

What Really Matters in the Darkest Hour: The 3 Essentials of Life Intelligence (LQ) for Career Success

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PRESENTED VIRTUALLY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW BRUNSWICK

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Brief Bio – Dr. Paul T. P. Wong

Paul T. P. Wong, Ph.D., C.Psych, is Professor Emeritus of Trent University and Trinity Western University. He is a Fellow of APA, APS, and CPA, and the founding President of **the International Network on Personal Meaning** (INPM, also known as the International Association of Existential Positive Psychology) and the **Meaning-Centered Counselling Institute**. As a servant leader, he has been a church planter, pastor, founding director of the graduate program in counselling psychology of Trinity Western University, and head of the Division of Social Sciences of Tyndale University. A prolific writer, he has published eight books and more than 200 journal articles and chapters; he is one of the **most cited psychologists** in areas related to positive psychology of suffering. As an internationally acclaimed leader in existential positive psychology (PP2.0), integrative meaning therapy, and meaning research, he has been invited to give keynotes and workshops globally and speak at major universities, such as Harvard University and Carnegie Mellon University.

Overview

1. The greatest need for this generation is life intelligence (LQ).
2. The three thought experiments of making life-changing choices.
3. The three great essentials to true happiness and success: Awakening, Faith, and Passion.
4. How my life experience and research support the importance of LQ.

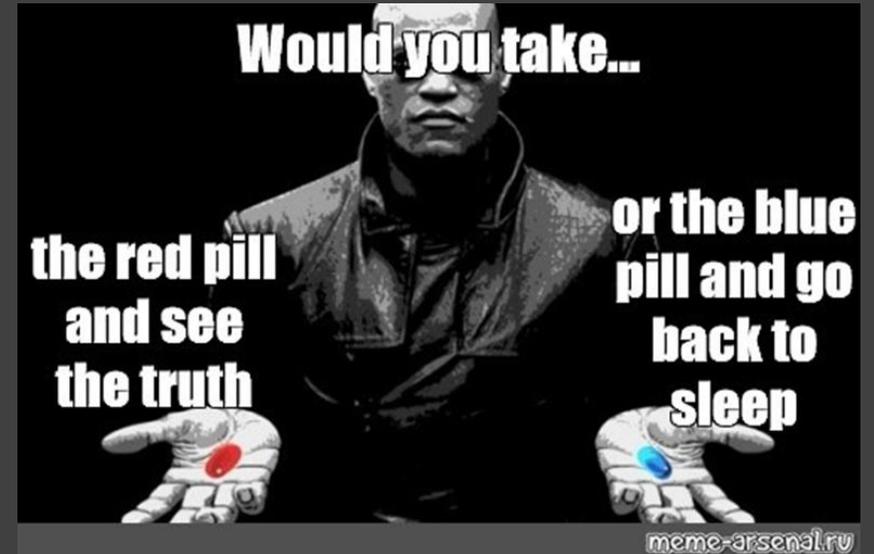


1. The greatest challenge for this generation is life intelligence (LQ)

2. The three thought experiments of making life-changing choices and the reasons for your choices

The First Thought Experiment

- Suppose you experienced some discomfort, and you don't know why. Now the specialist offers you a choice between a **blue sugar pill**, which will make you happy but does not have any real curative effect, or a **red truth pill**, which tells you the truth about the horrible condition you have and the painful surgery you need to undergo with serious side effects. What's your choice?



The Second Thought Experiment

- The second thought experiment is that you can either choose to stay in the shallow end of the pool or take a deep dive into the deep end, jumping in from the highest diving board.

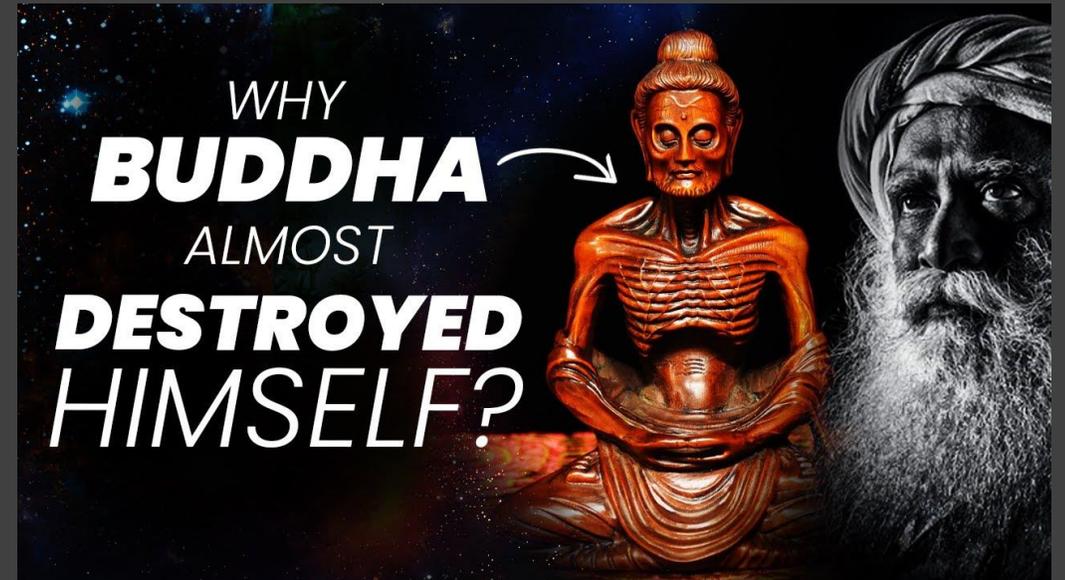
*I'm off the deep end, watch as I dive in
I'll never meet the ground
Crash through the surface,
where they can't hurt us
We're far from the shallow now*

