Doing Good Things Better

Brian Martin

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Acknowledgements

I wrote this book using the writing programme described in chapter 2. Over many months, I wrote 200 to 300 words per day, chapter by chapter — sometimes interrupted by other writing projects — until I completed a first draft. Along the way, I read more about the topics, talked to friends about the issues, checked references and revised what I had written.

Tara Gray, in her twelve-step programme for high productivity, specifies a two-step approach to seeking comments on drafts. First you give drafts to non-experts, who will point out things needing explanation and help with expression and making an argument. After making revisions, you then give drafts to experts, who will pick up on inaccuracies and omissions. I followed these guidelines, more or less.

For our weekly writing group meetings, I took along some parts of the text, where they received valuable scrutiny. The support and feedback from the writing group members have been highlights of this process. It is a pleasure to thank Paula Arvela, Anu Bissoonauth-Bedford, Trent Brown, Narelle Campbell, Rae Campbell, Vicki Crinis, Emma Dalton, Bryce Fraser, Peter Gibson, Frank Huang, Nicola Marks, Michael Matteson, Anne Melano, Ian Miles, Ben Morris, Jenn Phillips, Kirsti Rawstron and Rowena Ward.

I also gave full chapters to individuals for comment. Each chapter contains a footnote acknowledging these helpful readers. Malcolm Wright and Scott Armstrong advocate checking every significant citation with the author.[1] I didn't quite achieve this, but I did send drafts to some individuals who are quoted or cited in the text, to confirm that my reference to their work was accurate. When they replied "Yes, it's fine," I have not explicitly thanked them, in keeping with the convention that a citation is itself a type of acknowledgement. I greatly appreciate each author who took the time to reply.

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Colin Steele and Tom Worthington gave me valuable advice about open access publishing. I had told them about my desire for all my future books to be available free online.

One of the findings from research is that happiness can be increased by expressing gratitude. In that context, it is a pleasure to thank everyone who contributed to making this book better than it otherwise would have been.

1
Introduction

Whenever I watch the news on television — which isn't often — I come away with the impression that the world is a bad place. Or at least that lots of bad things are happening. Wars, murders, riots — as journalists say, "if it bleeds, it leads." Then there are climate change disasters looming, corruption, child abuse … the negative stories seem never to end. But then, for a change, there's a light-hearted feel-good story — about a lost cat that travelled a thousand kilometres to return home. This sort of story usually means the news is nearly over.[1]

Yet when I look around my own world, things don't seem so catastrophic. People walking down the street seem happy enough. Some of them smile and say hello. The houses look much the same day after day. The sun is shining. So I think, there are some good things in the world too.

I work as a social scientist, studying aspects of society, and it's obvious that social scientists give much more attention to exploitation than good feelings. There certainly are plenty of social problems to investigate: poverty, racism, inequality, war, torture, bullying, suicide, murder, arson and depression, to name a few. There's a major sociology journal named *Social Problems* but no scholarly journal called *Good Things*.

If you study good aspects of life, others may think you must be a pupil of the fictional Dr Pangloss who taught that we live in

the best of all possible worlds. Suzanne Segerstrom researches optimism and encountered this sort of attitude.

> … the study of "positive" topics, like optimism or happiness, attracts a lot of skepticism from people who study "negative" topics. The stereotype of people who study positive topics is that they are not serious scientists.[2]

This stereotype is silly. Let's say you study depression. That means you're concerned about people's unhappiness and want to help understand it and make it better. But say you study elation or exuberance or getting high. Does that mean you don't take unhappiness seriously enough?

There may be something instinctive about focusing on problems.[3] Imagine a room full of children. One of them is crying loudly. Everyone's attention turns to the crying child. The contented ones can be ignored. A suburb might be full of people who say hello on the street and are no danger to anyone, except for one fellow who scowls and mutters threats. He's the one everyone will be talking about.

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2 Suzanne C. Segerstrom, *Breaking Murphy's Law: How Optimists Get What They Want from Life — and Pessimists Can Too* (New York: Guilford Press, 2006), 195–196.

3 Roy F. Baumeister, Ellen Bratslavsky, Catrin Finkenauer and Kathleen D. Vohs, "Bad is stronger than good," *Review of General Psychology,* 5(4), 2001, 323–370; Paul Rozin and Edward B. Royzman, "Negativity bias, negativity dominance, and contagion," *Personality and Social Psychology Review,* 5(4), 2001, 296–320. On the other hand, Karen A. Cerulo, *Never Saw It Coming: Cultural Challenges to Envisioning the Worst* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), says there are perceptual and cultural reasons why people focus more on good than bad outcomes.

Being alert to problems was a survival mechanism for early humans. If a storm was brewing or a predator was nearby, it was vital to pay attention. But humans have changed their environment to eliminate many immediate dangers. Many people are physically safe much of the time, for example while sitting at home or talking to friends on the phone. Worrying about risks may not be the best approach to life.[4]

Good things

Most people can agree that some things, like murder, torture and genocide, are bad. In contrast, it's not so easy to agree on good things.

Take friendship. Having a friend sounds worthwhile; having a good friend sounds even better. But what about criminals who are friends with each other? Friendship can be turned to evil purposes.

Developing expertise is another thing that sounds good — unless it's expertise in developing weapons of mass destruction.

Part of the trouble here is linguistic. Take the word genocide, which refers to attempts to exterminate an ethnic group or some other category of people. Only extreme racists would think this is acceptable. However, the word genocide isn't applied to beneficial exterminations. We don't speak of the genocide of the smallpox virus.

There isn't a word that restricts friendships to ones beneficial to the friends and to wider society. But that's what I'm thinking of when I refer to good things: a combination of the

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4 Gavin de Becker, *The Gift of Fear: Survival Signals that Protect Us from Violence* (London: Bloomsbury, 1997), says people should rely on their instinctive responses to dangers rather than worrying about them.

thing itself, such as friendship or expertise, and service to or compatibility with wider benefits.

Methods

To obtain their objectives, militaries use tactics and so do businesses. What about tactics to protect and promote good things? This sounds a bit strange.

Tactics are methods or actions used as part of a plan for achieving a goal. Tactics are things people and groups do, as opposed to simply thinking or complaining about the ways things are.

Many good things are expected to just happen, usually when problems are fixed. When all the problems at work are fixed, then supposedly the organisation will operate at top efficiency. You imagine that when all your personal problems are resolved, you will be happy. Most attention is focused on problems, following the adage "the squeaky wheel gets the oil." Few focus on oiling the other wheels, namely trying to improve things that are working well.

Edward de Bono, pioneer of creative thinking, says something can be excellent and yet still need improvement.[5] That's my view. The question then is how to improve.

I propose that five methods are important for protecting and promoting all sorts of good things.

Awareness People should be aware of the good thing.

Valuing People should appreciate it — they need to think it is a good thing.

Understanding People need to know why it is a good thing.

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5 Edward de Bono, *Think! Before It's Too Late* (London: Vermillion, 2009), 13.

Endorsement Leaders, experts and other authorities should endorse the good thing.

Action People need to do the good thing.

In the appendix, I tell how I developed this framework.

There's one complication. These five methods can apply at different levels, typically at the level of individuals, groups and societies. So think again of friendship. You can protect and enhance your own friendships by being aware of them, valuing them and so forth. At the group level — for example your neighbourhood or sporting club — attitudes and actions can support friendships at the individual level. Finally, a whole society, through policies and standard practices, can support friendships at the group and individual levels.

In the following chapters, I describe a variety of good things, from writing to chamber music. In each case, I start by describing features of the good thing and then look at the relevance of the five methods. I think the methods make most sense within case studies. In the final chapter, I pull together some themes from the case studies.

I've picked case studies I know something about personally or for which I could find good sources, or both. There are many other good things worthy of investigation and, more importantly, efforts to protect and promote them.

One message from this examination is the importance of paying attention to good things and putting effort into protecting and promoting them. Another key message is that efforts at the individual level have limits: for sustained improvement, changes are needed at the level of groups and societies.

2
Writing

Overview
- Most researchers are binge writers: they avoid writing until deadlines loom.
- Becoming a productive writer is more a matter of good habits and regular work than natural talent.
- To develop habits that support productive writing, five methods are valuable: awareness, valuing, understanding, endorsement and action.
- A writing programme involving brief regular sessions is compatible with research on expert performance.[1]

Kerryn

For me, the high-output programme has been a lifeline.

The programme has worked for me as a tool to start writing my thesis, instead of reading, planning, researching and just generally delaying the actual process of writing! Before I adopted the write-before-you're-ready approach advocated by the programme, the process of actually writing was a daunting thought. I was always searching for that elusive block of time when I could sit down and write. That

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time was very hard to find, and as a result my thesis word count showed only staggered increases.

For me the everyday part — of writing new words every day — is crucial. It's about establishing a habit and sticking to the routine. By adopting this approach, the words are building steadily. Some days are more productive than others, but by setting an achievable target in terms of time (for me it's a minimum of 20 minutes) the opportunity to write each day is possible. Often the momentum gained from just starting to write results in more time spent writing than initially planned. I make sure to stop after an hour so I don't become fatigued and thus not keen to write the next day.

The important thing to remember is that although the writing may need polishing later, the words and ideas are there. This keeps your thesis alive. I've found that after the initial few weeks taken to establish the habit, writing each day is a gratifying experience that works to reassure me that my thesis will be written! Learning the skill of writing new words has also improved my writing ability - the words come easier.[2]

In early 2008, I read a short, punchy book by Tara Gray titled *Publish & Flourish*.[3] It spells out a 12-step plan to become a prolific academic author and cited research to back up the plan. I immediately knew I had come across a winner.

A bit of background. The job of most academics has three main components: teaching, researching, and service. The service component includes various administrative things like sitting on committees or helping with professional associations. Teaching is pretty obvious. Then there's research, which varies a

lot depending on the discipline but basically involves doing something new, adding to the body of knowledge and practice in the world.

The most common output of research is an article published in a professional journal. If you're in physics, it's prestigious to publish in *Physical Review,* whereas in sociology, *American Sociological Review* has clout. There are plenty of choices: there are hundreds of thousands of scholarly journals to choose from. Does anyone read them? Some articles, yes, but the average article would be lucky to have half a dozen readers. Nevertheless, the research findings sit there in the journals, available should anyone want to see what's been done.

In some fields, conference papers are more common than articles in journals; in others, books are respected outputs. In creative arts, it might be paintings or musical compositions. I'll refer to articles — sometimes called papers — for simplicity.

Even when no one reads your article, there's still a pay-off: you, as the author of a scholarly article, gain status. More than that, publishing academic papers is the way to get ahead. Usually you need some publications to get a job, more to obtain tenure and quite a few to become well known in your field. It is widely known that publishing is the road to academic advancement. It's not guaranteed but it's far more reliable than being a good teacher.

For decades, academics have been told to "publish or perish": either you publish articles or else your academic career is over. That's an exaggeration, because most academics don't publish that much. Publishing one scholarly paper per year puts you ahead of half of all academics.[4] One paper per year doesn't

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2 This and following quotes are from participants in the high-output writing programme, having been involved for about six months.

3 Tara Gray, *Publish & Flourish: Become a Prolific Scholar* (New Mexico: Teaching Academy, New Mexico State University, 2005).

4 Richard A. Wanner, Lionel S. Lewis and David I. Gregorio, "Research productivity in academia: a comparative study of the sciences, social

sound like that much, considering you're supposed to be spending a third or more of your time working on research. A third of a year is 120 days, seemingly a lot of time to produce just one article, maybe 5000 words of published text.

Even though tenured academics can get by without publishing much, "publish or perish" is more of a reality for those starting out. Without publications, it's difficult to obtain an academic job, especially at a prestigious university where there's a greater emphasis on research, and lower teaching loads. At top universities in the US, only some assistant professors are granted tenure. Having plenty of publications is the most promising way to achieve this goal.

I've described here the way the academic system works. However, there are plenty of problems with the system: critics paint the institutionalised obsession with publishing as a glorification of selfishness, waste and misdirection. My description of academic research is intended not as an endorsement but as a prelude to the discussion of an approach to writing that I think is worthwhile in itself, even if the goals to which it is turned can be criticised.

More generally, good quality writing isn't necessarily a good thing. After all, it might be designed to promote racism or justify an atrocity. So in looking at writing as a good thing, I assume the purpose of the writing is worthwhile. If it is, then it's valuable for more people to write and for them to write better. There's no special word for "writing for a worthwhile purpose," but that's what I'm talking about here.

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sciences and humanities," *Sociology of Education,* 54, October 1981, 238–253.

Boice

The title of Tara Gray's book, *Publish & Flourish,* turns the familiar "publish or perish" into a more positive formulation. Her manual promises success in this vital endeavour.

The foundation of Gray's 12-step programme is quite simple: write for 15 to 30 minutes every day. Yes, that's it: the core requirement is daily writing — and even five days a week will do.

Gray cites the work of Robert Boice, who back in the 1980s began studying the habits of productive new academics.[5] Boice is the one who found that daily writing is the key to success.

Why is this surprising? Coaches expect their athletes — swimmers, runners and so forth — to train daily. Junior athletes are expected to show up for training every day, at the same time. Swimmers have to put in their laps and runners their distance. This sort of training enables dedicated high school athletes to achieve times better than world champions a century ago.

So what were top athletes doing a century ago? Those were the days of amateurs, often from the upper class with spare time and access to facilities, who trained when they felt like it, typically on weekends. Very gentlemanly. But their performances weren't very good by today's standards.

What about writing? Most academics seem to be operating like the gentleman athletes of the past. They wait until they feel like writing. That usually means when they have a big block of time, or are forced to meet a deadline.

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5 Robert Boice, *Professors as Writers: A Self-help Guide to Productive Writing* (Stillwater, OK: New Forums Press, 1990); Robert Boice, *Advice for New Faculty Members: Nihil Nimus* (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 2000).

Boice found that aiming to write in big blocks of time is not a good approach. The first problem is that it's hard to find a big block, because it's too tempting to do all sorts of little tasks first. These days the biggest culprits include email, surfing the web and social networking. Boice started his investigations before these were on the scene, but even in the old days there were plenty of tempting little tasks to sidetrack a writing session. So the earnest academic would say, "I'll wait until the weekend … or until teaching is over … or until I'm on sabbatical." Some never got started at all. When these putative writing times arrived, it was all too hard to become inspired to actually write.

The second problem is that a big block of time for writing makes the task seem onerous. Some writers are able to overcome their inertia — often when a deadline is looming — and push themselves into a marathon session of frenzied writing. This is exhausting. When finished, there's little psychic energy left for writing on following days. It takes a while to recover before getting up the mental strength for another lengthy session. Weeks can go by with only a few days of actual writing.

This pattern is analogous to a weekend athlete who is physically exhausted after a long workout. It takes several days to recover.

Boice calls this pattern binge writing. It's analogous to drinking or eating too much — you feel terrible afterwards.

Bridget

I have found the program very helpful in many ways. When I started, I was having an extremely difficult time pacing myself with my thesis writing. I would binge-write until I totally ran out of energy and not be able to face it again for weeks. My output was high, but my thoughts were all over the place.

In the last twelve weeks my thesis writing has improved so much. I'm not writing as much but what I do write is much

more coherent, and my thinking is clearer. I've also starting writing a novel just for fun. I've written more than 25,000 words so far. I found writing for a short time each day, and doing it consistently, helped immensely with my confidence. I didn't feel so pressured, and I wasn't constantly worried about not doing enough.

Bridget's case is extreme, but milder forms are very common: articles written to deadlines — or not at all.

Why do academics binge-write? Most of them learn the habit from doing assignments in high school or undergraduate years: it's common to postpone the work and then do it all at the last moment, sometimes in an "all-nighter." Why is this the usual approach? Probably because assignments and deadlines are imposed by the teacher. When students do something they enjoy — like socialising or playing video games — they are less likely to postpone them.

Habits from high school and undergraduate study become increasingly dysfunctional as tasks become larger. Writing an essay overnight is possible, but completing a 90,000–word thesis requires planning. It's still possible to binge: my friend Steve wrote his PhD thesis in six weeks, using stimulants to stay alert. But this is not a prescription for long-term productivity, nor for enjoying the process.

Boice's alternative is simple: brief regular writing sessions. For academics, the easiest regular pattern is daily. Instead of setting aside just one day a week for writing, and continuing for hours until mental exhaustion sets in, a daily writing session might be for half an hour, or even less.

Many academics, as soon as this option is proposed, begin a series of objections. "It takes me quite a while to get started — to get myself immersed in the subject." "I can't just turn on inspiration at will." True enough. If you write infrequently, then

it does take a while to get back into the topic. And if you write in binges, you won't feel like doing it again very soon.

Regular sessions provide a solution to these obstacles. When you get used to writing every day, you don't need as much start-up time to get into the topic, because you were dealing with it yesterday. The result is greater efficiency, as memory is primed and maintained more easily.

As for inspiration, here's the new aphorism: "Don't wait to be inspired to write; instead, write to be inspired." Regular writing creates inspiration. Boice did an experiment in which one group of academics did no writing but maintained other usual activities (reading, seminars, etc.), another group wrote their normal way — bingeing — and a third group did brief daily sessions. The no-writing group averaged one new idea per week, the binge-writing group two new ideas and the regular-writing group five new ideas.[6] What Boice found is that waiting to be inspired is not very effective. Writing is the crucible for sparking ideas, rather than ideas being the trigger for productive writing.

The core of Boice's and Gray's prescription for productivity is daily writing — but not too much. Gray recommends 15 to 30 minutes per day. I have interpreted this as the writing of "new words," rather than revising previous writing.[7] If you write for

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6 Robert Boice, "Contingency management in writing and the appearance of creative ideas: implications for the treatment of writing blocks," *Behaviour Research & Therapy,* 21 (1984), pp. 537–543.

7 I might have misinterpreted Boice and Gray's advice: they might be happy to include editing in the 15 to 30 minutes per day, whereas I advise doing editing after writing new words. In my experience, writing new words is the most challenging task for most researchers, so regularly doing this is the key to greater productivity. However, there are some writers who have no trouble producing new words but get stuck in

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too long, it becomes onerous — and as a result you're less likely to continue day after day. The idea is to make new writing so inoffensive, over so quickly, that doing it doesn't seem like such a big deal. When expectations aren't so high, it's easy to overcome your internal censor: the little voice that says to you, "What you're writing is no good. In fact, it's crap. You're not measuring up. Give up and wait for a better time."

Perfectionism is a deadly enemy of good performance. It's like being judged every time you write a sentence or paragraph. It's far better to go ahead, make mistakes and learn from them.

Nichole

I began the programme because I wanted to let go of my perfectionist approach to writing which required blocks of time that, with small children at my knee, were never going to be available. Writing for me has always been challenging because my thoughts run thick and fast and the task of getting them down on the page in a manner that makes sense to others has always been overwhelming! I tended not to engage with these ideas in a rigorous or academic manner because I forgot them. I didn't write them down (unless they were part of the process of taking fieldnotes) because I felt that to write anything I needed to be "in the zone."

Writing daily has been a wonderful experience for me because it has provided me with a non-threatening way of untangling my messy thought process, thread by thread. I try to write each day and to write about a thesis-related issue. The issue is usually related to a reading or the data I have coded the night before. I have found that by doing this I am able to tease out an idea and look at what I know and need to know. The process has enabled me to get the cacophony of ideas and thoughts babbling through my head onto the

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perpetual revisions or have difficulty finishing articles or submitting them for publication, in which case these tasks should take precedence.

paper and into my thesis. My thesis is taking shape steadily as I paste the ideas into the relevant part of the relevant chapter.

