TENDING TO ONESELF

A Model for Maintaining the Executive's Most Important Resource

DAVID E. MORRISON, M.D.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

David E. Morrison, M.D. is a psychiatrist and organizational development consultant who has worked extensively with CEOs of Fortune 500 corporations through the years. His philosophy and practice are directed toward working with people who are "well" and who can increase their "wellness" by obtaining helpful changes in their environment.

In this monograph, Dr. Morrison focuses on some of the problems all leaders face — in particular, one of the most difficult challenges — managing themselves. There is a danger of approaching this subject from a superficial level and falling into the traps of self-indulgence and rationalization. However, anyone who is dealing with the personal side of the work environment must maintain self-discipline above and beyond that required for a technical or impersonal perspective.

Dr. Morrison is a graduate of Arizona State University and the University of Southern California. He received his psychiatric training at the Menninger School of Psychiatry. He heads Morrison Associates, Ltd., a medical corporation located at 650 First Bank Drive in the Chicago suburb of Palatine.

FORWARD

This monograph grows out of experience spanning more than 20 years of helping corporations and corporate executives confront, address, and occasionally resolve what most hard-headed managers would view as "soft" issues. I suppose those issues are soft in the sense that they tend to be personal and emotional: ranging from garden-variety family problems to sweeping corporate change to full-blown crises.

But, as many companies have found — and many more will certainly find in the current competitive, stressful, and incredibly demanding business environment — the toll those soft issues often take on performance, organizational as well as individual, can be harsh and heavy indeed. Unfortunately, that toll seems to be mounting today, the result in part of the mythology that has grown up about business in America and the factors that lead to success. "In today's competitive environment," the story goes, "it's not enough for executives to be merely competent or committed. They must be driven."

The driving metaphor has always struck me as apt, but for different reasons than you might expect. To my way of thinking, executives are supposed to be the people driving the organization. It's tough and usually dangerous to drive if you are being driven by a chauffeur or by responses to situations beyond your understanding or control.

The traditional story will, of course, continue to be told and reinforced, by boards, bosses, and the business schools, and I am not altogether sorry about that. As long as misconceptions of genuine leadership continue to produce Captain Blighs instead of effective captains of industry, I'll have plenty of work.

I don't, in other words, expect "Tending to Oneself" to stand as a new moral for the corporate fable. My goal is at once much less ambitious and, I think, more significant: to help people think, in a hard, directed, and productive way about the soft issues they and their organizations confront, and offer an idea or two that will make those issues much less hard to deal with for their organizations, their people and above all, themselves.

David Morrison, M.D.

INTRODUCTION

This monograph was prepared for executives and other leaders who shoulder responsibilities for organizations and other people. The need for senior managers to tend to themselves is easily overlooked or misunderstood. Conventional wisdom puts such topics into one or two categories: (1) another self-indulgent perk for pampered executives or (2) a scolding lecture for executives and managers who are complete idiots as far as anything personal is concerned. In my experience, both of those views are wrong. They certainly have no relationship to the purpose of this monograph.

When I first started working with executives 20 years ago, I shared those prejudices. Only a few years of in-depth work with public and private senior managers, however, forced me to change my opinion. If anything, most senior managers are less self-indulgent than most of the people with whom a psychiatrist works. And when it comes to competence with the personal side of life, they are more able than most groups.[1,2,3] Why then bother with trying to make them better at realistically caring for themselves? The answer is simple: they carry so much responsibility that they must be held to higher standards.

THE LEADER'S RESPONSIBILITY

Too much depends on a leader's personality for the question of realistic personal support to be ignored or treated haphazardly. His or her judgment determines the outcome of many critical organizational issues, including profitability, employee morale, development of professional staff, coordination of support staff, and the ability to plan successfully for the future. The leader's personality is his or her most important tool because a leader's role is to make decisions that affect the rest of us in profound ways. As a result, today's world requires leaders who are as realistic as possible about their own needs.

Tomorrow's world will require even better judgment from those who want to lead. Technology will continue to generate more change, but managing the human side of the organization — its people — will be an even greater challenge. As the demographics of the work force change, there will be more competition for a smaller, more educated group of people. That will require more ability on the part of leaders to motivate, plan, understand, and help people change.[4] That is ambitious work, and each of these functions depends directly upon the personal qualities of the individual attempting it.

In my experience, most leaders understand this at some level, and they do some of the work of tending to themselves. Most get physical exams, for example. That is important, yet, when we stop and think, they don't use their bodies to carry out their responsibilities except to the extent that their bodies support their minds. What preventive maintenance programs do they have for their minds? It's as if their personalities are assumed to be either irrelevant or in optimum condition. Maybe that idea survives because most senior management people don't know how to approach the problem; perhaps executives just don't want to think about how much is expected of the personalities of upper management.

Vulnerability and the Need to Tend to Oneself

Leaders need more than the average amount of endurance and wisdom. The closer people get to the top of an organization, the more they need to be able to work within ambiguity. Managing personal conflict and emotional issues are important today and will become even more so in the future. The multiple and increasingly complex demands leaders face will require more personal abilities than simple technical skills. They will be managed best by a healthy personality. People at work and in the family rely on leaders to tend to their own personal needs whether they know it or not.

Tending to our personal needs does not happen automatically. The leader who does not actively think about and act on personal issues is vulnerable to drifting into patterns that are comfortable, yet destructive.

When leaders gradually build destructive habits, the people who depend on them inadvertently cover up for them. They don't do it consciously; they simply accommodate a person in power, incrementally, over time. The changes are slow, subtle, and always rationalized to be in the best interests of the organization. (The road to hell is paved with accommodation more than good intentions.) Leaders who are bright and who know the vulnerabilities of the system within which they work can hide their problems. Those around them accommodate, grow to

depend on, and then support the very behaviors that are associated with those problems.

Consider the person who has developed a pattern of drinking too much. Subordinates and peers begin to expect long lunch hours and soon come to know that if you want to get something important decided with him or her, you do it in the morning. The more they accommodate, the more likely the drinking is to increase and become more of a problem. Then the inevitable day arises when the drinking causes a problem that no one can ignore. The result is a flurry of activity and much surprise that the problem could have gone unaddressed for so long.

Leaders whose emotional outbursts punish individuals who bring bad news set up a similar pattern. They very effectively educate subordinates (and even some peers) to hide mistakes until the last minute. Even though they give sermonettes on learning from mistakes and fire a few people who let problems go too long, their behaviors force adjustments on the part of those around them; they keep bad news hidden until the last possible minute. Of course, the most important bad news for them to hear is how they are undermining the necessary flow of information.

Many books on corporate failures like Indecent Exposure[5] document in devastating ways how even experienced managers will accommodate to maladaptive behavior until it has reached an extreme level. Anyone who has gone through a crisis caused by poor judgment (for example, Penn Square and Continental Bank) has had the experience of seeing groups of otherwise effective executives adapting to destructive behavior.

As I have seen many times, a strong personality in a position of authority can cause even his or her boss to back away. It takes courage and skill to continually address issues which provoke resistance and start another hassle. Such unpleasant work is saved for times when the need is obvious. When the issues seem more unclear and are related to less urgent pressures (for example, how his/her self-indulgent style undermines managerial discipline) they are sidestepped. It is in just those more intangible consequences that the seeds of future disasters germinate and grow.

Such patterns are not limited to the work setting. Families also adjust to maladaptive behavior. Spouses and children will eventually become gun-shy and learn to live "around" a manager who constantly cancels vacations, works through most of the weekend, and then is too tired to spend time in family activities. The absences become less painful because they are expected. Family members find other ways to get gratification and even intimacy. If the home situation has a kind of superficial comfort, it's for a simple reason: important conflicts go untouched. Yet everyone knows something important is missing. When a child gets into trouble at school or the spouse "suddenly" asks for a divorce, almost everyone gets more of the manager's time. The sad thing is that it would have been much more fun if the time had been spent in smaller doses over the preceding years.

A pattern of increasing accommodation to destructive behavior (in an otherwise brilliant person) is a serious impediment to the success of a group's work. When the problems become so significant that they must be addressed, the organization is forced to use its resources (primarily the time of executives and professionals) to minimize the damage. Senior management must then spend time on collecting evidence, planning on how to talk to the troubled person, trying to convince that person to change, and finding ways to compensate for the lost work. Such costs are rarely recorded in monetary terms even though they are significant. It is costly

because by the time people act, the problems are deeply entrenched; the people and the systems have been modified to cope with, and even depend upon, the destructive aberrations of a leader.

