

Self-transcendence: The Key to Meaning and Wellbeing

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TRENT UNIVERSITY, CANADA

International Webinar Series on Students' Wellbeing

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Overview

1. Unprecedented challenges to the education sector.
2. The inadequacies of positive education.
3. The need for existential positive psychology (PP 2.0).
4. The self-transcendence paradigm.

UN (2020) Brief on Education during COVID-19 and Beyond

- The largest disruption of education systems in history.
- Affecting nearly 1.6 billion learners (94% of the world's student population) .
- Closures of schools has impacted up to 99 per cent in low and lower-middle income countries.

According to UNESCO (2021), we're no longer in an emergency but in a "protracted crisis". We need a recovery package centering on inclusion, resilience, and transformation:

1. Take every measure to protect the health and wellbeing of learners, teachers and educators.
2. Build resilience to future shocks, from health to environmental.
3. Provide learners with the knowledge and mindsets to cope with the existential threat and create a sustainable, peaceful future.

Toronto's Hospital for Sick Children (SickKids)

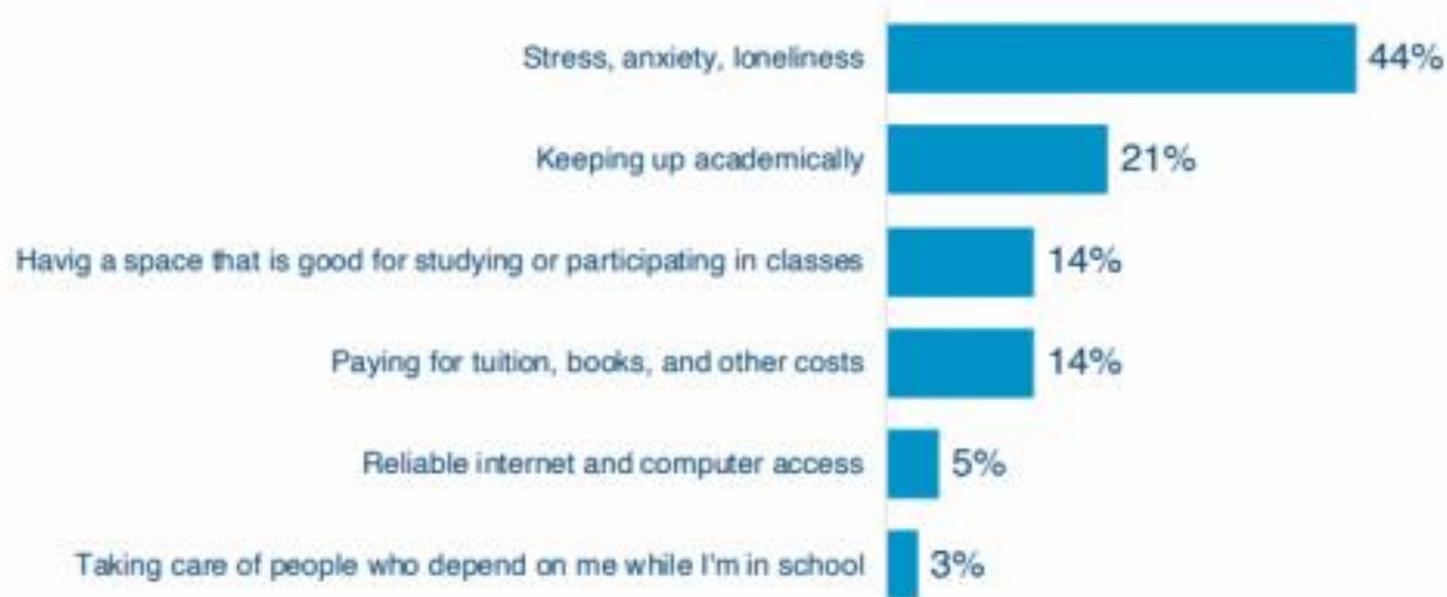
- Katherine Tombeau Cost et al. (2021) from Toronto's Hospital for Sick Children (SickKids) shows a large majority of children and youth (from 3-18) experienced harm to their mental health during COVID-19 because of social isolation, including both the cancellation of important events and the loss of in-person social interactions



Anderson (2020)

Emotional well-being is students' biggest challenge this fall

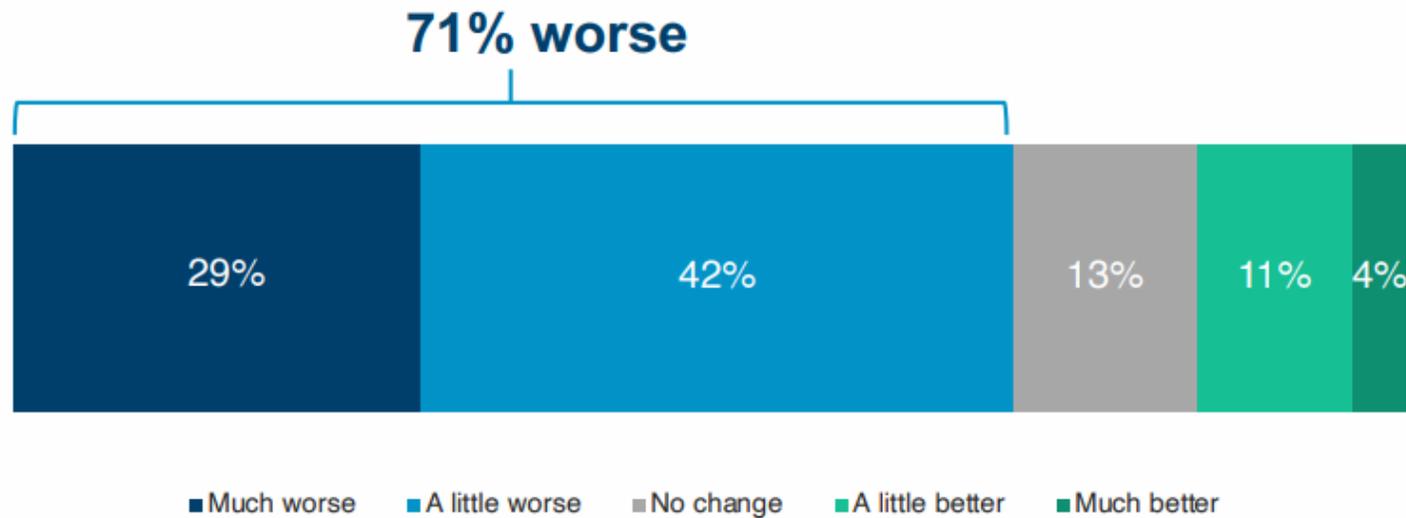
Which of the following has been the **biggest** challenge or struggle for you this fall?



Anderson (2020)

Nearly three-quarters of college students say online instruction has negatively impacted their ability to learn