The most exciting part of this approach to writing has been reconnecting with the creative side of my brain. The free writing gives me the opportunity to play with ideas, rather than slogging away and worrying whether they are right or expressed perfectly. The support of the group has also been central to my enjoyment of this approach: the others inspire and motivate me to stick at it and to work through the blocks.

Rather than expecting great output from a burst of frenzied inspiration, the idea behind Boice's brief regular sessions is to work with low daily expectations, knowing that this will lead in time to better results.

Many writers get stuck at the very beginning. They sit down to write and can't put a word on the page, because it doesn't measure up to their expectations. Or they write a sentence or a paragraph and then spend ten minutes or half an hour rewriting it, sometimes deleting it and starting again.

I recommend brief sessions writing new words, with revisions done at a different time. Why separate the writing of new words and the process of revising? It's because the creative process of creating new text can be undermined by the critical orientation usually taken during reading and revising.

Academics get a lot of experience in being critical. When they read a piece of writing by a student, they look for mistakes, for example misuse of a theory, omission of a key concept, the wrong answer on an exam, or even just misspelled words. Whenever they read a scholarly work — a published article, for example — this critical orientation is turned on. One aim in reading is to understand; another is to find fault. If you can't find flaws in someone's work, how can you do better yourself?

Trouble arises, though, when this critical capacity is turned on when you try to write. The text simply doesn't measure up. The mind cries out in pain: "It's no good! Change it! Delete!"

Writing programmes

Inspired by Gray's and Boice's work, I first adopted their approach myself. This wasn't too hard, because decades earlier I had developed my own system that was halfway to the Boice-Gray model. My practice was to set aside two hours for writing and to keep writing until either I had written 1000 words or the two hours were over. I could do this several days in a week, or even every day, until finishing the draft of a chapter or article. Then I would go into editing mode, and it might be a couple of weeks before I was ready for more writing of new text.

Following the Boice-Gray formula, I switched to 15–30 minutes nearly every day, typically writing about 300 words. I found this much easier. Writing 1000 words in a session was usually hard work; by comparison, 300 is a breeze. Furthermore, by writing nearly every day, I don't have any start-up problems. Previously, after not writing for a week or two, the first day back was really hard going. Now I find the daily routine easy to maintain. Of course I had a big advantage: I had been writing for a long time and knew how to go about it.

My next step was to encourage others to adopt the Boice-Gray writing programme. I started with my PhD students, most of whom were highly receptive. I also set up programmes with other research students in the Arts Faculty. Running these programmes enabled me to learn much more about obstacles to writing and what helps to overcome them.

Boice and Gray recommend keeping records, in particular the number of new words you write each day and the number of minutes it takes to write them. They also recommend reporting

these totals to an adviser or mentor, someone to whom the writer will feel accountable. I asked my own students to send their weekly totals to me. That way I could assess how they were doing and discuss, in our weekly phone calls, ways to fine-tune the programme. For the writing groups in the faculty, I initially suggested that students — not supervised by me — could report their weekly totals either to me or to someone else of their choice, such as their supervisor. But I soon found that reporting totals to people who didn't understand the programme was not helpful. Students need to be accountable to someone who will give them support. I learned that some academics don't understand the writing programme or don't believe in it.

In helping others use the Boice-Gray writing programme, I make some specific recommendations. I suggest making notes about the points to be covered in new writing, doing this a day or week beforehand. Then I recommend that when you sit down to write, you close or remove all books, articles and other polished text. Why? Because reading the polished text switches your mind into its flaw-noticing mode, the enemy of creating your own new words. I also recommend not reading yesterday's writing, but instead using just your notes to provide guidance to today's new words.

I also recommend closing the door, turning off the telephone, closing email and web applications and generally removing all distractions. Producing new words, for many writers, is a delicate process. Interruptions are temptations to do something else.

Email is a prime distraction. Several writers told me they could do their writing on most days, but sometimes they never got around to it — the days when they looked at their email first. The web is another temptation. Megan could hardly write a sentence without checking some point on the web, often follow-

ing links down fascinating byways. Her writing proceeded extremely slowly.

For some, the main distractions are people, such as others living in the house who will interrupt. I say, "go into a room and close the door," but not everyone has a separate room. Another strategy is to negotiate with family members to have 15 uninterrupted minutes. That often works with adults but seldom with small children.

Some academics say that they are so busy that they had no time to do 15 minutes of daily writing. What this usually means is that they have put writing too low on their priority list. With 16 or more waking hours per day, it's hard to imagine work occupying every minute. These busy academics spend hours preparing lectures, marking essays, attending seminars and committee meetings — and checking emails, watching television and having coffee with colleagues. If you're sitting with a pile of essays to mark, preparing to work on them for hours, taking 15 minutes away at the very beginning can't make much difference, can it?

Vicki had a full-time research position — no teaching, no supervision, very little administration. She did lots of work, but made very little progress on publications because she kept postponing writing. After she started the writing programme, she was able to produce article after article.

For Vicki, the main obstacle was not time — it was lack of a writing habit. The same applies to those with lots of other tasks, such as teaching and reading emails: doing the other tasks is often an excuse to avoid writing. When writing becomes a top priority, there will be time enough.

The title of chapter 4 in Boice's book *Advice for New Faculty Members* is a single word: "Stop." If the first principle of productive writing is to start, the second is to stop — before

doing too much. For regular writing, you need to feel fresh when you start. If you feel worn out from too much writing yesterday or the day before, then you may postpone your session until tomorrow, starting a cycle of boom and bust, namely binge writing. So, Boice says, stop sooner rather than later.

Gray in her 12-step programme made the advice more specific: write for 15 to 30 minutes per day. That means stopping when you get to 30 minutes. Actually, half an hour is more than enough for some writers. The optimum time for writing new words is what you can sustain day after day. It might be 10 or even just 5 minutes per day.

Again the analogy to exercise is helpful. If you exercise too much, then you may be sore and need a rest day. The optimum level is what you can sustain day after day, perhaps gradually building up the intensity of training but not necessarily the overall time.

Some athletes train for several hours every day. Think of the swimmers doing lap after lap. How can writers get by with only 30 minutes per day?

Suppose you spend 15 minutes daily creating *new* words. There's a lot of additional work required before this becomes publishable prose: revising, studying key texts, obtaining data, doing experiments, seeking comments on drafts, submitting the article, revising it in the light of referees' comments and perhaps resubmitting it if rejected. Writing new words is the core activity, something akin to the highest intensity part of an athletic training programme, but it has to be supplemented by a lot of other work. This might require several hours per day.

How many words can you write in a minute? If you just spew them out without thinking, you can go as fast as you can type (or, lacking a keyboard, as fast as you can write by hand). But if you ponder over them, so they come out as text that you

might actually use — after revision — then the pace will be slower. The people I've worked with have quite different rates of output, from about 5 to 40 words per minute.

Chai, a PhD student from Thailand, visited Wollongong for a semester and participated in the writing programme. His pace was pretty slow: five words per minute. But English was his second language and he found it challenging to express himself, though the finished product was quite good. Later, back in Thailand writing in Thai, he wrote more like 20 words per minute, a fast pace for thesis material.

Let's say you average 20 minutes per day and write 15 words per minute, a total of 300 words per day. It doesn't sound like much, but it mounts up. In three weeks, your total is 6000 words, enough for a typical article. So you start another article, also setting aside some time each day to revise the first article. Another three weeks and you have the draft of a second article. Keep up this pace and you have 17 articles in a year — a spectacular output by any standard. Is it sustainable? If the work in revision and doing the research gets to be too much, what's the solution? Easy: just write new words for less time, maybe just 10 minutes per day. If you complete eight articles per year, you'll still be in the top echelons of academic productivity.

One of the common problems of people using this programme is "I don't know what to write," often accompanied by "I'm not ready. I need to do more reading, or thinking, or investigation." This is an indirect expression of the familiar formula of researching first and then writing up the results. Boice and Gray want to turn this on its head. Their motto: "Write before you're ready!"

This means starting writing even though you don't know enough about the topic, you haven't read all the background material and haven't done the experiments or fieldwork or

interviews. Indeed, you're just starting work in an area that's entirely new to you. How can you write about it?

One approach is to write about what you're going to do. Describe the things you know and the things you need to find out. Tell about the experiments you're planning and how you'll set them up. Tell how you'll analyse the data.

Another approach is pretty similar: start writing the paper that you'd normally write at the end of your research. When you come to any part that you don't know or don't understand, just do as well as you can and keep going.

This feels very strange at first. Here's how it works. By writing, you stimulate your thinking. In fact, writing is a form of thinking. In order to make progress on your project, you need to think about it — and writing is an efficient way of getting this happening. Even after you've finished writing for the day, your unconscious mind will be working away at the topic, trying to address the matters you expressed.

Of course it's quite possible to think about your topic without writing about it. Writing is just a reliable way of sustaining the thinking process. How many people schedule 15 minutes per day of concentrated thinking about a topic? If you've tried it, you'll know it's not easy.

Unconscious mental processing — during the time you're not writing — is one thing that makes daily writing more efficient than bingeing. When you do a long stint of writing, you're attempting to concentrate all the thinking in one burst. This intensive effort can be exciting, but despite appearances it's not as productive as harnessing the mind over longer periods.

There's another, more practical reason why writing first — before doing the research — is more efficient than writing only at the end. Let's say there are ten major books in the area you want to write about. The normal approach is to read them first,

and probably you'll want to read even more books and articles just to be sure you understand the topic.

This approach can lead to a reluctance to start writing: the more you know about the topic, the harder it is to measure up to all this work by prior authors. Matt Groening captured this with a cartoon about doing a PhD. The caption reads "The simple way to avoid the stomach-churning agony of having to finish your thesis: read another book — repeat when necessary."[8]

When you write first, before doing all the reading, you find out exactly what you need to know. In writing an article or chapter, you find gaps in your argument, points where you need examples, and places where you need a reference. So when you turn to the ten books, you don't need to read them in full. You'll know exactly what you're looking for, so you can just check the relevant bits.

Does this mean you don't learn as much overall? Not necessarily. When you read a book or article with a purpose, you're much more likely to be able to remember crucial information because it fits within a framework you've developed.

Writing as the driver

Given that there are so many tasks involved in research — collecting data, doing experiments, becoming familiar with prior work, learning theory, etc. — why should writing be seen as so important? The answer, I think, is that writing is a core activity that drives the rest.

Consider someone who wants to become a better swimmer. It would be possible to spend a lot of time on things other than swimming, like making turns, refining the stroke and choosing

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8 Matt Groening, *School is Hell* (New York: Pantheon, 1987), "Lesson 19: grad school — some people never learn."

the right diet. But it wouldn't make sense to do these without also doing plenty of swimming. Regular swimming is the core activity. Learning how to do better turns will be more productive when you can swim fast. Choosing a good diet will depend on your training regime: lots of swimming means a larger appetite, higher demands for some nutrients and the like. With swimming as the core, it becomes obvious and necessary to undertake supporting tasks like getting plenty of sleep and doing strength training. Yes, you could aim to get plenty of sleep first and then launch into swimming a year down the track. But it makes more sense to put pool time first.

The same applies to research: writing drives other activities. To do daily writing means having something to write about, which means you need to think in advance about what you're trying to say: writing stimulates research planning. Daily writing generates words, and they need to be revised for publication, so this is another desirable daily task. Writing reveals gaps in your knowledge and highlights areas you need to investigate. So by writing daily, you generate a backlog of further things to do: articles to read, observations to make, theories to learn about.

When athletes train every day, in a controlled way, they gradually develop the capacity for more intense training, a process called progressive conditioning. To enable sufficient recovery time between training sessions, some athletes use split routines, such as strength work on different parts of the body on different days, or a high-intensity workout one day followed by a lower-intensity workout the next.

Writers can also benefit from progressive conditioning. Writing daily helps build the capacity for more productive sessions later on, either more words or higher quality expression or both. A split writing routine might involve a longer easier writing task one day and a shorter more intense task the next, or

writing on different topics every other day. Whether this would improve writing performance is unknown, given the absence of studies of such possibilities. In the meantime, individuals can try different approaches and see what works for them.

However, fine-tuning a writing programme is a luxury when the primary challenge is doing any writing at all. Many researchers rely on their willpower to find time to write. This has pitfalls. Willpower is important, to be sure, but it needs to be used strategically, otherwise it wears out too quickly.

Imagine an academic sitting in her office. A little voice says, "I know I should be doing some writing but first I'll check my emails." An hour or two later, there are new tasks — some emails brought new issues or interests to the fore, like filling out a questionnaire or responding to students. Then there's the web: "I'd better check the latest on Hilda's blog." Colleagues see your door open and stop to say hello or say "Let's go for a coffee." Before you know it, it's time for a class or a meeting. Or maybe you have a pile of essays to mark. "I'd better do those first. *Then* I can get to my research." Or maybe, "Whoops, I have to prepare for tomorrow's class. Drop everything else."

Some writers work at home to avoid office distractions. Others can't do this because of children and family members — or when at home become preoccupied with calls, texting, email and the web.

What's happening here is that small, seemingly urgent things are getting in the way of working on larger important goals. Willpower is needed to set aside the little things and concentrate on the big ones. But there are so many little things that willpower is soon exhausted, so your activity is driven by deadlines.

The solution is to use willpower to shape the environment, in particular to remove the distractions. That's why I recommend

turning off phones and email, closing the door and taking other steps to block interruptions and distractions.

Boice reports that some people on the writing programme make great gains in early months. They get into the habit of writing and it pays dividends. They then decide they don't need to continue the monitoring parts, such as recording daily minutes spent writing and words written and reporting them weekly to a mentor. But when they stop doing this, they have to rely on willpower much more, and may relapse into bingeing habits. Boice's argument is that you need to continue to shape your environment to support your good habits.[9]

Serious athletes expect to spend years in training. If you're on the high school or university track team, you are expected to join regular training. Your coach will monitor your performance. It would be an unusual runner indeed who reached the top ranks without a strong support system to guide training, give feedback and maintain commitment.

Why do I keep referring to running and swimming? In part because they are sports involving individual performance, and so are a better analogy to the individual task of doing research. With team sports like soccer, regular training is even more important. There's an analogy between team sports and research groups, though I don't know anyone who has developed the implications. It's also possible to develop analogies with other activities requiring practice, such as music and dance.

Brief and regular

Boice's approach of brief regular sessions can be used for all sorts of other activities. When you have a task that you're avoiding because it seems like you need a block of time to

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9 Boice, *Professors as Writers,* 124.

accomplish it, try breaking it down into small bits and doing them day by day.

I had a book to review and never got around to reading it. I had promised to review it and actually wanted to read it, but it wasn't high enough on my agenda, so I kept postponing doing the reading. I even had the book on my list of things to do, but that wasn't enough. Two years later, after reading Boice, I tried a different approach: I said to myself, I'll just read five pages every day. Reading five pages isn't onerous; surely I could do that. It's only five minutes!

So I read five pages per day. The book had 250 pages, so I finished in two months. Not quick — but definitely faster than the two years I had delayed getting started. Then I wrote the review in a day using the writing programme.

Initially I worried that by reading just a few pages each day I'd forget what I'd read before. I was surprised: I actually remembered previous reading quite well: my overall retention improved. To me it was another demonstration of the advantages of breaking down tasks and not bingeing.

Boice presents his non-bingeing approach as a general strategy for good academic performance. The first half of his book *Advice for New Faculty Members* is about teaching. Most new academics, with a full-time teaching load and an expectation to do research, put way too much effort into teaching. They do this highly inefficiently, by devoting big blocks of time to tasks with encroaching deadlines.

Preparing a lecture is a prime example: to prepare for a one-hour lecture, junior academics — not having taught a particular course before — commonly spend many hours in preparation: reading background material, searching out key ideas, preparing slides, even writing out every word they are going to say. This

preparation can be stressful, especially when it's done at the last moment, perhaps the day before.

Boice recommends starting much earlier, weeks or months ahead, spending just a few minutes per day on a lecture, sketching out ideas and then returning to the task the next day, gradually adding ideas and materials until there's enough. Boice says most academics over-prepare for lectures: they have too much material and are too attached to what they have so they can't easily respond to the class and adapt to the circumstances. Ironically, too much preparation can lead to a *less* successful lecture.

Then there is marking of assignments. Let's say you have a pile of 50 essays or exams to mark. This seems onerous, so it's tempting to leave it until tomorrow. Marking is postponed until it becomes imperative to finish the work, which means a marathon marking session. You anticipated it would be unpleasant, and you're right: it's boring, stressful and exhausting. The result: you repeat the process with the next batch of essays: delay and then binge.

Boice's approach makes it so much easier. Let's say you need to return the essays in two weeks. Divide 50 essays by 14 days and you get less than four essays per day. So do just four on the first day and stop. It's not so hard, and you're fresh the next day. Even better, your brain unconsciously addresses the task along the way, so you're more effective as you go along: you know what to look for without even thinking about it.

I've been doing marking this way for years. It works wonderfully and is so much better than binge marking that it's hard for me to understand why anyone would let themselves fall into marathon marking sessions. Well, actually, it's easy to understand. Every day, other tasks seem more urgent — or more attractive — so postponing becomes a habit.

Recommendations on writing

Only a few people have done proper research about the value of the writing programme, most notably Boice and Gray. Boice compared groups of junior academics who adopted his writing programme with those who didn't and found a dramatic increase in productivity among those adhering to brief regular sessions — nine times greater output.[10] Gray and a colleague found that a group adopting her programme was producing polished work at a rate of 75 pages per year, quite good for academics.[11]

No doubt these controlled tests can be criticised methodologically on the grounds that paying special attention to writing, and changing habits, could have caused some of the improvements. Even so, they are the best studies available. They carry far more weight than individual testimonials such as the ones in this chapter. Nevertheless, it's worthwhile looking at recommendations from experienced writing advisers, to see whether they're compatible with the Boice-Gray programme.

Brad Johnson and Carol Mullen wrote a book titled *Write to the Top! How to Become a Prolific Academic.*[12] Johnson and Mullen are prolific academics themselves. Their book summarises their experience as well as drawing on other studies. They don't cite Boice or Gray, so it's safe to say they developed their advice independently.

Write to the Top! is a superb systematic treatment of writing and research, presented in a straightforward way. I say "superb"

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10 Robert Boice, "Procrastination, busyness and bingeing," *Behaviour Research & Therapy,* 27, 1989, 605–611.

11 Tara Gray and Jane Birch, "Publish, don't perish: a program to help scholars flourish," *To Improve the Academy,* 19, 2001, 268–284.

12 W. Brad Johnson and Carol A. Mullen, *Write to the Top! How to Become a Prolific Academic* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

because everything they say accords with my own experience and what I've learned about doing research. Chapter 1 of the book is about developing a habit, which is exactly what Boice and Gray try to do. Johnson and Mullen recommend scheduling writing, putting writing times in your diary. They say daily writing is crucial.[13] They recommend turning off all distractions when writing.[14]

Johnson and Mullen pay a lot of attention to obstacles to developing a writing habit. They say "once you decide to write, nearly everything in your life will conspire to derail you," including reading, emails and colleagues.[15] So setting up boundaries against interruptions is vital. So is saying no to requests, for example to give talks, apply for grant applications, edit journals, serve on committees and the like. If you agree to every request, you'll soon be so burdened that your own research will suffer. In fact, the more productive you become, the stronger your boundaries need to be.

Johnson and Mullen have suggestions for dealing with problems. They note that in many places there is a "factory mentality," namely a norm against producing too much, applied especially to junior academics. The solution? Hide your enthusiasm and success in order to minimise resentment and sabotage by colleagues.