In speaking of "Tending to Oneself," then, I am not talking about eating whole-grain cereal or pampering one's body. I am addressing the responsibility to tend to yourself in order to manage the responsibilities you willingly accepted. Much depends on your judgment. It is in everyone's best interest for you to tend to yourself.

THE PARAMETERS OF THE PROBLEM

In the course of becoming executives, people have done a significant amount of living; they have developed many strengths and several wounds. Each starts off with his or her own set of personal assets and problems.

While some of those strengths and weaknesses are found frequently among successful professionals, there will be significant variations among the individuals who are asked to fill these roles. One may receive a great deal of support from a spouse while another is drained by the demands of a stressful marriage; the second, however, may obtain support from a church group. One executive may confide in a division head or a member of the board, another shares concerns with a few former mentors scattered across the country. One leader relies on a brilliant intellect, while another is particularly good at working through other people. Each system of support has been tailor-made by the individual, from what was available at the time. Further work on any part of it must be designed to fit the needs of the individual. Executives share more qualities, however, than just uniqueness.

The Issue of Imperfection

All executives, for example, face their responsibilities with significant imperfection. No one can ever relax and think, "I'm finally complete." People who reflect on themselves are bound to find some questions disturbing and many of their own answers disappointing. Some of those questions will probably sound familiar to almost everyone:

- Have I really let my wife know how much I appreciate the fact she loves someone as incomplete as I am?

- What kind of mother do I want to be, and how does it compare to the kind of mother I wanted when I was a girl?

- How much of my company's success is the result of what I did and how much is it the result of other people going the extra mile for something dear to them?

- If I am really honest, how much of my success has been luck? How many times were others hit by ricochets while I survived many near misses? (One purpose of this work is to decrease the role of luck in a person's life.)

Because the likelihood of disappointment is high, many people with high expectations of themselves find multiple reasons to avoid introspective work.

We don't feel so lonely once we recognize that none of us will get all (or even close to 90%) of the answers right when we honestly ask serious questions about ourselves. One consolation is that our imperfections, even the most secret, are probably rather common. Understanding our imperfections helps us to overcome them.

Constraints on time is another issue all executives face. All leaders experience intense demands on their own time.   Time with family members, for recreation, to sit back and think, or time to just be alone without intrusion becomes more and more precious.

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In the executive's arena, some things will never be addressed. While no one can take time for all the important things life offers, we do need to spend time on all the important categories. For example, while it may not be so bad to miss a child's birthday party, a sporting event, or graduation because of work, it is a serious mistake to miss too many opportunities for celebration and joy in one's children. Being good enough doesn't come automatically, so we do need to devote some time to deciding what to choose.

There are so many possibilities in our personal potential that we can't realize more than a fraction of them. There is so much we could do if we devoted ourselves to it: we could become pilots, learn musical instruments, write, do with our children what we wanted done with us, develop a subordinate, learn to appreciate opera, develop the body we always wanted, or have more of those genuine talks with our spouse. Unfortunately, time isn't enough to read, discuss, organize, or develop skills for mentoring, analyzing, exercising, loving, teaching, coaching, sitting through sixth-grade plays, helping with homework, and on and on. As a result, we do those that are within our potential. This is not a sign of how lazy people are, it is a result of needing to make choices. It is an understandable wish, but unrealistic to think that anyone can reach all of his or her potential.

The nice thing about all of this is that we don't need to be perfect or anywhere near it. We simply need to be "good enough." Good enough as a parent who understands and anticipates the needs of children. Good enough at expressing affection to a husband who is just a man who loves me. Good enough at letting a father know his hard work to support us is appreciated and some of his toughness is now cherished. We don't have to be any more elegant in our striving to hold up our end of important relationships than we expect those on the other side to be.

Making such tradeoffs is tough. At such times it is important to know one's personality. All executives need to watch for some common personal problems. While everyone doesn't share these problems, many do. For example, the problem of limited knowledge about oneself is common.

Unfortunately, many individuals who are convinced that they know themselves have glaring blind spots about important personal issues. Those who can doubt and wonder are more likely to be aware of the problems they need to address. For them, life becomes an adventure in gaining knowledge, including self-knowledge.

We need a decent understanding of ourselves to choose competently from the volumes of information on supporting oneself. Some of the information is useful. Much of it, however, is in my opinion destructive, because it contains half-truths and misinformation that people then incorporate into their plans.

A positive mental attitude, for example, can be helpful as a self-hypnosis technique or when there are cognitive problems causing depression. It is often presented as the answer to all motivational problems, however, and then it is not only ineffective, it even promotes magical thinking. It is ineffective because people don't diagnose their problems accurately: "She's just not positive enough!" "I know I shouldn't think like that, I should be more positive." All clear-headed skepticism is seen as interfering with people reaching their potential. It causes "magical" thinking because there is emphasis on uncritical acceptance of the idea that thoughts and feelings determine reality. People who have been pushed to think positively and chase all their desires have sometimes caused themselves serious damage. One man who couldn't

swim completed such a motivational program and convinced himself he could swim. He decided to prove it and drowned.[6]

Excessive claims and overreliance on one idea (diet, meditation, exercise, networking, and so forth) excites an audience because "the answer" is so clear and simple. "If you just manage your time well, everything will fall into place." Not only can it cause one's life to get out of balance, it can be dangerous. Learning about and following a balanced diet is healthy. Excessive emphasis on one of the food groups can cause disease. Modest exercise promotes health and a sense of well-being. Excessive exercise limits time for dialogue, reading, wrestling with the kids, and so forth. The body gets well-toned while the personality becomes limp.

When a method is presented as "the easy way to be healthy" or "the answer," beware. Remaining healthy and productive over the long term is complicated and never easy. If it can be done in one minute it probably isn't worth the manager's time. The best way to manage this dilemma is to know one's own vulnerabilities with personal information (for example, what concepts do you want to believe so badly that an entertaining, glib salesman can offer, and you will eagerly respond?). Some helpful books are listed under selected references.

If we don't know our vulnerabilities, if we accept pleasant drivel believing we just learned some significant new truth about ourselves, all we do is protect our own ignorance with a faulty concept. The virtue of the half-truth when it deals with personal information is that it insulates us from the need to struggle with decisions — or to change.

The Capacity for Destructive Responses

Personal knowledge about one's vulnerabilities is necessary for another reason as well. We all share the capacity for several destructive responses.

Greed, for example, is not the benevolent motivator of economic theories, nor is it a part of healthy self-interest. Real greed undermines a person's genuine needs. It requires no talent and is potentially present in everyone in ways that go far beyond a desire for money, food, or physical possessions. Greedy individuals are preoccupied with consuming. They consume without receiving gratification and joy from what they have used.   Their only pleasure is in the consuming. So, as soon as the act is over, they again feel needy.

When we live in a society where there is an overabundance of opportunities, plus profession-als who have degrees in stimulating greed (advertising), there are many subtle ways to wear ourselves out with greed. Even programs on how to support oneself may become just another area of greedy consumption. It is easy to fall into a pattern of consuming activities such as physical fitness, time with interesting customers, challenging jobs, sexual opportunities, sports events, or golf. Frenetic, fatigue-producing activity without significant personal gratification indicates that people should stop and reflect on whether they are becoming greedy.

Envy and jealousy are also extremely destructive, yet potential responses for all of us. The goal of these two responses is to spoil the pleasure others receive from an activity or relation-ship.

Envy is a terribly destructive response. The basic dynamics of envy involve differences and

