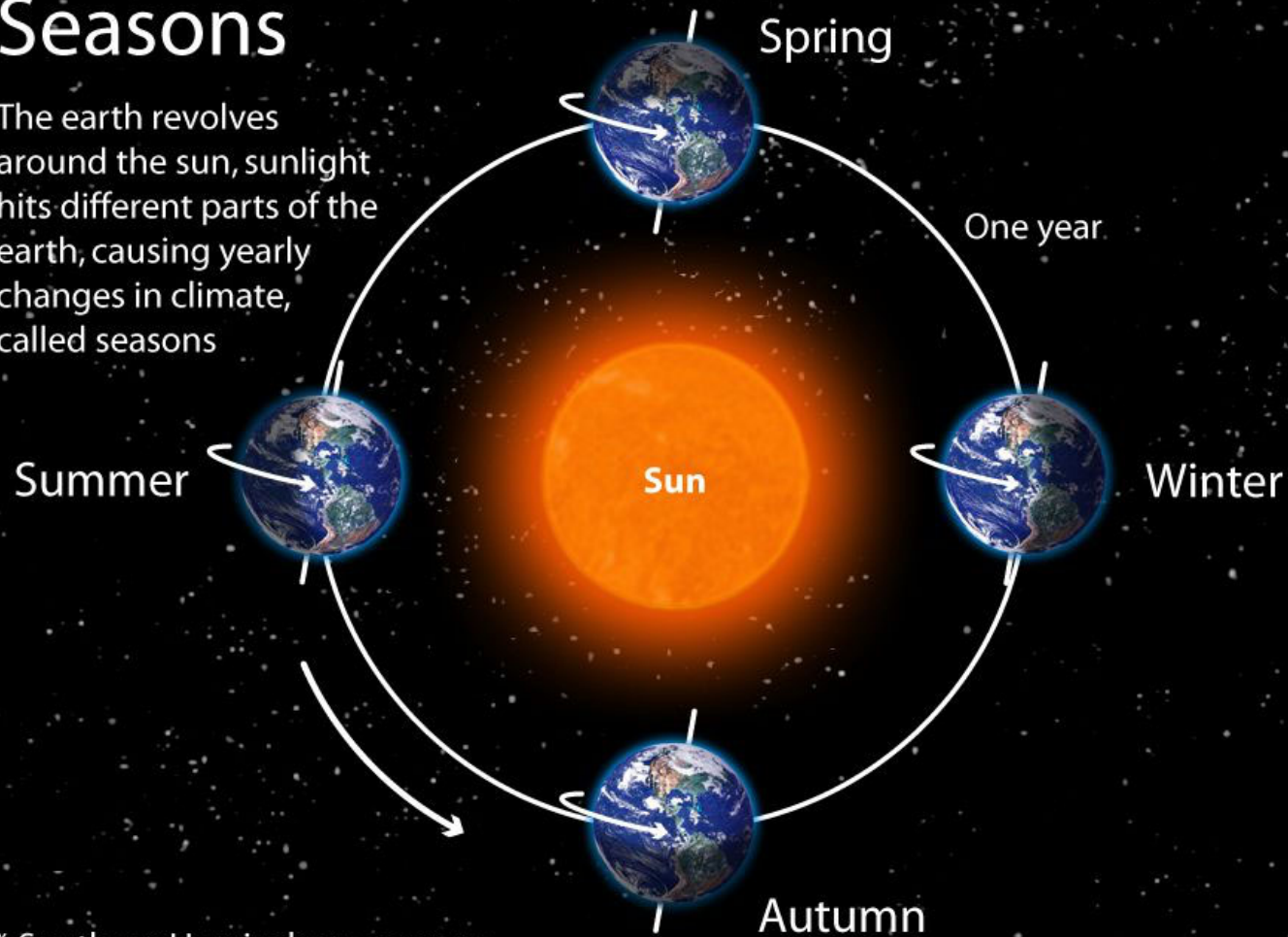
VII. Openness to seasons/cycles/rhythms/flow
as natural order.

To *every thing*
there
is a *season*, and
time to *every* a
purpose
under the heaven.

Ecclesiastes 3:1

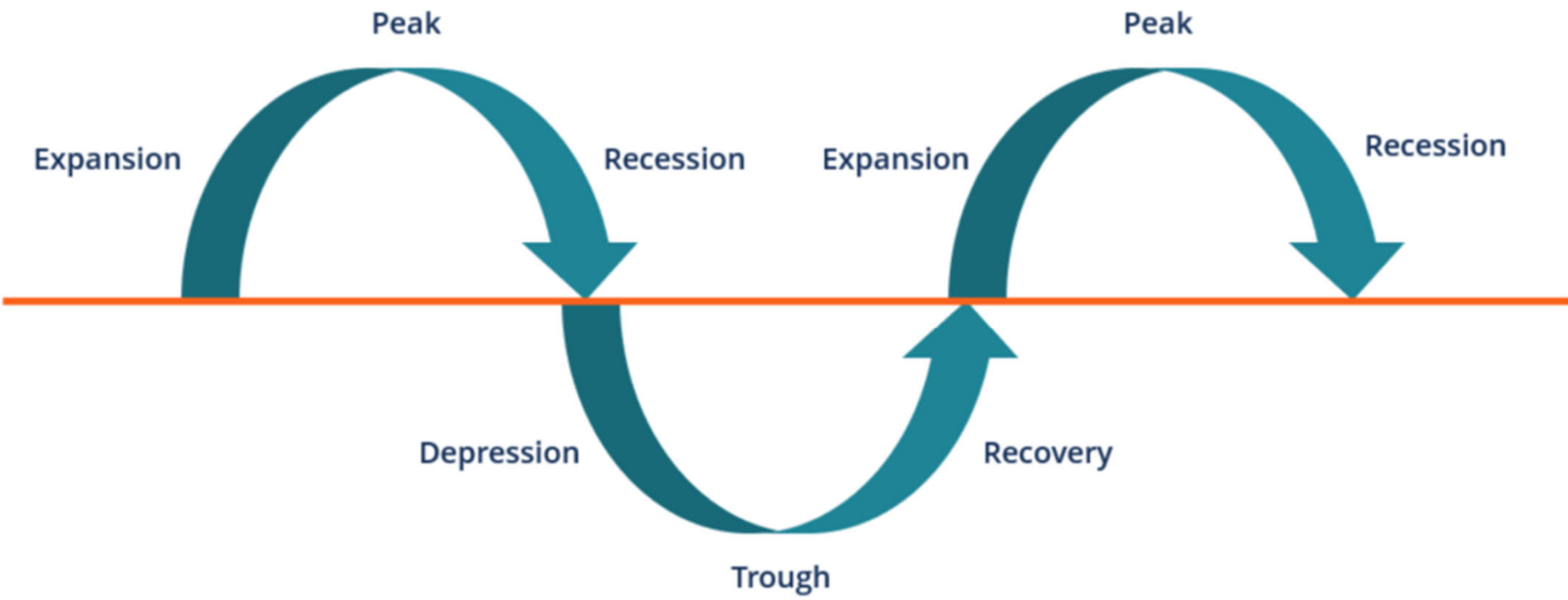
Seasons

The earth revolves around the sun, sunlight hits different parts of the earth, causing yearly changes in climate, called seasons