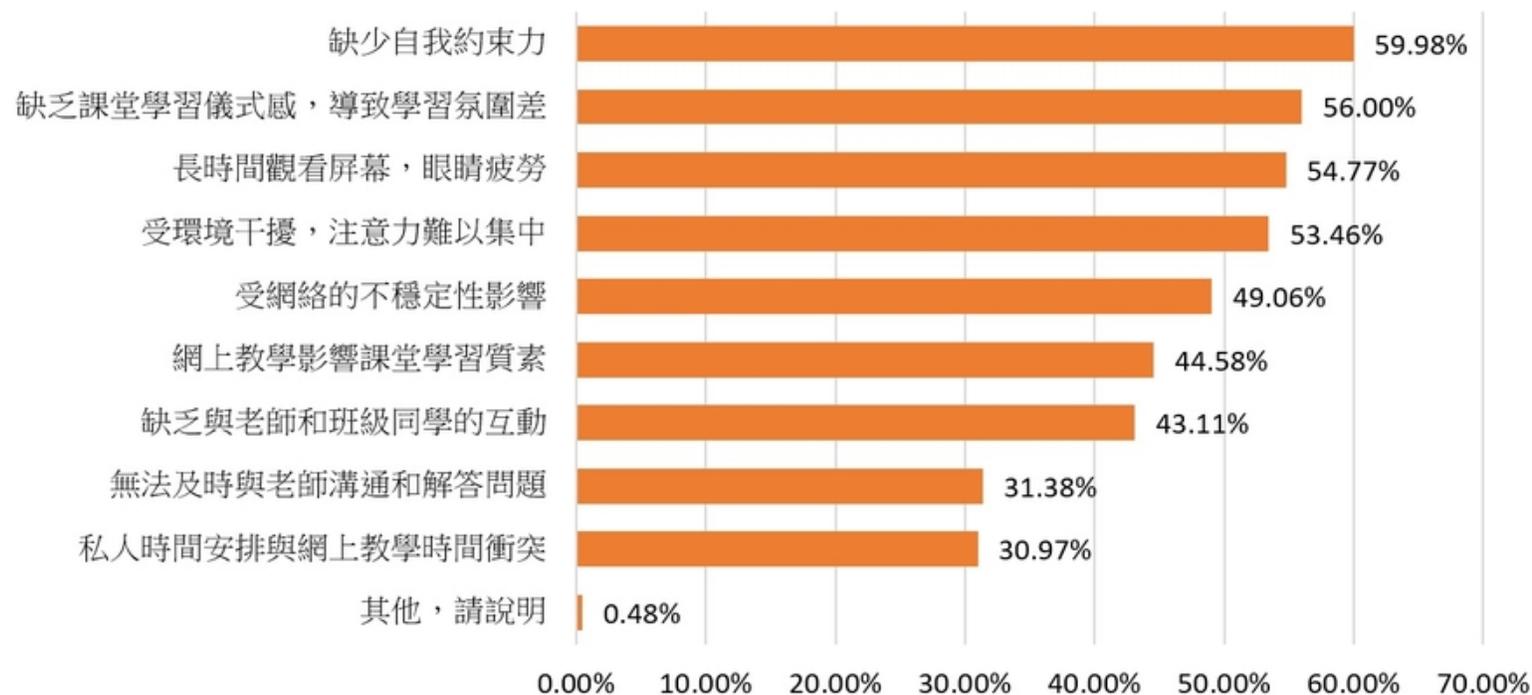
How, if at all, has online instruction impacted your ability to learn? Online instruction has made this ...



Strada-College Pulse survey, Sept. 10-25. Base: current college students enrolled at four-year institutions, n=3,879.

Hong Kong Students

- 岭大研究 (2020)：逾六成本港大学生认为抗疫期间网上学习效果比面授课堂差
- More than 60% of University Students in Hong Kong say online instruction negatively impacts their learning.



Seligman's Positive Education

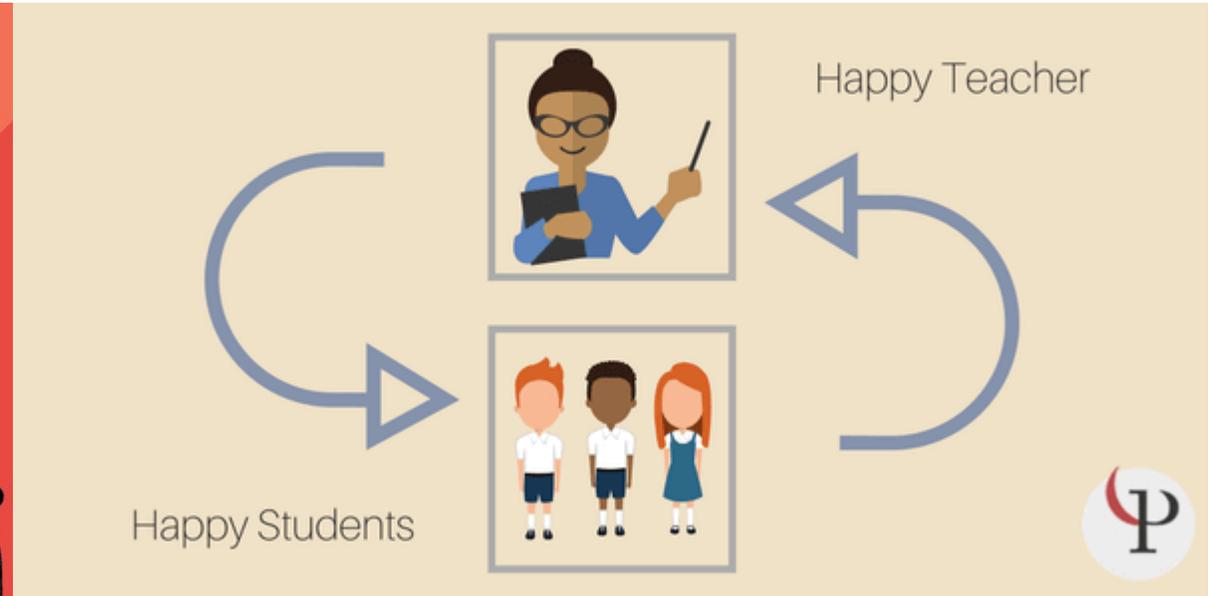
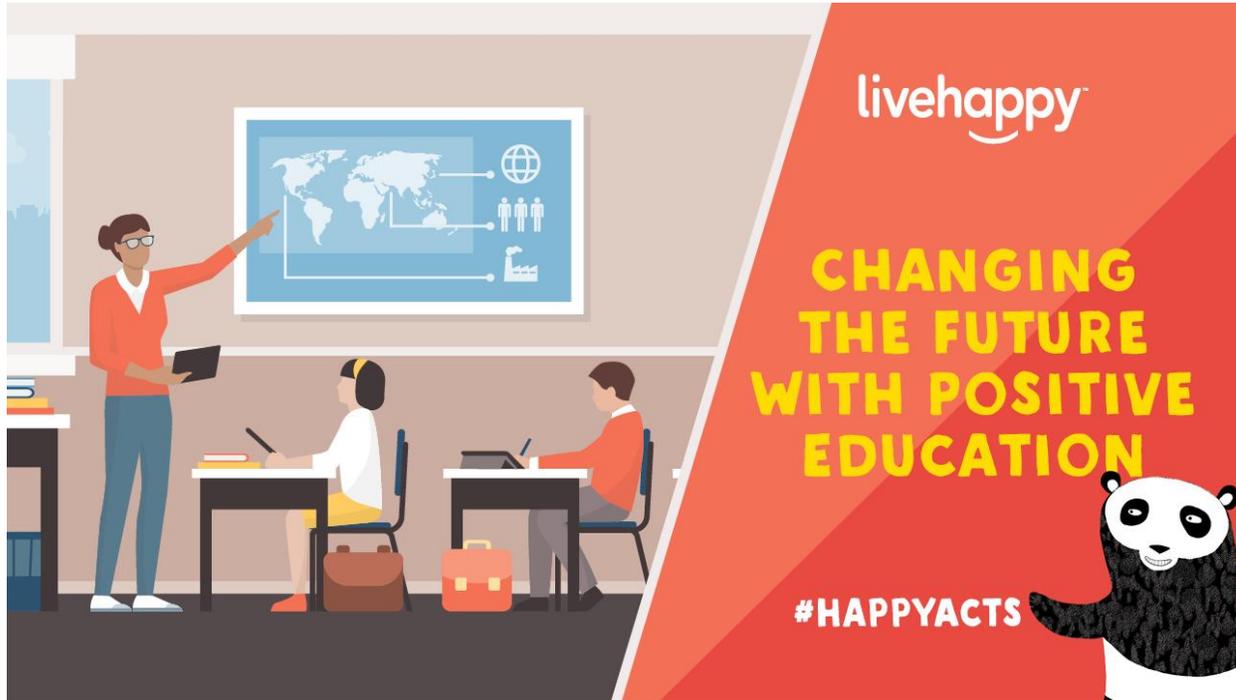
Seligman's Positive Education



“Positive education is defined as education for both traditional skills and for happiness. The high prevalence worldwide of depression among young people, the small rise in life satisfaction, and the synergy between learning and positive emotion all argue that the skills for happiness should be taught in school.”

(Seligman, Ernst, Gillham, Reivich, & Linkins)

Positive Education



No **significant learning** can occur without a **significant relationship**



Toxic Positivity



"Constant Positivity is a form of AVOIDANCE and is NOT a valid solution to your problems."