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destructive impulses. Let's say you have more of something than I have — love, money, status, attention, physical attractiveness or information. I don't have enough of it to be gratified. In the accompanying diagram, the long dotted line represents the amount people need to be gratified with whatever the two of us have.
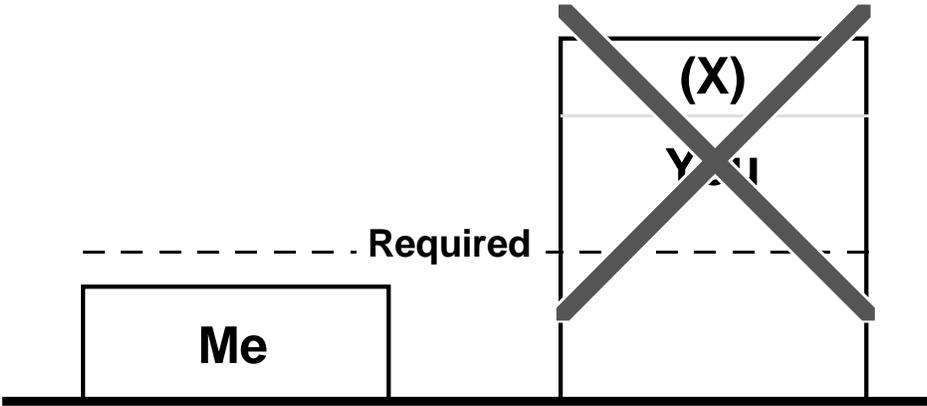
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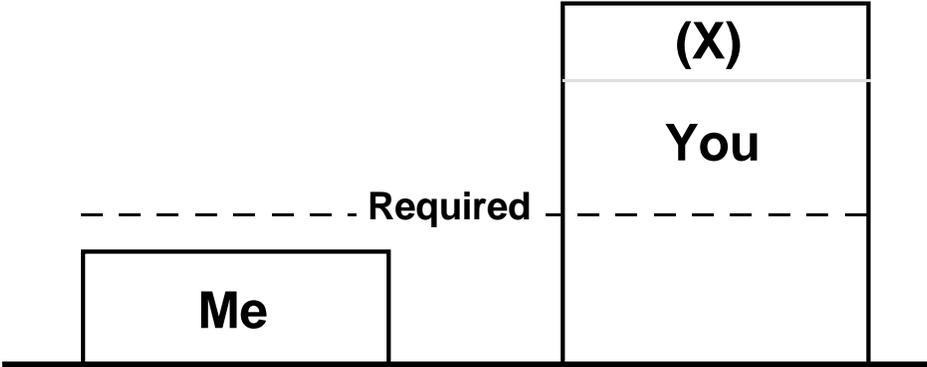
You may be willing to give me some of what you have so I can be gratified. But that won't stop envy. The problem: I hate the difference. If you give to me, you will only lose a little (x) — you will still have more. The only way to manage my envy is to destroy everything you have, even though it means I will still be frustrated. As a matter of fact, people often spoil what the other is about to give before they get any. It may be stupid, but at least I got more than you! The pleasure of spoiling takes precedence over the gratification of being fulfilled.[7]

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Envy is the bane of the helping professions. When you are in a position to help someone, you have more of something (security, information, health, or whatever) than they do. As a result, they then become envious of your knowledge, health, pleasure from giving, or anything else. For example, teachers have more information than students. When you give information away , you don't lose it; if the student accepts it, you are a better teacher. Envious people spoil by

not learning anything: "What does this have to do with the real world?" or "We could never do that here." That is a dilemma managers face when they return from a training program and enthusiastically try to get peers and bosses to implement the new ideas.

Envy keeps many good things from happening. The painful part, however, is the spoiling. People who thought they had something good to share are degraded before any real analysis and understanding takes place; they feel ridiculed and foolish instead of competent and expansive.

Jealousy resembles envy but now love is added. Jealous people spoil the pleasure of those they care for. At work, you can see this when it is time for proteges to leave mentors and go off on their own or find other mentors. Proteges are sometimes surprised to find their old friend taking pot shots at them for being "uppity" and subtly undermining their new relationships. (It can also be the proteges who become jealous of their old mentors' new relationships.) These responses are very human, but not very productive or pleasant.

Envious or jealous people are commonly possessive and controlling. They try to keep others from doing what they either can't or won't permit themselves to do. If they are bright, they are able to rationalize why it is for the good of others. Thus, they are able to spoil others' pleasure with righteous indignation. They feel confident they are justified because they "did it for the company" or "the family."

To make the situation even more complicated, I've seen some bright people protect themselves from feeling envy by provoking it in others. They are skillful at creating the appearance of gaining special gratifications, which are far beyond what others can obtain.

These people may present themselves as someone without any vulnerabilities. Everything in their lives is better than in the lives of those around them. They have the most "with it" wives, or kids that lead their class at the best schools; they all could be members of the Cosby T.V. family. They sail past every obstacle that the rest of us stumble over and let us know it. They complain about being too busy because they are in such demand for exciting and "meaningful" projects.

These people have an uncanny ability to show us how good they are at the most inopportune time for us. When we are feeling less than adequate, they point out how well they handled an even more difficult situation; it is usually couched in a way that suggests they are trying to help by giving advice. It doesn't help because their real goal isn't to help but to provoke envy.

When such people are studied in depth, you find they are very insecure at a fundamental level despite all the trappings of success. They are so vulnerable to feeling envy themselves that they defend themselves against it by skillfully provoking envy in others. We all can regress into this behavior from time to time. It is particularly likely when we are not aware of our own tendency to become envious or jealous. Only people who know their own vulnerabilities to envy and jealousy can keep from falling into these destructive traps.

Such complex interpersonal transactions will make your job challenging and interesting. If you aren't aware of these processes and your own vulnerabilities to envy and jealousy, however, meetings, performance appraisals, and working on the company culture will become confusing and so unpleasant you may avoid this important work.

Cynicism is a third major common problem, important because it often resembles skepticism

— an important personal tool for staying in touch with reality. Benevolent skepticism means one does not accept anything until it has been tested in numerous ways for some time. It is crucial for understanding other people and one's self.

The skeptical person knows how easy it is to be fooled by even well-meaning colleagues. At one time, we all thought asbestos was safe as an insulation. Most of us thought we had conquered infectious disease for good, and then along came AIDS. Only "skeptics" refused to unquestioningly accept the "fact" that oil prices would stay high through the end of the century, or that loans to foreign countries were the safest.

The skeptics want more data. They know they can be conned. They know that they can be seduced by their own desires for quick-and-easy answers. So they suspend judgment. Even when the amount of information is "good enough" and they decide to act, they still watch for signs that they misinterpreted something. Skeptics aren't hostile or smug; they are cautious about their own ability to know what reality really is.

Cynics often feel smug. They have discovered that ideals can't be logically proven. If you look hard enough, you can find that a benevolent act held some significant self-interest, or in many ways, another person didn't change. Using those facts to say everyone only looks out for themselves or that people can't change isn't trying to discover what is really happening. It is attacking the idea that the things we bitch about could be better.

Pontificating on reasons why a project can't be done well enough or all the ways it fell short of the ideal causes less anxiety and depression than deciding to do something about moving closer to the ideal. Every time I have worked with a cynic, I have found a disappointed idealist underneath. Like envious people who provoke envy in others, cynics attack the ideals which have become too painful for them to embrace. Cynicism protects one from the complications of caring; it doesn't make one more realistic. Cynics are not interested in being realistic despite their statements to the contrary. Cynics feel comfortable. The belief that it is useless to try to make anything better is the cynic's armor against personal responsibility.

The Resources You Command

A final issue for leaders to consider is that of significant resources. Despite demands and limited time, anyone who has become a leader commands far more resources than the rest of the population. Those resources may include: money; the company; connections with important, competent people; education; analytical skills; the ability to think; an established ethical code; rich experiences; and many people who care about you.

Remember those resources for support when you ponder questions about your own personal development; when the challenge seems too much; and when you hurt.

DEMANDS OF TODAY'S WORLD

Work on personal development requires recognition of the realities of the age and culture within which we live. Different times and cultures require different kinds of support for individuals who strive to be leaders during their brief appearance "on stage." The ideas in this section are based on assumptions and expectations for an industrialized society at the end of the Twentieth Century.

Information Overload

One of the accepted truths of our age is that we live in the midst of exploding knowledge. We are not only faced with excessive opportunities, but also with the challenge of understanding all that is going on around us. That in itself creates personal stress.[8]

New knowledge helps us solve problems and makes life more exciting. It also increases the complexity. New specialists arise who think differently and even have their own "language." We must decide whether to trust them or take the time to go through enough background of their new discipline to keep some control. They all generate more information. So more ideas are pushed through our area of responsibility with less time to digest it. (Even as this is being written, someone is doing some work somewhere that will make a part of this irrelevant or wrong.)

Time doesn't permit us to tie up enough loose ends to feel comfortable that all the new implications are properly integrated. Each of us works out our own scheme to manage our time better. (George Washington went to bed at 9:00 p.m. and awoke at 7:30 a.m. After he spent some time on the veranda he came in to have a leisurely breakfast! That sounds like a vacation to many modern leaders.)

A "to do" list is one popular way to manage time, and one of our modern-day persecutors. Some of the "must do's" don't get done by the end of the day. The next day some items more urgent than yesterday's "must do's" are presented and move to the top of the list. Those from yesterday slip down a notch. Eventually a few drift to the bottom of the list. Those issues that were never resolved aren't forgotten, however. They continue to bother us from the sidelines even if they are no longer relevant (for we haven't had the luxury of time to decide on their current relevance).