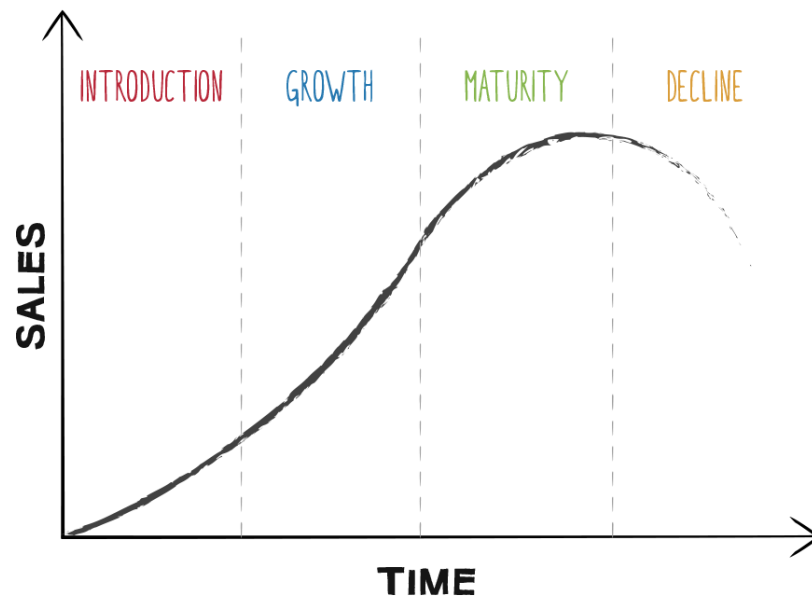


* Southern Hemisphere seasons

Business Cycle

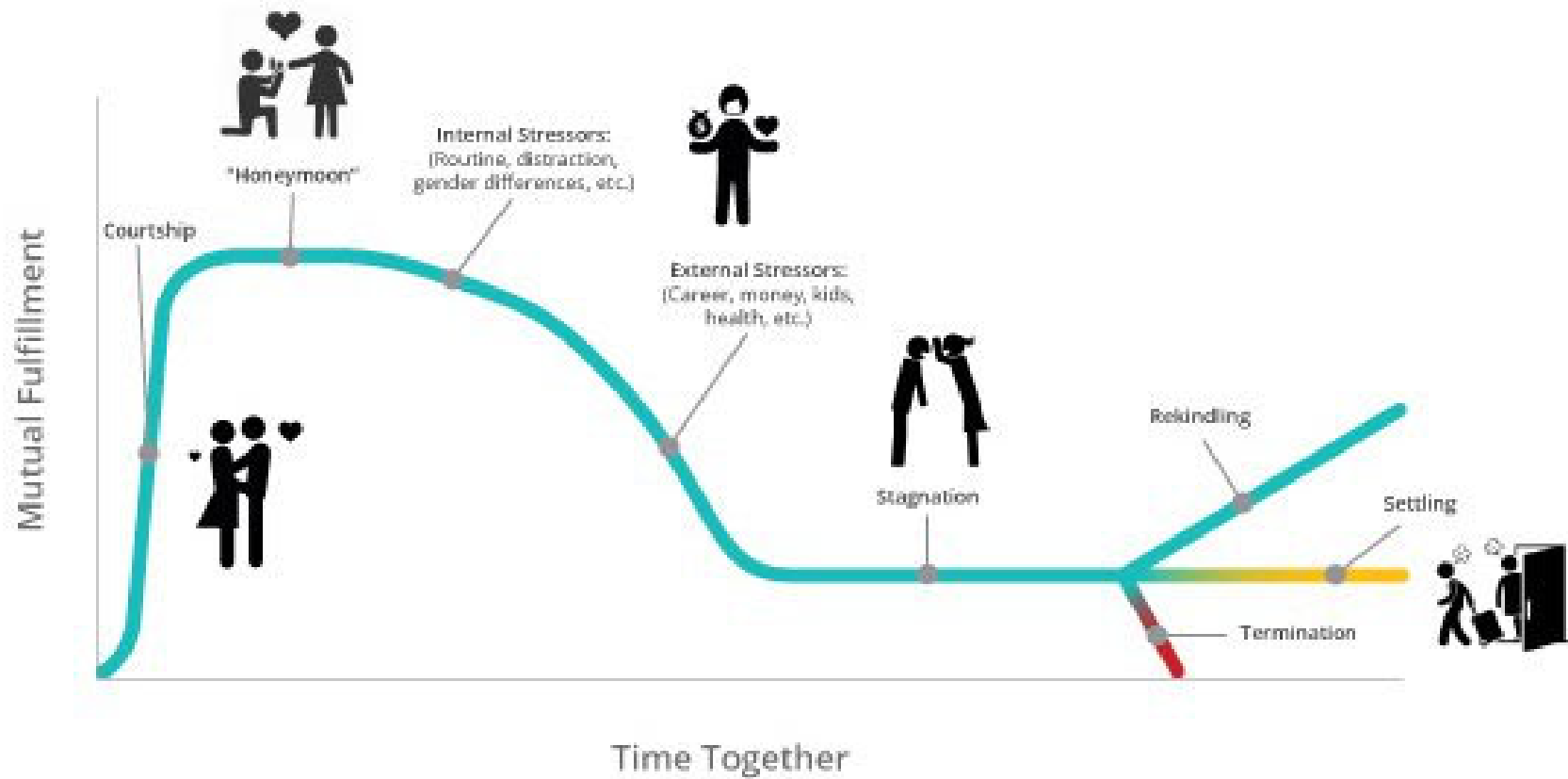


THE PRODUCT LIFECYCLE MODEL



ESSENTIAL MARKETING MODELS [HTTP://BIT.LY/SMARTMODELS](http://bit.ly/smartmodels)

Committed Relationship Life Cycle



VIII. Tolerance for suffering...pain...loss...injury...death.

Suffering: (S___) Happens

“... modern society does a poor job of preparing 21st-century humans for the inevitable ebb and flow of discontent.

Therapist James Davies: we have created a culture that assumes happiness to be the normal, healthy human condition. Deviations from the blissful path — sadness, anxiety, disappointment — are thus treated as illnesses in search of a cure.” Lee

Buddhism: Noble truths. 500 BC.

- (1) Everything is impermanent (so loss is inherent).
- (2) We add to suffering when we desire what we don't have and/or **attach/cling to things going/gone away**.
- (3) Way to **end this cycle**: curb desire/craving, wake up, accept loss and changes underway. Live in NOW!

Pain of loss made worse by ‘attachment’ to what you once had but is now going away. Made worse still by ‘desiring’ or craving what you don’t have now, probably never did, and very likely never will.

ACCEPTANCE: HOW TO FACE AN ADVERSITY

“When we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves....Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms—to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one’s own way.”