Everything Johnson and Mullen say is generally compatible with Boice and Gray. There is one slight difference. Johnson and Mullen say that when you're writing and feeling really good — when you're on a roll — then keep going. Boice would say "stop" before doing too much.

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13 Ibid., 45.

14 Ibid., 40.

15 Ibid., 26.

Paul Silvia is a psychologist who turned his attention to writing. His book *How to Write a Lot: A Practical Guide to Productive Academic Writing* is most entertaining.[16] Silvia draws on psychological research to give advice, especially on overcoming mental barriers. He covers tools for maintaining motivation, for example setting highly specific goals like writing 200 words, getting references and making an outline.

Silvia, like Johnson and Mullen, does not cite the work of Boice or Gray, but most of his recommendations are compatible with their work. He says that finding big blocks of time is a false barrier: instead of "finding" time, you should allot it, and refuse any meeting that interferes, just like you would say you couldn't attend a meeting that clashed with your class times. Silvia says that binge writers often say they're not schedulers, but, he notes, they can schedule teaching, television watching and sleeping.

A lot of people who aren't producing say they have "writer's block." Silvia isn't impressed: he says writer's block is a description, not an explanation. It just means a person isn't writing. The solution to writer's block is simply to start writing.

Like Boice and Gray, Silvia says habit is the key to productivity and that keeping records of your work is helpful. He advises minimising interruptions during your scheduled research time. He says "The best kind of self-control is to avoid situations that require self-control."[17]

There is one difference though: Silvia doesn't emphasise writing new words every day. In Silvia's approach, the key is

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16 Paul J. Silvia, *How to Write a Lot: A Practical Guide to Productive Academic Writing* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2007).

17 Ibid., 22.

scheduling research time every day — a couple of hours if possible.

Jody

Writing has not come easy for me. To think I could write freely about my thesis was not something I had previously contemplated. I had always taken notes and written down any thoughts that came into my head, even in the early hours of the morning, but free writing was not something I felt comfortable with.

Although I was aware of the importance of the process of writing, editing my work and getting it out to someone for critical comments, I am finding this programme is putting that awareness into genuine practice. I find that my ability to run words together and have them form coherent and useful sentences has greatly improved. I have been on the programme now for about three months and although I only spend about 10–15 minutes each day, occasionally longer, it is enough at this early stage of my PhD to keep the momentum going.

I have found also that the writing has started to drive my research because I am identifying areas where I need to gain a deeper knowledge. A hint Brian gave me was to work on different topics at the same time. I have found this very useful as I sometimes have not read sufficiently to be able to write freely on one topic so I then move to another, such as an article or book chapter. For me it has become my craft. I practise every day, as much as possible, and every day I feel more confident and know I am improving. Little by little I am becoming a writer, someone who can visualise what is going on in my head and transcribe those thoughts into the written word to communicate with others. It is just wonderful and I know if I keep it up I will get better and writing will become easier for me.

So far I've looked at advice from academics about academic writing — and just looked at a few key sources: there's much more. Going beyond academia to writing in general, there's a vast amount of writing about writing, especially for fiction writers. There are many courses on how to be a writer — a fiction writer that is — and a correspondingly large amount of writing about it.

King

Stephen King is one of the world's best-selling authors. He is incredibly productive. In one of his books — *On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft* — he tells about the way he goes about it.[18] The book is not just about writing: it contains an engaging account of King's childhood, in snippets, and of a horrific accident he experienced. The book exemplifies what he preaches: it is fascinating to read, combining story and insight.

King says that to be a writer, you should "read a lot and write a lot," work in a "serene atmosphere" and avoid "alarms and excursions." He says "Don't wait for the muse," in other words write even though you don't feel inspired.[19] You should write in a place of your own, with a room, a door and the willpower to shut the door. Each of these recommendations is entirely in tune with Boice and Gray.

Then there's setting a target. King says to have a concrete goal. He recommends a daily writing target. To make this easy to start with, he suggests a target of 1000 words per day, six days a week. King doesn't say what his personal target is, but

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18 Stephen King, *On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2000).

19 Ibid., 164, 176–177, 180.

obviously it's quite a bit more! That's much more than the target set by Gray.

The difference is that King is writing fiction. It's possible for full-time fiction writers to produce hundreds of thousands of words — several books worth — per year. In writing academic articles and books, there's a lot more work in doing the research. If you wrote several scholarly books per year, based on your own original research, you would indeed be extraordinary. In fact, just one scholarly book per year would make you an academic star. So King's recommendations, when translated into the scholarly realm, are more modest. The key point is that he recommends a daily target, something to aim at nearly every day of the year.

Tharp

Twyla Tharp is a highly acclaimed US dancer and choreographer who has written a book titled *The Creative Habit*.[20] Choreography — designing routines for dancers in dance productions — is different from writing, of course, but there's an important similarity: the need to be creative.

In the creative arts, such as painting and drama, belief in spontaneous inspiration is even more common than among academic writers. Tharp challenges this belief, asserting instead the importance of habit. Indeed, her book is titled *The Creative Habit* with the subtitle *Learn It and Use It for Life: A Practical Guide*.

She says the key to creativity is discipline, specifically in maintaining daily habits. She states "Creativity is a habit, and the best creativity is a result of good work habits." In her picture,

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20 Twyla Tharp with Mark Reiter, *The Creative Habit: Learn It and Use It for Life. A Practical Guide* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2003).

genius is a consequence of good work habits: she says "There are no 'natural' geniuses."[21]

Tharp tells about her own creative endeavours, emphasising what has worked for her to develop suitable habits for ongoing creativity. She recommends being well organised and building up an archive of materials relevant to creative projects. For each of her own projects, she keeps a box filled with everything related to the project, to stimulate her thinking.

She gives examples of other artists who were organised — for example Beethoven. The usual image of Beethoven is of a renegade who periodically produced brilliant work, such as symphonies and string quartets, out of a volcanic imagination. Tharp says that contrary to the image, Beethoven was very well organised, carrying around a notebook to jot down fragments of melody when they occurred to him and using them at a later time.

Tharp, in recommending habit as the core of creativity, has many recommendations that are directly parallel to what Boice and Gray say about writing. For example, Tharp says all creators need to keep practising their skills and the greatest performers practise the most. Tharp's job is to design dance steps for others, but practises her own dance skills daily. The foundation for her creativity is an understanding acquired through her own body.

She recommends setting a creative quota — and stopping before exhaustion. Indeed, she says it is crucial to know when to stop. This reminded me of Boice's chapter titled "Stop."

I picked out Tharp's book because of her emphasis on habit. Tharp is just one voice, but an important one in her argument that habit is the key to creativity.

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21 Ibid., 7.

Tactics

Let's assume that becoming a productive researcher is a good thing — it won't be for everybody or for every topic, but in general it seems more worthwhile than being a low-output researcher whose quality is no better.

What things need to be done to help promote being a productive researcher? The central goal of the Boice-Gray approach is to make writing — taken to be the core element — a habit. That much is obvious. But how is the habit to be developed and maintained? Let me spell out the connections between their approach and five methods for promoting writing: awareness, valuing, understanding, endorsement and action. As discussed in chapter 1, these are the same five methods also relevant for promoting other good things, like happiness and health.

Awareness In order to turn something into a habit, when it wasn't a habit before, you need to become aware of it and the things necessary to promote it. At the beginning of the writing programme, the key element is setting priorities, for example putting times for daily writing in your diary. Making something a priority requires awareness, otherwise it gets downgraded in importance and postponed.

Boice adds another element of awareness. Just before you begin to write, he says to pause for a few seconds and think about what you're doing. This is a form of mindfulness.

Valuing Regular writing needs to be valued, for example by being associated with other good things, such as good text, publication and recognition by colleagues.

Some people can obtain validation internally, from simply telling themselves what they are doing is worthwhile. But for

most people, some external validation is important. Down the track, after writing an article and sending it to a journal, you can be encouraged by comments from reviewers, editors and readers. But this feedback can be very delayed. To maintain the writing habit, especially at the beginning, something more immediate is helpful, such as a regular meeting with a supportive supervisor or mentor or a weekly session with other writers. This, I've found, is a vital part of the writing programme.

Understanding Few people will undertake regular writing unless they believe it will be effective. The features of the writing programme need to be explained and justified.

Most researchers are used to binge writing. That's how they operated as undergraduates and that's the way everyone else does it. They believe in it. So to be convinced to adopt regular writing, there need to be good reasons. Boice and Gray offer several. The most important is that it works. Why? Because regular writing overcomes blockages, stimulates ideas and reduces work by sharpening the focus on what needs to be done. The point here is that to promote the writing programme, it helps to understand why it works.

Endorsement People are more likely to undertake and continue with the writing programme if it has authoritative backing.

This is the weakest link in promotion of writing programmes. After all, who has ever heard of Robert Boice or Tara Gray? As scholars, they aren't all that high profile, and certainly not outside their own fields. If, instead, the programme was backed by the likes of Noam Chomsky, Jacques Derrida, bell hooks and Vandana Shiva — or, closer to home, individuals in your own field who are incredibly productive and highly respected — then a lot more people would take it seriously.

My guess is that many prominent scholars do something akin to the writing programme, namely working every day on their writing. But none of them has formulated a writing programme nor even revealed their daily habits.

To gain authority, the programme needs to be advocated by people with credibility. I could do this pretty well with my own PhD students and with other research students in my faculty because I have a good research output, am a senior figure and had built up credibility by running other sorts of workshops for research students. And I adopted the programme myself.

The trouble is, most senior researchers have well-established habits. They are actually less likely to adopt the writing programme, because it's harder to change a long-standing habit and they have less to gain because they are already productive.

Action The most important step in becoming a writer is — just write! If possible, this should be for intrinsic reasons, not because someone is telling you to do it. When you write regularly, both the experience of writing and seeing what you've accomplished provide motivation to keep going.

To maintain motivation, the easiest way is to create external conditions to ensure doing it. That's the reason for a schedule, a plan for what you're going to write, a place to write, a log of words and minutes, and an obligation to send the totals to a mentor. Rather than use limited willpower each day to decide to write, it's easier to use willpower to establish a set of encouragements and constraints that make writing a routine, ordinary thing like brushing your teeth or getting dressed.

These five elements — awareness, valuing, understanding, endorsement and action — are positive steps in creating a

writing habit. There's another side to each one: countering negative factors, namely the threats and temptations that prevent development of a habit and derail existing habits. These are straightforward, and include:

- Distractions and other priorities that reduce awareness
- Critics and envious friends who interrupt and undermine regular effort towards superior performance
- Know-it-alls who pontificate on why regular writing won't work and who glorify destructive practices, from drugs to bingeing
- Beliefs in the primacy of talent and the irrelevance of talentless persistence
- Beliefs in inspiration and spontaneity as the source of good writing
- Perfectionism

Each of these negative elements is worth detailed examination. For example, distractions include email, telephone, web surfing, television, friends, children and a host of other activities, depending on the person. Any of these can be worthwhile in their own terms but, when your priority is writing, they are deadly.

Conclusion

The Boice-Gray writing programme is a powerful means for researchers to become more productive. To the extent that writing is a good thing, then the programme is good too. Boice presents the writing programme as one aspect of a wider way to approach many tasks in life, namely mindfully.[22] The programme can be readily mapped onto the five methods for

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22 Boice, *Advice for New Faculty Members.*

promoting good things: awareness, valuing, understanding, endorsement and action.

Regular writing is a powerful tool, but for many it is extremely challenging. The temptations of procrastination are powerful. Therefore, rather than relying on willpower every day, the key to the programme is to establish conditions in your life that help develop and maintain a habit. These include finding a dedicated place and time for writing, keeping tallies of minutes spent and words written, and reporting totals to a mentor. The task of undertaking writing sessions that are brief and regular helps reduce psychological resistance to starting, which is often the greatest barrier. Putting these steps into place can make it far easier to establish and maintain a habit that leads to high productivity.

However, only a few writers find themselves in the fortunate position of being encouraged and supported to make these sorts of arrangements. The wider social circumstances are not particularly supportive — indeed, they are at the foundation of bingeing behaviour. Boice says that established writers and editors are actually unsympathetic, as they think people who aren't publishing don't have anything to say. He quotes one editor as saying, concerning a writing programme, "Why bother? Too much is already being written and good writers don't need help."[23] This sort of view, which Boice calls "elitist," assumes that writers are born, not made.

The Boice-Gray programme is threatening to this sort of elitist attitude, because it is based on the assumption that good writing is an acquired skill and that, with the right conditions, just about anyone who works at becoming a better writer can do

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23 Boice, *Professors as Writers,* 126.

so. Furthermore, having something to say comes, in part, from practising saying things.

Until cultural attitudes change, developing and maintaining the writing habit will be restricted to relatively few. But the ideas are now available to anyone, so awareness, valuing and understanding are likely to increase, if only gradually. All that's required is the action.

Appendix: expert performance

Many people believe natural talent plays a big role in whether someone can achieve at the highest levels. Think of famous figures in the arts and sciences, such as Mozart and Einstein. Surely they had natural talent. They were geniuses, otherwise they couldn't possibly have produced such beautiful music and such profound scientific breakthroughs. This is a common line of thinking, anyway: geniuses are born with innate gifts. If so, there's not much point in the rest of us trying too hard, because without the right genes we have no chance of doing something really outstanding.

But there's an alternative viewpoint. Michael Howe in his book *Genius Explained* says that geniuses benefit from special circumstances and opportunities. But he also argues that anyone who is seen as a genius spends a huge amount of time practising their skills, constantly working to improve and getting good feedback along the way.[24] The examples he uses to support his

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24 Michael J. A. Howe, *Genius Explained* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). See also Howard Gardner, *Creating Minds: An Anatomy of Creativity Seen through the Lives of Freud, Einstein, Picasso, Stravinsky, Eliot, Graham, and Gandhi* (New York: Basic-Books, 1993).

argument include inventor Michael Faraday and scientists Charles Darwin and Albert Einstein.

Howe also discusses the Brontë sisters. Charlotte Brontë's novel *Jane Eyre* and Emily Brontë's novel *Wuthering Heights* are recognised as masterpieces, produced at fairly young ages. But did Charlotte and Emily burst into writing scene with great works? No — they had years of prior practice. It wasn't training in the usual sense of being drilled. From about the age of ten, they and their sister Anne and brother Branwell wrote fantasy stories for each other, with little outside scrutiny. They started at an elementary level, like anyone else beginning to write, and gradually improved their skills. The years of constant writing laid the foundation for their greatest works.

Howe, having analysed the phenomenon of genius through the lives of famous figures, concluded that the evidence is compatible with the proposition that geniuses are made, not born. Another way to test this claim is to look for someone who is different: someone who achieves at a high level without having to work as hard as the others. Investigators looking for someone with natural talent went into a violin academy, where hundreds of youngsters live and breathe music, most of them hoping for a career as a performing violinist or, if not that, a music teacher. The investigators examined the practice routines of the students at the academy. If natural musical talent exists, they reasoned, they should find some top students who don't need to practise as much as the others. But there weren't any such top students. The students performing at the highest level had spent more hours practising their violins than those at a lower performance level. The evidence thus suggested that the key to becoming an outstanding musician is thousands of hours of practice.[25]

The role of practice is often hidden, for two main reasons. One is that when people believe in natural talent, they discount the effect of practice. Another is that many people hide their own hard work from others and sometimes from themselves. Many students feel comfortable saying "I didn't study much for that exam" but are less likely to want to say "I've been studying really hard for that exam." Why? Often it's because they believe in talent too.

Carol Dweck, a psychologist, has studied the effects of beliefs about the causes of success. In her book *Mindset* she distinguishes between two main ways of thinking that she calls the fixed and growth mindsets.[26] A person with a fixed mindset believes talent or ability reflects an innate capacity, for example that some people are naturally good at sports and some will never be any good no matter how hard they try, or that some people are smart and some are not so smart. A lot of people buy into this, for example when they say "Michael Jordan — he was a natural" or "I'm no good at mathematics." A person with the growth mindset believes, on the other hand, that success is the result of hard work, so the key to achievement is persistence.[27]

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25 K. Anders Ericsson, Ralf Th. Krampe and Clemens Tesch-Römer, "The role of deliberate practice in the acquisition of expert performance," *Psychological Review,* 100(3), 1993, 363–406. The authors used a much more rigorous research design than my description suggests.

26 Carol S. Dweck, *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success* (New York: Ballantine, 2006).

27 On the importance of persistence for success among physicists, see Joseph C. Hermanowicz, "What does it take to be successful?" *Science, Technology, & Human Values,* 31, 2006, 135–152.

Dweck realises that people aren't stuck in either a fixed or growth mindset. For example, they might have a fixed mindset about success in mathematics but a growth mindset about success in accountancy, or have a position in the middle. But for many purposes, especially understanding the effects of mindsets, it's useful to concentrate on the ends of the spectrum of belief.

People with a fixed mindset are often worried about failure, because failure might reveal that actually they are no good — and that's disastrous to their self-image. If you have no natural talent, what's the use of trying? If you think you have no mathematical ability, why bother trying to solve a few equations? You'll just embarrass yourself by your ineptitude.

The effects of having a fixed mindset are even worse in areas where you think you're good. For those with a fixed mindset, it's sometimes better not to try than to try and not succeed, because maintaining a belief in your own natural ability is crucial. Dweck gives examples of top performers with a fixed mindset, for example the tennis star John McEnroe who would throw tantrums when he was losing, blaming someone or something for his problems. McEnroe refused to compete in mixed doubles for 20 years after one serious loss.[28]

The growth mindset leads to a very different set of responses. If you didn't do so well in the swimming race, it means that you need to do more training, or refine your stroke, or adjust your tactics. Failure doesn't signify anything about innate capacity, only about what happened on this particular occasion. With a growth mindset, you might say "I never put much effort into mathematics." If you wanted to become better, you would develop a training programme.

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28 Dweck, *Mindset,* 100.

If you want to become an expert performer, you need to work at it. That's what the research shows. Genetics may play a role — you'll never become a championship basketball player if you're short — but genetics alone won't get you all that far. Even those who apparently have loads of natural talent need to work hard. Having a growth mindset is a better foundation for the hard work required, because you're less likely to be stymied by setbacks.

Hard work: it's easy to say, but what does it actually mean? The key, according to Anders Ericsson, a leading researcher into expert performance, is "deliberate practice."[29] It basically means practising while you concentrate as hard as you can on doing well and improving.

Let's say you're trying to improve at playing the piano. You sit down for a daily session at the keyboard and start with scales. You've done these thousands of times before, so before long you're daydreaming about an upcoming meeting, or something — your mind is not on the task, because it's so routine. This sort of practice might be good for cementing your mental circuits for playing scales, but it's not much good for making your playing better than before, because you're not concentrating. To become better, you need to concentrate on improvement, and you're more likely to do that when you're working on a challenging piece.

To play a really fast and complicated passage, the usual process is to master it bit by bit, initially playing it slowly enough so every note is correct, and then going over and over it

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29 K. Anders Ericsson, "The influence of experience and deliberate practice on the development of superior expert performance," in K. Anders Ericsson, Neil Charness, Paul J. Feltovich and Robert R. Hoffman (eds.), *Cambridge Handbook of Expertise and Expert Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 685–706.

at a gradually faster speed, periodically going back to a slower tempo when something isn't quite right. You notice that there's a slight unevenness in a group of notes, so you slow down to a glacial pace so you can determine exactly which finger is causing the problem. You get the group of notes just right, then add the ones around it, carefully listening for the overall effect as well as precision in the challenging group. Through all of this, you have to concentrate. This isn't routine like running through scales or playing a familiar piece.