Source: Mark Manson www.ConsultingRose.com

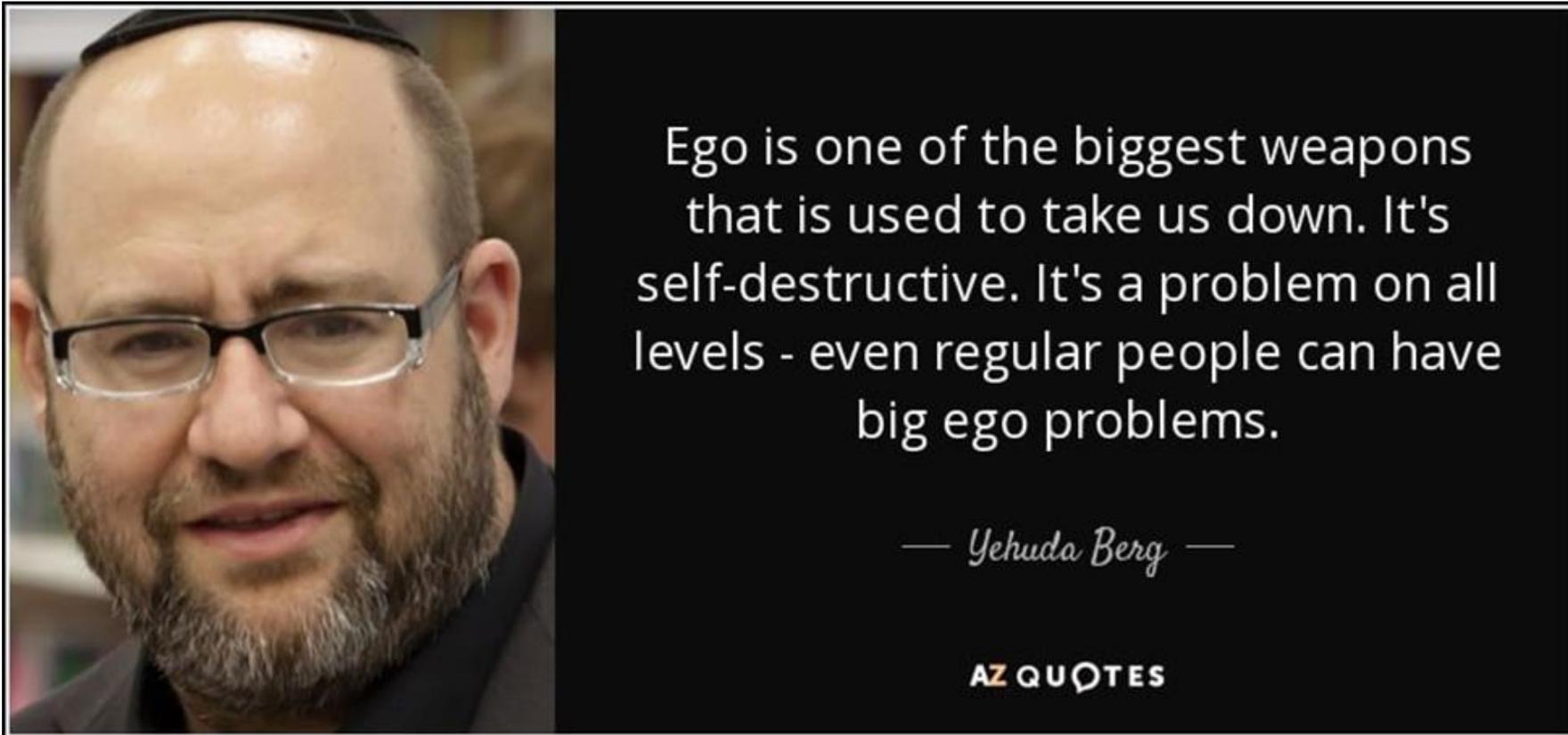
IS THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS MAKING YOU UNHAPPY?

Are Teachers Ok?

No, and Toxic Positivity Isn't Helping

Problems posed by the Ego

- Positive psychology and positive education do not address the problems posed by the Ego.



Ego is one of the biggest weapons that is used to take us down. It's self-destructive. It's a problem on all levels - even regular people can have big ego problems.

— *Yehuda Berg* —

AZ QUOTES

Two Different Models of Human Flourishing



Seligman's PERMA model:

1. Positive emotion – Hedonic and eudaimonic happiness.
2. Engagement – Do things we truly enjoy.
3. Have good relationships to enhance our wellbeing.
4. Meaning – Devote our time to do something greater than oneself.
5. Accomplishment based on success or happiness.



Wong's Self-transcendence model:

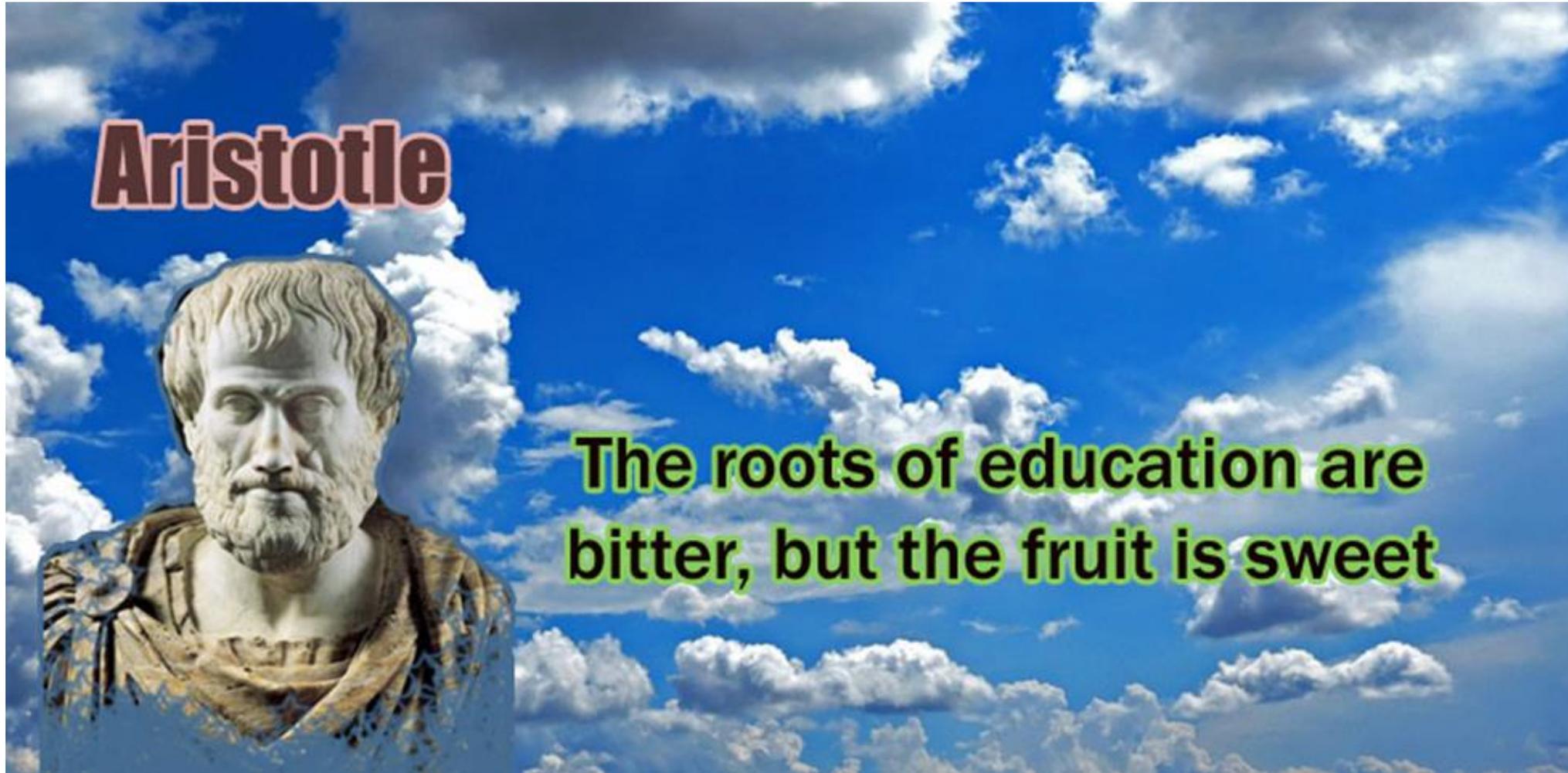
1. Have the courage to embrace all emotions and learn to maintain inner peace.
2. Assume responsibility to do what is right and good in spite of limitations.
3. Seek connections with our true self, with others, and with God. Treat others not as instruments for our wellbeing, but as fellow human beings.
4. Meaning – Pursue our calling or life goals which are constitutively and intrinsically good.
5. Accomplishment based on becoming what one was meant to be – a decent human being, who remains true to their calling.