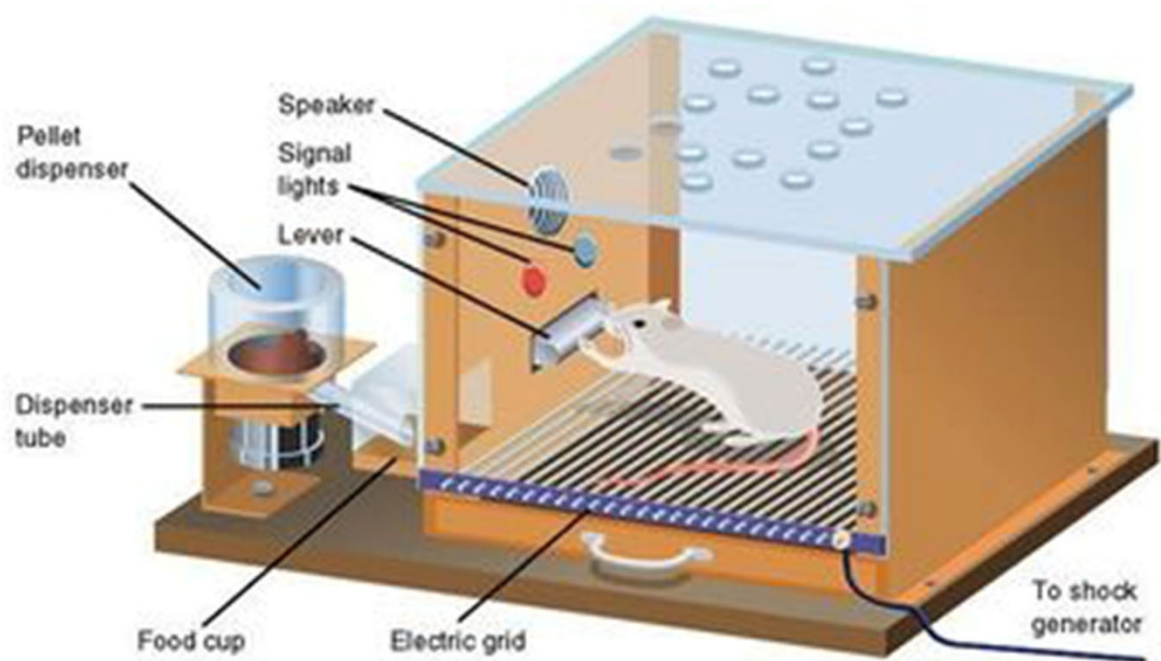
Viktor E. Frankl M.D., Auschwitz survivor, [Man’s Search for Meaning](#), 1946

IX. Persistence training:

We keep doing what has “worked” before, at least occasionally. Best if we’re conditioned to expect any payoffs to be random and scarce (e.g slot machines).

Once sharply stung we avoid any risk of re-injury, if possible and easy. We persist in avoidance long after necessary or sensible; never re-test. e.g. too hot tea

If hurt minimal & included with goodies, we tolerate a “small price to pay” and do again. e.g. hangovers



“If at first you don’t succeed, try, try again.” Anon

VS

“If at first you don’t succeed, try, try again... and then quit...there’s no sense being a damn fool about it.” Fields

“Once burned twice shy...why chance it?” Anon

VS

“No pain – no gain”...”Hurts a little but worth it for sure.”

X. Degree of investment in, attachment to hope, wishes, dreams...generally and in this particular situation.

“To dream the impossible dream
To fight the unbeatable foe
To bear with unbearable sorrow
To run where the brave dare not go
To right the unrightable wrong...
To try when your arms are too weary
To reach the unreachable star
This is my quest to follow that star
No matter how hopeless, no matter how far.”
“The Man of La Mancha”

“Hope springs eternal in the human breast.”

Pope 1732

REALISTIC hope energizes/sustains efforts.

FALSE hope may be delusional and can be self-destructive

FALSE HOPE

“Hope is one of the most powerful forces in the universe. With hope we can endure almost anything...hope keeps us going. And that is the problem...

Hope... sometimes creates problems if we are not in touch with reality. In that case it is hope that keeps us going down a road that has no realistic chance of being the right road.

In a false reality hope is the worst quality you can have.” Cloud

WHY HOPE SEEMS SO COMPELLING

- (1) Hope redeemed/affirmed is the actual experience and the history told by winners and survivors, not the losers, casualties or the dead.
- (2) Most potential mishaps we have hoped wouldn't happen, DON'T happen. Hopes usually come true and 'proven right' every day.

w
c



DAY TWO

What usually happens when an unwelcome ending looms?

“OMROSA”

We know from a wide variety of settings and situations in human life, that the process of coping with irreversible/inevitable change emerges and progresses onward through a common course.

OMROSA OUTLINE

Oblivion: no clue what's coming, and no accessible way to know

Misperception: signs there but we don't notice or we misconstrue

Resistance: we register but deny, dismiss or twist emerging reality

Opposition: compelling evidence but many actively argue against it

Surrender: we accept defeat, go through process of grief

Acceptance: we "accommodate" to new reality, move on

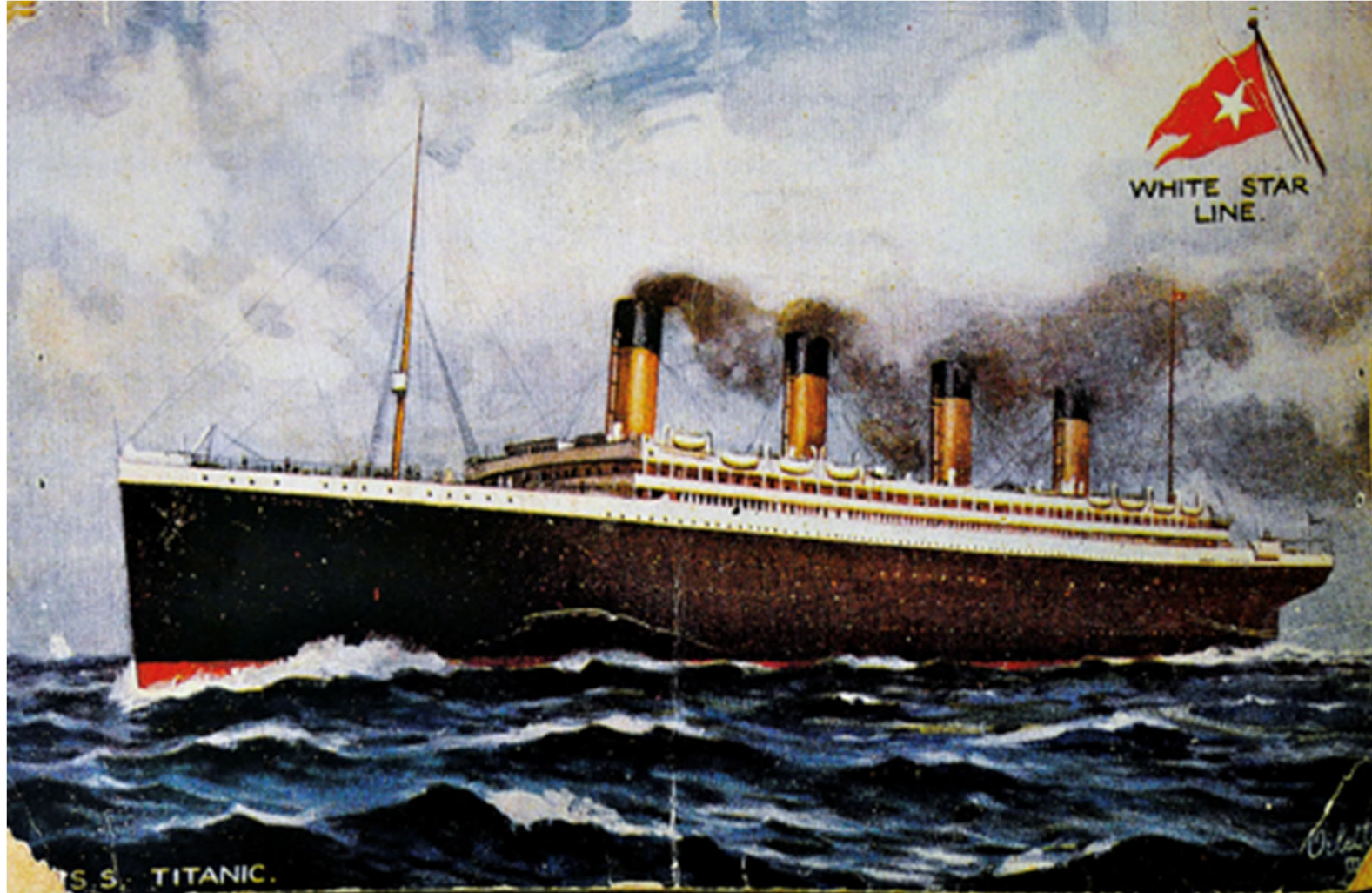
OMROSA I: OBLIVION

Due: actual undetectability; or warning signal not landing on our receptors; or signal lost in apparently unrelated noise

