

Foundations of Learning and Development: An Overview

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Introduction

Humans learn and develop. How fast, how much, how far, and to what end is open to individual chance and choice, but learning and development themselves are not. Humans are learning beings that develop throughout their lives. How humans as individuals and as a species understand learning and development and harness that understanding to positive ends determines the course of our evolution and the legacy we in this time leave to those in future time. This overview of the philosophies, education and technologies, and research of human learning and development suggests that an individual's immediate awareness of emotional experience is a principal determinant of that individual's ability to learn and develop, connect with other people, and feel satisfaction and meaning in life. It is also apparent to me that biological and medical research over the last 15 years is providing an empirical, scientific basis of what philosophers and psychologists have theorized about learning and development for well over the past century.

Philosophies

The theories, models, and ruminations of psychologists and philosophers lay a basis for understanding how humans learn and develop. The contributions of developmental psychologists, beginning with Sigmund Freud, Adlerian psychologists, existential philosophers, and human potential practitioners have helped people understand themselves better and, as a result, learn and develop more effectively. This is, I believe, crucial for the evolution of humanity in a positive direction of preservation and sustenance. Following is an overview of the psychological and philosophical basis of learning and development.

Developmental Psychology

One of the most important perspectives for understanding how humans learn and develop is to look at how they grow up, both physically and psychologically. Developmental

psychologists, beginning with Sigmund Freud, have constructed models that explain how people grow through various developmental stages, how a person's the physical and psychological experience during those stages help and hinder their development, and how an individual can chose to overcome deficiencies and build on strengths in their developmental histories.

Freudian

One of the earliest developmental models, and the outlook that has formed the foundation for many subsequent models, is Sigmund Freud's model of psychosexual development, which shows the developmental stages people move though in becoming mature adults. What happens to a person during their development affects how they learn and develop in the future. To Freud, then, the unconscious mind is the key to conscious desires and choices in the present—all of which are linked to buried (or repressed), past memories.

Humans are energy systems, Freud postulated, not unlike any other system that uses energy. Freud used the term "psychic energy" to denote the energy that operates the human personality. Energy is transformed in the human system to drive the three systems of personality, the Id, Ego, and Superego. The primary, primal source of energy is the Id, which functions to fulfill what Freud called the "pleasure principle." The Id seeks to increase pleasure or reduce pain, and this process is driven by instincts.

The Ego, for its part, has no energy in and of itself but serves to regulate, control, and govern the primal Id. The Ego is governed by the "reality principle," which means that it ensures that the conditions required to release the tensions of the Id actually exist in the world. It's the intermediary between the Id and the external world, and how a person perceives the world and makes judgments and decisions from the information obtained is critical to how that individual learns and develops throughout life.

The third aspect of personality is the Superego, which represents outside forces, such as social ideals and moral codes. The Superego strives for perfection and is therefore what is generally called a person's conscience. The standards, morals, values, rules, and

myths instilled in a child by parents and society make up the ideals against which an individual learns and develops. Behavioral rewards and punishments, such as the giving and withdrawal of attention, serve as the mechanism for instilling ideals in an individual and further regulating and shaping actions. Learning in general is a process of developing skill in dealing with frustrations, conflicts, and anxieties (Hall, 1954, pp. 36-47).

Early on Freud posited that most of what drives a person's development lies in the unconscious mind, which is heavily influenced by how a person's parents helped a child grow, what they suggested was acceptable and affirmed and what they suggested was unacceptable and punished. The Ego's defense mechanisms, for instance, may repress painful memories, and thereby serves as a block on psychic energy. The essential role of the psychoanalyst from a Freudian perspective, then, is to help a person "recover and reintegrate material from the unconscious mind, in short, to help that person's life be more balanced and satisfying" (Drury, 1989, p. 17). In this way, Freud's developmental psychology influenced many of the practitioners in the human potential movement, as well as the psychiatrists and psychotherapists who recognized and used the existential elements implied in Freud.

Wright

The Wright Model of Human Development takes ideas from Freud, Adler, and the existentialist philosophers to provide a developmental model that allows for real-time behavioral analysis and development. Overall, the Wright Model of Human Development is based on greater or lesser consciousness of human needs at each level of development. Needs are not always conscious—and may well remain unconscious at a particular level of those needs were not met or repressed during childhood. Awareness of the needs at a particular level allows them to be satisfied in a positive manner and, as a result, allows an individual to make choices toward greater development or away from stasis or even lesser development. Each stage of development consists of two opposite poles of behavior, regressive and progressive, in which the regressive pole equates to unmet needs

and the progressive pole equates to satisfied needs. The model is based on the existentialist principal of choice, for at each developmental stage, a person has a choice to act according to the regressive or progressive poles, to learn and develop or not. Further, each stage of the model posits an existential principle that informs the quality of learning and development at each level.