Those "old number ones" are mixed with lower priority numbers in the stacks of papers that were put aside and they make us nervous. Months or years later we go through the piles and find they are no longer relevant. They didn't get us in trouble this time, but what about that other stack that started while we worked on the old one? Time management helps, but will never solve the problem; it is easy enough to realize with hindsight that information in old stacks wasn't that relevant. The real question is which ones in today's stack will be most important. And what new knowledge will make one of today's trivial items relevant tomorrow?

Old categories for determining relevance are less helpful as the field becomes more complex. New knowledge can even make some of our old methods of categorizing dangerous. For

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example, not promoting someone because she might get pregnant or might move with her husband was once acceptable. That old formula for helping a manager decide can get his company sued in this more complicated environment. Today there is more complexity with less time and new dangers when we sort out issues.

There are also fewer acceptable buffers. Not too long ago if you were in a different country or unavailable on the weekend, people understood. Today technology has given us voice mail and portable telephones. Now the demand for an answer is on the personal computer at home. It needs to be checked at 11:30 p.m. when you return from the symphony on Saturday night, whether you are in Chicago, Dallas or Australia. When is it legitimate to relax, knowing that no one else can get a leg up on you because their communication systems are better?

In technical terms all of that is called "quantitative input overload." It has been documented that quantitative input overload causes increased blood pressure, pulse rate, and cholesterol.[9] A ten-year-old I know, when asked how his computer class in school was going, put it more simply: "Pressure sucks."

The Challenge of Change

Because new knowledge causes change, change is another overwhelming reality of our age. While change is related to stress and creates its own challenges for leaders, there is another more subtle aspect we need to remember. People are constantly changing. The executive also changes, sometimes in significant ways.

It is a common belief that people don't change. Someone who was once sour marries a different man and becomes enthusiastic about her work and its potential. A cautious person has a series of successes and starts taking more risks. An angry, controlling man is understood and accepted enough by another so he begins to use the sensitivity he always had to support his subordinates and peers.

If change is so common, why do we think people can't change? Two related reasons are that we want to think our lives are stable, and many of the changes are incremental. As we discount the constant, gradual changes, we keep the illusion of stability. People are recognizable over time, because enough of their characteristics remain the same during any given period. The stable characteristics enable us to keep a sense of continuity. For our own sense of familiarity, we discount some of the significant changes they have made. The idea is reinforced when we see how some undesirable characteristics in another person remain fixed despite attempts to change them.

We say "The same old Al" because we refuse to see how he has changed. You have had the experience with your family or people at work who refuse to see how you have changed. It is usually very hard to get people to realize that problems or personal quirks no longer exist. Sometimes the group can even get you to unconsciously act in the old ways (for example, at family reunions). It is often most difficult to recognize changes in ourselves. That is why old photo albums and diaries are helpful.

The goal for managing the changes outside and inside one's self is to be realistically adaptive. You seek your place somewhere between stubborn resistance to needed change and easy seduction by the latest fad. To adapt realistically is not easy; the opposing forces of rigidity

and faddishness can become intense for any leader or professional.

The opposite of change is structure. From a psychiatric point of view, structure and support are essentially the same thing. When you think of supporting someone else or yourself, you think, for example, of giving them directions, answers, or techniques. The structures that support you include your routines, concepts, and familiar patterns of problem solving. Anything that organizes our experience and "puts things in their place" is supportive.

Although structure is supportive because it adds stability, it also resists change. Even so-called structures for change resist changes in the structures themselves. For example, task forces set up to implement changes often keep meeting long after their work is completed. When the structure of rotating managers to give them a variety of experiences is no longer useful, managers still find it hard to modify or do away with it. Psychotherapy or marriage counseling are structures created to help people change. Sometimes the meetings continue well past the point where the desirable changes have been made. All of those structures for change can become part of our support systems and we often inadvertently resist changing them.

If we live in a changing age, our support structures can keep us out of touch with important aspects of reality, even as we feel cozy, comfortable, and supported.

Unpleasant Feelings

The dilemma between cozy structure and at times unpleasant reality raises the problem of unpleasant feelings. No one who is normal enjoys unpleasant feelings. We all wish to avoid them. That is their function. They motivate us to avoid something. They function as alarms between our mind, our body, and the world around us.

Too much avoidance of unpleasant feelings, however, causes a person to avoid important parts of reality. He either avoids the unpleasant experiences or avoids his feelings. Obviously, avoiding all feelings moves a person away from a most important part of work, family, and personal life. If we shy away from painful experiences we will avoid conflict; important, but disquieting information; and even important health issues.

Information about unhealthy developments in your body — a polyp growing in your bowel — will make you anxious. Most occupational physicians are familiar with examples of CEOs who didn't get their annual physical (who can make the boss go?). By the time they had symptoms they also had inoperable cancer. Then they died — too early for them, their families or their companies. George Vaillant documents the relationship between being able to feel significant discomfort and health.[10]

Unpleasant feelings accompany experiences with significant risk, for those alarms alert us to potential dangers. Thus, unpleasant feelings accompany experiences with basic change, complexity, conflict, or novelty. (There are also pleasant feelings associated with these experiences, but people don't try to avoid them).

Frustration, fear, anxiety, sadness, and worry are all essential for a person to adapt to a constantly changing and challenging environment. Those feelings alert and motivate the individual to deal with issues that are not yet intellectually mastered. Thus, it is important to understand the meaning of such feelings, to know how to use them, and then to manage them.

Tending to Oneself

Ignoring, discounting, or repressing such feelings is not good management.

Because unpleasant feelings usually accompany the "gray," ambiguous areas of our lives, there will be times when we must bear them for some time. We endure unpleasant feelings because we want to stay in touch with reality but don't yet fully understand all aspects of the problem. During these times, it is important to understand that such feelings are helpful. The time to be concerned is when you never have any of those feelings. The person to be concerned about is the one who brags he has never had, or rarely experiences, such feelings.

If feelings of anxiety, fear, sadness, and so forth become too intense or last too long, a person may need help to understand what the feelings mean or why those old, friendly alarms are misfiring. It is always a matter of judgment when deciding if the feelings are too intense or lasting too long. Sometimes professional judgment is required to assist in the decision to seek help.
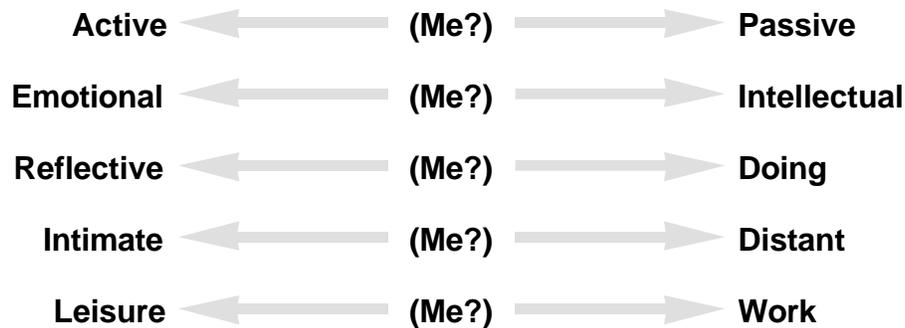
Finding a Balance

It is helpful to look at personal phenomena as matters of balance and continuums. The question isn't, "Are you healthy, supported, competent, or not?" Rather, the appropriate question is "Where are you on these continuums?" My colleague, Herb Klemme, suggested that with most executives, the question is not whether you are alcoholic, but how alcoholic are you? If the teetotaler is on one end of the continuum, and the skid-row alcoholic on the other end, most of us fall somewhere in between.

Teetotaler ⟵⎯⎯⎯ **(Me?)** ⎯⎯⎯⟶ **Skid Row Alcoholic**

Using a continuum helps us examine where we fit in the "gray" areas instead of in relationship to some artificial absolutes. More important, we might ask, "What are the trends in our lives? Am I sliding toward one end or the other? Where would I have placed myself ten years ago? Where would my spouse, or boss, or subordinates place me?"

Health ⟵⎯⎯⎯ **(Me?)** ⎯⎯⎯⟶ **Illness**

Support ⟵⎯⎯⎯ **(Me?)** ⎯⎯⎯⟶ **Alone**

Loving ⟵⎯⎯⎯ **(Me?)** ⎯⎯⎯⟶ **Hateful**

Teetotaler ⟵⎯⎯⎯ **(Me?)** ⎯⎯⎯⟶ **Dependent on Drugs**

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Some continuums are not between desirable or undesirable, but between two useful qualities. Then we look more for balance.

Active ⟵	**(Me?)**	⟶ **Passive**
Emotional ⟵	**(Me?)**	⟶ **Intellectual**
Reflective ⟵	**(Me?)**	⟶ **Doing**
Intimate ⟵	**(Me?)**	⟶ **Distant**
Leisure ⟵	**(Me?)**	⟶ **Work**

Important continuums in our lives include active to passive; work to play; thinking to doing; intellectual to emotional; and health to illness. The needs of work, family and self contain many continuums and require significant balances. When you evaluate yourself, do it in terms of balance and continuums.