-It may be impossible to detect w/ current & available technology or alerting practices. [e.g. microscopes and colonoscopies]

-Radar not aimed in that direction; radio not tuned to that frequency

-Signals may arise unlinked from actual emerging threat or adversity:
e.g. Birth defects & Thalidomide... Thinning bird eggs & DDT



“When leaving his surgery on the morning of April 16, Dr. Bernard Rieux felt something under his foot. It was a dead rat lying in the middle of the landing. On the spur of the moment he kicked it to one side and, without giving it a further thought, continued on his way downstairs.”

Albert Camus: THE PLAGUE (1947)

OMROSA II.

MISPERCEPTION:

WE DON'T NOTICE/DETECT WHEN WE READILY MIGHT HAVE

- not expected, lost in prevailing paradigm, hidden in creeping normalcy or silent evidence
- no framework, schema, language, maturity to guide or orient us so confusion & ambiguity
- inaccurate perceptions of reality: distortions of incoming data to construct a 'sensible' perception
- jump to easy and available conclusions, then settle



YOU DON'T SEE WHAT YOU DON'T EXPECT

“But in all my experience, I have never been in any accident...of any sort worth speaking about. I have seen but one vessel in distress in all my years at sea. I never saw a wreck; never have been wrecked nor was I ever in any predicament that threatened to end in disaster of any sort.” E.J. Smith, 1907 testimony; Future (1912) Captain, RMS Titanic

Some adversity is unimagined in current world view. We're not looking for it or noticing it as it emerges from "out of nowhere." True to claim: "we had no way to see it coming." E.G.: Pandemics...affairs...break-through technologies...sneak attacks...

“The most important failure
leading to the 9/11 attacks was
one of imagination.”

9/11 Commission Report, 2004

SILENT EVIDENCE

- We believe that what we see is all that is there: We ignore or disregard the “silent evidence.” Taleb
 - e.g. shrink-flation in the cereal box or the candy bar
 - empty seats in the pew, the concert hall, the political rally
 - lucent lesions on the x-ray

Creeping normality

... major changes can be accepted as the normal situation if they happens slowly, in small unnoticed increments. The changes get "lost" but would be regarded as alarming or objectionable if they took place in a single step or over a short period.
E.G. domestic violence...alcoholism...obesity



“Human beings are poor examiners, subject to superstition, bias, prejudice, and a PROFOUND tendency to see what they want to see rather than what is really there.”

Scott Peck

PERCEPTION IS NOT REALITY

“Most people have the impression that they simply see what is there and do so merely by opening their eyes and looking. Not so!”

Arian Mack

CONSTRUCTING REALITY

“In the face of uncertainty we must of course make a judgment, even if only a tentative one...we create a mental model of an expected universe because we can't handle the complexity of the present one...actually creating a world that is congruent with our expectation even though it may be the wrong world....

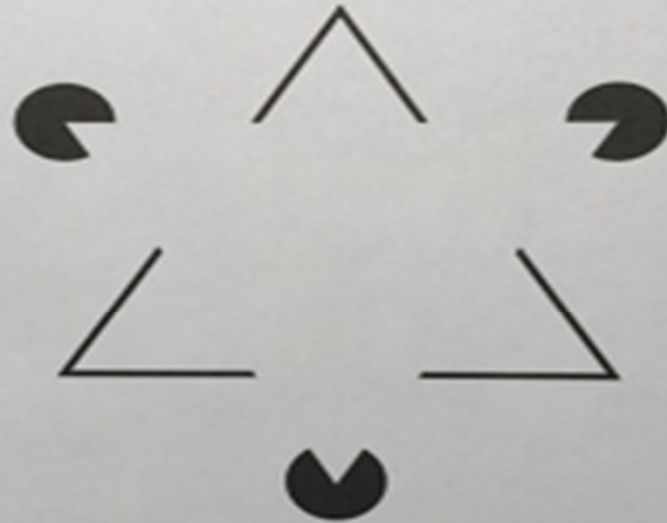
and then we process information according to what fits [our notion of] the expected world” Pernow: “Normal Accidents”



I
LOVE
PARIS IN THE
THE SPRINGTIME

FLOATING TRIANGLE

Do you see an upside down white triangle floating above the background triangle? That's because these separate fragments evoke the perception of edges where there are none. Our brains fill in the gaps and create a triangle that isn't there.



QUICK AND EASY LOCK ON FIRST SENSIBLE CONSTRUCTION

In logic: “jumping to conclusions”

In medicine: “diagnostic bias” or “search satisfaction”

In police work or courtrooms: “rush to judgment” or “presumption of guilt”

In social life: “stereotyping,” or “labeling” or “racial profiling”

In sales it is called: “sway” (initial preferences prevail, rarely changed)

In romance it is called: “love at first sight,” or “stricken” or “infatuation”

OMROSA III: RESISTANCE

Normal resistance to change due preference for the familiar. Reliance on existing schema, maps, templates to process unusual or novel experience.

Awakening, but we deny signals or twist meanings:

- Deny, simplify, minimize, ridicule, dismiss, distract, mis-attribute, bend the data, discount importance or implications
- Cognitive Biases: simplicity, optimism, affective, narrative, commitment, certainty and the biggie – “**confirmation bias**”
- Don't look for, or dismiss, negative evidence and disconfirmation

DENIAL AND MIS-ATTRIBUTION

Benjamin Guggenheim put his mistress [and her maid] in Lifeboat #9 saying: "We will soon see each other again! ...It's just a repair... Tomorrow the *Titanic* will go on again."



Commonly deployed deflections, feints, push-backs & mis-attributions:

- "It's only a phase...this is temporary...this will pass."
- "It [chest pain/distress] must have been something I ate."
- "No dear...Daddy is 'napping' [passed out] cuz he's tired."
- "Don't be silly!...You're so over-reacting!...Nonsense!!!"
- "It's only a tropical storm, not a hurricane...no biggie."
- "Yeah, but what about _____ over there"? [what-about-ism]

HOW WE DECIDE WHEN TROUBLE ARISES

“What we often DO in approaching novel problem situations:

- (1) We too quickly scan, appraise and form a tentative solution;
- (2) We look for examples and other data to confirm our hunch;
- (3) We **don't** try to look for negative evidence, or disregard it;
- (4) We lock into [commit to] and elaborate our initial impression;
- (5) We are slow and resistant to changing our solution even when we are obviously wrong.” Lehrer: ‘How We Decide’

SEARCH FOR CONFIRMATION

“We have a natural tendency to look for instances that confirm our story and our vision of the world. These instances are always easy to find. Alas, with tools and fools anything can be easy to find.” Taleb

SENSE MAKING FALLACY

“We have limited ability to look at sequences of facts without weaving an explanation... or forcing a sensible logical link [of causality] upon them.