The first level of the model begins with the earliest stages of child development: an infant's need for survival and attendant experience of scarcity and fear. If the infant's needs are consistently met by an attentive parent, the infant comes to trust the world. The principal expressed by the movement from scarcity to trust is aliveness, an experience of the power of life. This leads to a greater sense of trust and therefore development, as the infant comes to see that his actions (crying, for instance) affects his environment and well being in a positive way. At the second level, a child hungers for attention, as well as for food and shelter. If that hunger is affirmed by another person, the child experiences a greater sense of connection and sense of self. The principle of play is at work, where play is a here-and-now relationship with another person (or thing). If hunger is not affirmed, the child experiences hurt. If a child is hurt over and over again, he may give up seeking affirmation and withdraw into himself, leading to a reduced learning and development. The other levels proceed in much the same way.

Attachment Theory

The choices that an individual make are, as in Adlerian thought and Freudian theory, determined by a child's perception of the world based on experiences in early childhood. Attachment theory provides a view of a child's early experience and the learning-and-development challenges a child will face later in life. Attachment theory examines how a mother or other primary caregiver and a child "bind" or "attune" to one another and considers such questions as: Are the child's needs understood by the caregiver? Are they and met immediately? Is the child cared for with affection?

Attachment theory was pioneered by John Bowlby and tested by his colleague Mary Ainsworth. Their research shows that the early relationship between an infant and mother or primary caregiver, and how the primary caregiver responds to an infant, determines how that infant learns, grows, and develops. As Daniel J. Siegel and Mary Hartzell put it, “Attachment lays a foundation for how a child comes to approach the world, and a health attachment in the early years provides a secure base form which children can learn about themselves and others” (Siegel and Hartzell, 2004, p. 102).

The feeling of safety, certainty, and intimacy that should result between a mother and infant results in what Bowlby called a “secure base” from which children learn to explore the world around them (Siegel and Hartzell, 2004, p. 101). The ideal attachment is called “secure” attachment, where the caregiver and child are attuned. They mirror one another back and forth through eye contact, verbal, and nonverbal cues. The caregiver accentuates the positive and minimizes distress. The infant “feels felt,” (Siegel and Hartzell, 2004, p. 60). Most people do not experience secure attachment but various degrees of the three types of insecure attachments: insecure avoidance, insecure anxious and ambivalent, and insecure disorganized.

Taken together, the four attachment styles (secure, insecure avoidance, insecure anxious and ambivalent, and insecure disorganized) work along a continuum, said Dr. Robert Wright. Attachment consists of five variables:

1. accuracy
2. presence
3. conditionality
4. acceptance
5. consistency

Together, those variables help a person see how they attached as infants and provide guidance on what developmental gaps a person needs to fill. This phrase, which uses all five variables, gives a useful guide to judging attachment: “accurate perception in the

here and now with unconditional positive regard consistently” (R. Wright, 15 August 2009).

Much of attachment concerns how a parent or caregiver responds to a child’s emotions and expression of need. Attachment is important to learning and development because it helps determine how a person experiences and expresses emotion later in life, and emotional awareness, as it turns out, helps determine how a person learns and develops. Until a child’s brain can develop sufficiently, the mother serves as an affect (emotional) regulator and, in effect, an auxiliary cortex of the child’s brain. This underscores the importance of attachment in learning and development because the baby’s brain is literally getting wired based on the mother’s response. As research summarized below shows, initial brain “wiring” can be reworked to overcome negative attachment patterns later in life.

Adlerian Psychology

Whatever a person’s attachment style, people learn how to learn, learn their initial lessons, and learn their attitudes toward and filters on future development from their families. The family is the initial seat of learning and development. Attitudes for learning develop as a result of the family atmosphere for learning and growth, either in consonance with or reaction to that atmosphere. In developing his conception of individual psychology, Adler wrote that “the impulsive life of man suffers variations and contortions, curtailments and exaggerations, *relative to the kind and degree of its aggressive power.*” It seems that what he meant by “variations and contortions, curtailments and exaggerations” refers to how people learn and develop and how the basis of learning and development begins with the family and “the power of cooperation has developed in childhood” (Adler, 1930, p. 249).

Cooperation naturally develops in children yet how the family fosters or frustrates cooperation determine how children learn and grow, as well as how well they work with

others. The family's influence on learning and development takes place in two areas, according to Adler's student Rudolph Dreikurs:

1. **Family Atmosphere.** Children encounter society through their parents, Dreikurs wrote, so the immediate family atmosphere determines to a great degree how children initially experience and act in society. What a family values helps determine how a child focuses on inferiority. It could be just the way it is, it could be something to compensate for, it could be a source of overcompensation. If a family values academics, then a child might strive in school, just as family that values athletics may encourage and develop athletes.

