Transcend: The New Science of Self-Actualization
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Introduction: A New Hierarchy of Needs
LIFE IS NOT A VIDEO GAME
Maslow never actually created a pyramid to represent his hierarchy of needs. "Maslow's Pyramid" was actually created by a management consultant in the sixties.

THE GOOD LIFE
Instead, the good life that I present, which is deeply grounded in the core principles of humanistic psychology and a realistic understanding of human needs, is about the healthy expression of needs in the service of discovering and expressing a self that works best for *you.*

The good life is not something that you will ever achieve. It's a way of living. As Carl Rogers noted, "The good life is a *process,* not a state of being. It is a direction, not a destination."

Part I: Security
Chapter 1: Safety

As the author Ruth Whippman has pointed out, we have created a societal narrative around health and wellness that essentially inverts Maslow's hierarchy of needs, placing self-actualization as a viable alternative to these fundamentals,

Modern-day science makes clear that unpredictability has far-reaching consequences for the lives we can envision and create for ourselves. The need for safety, and its accompanying needs for stability, certainty, predictability, coherence, continuity, and trust in the environment, is the base upon which all others are fulfilled. The need for safety is tied to the struggle to make sense of experiences and a motivation to gain control over violated expectations. Having a safe base allows a person to take risks and explore new ideas and ways of being, while also allowing the opportunity to become who you truly want to become. In the absence of that base, people become overly dependent on the protection, love, affection, and esteem of others, which can compromise growth, development, and meaning in life.

HOPE THROUGH AN INTELLIGENT VIEW OF INTELLIGENCE
In other research, inner-city eighth graders were asked to imagine a future possible self, to list the obstacles they might encounter in realizing that self, and to describe strategies they would use to overcome the obstacles. The students were 60 percent less likely to repeat eighth grade and showed greater academic initiative, had improved standardized test scores and school grades in the ninth grade, had fewer absences and instances of misbehavior in the classroom, and scored lower on measures of depression. The effects persisted over a two-year-follow-up period and proved to be directly caused by changes in the students' view of their possible selves.

Chapter 3: Self-Esteem

SELF-ESTEEM VS. NARCISSISM

The development of self-esteem and narcissism are also influenced by different parenting styles. Narcissism tends to develop in tandem with parental *overevaluation*: parents who raise children who exhibit high levels of narcissism tend to overclaim their child's knowledge, overestimate their child's IQ, overpraise their child's performance, and even tend to give their child a unique name to stand out from the crowd. In contrast, high self-esteem develops in tandem with parental warmth. Parents who raise children who exhibit high levels of self-esteem tend to treat their children with affection and appreciation. They treat their children as though they matter.

Part II: Growth
Chapter 4: Exploration

To Maslow, the key to helping people move toward growth is to make the growth choice more attractive to people and less threatening, and make the safety choice less attractive and more costly, so that a person can feel unthreatened, free, and spontaneous enough to "dare to choose the unknown".

POST-TRAUMATIC GROWTH

A key factor that allows us to turn adversity into advantage is the extent to which we fully explore our thoughts and feelings surrounding the event. *Cognitive exploration*—which can be defined as a general curiosity about information and a tendency toward complexity and flexibility in information processing—enables us to be curious about confusing situations, increasing the likelihood that we will find new meaning in the seemingly incomprehensible.

Writing about a topic that triggers strong emotions for just fifteen to twenty minutes a day has been shown to help people create meaning from their stressful experiences and better express both their positive and negative emotions.

OPENNESS TO EXPERIENCE

Rogers conceptualized openness to experience as a mode of cognitive processing where one is open to all of one's personal experiences, receiving conflicting information without forcing closure, tolerating ambiguity, and seeing reality clearly without imposing predetermined categories onto the world.

INTELLECT: FINDING YOUR WAY BACK TO SHORE

Another meaningful difference within the intellect domain is that between IQ and intellectual curiosity. In my doctoral research, I found only a moderate relationship between IQ and intellectual curiosity: there were plenty of people with sky-high IQ scores but little intellectual curiosity, and plenty of people with a lot of intellectual curiosity but with lower IQ scores. Long-term studies have found that even though IQ is a strong predictor of academic achievement, intellectual curiosity is also a significant predictor of academic success, independent of IQ. And when it comes to real-life creative achievement, intellectual curiosity predicts the creative achievement of inventions and scientific discovery even better than IQ. So while IQ, intellectual curiosity, and the need to know often go together, they also come apart in important ways.

THE CREATIVITY PARADOX

This is precisely what we see when we look at the creative brain. From 2014 to 2017, I was scientific director of the Imagination Institute *(imagination-institute.org)*

Chapter 6: Purpose

Self-actualizing people are, without one single exception, involved in a cause outside their own skin, in something outside of themselves. They are devoted, working at something, something which is very precious to them—some calling or vocation in the old sense. They are working at something which fate has called them to somehow and which they work at and which they love, so that the work-joy dichotomy in them disappears.
— **Abraham Maslow, *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature* (1971)**

THE NEED FOR PURPOSE

The need for purpose can be defined as the need for an overarching aspiration that energizes one's efforts and provides a central source of meaning and significance in one's life. Having a purpose often causes a fundamental reordering of the most central motives associated with the self.