Explanations bind facts together. They make facts more easily remembered, then help them make sense...they increase our IMPRESSION of an understanding [even if false].” Taleb

UNCERTAINTY AVOIDANCE

“We over-focus on known knowns, the familiar, the tried and true, our accumulated knowledge, the predictable details and expectations...

We deny/flee from uncertainty... we substitute certainty for doubts...

Reflecting a pervasive and fateful human need to remain in control of one's internal and external worlds by seemingly understanding them, even at the expense of falsifying the data.” Katz

Optimism Bias

“...the inclination to overestimate the likelihood of encountering positive events out in the future [i.e. not today] and to underestimate the likelihood of experiencing negative events now or later.” Sharot

“What Americans believe people **can** change in life is, in historical perspective, truly astonishing...” Seligman

THE OSTRICH PARADOX

“Hurricane Sandy: Only 20 percent of coastal residents had an evacuation plan. What went wrong? In this case, the **cognitive bias of excessive optimism** kicked in: Residents knew all too well that a storm was at their doorstep and that many would be affected- they just thought it wouldn't affect *them*.”

Kunreuther. "Why We Underprepare for Disasters,”

Beach home owners who have survived a previous hurricane are LESS likely to evacuate. Deadly assumption: all hurricanes alike.

AFFECTIVE BIAS

“A preference [by MDs] for ‘feel-good’ or optimistic diagnoses or interpretations over darker, more painful or catastrophic realities. In medicine this short-circuits search for worst-case scenarios, especially if the Dr. likes the patient.” Groopman M.D.

“The sun’ll come out tomorrow...bet your bottom dollar.”

“MAGA”

BIAS FOR SIMPLE over COMPLEX

“Most of us, most of the time, want certainty and we want nice, neat, simple explanations...

This preference can radically oversimplify reality and interfere with critical thinking and problem solving...

Now and then solutions may be simple, but usually they are not.”
Michael Shermer

Usual response: Do nothing at all and then justify inaction:

- “What’s the big deal? Why should I care”?
- “Be calm and carry on. Relax!!!!”
- “So what?...What difference does it make anyway”?
- “I can’t be bothered to care about such matters.”
- “What’s the point?: Adjusting won’t work & costs too much.”
- “It’ll get better... You’ll see... Let’s not over-react.”



SIPRESS

"O.K., we'll try it your way—let's ignore any problems that come up in the next twenty years and see what happens."

OMROSA IV: OPPOSITION

If increasing evidence and pressure to change, some may dig in – fight back against probability of a looming disaster or an unwelcome new reality. Opposition doesn't have to happen. Not everyone joins.

Persistence > Doggedness

Once a conclusion is reached or strategy is established, we rely on it. We keep doing what we know has ‘always’ (or usually) worked before in our own experience. We rarely try something new unless we have to...cuz persistence has ‘paid off’ before. Strong cultural support & reinforcement.

DIG IN...STAY THE COURSE...BUSINESS AS USUAL

In science (Kuhn): “ideological immunity” against a “paradigm shift”

In political history (Tuchman): “the march of folly”

In the wilderness disasters (Gonzales): “bending the map”

In business: “commitment bias” or “throwing good money after bad”

In the stock market (any gambling): “chasing the loss” or “doubling down”

In military campaigns: “the ‘generals are always fighting the last war”

BENDING THE MAP

"The cause of many wilderness disasters is the tendency of the adventurer to 'bend the map' when the trail data doesn't fit the map. Then he becomes frantic and disoriented when he can no longer deny the misfit. Panic ensues." Gonzales



MORE OF THE SAME

“A fanatic re-doubles his efforts after he has forgotten his aim.”

Santanyana

“If some is good, then more is certain to be better.”



DETERMINED PURSUIT OF FOLLY

“The most lethal combination of character traits... turns out to be arrogance allied to ignorance...an indulgence of fools.

[Such] stupidity is frequently disguised by ambition and a relentless perseverance that can be a virtue only when the path chosen is informed and comports with reality.

Passionate pursuit can ennoble or destroy us depending on the wisdom that directs it.” G. Livingston.

OMROSA V: SURRENDER

Eventually, after the new reality prevails for a while in spite of our best efforts to oppose or reverse it, we give in/give up/surrender... or acknowledge that the new reality is established...the past is not coming back.

Often a painful transition: be-wilderment, despair, grief, paralysis, resentment, regret, self-recrimination

Gradually we accommodate our schemas, or create new ones that fit the real world. New understandings.

CHOOSING ONE'S ATTITUDE

Billionaire Benjamin Guggenheim, realizing he was not going to survive, returned to his cabin and changed into evening wear, a rose at his buttonhole. He remarked to his valet: "We've dressed up in our best and are prepared to go down like gentlemen." Wikipedia



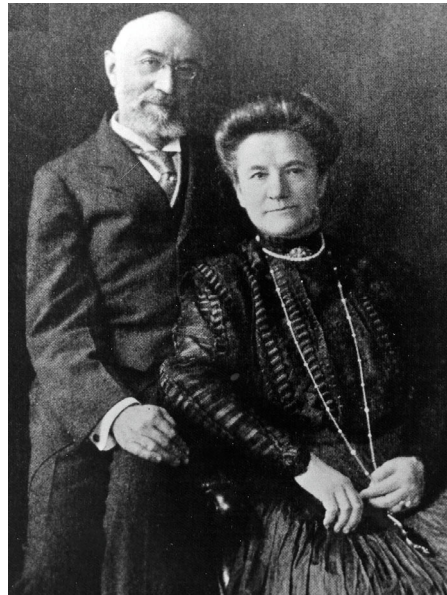
OMROSA VI: ACCEPTANCE

An updated and realistic plan is adopted and developed.

Maintenance is needed to control relapses and yearnings.

Once a new equilibrium, we may discover unanticipated opportunities and unimagined benefits.

On the night of the sinking, Ida and Isidor Straus (founder of Macy's) were standing near Lifeboat No. 8. Isidor declined [two seats offered] while there were women and children still remaining on the ship. He urged his wife to board, but she refused, saying, "We have lived together for many years. Where you go, I go." Wikipedia



SURRENDER CONTROL TO FATE/GOD

“Now I lay me down to sleep.
I pray the Lord my soul to keep.
If I should die before I wake,
I pray to God my soul to take.”

New England Primer 1750

UNFIXABLE AT LAST: EOL

“... medicine exists to fight death and disease, and that is... its most basic task. Death is the enemy. But the enemy has superior forces. Eventually it wins. And in a war you cannot win you don't want a general who fights to the point of total annihilation.

You don't want George Custer [but] Robert E. Lee, someone who knows how to fight for territory that can be won and how to surrender when it can't, someone who understands that the damage is greatest if all you do is battle to the bitter end.” Gawande

~ WANTED ~

A good woman who
can clean and cook
fish, dig worms, sew
and who owns
a good fishing boat and
motor.

Please Enclose Photo
Of Boat And
Motor.

BEFORE YOU INVEST IN THE FIRST PLACE:

“You can’t win if you don’t play” [Va. Lottery]...but you can’t lose either.

“Casino odds send 6% of all \$\$\$ bet to the house. If you gamble you will lose.”

“Don’t enter a competition unless you start with an advantage.”