Two Different Models of Human Flourishing

	Seligman's (2011) Model of Flourishing	Wong's (2021) Self-transcendence Model of Flourishing Through Suffering
P	Positive Emotions	Positivity through embracing the dark side of life.
E	Engagement	Engagement through painful discipline.
R	Positive Relationships	Strong relationships through forgiving and enduring the foibles of others.
M	Meaning	Meaning through transcending egotism and external obstacles.
A	Accomplishments	Achievement through transcending sacrifices and failures.

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Aristotle and Education



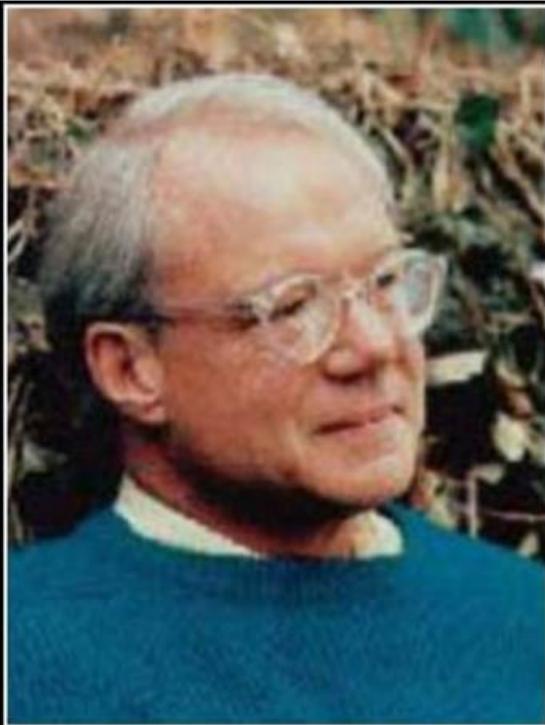
Aristotle and Education

Reshmi Prasad (2016):

- According to Aristotle, education is not something you have to study hard in order to get a good job and make money.
- The true goal of education is to develop positive personality traits such as contentment, right conduct, moral values, compassion, courage, empathy, humility etc.
- Without suffering, there would be no compassion. But suffering is bitter in life.

The worst of times may be the best of times.

- The good news is that the darkest moment of loneliness, helplessness and despair may compel us to search for meaning and discover what has been missing in our life all these years.



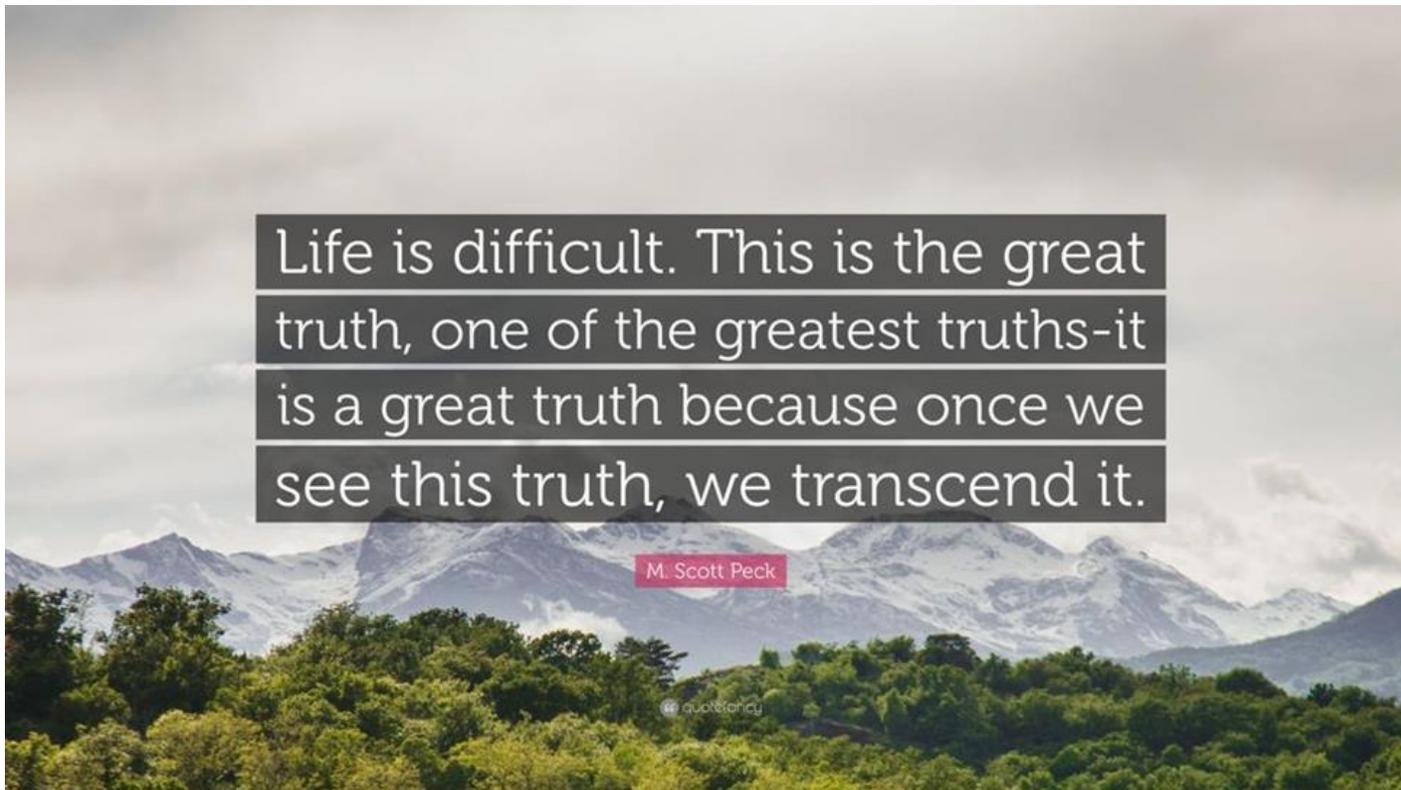
The truth is that our finest moments are most likely to occur when we are feeling deeply uncomfortable, unhappy, or unfulfilled. For it is only in such moments, propelled by our discomfort, that we are likely to step out of our ruts and start searching for different ways or truer answers.

— *M. Scott Peck* —

AZ QUOTES

Life is a Constant Battle

- Those who dismiss this great truth and expect life to be a joy ride have already lost half of the battle even before the war even started.



The need for self-transcendence is the biggest discovery in modern psychology.



Only to the extent that someone is living out this self transcendence of human existence, is he truly human or does he become his true self. He becomes so, not by concerning himself with his self's actualization, but by forgetting himself and giving himself, overlooking himself and focusing outward.