Then you have a lesson with your teacher, who points out a few things you hadn't noticed — you were actually missing a note in one place, getting the timing wrong in another, and sounding a bit too mechanical overall. Your teacher helps you focus on crucial facets of playing so when you practice, you're going in the right direction.

Consider two pianists. One practises hard for an hour per day and builds up to a short performance once a month. The other pianist performs for three hours per day in a cocktail lounge. Which one will improve the most? According to the research on deliberate practice, it will be the one who concentrates the most on improvement, and that will probably be the one-hour-per-day player. The performing pianist can easily get into a routine and has little opportunity to diagnose problems and work carefully on difficult passages until they sound better. The point here is that just playing is not enough to become ever better — you need to practise.

A pianist who performs all the time seldom has an opportunity to slow things down and fix problems, or likewise to push the limits. There's an audience, and the audience expects a decent performance. Concentrating on producing an acceptable performance is good for solidifying what it takes to perform at that level but not to extend it. Great pianists continue to practise

intensively throughout their performing careers, typically several hours per day.

Becoming an expert performer requires laying down circuits in the brain that are highly efficient for the task involved. Every day through your life, new brain cells are created and the connections in your brain are changed. The brain is flexible and adaptable: it is moulded through use and experience.[30] Deliberate practice is a process of moulding the brain.

Deliberate practice uses conscious effort to forge brain circuits for unconscious processing. For expert performance, you need to do really complex things without thinking about them — they need to become automatic. But to make them automatic, you first need to concentrate on them. Think of driving a car. When initially learning to drive, you have to pay attention to every detail, like how fast you're going and whether there's enough time for you to turn before another car comes along. So when you're learning, you're concentrating. But as you become familiar with what's required, some of these skills become automatic: conscious attention is no longer needed, so you can talk or daydream while driving. Many drivers have had the experience of arriving at a destination and realising they had no memory of several minutes of their trip — their conscious minds were in another place.

To become more expert, you need to tackle something that is sufficiently difficult to keep you alert. You concentrate, laying down new brain circuits. As a driver, you might take up racing: that requires attention! Or you might set yourself challenges such as minimising acceleration and deceleration or plotting a slightly different route each day. For a musician, you need to

30 Sharon Begley, *The Plastic Mind* (UK: Constable, 2009); Richard Restak, *Mozart's Brain and the Fighter Pilot: Unleashing Your Brain's Potential* (New York: Harmony, 2001).

play ever more difficult pieces and prepare them at higher standards. For chess players, you need to play better opponents and analyse more complex positions.

In summary, developing the capacity for expert performance involves an interplay between conscious and unconscious processing. The goal is to make high-level performance automatic. But to get there, deliberate practice is needed, involving intense concentration — conscious attention — to areas needing improvement or reinforcement. This conscious processing lays the basis for more and more aspects of the performance to become automatic, namely run by the unconscious.

A high-level performer can ignore routine aspects of the job — they are being monitored by the unconscious — and concentrate on advanced aspects. An experienced driver doesn't need to pay special attention to cars nearby but can concentrate on emerging traffic opportunities or risks. A skilled pianist worries less about getting the notes right and can concentrate more on expression and affinity with the audience. A highly rated chess player will automatically notice combinations in the next few moves and concentrate more on creating favourable positions further along.

Deliberate practice can be used in all sorts of fields besides chess, music and sports, for example to develop skills in management and teaching.[31] Most relevantly here, research on expert performance applies directly to writing.

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31 Geoff Colvin, *Talent is Overrated: What* Really *Separates World-class Performers from Everybody Else* (New York: Penguin, 2010); Daniel Coyle, *The Talent Code. Greatness Isn't Born. It's Grown. Here's How* (New York: Bantam, 2009); David Shenk, *The Genius in All of Us: Why Everything You've Been Told about Genetics, Talent, and IQ Is Wrong* (New York: Doubleday, 2010).

Writing as expert performance

The key to becoming a good writer is deliberate practice, and lots of it over many years — not natural talent or some mystical notion of creativity.

The maximum amount of deliberate practice that people can maintain is about four hours per day. The limit is due to the requirement to maintain concentration. It's quite possible to work on something for six, eight or more hours per day, but not with the same level of attention and effort.

So what does this say about Tara Gray's writing programme in which the target is 15 to 30 minutes per day? That's nowhere near four hours. As mentioned earlier, if you spend 15 minutes writing new words, then editing that text — rewriting, revising, polishing — could easily take an additional 30, 60 or more minutes per day. The second point is that Gray's programme is designed for researchers, who have other things to do besides write, like run experiments and do interviews. Add in the other parts of research and they could easily total many hours per day, of which up to about four might count as deliberate practice, depending on how they are done. Someone who is primarily a writer, rather than a researcher, could spend four hours per day of deliberate practice in writing. Stephen King is an example.

A human's capacity for deliberate practice may be debatable, but that is not the problem for most researchers, for whom the biggest challenge is setting aside any regular time at all for writing. To turn writing into a habit, it's best to start small and gradually build up. Just 15 minutes per day doesn't sound like much, but it's a huge leap from none at all. Research on expert performance and the Boice-Gray approach to writing are completely in tune concerning the importance of practice. There's no substitute for putting words on a page.

3
Happiness

Overview
- Most people think having more money and possessions will make them happier, but these sorts of changes in circumstances seldom live up to expectations. Happiness is more reliably increased by less obvious things such as expressing gratitude and helping others.
- To develop habits that support happiness, five methods are valuable: awareness, valuing, understanding, endorsement and action.
- Most happiness efforts are oriented to individuals. Also important are collective efforts to structure social life to make happiness habits easier to maintain.[1]

Just about everybody wants to be happy — so that means happiness is a good thing, right? Well, not quite. Just because everyone wants something doesn't guarantee it's good for you. Nearly everyone likes ice cream, but it's not the healthiest food. Nearly everyone with the option chooses to drive a car rather than walk a few kilometres, but actually that's bad for people's health in the long term.

Happiness, though, doesn't seem to have a down side. There's evidence that being happy makes people healthier and

more productive at work, plus other side benefits. Most importantly, being happy seems worthwhile on its own.

It's possible to imagine exceptions. Laughing hysterically might make you fall and hurt yourself. Being happy at someone else's misfortune is bad taste. The idea of a happy murderer is repulsive. There are some things we shouldn't be happy about.

There are a few such exceptions, but in general happiness is largely considered to be a good thing. This is even more true if happiness is applied to both immediate pleasure — something that makes you smile — and a more general feeling of satisfaction with life or good will towards the world.

Pursuing happiness is another matter — craving things, including happiness, can be a trap and actually lead to more misery. Pursuing happiness is not the same as being happy.

How do you know when someone is happy? You can look at them and see whether they are smiling or laughing, though these can be faked. Happiness is an inner feeling, and usually you yourself are the best person to judge whether you're happy. So the obvious way to find out whether people are happy is to ask them. That's exactly how happiness researchers proceed.

I started reading about happiness research decades ago. One of the earliest books I read was *The Psychology of Happiness* by Michael Argyle. He summarised findings from many studies of happiness. One finding was that "Happiness does not vary much with age."[2] This is good news or bad news, depending on how you look at it: as you get older, things won't seem much better or worse. However, there was an exception: being a parent. On average, parents of growing children reported being less happy than non-parents. I remember a graph in Argyle's book plotting findings from several studies of parents' happiness as a function

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2 Michael Argyle, *The Psychology of Happiness* (London: Methuen, 1987), 156.

of the age of their children.[3] The happiness deficit became larger as children grew older and was largest when they were teenagers. Then, after the children left home, parents' happiness levels returned to roughly the same as before the children were conceived.

This result was fascinating because it was unexpected. Talk to parents and most of them will tell you that having children is a wonderful blessing. Then again, some will reveal the terrible struggles they've had — especially with teenagers. Very few parents will admit being unhappier or wishing they hadn't had children. The closest to this is a comment that, though they love their darling children Johnny and Sally, if they were starting again they might make a different decision.

How can the research findings about parents' happiness deficit be reconciled with most parents' defence of their decision to have children and their fond memories of a growing family? The answer is straightforward: the research measures what people say about their feelings *right now* whereas parents, when commenting on the virtues or otherwise of parenthood, are reflecting on the past. There's a systematic bias in views about past happiness.[4]

But can we trust data on happiness? The way happiness is usually measured is simply by asking people whether they're happy right now or whether they are generally satisfied or

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3 Ibid., 20.

4 This is called a focusing illusion. For a more recent discussion of research on children and happiness, see Nattavudh Powdthavee, "Think having children will make you happy?" *The Psychologist,* 22(6), April 2009, 308–310. Many parents were hostile to Powdthavee for claiming they might less happy than non-parents: see Nick Powdthavee, *The Happiness Equation: The Surprising Economics of Our Most Valuable Asset* (London: Icon Books, 2010), 146–148.

contented with their life. This seems extremely subjective. Your judgement of what counts as 7 out of 10 on a happiness scale might be quite different from mine. When you start comparing happiness between people in their 60s versus those in their 20s, the potential for systematic error seems large.

Then there are comparisons between happiness in Nigeria and Brazil. Cultural differences in the way terms are used or the way people respond to questions might undermine the validity of any observed difference. Indeed, the very idea that happiness is a universal phenomenon shouldn't be taken for granted. The question "What is happiness?" has vexed philosophers for millennia. Today's researchers, through their questions and analyses, use and create a particular sort of answer to this question — and it is largely based on asking people whether they are happy right now or generally satisfied with their lives.

The alternatives aren't any better. Can you tell whether someone is happy? Their smile might be faked or their bland expression might hide an inner joy.

Actually, asking people how happy they are is surprisingly reliable. If you pick someone and ask them how they feel at different times during the day, the figures can be plotted in a graph showing ups and downs, and these are pretty regular across different days. Many people's moods start low on waking up after a night's sleep, increase to a peak mid-morning, decrease a bit around the middle of the day, reach a lesser afternoon peak and then decline until going to sleep.[5] Whenever observations fit a regular pattern, this gives confidence in the results.

Back in 1987, when Michael Argyle wrote *The Psychology of Happiness,* happiness research was in its infancy. The field

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5 Robert E. Thayer, *The Origin of Everyday Moods: Managing Energy, Tension, and Stress* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

grew rapidly in the 1990s and boomed in the 2000s. In 2002, I visited Virginia Tech and, on leaving, was stuck in the airport for about six hours — flights had been cancelled due to a snowstorm. But I didn't mind: I had picked up the new book *Authentic Happiness* by Martin Seligman, a prominent US psychologist, and sat down to enjoy every page.[6]

Seligman is often called the father of positive psychology, because he has given authoritative endorsement of the importance of looking at desirable emotions like happiness. The majority of psychological research has looked at negative states like depression and anxiety. The aim of most people in the field, researchers and therapists of all types — including Freudian psychotherapists, practitioners of cognitive behavioural therapy and dispensers of therapeutic drugs such as antidepressants — has been to move people who are unhappy or disturbed closer to average. This can be called negative psychology because it focuses on treating negative emotions. Positive psychology looks instead at valued emotions and says, let's see if we can help someone who is average or above to become even better.[7]

In the remainder of this chapter, I look at some findings from happiness research.[8] I start with things that seldom make

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6 Martin E. P. Seligman, *Authentic Happiness* (New York: Free Press, 2002).

7 Prior to positive psychology, positive emotions did receive quite a bit of attention, just not nearly as much as negative emotions.

8 Worthwhile non-technical treatments include Daniel Gilbert, *Stumbling on Happiness* (New York: Knopf, 2006); Jonathan Haidt, *The Happiness Hypothesis: Finding Modern Truth in Ancient Wisdom* (New York: Basic Books, 2006); Sonja Lyubomirsky, *The How of Happiness: A Scientific Approach to Getting the Life You Want* (New York: Penguin, 2008); Matthieu Ricard, *Happiness: A Guide to Developing Life's Most Important Skill* (London: Atlantic Books, 2007).

people much happier and then turn to things more likely to make a difference. I then relate these findings to five methods for protecting and promoting good things: awareness, valuing, understanding, endorsement and action. The connection between happiness research findings and these five methods can be made at the level of individuals, groups and society. In the appendix, I comment on a particular critical view about positive psychology.

Do we know how we feel?

Timothy Wilson has written a provocative book titled *Strangers to Ourselves.*[9] It summarises fascinating research on the relationship between the unconscious and conscious mind. One example: you're watching a popular film and afterwards the friend you're with asks, "What'd you think of that?" You respond, "I didn't think much of it" and your friend says (or thinks) "That's strange — you were laughing the whole way through." What's going on here? The laughter was spontaneous, an unconscious reaction, whereas your post-film comment is a considered judgement. Your stern assessment is that the film was light-weight, indeed trashy, so how could it be good?

The key point here is that your friend might be a better judge of your response during the film that your own post-film critical self. Numerous ingenious experiments have been designed to test this proposition. A famous one involved a questionnaire administered to young men in two conditions. Half the men were approached and questioned in the middle of a

rickety walking bridge across a chasm. The other half of the men were questioned on firm ground on the far side of the bridge.[10]

The questionnaire was a ruse. What the experimenters wanted to study was how the young men responded to the attractive young woman administering the questionnaire who gave the participants her phone number in case they had any subsequent questions. In which experimental condition — on the bridge or on solid ground — would more of the men ring her? The answer: far more of those interviewed on the bridge. Why? Because, the experimenters proposed, the young men are more aroused not by the young woman but by fear caused by crossing the swaying bridge. But this was unconscious. As Wilson interprets this experiment, the men couldn't consciously distinguish between arousal due to fear and arousal due to the woman. An attractive woman was present, so they attributed their arousal to her.

Wilson cites many such experiments. He eventually comes to an astounding conclusion: if you are with someone else, the other person is — on average — as good a judge of your feelings right now as you are yourself.

This conclusion should apply to happiness. The implication is that most people have only a partial insight into their own feelings and that others around them may have just as much insight. Most happiness research, though, continues to rely on people's self-assessments. It would be valuable to collect assessments by others in a person's life, but this is more complicated, so it isn't often done.

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9 Timothy D. Wilson, *Strangers to Ourselves: Discovering the Adaptive Unconscious* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002).

10 Donald G. Dutton and Arthur P. Aron, "Some evidence for heightened sexual attraction under conditions of high anxiety," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* 30(4), 1974, 510–517.

What usually doesn't make you happier

According to the research, some things widely thought to increase happiness in fact don't usually make people much happier. One is climate. You might think that people living in a warm, sunny place would be happier than those in a cold, cloudy, rainy place, where the weather is commonly called miserable. Although the weather might be miserable, people report being just about as happy. This is a statistical finding. Some individuals might be happier moving to a place where it's warm and sunny but, if so, just as many will be happier moving to the cold and overcast place.[11]

Another thing that seems not to make much difference in happiness levels is having a formal education. It's true that some students at university are there to have a good time, but others find it stressful. Furthermore, education doesn't do much to make students happier after they graduate. Many students pursue degrees so they can obtain a better job at the end — and they expect a better job will make them happier. They are in for disappointment.

The most surprising finding from happiness research is that higher income doesn't bring greater happiness — at least not by very much.[12] Yet nearly everyone assumes that more money

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11 David A. Schkade and Daniel Kahneman, "Does living in California make people happy? A focusing illusion in judgments of life satisfaction," *Psychological Science,* 9(5), September 1998, 340–346.

12 Gregg Easterbrook, *The Progress Paradox: How Life Gets Better While People Feel Worse* (New York: Random House, 2003); Bruno S. Frey and Alois Stutzer, *Happiness and Economics: How the Economy and Institutions Affect Well-being* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002); Bruno S. Frey in collaboration with Alois Stutzer, Matthias Benz, Stephan Meier, Simon Luechinger and Christine Benesch,

makes you happier. That's why people strive to get a high-paying job and why they put in long hours to get a promotion. It's why people go to court seeking a larger share of estates of deceased relatives. It's why people buy lottery tickets: winning the lottery is thought to be a dream come true. You suddenly have loads of money and can live happily ever after.

Back in the 1970s, Philip Brickman and collaborators decided to find out whether this common belief was actually true. They interviewed lottery winners months after their big wins and discovered they were not any happier, on average, than control subjects who had not won.[13]

When you win the lottery, it's tremendously exciting. You may literally jump for joy. You might be on a high for days, weeks or months. But eventually you settle down — and things are different, but maybe not any better. The obvious difference is that you have lots of money and all the things money can buy. But some things aren't as good as they used to be. Maybe you used to enjoy having breakfast. But after the win, breakfast isn't as satisfying as before. Winners found ordinary activities less fulfilling: they didn't measure up to the massive excitement of the lottery win.

Everyone has the same sort of experience in little ways. For example, suppose you've been drinking ordinary coffee for years, and enjoying it, and then you start drinking a really fine coffee for a while. If you go back to the ordinary coffee, it seems less satisfying than before. Now you have higher expectations. Perhaps this is why so many people complain about coffee.

Happiness: A Revolution in Economics (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008).

13 Philip Brickman, Dan Coates and Ronnie Janoff-Bulman, "Lottery winners and accident victims: is happiness relative?" *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* 36(8), 1978, 917–927.

They've had really good coffee and subsequent coffees seldom measure up.

The experience of lottery winners is found pretty much across the board: more money doesn't make you much happier — on average. It makes some people happier and some people less happy.

The explanation for this is a process called adaptation. After a while you get used to your higher income so it become routine, and you revert back to your usual happiness level. This process is also called the hedonic treadmill. "Hedonic" refers to happiness. The treadmill is the endless quest for better jobs and higher incomes but, like a treadmill, you're running in the same place the whole time, trying harder but never changing position on the happiness scale.

There is an exception. If you're poor, then more money is more likely to make you happier. But once you're out of poverty, on a decent if modest income, extra income doesn't make such a difference. It does make a slight difference though: the super-wealthy are a little bit happier than those with average incomes. But, as we'll see, the difference is not very great compared to other ways of increasing your happiness.

The data supporting the adaptation process are dramatic. People in Britain have been surveyed for decades about their life satisfaction. Income per person has risen dramatically but average satisfaction levels have stayed pretty much the same. The same thing has been found in other countries, such as Japan and the United States.

The findings concerning income apply to all the things that go along with it: fancier cars, larger houses, the latest electronic gadgets, expensive jewellery. None of these reliably increases happiness, because you adapt to your new situation. Before long

it seems normal and your happiness level is back to where it was before.

The implications of this finding are profound. The whole rat-race of striving for the highest-paying job, buying the most prestigious house and wearing the most trendy clothes is illusory: people think having more will make them happier but they end up feeling much the same as before.

Many young people pursue occupations they believe will be lucrative, putting in long hours to become lawyers, doctors or corporate executives. They don't realise they would be just as satisfied in careers with lesser incomes such as teaching, nursing or community work. Some students study accountancy even though they find it tedious, because they think they'll have better prospects for well-paying jobs than studying physics or philosophy.

Research indicates that the search for happiness through making money is misguided. Indeed, evidence suggests that people who are more materialistic — who are especially keen to obtain more money and the things it can buy — are somewhat less happy than average.[14]

The adaptation process leads to some radical policy implications. To improve the overall happiness of a society, a promising approach is to eliminate poverty. The people who move from poverty to a decent income will be quite a bit happier, whereas those already on reasonable incomes will not be much affected by a relative decline in wealth — even if some of them complain mightily. Furthermore, research suggests that greater equality has many collective benefits for health and

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14 Leaf Van Boven, "Experientialism, materialism, and the pursuit of happiness," *Review of General Psychology,* 9, 2005, 132–142.

welfare.[15] But governments seldom make it a top priority to eliminate poverty and promote greater equality.