Jack Welch, former CEO General Electric

**DAY THREE:
APPROACHING AND NAVIGATING
THROUGH NECESSARY ENDINGS**

Can We Learn to Improve on the Usual Process?

“WEBSTRAP” SHORT VERSION

WAKE UP...observe/notice...attend

ENGAGE the experience...don't deny

BREAK OUT of ruts/molds

SEEK contradictory evidence

TOLERATE the time/effort/unpleasantness of the research

RUN...after deciding to fold, don't linger, dawdle, cling

ACCEPT new realities...grieve the losses...move on

PLAN for and enter the next phase

WAKE UP...observe/notice the unexpected...pay attention...be surprised...figure/ ground...silent evidence...situational awareness

1. “Be here now.”

2. “Listen to the dog.”

-what’s coming in?...what signals are emerging out of fog/noise?

-what’s fading out, slipping away?...harder now to pick up in noise?

-what’s missing or gone that should be, used to be there?

Heraclitus 500BC



“Expect the unexpected (or you won’t find it).”

ENGAGE the experience...explore/study...speculate...be curious...inquire...don't deny/dismiss/distort alert signals

3. “What is going on here”?...”What’s up”? E.g. Dr. Rieux

4. Listen to intuitions, gut reactions, “sense of things” and ask why/how/whence. OK to use enhancements, tech. aids. alerts

We must filter, screen and select what we respond to, but...

don't hide behind willful blindness, flagrant neglect. dereliction

“Of each particular thing, ask first: ‘What is it in itself?... What is its nature?...its essence’”?

Marcus Aurelius, 170 A.D. Meditations.

You don't bring me flowers
You don't sing me love songs
You hardly talk to me anymore
When I come through the door at the end of the day
I remember when
You couldn't wait to love me
Used to hate to leave me
Now after lovin' me late at night
When it's good for you, babe
And you're feeling alright
Well, you just roll over and turn out the light
And you don't bring me flowers anymore
It used to be so natural (used to be)
Talk about forever
But used-to-bes don't count anymore
They just lay on the floor 'til we sweep them away

DON'T BEND THE MAP!!!

“When the terrain you are standing on does not conform to the map of it that you hold, the map is wrong.” Army Infantry training mantra

Because counter-intuitive, must be trained/baked in

“The only way to make sense out of change is to plunge into it, move with it, and join the dance.” Watts

BREAK OUT of ruts/molds...check auto-filing...try new templates...challenge **default settings, assumptions and definitions**...**invent unique points of view**

5. “Change it up.” Violate routines/habits on purpose.

6. “...from the point of view of the fish.” Another vantage point/perspective?

-Insanities?...What do you persist in doing in spite of failures?

-Persistent avoidance?...What to you still avoid for no current reason?



**Insanity: doing the same thing
over and over again and
expecting different results.**

Unknown

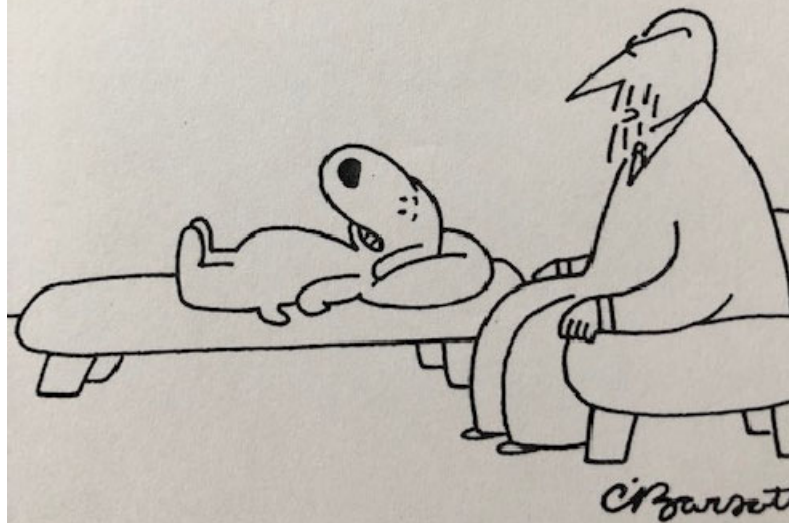
Avoidance Strategies Persist If Let Them

Very hard to unlearn or discontinue obsolete avoidance habits...

- never try again or stay long enough to see danger is gone or now manageable
- direct price of excess caution is 'invisible,' buried in budget & tradition
- indirect missed opportunity costs are silent evidence (return w/ other stock)
- no experience with positive alternatives (don't know what you're missing)

So...review your risk assessments...update goals...recalculate costs/benefits

THE NEW YORKER



*"Protect your family, protect your yard, and
stop obsessing about port security."*

ERIDA

#1 BESTSELLER

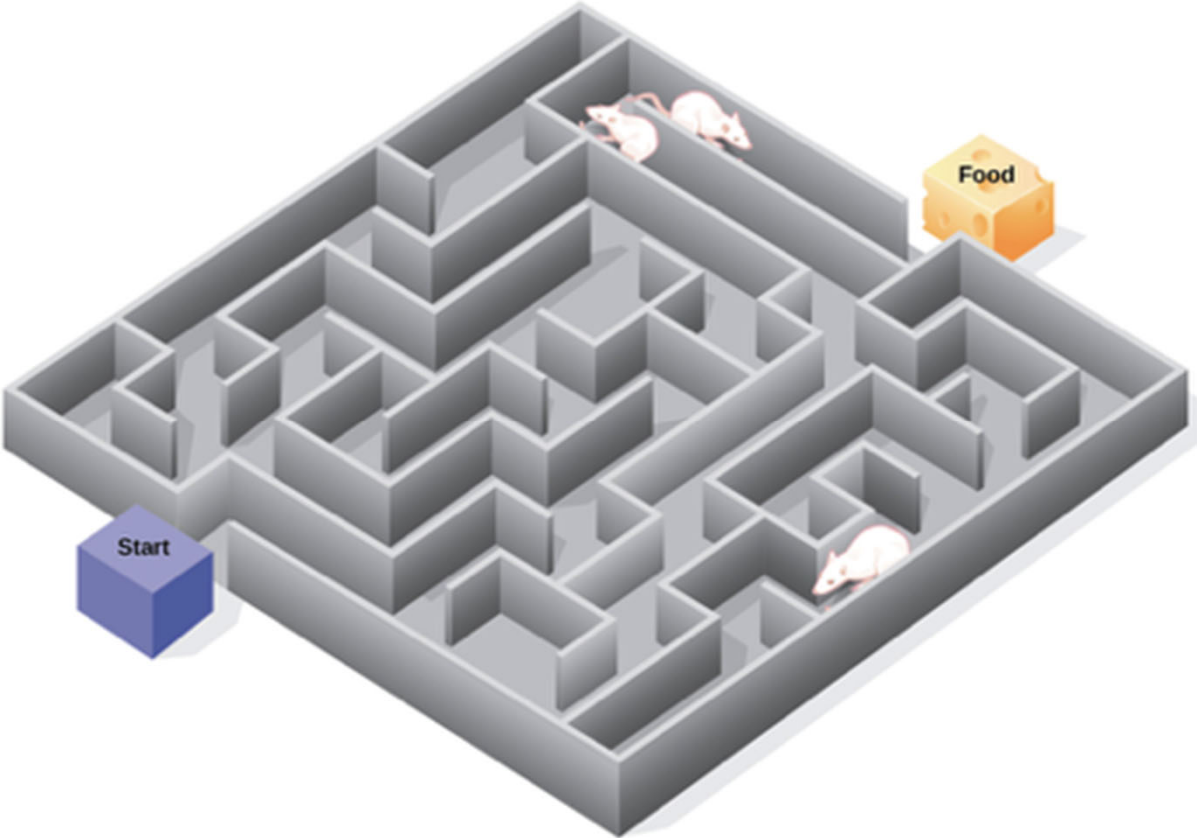
An A-Mazing Way to Deal with Change
in Your Work and in Your Life

Who Moved My Cheese?