In looking at your place on any continuum, however, it is vital to remember that you—and all executives—are human. Being human means you have your own personal needs. You are more or less supported by your family, and you more or less give sensitive support to others. You have your own aspirations, contentments, and flaws. You are in charge of your own life. It is important to remember this when one human being tries to help others tend to themselves.

No one can say what another person should do. If someone could, it wouldn't work anyway. Even if you aren't the one who knows best what you should do, you will, nevertheless, be the one who decides what you will do. Therefore, any help that is offered must offer choices, not answers. Ultimately, you will use the devices that make the most sense to you. You will decide what is the proper balance for your own life from the different choices you perceive.

PERSONAL ISSUES TO ADDRESS

To understand the continuums and balances in our lives together better, we must look further at the general categories all of us must manage: work; family; and self.

The Self, Values, and Support

We can divide the issue of self into three parts: the body, the mind, and personal systems of support. The distinctions are artificial, of course, no one can exist without all three. Here, a continuum is a more realistic description; we have never been able to decide exactly where one of the three categories stops and another begins. Nevertheless, they are helpful conceptual structures.

The body is easily forgotten by executives who spend so much time working on concepts, perceptions, and other functions of the mind. Minimal attention to the body requires regular physical checkups. This means you need to find a physician you can trust and to whom you can talk. He or she needs to be someone who understands the concept of preventive medicine and who will help you to build an individualized program. In such a program, you need to learn to pay attention to the signals your body gives about how well it is functioning. Your body is crucial because it supports and affects your mind.

The body is important beyond just giving the mind a "place to live." The body affects the personality in myriad ways. Being irritable from a painful stiff neck, or cramps is relatively common. Most of us are aware that alcohol, fatigue, and lack of sleep will impair one's judgment. Physical illness saps one's energy, motivation, and hampers judgment. Biochemical problems in the brain can cause depression, mania, panic, and even some neurotic problems.

An understanding of the mind is elusive and—because we must use the mind to try to understand the mind—perhaps impossible. Yet, there are two significant tools that can help us understand our own minds. First, the mind has the capacity to reflect on itself. Introspection is essential for any realistic self-maintenance program. We can also use other minds to help us understand our own. Feedback is essential for a self-maintenance program.

The mind thinks, reflects, feels, remembers, judges, perceives, integrates, and creates. The functions of the mind must be exercised, even as physical muscles need to be exercised, to stay in shape. The exercise needs to be balanced and adequately planned. An overemphasis on analytical skills combined with underemphasis on emotional and intuitive experiences, for example, may cause a person to be uncreative, insensitive, and out of touch with important aspects of reality.

An important aspect of the mind is the personal code by which you judge yourself and others. This includes your:
- Sense of right and wrong;
- Beliefs about what is good or bad;
- Expectations of yourself and others;
- The standards by which you hold yourself accountable.

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Personal codes are particularly vulnerable to obsolescence in a changing environment; and they also often involve concepts developed in childhood that are no longer appropriate to an adult. Codes, therefore, must be ruthlessly re-examined and questioned on a regular basis. Analyzing our convictions about what is right and good will provoke some personal resistances, however.

Our personal code of values seems unquestionably profound and uncompromisable. It feels as if the interpersonal rules we gradually acquired aren't the result of our unique experiences at all, but were handed down in completed form by a greater being. There does need to be conviction when it comes to ethical issues. But we can also have the same strength of conviction about trivial things. Some people (a great many, in fact) can even feel something necessary to a healthy adult is wrong. They they become inhibited or feel guilty about doing what a mature adult should do: for example, some people feel guilty about confronting their parents as adults. It is important to note that their feeling guilty isn't the problem. The capacity to feel guilty is necessary for a healthy adult. The problem is feeling guilty over a trivial issue or a necessary act; it is caused by a part of their code which is irrelevant. Past values were accepted and have remained unexamined too long—but that is a quality of values. When you challenge your own personal values, you feel anxious or guilty.

Most successful people have a personal value something like: "Thou shalt be pragmatic." They feel proud of themselves when they are pragmatic in all but one situation—they feel guilty when they make their values pragmatic. Most values are supposed to be above pragmatism. When we begin to analyze values to see if they are still relevant, we often feel uneasy, or even guilty. That is one reason why values are rarely examined in much depth. But there is also a more personal reason why it is hard to question values as well: the sources of our code.

We adopted our personal code from people like our mother, father, older sister, Sunday school teacher, special coach, special adolescent friends, mentor, and others who were important to us. We unconsciously took the codes of the people we admired and who cherished us. We took different principles from different individuals depending upon how much they influenced us at the time. To question what we saw and believed was most valuable to them feels like a betrayal. Some of them might even have presented themselves as above question— "Because I say so, that's why!"

Genuine reassessment of values is difficult for many complex reasons. That's good, because such work should take effort. Values are too important to our social existence for them to be easily discarded and replaced. (This is both the strength and weakness of corporate culture.) As mature adults, however, we must go beyond the accidents of life (the time and place we were born, what influential people believed at the time they were with us, and how we as children interpreted the social environment). Additionally some things that were right for a child are not appropriate for an adult.

Values need to mature like other parts of the personality. At one time, for example, most of us were taught that sex was forbidden. For most adults that is no longer appropriate. Yet many adults can't relax and enjoy sex or they may giggle like children when the forbidden topic is discussed. Most children were taught to obey their parents; but as adults they may have to insist that a parent who has become careless about personal essentials goes into a nursing home over the parent's protestations. If the grown-up child feels too guilty, he may take too long to act, and endanger the lives of his parent and others (for example, the old person who repeatedly forgets to turn off the gas stove, or drives when she can't see). Another old value

for some people was, "Never make a mistake." While it can drive a person to high-quality performance, it can also be too severe. Then a person covers up mistakes or avoids taking appropriate risks.

There are values we developed about what is managerial or professional. Some physicians, attorneys, and accountants feel they can't advertise no matter what the supreme court decided, and run the risk of damaging their practice. (They would rather be poor than make their values pragmatic). Many leaders incorporated into their personal codes the outdated value that avoiding feelings is the way to be objective. (Often that value wasn't explicitly stated to them, but was implied in the behavior of their teachers, supervisors, and so forth). They get uneasy when addressing emotional issues at work. Then they are ineffective when it comes to dealing with issues of morale, personnel, or changing a corporate culture. They also run the risk of being intimidated and controlled by people who threaten to get emotional.

In an imperfect society, with imperfect parents and teachers, we all grow up with flawed personal codes. Profound concepts about right and wrong exist side-by-side with trivial prohibitions for children. Some of what I think is right and proper is quaint to someone with different experiences. I don't want to be guided by trivial principles; but who will decide what's important other than me? To question, assess, and modify one's values does not mean we become unprincipled. It means we work to integrate our code so there will be more integrity in our life. We use our courage to question ideas which were once presented as unquestionable. We feel uneasy but understand that values are such an important part of the Self that keeping them relevant is worth some discomfort.

One's personal code is more supportive when it is integrated into a world view, or Weltenshung. Where do I fit in the universe and history? Then it becomes a basic supportive structure. There is a sense of having a place in existence. While there is evidence that individuals need an integrated world view in order to have a healthy mind, no one world view is more healthy than another. Religious or "spiritual" concepts are vital and supportive to many individuals; yet agnostics and atheists can be just as healthy.

It is also useful to have some idea of how we relate to phenomena beyond human understanding. This is part of the disciplines of philosophy, religion, and mythology. A person may or may not want to use the idea of spirituality to help. Despite what some individual's personal codes demand, the "spiritual" dimension is not required for a healthy, happy, and effective person.

The idea of spiritual can be a catch-all word that is used to intimidate people into superficial religiosity. It ranges from parapsychology to highly structured cults. It can offer support or cause distress. If the concept is important to you, it can be addressed either under the category of the mind or support. It can be categorized as part of the mind, for it is a way the person perceives the world and thinks about existence. It can be part of support since it is shared with other beings.

Our support becomes a part of us if it is truly supportive. If one is supported by music, a spouse, work, religion, or poetry, it becomes impossible to see where the self ends and the support begins. We perceive and think differently, because of those supports. A religious person understands worldly events within the context of religious principles. The artist sees things the layman misses. Harmonies and rhythms are part of a musician's way of understanding himself in his world.