Happy Sing Lyrics



The Third Thought Experiment

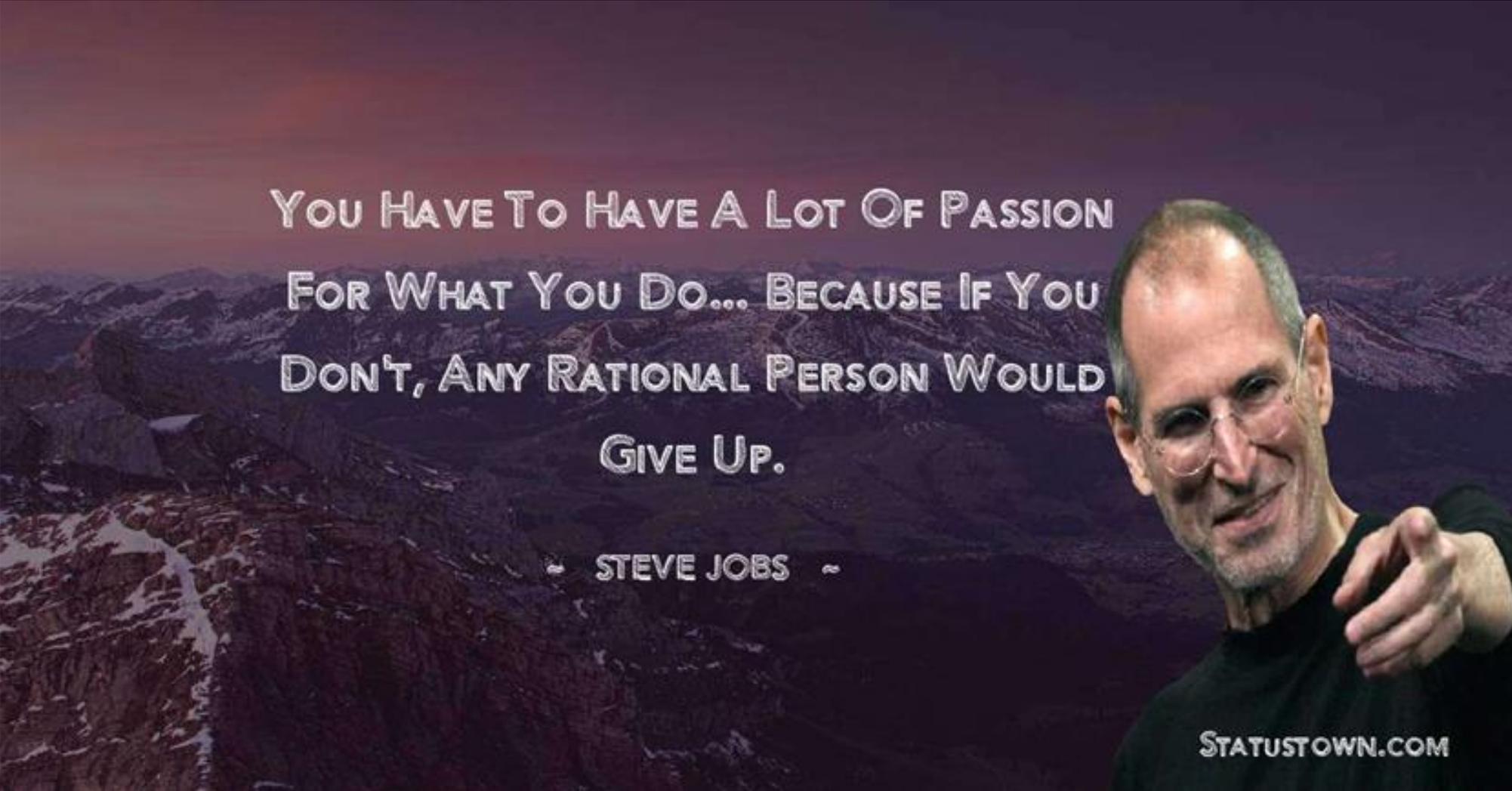
- Would you choose a proven path for success or blaze a new trail to achieve an impossible task? Buddha chose to be a suffering monk in order to find ways to end human suffering. He almost destroyed himself



Feeding
God's
Flock

**It was love,
not nails that kept
Jesus
on the cross**

- Jesus chose to offer his own life as a sacrifice in order to redeem humanity from sin. Jesus is a unique savior who chose to cleanse our sin with his own blood.
- This Easter weekend reminds us that the **passion** of Christ on Good Friday must precede his resurrection and glorification on Easter Sunday.
- What is the passion in your life?

A composite image featuring a quote by Steve Jobs. The background is a dark, atmospheric photograph of a mountain range with a winding road. On the right side, there is a portrait of Steve Jobs, wearing his signature black turtleneck and glasses, pointing directly at the viewer. The quote is written in a white, serif font across the center of the image.

YOU HAVE TO HAVE A LOT OF PASSION
FOR WHAT YOU DO... BECAUSE IF YOU
DON'T, ANY RATIONAL PERSON WOULD
GIVE UP.

~ STEVE JOBS ~

STATUSTOWN.COM

3. The three great essentials to true happiness and success: Awakening, Faith, and Passion

1. **Awakening** – I would rather be awakened to the truth that life is full of suffering.
 2. **Faith** – I would rather take a leap of faith to believe that I can create a better future.
 3. **Passion** – I would rather be committed to passionately pursuing an impossible dream.
- Most of the great and noble achievements in human history are driven by these three powerful forces. The world is still going on because of the few who dare to blaze new trails.

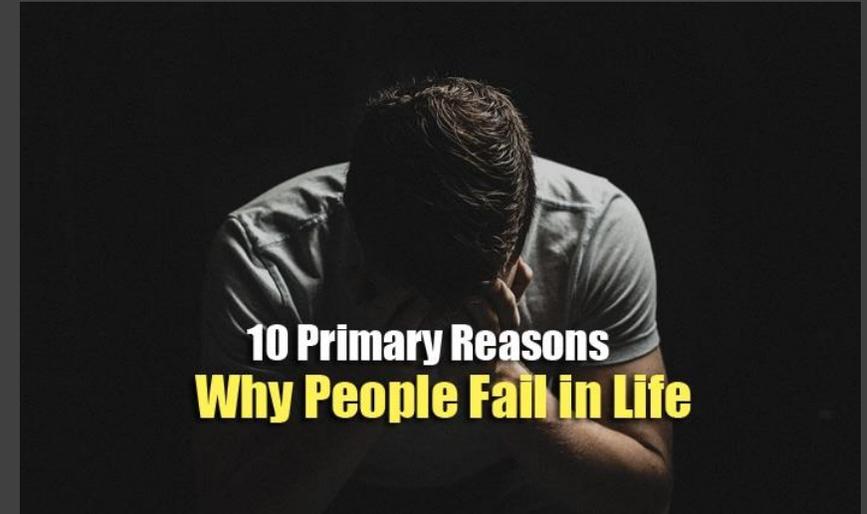
4. How my life experience
and research on supports
the above 3 grand essentials



- Hong Kong in the 50s was beyond your imagination, with millions of refugees escaping from Communist China and without much help from the colonial government. Everyone was struggling and doing what was needed to stay alive.

I was doomed to failure as a high school graduate because of the following:

1. A war babe with childhood trauma.
2. Childhood malnutrition and frequent illness.
3. Told repeatedly that I am not good enough in part-time jobs .
4. My family was falling apart.
5. My father was dying.
6. My family was bankrupt.
7. Refugee status and discrimination.
8. As a child I was interested in following Confucius and Buddha.
9. As a young man my ambition was to become a last day prophet.
10. At the end of my rope – no higher education, no good job.



Life begins on the other
side of despair.

— Jean-Paul Sartre

- When I was at the nadir of my despair, with nowhere to go, I was awakened to the painful reality that I was a helpless sinner and only Christ can save me from my anguish and hopelessness.