Good looks — surely being attractive makes you happier. There's research showing that good-looking people have advantages in life: they are judged more favourably and end up with better jobs.[16] More people want to know them. Just look at models and movie stars and how people are attracted to them.

Many people spend lots of time making themselves attractive, styling their hair, putting on make-up, removing unwanted hair, maybe even having cosmetic surgery. Some work out in the gym so they'll look slim or muscular. So does all this effort lead to greater happiness?

There's not a lot of research on this, but what there is suggests that if happiness is your goal, putting effort into becoming more attractive is not a particularly good investment.[17] One study even found that women who had their breasts enlarged committed suicide at a higher rate than other women. It's unlikely that having larger breasts makes women more suicidal: possibly the women who were so dissatisfied with their bodies that they sought surgery were more prone to suicide.[18]

The process of adaptation no doubt applies to your looks — if you have cosmetic surgery, then you get used to your new

15 Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett, *The Spirit Level: Why More Equal Societies Almost Always Do Better* (London: Allen Lane, 2009).

16 Daniel S. Hamermesh and Jeff E. Biddle, "Beauty and the labor market," *American Economic Review,* 84(5), 1994, 1174–1194.

17 Ed Diener, Brian Wolsic and Frank Fujita, "Physical attractiveness and subjective well-being," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* 69(1), 1995, 120–129.

18 Eero Pukkala et al., "Causes of death among Finnish women with cosmetic breast implants, 1971–2001," *Annals of Plastic Surgery,* 51(4), 2003, 339–342.

looks, and your happiness level reverts to your norm. What is the norm? It varies from person to person and seems to be pretty well fixed after early childhood experiences. Some people are persistently gloomy: good fortune seemingly cannot cheer them up for long. Others are perpetually positive about their life, being cheerful even in the most oppressive circumstances. Each person apparently has a "set point" for happiness: whatever their ups and downs, it's the point to which they return. This seems unfair, and it is, because people can't choose their genetics and upbringing.[19] But this is not the end of the story. There are things anyone can do that reliably increase happiness levels above set points.

So far I've commented on the things that don't do much to increase happiness, like a pleasant climate, more education, a high income and good looks. Yet these are exactly the sorts of things that many people believe will make them happier. A typical vision of bliss is having oodles of money, looking fantastic, being really intelligent and relaxing on a tropical island. How did so many people end up with such a misguided sense of how to achieve that elusive goal of happiness?

Rather than try to answer this question — which might involve an excursion into the controversial field of evolutionary psychology, or some heavy political economy — I turn now to things that, according to research, reliably make people happier.

19 The set point may not be as fixed as often assumed. Any genetic factors can be affected by environmental conditions, and the effect of these conditions can be especially great in infancy and early childhood. See Felicia A. Huppert, "Positive mental health in individuals and populations," in Felicia A. Huppert, Nick Baylis and Barry Keverne (eds.), *The Science of Well-being* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 307–340.

Many of them involve the way people think about the past, present and future.

Thinking about the past

A friend of mine — I'll call her Greta — has a very negative attitude towards life, especially in her attitude to the past. She holds a grudge against every boss she's had and regrets her lost opportunities, which she attributes to prejudice from others. She broods over these perceived slights and inequities. I used to try to talk her out of this, pointing to the positives in her career and life, but it was no use: Greta seemed almost to relish her bitterness. Her attitude was a prescription for unhappiness.

Research shows that if you dwell on past problems, this simply accentuates them in your mind. Essentially you are reinforcing the circuits in your brain about those particular memories, elaborating and deepening them so they become magnified beyond their original significance. Grudges are maintained this way.

If, on the other hand, you don't spend too much time thinking about bad things that happened to you, they gradually decline in salience and you may forget about them entirely. If you are this sort of person, it can be difficult to have a relationship with a grudge-keeper: the other person is resentful about something that happened years ago while you can't remember what it was all about.

I once experienced this at a committee meeting when "Alice" suddenly accused me and a couple of others of undermining her. The incident she referred to had occurred a decade earlier and she had never said a thing about it to me, either at the time it happened or in subsequent years. I had only the vaguest recollection of the issues. Until that meeting, I had no idea she was seething with resentment over a perceived slight.

Holding grudges is an excellent way of fostering unhappiness. All you have to do is recall memories of when someone did something that harmed you, rehearse exactly what happened and reignite your sense of outrage. Pretty soon you'll become so resentful and bitter it will be hard to crack a smile.

There's a very different way of relating to past events. Two key mental processes are gratitude and forgiveness. Gratitude is thinking about good things and acknowledging them.[20] Everyone has much to be grateful for. It can be major things like having a loving family, trusting friends, a decent job and good health. It can be small things like enjoying a snack, greeting a neighbour or feeling the breeze as you walk along the street.

For everyone, life is filled with experiences positive and negative. By noticing and reflecting on the positives, you become happier. A simple exercise is to reflect on three things you are thankful for, and do this once a week.

Studies show that people with religious beliefs are happier, on average, than those without. Perhaps part of this is because giving thanks is an integral part of a number of religions. You don't need to be religious to express thanks, but developing the habit is easier if you engage in a collective ritual.

Many people, in their daily lives, have little to encourage an orientation to gratitude. It's possible to establish a personal habit, for example reflecting on good things at a regular time or place, but this can be disrupted. Rituals can be useful, like saying grace at meals, but can become so routine that there is little emotional impact.

Meanwhile, there are many temptations to focus instead on negatives, for example emphasis on longstanding grievances promoted by some groups or the culture of complaint in some

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20 Robert A. Emmons, *Thanks! How the New Science of Gratitude Can Make You Happier* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2007).

organisations. Mass media usually concentrate on what is happening now and emphasise conflict, disasters and atrocities; appreciation for the past has relatively little visibility in the media. No wonder individuals often dwell on resentments rather than what they have to be thankful for.

The positive psychology movement is promoting the value of gratitude, but so far it has had a limited influence, mainly on individuals. There is no popular movement to promote gratitude rituals.

If expressing gratitude is a good thing, then the goal is to make it a regular practice. At an individual level, this is fairly straightforward, whereas changing the external conditions is far more difficult.

Forgiveness is another key process for relating to the past. You've suffered a hurt. If you blame someone or something — which may be quite reasonable — and keep on blaming, you are putting yourself in an ongoing negative mental state. Forgiving the perpetrator, on the other hand, releases the negativity — or some of it, at least.

There are some amazing examples of forgiveness, for example parents forgiving the murderer of their daughter. Forgiving doesn't mean saying it was okay or that the events are forgotten. Forgiving is about understanding what has happened and letting it go mentally. The primary benefits are for the person who does the forgiving.

Like gratitude, forgiveness needs to be practised; it can be quite difficult to achieve. It can be helpful to start with small things, like when a friend didn't return your call. Maybe she was preoccupied or just forgot. When she wouldn't do something you really needed, maybe she was overwhelmed or just not ready for that level of commitment. Maybe she's not perfect. If you forgive, you can move on to the next step, whether it's building

the relationship, continuing it at a modest level, or separating. Whatever happens, forgiveness can be valuable.

Thinking about the future

What's the future going to bring? Financial risks? Poor health? Relationship problems? Potential disaster? If you constantly worry about what's going to happen, you can hardly be all that happy.

Seligman says some of the positive emotions about the future are "faith, trust, confidence, hope, and optimism."[21] He focuses on optimism; one of his earlier books was the widely acclaimed *Learned Optimism.*[22]

Seligman analyses optimism using two dimensions: permanence and pervasiveness. Consider permanence first. When something good happens to you, for example getting on well with a new friend or making progress mastering a challenging skill, do you think this is likely to continue — or do you worry that it will all go sour? If you think the good thing will continue, indeed get even better, that's an attitude reflecting permanence: you believe that whatever is going well will be a permanent feature of your life. This can be expressed in a generalisation, for example "I'll always have good friends" or "I'm good at learning."

If you're good at one thing — perhaps maintaining friendships — then do you think you are good at all relationships? If so, your attitude is pervasive: you apply it to all sorts of areas. You could start with "I get along with Jane" and generalise to "I can get along with nearly anyone."

21 Seligman, *Authentic Happiness,* 83.

22 Martin E. P. Seligman, *Learned Optimism: How to Change Your Mind and Your Life* (New York: Free Press, 1998).

If your attitude towards good things involves both permanence and pervasiveness, then if one good thing happens — you make friends with Jane — then you think you'll always be able to make friends with lots of people. That's certainly optimistic!

The opposite side is your attitude towards bad things. Let's say you forget an important date and offend a friend. If you think pessimistically, you might say to yourself, "My memory is hopeless; in fact, I'm just a loser." An optimistic person takes the opposite orientation, treating the incident as an exception, applying only to the particular circumstances: "I forgot then but I was distracted so it won't happen again; I'll make it up to my friend."

In summary, an optimistic person assumes good things will continue and apply to all parts of their life, while treating bad occurrences as temporary and of no wider relevance. That's all easy enough to say, but how can you enter this optimistic way of thinking? Seligman recommends arguing with yourself whenever you start to enter a pessimistic line of thinking. He has a process involving several stages: adversity, belief, consequences, disputation and energisation.[23] Basically it means becoming aware of the bad thing that happens, articulating your beliefs about it and the likely consequences, disputing the negative line of thinking and coming out on the positive side.

Living in the present

You can think *about* the past and *about* the future, but this thinking occurs in the present — right now — just like all experience. How you feel moment to moment is the key to happiness.

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23 Seligman, *Learned Optimism*.

So what is it like? Are you mentally relaxed and contented, excited and engaged, or perhaps frustrated by the children, annoyed at a neighbour, enraged by an incompetent driver or anxious about an upcoming meeting?

I've met people whose whole lives seem oriented to the weekend. At work during the week they look forward to Friday and on Friday they go drinking with the aim of becoming oblivious to the world. On Saturday they recover from their hangovers and look forward to a repeat bout. Sunday is another recovery and dread of the coming week.

In mental terms, these ostensible pleasure-seekers seldom enjoy the present moment: during the week they are preoccupied with the coming weekend and so not fully experiencing the present; during their drinking episodes they momentarily feel the pleasure of liberation from the self[24] before succumbing to diminished awareness.

Bodily pleasures are one way to obtain happiness in the present. For some people alcohol is the means whereas for others the route is via sex, chocolate or hot baths. To maximise pleasures of this sort, the key is to savour the experience, namely to spread it out over time and become intensely aware of it.[25] Savouring a drink would mean taking a sip now and then, focusing on the taste and other sensations. It's the opposite of chugging down one glass after another.

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24 Roy F. Baumeister, *Escaping the Self: Alcoholism, Spirituality, Masochism, and Other Flights from the Burden of Selfhood* (New York: BasicBooks, 1991).

25 Fred B. Bryant and Joseph Veroff, *Savoring: A New Model of Positive Experience* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2007).

Savouring means paying attention to what's happening in your body and mind. It is a form of heightened awareness. It is mindful experience.

Another way of enjoying life in the present is called flow. One example is when athletes are pushing themselves to the limit of their skills and capabilities. It might be a soccer player who, in a game, is fully extended, using well-developed skills deftly and confidently. In such a situation, the player's attention is fully engaged with the game — there is no opportunity for day-dreaming. Neither is there anxiety due to being over-whelmed, because the player is coping. Athletes in this sort of fully-engrossed mode sometimes say they are "in the zone." This means their mind is totally engaged in the activity, typically for an extended time.

This sort of experience can happen in training, too — whenever the player's capacities are fully extended, so every bit of attention is on the activity. In such a state, time can pass with little awareness. Most players find it immensely satisfying.

People in all walks of life, from carpenters to singers, can have the same experience. It usually involves exercising well-developed skills at the limit of one's capacities, giving a feeling of challenge and achievement.

Psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi called this mental state "flow."[26] It's as if you are flowing along in a satisfying experience. Worries about the past or thoughts about the future disappear because you're entirely in the activity, in the present.

Flow is so satisfying that people will seek opportunities to repeat the experience. This often means constantly pushing to new levels of performance. Imagine a child who learns the violin at a young age. Most violin pupils don't continue, but a few push

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26 Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience* (New York: Harper & Row, 1990).

on. After learning the basics and developing a routine of daily practice, this child finds satisfaction in mastering ever more challenging repertoire, providing the incentive to practise even more. Further challenges come from playing in orchestras, chamber groups and solo performances. Performing can be a source of anxiety, but if the challenge is not overwhelming, even a solo performance can be satisfying.

For young musicians, there is a standard development path, moving to more difficult pieces and to a higher desk in an orchestra and then to other orchestras or chamber groups playing at a higher level. Eventually the youthful violinist gets a job in a professional orchestra, providing a terrific challenge. But the thrill of performing great works with fellow professionals may fade after a number of years, if the violinist continues to improve her skills and becomes familiar with the pieces played by the orchestra. So, in search of a new challenge, she might attempt to launch into a solo career or find players of a similar standard to form a string quartet. After an activity becomes routine — performing Beethoven's 5th symphony for the hundredth time — it may no longer provide the challenge needed to enter the flow state.

The state of flow doesn't just happen to you — effort is required to develop skills and exercise them at the limit of your ability. Flow is possible for someone just beginning on the violin, but becomes more likely at higher levels of performance.

Flow can be seen as a good thing in two ways. First, it can be deeply satisfying, worthwhile in itself. Second, it can be harnessed to valuable goals. A skilled violinist can bring joy to listeners and play an important role in an orchestra or chamber group. Like other aspects of happiness, flow states are not guaranteed to be beneficial to society. A person might experi-

ence flow when exercising anti-social skills, such as a surreptitious break-and-enter or an elaborate financial scam.

Flow has not been all that widely recognised until recently. While religions have recommended gratitude for millennia and connoisseurs have recognised the value of savouring, it is only with Csikszentmihalyi's work that the widespread significance of flow has been documented. His work has laid the basis for better understanding and valuing the flow state.

How can you find a way to enter the flow state regularly? Seligman developed a questionnaire to assess your personal strengths. For example, you rate yourself 1 to 5 on statements like "I am always curious about the world" and "I am easily bored." After you've done lots of ratings — typically requiring 30 minutes or so in the web version — then a score is calculated for each of 24 areas of potential strength. If you answered 5 for "I am always curious about the world" and 1 for "I am easily bored" then you'll have a high score on "curiosity/interest in the world" and vice versa if you answered 1 and 5 respectively.

The point of this survey is not to score highly on every strength, but rather to figure out which of your strengths are strongest, for example "curiosity/interest in the world," "valour and bravery" and "leadership." (All the strengths are couched as positive attributes.) Seligman says you should pursue a life in which you have regular opportunities to express your greatest strengths, which he calls character strengths.[27]

Some people know their interests when very young, but others take a while to find their calling — and some never find it at all. When students in my class took the character-strength survey, a number of them were sceptical about the results because they felt their answers weren't firm, but could have

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27 Authentic Happiness, http://www.authentichappiness.sas.upenn.edu/.

varied quite a bit depending on how they were feeling at the time. Most of them were about 20 years' old, so their strengths may become more pronounced a few years down the track.

Seligman recommends finding and developing strengths as the basis for a good life. It will be a life in which you can enter the flow state regularly, because you are exercising a well-developed skill at the limit of your capacity. That's a good life for you in terms of satisfaction.

In summary, most people believe happiness is something that happens to you, due to your situation in the world, such as making a lot of money, looking beautiful, living in elegant surroundings or eating chocolate. Research shows that these sorts of things seldom have a lasting effect, because people adapt to their situations. Increasing your satisfaction from life in a sustained fashion is far more likely through changing your thoughts and actions, for example by fostering gratitude and forgiveness, developing skills to enable entering the flow state, and cultivating an optimistic attitude.

Happiness research is surprising because so many of its findings are counterintuitive. People think that they will be happier with more money, but actually spending more time with friends is far more likely to increase happiness.

Happiness tactics

For sustained happiness, it's valuable to turn practices fostering happiness into habits. In a sense, then, happiness itself becomes habitual. Most of the things required for long-term contentment require practice. The happiness habit is mostly mental and behavioural: ways of thinking and acting that foster satisfaction.

To be sure, brief moments of pleasure are possible for everyone without particular effort, such as eating ice cream or laughing at a joke. But even these apparently natural activities

require a certain attitude or orientation to be fully appreciated. Some people gobble down ice cream without really thinking about it; others seldom laugh at jokes, much less tell them. So to really take advantage of pleasurable moments, some preparation or effort may be useful to get in the right frame of mind.

Some people are lucky enough to be happy a lot of the time: they have a high happiness set-point. Others have to work at becoming happier: the happiness habit has to be developed through effort. Those with high set-points might become even happier through suitable habits.

To increase happiness levels at an individual level, what methods should be used? The aim is to increase things like gratitude, optimism, savouring and flow. For all of these, the five standard methods are important. These are the same methods relevant for promoting other good things such as health and honour codes, as discussed in chapter 1.

> ***Awareness*** It helps to be aware of the desired mental state, so you can try to enter it and know when you're in it. For example, you might occasionally express gratitude without thinking about it; by becoming aware of expressing gratitude, it's easier to build it into a more powerful habit.

> ***Valuing*** You need to believe these states of mind are valuable. That seems obvious enough, but many people don't have this sort of belief. For example, some people are aware of savouring, but don't pursue it, instead gobbling down food, drink and other experiences.

> ***Understanding*** You need to understand how these states of mind operate. This helps to resist beguiling arguments to pursue other courses of action. For example, it helps to know about adaptation so that you're less tempted to pursue

happiness by seeking job promotions and more expensive cars.

> ***Endorsement*** When authority figures support happiness habits, this provides powerful support for relevant habits. Until recently, the most important authorities endorsing happiness-promoting habits have been religious figures, in relation to gratitude and forgiveness. The positive psychology movement has added a secular endorsement with authority figures like researchers Martin Seligman and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi.

> ***Action*** The key to happiness habits is to practise them. All the other elements are fine but don't accomplish much without practice. Happiness is in the doing.

The how of happiness

In describing research on happiness, I've drawn on the framework used by Seligman in his book *Authentic Happiness*. Another excellent practical treatment of happiness research, oriented to the general reader, is Sonja Lyubomirsky's *The How of Happiness*.[28] Her opening chapters give an overview of findings about happiness. She makes a strong point that there are many ways to improve happiness, such as expressing gratitude and finding flow, but that for an individual, some of these may be more attractive and effective whereas others are not.

The main body of her book treats 12 different strategies to achieve happiness, such as relationships and forgiveness, providing exercises for developing habits to make these a personal practice. All her recommendations are backed up with plenty of references.

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28 Lyubomirsky, *How of Happiness.*

The How of Happiness can be readily related to the five happiness tactics.

Awareness Lyubomirsky's book is itself an exercise in promoting awareness. She is a happiness researcher herself and therefore has an in-depth understanding of studies in the field, especially the ones she's been involved with directly. She wrote *The How of Happiness* because she wanted to make research findings known to a wider audience. Anyone reading the book will become aware of the 12 happiness strategies, as well as the more basic point that to achieve happiness it is worthwhile putting effort into well-chosen activities.

Valuing Lyubomirsky says that if anything is the secret of happiness, it is to find happiness-promoting activities that you personally value: "the secret is in establishing which happiness strategies suit you best."[29]

Understanding Lyubomirsky says that understanding why happiness strategies work helps in pursuing them: "I describe *why* these strategies work and *how* precisely they should be implemented to maximize their effectiveness using evidence from the latest research."[30]

Endorsement Lyubomirsky uses scientific research to add credibility to her recommendations: "I have selected for this book only those activities (from among many) that have been shown to be successful through science, rather than conjecture."[31]

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29 Ibid., 70.