2. **Family Constellation.** A child's birth order and the attendant environment of sibling relationships is another factor in learning and development. Where you are in the family system birth-wise affects how you strive. A second born tends to be in an inferior position in relation to a first born and may, therefore, strive all the harder to get ahead of him. They may succeed or get so discouraged that they give up even trying. How your parents and family responded has a great deal to do with how you move forward as well.

At the same time, children also have a responsibility for learning and development, Dreikurs wrote. Children are "active participants and not passive recipients of how they develop" (Dreikurs, 1963, p. 266). "Children manage their parents pretty successfully and make them submit to their demands." Learning and development in the family from an Adlerian perspective is a two-way street. Children learn to control the data coming in from the outside, and their chosen style of life provides the filter upon which they select their life goals. Accordingly, the family environment remains the gauge of how a person learns how to learn and develop. ". . . Children without any guidance . . . may develop in unaccountable ways," Adler wrote.

To Adler, accountable ways of development moved a person toward social cooperation. Given that a child's relation to its mother is the first social situation that confronts a child, how a mother handles that relation determines, to a great extent, how a child develop socially. As Adler wrote:

If she understands how to train this (social) interest in the direction of cooperation, all the congenital and acquired capacities of the child will converge in the direction of social sense. If she binds the child to her exclusively, life will bear for it the meaning that all other persons are to be excluded as much as possible (Adler, 1930, p. 258).

From a learning and development point of view, Adler wanted to raise awareness of and insight into a person's unconscious family training, which result in what he termed fictions and form the basis of an individual's style of life. When not understood, fictions have the weight of inevitability, of fate. Once fictions are understood, however, they can become the starting point for learning and growth. For Adler, understanding the unconscious drivers of learning and development is the key to unlocking future growth. Indeed, a child's initial drive for affection is not fully satisfied in childhood. That remaining dissatisfaction is important so that the child, properly guided, can draw on unsatisfied needs to propel themselves into relationships with others. It is, in the end, the child's choice.

Existential Philosophy

The primary contributions of existential philosophers to learning and development fall into three broad categories, all of which have broad influence on the later human potential movement and the technologies that developed from it. Those three contributions are:

1. The principles of choice and responsibility.
2. The unity of human existence in time and body.
3. The concept of personal authenticity.

Choice and Responsibility

Individuals are responsible for their own growth and development, which existentialist philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre referred to as an individual's "life project." Choice is the primary mechanism that people pursue their life project, and their lives are the sum total

of their choices. Moreover, the responsibility for the result of those choices belongs to the individuals themselves, for it is individuals who give meaning to their lives and actions. In the writings of Danish social and religious philosopher Søren Kierkegaard, individual responsibility for choices leads to anxiety, which can result in a continuous drive for learning and development.

“Existentialism is an attitude which accepts man as always becoming, which means potentially in crisis,” wrote Rollo May (May, 1958, p. 17). The implications of that for what an individual learns and how an individual develops are profound, for an individual can make choices that lead to greater or lesser learning and take more or less responsibility for the direction and means of personal development. The point, however, is that an individual will learn and develop because an individual always makes choices.

Time and Body

After Kierkegaard’s focus on choice, the 20th century existentialist philosophers focused on “being” as their essential focus of study. Martin Heidegger, for instance, sought to develop a comprehensive theory of being in *Being and Time*, in which he recognized that time is an essential dimension of human existence and “beingness.” The human experience of and existence in time is critically important to the phenomenological philosophers that built the foundation upon which modern existential philosophers built. Furthermore, the notion of being in time provided the intersection between students of human potential and philosophers of human existence. One of the basic concepts of human existence is an individual’s experience as that individual lives in time. As stated by May, “the present is experienced by the normal individual as awareness of his own activity and inmost drive to activity,” (May, 1958, p. 105).

As we shall see, that notion underlies the human-potential ideal that the expression of emotion is required for the full and complete development, care, nourishment, and satisfaction of an individual person. With existentialist thought, the mind and the body, split in Western rational thought, most famously by Rene Des Cartes, begin to merge. In

this regard, the existentialist philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty begins to heal the philosophical divide and recognize the central position of the body in human experience and being, a development that has relevance for the later human potential movement and the exercises its practitioners developed for unlocking the power held back in unexpressed emotions and thoughts.

Experience is not simply a mental process of awareness but is intricately intertwined with the physical senses of perception, which form a whole. It is the awareness of the physical body and its importance to learning and development that provide an important link between and contribution of existential philosophy to learning and development. “We grasp through our senses and more than our senses, through the whole complex series of transactions with the world that constitutes experience, the presence about us of other things and other lives. It is only in analysis and reflection that we separate the five senses and learn to understand their distinctive achievements,” (Greene, 1970, p. 99).