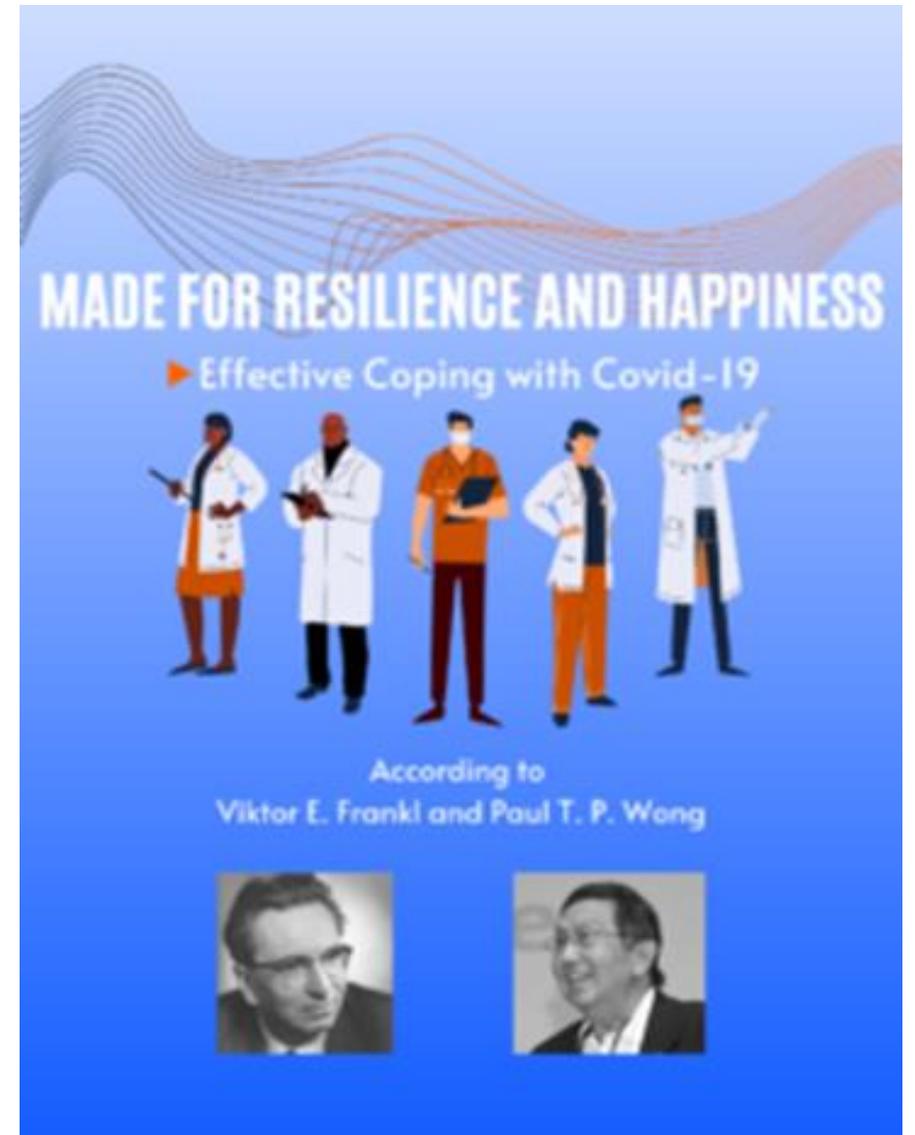
— Viktor E. Frankl —

AZ QUOTES

The biggest untold story in positive psychology

- The biggest untold story in positive psychology: Suffering terrifies millions, but true happiness is unattainable without it.
- Available for free from:

<https://www.free-ebooks.net/science-textbooks/Made-for-Resilience-and-Happiness-Effective-Coping-with-Covid-19-According-to-Viktor-E-Frankl-and-Paul-T-P-Wong>



Self-transcendence represents a paradigm change

Here are three powerful ideas that can transform both psychology and society for the betterment of humanity:

1. Polarity--all things in nature exist not as opposite poles on the same dimension but as two complementary and opposite dimensions.
2. Transcendence--the creative force or tension holds the opposites together.
3. Balance and Harmony--Inner peace and wellbeing result from navigating a balance between opposites.

The **Self-transcendence paradigm**, based on the above three inter-related tenets, charts a new path towards global wellbeing, world peace, and individual flourishing even in turbulent times.

♦ Dr. Paul T. P. Wong

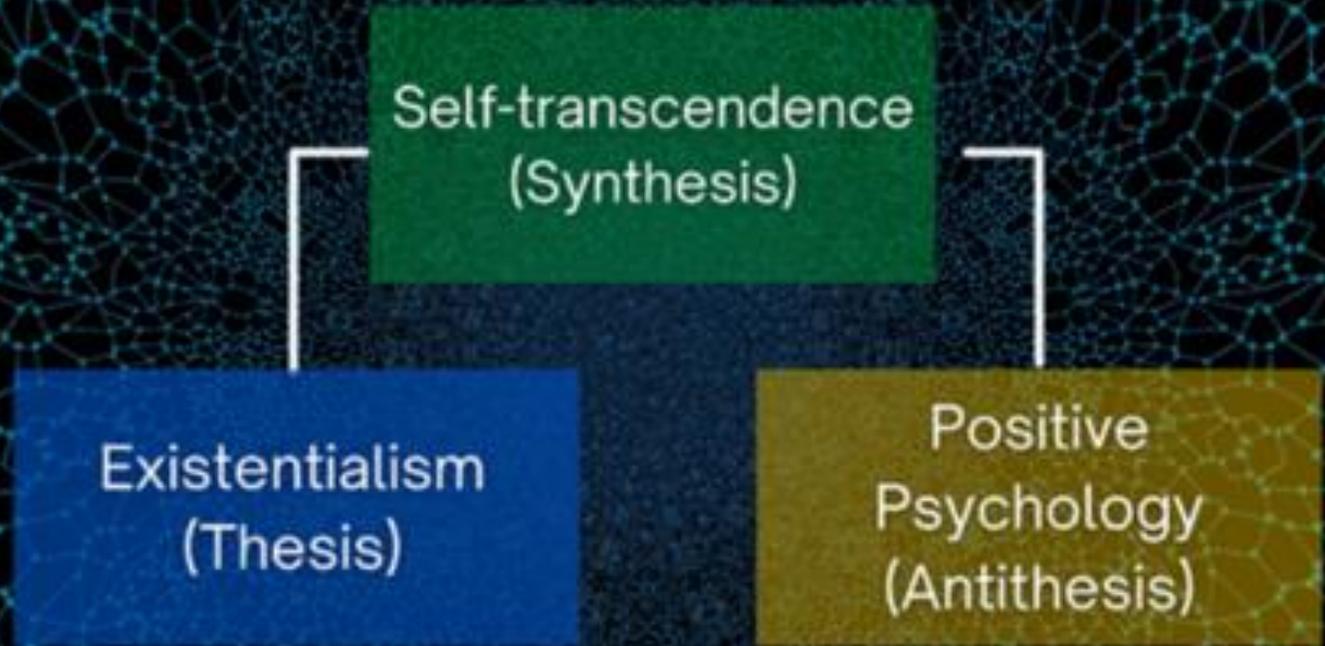
.....
"In the self good and evil are indeed closer than identical twins!"

– *Carl Jung, CW 12, Para 24*

PP 2.0

- According to existential positive psychology (PP 2.0), one needs to navigate a dynamic balance between positive and negative conditions.





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The Positive and Negative Sides of Ultimate Concerns



Yalom's four
existential anxieties:

- Death (mortality)
- Freedom of choice
- Isolation
- Meaninglessness



Wong's four
existential yearnings:

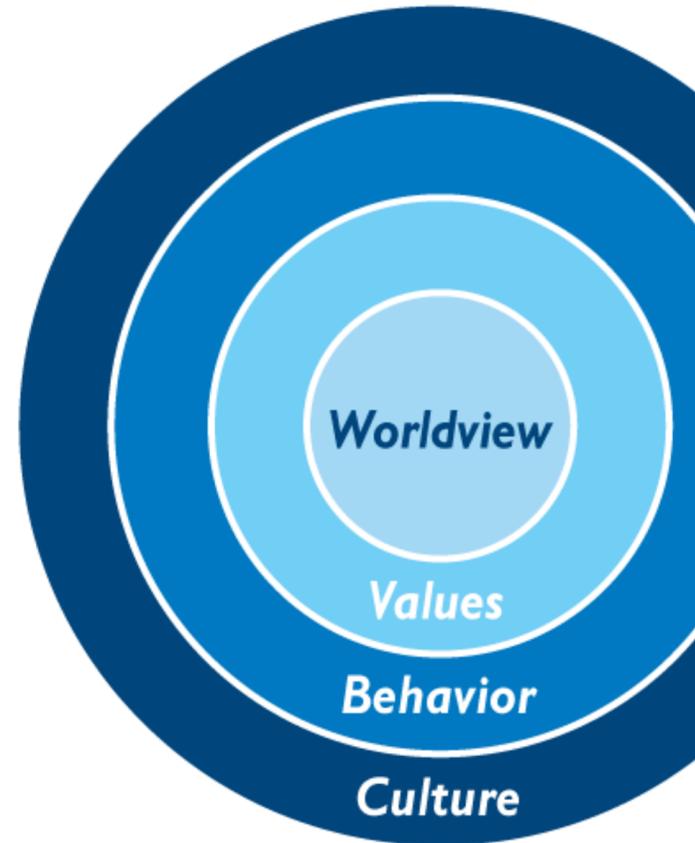
- Religious or transcendental faith
- Courage to make the right decision
- Love or connections
- A life of meaning and purpose