30 Ibid., 89.

31 Ibid.

Action Central to Lyubomirsky's recommendations is to turn happiness strategies into habits.

The five happiness tactics thus are quite compatible with *The How of Happiness*: every one is integral to Lyubomirsky's approach.

Social obstacles

Most happiness research focuses on individuals: it looks at things that make individuals happy. This partly reflects its home in psychology — which as a discipline tends to focus on individuals — and perhaps that many prominent happiness researchers are from countries high in individualism, especially the US.

It is certainly true that individuals can do an enormous amount on their own and with support from family and friends. But left out of this picture is the role of society, namely the way society is organised, which has an enormous influence on what individuals decide to do.

In setting up a habit — such as meditating or expressing gratitude — it's possible to rely on personal willpower. But it's far easier to maintain a habit if the external conditions are favourable. Setting aside a daily time for meditating when no one around you is doing it can be a challenge; it's far easier if everyone else meditates at the same time. That's one reason why people go to meditation retreats: meditation is the thing to do and doing anything else requires going against expectations.

A glance at western culture immediately reveals a range of obstacles to happiness. The most obvious is consumerism, the orientation to buying goods and services. A consumer culture involves pervasive advertising, status built on conspicuous

consumption, and personal values oriented to consuming as the road to a better life.

Consumerism is not just a fashion: it is deeply entrenched in contemporary capitalist economies, which are built on ever-growing production that requires ever-increasing consumption to maintain profits. The belief system underlying consumerism is that the more you buy and use, the happier you will be. Happiness research shows this is misguided.

In a consumer society, people expect happiness to come from the outside. They work to make money and then spend their earnings on houses, cars, clothes and entertainment, all in a frenetic quest for a better life, seldom stopping to question whether the whole enterprise is built on a false premise.

There are critics of course. Members of the group Adbusters promote what they call subvertisements, which are fake advertisements that challenge the assumptions of consumer culture.[32] But you'll never see an Adbusters ad on television. Station managers have refused to broadcast them. Even if they did allow Adbusters segments, they would be a token opposition given the enormous money behind conventional advertising, some of which uses irony and parody as a marketing angle anyway.

Canberra, Australia's national capital, is a small city with a difference: there are no public advertisements — well, not many. There are no billboards. It makes a difference, but then public ads are only one part of the environment. The media are filled with ads.

Advertising is just one environmental influence hindering happiness habits. Perhaps more influential is peer pressure, often exerted through witnessing what others have or do. The

32 Kalle Lasn, *Culture Jam: The Uncooling of America* (New York: Eagle Brook, 1999) and the magazine *Adbusters*.

neighbours have a bigger house or a fancier car, send their kids to an expensive school and take extended overseas holidays. Keeping up with the Joneses still plays an important role in the culture of materialism.

People can opt out of this system. The so-called down-shifters choose lifestyle over greater affluence. But this remains a minority choice. The dominant influences encourage greater consumption.

What psychological states are fostered in a consumer society? The most obvious is greed, the desire to have more no matter how much you have already: money, high-status jobs, expensive clothes, a private jet. Greed has a long history[33] but it is not conducive to satisfaction: even billionaires may want more. Another thing stimulated by consumerism is envy, the resentment of others because of what they have. Like greed, envy is a destructive emotion that, at its worst, can lead to antisocial behaviour including hurting others. An everyday example is spreading rumours about co-workers to damage their reputations, sabotage their chances for promotion or just to cause them a hard time.

To the extent that greed and envy are fostered, gratitude is neglected. Being thankful for what you have is undermined when you want more and resent the possessions and accomplishments of others.

Consider another element of contemporary societies, the criminal justice system. In the United States since the 1980s, the prison population has dramatically increased so that by 2010 over two million people were incarcerated. Per head of population, this is the highest rate of any country in the world. In the

33 For an examination of greed, envy and jealousy, see Joseph H. Berke, *The Tyranny of Malice: Exploring the Dark Side of Character and Culture* (New York: Summit, 1988).

prison system itself, there are conflicting priorities that, in simplest terms, can be classified as rehabilitation versus retribution. Much of the US system is oriented to retribution, which basically means punishment.

The explosion in the prison population can be linked to competition between politicians to be seen as tough on crime, to heavy media coverage of crime, and to what critics call the prison-industrial complex, namely the influence on government from companies that make money out of prisons.[34] Campaigners for more compassionate policies have been marginalised in the past several decades; indeed, even those who present the rational argument that higher rates of imprisonment don't reduce crime have had little influence. The overwhelming impression is that criminals do not deserve compassion. The orientation is to blaming and vengeance, not forgiveness.

Forgiveness is a key element in happiness about the past. Individuals can pursue forgiveness. But public policy, especially in the US, sends a different message: perpetrators are not forgiven but rather treated harshly and then left to fend for themselves. This is an example of how a structural feature of US society, namely prison policy and practice, is contrary to the goal of greater happiness.

I haven't even mentioned the prisoners themselves. For most people, prison is one of the last places to go to become happier.

Next consider flow, the state of full engagement in a challenging task. Flow states are encouraged by opportunities for people to develop skills and exercise them. For some people, flow is becoming easier to achieve because more is known about how to develop high-level skills. Athletic training, for example,

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34 See for example Nils Christie, *Crime Control as Industry: Towards Gulags, Western Style,* 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 1994).

is vastly more sophisticated than a century ago, so young swimmers, runners, gymnasts and many others are coached to develop their skills and their capacity to focus, for extended periods, on tasks at just the right level of challenge. This undoubtedly promotes flow.

The trouble is that much of this coaching is oriented to competitive sport. After the prime years of a person's competitiveness are over, often by the age of 30, there are fewer opportunities for maintaining athletic involvement. Furthermore, many older athletes have jobs that restrict time for training.

At young ages, parents, teachers and peers can provide a supportive environment for the pursuit of expert performance: training becomes a routine part of daily life, encouraged by key authority figures. But after leaving home and competitive leagues, more willpower is required to keep developing skills: there are competing priorities and authorities — bosses or family members — with different priorities. In other words, the environment is no longer as supportive of sporting activities that promote flow.

Flow requires extended periods of engagement. No interruptions please! The new personal communication technologies built around mobile phones and the Internet — texting, Twitter, Facebook and the like — encourage users to constantly shift their attention. It's stimulating, to be sure, and exercises the brain much more than staring at a wall, but it may also make flow more difficult to achieve. Of course you can switch off your phone for a few hours while you swim or paint or read, but many users become so entranced by being constantly in touch that these interludes become rarer.

A high-paced society makes it harder to savour experiences as they happen, because nothing lasts all that long before an interruption. Rather than slowing down to enjoy the present,

users seek the next bit of information in the hope that it will be more exciting than the previous one, or at least provide a diversion from the seeming emptiness of no contact.

In contemporary Western societies, choices have massively expanded — consumer choices, that is, as a visit to a super-market will reveal. Barry Schwartz, in his thought-provoking book *The Paradox of Choice,* reviews evidence that excess choice reduces happiness.[35] For example, if you buy a product with the option of returning it if you don't like it, you are less likely to be satisfied than if there's a no-return policy and you are stuck with the product. The same applies to relationships: if it's easy to start and terminate close personal relationships, people are less likely to put the effort into maintaining their relationships through difficult periods and more likely to trade in their partner in the hope of finding a better one. With plenty of choices in a seemingly wide-open market, the emphasis shifts to searching for a better option rather than transforming yourself to be satisfied with something that is good enough and becomes better through your own efforts.

I've mentioned several of the features of contemporary individualised societies that make it more challenging to regularly enter a contented state: consumerism, competitiveness, unforgiving criminal justice systems, continual interruptions and excessive choice. These features discourage some of the practices that foster happiness, but it's still possible for individu-als to achieve a happy life and to adopt personal practices that foster it. For some, this means opting out of the rat-race, for example finding a satisfying occupation, perhaps lower-paying, away from the frantic pace of urban living. For others, it means learning a new way of dealing with the pressures of typical life.

35 Barry Schwartz, *The Paradox of Choice: Why More Is Less* (New York: HarperCollins, 2004).

However, the point here is that the onus is on the individual to find a way of achieving happiness, and even for those who try there are many temptations to divert efforts. The result is that acquiring happiness habits can be quite difficult.

If the goal is greater happiness for everyone, then it makes sense to act on two fronts, namely for individuals to adopt happiness habits and for individuals and groups to pursue social changes that make it easier to develop happiness habits. This is a very big topic so I'll just give a few ideas.

People overall will be happier if income levels are more equal. That's because bringing poor people out of poverty will improve their happiness levels quite a bit, whereas lowering the income of the extremely wealthy won't make very much difference to their happiness. In fact, they might end up being happier in a more equal society.[36] So the goal should be greater equality. This can be pursued on various fronts. One approach is to help those who are worse off, for example alleviating homelessness and giving greater support for people with mental illness and intellectual disability. Another approach is to provide more facilities available to everyone such as low-cost public transport, parks, museums, neighbourhood centres, music clubs and a range of venues where people can gather to pursue activities that are challenging but not overwhelming at their

36 See for example Alberto Alesina, Rafael Di Tella and Robert MacCulloch, "Inequality and happiness: are Europeans and Americans different?" *Journal of Public Economics,* 88, 2004, 2009–2042; Robert H. Frank, *Falling Behind: How Rising Inequality Harms the Middle Class* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007); Johannes Schwarze and Marco Härpfer, "Are people inequality averse, and do they prefer redistribution by the state? Evidence from German longitudinal data on life satisfaction," *Journal of Socio-Economics,* 36, 2007, 233–249.

competence levels. Yet another approach is to promote building designs that foster community interaction and mutual help, for example co-housing, as developed in Denmark and adopted elsewhere, in which people live in complexes with small private rooms and extensive collective areas for eating, child care and socialising.[37]

It's also possible to promote social rituals that foster happiness. Some holidays are ostensibly about gratitude, for example Thanksgiving in the US, but have been so highly commercialised that they have been divested of nearly all content. Rather than concentrate gratitude in occasional big events, it would be better to promote regular small occasions.

The slow food movement aims to encourage people to take time in preparing meals and eating them. Slow food is the embodiment of savouring, something that is discouraged through fast food. The slow movement applies this approach to a wide range of activities.[38]

If promoting happiness becomes a social goal, it has innumerable implications for the way society is organised and runs. I've mentioned a few. This isn't only an issue of policy for governments but rather a matter for everyone.

37 Kathryn McCamant and Charles Durrett, with Ellen Hertzman, *Cohousing: A Contemporary Approach to Housing Ourselves,* 2d ed. (Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed Press, 1994).

38 On the slow movement, see Carl Honoré, *In Praise of Slow: How a Worldwide Movement Is Challenging the Cult of Speed* (London: Orion, 2004).

Social action

As well as spelling out happiness-promoting alternatives, such as greater equality, it's also essential to think about how to promote them. This is a big task.

One way forward has been well laid out by social movements, such as the peace, labour, feminist and environmental movements. They have been campaigning for decades. Activists know an incredible amount about analysing problems, presenting arguments, getting messages to audiences, building organisations, holding meetings, finding allies, developing strategies, and organising actions such as rallies, strikes and boycotts.[39]

In fact, some of these movements are part of the quest for greater happiness. For many decades, peace movements have campaigned against war, which is a major source of sorrow and angst. The labour movement, when it pushes to help those in greatest need — workers receiving extremely low wages or suffering abuse on the job — helps bring people out of poverty, counter exploitation and give workers dignity, thereby increasing overall happiness. (On the other hand, when labour organisations mainly look after well-paid members and neglect the unemployed or non-unionised sectors of the economy, they do not address key areas of unhappiness.)

Campaigners for social change that fosters happiness habits can work in alliance with other movements. They can also learn a lot from the experience of movement activists. But happiness itself seems an unlikely basis for a social movement of the

39 For example, Saul D. Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals* (New York: Random House, 1971); Virginia Coover, Ellen Deacon, Charles Esser and Christopher Moore, *Resource Manual for a Living Revolution* (Philadelphia, PA: New Society Publishers, 1981); Randy Shaw, *The Activist's Handbook: A Primer* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001).

traditional sort. The usual rationale for a movement is opposition to a problem such as war, exploitation of workers, male domination or environmental degradation. Given the presence of social evils, a movement promoting a good thing such as happiness may seem self-indulgent, perhaps even a misdirected effort when social problems are so pressing.

In this context, pro-happiness movements have three things to contribute. Firstly, promotion of happiness is likely to bring more people into traditional movements. One of the key elements of happiness is helping others. When people realise that helping is a greater source of satisfaction than acquiring goods or status, they are more likely to join organisations or choose careers that allow helping on a sustained basis. This could be a welfare organisation or it could be a campaigning organisation concerned about refugees, homelessness, people with disabilities, or any number of worthy causes. One possibility is becoming an activist in a social movement. Promotion of happiness as a social goal thus is likely to swell the numbers of activists in movements.

Secondly, happiness promotion requires rethinking goals. Established labour organisations, for example, have devoted a great amount of their effort to gaining increased salaries, including for workers who are already well off. Taking on board insights from happiness research, a labour activist might well suggest redirecting effort towards greater equality, including support for those outside the labour force, increases in wages for those in the lowest-paid jobs, a focus on conditions rather than wages for those already reasonably well off, and designing work to foster flow.

Thirdly, ideas from happiness research can be used to develop what might be called happy activism. This would be a change from the standard approach in many social movements.

Activists aspire to a better world. They want to challenge and, if possible, eliminate poverty, exploitation, war and other social problems. Most movements are oriented negatively: they are against something. The peace movement, for example, despite its name, is principally an antiwar movement, with protests against nuclear weapons, particular wars, arms manufacture and so forth. There is a lot more activity — at least in the most visible part of the movement — against the problem of war than in creating a more peaceful world in places where there aren't any wars.

A lot of campaigning is negative in orientation, emphasising the problems: "There are no winners in nuclear war"; "thousands of children are killed and maimed by land mines every year." With these negative messages, it's natural for activists to adopt a serious tone. Activism can come across as a grim business. Where is the fun?

Happy activism is an alternative.[40] Rather than wait to be happy until after the social problem is fixed — which may be never, or at least many decades hence — the idea is to live the sort of future being sought, which includes being happy in campaigning. That means making activities fun, being more oriented to positive outcomes than the current dire situation, and adopting an optimistic mindset.

Many activists are driven by anger. They are outraged by injustice and want to do something about it, often by blaming those they see as responsible. A happiness-driven activist would instead draw on and seek to develop different psychic resources, including gratitude, mindfulness, optimism and a commitment to helping others.

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40 I thank Sharon Callaghan, Karen Kennedy and Yasmin Rittau for valuable discussions on this topic.

An antiwar activist who cultivates gratitude might seem disrespectful to all the people killed and maimed in the operation of the war system. But gratitude can be a tool for more effective action. What is there to be thankful for? To start, there are other committed activists, past and present. There are successes in campaigns, however minor. There are absences, such as no nuclear attacks since 1945. There are harmonious relations in many communities around the world. By focusing on what there is to be thankful for, it's possible to gain ideas about building the movement, for example thinking of what sustains commitment and how campaign successes were achieved.

An orientation to happiness in campaigning should make activist groups more attractive — others will want to be involved. Some activists do this already: they focus on positive alternatives, design activities that will be satisfying for everyone and make their meetings and interactions a joy.

Summary

The strange thing about happiness is that nearly everyone desires it but so many people are misguided in the way they pursue it, continuing to seek it in the same ways despite repeated failures. This is most obvious with money: most people think more money will make them happier although research shows extra money will have only a small effect, at least when you have enough to start with.

More generally, people pursue happiness through external things like possessions, holidays, awards and entertainment. However, research shows that the biggest increases in happiness can be achieved by changing thinking and behaviour. Some of the valuable mental states are gratitude, forgiveness, optimism, flow and mindfulness. Achieving these states is not quick and easy: practice is needed to develop and maintain mental habits.

Likewise, happiness-promoting behaviours, such as fostering relationships and helping others, require practice.

If sustained happiness is based on habits in thinking and behaving, then what are the ways to promote the habit? For the individual, there are several important ways.

Awareness You need to be aware of what really makes you happy. Continually bringing these things to your conscious mind helps cement your habits.

Valuing You need to value what really makes you happy. This sounds obvious enough, but many people dismiss meditation or savouring because they seem to clash with cultural norms.

Understanding You need to understand what really makes you happy. This helps you to identify temptations and false claims and respond effectively. For example, if you understand the process of adaptation, you're better prepared to make wise choices.

Endorsement When people whose opinion is important to you support things that really make you happy, you're more likely to maintain happiness habits. This could be peers you respect or a prominent authority figure.

Action You need to do the things that make you happy. This is the most important step in developing and maintaining a happiness habit.

This all seems straightforward, but there's a major obstacle: the way the world is organised. It's harder to be satisfied with what you have when you're bombarded with advertisements cleverly designed to make you dissatisfied unless you purchase some

product or service. It's harder to practise forgiveness when ritual events — like crime reporting — foster a sense of grievance.

So promotion of happiness requires action at two levels: the individual level and the social level. Not that these are independent: every step you take to develop gratitude or optimism has some effect on those around you, while some campaigns, for example for humane treatment of prisoners, have direct effects on individuals.

Happiness research has mainly focussed on the individual level. Taken seriously, it has some radical implications and can lead to people dropping out of the rat-race and choosing a different lifestyle. But these changes will affect relatively few unless there are some big changes in the way the economy, the political system and social life are organised.

If big changes are going to occur in the way society is organised, this will require a lot of time and effort. At the campaigning level, the same five ways are relevant: awareness, valuing, understanding, endorsement and action.

Social change is a topic much wider than happiness research. Nevertheless, there are few things that an orientation to happiness can bring to activism. One of them is the idea of happy activism, namely making campaigning a joyful process, something lots of people will want to join and that will help achieve its goals through the means of pursuing them.

Appendix
Ehrenreich's critique of happiness promotion

Before getting carried away with happiness as the ultimate goal, it's worth looking at contrary arguments. A good place to start is Barbara Ehrenreich's book *Bright-sided: How the Relentless*

Promotion of Positive Thinking Has Undermined America.[41] Ehrenreich is the acclaimed author of more than a dozen books, most famously *Nickel and Dimed,* in which she reports on working in several low-paying jobs to reveal the hardships of those on a minimum wage in the US. She is a long-time critic of social inequality and exploitation.

In *Bright-sided,* she targets the positive thinking movement in the US, illustrating how it ends up blaming the victims of the political and economic system for their own failures. She examines positive thinking in several domains: cancer treatment, in which optimism is virtually mandated as an aid to survival; business, in which retrenched workers are exhorted to be positive about their futures (and not blame their former employers); religion, when material success replaces obedience and good works as a road to salvation; and positive psychology, the science of happiness.

I read *Bright-sided* after completing the first draft of this chapter, so I was eager to discover how Ehrenreich — whose writings I first encountered and respected in the 1970s — would tackle the positive psychology movement. Conveniently, her central target is none other than Martin Seligman, whose book *Authentic Happiness* I used as a launching point for the themes in this chapter.

Ehrenreich and I have approached Seligman in rather different ways. She begins by recounting his election as president of the American Psychological Association, a platform from which he promoted positive psychology. She obtained an interview with Seligman, but was frustrated by his behaviour: instead of talking in his office, he took her to a museum and

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41 Barbara Ehrenreich, *Bright-sided: How the Relentless Promotion of Positive Thinking Has Undermined America* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2009).

interrupted their time together by various promotional activities, such as a phone call to schedule an interview. In Ehrenreich's eyes, Seligman comes across more as a preoccupied prima donna than as either a hard-nosed scientist or a contented practitioner of his own recommendations about happiness. Ehrenreich also tells of Seligman's conservative politics and consulting work for business, seemingly at odds with his emphasis on positive thinking rather than material success as a road to happiness.