Working on the paradox of visual perception—that we experience things visually yet what we experience is not really the object itself but an impression of the object—Merleau-Ponty discussed philosophically a view of human existence that today’s neuroscientists are showing is a functional reality from a biological and chemical point of view. Merleau-Ponty wrote about the mind *in* the body, starting with “the fullness of real, embodied, ongoing perception.” Merleau-Ponty explored this paradox by studying painters: how they saw the world and how they gave physical manifestation to that perception. In his writings on aesthetics, he noted how “the painter at work stands for. . . the bodily rootedness of all creative activity” and how the meaning and significance of experience is not given and waiting to be discovered “is always grounded in the being of the living, embodied individual” (Greene, 1970, pp. 98-101).

Authenticity

The existential idea of existence in time as an embodied individual, fully conscious and aware of experience, led to the ideal of individual authenticity. To the existentialists, the

term “authenticity” is a creative process of evolution in which a person learns and develops on the basis of what is true and right to that person. “To be authentic means to invent one’s own way and pattern of life.” It requires what Golomb calls “an incessant movement of becoming, self transcendence and self creation” (Golomb, 1995, p. 9).

Accordingly, the existentialists suggest that a truly authentic individual will break free of the bonds of choices learned through social enculturation, an idea that derives primary from Heidegger. Whether a person decides to be an authentic individual, distinct from yet belonging to society and expressing truthfully rather manipulatively, provides an existential tension, for if learning and development veers too far from the norm, then perhaps a person is longer accepted by the society, the part rejected from the whole. It’s happened throughout history and will continue to put a damper on an individual’s expression and even innovation. “If you are [going along with the crowd], you are not being authentic,” Dr. Robert Wright said. “The job of learning and development in adulthood is becoming increasingly aware of your social programming and individual choosing” (Wright, R., 15 August 2009).

Being present in the moment, being aware of your experience, and choosing to express it truthfully to the best of your ability are the critical existential notions in learning and development. Taken together, they are existential foundations of learning and development for an individual’s life project, in the sense that existentialist philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre meant when he suggested that the meaning of an individual’s life was the choice and responsibility of the individual.

The degree so which individual decide to take responsibility for their learning and development determines the degree of satisfaction and nourishment and individual experiences. In the area of authentic expression, for instance, consider that many if not most people are highly attuned to what others want to hear and express themselves inauthentically, in a manner designed to get what they want, not to express who they really are—in other words, most people manipulate themselves in order to manipulate others. The cost to individual identity is a reduction in “selfness” and individuality and,

as a result, a sense that interaction with others is not satisfying and not nourishing. As John O. Stevens put it,

If I'm being phony, you may love my behavior but you won't love me, you may see my behavior but you won't see me because what's me is not really me but an act designed to get you to respond in a particular way. . . .This is the tragic fallacy in all behavior that is based on fantasy and images, intention and manipulation. Whenever I manipulate myself in order to get a certain response from you, I know that your response is not directed toward me, so it gives me little satisfaction (Stevens, 1971, p. 100).

Human Potential Perspectives

The practitioners of human potential in the 1960s and 1970s helped harness the power of existentialism from a learning and development point of view. The key to unlocking and learning from experience is to be aware of experience as it occurs and to make choices based on that awareness that cause the individual to learn and develop. The phrases “here and now” and “present moment” evolved to describe temporal immediacy of experience, and the term “awareness” denotes an individual’s knowledge of consciousness of that present experience. Drawing on the existentialist notion of existence in time, human potential practitioners like Stevens, philosophers like Alan Watts and spiritualists like Ram Dass all suggest that human experience and relationship with others *only* exists in the immediate present moment, the here and now. “Everything exists in the momentary now,” wrote Stevens (Stevens, 1971, p. 6).

Further, the human potential thinkers state that the joy and satisfaction of learning and growing is a function of awareness of here-and-now experience and expression of the truth of that experience. There are two assumptions here for human potential. The first is that experience is the source of true knowledge and validity of reality. As Carl R. Rogers wrote, “Experience is, for me, the highest authority,” (Rogers, 1961, p. 23). The second assumption is that the greatest nourishment and satisfaction a human can have is immediate experience and awareness of the present. As Dr. Robert Wright said, “There is

really no nourishment if you are not present and here, living fully in the moment” (Wright, R., 15 August 2009).