Paradoxes of Human Existence

	Existential Therapy (van Deruzen & Adams)	Existential Positive Psychology (Wong & Cowden)
The Physical World		
Challenge	Death and pain.	How to keep safe and healthy in a world full of dangers and obstacles, but also full of overcoming and opportunities.
Gain	Life to the full.	Accept my finitude and transcend hardships in order to enjoy a full life.
Loss	Unlived life or constant fear.	Indulge in egotistical desires in the short-term but fail to meet body's need for safety and wellbeing in the long-term.
The Social World		
Challenge	Loneliness and rejection.	How to get along with other people and build meaningful relationships in spite of unavoidable misunderstandings and conflicts.
Gain	Understand and be understood.	Maintain harmonious relationships by remaining true to the self and transcending personal differences with empathy, compassion, and self-sacrifice.
Loss	Bullying or being bullied.	Treat people as instruments for my happiness/success and live a disconnected life filled with tension and conflict.
The Psychological World		
Challenge	Weakness and failure.	How to develop and realize my full potential in spite of internal/external constraints.
Gain	Strength and stamina.	Accept/transcend my limitations and actualize my potentials.
Loss	Narcissism or self destruction.	Deny/ignore personal limitations and fall prey to misguided ambitions.
The Spiritual World		
Challenge	Meaninglessness and futility.	Recognize that my life is both a tiny part of a vast universe and an important part of something infinitely greater.
Gain	Finding an ethics to live by.	Become connected with my true self, others, and some divine, transcendental force.
Loss	Fanaticism or apathy.	Sell my soul for worldly happiness and success, and live a wasted, lonely life without knowing my true self and life purpose.

Know Yourself

1. **Your true self** is defined by your core values and beliefs (worldview) more than by your role, behavior, or culture.
2. **Your soul** is the bright side or healthy core characterized by spiritual aspirations of faith, hope, love, and the motivation to realize your calling.
3. **Your shadow** is the dark side or your "sick soul", characterized by the repressed aspects of self and the anxieties in grappling with the evil and suffering of life.
4. **Your good and evil twins** need to know and help each other.



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LIFE AFFIRMATION TEST

Down through the ages, human beings need to believe in something in order to survive and thrive the tough times. What are your beliefs? Can you say "Yes" to any of the following 10 beliefs?

- | | |
|--|-----------|
| 1. Every life has intrinsic value and is worth saving. | Yes or No |
| 2. As long as there is breath, there is hope. | Yes or No |
| 3. I was born for a purpose. | Yes or No |
| 4. If I believe that life is worth living, I will find meaning and purpose. | Yes or No |
| 5. I can create some value in my life, if I put all my heart and soul to it. | Yes or No |
| 6. I have the innate capacity to learn and grow. | Yes or No |
| 7. I have the freedom and responsibility to create a better future. | Yes or No |
| 8. My life matters, especially to those who love or depend on me. | Yes or No |
| 9. Even in hopeless situations, I can still cry out to God for help. | Yes or No |
| 10. Even the worst storm will pass, if I endure it patiently. | Yes or No |

Overcoming Existential Concerns

◆ Dr. Paul T. P. Wong

Transcend meaninglessness, loneliness, death anxiety, and egotistic ambitions through the golden rules of hope, love, and faith.

Transcend your vulnerabilities, fear, shame, and guilt through the iron rules of courage, acceptance, and meaning making.

Transcend your sense of limitations and inadequacy through the executive rules of responsibility and self-determination.

Transcend suffering, trauma, and hopelessness through the creative rules of tragic optimism, imagination, and idealism.

12 Rules for Flourishing through Self-transcendence



The Golden Triangle

- The Golden Triangle of innate motivation for connections with one's true self and calling, with other people, and with God or a higher power.

The Self-transcendence Paradigm of Global Wellbeing & Flourishing

The golden triangle of mental health and wellbeing is about how to live a meaningful life through expanding one's innate capacity for connections in 3 life domains in spite of hardships.

FAITH
(Spirituality)

Connecting with God, a higher power, or nature by transcending doubts and disbelief.

HOPE
(Agency)

Connecting with one's soul, calling, or authentic self by transcending one's limitations and egotism.

AGAPE

LOVE
(Communion)

Connecting with others and loved ones by transcending relational conflict and frustrations.

Faith makes all things possible
believe in yourself

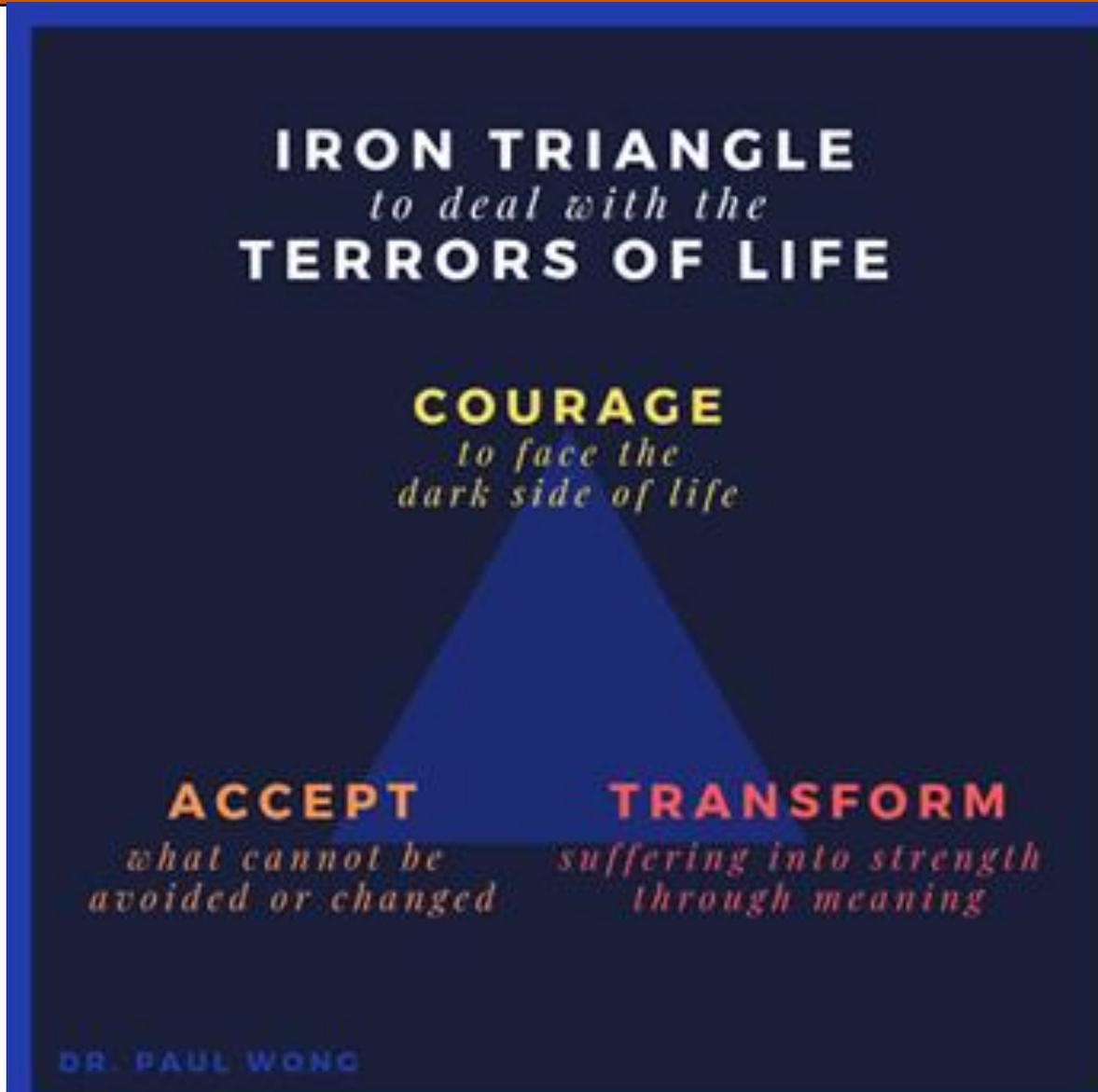
Hope makes all things brighter
believe in your future

Love connects us all together
believe in others

The Iron Triangle

The Iron Triangle of summoning up one's courage to:

1. Face the horrors of life,
2. Accept the dark side of human existence, and
3. Transform all painful experiences into triumphs.