In *Bright-sided,* Ehrenreich is highly critical of the excessive promotion of positive thinking, especially when it serves to distract from a realistic understanding of problems and to discourage collective action to address them. So in addressing positive psychology, she is especially critical of researchers when they cross the line from objective assessment of the evidence and become uncritical boosters of the virtues of happiness. Anything smacking of hucksterism is suspect in her eyes. As a prime target she scrutinises claims that happiness contributes to better health and longevity, picking flaws in several studies.

I am sympathetic with Ehrenreich's criticism of exaggerated claims that go beyond the research findings concerning happiness. But this is hardly a special sin of positive psychology. Scientists in all sorts of fields regularly tout their findings as breakthroughs as a tool for obtaining more research funding. Great advances in the study of cancer have been announced for decades. Within psychology itself, hype for findings is routine, including in the mainstream research what can be called "negative psychology," namely the study of how to bring people in negative states, like depression and anxiety, closer to normal. In the US, television viewers can watch lengthy advertisements for prescription antidepressants. So far, there's no equivalent promotion of positive psychology.

In one of my articles, "Scientific fraud and the power structure of science," I included deceptive promotion of research findings as a type of fraud — but one so commonplace that it is not normally classified as fraud.[42] It is convenient to scientific elites to treat this sort of hype as normal while stigmatising a few narrow behaviours, such as altering data, as fraud. Ehrenreich has not shown that positive psychologists have engaged in exaggerated promotion any more than other scientists — though this is hardly to excuse such promotion.

Ehrenreich criticises Seligman's formula $H = S + C + V$, in which H, happiness, is the sum of S, an individual's set point, C, the particular circumstances of a person's life, and V, factors under voluntary control. She says H cannot be a simple sum of the three variables S, C and V, but is instead a more complex function of S, C and V, which should be written $H = f(S, C, V)$. Of course she is correct. When I saw Seligman's formula in *Authentic Happiness,* I assumed it was illustrative rather than literal. Anyone familiar with science would readily see that the formula cannot be additive, especially given that Seligman does not begin to operationalise any of the factors, namely show how they can be measured. Ehrenreich is technically correct in her criticism, but I don't think it says much about positive psychology.

More important is Ehrenreich's critique of claims that happiness leads to improved health and longevity. She examines several studies, pointing out limitations. However, I would question Ehrenreich's initial statement that "The central claim of positive psychology, as of positive thinking generally, is that happiness — or optimism, positive emotions, positive affect, or positive *something* — is not only desirable in and of itself but

42 Brian Martin, "Scientific fraud and the power structure of science," *Prometheus*, 10(1), June 1992, 83–98.

actually useful, leading to better health and greater success.”[43] That is not how I read the research on happiness. Most authors see happiness as the key goal. Better health and greater success might be spin-offs, but they are hardly the main purpose. Seligman, for example, says that the objective state of one's health has relatively little effect on one's happiness, but the way you think about your health has a significant effect. He is more concerned about the effect of health on happiness than the effect of happiness on health.

More generally, what is the point of being successful — career, wealth, fame, accomplishments — without happiness? The positive psychology movement is more about psychological states as ends in themselves than as means to some other goal.

Key areas in positive psychology — a few of which I discussed in this chapter — deal with thinking about the past, present and future. An example is the role of gratitude in happiness, including how fostering gratitude can increase happiness. Ehrenreich does not address this research and therefore, as I see it, has missed the crucial core of positive psychology.

Where Ehrenreich hits the mark is in criticising the individualistic orientation of positive psychology, and the resulting bias in favour of adjusting to current social conditions rather than challenging and changing them: “Like pop positive thinking, positive psychology attends almost solely to the changes a person can make internally by adjusting his or her own outlook.”[44] This is precisely my view. However, an orientation to the individual is not inherent in the findings of happiness research but may simply reflect contingencies, in

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43 Ehrenreich, *Bright-sided,* 158–159.

44 Ibid., 171.

particular the individualistic orientation of psychology more generally. Ehrenreich might just as well criticise negative psychology for treating depression as a defect solely of the individual, ignoring the role of social arrangements.

Ehrenreich treats Seligman as the personification of positive psychology, or at least as the prime illustration. Following the quote above, she states:

> Seligman himself explicitly rejects social change, writing of the role of “circumstances” in determining human happiness: “The good news about circumstances is that some do change happiness for the better. The bad news is that changing these circumstances is usually impractical and expensive.” This argument — “impractical and expensive” — has of course been used against almost every progressive reform from the abolition of slavery to pay equity for women.[45]

Rather than throwing out positive psychology because of a Seligman-style dismissal of social change, I think it is more productive to make a different interpretation of positive psychology or, in other words, to draw different implications from its findings. Firstly, Seligman focuses solely on large-scale circumstances; it is quite possible for individuals to change their own circumstances, to some degree, to foster their own happiness.

Secondly, Ehrenreich ignores a key research finding, that helping others can be a great source of lasting satisfaction. Helping others can occur at the individual level, such as helping someone across the street, but also at the collective level, through organisations such as Amnesty International or social movements such as the labour or feminist movements. Partici-

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45 Ibid.

pating in a movement for social betterment can be rewarding in itself as well as helping change the circumstances that affect many people's lives and therefore their happiness.

Thirdly, Seligman's statement that "changing these circumstances is usually impractical and expensive" is correct only on the individual level: for an individual to end a war, single-handed, is indeed impractical and expensive. But Seligman's statement is incorrect at the collective level: when large numbers of people combine their efforts to change circumstances, a good outcome is far more feasible and the per-person costs are minimised. That is the experience in numerous countries where popular nonviolent action has overthrown repressive regimes.[46]

Ehrenreich's critique of positive thinking would, in my opinion, be better formulated as a critique of positive thinking in service of the establishment. Towards the conclusion of *Bright-sided,* she says

> Over the last couple of decades, as icebergs sank and levels of debt mounted, dissidents from the prevailing positive-thinking consensus were isolated, mocked, or urged to overcome their perverse attachment to negative thoughts. Within the United States, any talk of intractable problems like poverty could be dismissed as a denial of America's greatness. Any complaints of economic violence could be derided as the "whining" of self-selected victims.[47]

Ehrenreich is really complaining about the way powerful and wealthy interests have turned positive thinking into a tool for maintaining their privileges, so that being positive is synony-

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46 Peter Ackerman and Jack DuVall, *A Force More Powerful: A Century of Nonviolent Conflict* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000).

47 Ehrenreich, *Bright-sided,* 201.

mous with accepting the system and trying to adapt to it. However, this connection between positive thinking and power isn't inherent in positive thinking. It's just as possible to be positive about workers, women and the disadvantaged and to be positive about efforts by trade unions, feminists, environmentalists and other social movements.

Ehrenreich might be right that "realism" is needed, namely objective thinking rather than positive thinking. However, it is hardly realistic to think about eradicating war or world poverty. Positive thinking can play a valuable role when harnessed to efforts for social change. Perhaps, given the long-standing connection between positive thinking and defence of the status quo, it might be better to use a different word, such as commitment or dedication. There could, though, be a perverse delight in adopting the idea of positive thinking to radical ends.

4
Citizen advocacy

Overview

- Citizen advocacy is a system for protecting and promoting the interests of people with disabilities.
- Citizen advocacy can be supported using the methods of awareness, valuing, understanding, endorsement and action.
- Because of institutional obstacles to the expansion of citizen advocacy, it may be worth rethinking the way citizen advocacy is organised.[1]

In 2005, Steve Lopez, a journalist with the *Los Angeles Times,* came across a homeless man playing a violin that had only two of its four strings. Intrigued, Lopez sought more information. He discovered that decades ago the violinist, Nathaniel Ayers, a middle-aged black man, had attended Julliard, an elite music school in New York. But Ayers never graduated. Lopez used his journalistic skills to track down Ayers' sister, who said Ayers had played the double bass when he was younger.

Lopez decided to write a story about Ayers, reaching a large audience through the *Los Angeles Times.* Many readers were touched and several donated string instruments to Ayers. Lopez became more involved with Ayers, finding a place for him to live and creating opportunities for him to hear the Los Angeles Philharmonic and be tutored by its lead cellist. But it

was not an easy process. Ayers had dropped out of Julliard after he started hearing voices. His mental problems made it impossible for him to continue a musical career, though his mind was filled with music. Lopez was able to do a lot for Ayers despite Ayers' shyness, resistance to change and occasional tirades.

The story of Ayers and Lopez was later made into a movie titled *The Soloist,* with Ayers played by Jamie Foxx and Lopez played by Robert Downey, Jr.[2] Unusually for Hollywood films, *The Soloist* does not have a fairy-tale ending, because it is based on a true story: at the film's conclusion, Ayers is doing better but the future is uncertain and he is not likely to ever become an actual soloist on the classical stage.

The uplifting message is that one person can make a difference in the life of another person — someone who needed help. As the film says at the end, there are 90,000 homeless people in Los Angeles. Ayers was lucky enough to have a friend in Lopez. But what about all the others?[3]

In the late 1960s, a group of parents in Omaha, Nebraska had a problem. Their adult children had intellectual disabilities. That was not the problem. The parents loved their children, and had cared for them at home for their children's entire lives. But

2 Lopez wrote a book to accompany the film: Steve Lopez, *The Soloist: A Lost Dream, an Unlikely Friendship, and the Redemptive Power of Music* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 2008). Where details differ, I have followed the book.

3 Another Hollywood portrayal in this vein is *The Blind Side* (2010), also based on a true story. These cases are atypical in that they involve white people assisting disadvantaged African-Americans, though in reality those who provide assistance are more likely to be other African-Americans. In these Hollywood shows, the protégés demonstrate or develop considerable talents, although in many actual cases this does not occur.

as the parents aged and faced the prospect of death or incapacity themselves, they feared for their children. Would they be put in an institution, with little support and open to abuse?

A young social scientist named Wolf Wolfensberger came up with a possible solution. Ask someone else — a member of the community, not connected to the family — to agree to be an ally for a person with a disability. The community member was called a citizen advocate, or advocate for short, and the person with a disability was called a protégé. The advocate would fill a needed role in the protégé's life, for example as a protector, friend or surrogate parent. The advocate would make sure the protégé had suitable accommodation, was being treated all right, gained skills necessary for everyday life — whatever was needed. An advocate wasn't expected to do everything personally, just to make sure things happened for their protégé. "Advocate" is the term used most commonly — other potential labels are mentor, guide and friend.

How were these relationships to be created? Would it be possible to find anyone to take on a long-term commitment for a person with an intellectual disability? This wasn't going to be easy.

People with disabilities are often stigmatised, and people with intellectual disabilities are even more stigmatised than those who are blind or unable to walk. Some people with severe intellectual disabilities are unable to communicate. Becoming an advocate in such cases is not so much being a friend as being an ally or protector.

Wolfensberger proposed setting up an office with paid staff whose job would be to find people with disabilities, evaluate their needs, find community members who would agree to become advocates, establish protégé-advocate relationships and

continue to support them. Thus was born the concept of citizen advocacy.

The first citizen advocacy programme was set up in Omaha. Since then, dozens of programmes have been established in the United States, Australia, Britain and New Zealand.[4] The orientation broadened out from finding advocates for adults with intellectual disabilities whose parents were ageing to finding advocates for anybody with a disability who had serious unmet needs, including babies, young children and young adults. Needs might be unmet because of poverty, abuse, homelessness, or overprotective carers.

> When his mother passed away, a 26 year-old man had no one and nowhere to live. His citizen advocate found him a place to live and located his father who was thrilled to be a part of his life again. When we see this man now — he is about to turn 30 — he tells us with pride that he has 18 people in his family.[5]

Many people with intellectual disabilities face enormous difficulties in their lives. Some are abused by family members or staff in human services. They are easy targets when they do not have communication skills to clearly explain what happened in a way that is credible to others. Even more common is neglect. Their lives may consist mainly of waiting — waiting for an

4 Most of the knowledge about the history of citizen advocacy resides in the memories of coordinators and others who have been involved a long time. There seems to be no substantive written history of citizen advocacy, nor a manual for coordinators to do their work. One useful source is the journal *Citizen Advocacy Forum*.

5 The stories throughout this chapter were contributed by various Australian citizen advocacy programmes to the website of the Citizen Advocacy Network, http://www.bmartin.cc/CAN/. The network is no longer active.

occasional excursion or visit, with no regular activity to engage their energies and develop their skills.

Most staff in human services do as well as they can. However, the risk in relying on services is that people with disabilities can become passive recipients of assistance, in other words dependent clients.

Those who live with relatives are usually the lucky ones, but not always. Some families protect their members with intellectual disabilities too well, preventing them from going out, meeting others and experiencing ordinary activities like shopping, taking the train or meeting friends.

The beneficial impact of a citizen advocate can be hard to appreciate. Many people with intellectual disabilities have been cared for by human services their entire lives. For some, whose relatives are unable or unwilling to look after them, everyone they meet is paid to be there. Furthermore, often there is little continuity in the paid staff, who frequently move to other jobs or postings.

Then an advocate comes on the scene — someone who wants to be there, someone who is not paid. This alone can make an enormous difference. For protégés who live with overprotective carers, an advocate can ease a transition to a wider set of experiences and challenges. Protégés who are able to communicate can experience, with an advocate, a relationship in which they are expected to give as well as receive. The experience of reciprocity can be liberating.

In a sense, citizen advocacy tries to create the linkages that should exist in a caring community. A valued member of the community typically has strong relationships with family members, neighbours, friends, work colleagues and others through associations such as churches and sporting clubs. Why should someone with a disability have any less? An advocate can

help integrate a protégé into a variety of relationships that others take for granted.

> Everyone in Allan's life settled for far less than what was best for him. As well as having an intellectual and physical disability, he is blind. The only people around were staff who did not imagine life ever looking different for Allan. No one expected anything of him and his life was spent sitting … and waiting. Peter has become involved in Allan's life and is providing many and varied experiences for him. They share time together and Peter is assisting Allan to build and fulfil dreams. He is getting to know Allan as a man with potential and hope for the future.

The idea behind citizen advocacy is to find and help those in need, ideally those with the greatest unmet needs. Some people with intellectual disabilities do not require additional assistance. They might live with caring families or live on their own with a network of support. However, others are neglected, exploited or abused. Sometimes their own behaviours alienate those closest to them. They are the ones who can benefit most from citizen advocates.

Wolfensberger and his early collaborators established a set of principles for citizen advocacy.[6] Wolfensberger was acutely

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6 John O'Brien and Wolf Wolfensberger, *CAPE: Standard for Citizen Advocacy Program Evaluation,* Test Edition (Canadian Association for the Mentally Retarded, c. 1980). This manual is used when external teams evaluate citizen advocacy programmes. More generally, citizen advocacy is built on an approach to people with disabilities called normalisation or social role valorisation. See Robert J. Flynn and Raymond A. Lemay (eds.), *A Quarter-Century of Normalization and Social Role Valorization: Evolution and Impact* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1999); David G. Race, *Social Role Valorization and the English Experience* (London: Whiting & Birch, 1999); Wolf Wolfensberger, *A Brief Introduction to Social Role Valorization: A High-Level*

aware of the problems with institutions such as asylums, aged care homes and sheltered workshops. These sorts of institutions were originally established in the 1800s as an humanitarian solution to a perceived social problem, but they soon became part of the problem: the institutions, however well intended, began serving the needs of the staff and managers more than their clientele. Wolfensberger wanted citizen advocacy to be different from institutionalised care, just as a parent, friend, neighbour or colleague is different from a paid service worker.

One principle is advocate independence. The advocate's decision to begin and continue the relationship with their protégé should be freely made, with no external incentives. That means no payment, no covering of expenses, no course credit, no rewards. No one would expect any of these for being a friend or colleague. As soon as advocates begin expecting something in return, they start entering the mentality of the service worker and this, all too often, undermines the relationship.

> The citizen advocate of a 12 year-old boy is supporting his parents to make decisions and choices about his future education and employment needs. The advocate attends meetings at the education department and helps his parents to clarify and understand what is being suggested. The advocate also asks the questions that the parents are reluctant to address.

My involvement

In 1996, I was contacted by Julie Clarke, coordinator of Illawarra Citizen Advocacy. She told me about citizen advocacy

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Concept for Addressing the Plight of Societally Devalued People, and for Structuring Human Services, 3d ed. (Syracuse, NY: Training Institute for Human Service Planning, Leadership & Change Agentry, Syracuse University, 1998).

and about a couple of current protégés, and invited me to be an advocate. I declined to be an advocate — but I did agree to join the board of management. Soon I was learning about citizen advocacy by meeting advocates and protégés and discussing plans of action in one of the most successful programmes of its kind in the world. A year later I became chair of the board, a position I held for the next decade.

Through my involvement with Illawarra Citizen Advocacy, I learned about the terrible things happening to some people with intellectual disabilities and about the capacity of ordinary people to make a tremendous difference in others' lives. I also learned about citizen advocacy as a system.

A coordinator's viewpoint

Here's a typical scenario.[7] A few individuals learn about citizen advocacy and form a group to auspice a new programme. After months or years of learning, lobbying and campaigning, the group may be successful in attracting enough money from businesses or governments to set up a programme. Offices are rented and one, two or possibly more staff are hired. The key person hired is the coordinator, who is in charge of recruiting protégés and advocates.

A coordinator has many things to do any given day. Instead of examining a single day, let's look instead at a typical sequence of actions involved in making and maintaining one relationship between a protégé and an advocate, efforts that

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7 I've drawn here on my experience with Illawarra Citizen Advocacy. Mitchel Peters provided several insightful comments to correct and broaden my perspective. See his valuable "Articles by Mitchel Peters about Citizen Advocacy," http://www.bmartin.cc/CAN/policies/Peters/.

typically take place over weeks, months and years, in among other activities.

The process starts with a search for a protégé. This means someone with a disability, typically an intellectual disability. But not just anyone with a disability — someone who has unmet needs, for example someone who has no family or friends, someone without suitable accommodation, someone in regular trouble with the police, or someone being abused.

> Labelled as having a dual disability, Loretta's future was grim. She had no place to call home except the psychiatric ward of the local hospital. Her so-called friends would take her in, take her money and flush her medication down the toilet. She was abandoned by service agencies. This cycle continued until a citizen advocate stepped in and said "no more." After two years without having to spend time in the hospital, Loretta fulfilled a long-time dream — she married.

So what sort of protégé should be sought? In a well-organised programme, there's a plan for the year. It might involve finding ten new protégés in a year, with targets for specified variables.

One variable is age: the plan for ten protégés might include two children, one teenager, one young adult, two over age 65 and four aged 25–64, with the age categories specified in the manual for evaluating citizen advocacy programmes.[8] Because it is usually easier to find protégés in the age group 25–64 and easier to find advocates for protégés of about their own age, younger and older people with disabilities may be neglected. Therefore, a good plan will give special emphasis to these groups.

Another variable is reciprocity, the capacity of a protégé to interact with an advocate. Individuals who can't communicate

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8 O'Brien and Wolfensberger, *CAPE.*

are at special risk, so the plan might specify finding at least one protégé who cannot reciprocate. Other important variables include a protégé's need for vigorous spokesmanship, the need for a long-term relationship, the prospect of establishing a formal relationship such as adoption, and whether the advocate's role is expressive (such as friendship) or instrumental (accomplishing tasks such as finding accommodation) or both. Given the number of variables to consider, a plan gives guidance but cannot be too prescriptive, because real-life protégés don't necessarily satisfy all the theoretical requirements.