Being present requires awareness of experience. “Awareness is basic, and you can only discover this through your own experiencing,” Stevens wrote (Stevens, 1971, p. 307). “Full awareness is identification with my experience and my process now: Acknowledging that this is my experience, whether I like it or not. . .” (Stevens, 1971, p. 38). The reason for the primary importance placed on awareness is summed up by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi: “Awareness is the key to consciousness and therefore to gaining control over consciousness” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1993). To Stevens and others, experience is grounded in the senses of perception, and anything other than sensory-grounded experience belongs to the realm of fantasy, which, though it may inform growth, tends to be inauthentic.

If awareness is basic and primary, then perhaps attention is secondary. Attention, as described by American philosopher and psychologist William James, provides a critical mechanism of learning and development from a human potential point of view, and it also serves as a joint that neatly dovetails with modern neuroscience research as a means of explaining how awareness of experience works in the human process of learning and development. James described “attention” in *The Principles of Psychology* (1890):

Everyone knows what attention is. It is the taking possession of the mind, in clear and vivid form, of one out of what seem several simultaneously possible objects or trains of thought. It implies a withdrawal from some things in order to deal effectively with others (in Gallagher, 2009, p. 6).

This is important because it really shows how the existential principals of choice and responsibility function in an individual person’s learning and development. The primary mechanism of attention is selection, which has been a subject of psychological research since at least the 1950s. From a human potential point of this, selection is important because it’s the individual human who is ultimately in charge of selection. What a person decides to focus attention on determines that person’s view of reality and, ultimately,

quality of life. “In short, to enjoy the kind of experience you want rather than enduring the kind that you feel stuck with, you have to take charge of your attention,” Winifred Gallagher wrote (Gallagher, 2009, p. 28).

Human potential thinkers and practitioners begin with the premise that people can and will want to “take charge” of their lives in order to “enjoy the kind of experience” they want. People want to learn, grow, and develop. All humans have potential and an opportunity to realize their potential, and anyone can take responsibility for realizing their potential, with little or no professional help.

In realm of psychotherapy, Carl R. Rogers was also one of the first professionals to believe that his patients were not “broken” or “ill” but were fully capable of learning and growing on their own, as long as they were in the right environment. Rogers suggested that if a professional created an environment of unconditional positive regard, people would automatically learn and grow and change without a doctor or medical professional. As Rogers put it, “If I can provide a certain type of relationship, the other person will discover within himself the capacity to use that relationship for growth, and change and personal development will occur” (Rogers, 1961, p. 33).

Given that psychoanalysis, practiced by medical doctors with psychoanalytic training, was the dominant model of the professional at the time, Roger’s view was revolutionary. The human potential practitioners developed a wide and varied range of educational techniques and technologies, many following the Freudian principle of unlocking blocked psychic energy and based on the human-potential premise that consciousness in and of itself provides a means of learning and development. As Stevens wrote,

[I]t is much more useful to simply become deeply aware of yourself as you are now. Rather than try to change, stop, or avoid something that you don't like in yourself, it is much more effective to stay with it and become more deeply aware of it (Stevens, 1971, pp. 2-3).

Education and Technologies

Alfred Adler made a distinction between education and instruction that I believe is necessary for lifelong learning and development—and for a rich experience of nourishment and the care the feeding of the self and soul. Instruction consists of the recitation and learning of facts and concepts, and it is an important function of schools. Education, in contrast, consists of showing children how to solve problems. Schools were important to Adler because they are “placed between the family and life in society.” Teachers, in turn, “must replace the mother and make corrections where she has made a mistake” (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956, p. 399). As Adler further remarked:

An educator’s most important task, one might almost say his holy duty, is to see to it that no child is discouraged at school, and that a child who enters school already discouraged regains his self-confidence through his school and his teacher. This goes hand-in-hand with the function of the educator, for education is possible only with children who look hopefully and joyfully upon the future (Ansbacher. & Ansbacher, 1956, pp. 399-400).

In this way, the joy of life is enhanced through education, a process of learning how to solve problems, whether that process is undertaken by an individual alone or in school or in work with any other kind of teacher. This section summarizes several modes of education and technologies that have developed to aid individuals in learning and development, with an emphasis on modes and technologies that help individuals develop toward an increasingly genuine and authentic way of being, which is important because it directly increases a person’s quality of life:

There is no easy distinction between those who, leaving the fraudulent behind them, achieve the level of genuine existence and those who do not. We are all, always, a prey to the cares of here and now; of a thousand and one trivialities all our days are made. Yet there is an essential, qualitative, recognizable difference, a total difference, morally, between the existence for which the trivialities are the whole and the existence for which the manifold of experience is transcended in a unity not, like the Kantian, abstract and universal, but intensely personal and concrete” (Greene, 1976, pp. 51-52).