Spencer Johnson, M.D.

Foreword by Kenneth Blanchard, Ph.D.,
coauthor of *The One Minute Manager*
The World's Most Popular Management Method





‘Cheese’ Thought Experiment

What do maze-trained rats do as quantity of cheese served at the end goes down day after day, and then stops forever at familiar site, while a new delivery site has been established elsewhere in the maze, undiscovered?

Answer: they continue [for days] to go directly each new training day to the old feeding station... but they **immediately** leave empty dish to start a new search and maze exploration, especially if they can smell it nearby.

What would pairs of people do if their metaphoric ‘feeding site’ (where they get food, nurturance, \$\$\$, affirmation, acclaim, sexual favors, etc.) gradually, then totally failed to deliver at usual site, because of relocation?

Answer: Most people would PERSIST each day in going to the old ‘feeding site’..STAY THERE... WAIT... HOPE...PLAY FOR TIME OR MIRACLES

Exception: Less settled cultures...nomads...hunter/gatherers

Then eventually normal humans would:
clamor, pray, join protest groups, form investigative
committees, pass welfare subsidies, bitch and moan, blame
management, curse God, compete for crumbs, fight each
other for seats at the table, follow a savior or charlatan

SEEK contradictory evidence...don't settle for "certain," sensible, cheap, easy, simple, familiar, optimistic, feel-good confirmation

7. Consider alternative theories. "Differential diagnoses." Null hypotheses: belief only a hunch till PROVEN to be true

8. Pose challenge questions. "Yeah, for sure, but what ELSE could this be"?

9. "What DON'T you know"? "What have you not yet imagined, considered or foreseen"? What are your unknown unknowns?

CHALLENGE QUESTIONS

“In pragmatic terms I believe in what works. If what you are doing now isn't working, why not try something else”?

G. Livingston, M.D.

“How's that workin' for ya”?

Dr. Phil

“What reason, other than the fact that I **want** this to work, do I have for believing or even hoping that tomorrow is going to be any different from today”? Cloud

CHALLENGE CONFIRMATION BIAS

“More worrisome, when we are trapped in confirmation bias, we may not consciously perceive facts that challenge us, that are inconsistent with what we have already concluded. In a complicated world...we simply can't change our minds.”

James Comey, 2018: “A Higher Loyalty.”

”Great presentation...now let me hear our best counter-argument.”

CHALLENGE CERTAINTY BIAS

“The only way to counteract the bias for certainty [and re-confirmation of our ‘certainties’] is to... force ourselves to think about the information we don’t want to think about,

...to pay attention to the data that disturbs our entrenched beliefs..[so we don’t] end up ignoring relevant information...”

Sharot

DON'T PURSUE FOLLIES

Follies = 'historical mistakes' with common features: the policy taken was contrary to self-interest; it was not the only policy available; it was pursued despite clear warnings that it was mistaken; and it was pursued further well after it had proven itself a failure. Example: Vietnam.

Wooden-headedness = source of self-deception playing a large role in government... assessing a situation in terms of pre-conceived fixed notions while ignoring or rejecting any contrary signs. It is acting according to wish while not allowing oneself to be deflected by the facts.” B. Tuchman

TOLERATE the time & effort of the research...the unpleasantness of painful realities and indefinite or conflicting findings.

10. Google/research it. Stress tests...war gaming...dry runs. Stay tentative till done. Due diligence before conclusions.

11. Don't flee from mild discomforts or minor risks - part of life, maybe a message.

TOLERATE DISCOMFORT

“The harmful cultural belief that much of our everyday suffering is a damaging encumbrance best swiftly removed gets in the way of a more robust response: namely, approaching unpleasant emotions as **potentially productive** experiences to be engaged with and learnt from.” Davies cited in Lee



THE NEW YORKER



GOOD SHRINK, BAD SHRINK

WEDNESDAY
FEBRUARY 4

STAY TENTATIVE

“...we make diagnostic errors when we narrow down our field of possibilities and zero in on a single interpretation of a situation or person.

We have to be careful not to rely too much on such pre-emptive judgments as they can short-circuit a more nuanced evaluation. They narrow our perceptions and make us more apt to get swayed by a hasty diagnosis....” Epting

LOSS AVERSION TRUMPS RISK TAKING

“We experience the pain associated with a loss much more vividly than we do the joy of experiencing a gain.” Brafman

“We are more afraid of losing what we have than not getting what we want.” Livingston

SO: Suck up the loss...don't double down to “chase a loss”

TOLERATE FAILURES

“I ask you to fail without fear...Fearing failure is an obstacle to success students must overcome, both for there own sake and for the sake of society.” Meredith (HS valedictorian 2018)

DOUBLE DOWN

“Chasing a loss: in stock investing when you buy at any price but almost never sell it off for less...and often buy more as price goes down.

Investors ignore the current data, put on blinders, and proceed with the singular purpose to recover as much of their loss as possible.” Brafman

TOLERATE UNPLEASANT DISCOVERIES

“I wanted to live deliberately...I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life...to drive life into a corner, and reduce it to its lowest terms, and, if it proved to be mean, why then to get the whole and genuine meanness of it, and publish its meanness to the world; or if it be sublime, to know it by experience, and be able to give a true account of it in my next excursion.” Henry Thoreau

“Those managers who have the greatest difficulty abandoning things are often unable to face reality...common contributor to executive failure involves delusional attitudes that kept this inaccurate reality in place.” Krames

RUN...after deciding to fold, don't walk to the nearest exit...don't linger, dawdle, cling, hesitate

12. When best evidence says “fold ‘em” then do it. Run, reorient, cut your losses.

13. Judgment calls always made in uncertainty...just do it!...don't look back.

All organized “high stakes” ventures have “exit strategies,” buy-sell benchmarks, “abort” criteria, and also conduct abandon ship and rescue/recovery drills...

CUT YOUR LOSSES

“Winners are smart quitters who quit often, quit fast, and quit without guilt... like when they realize their current path and decisions cannot get them any farther toward their goal.

Cutting their losses allows winners to reallocate their time and energy to the things that *do* continue to move them forward.”

Godin: [A Little Book that Teaches You When to Quit \(and When to Stick\)](#)

IT'S JUST BUSINESS

“Face reality...fix, close or sell any/all struggling divisions or product lines...every year fire the bottom performing 10% of the work force...” Jack Welch

HEROIC MEDICAL EFFORTS AT EOL

“My own belief is that the use of heroic and experimental medical technology is often a moral outrage, showing callous disrespect for the sacredness of human life and pathetic inability to face the reality of human death.”

Stinson in The Long Dying of Baby Andrew

DITCHING THE PLAN

“In nature, adaptation is important, your plan is not. Its a Zen thing: We must plan but we must be able to let go of the plan too.”

Gonzales re: avoiding wilderness disasters.

“Plan the flight. Fly the plan. But don't be married to the plan.”

US Air Force pilot training mantra

“When the facts change I change my plans. What do you do sir”?