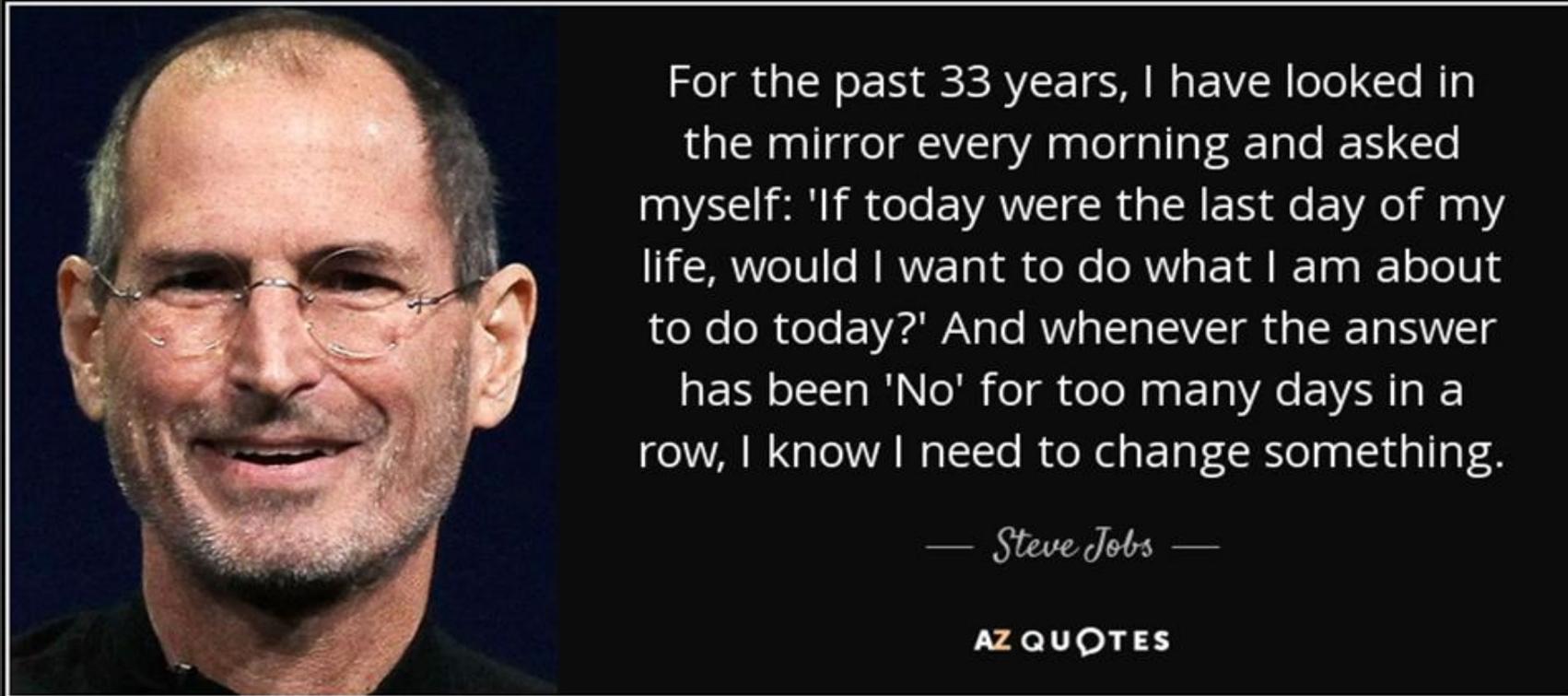
God shouts through pain to awaken me



God whispers to us
in our pleasures,
speaks in our consciences,
but shouts in our pains.
**It is his megaphone
to rouse a deaf world.**

C.S. Lewis

JaymeLeeHull.com

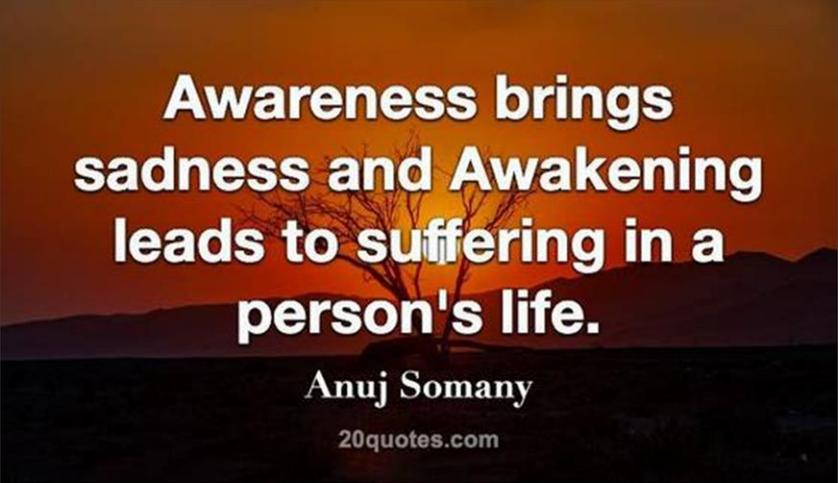


For the past 33 years, I have looked in the mirror every morning and asked myself: 'If today were the last day of my life, would I want to do what I am about to do today?' And whenever the answer has been 'No' for too many days in a row, I know I need to change something.

— *Steve Jobs* —

AZ QUOTES

- The daily mirror test is also helpful. It is through self-reflection and self-awareness of our need for change that transformation can happen.



**Awareness brings
sadness and Awakening
leads to suffering in a
person's life.**

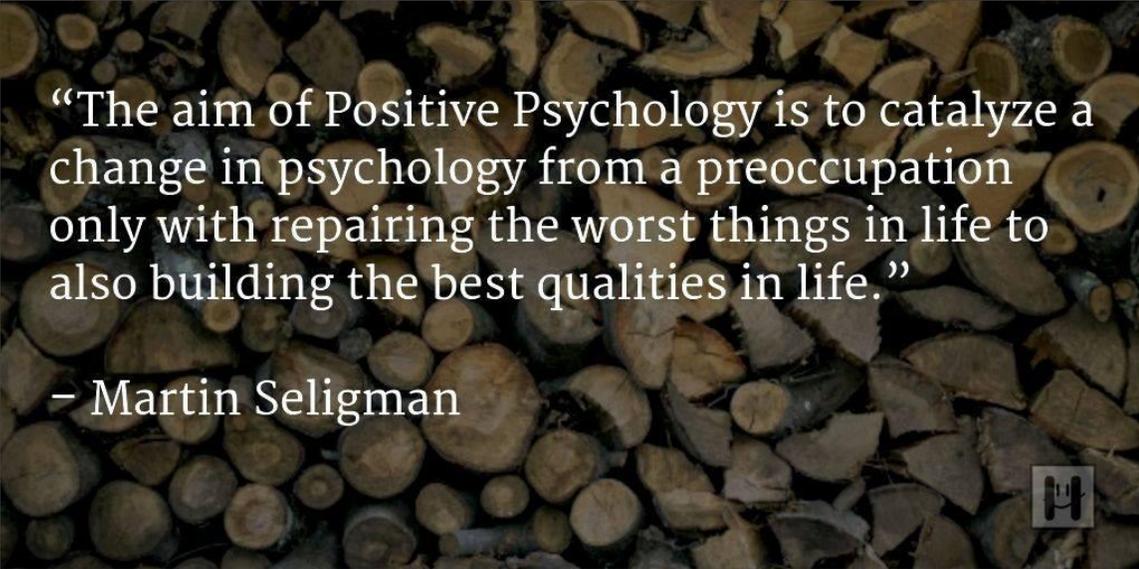
Anuj Somany

20quotes.com

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- Contrary to common belief, awakening does not bring instant happiness and inner peace. Actually, it brings immense sadness and suffering, which leads to repentance and rebirth. There is no shortcut to transformation.