Gestalt Therapy

The awareness of experience John O. Stevens concerned himself with grew out of the gestalt therapy practices by one of the human potential movement's more colorful practitioners, Dr. Frederick Perls. Fritz Perls practiced during the 1960s at the Mecca of the human potential movement of that time, the Esalen Institute in Big Sur, California. The theories upon which Perls based Gestalt Therapy date back to the early part of the 20th century. The German word *gestalt* refers to a pattern of parts expressing the whole. From a therapeutic point of view, what Perls's Gestalt Therapy did in essence is take a part of a person's experience and show how it reflected the entire whole of the person's personality. This was revolutionary because the collection of a client's life history was thought to be the only way to really understand a person and thereby provide a treatment for the ailments and blocks that brought the person into therapy in the first place (Drury 1989, pp 40-43).

In keeping with the human-potential focus on the present moment, Perls's Gestalt Therapy works with immediate experience. "Anxiety is what happens between now and then," Perls said. Perls is fascinating to watch and was known for public demonstrations of his gestalt methods. You can view a number of videos of Perls in action, starting at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ps6PHYBUnuk&NR=1>. The purpose of the gestalt method is to release psychic energy for growth. "Whatever energy or experience you have disowned and you put it out into the world and integrate it, then you grow," Perls said. The method focuses on immediate sensory experience. "That's not what you see," Perls commented to a woman he was working with in the referenced video clip. "That's what you imagine." He immediately brought her to what her senses told her and worked with the emotion that she manifested as he questioned her about what she sensed and what it meant to her.

The Freudian influence is apparent both in the focus on energy and how it moves through a person and on the fragmentation of personality. As Perls said in another

demonstration on working with dreams, “Most of our personality is fragmented. It’s there but not available because it’s fragmented.” Dreams, as in Freud, provide a clue to learning about the deeper structures of a person’s personality and its development, but the work of dream interpretation, in human-potential fashion, is, to Perls, the work of the client, not the therapist: “Any interpretation is a therapeutic mistake, an inference, or the therapist’s opinion. The patient has to do all the work himself” (Perls, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AlayqPwDuz0>).

Client-Centered Therapy

Another important human-potential method of learning and development is Carl Rogers’s client-centered therapy. As stated previously, Rogers saw his role of setting up the proper environment because that would allow people to automatically learn and grow. The source of learning and development is the client and learning itself makes a difference in the individual’s behavior, attitudes, and personality. “It is pervasive learning which is not just an accretion of knowledge, but which interpenetrates with every portion of his existence.” To Rogers, learning of this kind requires five conditions for the therapist, coach, or teacher (Rogers, 1961, pp. 280-284):

1. Facing a Problem, which means that the client is up against a situation that the client considers serious and meaningful. Learning and development is based on the desires of the learner.
2. Congruence, which means that the teacher or therapist is in relationship with the client in as a “unified, or integrated, or congruent person”. The therapist is real and in touch with this “actual experience of his feelings and reactions.”
3. Unconditional Positive Regard, which Rogers defines as “a warm caring for the client—a caring which is not positive, which demands no personal gratification.” This holds clients as separate people and gives them permission to experience their own feelings and give them their own meaning.

4. Empathic Understanding, which means that the therapist's experiences the accurately and enters into the client's private world "as if it were your own, but without ever losing the "as if" quality."
5. Client Experience of Therapist, which means that the client actually experiences the therapist's congruence, acceptance, and empathy. Learning and development, therefore, is a mutual experience.

Like Perls, Rogers is fascinating to watch in action:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HarEcd4bt-s&feature=related>.

The common theme that emerges from watching both Perls and Rogers is this: the faith that the human-potential movement's technologies and methodologies put the in the individual as the source of learning and development, a faith that both creates and requires the joyful, hopeful look to the future of which Adler wrote. Dreikurs summarized this outlook and its critical role in learning and development from a humanistic perspective:

Psychotherapy is not a medical treatment but an educational process. The person learns to understand himself and his life. Psychotherapy implies a change of concepts, belonging through the diminution of self-doubt and of inferiority feelings. This is the basis for all correctional efforts: to overcome doubts about value and ability, and to develop a sufficient Social Interest to cope successfully with life and people (Dreikurs, 1963, p. 271).

Soft Addictions Solutions

Another learning and development methodology that educates people on how to make personal choices that leads to greater nourishment while caring for the self is Dr. Judith Wright's techniques for overcoming soft addictions. "Soft addictions" is a term Dr. Judith Wright coined to represent the "seemingly harmless habits" that, when overdone, rob people of time, energy, and money. As a result, soft addictions inhibit learning and development, as Dr. Judith Wright noted in summarizing the consequences of mood addictions like chronically being in a bad mood:

When you're in the more negative frame of mind, you literally can't find solutions. You cannot see more possibilities. Mood addictions are not just annoying but limit our potential, capacity, and thinking (Wright, J., 30 August 2009).