John M. Keynes, economist

ACCEPT and adapt to emerging and new realities...grieve the losses...move on

14. What's gone is gone: mourn the loss, cherish and hold the memories but live here now

15. The future is not here yet: dream & savor the anticipation, but live here now

What do you mean
It didn't work out?

How can a relationship *not work out*
...when it's already *worked out* for



7 hours



7 months



or 70 years?

The miracle is to connect at all!
As long as it goes is as long as it goes.
Living it is the point.
Sustaining it is merely extra credit.

Flash Rosenberg ©1994

Hopkinson's Favorite T-Shirt

FRONT: "I am where I should be, doing what I should be doing."

BACK: "Otherwise I would be somewhere else, doing something else."

SWALLOW YOUR PRIDE

“But when it comes down to it, quitting, even if it’s something small, can be a real struggle. The solution... is to take your ego out of the picture.

When you focus on protecting your ego, you focus on the wrong questions, like ‘Am I a failure?’ or ‘Am I good enough?’ Instead, ask yourself: ‘What’s the best move for *me here?*’” Neff

ACCEPT “DEFEAT”

“Accept terminal illness or business failure as valid possibilities. The best performers know how to fail well. They see it, accept it, and move on. They do not keep beating a dead horse...They can call it quits, wave the white flag and go forward.” Cloud

PLAN for and enter the next phase...discover
and enjoy the new opportunities and freedoms

16. Start looking for new cheese.

17. The “new normal”- might not be so bad as
you thought...or maybe better?

THE HANDWRITING ON THE WALL

Change Happens

They Keep Moving The Cheese

Anticipate Change

Get Ready For The Cheese To Move

Monitor Change

Smell The Cheese Often So You
Know When It Is Getting Old

Adapt To Change Quickly

The Quicker You Let Go Of Old Cheese,
The Sooner You Can Enjoy New Cheese

Change

Move With The Cheese

Enjoy Change!

Savor The Adventure And Enjoy
The Taste Of New Cheese!

**Be Ready To Change Quickly
And Enjoy It Again & Again**

They Keep Moving The Cheese

At first, I was afraid, I was petrified
Kept thinking I could never live without you by my side
But then I spent so many nights thinking how you did me wrong
And I grew strong, and I learned how to get along

And so you're back from outer space
I just walked in to find you here with that sad look upon your face
I should have changed that stupid lock
I should have made you leave your key
If I'd have known for just one second you'd be back to bother me

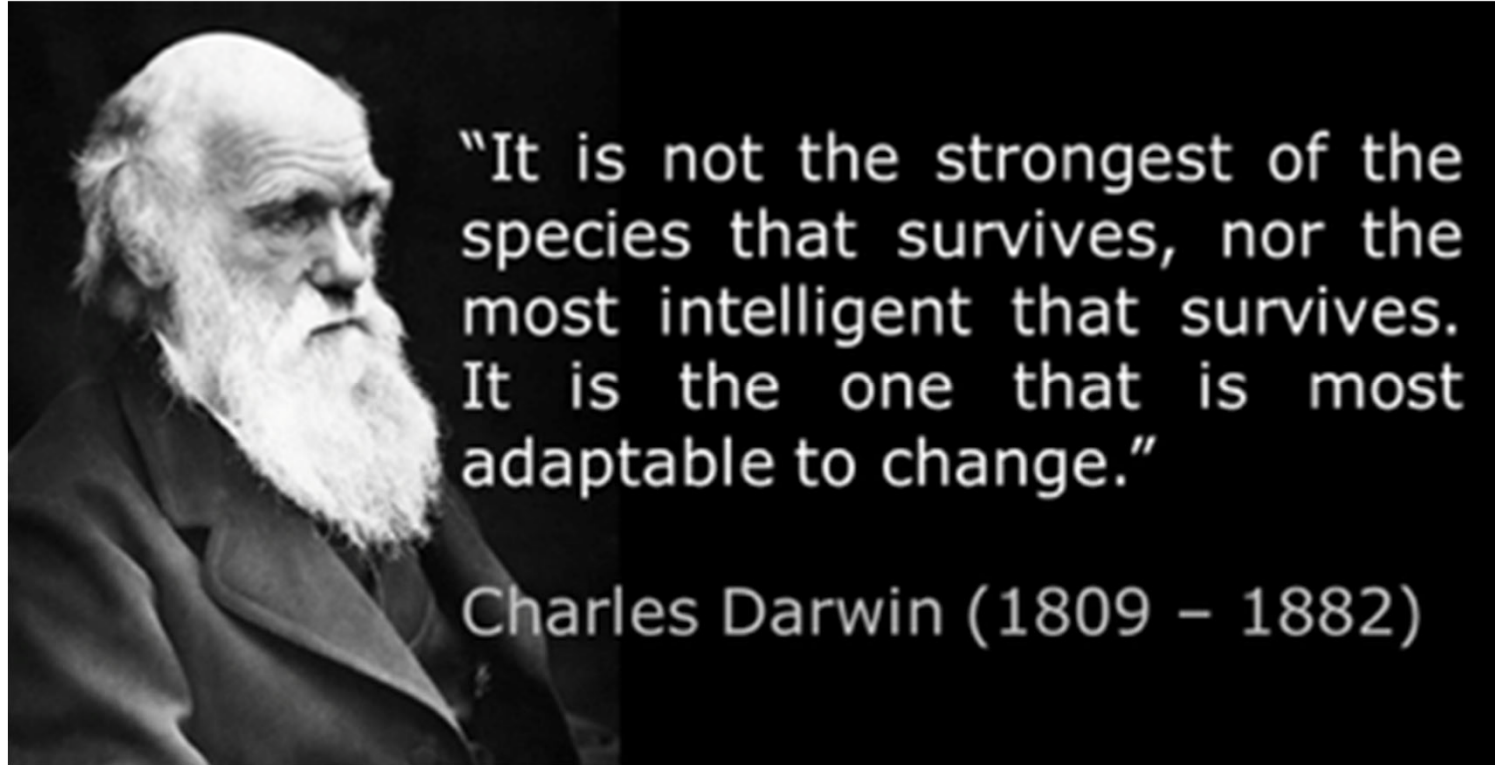
Go on now, go. Walk out the door
Just turn around now 'cause you're not welcome anymore
Weren't you the one who tried to hurt me with goodbye?
Did you think I'd crumble?
Did you think I'd lay down and die?

Oh, no, not I
I will survive
Oh, as long as I know how to love I know I'll stay alive
I've got all my life to live
I've got all my love to give
And I'll survive
I will survive, hey, hey

The Serenity Prayer

“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.”

American theologian Reinhold Niebuhr 1934



"It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent that survives. It is the one that is most adaptable to change."

Charles Darwin (1809 – 1882)

LOSS, **SOMETIMES**, AS GATEWAY TO POSITIVE FUTURES

“The opportunity to move on to an intimate love relationship begins for some at the end of their honeymoon. Love is not romance.” Peck: The Road Less Travelled

Step 1: AA Twelve Steps

“We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.” Bill Wilson The Big Book 1935 [i.e. recovery from alcoholism becomes possible only after you stop denying your powerlessness to your lifelong addiction]

“Free at last, free at last...thank God Almighty that I (we) am (are) free at last.”

Slave-era Negro spiritual...epitaph on gravestone of MLK

“Losses are part of life - universal, unavoidable, inexorable. And these losses are necessary because we grow by losing and leaving and letting go.” Judith Viorst