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- My first step towards rebirth is a rude awakening from all our illusions.
 - The **red truth pill** strips us of all the illusions and self-deceptions and confronts us with our true condition.





“The aim of Positive Psychology is to catalyze a change in psychology from a preoccupation only with repairing the worst things in life to also building the best qualities in life.”

– Martin Seligman



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- The prevailing positive illusion is that we can live a happy life and become our best self without overcoming our inner demons or heart of darkness.
 - The dominant narrative of our culture believes in this illusion, because the **blue happy pill** is much more profitable and easier to sell than the **red pill of bitter truth**.



• With the pandemic, more people are questioning whether the pursuit of happiness can really make us happy.

• Some even believe that the pursuit of happiness may be a source of suffering.

- See [O'Connell \(2022\)](#)

. if we accept the reality that life is difficult, demanding and often painful, then the day-to-day living of it is no longer so onerous. In accepting life as it really is, we transcend it. Or, as they say on Wall Street, 'The market has already discounted the bad news.'

Robert White

QUOTEHD.COM

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- Paradoxically, accepting the painful reality that we need change is necessary to endure and transcend suffering.



"The curious paradox is that when I accept myself just as I am, then I can change."
Carl Rogers

Acceptance of the dark reality is the first necessary step towards positive change.

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.

◆ Dr. Paul T. P. Wong

My life experience & research led me to the conclusion that we can flourish only through **transcending** our inherent limitations and suffering

The second big step is to reorient ourselves from egotism to self-transcendence



*There is only one dream
That will always be perfect
In your lifetime,
And that is the dream
Of self-transcendence.*

~Sri Chinmoy~

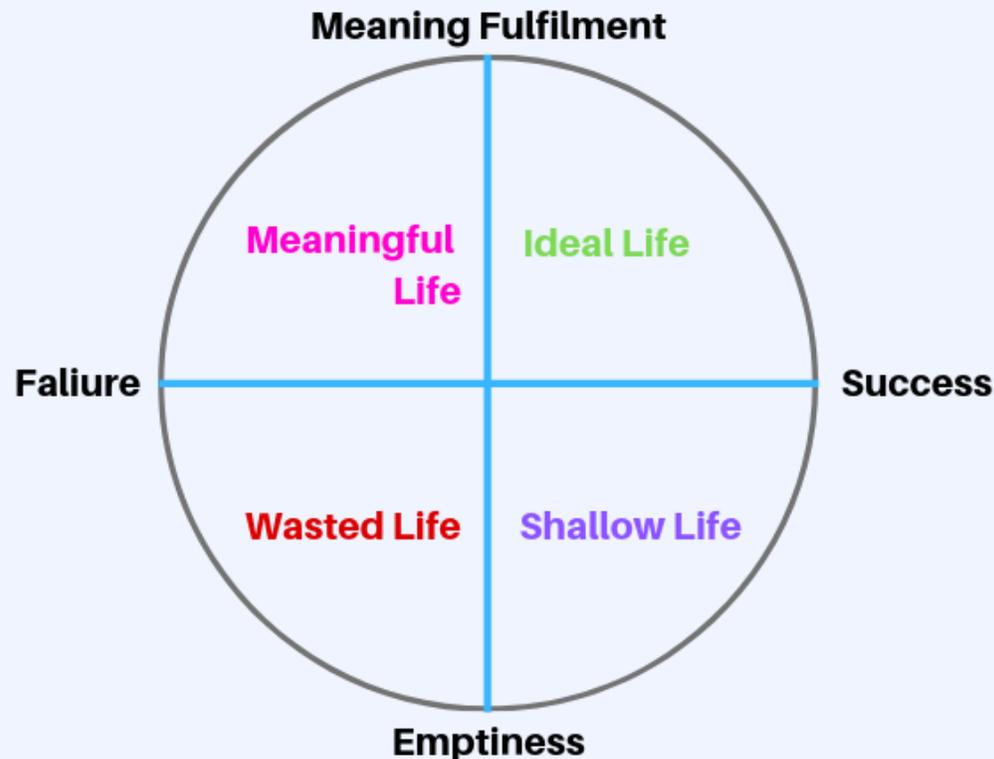
The only dream that will not become a nightmare is dream of self-transcendence, because it is based on humility, compassion, and losing one's small self in serving the greater good.

This may take a leap of faith and existential courage to dive to the deep end.

◆ Dr. Paul T. P. Wong

THE MEANING MINDSET VS. THE SUCCESS MINDSET

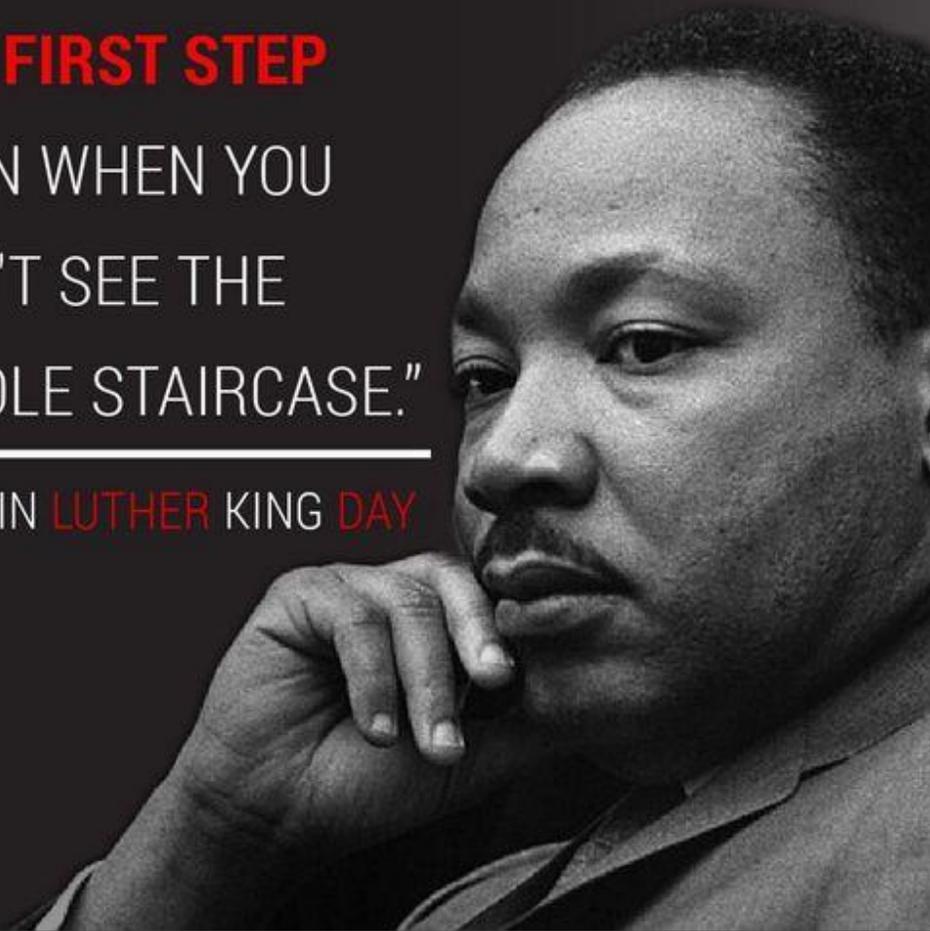
Existential psychology will always be with us because our universal existential anxiety and search for meaning. **Positive psychology** will always be with us because our universal desires for happiness success. That is why **existential positive psychology** will always be the best approach to life by avoiding both the despair of staring at the existential abyss and the disillusion of striving for worldly gains.