Dr. Judith Wright's methodology provides tools that help people make choices that lead to lives filled with love and satisfaction. The learning and development breakthrough of the soft addictions methodology is its moment-by-moment focus on an individual's choices of activities, consumables, moods and ways of being. Soft addictions like overeating or watching too much television are seen as a substitute for discomfort of authentic, personal, emotional experience. Rather than experience, say, the fear of rejection inherent in making sales calls, a salesperson may eat a candy bar or drink a cup of coffee as a way of staving off the experience of fear and anxiety that tends to accompany the prospect of making calls.

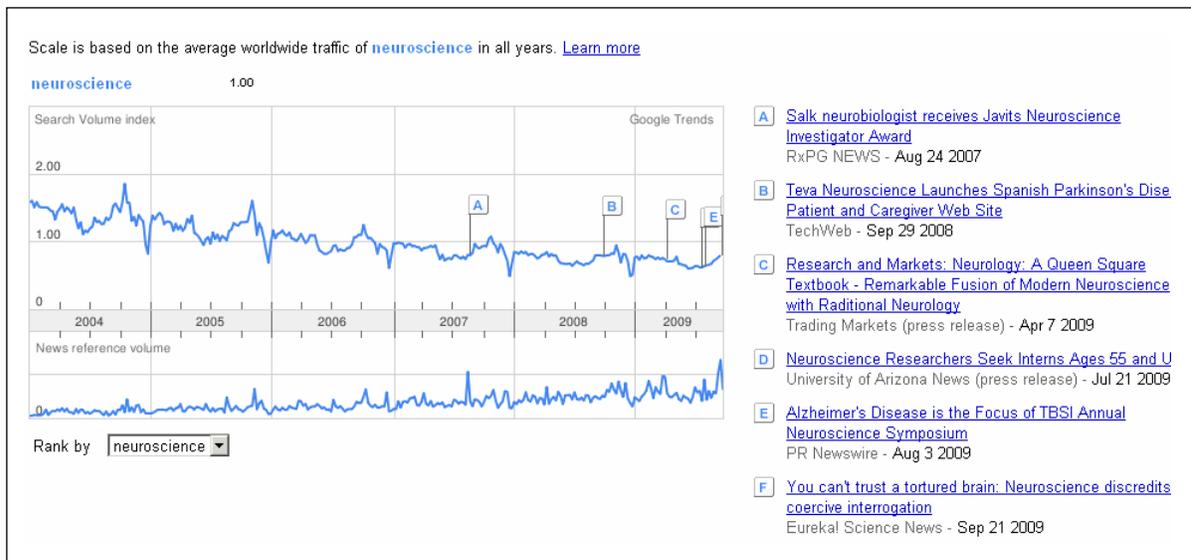
To help overcome soft addictions and provide more positive ways of dealing with the personal anxieties of life, Dr. Judith Wright has developed a number of tools and techniques. The Math of More, for instance, is a method for making goals to subtract negative behaviors while adding positive rewards. The power of the Math of More specifically and the soft addictions methods generally are that they meet the needs and hungers that tend to lie under anxieties and change behaviors by subtracting stimuli that provide negative results like weight gain (pain) and adding stimuli that produce positive results like love and acceptance (pleasure) (Wright, J., 2006).

Research

The mechanisms of how soft addictions work and how emotional expression can help to overcome them are validated by recent research in neuroscience, as are the benefits of the positive self-esteem a person who no longer engages in soft addictions experiences. Recent neuroscience, in fact, provides an increasingly complete view of how humans learn and develop and suggest that people are far more capable of influencing their own growth and development throughout their lives. People's capacity for learning and

development is not fixed because, at some point in their lives, their brains start developing. Quite the contrary, neuroscience research now suggests that the human brain has a “plasticity” that allows it to change, grow, and learn throughout a person’s lifetime.

Neuroscience is wired. News reports on the latest discoveries in neuroscience appear with increasing frequency, as shown by the following Google Trends graph (bottom line) on the search term “neuroscience.”



With advances in medical technology, especially magnetic resonance imaging, developed in the 1970s, neuroscientists have been able to watch the brain in action and gain a much more detailed look at how the brain processes information. As a result, neuroscientists have gained insight into the overall structure of the brain and which areas are responsible for what functions and the biochemical processes through which the brain communicates with the body.

Since the mid 1990s, for instance, neuroscience researchers have been mapping the portions of the brain responsible for emotion. In 1996, researchers in England identified a tiny brain structure called the amygdala as the crucial brain area for the perception of fear (Trudeau, 30 October 1996). The amygdala isn't logical. It just reacts. “Before we are even consciously aware of something the amygdala has activated the fight-or-flight reflex

and activated the fear system,” said Kerry Ressler, a psychiatrist at Emory University and investigator for the Howard Hughes Medical Institute (Hamilton, 4 September 2009).