When such support is gone, for whatever reason, we feel we have lost an essential part of ourselves. It is important to know beforehand what our supports are, lest we inadvertently undermine and lose them. It leaves us very vulnerable to realize something was an important support only after it is gone. For this reason, it is helpful to define what important supports might easily be taken for granted.

The Importance of Family

Perhaps the most important support for human beings is the family. For single or divorced individuals, it is important to understand that this category is not limited to the traditional or genetic family. There are many forms of enduring relationships, which give support, intimacy, a sense of identity, and unquestioned membership. For the purposes of support, we will define family as a group where the individuals have made significant personal commitments to one another. The members will help in a crisis. They give feedback to one another. That feedback is both pleasant and critical, for they care enough to run the risk of giving needed but painful personal information. ("That tie doesn't go with that shirt," or "You look awful today.") Sometimes families will do that for you several times in one meal. Family members help with jobs that require more than one. They also ask for help when they need it, so the power relationships don't get too skewed. I call such a group a family, because the term is more personal than "support group."

Social acquaintances are not as supportive as family relationships. They are nice, but they don't protect against illness as families do.[11] To be a supportive family member, you don't have to be in the same house or apartment, but you do need to spend significant time together and have frequent opportunities for intimacy.

The primary quality of the family is that it is relationship oriented, in ways that make it very different from work. Most important, activities in the family are more spontaneous and have less delayed gratification than work activities. The reason is straightforward: where the primary function of relationship in work is to accomplish tasks, relationships in families are more the end than the means.

Using family relationships to further some personal end diminishes the family. Some parents see their children as a means for their own self-aggrandizement or for gaining assurance they are lovable. Such parents not only damage the children but miss the essence of what children truly offer. Good family members are more reactive and responsive than proactive and controlling.

There are times, of course, when issues must be managed and controlled in the family. During such management, however, one needs to remember the goal is to support the relationships within the family.

For an objective analysis of how supportive one's family is, there are many resources you can use. There are books and articles, exercises that have been developed for family members to better live with one another, and different kinds of tests.[12,13,14] Perhaps the most helpful tool is to get regular feedback from all family members about how well they think the family is functioning.

One group of therapists, (Lewis, et al) studied families that were unusually successful in terms

of contributing to the health and success of all family members. Their description of the highly competent family is a helpful model to remember:

> "Highly competent families share a number of structural characteristics. The parents share power and have the capacity for unusual openness with each other. Family members' ego boundaries (autonomy) are clear. They encourage open expression of feelings, are sensitive to each others ' messages, and use negotiation in problem solving. A wide range of feelings are expressed, and empathic responsiveness is the rule. These families encourage the development of high levels of individuality and at the same time facilitate closeness between family members. Families rated as highly competent and demonstrating those characteristics were found not to contain individuals with psychiatric syndromes including depression."[15]

Sometimes friendships and even work relationships can take on the qualities and functions of a family. Friends can become as close as traditional family members. Good friends give significant support.

Over time, good friends become able to anticipate each other's needs. Friendships at work help make challenging tasks go smoother, and give sustenance during the normal ups and downs of joint human endeavors. Sharing pleasant times with friends makes them both better. When a friendship grows to the level that the individuals are confidants for one another it protects against illness.[16] Beyond that, it is one of the genuinely uplifting parts of life. In essence that person is now a member of your family.

Work and the Sense of Mastery

As we need to love and play, we also need to work. Meaningful work is more than just the activities for which one gets paid. That is a middle-class value. The upper class has traditionally seen it as demeaning to get paid for work. Most of us can't be that proud, but we don't need to diminish the concept of work by tying it to pay. Work has been much more than just a job and money for the successful executives I have examined. It gave a specific kind of meaning to their lives; for it was a place to express their aggression in the acceptable form of taking on challenges. From that, people develop a realistic sense of mastery.

Work is putting out effort for some valued goal. The goal may be:

- Applying realistic management practices to running a financial institution;

- Supporting people so they can heal themselves;

- Creating an atmosphere for children to grow into healthy, productive adults.

Your work is more than just time put in for the company. Work includes anything that is goal and accomplishment oriented. In work, you exercise your abilities to control, analyze, and delay gratification. Work is a means rather than an end. Although work is important for a healthy human being, it can get out of hand. Some people get so much gratification from controlling, analyzing, and striving for future goals that they neglect other important parts of life.

Work includes community activities, household responsibilities, serving on boards, and even organizing activities for children. Thus, when you think of the balance between work, family, and self, make sure you include more than just company affairs or time at the office in the category of work.

The three personal areas overlap one another as in the following diagram:

FAMILY   WORK

MANAGER

SELF
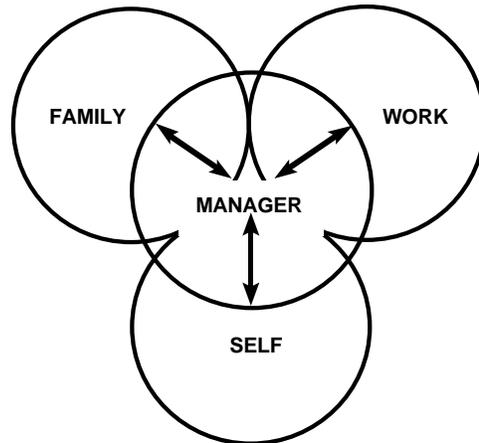
In the diagram, "Manager" represents the challenge of managing the overlap. Sometimes the three areas integrate with one another in a synergistic way. Sometimes there are very difficult conflicting demands from the different parts of our existence. That is often described as being out of balance.

The idea of balance is interesting. My friend, Peter Koestenbaum, an existential philosopher, once pointed out that work, if it is done well, takes 110% of your time. If you are to make your family all it should be, you must give 110% of your time. If you take complete care of yourself it will take 110% of your time, energy, and commitment. Thus, it is impossible to balance work, family, and self. He is right, but we don't need perfect balance. This is like all of the good and important things we strive for in life; we don't have to obtain the ideal. We simply remember the problems of too much potential and greed.

It is probably more important to integrate the three areas than to balance them anyway. As much as possible, make what is done when tending to oneself strengthen all three areas.

HOW TO START TENDING TO YOURSELF

The first step in tending to yourself is to take personal maintenance seriously. No matter how you decide to approach the task of tending to oneself, you must give it appropriate weight. You need to seriously define your own vulnerabilities and then do something about them.

You are significant and a lot depends upon you. I have said this before; now I need to acknowledge another paradox. While this is serious business, it is also important to be able to laugh at oneself. When we are finished, we must pause and reflect upon just what it is that depends upon you. Basically, managers manage a herd of near-apes on a small planet circling an insignificant star in a galaxy that isn't such a big deal itself. That doesn't mean we miss how precious life is. It just means that after basking in the luxury of feeling so special, we should put it in perspective. Remember how important this work is to you and how many people count on you. But retain a workable perspective—one that permits you to play and laugh with the rest of us. Take it seriously, but not too seriously.

The Importance of Feedback

In order to stay in touch with the important aspects of reality, you need to develop ways to get regular feedback. Most organizations offer much statistical information about how you and your business function from a numerical perspective. It will be up to you, however, to create regular structures for receiving feedback about your personal functioning.

Even with colleagues of unusual courage and integrity, it is difficult to get feedback on personal weaknesses which interfere with work. A climate that pushes candor helps; but people on the same management team will share some of the same blind spots, and sometimes the signs of developing problems are subtle. So some organizations use professionals to give periodic feedback to the leaders about their personalities. Some use internal consultants who have responsibilities in organizational development, or personnel. The role requires a great deal of skill and tact if the person is to be effective and survive in the organization. A few organizations use outside professionals who get to know the leaders and company very well. In a periodic formal way, such consultants can then give important feedback about evolving strengths and weaknesses.

You need to know whether there are pieces of reality you regularly miss. In my experience, the person who is called "insensitive" often has difficulty perceiving significant aspects of interpersonal, emotional reality. It is easy for individuals to be unaware of increasing signs of stress in their lives, for example, irritability, increased alcoholic intake, withdrawal, or a serious imbalance.

When you get feedback, ask for specific details so you can evaluate the accuracy and significance of the information. In order to get honest feedback, a person needs to be nondefensive and grateful. Also the recipient needs to show the other person who took the risk of giving important personal information that he or she tried to do something with it. Then the person who has done the hard work of giving feedback may be willing to do it again.

Once you have collected the data from your various sources, then actively decide. Take charge

of this part of your life as you have the other aspects of your life.

Define what you want and develop your own plan about how you will get it. When people's decisions about themselves are passive (for example, not deciding), then their lives are determined by outside forces and their own unconscious. Unconscious processes do contribute to creativity and intuition. If they are not managed by the conscious mind, however, they drift toward more primitive, dangerous consequences. Then a person is more vulnerable to becoming petty, greedy, or envious.