- It take faith to re-orient our life attitude from preoccupation with world success towards the vertical dimension of meaning or self-transcendence.

“FAITH IS TAKING
THE **FIRST STEP**
EVEN WHEN YOU
DON'T SEE THE
WHOLE STAIRCASE.”

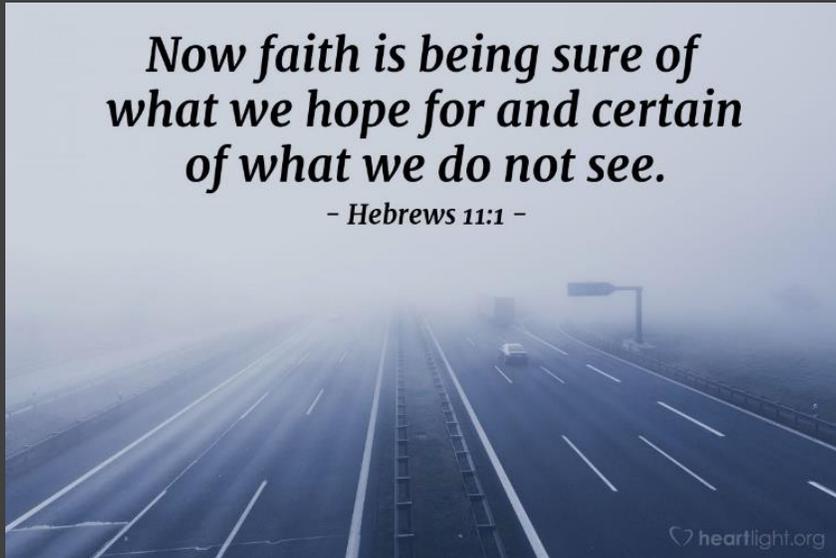
MARTIN **LUTHER KING DAY**



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- After awakening, the next crucial test is to change the direction of my life by faith.
 - My best decision in life was to accept Jesus as my Savior 60 years ago. I've never regretted this decision.

*Now faith is being sure of
what we hope for and certain
of what we do not see.*

- Hebrews 11:1 -



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- This is the best definition of faith. It is basically based on hope of what we can create a better future and being convinced that our invisible dream will be realized.
 - If everything is based on evidence, then there is no room for faith.



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- His bold dream inspired millions and paved the way for the triumph of the human rights movement.
 - How big is your dream today? Does it inspire others?

The third crucial test is whether you have the necessary passion to persevere

A PERSON WHOSE SOUL IS ON FIRE IS FEARLESS AND UNDEFEATABLE



If you have this kind of spiritual passion, you will do the following:

- 1) Do everything with all your heart and soul
- 2) Dare to face all odds
- 3) Have a sense of calling worth dying for
- 4) Can go on indefinitely without any reward or recognition

I have achieved the impossible with my soul on fire for the Lord

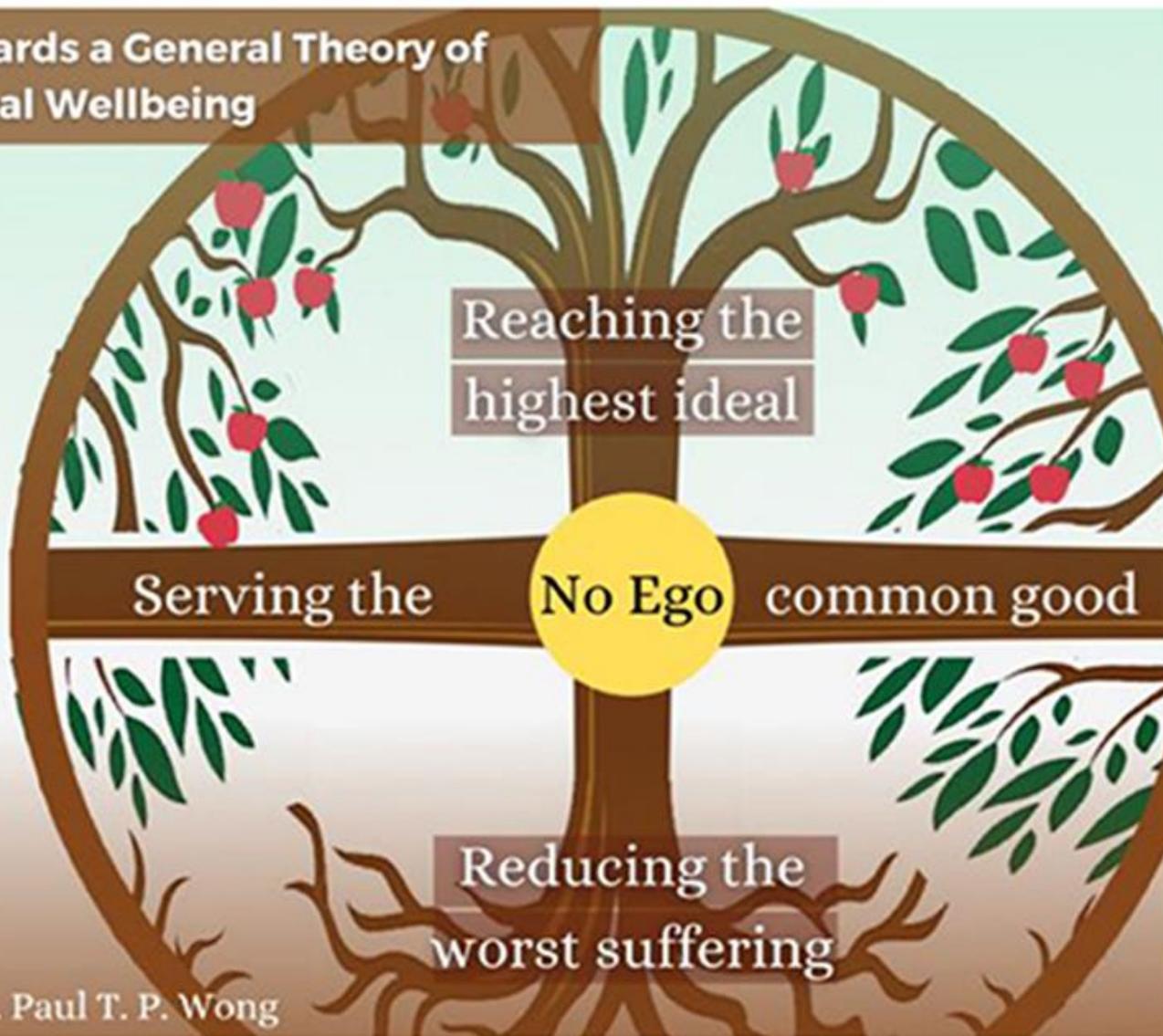
What is to give light
must endure burning.
- Dr. Viktor Frankl