Indeed, of all the recent neuroscience research, perhaps the most relevant to learning and development is research on emotions: how they work to connect the brain and the body and their critical role in human learning and development. “The inextricability of thought and emotion is one of contemporary psychology's most important discoveries,” wrote Winifred Gallagher. The Greek separation of “supposedly lofty cognition, which focuses on reason and absolute truth, and funky emotion, which centers on subjective value judgments” has been brought back into a whole over the last 10 years, as “scientists have discovered that thinking and feeling often have a chicken-or-the-egg relationship and are hard to tease apart” (Gallagher, 2009, p. 29).

One of those scientists, Dr. Candace Pert, pharmacologist and former Chief of the Section on Brain Biochemistry of the Clinical Neuroscience Branch of the National Institute of Mental Health, has done pioneering work on brain chemistry, communication between the mind and the body, and the biochemical nature of emotion. In her view, the mind is in the body's nervous system as much as it is in the brain. “The body is the unconscious mind,” she wrote. The chemical mechanisms of communication between the brain and the body are short amino acid chains called peptides and receptors, and the information that they carry is experience, by both the brain and the body, as emotion. To Pert, “emotion creates the bridge between mind and body” (Grodzki, 1995). As Pert wrote, “Neuropeptides and their receptors thus join the brain, glands, and immune system in a network of communication between brain and body, probably representing the biochemical substrate of emotion” (Pert, 1999, p. 179).

The implication is that emotional awareness and expression is critical to learning and development. Indeed, both memory and actual performance are affected by mood, Pert's research shows. Emotions are both the arbiters of what people remember and what people learn. The human brain is bombarded by sensory input. In order for the brain not to become overwhelmed, it needs some mechanism to decide what information is important

to pay attention to and what information should be ignored. Pert concluded that “our emotions . . . decide what is worth paying attention to” (Pert, 1999, p. 146).

Researchers studying attachment theory and its role in parenting say something similar and take it a step further. “How emotion is experienced and communicated may be fundamental to how we come to feel a sense of vitality and meaning in our lives,” wrote Siegel and Hartzell (Siegel and Hartzell, 2004, p. 59). Their experience and research suggests that “emotions shape both our internal and our interpersonal experiences” and, as a result, allow us to integrate our experience within our selves, deepen our connection to others, and prepare our bodies for action. Emotional communication is especially important to how children develop and learn. “The experience of emotional joining helps children develop a stronger sense of themselves and enriches their capacity for self-understanding and compassion (Siegel and Hartzell, 2004, p. 68).

It’s a physical as well as an emotional process and becomes the equivalent of a dance between the mind and body. “Emotions are at the nexus between matter and mind, going back and forth between the two and influencing both,” Pert wrote (Pert, 1999, p. 189). Neuropathways are forged in the brain, though mechanisms that include attachment, and those pathways, along with the emotional tendencies that our individual neuropathways support, serve as a filter our experience. As a result, we cannot objectively define what is real and what it not. We are, in a sense, the product of our emotional experience and select information based on that experience, both past and present. Even so, the biochemical receptors in our brains and body can and do change. “Emotions and bodily sensations are thus intricately intertwined, in a bidirectional network in which each can alter the other,” Pert wrote (Pert, 1999, p. 142). Because that generally unconscious process can be brought into consciousness, “even when we are “stuck” emotionally, fixated on a version of reality that does not serve us well, there is always a biochemical potential for change and growth” (Pert, 1999, p. 146).

Conclusion

Pert's observations on "the biochemical potential for change and growth" serve as a good conclusion for this overview of human learning and development. From the initial overview of the philosophical literature, two primary themes predominate:

1. that an individual's initial development is highly dependent on and determined by the individual's family, both the relationship with the mother and the overall family environment, and
2. that an individual ultimately has choice about and responsibility for future learning and development.

From the overview of the human potential methodologies and the neuroscience of emotions, it is also apparent that emotional readiness is just as important as physical readiness when it comes to human performance and learning.

For human beings, as the humanistic psychologists showed, have within them a vast potential for growth that they can tap into to both overcome and extend their early developmental limitations and strengths. Throughout the 20th century, as psychological understanding progressed, a wide array of technologies and methodologies are available to help people learn and develop far beyond what many can envision for themselves and others. Toward the end of the 20th century and into the early years of the 21st, scientific understanding of the brain and body and how the two communicate are bridging the gap between the early philosophical and psychological theories of learning and development and stand to provide even greater tools for humanity to use its full potential in meeting the economic and political challenges it faces.

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