Be Realistic

Follow the reality principle and not the pleasure principle. Do what is realistic instead of what feels good at the moment. Although your decisions and plans need to include knowledge of what would be pleasurable and ideas on how to achieve significant enjoyment, they must be tied to reality.

All of us are uncomfortable with some aspects of reality. We will avoid them if we can. In some cases, we don't even need to try. Our own coping devices can cause us to forget, discount, or procrastinate when we encounter unpleasant realities. For example, one man may decide to quit smoking cigarettes next year because he "would feel too uncomfortable" if he started now. Of course, he may rely on the same rationalization when next year rolls around. Another man may decide he is too tired to confront his wife's aberrant behavior, even though he understands just how unrealistic delay is. Putting off unpleasant realities often means they will become more unpleasant in the future.

So here we have another paradox. The person whose decisions are guided by reality tends to experience more pleasure than the hedonist — in the long run.

Take Time to Reflect

Schedule a regular time to think about these things. Busy, active lives may leave little time for introspection. Contemplation in the shower or in the car on the way to work is helpful but usually lacks the thoughtfulness and follow-up such work deserves. Planned and protected times to reflect and consider where you have been and where you are going are much more likely to be effective.

Plan Ahead

Plan ahead for crises. Family problems, deaths, professional risk, and illness will affect most of us from time-to-time. So just as you have a will, develop contingency plans for other crises. As much as possible, target professionals you can rely on. Get to know them well enough to decide if you can trust them. While you are unpressured, evaluate them as professionals and people. Then you won't worry about their trustworthiness during a crisis. A trusting relationship is important in the helping professions.

Look at Yourself

Most important of all, know thyself. This is an old but still highly relevant virtue.

More and more of your work will depend on your own judgment and therefore, your own personality. To deal aggressively and sensitively with the problem individual in a timely way, you need to know your own strengths and blind spots. What kind of person can "con" you? What kind of person irritates you even when she is right (particularly when she is right!)? What troublesome qualities did one of your parents have which if you see them in a colleague or spouse, you react to like a cornered animal. A sign you've been with such a person is thinking, "Damn, I wish I hadn't said that."

Even strengths can become weaknesses in the wrong setting or if they are overused. Can you concentrate so well that you shut important people out when you don't even know it? What does it mean if you never feel anxious?

The issue of self-knowledge comes up over and over again. This is because knowing yourself is the most important, most frustrating, and most fun aspect of all this work.

TIPS ON TENDING TO YOURSELF

A surprisingly large and varied number of ideas and techniques have been helpful to people as they "cared for themselves." What follows are some techniques and structures that have been helpful to others. Some may be helpful to you.

The available tools range from highly personal to impersonal. With some you get only feed-back about yourself. With others, you get an opportunity to see how other people manage the same issues; you may even receive some suggestions about how you could manage better. All of the tools involve significant opportunities for introspection. With some, introspection is the primary goal; with others (for example, jogging) it is only a possibility.

Using the continuum of personal to impersonal, we will begin with the most personal strate-gies, which you can do by yourself, and proceed to the more impersonal, which are done with others.

Keep a Personal Log

Perhaps the most introspective and solitary exercise is writing. A private, personal log, if used on a regular basis, helps clarify vague feelings and ideas.

Writing captures your ideas so you can remember and analyze them. A technique that can be used with a log is to set a time limit (15-to-20 minutes) to write everything that comes to mind about a particular topic. This writing must be uncensored; you cannot permit yourself to stop even when you think your mind has gone blank. (At that time, write "my mind has gone blank.")[17]

You might write on various topics. Here are some examples:

- A conversation with your father, mother, or important teacher about your successes;

- A letter to your husband or wife about why it is so hard to tell him or her how much you really love him or her;

- A conversation with yourself when you were a child about past hopes and dreams;

- A conversation about some problems you have been unable to solve. (For example, conversing with the problem of overreacting).

Writing down personal goals also has been effective for many people. You can use a napkin, piece of notebook paper, an old paper bag or envelope to write down your goals. It is difficult to get most people to take the time, however. Such work requires several hours because you need a chance to fuss and decide what is truly important to you.

It usually makes sense to start with the question, "What do I want to do with my life." Then, you proceed from life goals to shorter-term goals.

Relaxation Techniques

Another personal and private set of tools involves relaxation and hypnotic techniques. These relaxation tools include techniques such as guided imagery, self-hypnosis, biofeedback, meditation, and variations on those themes.[18] Those techniques are as personal as writing, but they do not capture the ideas and insights. Their purpose is to provide more direct work on one's unconscious and to give the individual experiences with controlling internal processes.

As with any personal skill, these techniques need to be practiced on a regular basis. If you wish to use one, it is important to decide which is best for you and then stick with it. The exercises will be supportive during quiet times and can be used during times of heightened stress.

Exercise

Physical exercise and recreational programs offer a great deal. They require some planning and, again, regularity is important. Some exercise programs, such as Tai Chi may be combined with meditative techniques. Today there isn't much need to discuss the usefulness of exercise; information on the topic surrounds us. While the ads and zealots can go overboard, the underlying idea is sound. A regular routine (preparing for a marathon isn't necessary) will help you burn the normal chemicals produced by daily stress. When your muscles are in tone, you feel better and are better equipped to handle the more difficult crises that develop. Whether those crises are pushing a car out of a snow drift or undergoing surgery, being in physical shape is safer. (Just from a technical point of view, it is much easier to do surgery on a muscular person at the optimum body weight than an overweight person with flaccid muscles).

The Arts

The arts, including music, drama, painting, and literature, facilitate introspection and the exercise of psychological facilities often neglected by the highly technical occupations.

Although the arts may offer little help for the technical side of your work, they do offer a great deal of help for the professional side. Literature and philosophy may be the best way to learn about people, their needs, and one's own personal vulnerabilities.[19] (Many coronary-prone personalities learn one of their vulnerabilities is that they want to speed read such things as philosophy. Simply starting to read such works is helpful to them). Timing, rhythm, harmony, and shadings of color are crucial for developing relationships, negotiating tough personal issues, and managing the inherent conflicts in long-term relationships.

Conversation

Just as certain forms of the arts require other people, some tools also require others. At the most personal level is the "dialogue." A straightforward, open discussion with another human being has great potential for increased understanding, support, and healing.

A true dialogue is more than just talking; it involves communication between two equals, who, at least for the moment, have no hidden agendas or techniques to manipulate the other.[20] Self-disclosure is optimum; feedback is sensitive and honest. Some form of dialogue is essential if solitary exercises are not to become self-indulgent activities that avoid painful information. Most often, a confidant is required for true dialogue. Some groups can function at such an honest level that dialogue takes place. Occasionally, even a group in the office may reach this level of discourse for a short time. Groups exist for the support of different functions of the personality. Some group exercises are particularly helpful in understanding the aggressive and conflictual sides of human experience and about power struggles. Some groups primarily focus on the affiliative, affectionate, and creative sides of human experience. Other groups support marriages, parenting, and stressed leaders. While executives often look askance at such groups, they are some of the more powerful tools for introspection and personal change.

Education

Continuing educational experiences may be impersonal yet impart much personal information. There are useful programs for busy professionals and executives who want to learn, for example, about the humanities, leadership, and personal management. When organized well with effective leadership, these programs not only impart information, they also help participants learn more about themselves and support structures.

As you decide which tools to use, consider the fit between your vulnerabilities and the potential solutions. If a solution simply reinforces or hides one's vulnerability, it does not help. For example, people who are already too aggressive are often the ones who see the most value in an assertiveness program. The person who is passive and withdrawn may be attracted to the more private, solitary activities. When you discuss specific changes to prevent vulnerability to heart attack with persons who have a Type-A personality, their response often is: "But if I do that, I will be bored." These are examples of how solutions need to follow the reality principle instead of what feels natural, right, or comfortable to the individual.

If you are the kind of person who is able to see problems more easily than you see possibilities, you fall into a common personality pattern for executives. Such an individual easily picks up subtle clues that suggest danger or trouble ahead. On the other hand, these people do not readily pick up signs of budding opportunities for affiliation, affection, or creativity. They need structure to come up with the solutions to the problems they see. These executives also need to beware of people who offer slick solutions (for example, a positive mental attitude), because they want a simple, happy answer for the challenges of building relationships.

Many people offer easy formulas and recipes for motivation, creativity, or support. Yet sustained support and success cannot be obtained by simple formulas. Executives with such vulnerabilities must wrestle with the fundamentals of affection, affiliation, and creativity. They must be prepared to be confused and even discouraged, because they will be trying to master something difficult for them.