Another key aspect of purpose is that it is energizing. Having a purpose fuels perseverance despite obstacles because perseverance is seen as worth the effort.

STRIVING WISELY

In trying to figure out the deeper aspects of yourself that are the *best* within you (i.e., your best selves), it might be helpful to assess your "signature strengths," or the particular aspects of your personality that you yearn to use, that enable authentic expression, and that energize you and give you a sense of vitality. These include your various talents and your "character strengths" —those aspects of your personality that specifically contribute to the good life for yourself and for others.

PURSUING WISELY

Unfortunately, misconceptions about grit abound. One of the biggest misconceptions is that grit always means putting your head down and single-mindedly pursuing one particular goal no matter the consequences to others.

We found a *zero* correlation between having a diversity of interests and being inconsistent in your interests—but a significant *positive* correlation between having diverse interests and persevering in the face of adversity. In other words, having a number of projects on the go that you are excited about doesn't mean that you will be any more likely to give up on them. Having a diversity of interests was strongly related to the exploration drive, as well as higher levels of health, life satisfaction, self-acceptance, purpose in life, personal growth, feelings of wholeness, positive relationships, autonomy, stress tolerance, psychological flexibility, work satisfaction, work performance, creativity, and a drive to make a positive impact on the world. Inconsistency of interest was *negatively* related to many of these outcomes. Our research clearly shows that you can have a diversity of interests and yet still remain extremely consistent in your most deeply valued interests. In fact, grit in combination with exploration and love (including healthy self-love) make it *more* likely that you will have the drive to persevere among setbacks.

HOPE

There may be some character strengths that we'd all benefit from cultivating. Two that are universally worth cultivating on the path to purpose have already been discussed: exploration and love. Another is hope. The hope I am referring to is not optimism, which is limited to the expectation of a positive future. Instead, it consists of both the will and ways to get to your goal. The late hope researchers Charles Snyder and Shane Lopez have found that the more energized you are by your goal and the more you can imagine possible roadblocks and devise strategies to overcome obstacles, the more hope you will have and the less likely that roadblocks will stunt your growth.

A hope mindset fosters belief that multiple paths are possible to get to where you want to go and helps you remain flexible when any one pathway seems blocked.

- Enlightened leaders lead by example. They set high standards for performance, work as hard as anyone else in the organization, and articulate clearly, with genuine enthusiasm, a compelling purpose or vision of the future for the organization.
- Enlightened leaders are good at informing employees. They make explicit links between the task to the job and the broader purpose and vision of the organization, make clear their expectations, and give honest and fair answers in response to their employees' concerns.
- Enlightened leaders trust employees, explicitly stating their confidence and belief that the employees will meet their high expectations.
- Enlightened leaders engage in participative decision-making, downplaying power hierarchies, encouraging and giving all employees an opportunity to voice opinions, and using feedback to make decisions in the workplace.
- Enlightened leaders are good at coaching employees, providing help when necessary, teaching employees how to solve problems on their own, telling employees when they are performing well, helping them stay on task, and sometimes seeing greater possibilities for them than they may even see in themselves.
- Enlightened leaders show that they care about their employees, finding the time to chat with individual employees and get their feedback, figuring out ways of increasing well-being and meaning in the workplace, and assigning tasks that are challenging and will continually help their employees grow, develop, and feel a sense of authentic pride.

Finally, autonomy-supportive organizational cultures allow for a certain degree of job-crafting, whereby employees have some say in designing their job to allow growth, engagement, job satisfaction, resilience, purpose, and well-being. Job crafters can redesign how they perform tasks, increasing social connection while engaging in their task, and reframe their task as something more meaningful and beneficial to society.

Part III: Healthy Transcendence
Chapter 7: Peak Experiences
MIND-ALTERING INTERVENTIONS
In a 2014 article, "Love: The Nature of Our True Self," Cosimano reflected on her experience as head session guide: "Based on my clinical perspective, I would like to share what I personally believe to be one of the most important outcomes of this work: that psilocybin can offer a means to reconnect to our true nature—our authentic self—and thereby help find meaning in our lives …. I believe that what humans really want is to receive and to give love. I believe that love is what connects us to each other and that such a connection is brought about by being intimate with each other, by sharing ourselves with others. I believe that the nature of our true self is love…. Yet very often we're afraid to open ourselves to this connection so we put up barriers and wear masks. If we are able to remove the barriers, to let down our defenses, we can begin to know and accept ourselves, thus allowing ourselves to receive and to give love."

Live More in the B-Realm
- Contemplate your daily life as though being seen from a great distance, such as from a remote village in Africa.

Appendix

Seven Principles for Becoming a Whole Person

PRINCIPLE #1: ACCEPT YOUR WHOLE SELF, NOT JUST YOUR BEST SELF

PRINCIPLE #2: LEARN TO TRUST YOUR SELF-ACTUALIZING TENDENCY

PRINCIPLE #3: BECOME AWARE OF YOUR INNER CONFLICTS

PRINCIPLE #4: LOOK OUT FOR LOPSIDED DEVELOPMENT

PRINCIPLE #5: CREATE THE BEST VERSION OF YOURSELF

PRINCIPLE #6: STRIVE FOR GROWTH, NOT HAPPINESS

PRINCIPLE #7: HARNESS THE POWER OF YOUR DARK SIDE