**Sometimes
you just have to
die a little inside
in order to be
Reborn
and
Rise
again as a
Stronger and Wiser
version of You!**

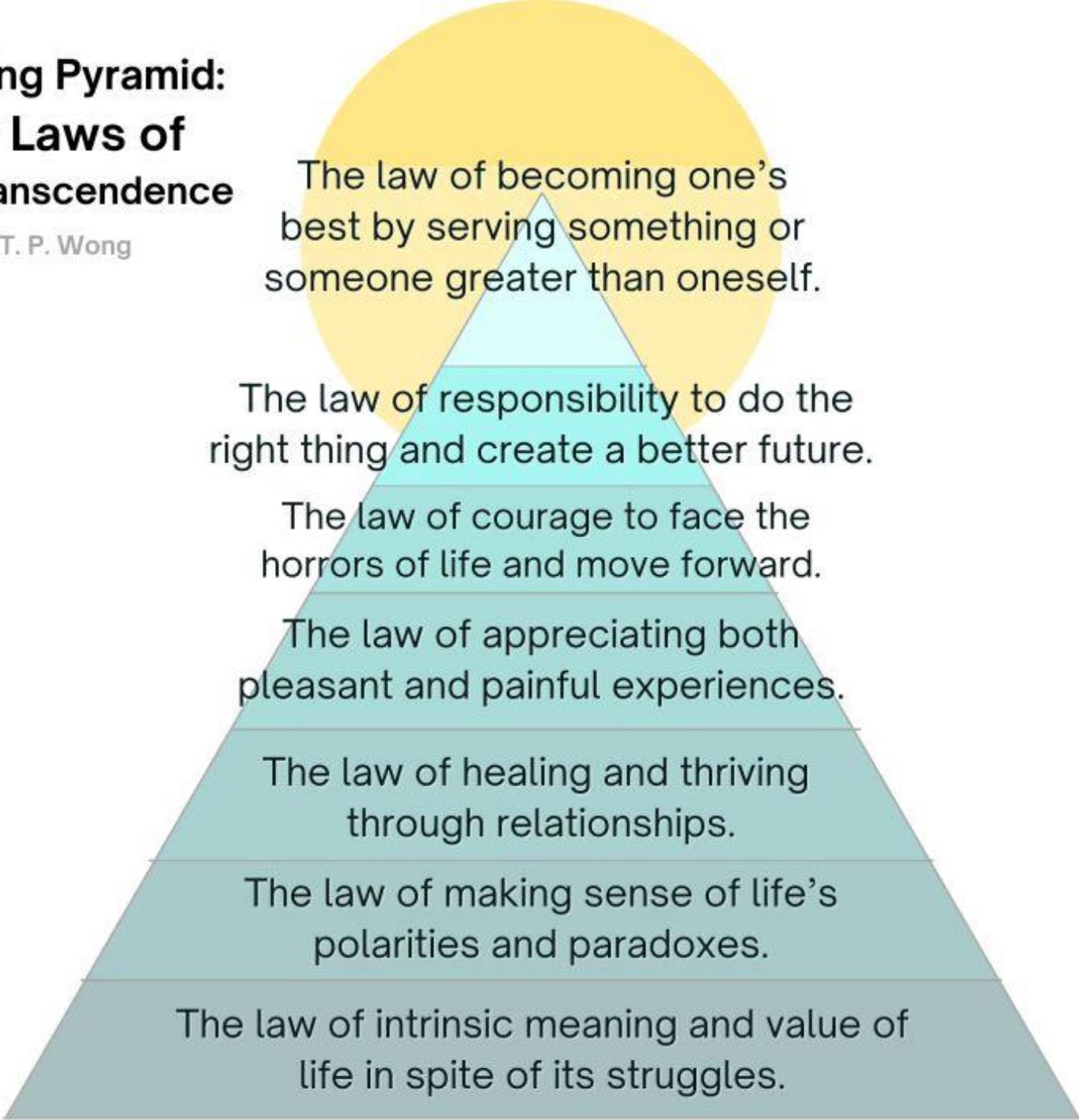
Character cannot be developed in
ease and quiet. Only through
experience of trial and suffering
can the soul be strengthened,
ambition inspired, and success
achieved.



Helen Keller

Meaning Pyramid: The 7 Laws of Self-transcendence

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The law of becoming one's best by serving something or someone greater than oneself.

The law of responsibility to do the right thing and create a better future.

The law of courage to face the horrors of life and move forward.

The law of appreciating both pleasant and painful experiences.

The law of healing and thriving through relationships.

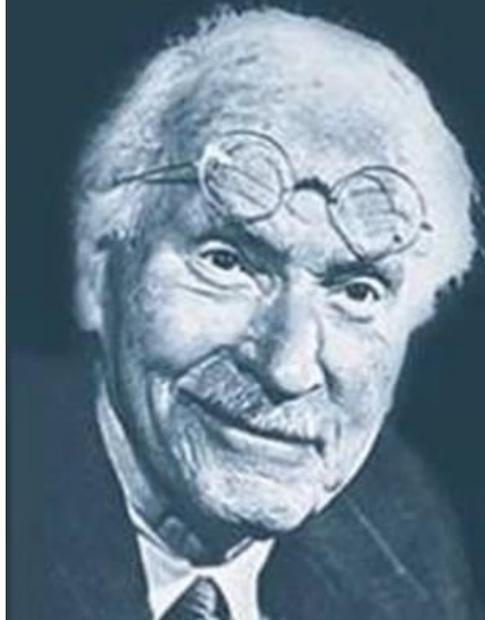
The law of making sense of life's polarities and paradoxes.