SOME OF MY IMPOSSIBLE DREAM

- Building a church without any official support
- Starting a graduate program without university support
- Starting a new paradigm of existential positive psychology without any institutional support

Towards a General Theory of Global Wellbeing

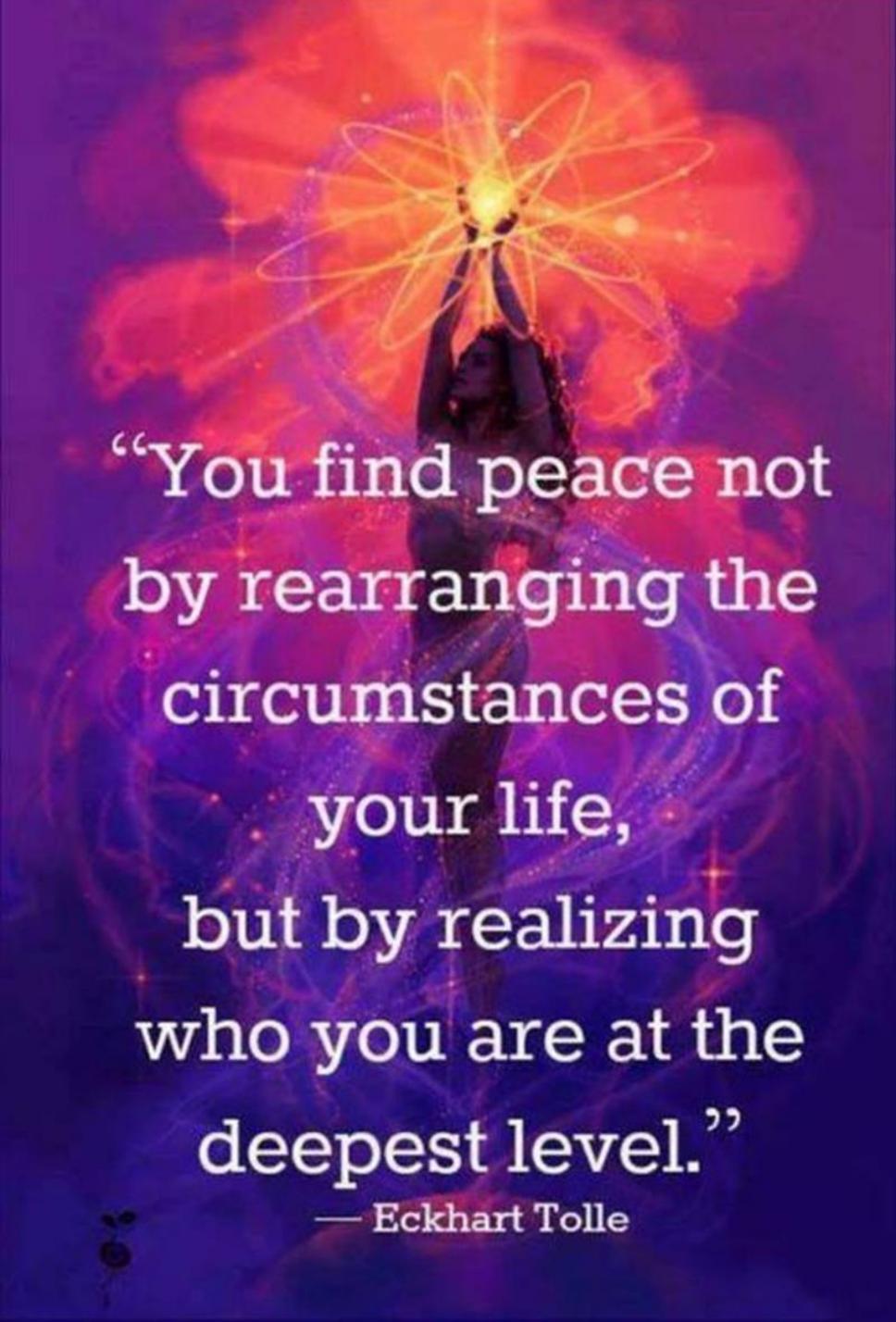


◆ Dr. Paul T. P. Wong

Through levels of processing, at the deepest level, all disciplines reach the same conclusion. Through the dialectical process of self-transcendence, at the highest level, all people can reach the same awe-inspiring mystery. Through selfless sacrifice, we can serve the greatest number of people. Through holistic integrative research, we can best approximate the ultimate truth of wellbeing.

More than two decades ago, I took the deep dive to pursue existential positive psychology.

Because from my own suffering and research I am convinced that sustainable flourishing is possible only through the narrow gates of suffering.

A woman in a dark dress stands with her arms raised, holding a glowing, multi-orbit atomic model. The background is a vibrant mix of purple and red, with swirling patterns and a bright light source behind the atomic model.