There is another side to this coin. Some executives see possibilities easily but not the signs of problems and dangers. They must also select solutions that may be frustrating initially. These people will be inclined to express irritation about what they perceive as unpleasant or "negative" views of life. A leader like this will be inclined to discount the problems others see in his or her relationships with people in the office, with clients and family members. Such execu-

tives tend to come up with a premature solution before problems have been adequately defined. But the new solutions don't adequately address the issues because such people do not perceive, understand, or take the time to study problems.

When we work on our own vulnerability, we will feel frustrated because we are exploring in areas of experience we have not yet mastered. Thus, reaching appropriate solutions will involve frustration, anxiety, and even occasional discouragement.

Build Supportive Structures

To "tend to yourself" in an age of change, you need to continually build supportive structures.

At work, supportive structures are based on good management practices. Your supportive structures will include the reliable policies and procedures you create for the organization. They also include the mechanisms that keep communications open. Communication structures involve not only formal reporting relationships but regularly scheduled retreats where there is ample opportunity for you to get to know your team members as people. They also get to know each other as people.

The reliable techniques you create, for example, for assessing your subordinates, maintaining relationships and motivating individuals are supportive structures. How seriously the people in your organization take those structures will depend on how clearly you "reward" those individuals who give you appropriate, needed information and "punish" those who withhold relevant information.

It is possible for the family to drift into a structureless morass until it becomes relevant only when a member has no other activities. Or the home may become an elegant yet inefficient dormitory. Families require regular and frequent times for the members to be together as people and support each other. To be supportive and have intimate relationships, the individuals must know each other on a personal level. To know the other person requires time that is not dominated by a task. Time just to talk—just to "be"—together.

Individual time with each child and your spouse is required to build strong relationships. Mutually supportive relationships not only decrease the frequency of crises, but they also make the outcomes of the unpreventable crises more likely to be healthy. Planned, regularly scheduled times for you and your spouse to be together without distractions is a simple device for the work required to keep a marriage from drifting into a relationship of form without substance. Just picking an evening each week when the two of you can have dinner together (without customers, colleagues, or children) at least keeps the opportunities for dialogue open.

Individuals who aren't living with someone else may find it requires extra work to set up such a structure with the person closest to them. It is still worth the try. A dependable routine where you have an opportunity to talk about current concerns keeps the relationship alive and growing.

You also need supportive structures for your self. Each of us needs time alone. Vacations that refresh and rejuvenate must be planned, or they become just another forced march. You need to plan for and protect activities and places that heal and "re-create" you. Personal structures include goals, dependable relationships, limits on the intake of alcohol and other drugs, and

efficient sleep patterns.

During personal transitions, such as when one takes on new responsibilities, planning time for reassessment of personal goals and structures is often helpful.

A Plan for Self-Care

Finally, consider developing your own written plan for self-maintenance and personal growth. For self-maintenance, a personal annual checkup is helpful. You can do it during the time when you purposefully stop to reflect. To make it more methodical, consider the following questions:

1. Have I followed the advice of the professionals I paid to advise me?

    • If not, did I have good reasons?

    • Did I check my reasons with someone whose judgment I trust?

2. Do I have someone to call in case of a crisis?

3. Drugs—do I take the ones I need?

4. Drugs—are dangerous ones becoming too important, for example, alcohol, cigarettes, or caffeine?

5. Do I feel loved?

6. Do others feel loved by me?

7. Have I felt most of the possible human feelings over the past year?

8. Can I doubt, worry and wonder about myself and the key issues in my environment?

9. Are parts of my personal code irrelevant?

    • Are the principles which guide my life relevant to adults or children?

    • Is my code relevant to the realities of the first half or last decade in the Twentieth Century?

    • Do I have the courage to question my code and the people who gave it to me?

10. What are the trends in my life?

    • Financial
    • Physical Health
    • Pain
    • Pleasure
    • Risk
    • Intimacy
    • Stimulation
    • Reading
    • Recreation

11. Have I received personally relevant and challenging information on a regular basis over the past year?

12. Who are my confidants?

13. What am I going to do about the problems I have uncovered?

Consider keeping a personal record of your own insights, vulnerabilities and successes. This is one of the important functions of a personal log and the writing exercises. Review it during your annual check up.

In your plan, evaluate the kinds of groups that could be helpful to you. Many of those groups might also be part of your continuing professional education. Since you have proved yourself to be a leader, your professional education from now on will require more devotion to managing yourself. There are many resources available.

SUMMARY

As an executive, you have awesome responsibilities. This monograph reviews a few of the more personal ones. Some of the most difficult challenges you will face are the hard-to-understand philosophical problems described in the beginning. Although the action steps at the end are the easiest to understand, troublesome issues such as greed, envy and exploding information are the most important to understand. Yet they are the very points that will be forgotten first, so set aside a time one year from now to reread that section.

The more you master the concepts, the less you will depend on the techniques. There are so many techniques for self-improvement because they are easy. The challenge is to understand why a technique is supposed to be helpful. To truly understand means you have defined your own relationship to basic human issues.

In this monograph, I have focused on some of the problems all leaders face. One of their most difficult challenges is managing themselves. I haven't spent much time on the delightful side of the executive role. Legitimate fun doesn't need to be analyzed. It simply needs to be. The pleasures, as well as the problems, are individualized. Most people find your role highly gratifying.

Only a few of the people who strive to be an executive accomplish it. Appropriately tending to your self should enable you to enjoy this role longer and make you a more effective leader.

NOTES

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People gain understanding from reading. Some books primarily provide conceptual, intellectual knowledge. Still others also offer a perspective, allowing us to see how we compare with others in problems such as envy, jealousy, greed, unrealistic competition, and so forth. Gaining a realistic perspective, intellectual understanding and new techniques are important elements in managing and changing problems into possibilities.

Resolving personal problems often requires extending one's emotional understanding. Some books can also be helpful here, stirring up feelings and providing a little catharsis. One gets an opportunity to share some feelings with the author. Then if you discuss the book with someone you trust, and maybe even love, you can gain some insight and a better perspective.

ADAPTATION TO LIFE, George E. Vaillant
- Category: Growth and Development
- Provides: Perspective: Personal growth and development; general information
- Important Points: Broad prospective study: Data Harvard men Definition of health; development more as a process; discomfort is not bad; most healthy coping devices.

AGE OF DISCONTINUITY, Peter Drucker, HarperCollins, 1982
- Category: Management
- Provides: General Information; perspective
- Important Points: Underlying economic and demographic trends.

GREAT EXPECTATIONS, Landon Y. Jones
- Category: Outside forces
- Provides: General Information; perspective
- Important Points: Baby boom and its demographic influences; "New Values Employee" understanding.

LEADERSHIP WITHOUT EASY ANSWERS, Ronald A. Heifetz
- Category: Leadership
- Provides: New pragmatic view of leadership
- Important Points: Leader pushes people to deal with their problems

RELAXATION RESPONSE, Herbert Benson, M.D.
- Category: Needed skills
- Provides: Specific techniques
- Important Points: Meditation techniques, an overview, focus on blood pressure.

THE CLASSIC TOUCH, John Clemens, Douglas Mayer
- Category: Management
- Provide: An introduction of key ideas about management from the classics

TYPE A BEHAVIOR AND YOUR HEART, Meyer Freedman, M.D. and Ray Roseman, M.D.
- Category: Health
- Provides: General Information; consequences; alternatives
- Important Points: Effects of personality style on coronary arteries; good explanation of function of coronary arteries and heart.

UNDERSTANDING PSYCHOTHERAPY, Michael Basch, M.D.
- Category: Professional support
- Provides: An example of good psychotherapy

YOU CAN NEGOTIATE ANYTHING, Herb Cohen
- Category: Needed skills, consequences and alternatives
- Provides: Techniques; general information
- Important Points: Win/win; pleasure to read; power and negotiations are not bad; also good for families

WHEN A NEW MANAGER TAKES CHARGE, John J. Gabarro, Business Review, May-June 1985
- Category: Management
- Provides: Perspective and techniques
- Important Points: There is an understandable process when a new leader takes charge.

WORK AND LOVE: THE CRUCIAL BALANCE, Jay B. Rohrlich, M.D.
- Category: Insight
- Provides: Perspective
- Important Points: Work and leisure are different, both are required for health.

WHEN BAD THINGS HAPPEN TO GOOD PEOPLE, Harold S. Kushner
- Category: Theology
- Provides: Perspective
- Important Points: Bad events are not a sign of punishment or that we are bad.