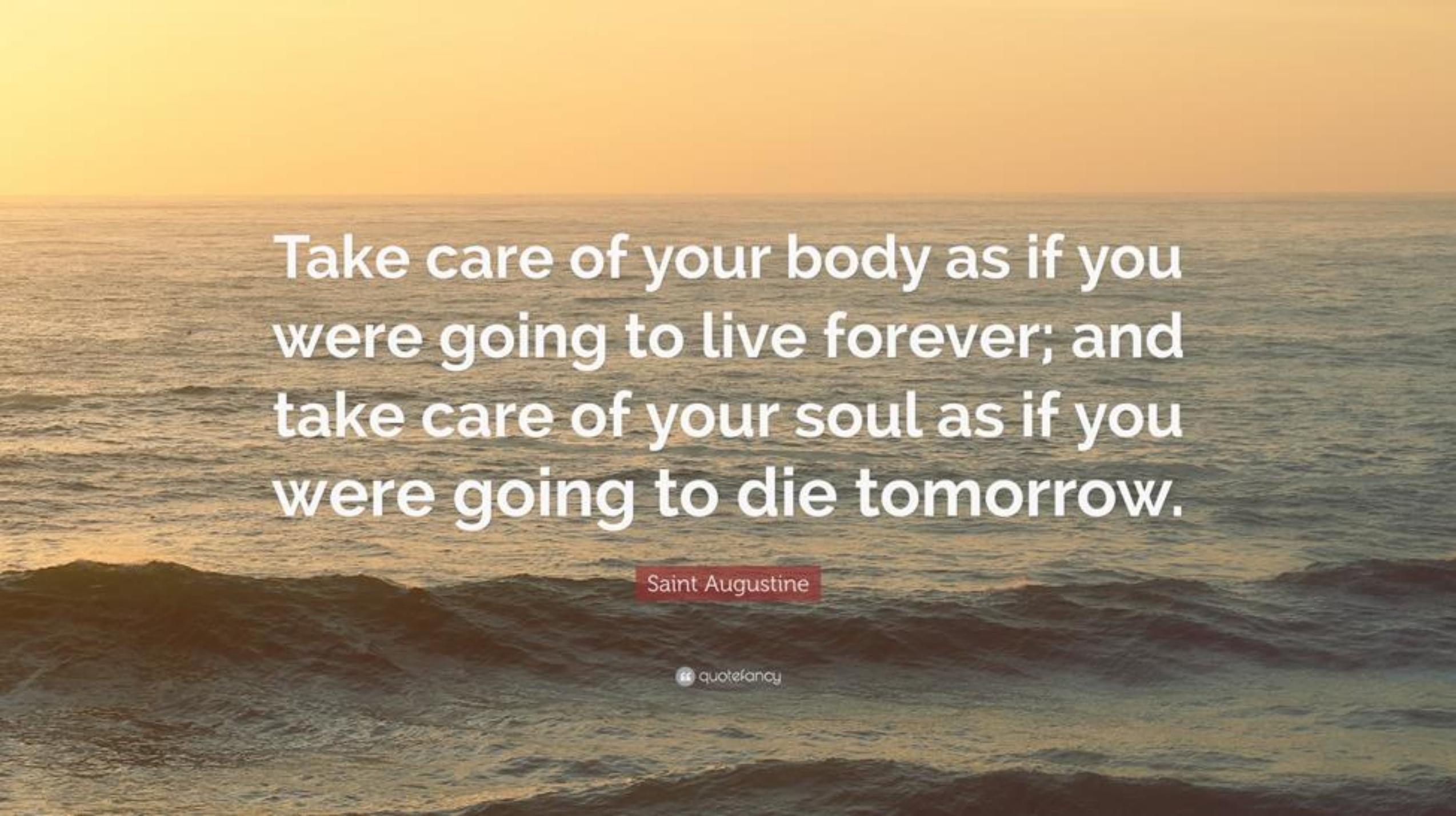
The law of intrinsic meaning and value of life in spite of its struggles.

Caring for your soul is equally important as caring for your body

My friends, it is wise to
nourish the soul,
otherwise you will
breed dragons and
devils in your heart.

*C.G. Jung,
The Red Book p.232*



A serene sunset over the ocean. The sky is a gradient of warm orange and yellow, transitioning into a soft blue at the horizon. The water is dark blue with gentle waves in the foreground, catching the low light of the setting sun. The overall mood is peaceful and contemplative.

Take care of your body as if you
were going to live forever; and
take care of your soul as if you
were going to die tomorrow.

Saint Augustine

The 7 spiritual laws of caring for your soul

1. The law of loving life and growing through transcending developmental challenges.
2. The law of seeking wisdom through transcending ignorance and biases.
3. The law of loving and forgiving through transcending isolation and conflicts.
4. The law of gratitude and appreciation through transcending boredom.
5. The law of faith to face obstacles and oppositions with courage.
6. The law of conscience of doing the right thing and pursuing one's ideals.
7. The law of devoting oneself to something greater and more valuable through transcending egotistic and materialistic concerns.



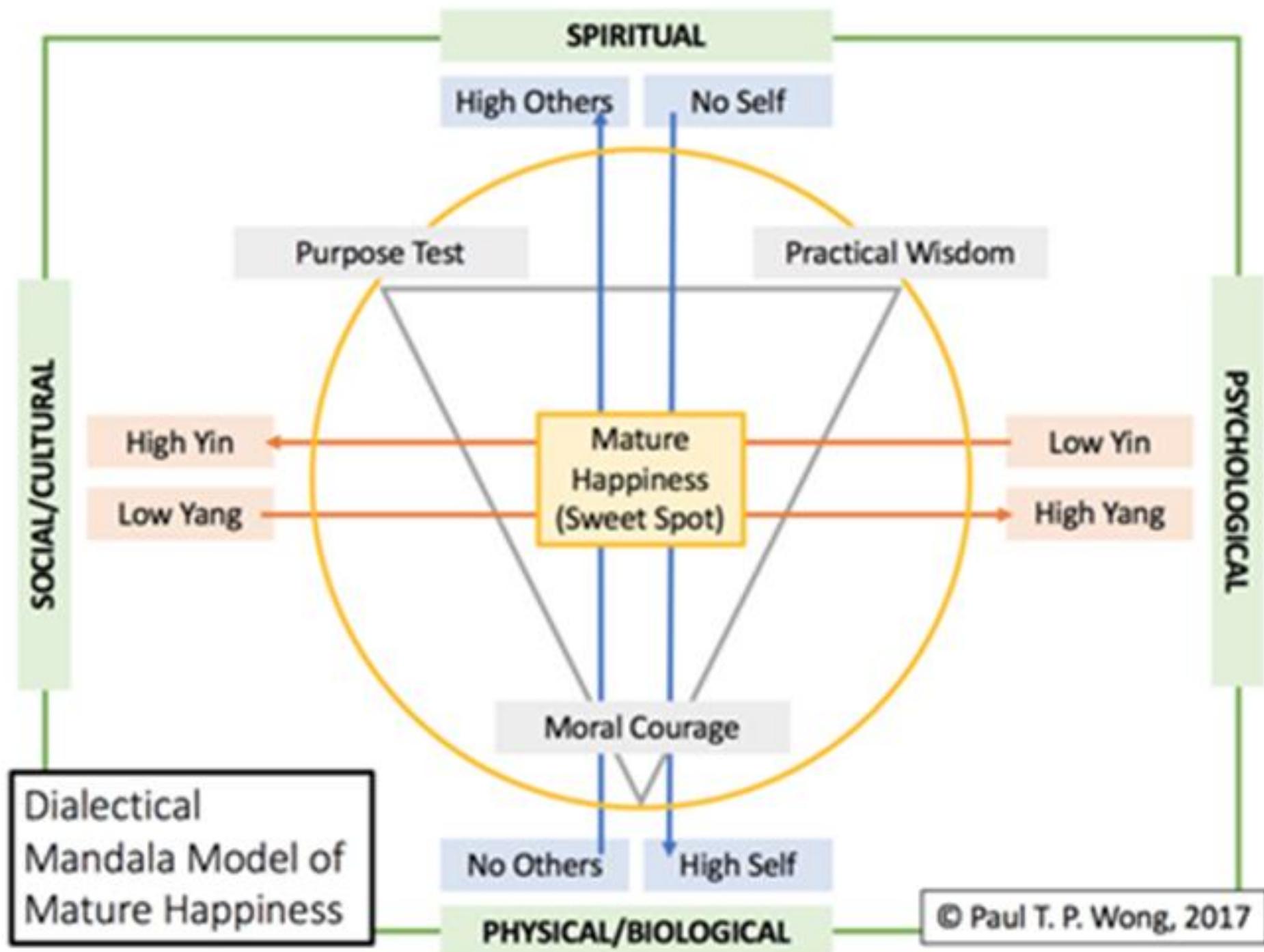
Varieties of meaning and wellbeing

1. The intrinsic meaning of life and the joy of learning and being alive.
2. The meaning of understanding the predicaments of life and existential wellbeing.
3. The meaning of connections and the joy of harmony and balance.
4. The meaning of remembering the origin and the joy of gratitude.
5. The meaning of creating a better future and a sense of fulfillment of being an overcoming hero.
6. The meaning of taking responsibility and the satisfaction of doing one's best.
7. The meaning of serving or worshipping something sacred with a sense of awe.

“True happiness comes from having a sense of inner peace and contentment, which in turn must be achieved by cultivating altruism, love, and compassion, and by eliminating anger, selfishness, and greed.”

Dalai Lama





You are Invited!

- 11th Biennial International Meaning Conference

- Registration: <https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/inpms-11th-biennial-international-meaning-conference-tickets-88531338617>
- Call for Papers details: <https://www.meaning.ca/conferences-and-events/meaning-conference-2021/>
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