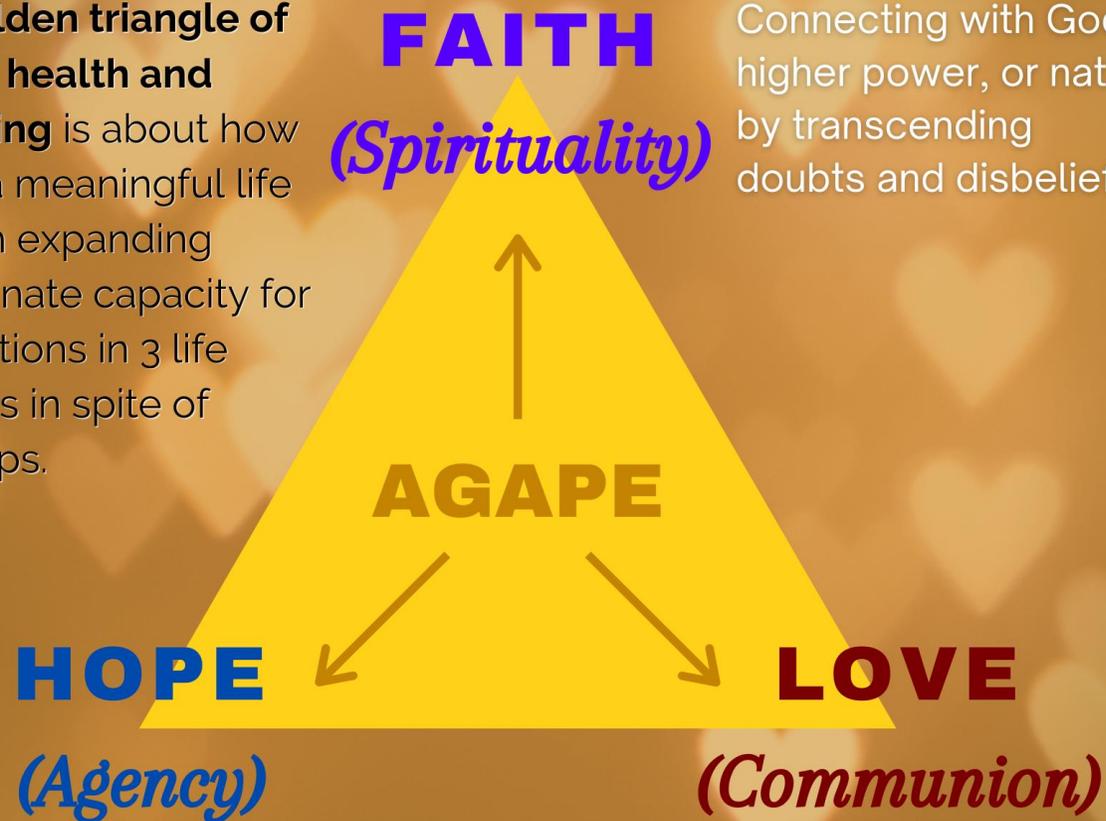
“You find peace not
by rearranging the
circumstances of
your life,
but by realizing
who you are at the
deepest level.”

— Eckhart Tolle

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- I have also found that true joy or inner peace is the natural outcome of self-transcendence -- digging deeper and wider.
 - I have a lot of research support for my deep and wide hypothesis (see [Wong & Worth, 2017](#))

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.



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

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

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

My impossible dream is to advance the truth of self-transcendence -- to reach heaven through transcending hell.

There is a lot of research on this subject during the pandemic.

([Wong et al., 2021](#))

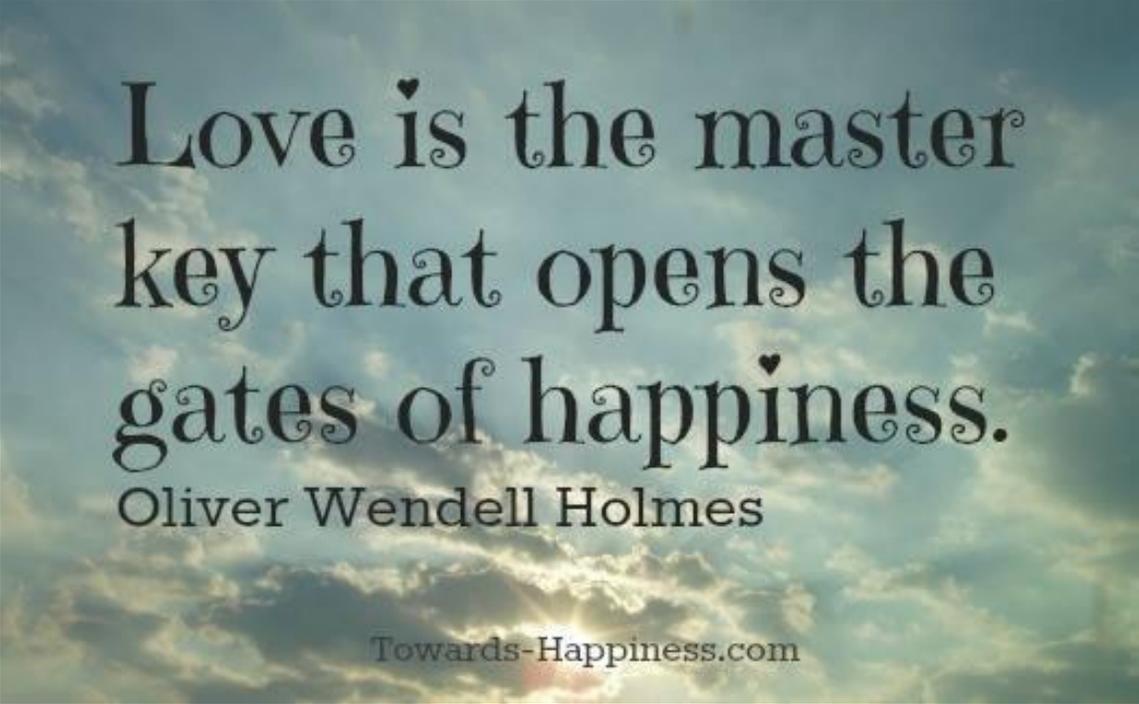
- Self-transcendence is based on the moral foundation of loving our neighbor as ourselves, and loving God, the source of all life.



What do I mean by loving ourselves properly? I mean first of all, desiring to live, accepting life as a very great gift and a great good, not because of what it gives us, but because of what it enables us to give to others.

— *Thomas Merton* —

AZ QUOTES

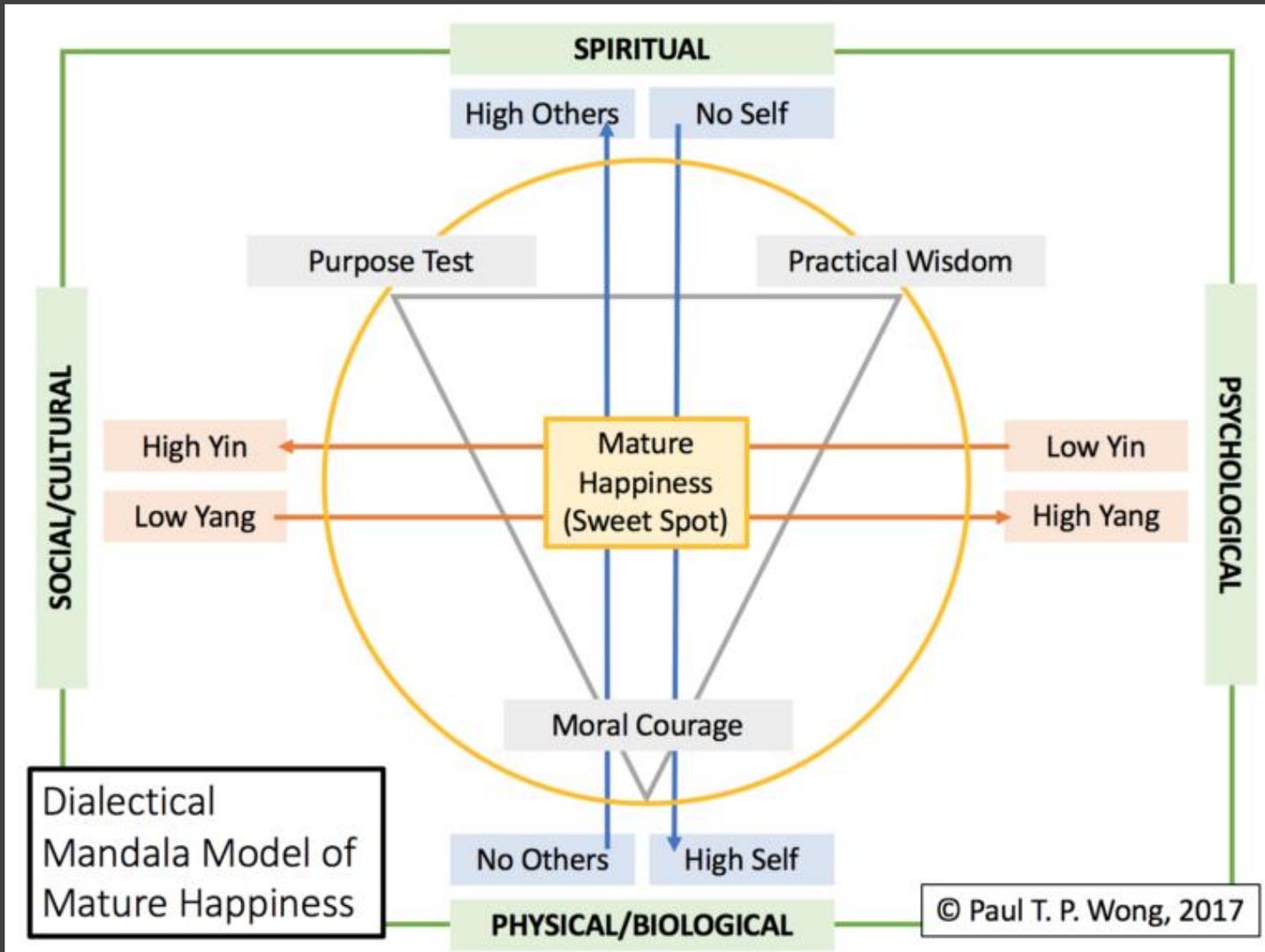


Love is the master
key that opens the
gates of happiness.

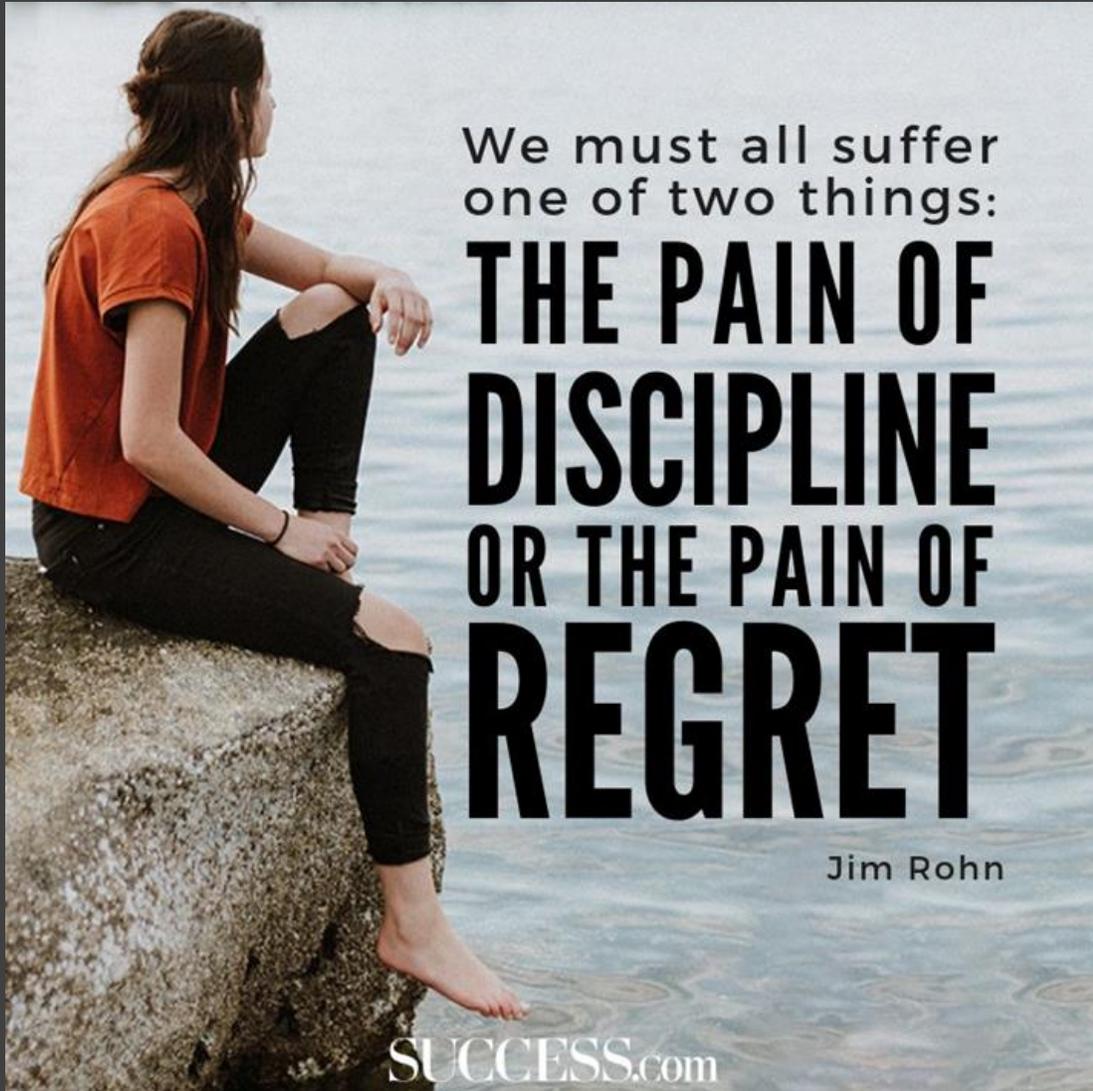
Oliver Wendell Holmes

Towards-Happiness.com

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- I have discovered a new kind of happiness. Mature happiness stems from transcending suffering through love ([Wong & Bowers, 2018](#))



- Here is a diagraph of mature happiness based on Eastern wisdom and Western research.



- My final challenge to you 2022 graduates is: No pain, no gain. Everything has a price. You either pay now or later.
- It's better for you to suffer the pain of discipline and hard work now than suffer the pain of regret and a wasted life in old age.

I've succeeded even when I swim against the tides and follow a different drummer

- Dare to be a follower of Christ in academia.
- Dare to speak up and challenge the power that be, based on principles.
- Willing to teach in smaller and smaller universities for a higher purpose.
- Willing to spend countless hours helping refugees and students without expecting anything in return.
- I am glad that I have chosen a less travelled narrow path considered by most as unprofitable and a waste of time.

Thank you for your interest!

- For more information on Existential Positive Psychology and Life Intelligence, please visit www.drpaulwong.com

References

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