Let's say the target is a young adult needing a long-term relationship. Where to look? A lot of protégé recruitment comes via word of mouth. The coordinator hears of someone and goes to check. But even to hear, it helps to be out in the community. It might mean visiting street shelters, special schools or parents' groups. It might mean asking contacts in the police, welfare or employment sectors.

Chris, the coordinator, has discovered Emma, a potential protégé. What next? Chris needs to spend time with Emma, finding out about her life and, in particular, assessing her needs. Emma is twenty years old. She has a moderate intellectual disability and lives in a group home supported by a welfare organisation. Emma's family members hardly ever visit: they live in a nearby city and have a hard time dealing with their own difficulties. Emma is well looked after but is stagnating. She spends most of her time in the group home watching television, except for regular group excursions to parks or shopping centres. She has no friends unless you count the other three in the home and the stream of service workers who manage it.

Chris, after several meetings with Emma and discussions with service workers and Emma's family, decides Emma needs an advocate who will encourage her to acquire skills, possibly

get a job, meet more people and spend time in the community. Chris is aiming to find a woman aged 30 to 50, living not too far from Emma, who is sociable, well-networked and desirably with experience in helping young people develop their capacities. Chris next aims to find an advocate fitting this profile.

Finding advocates is the most challenging part of the coordinator's job. It's a big thing to ask. "I've just told you about Emma. Would you be willing to be her advocate? That means protecting and defending her, as if her needs were your own. It's for the indefinite future — as long as she needs an advocate."

Advocates undertake a huge commitment. Who would do it? Amazingly, some people are willing — but only a few. The challenge for the coordinator is to find someone who is ideally matched to the protégé. For Emma, that means someone who has the skills, commitment and willingness to help her grow — someone who fits Chris's profile for being Emma's advocate.

How to find this person? To find possible advocates, it's a matter of networking and continually asking. Visit a mother's group, a neighbourhood centre, a local church, a sporting club, and ask people who they know who fits the profile, who has a passion for social justice, who is just the right person for Emma.

Members of the programme's board of management sometimes can suggest potential advocates. Board members, who are volunteers, can and often do assist in a number of aspects of the coordinator's work. Often, some board members have disabilities themselves, some are advocates and some support family members with disabilities. Such board members have a deep insight into the tasks undertaken and the challenges faced by the coordinator.

Advocates do wonderful things, but they don't need to be wonderful in every way. They are ordinary people, with the usual range of shortcomings. They might have personal diffi-

culties or be struggling financially. All that matters, from the coordinator's point of view, is that they will do a good job as an advocate. This is certainly possible. Everyone knows people whose lives are a mess but who are dedicated parents or loyal friends.

However, being an advocate is not a one-way street. Advocates benefit too. They build new relationships and often gain immense satisfaction from seeing their protégés blossom or avoid disaster. Helping others often brings joy to the giver. Being an advocate is a highly personal way of helping. Many advocates say they get more out of their relationships than their protégés.[9]

Still, Chris as the coordinator doesn't find it easy to find an advocate for Emma. Rejection after rejection is hard to take. But finally a woman named Claire says yes. She seems to be a perfect fit.

The next part of Chris' job is more straightforward: explaining to Claire exactly what is involved in being a citizen advocate and making absolutely sure she is ready to take on this role. Emma has to be prepared as well. Then comes the big moment when Emma and Claire first meet. Some relationships spark immediately; others require time to develop; yet others require ongoing assistance by the coordinator.

After the relationship is established, Chris plays a new role, as advisor and encourager and critic, in a process called follow-along and support, interacting mainly with the advocate, Claire. If Claire has any difficulties, she can contact Chris for advice. In

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9 Wolf Wolfensberger, "What advocates have said," *Citizen Advocacy Forum,* 11(2), November 2001, 4–27. In *The Soloist,* Steve Lopez writes, concerning his relationship with Nathaniel Ayers, "it's not a stretch to say that this man I hoped to save has done as much for me as I have for him" (p. 268).

any case, Chris will check in with Claire every month or so, to ask how things are going, to offer comment or advice and sometimes to encourage Claire to be more forceful in pushing for Emma's interests.

Claire can also contact others, called advocate associates, for assistance. These are doctors, pharmacists, lawyers, physiotherapists and a host of others who have volunteered to help advocates in specialist areas. Part of Chris' job is to find volunteers to be advocate associates.

From the coordinator's point of view, there is a logical sequence to each relationship: finding a potential protégé, determining the protégé's needs, finding a potential advocate, initiating the relationship and providing ongoing support to the advocate to maintain the relationship. Daily work is far less ordered, because it involves a mixture of all these tasks, and others. A day might involve meeting several potential protégés, searching for advocates for protégés on the waiting list and doing urgent follow-along for several advocates whose protégés are in some sort of crisis. Then there are routine activities like handling correspondence, maintaining files and preparing newsletters.

Advocate and protégé viewpoints

From an advocate's point of view, things are rather different. Claire was simply going about her life when approached by Chris, who told her about Emma and how Emma would benefit from having an advocate. Claire was cautious initially but, after hearing more, decided this was something she could and would do. After being briefed about the role she would be expected to play, Claire met Emma. From then on, Emma and her needs provided the stimulus for Claire's involvement, along with helpful support from Chris. Claire met Emma every week and

introduced her to her friends. Claire encouraged Emma to undertake studies and helped get her enrolled in a suitable course. As Emma developed her capacities, Claire encouraged her to continue to try new things — and provided support when Emma had difficulties.

A protégé's perspective is different again. Emma was going along with her life, not taking much initiative, letting time pass by. Then Chris came along and asked a lot of questions and did a lot of listening, and offered to try to find someone to be an advocate. Emma thought this sounded good, so she said yes. A couple of months later she was introduced to Claire and from then on Claire was an important part of her life, especially in opening doors to new experiences and achievements. Emma occasionally met Chris and others in the citizen advocacy programme, but her main connection was Claire, who cared about her personally.

Relationships

At the interpersonal level, of Emma and Claire, citizen advocacy seems like a good thing. Most relationships are beneficial to protégés, sometimes helping to provide meaning to an empty life, sometimes helping prevent abuse and degradation, and sometimes even making the difference between life and death. The stories of successful relationships are heart-warming.

Some relationships are set up to be brief. These so-called crisis matches are designed to help a protégé survive a difficult period, such as illness, loss of accommodation, a family dispute, financial problems, pregnancy or imprisonment.

> Red tape and a series of unfortunate circumstances landed Tom in a locked psychiatric unit. Although the professionals agreed that it was an inappropriate place for this gentle

> young man to live, he remained there for three months. He had nowhere else to go.
>
> Tom needed someone on his side immediately so Peter was asked to be his crisis advocate. Through Peter's vigorous advocacy and representation, using the media and the Anti-Discrimination Board, Tom was released and now lives in his own unit, with support provided. The programme is now seeking an ongoing advocate to watch out for Tom's long-term, stable future. In the meantime, Peter will continue to protect Tom.

Crisis matches are valuable. Even so, most citizen advocacy programmes prefer to concentrate on establishing long-term relationships, because these provide ongoing benefits, often preventing crises from developing. Some relationships are life-long, until either the protégé or advocate dies.

Some relationships don't work out so well. Maybe the advocate is too busy to devote sufficient time to their protégé; maybe the match isn't ideal, so there aren't enough common interests; maybe the protégé displays such difficult behaviours that the advocate can't cope. That some relationships fail is not surprising. After all, some friends fall out or drift apart.

The most common reasons why relationships end are that the protégé or advocate moves away — though some long-distance connections can be maintained — or the advocate becomes too busy or loses interest. In some cases, on the other hand, the protégé develops skills and support so that advocacy is no longer required, which is the best sort of completion to the relationship.

Promoting citizen advocacy

If citizen advocacy is such a good thing, why isn't there more of it? One possible explanation is that relatively few people are

willing to be advocates. After all, Chris had to tell 20 potential advocates about Emma before finding Claire. But citizen advocacy coordinators agree that advocates can be found — it's a matter of persistence and skill. Furthermore, when advocates tell friends how rewarding they have found the experience, this makes others more receptive to becoming advocates. A coordinator is like a matchmaker. Making a good match can be difficult, but with perseverance it usually can be done.

Another problem is that the job of a coordinator is so hard. There's no formal training for it. New coordinators are often tossed in the deep end, expected to make matches, yet daunted by the difficulty of finding suitable protégés and discouraged by repeated knock-backs from potential advocates. They sometimes leave the job after a year or two and the cycle begins again. But there are some talented and experienced coordinators. They are willing to assist new coordinators. The job is challenging, but it can be incredibly rewarding, especially when seeing people with disabilities like Emma have their lives changed by dedicated advocates.

The bigger problem is obtaining funding for citizen advocacy programmes, to pay staff and for an office, transport, phone and other costs. Obtaining funding is both difficult and contains traps.

In the United States, the usual pattern is to seek funding from a variety of sources, including governments, companies and individuals. The advantage of having funding from multiple sources is that the programme is not beholden to any of them. Some advocates speak out about the failure of agencies that are supposed to be providing services to their protégés. What if the agency is providing funding to the programme? That's risky, as funding might be cut off in reprisal. Another possibility is that someone in the funding body is friendly with someone in the

agency being criticised. The programme needs to be as independent as possible of any particular funding source so advocates can speak without fear or favour.

Obtaining funding from several different sources is certainly a good idea, but it's hard to bring off in practice. There are only a few dozen citizen advocacy programmes in the US, with a few staff each. Their efforts are highly valuable, but address only a tiny fraction of the millions of people with disabilities who might benefit from advocates.

In Australia, most citizen advocacy programmes are funded by governments, most of them by the federal government through the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FACSIA). The advantage of this arrangement is reasonably stable funding at decent levels, without the need for endless efforts at fundraising that can divert energy away from the work of citizen advocacy itself. Some Australian programmes have tried to gain corporate sponsorship, but with little success. There is not a tradition of business support for these sorts of efforts as in the US. FACSIA funds but does not directly run the frontline services for people with disabilities, whereas state governments both fund and provide services. When advocates speak out, it is usually to challenge failures in state, local and private agencies, not FACSIA.[10]

If citizen advocacy is so good, why isn't there more funding for it? One explanation is that it isn't widely known. Another is that supporters of citizen advocacy simply haven't tried hard

10 The name and scope of the federal government department that funds citizen advocacy keep changing. Its most recent name is the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FAHCSIA). Because it funds employment services, there is a greater potential for an advocate to come into conflict with a department-funded agency.

enough. Yet another is that citizen advocacy is an expensive form of advocacy.

Types of advocacy

Advocacy occurs in many areas. Lawyers are advocates within the legal system. Workers form and join trade unions that act as advocates for workers, individually and collectively. Women get together to campaign for women's rights. Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth and many other groups campaign on environmental issues, essentially being advocates for the environment.

Disability advocacy fits into this wider picture of advocacy. There are several ways to do it. One is for people with disabilities to advocate on their own behalf, an approach called self-advocacy. There are many talented campaigners among people with physical disabilities, and their courageous efforts have brought massive changes in many arenas for those with impairments in vision, hearing and mobility. The word disability usually brings to mind images of a person in a wheelchair or a person with visual impairment with a guide dog.

People with intellectual disabilities — the largest category of disability — are invisible by comparison. Their very disabilities mean that many of them do not have the skills in reading, writing and speaking to be highly effective campaigners. Some can advocate on their own behalf, but many cannot, at least not without considerable support and coaching.

Self-advocacy can be powerful when it works. But meetings of self-advocacy groups for people with intellectual disabilities, assisted by a paid worker, sometimes are little more than social occasions.

Another approach is systems advocacy. Rather than focus on individuals, as in citizen advocacy, the systems approach targets the social, political and economic obstacles to people

with disabilities. Systems advocates may lobby or campaign to bring about change or sometimes support others to do so.

Education is one key system. Many people with disabilities are put in special schools, where they receive specialised attention but do not learn skills for coping outside. Furthermore, children and teachers in conventional schools do not learn how to include people with disabilities.

Systems advocates may put pressure on principals or education departments to change their policies and practices. Alternatively, or as well, systems advocates may assist parents to take action to get their children into conventional schools, helping parents develop skills in mobilising support, negotiating with principals and teachers, and dealing with educational bureaucracies.

In between self-advocacy and systems advocacy is individual advocacy: advocating on behalf of an individual. Citizen advocacy is one type. The other main approach is for the advocate to be a paid worker. Typically, a paid advocate will assist several different people with disabilities.

The Australian federal government began funding disability advocacy programmes in the 1980s, including self-advocacy, systems advocacy, citizen advocacy and individual paid advocacy. Some funding has come from state governments too. In 2006, FACSIA announced a review of what they called advocacy services. The agenda quickly became clear: to cut back on systems advocacy and citizen advocacy and to concentrate on paid individual advocacy. Why would this be?

One line of argument is that citizen advocacy is more expensive — a sort of boutique type of advocacy. This theme had been repeated in the department for years. To test this assumption, I carried out an assessment using data from Illawarra Citizen Advocacy. The Illawarra programme had long

been highly successful. It had met its target of establishing 12 or 15 new matches per year and in 2002 was supporting some 70 existing relationships.

The reason why citizen advocacy can seem to be expensive is due to the method of counting advocacy actions. A paid advocate might see dozens of people with disabilities in a year and undertake hundreds of actions, for example contacting service providers and accompanying clients to meetings. This seems like a lot compared to finding just a dozen new citizen advocates. What this comparison misses is the advocacy by citizen advocates. Recruiting an advocate for a protégé doesn't, on its own, do anything for the protégé. It's what the advocate does in the following weeks and months that counts.

Over a couple of months, Julie Clarke, long-time coordinator of Illawarra Citizen Advocacy, asked advocates how much time they had spent with their protégés in the previous month. Some had spent little or no time whereas others had spent many hours. Adding up the figures, the total amount of time devoted to advocacy was far greater than any paid advocate could possibly have spent.[11] This stands to reason: dozens of citizen advocates were out doing things with and for their protégés without any cost to the taxpayer. By this comparison, citizen advocacy seems like a bargain compared to paid individual advocacy.

> Institutionalised for most of her life, a 30 year-old woman moved into the community and was living alone in a unit, totally isolated and vulnerable, as she was unable to walk following a motor vehicle accident in which both her legs were broken. She was tormented, teased and the target of thieves which made her fearful for her life. When her citizen advocate met her he likened her deprivation to that of a

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11 Brian Martin, "Citizen advocacy and paid advocacy: a comparison," *Interaction,* 17(1), 2003, 15–20.

prisoner of war. With his support she has moved to safe housing and her stolen possessions have been replaced. The citizen advocate is now challenging the Motor Accident Insurance Board for compensation and is committed to ensuring that she will never be victimised again.

Systems advocacy can be even more effective in strictly financial terms. When parents organise to put pressure on the school system to open access to their children, most of the effort is by the parents: the systems advocates provide a supporting and facilitating role. The changes in the school system benefit the children involved immediately, but also go on benefiting many other children in the future. Advocacy of this sort is tremendously effective.

There's another comparison possible. What about the quality of the advocacy? A paid individual advocate will develop a lot of experience, with knowledge of disability issues and ways of tackling problems. Paid advocates usually have relevant training, for example in social work. Citizen advocates, in comparison, are untrained and have limited experience, typically working with just a single protégé. But this also has an advantage. By focusing on the needs of a single person over a long period, often many years, a citizen advocate learns an enormous amount about their protégé and how to address their needs.

A key difference between citizen advocacy and paid individual advocacy is the payment itself. A citizen advocate is a free agent, able to take action without worrying about wages or a job. Funding bodies seem not to be attracted to this sort of independence, preferring instead to maintain levers of control. In a bureaucracy, accountability — namely ensuring that subordinates toe the line — can be more important than effectiveness.

The same dynamics apply to agencies funded by bureaucracies. The agency managers like things to be under their control.

Paid individual advocacy fits this model. Citizen advocacy does not, because the advocates are free agents, and systems advocacy does not because system changes are less predictable and controllable. This, I believe, is the underlying reason for FACSIA's push towards paid individual advocacy.

Obstacles

Citizen advocacy may be a good thing, but it has been taken up to only a limited degree. The obstacles are many.

As already discussed, funding for programmes is a key obstacle. Private funding sources are limited and subject to many other demands. Government funding for disability advocacy can bring with it pressure to move to paid advocacy.

Another obstacle is the difficulty of being a programme coordinator. Finding protégés and advocates is hard work and can become demoralising. Coordinators who are not successful at finding citizen advocates may be tempted to take the easier option of doing advocacy themselves and steering the programme towards paid individual advocacy.

At the level of advocates, the main difficulties are time and commitment. If one's protégé is a top priority, there's no problem. But if family, friends, jobs and recreation come first, protégés may be neglected and eventually abandoned.

Tactics

The tactics to support citizen advocacy can be examined at two levels: the point of view of advocates and the point of view of citizen advocacy as a social movement. Let's start with advocates and look at five methods for promoting a good thing: awareness, valuing, understanding, endorsement and action.

These are the same methods important in promoting other good things, such as writing and happiness, as discussed in chapter 1.

Advocates obviously know about what they are doing and believe it is a good thing: *awareness* and *valuing* are solidly covered. They also know the reasons why it is worthwhile, with the rationale for getting to know their protégé and their protégé's needs explained and its value apparent in their ongoing relationship: *understanding* is covered.

When it comes to *endorsement,* advocacy relationships are on weaker ground. The most authoritative backing of the relationship comes from the citizen advocacy office, but this has little recognition in the wider society. Nevertheless, if the office establishes good practices and has a good image — professional, well positioned, a good reputation — then its endorsement of a relationship will be influential with advocates. Just as important is endorsement by key people in an advocate's life: family members, friends, neighbours, co-workers. If these people are supportive, the advocate will be encouraged to continue; if they are indifferent or sceptical, then it is easier to let the relationship drift.

The key method for an advocate to continue is to be active in the relationship: this is the method of *action.* This is obvious enough, but it is more than a truism. The key is to put the protégé in a central part of one's life, like a family member or close friend, rather than as an afterthought to be squeezed in when there's time.

In summary, at the level of the advocate-protégé relationship, citizen advocacy does all the things necessary to turn a good thing into a habit. It's no surprise, then, that many advocates remain committed to their protégés for years, probably as long as many good friendships.

But relationships have to get started somehow, so we need to look at the methods used to promote citizen advocacy generally. If the context is right, then a lot of people will want to become citizen advocates and those who do will receive encouragement to continue: their habits will be reinforced by the people and circumstances around them.

If citizen advocacy is a good thing, then the ultimate goal is to make it a routine occurrence, something that occurs as a matter of course. That is very far from the case now: it's quite unusual for someone to initiate a strong voluntary relationship with a person with an intellectual disability or mental illness, especially someone who cannot easily reciprocate. These sorts of relationships do occur, such as the one between Nathaniel Ayers and Steve Lopez. In citizen advocacy circles, some of these become "blessed relationships," a rather strange expression. It means that when citizen advocacy coordinators come across such spontaneous relationships, they endorse and support them, in other words give them their blessing.

Spontaneous advocacy relationships are rare. A citizen advocacy programme might make dozens of matches for every blessed relationship discovered and supported. This shows that matchmaking efforts are needed to create relationships. And matchmaking is certainly not a routine occurrence. What methods can help make it so?

The first method is promoting *awareness*. When people know about and understand citizen advocacy, nearly always they are more supportive. Obviously, potential funders need to know about citizen advocacy before they'll offer financial support. Potential advocates need to know about citizen advocacy, and about protégés, before they'll volunteer to become an advocate.

Programmes make some efforts to raise awareness, but usually in a targeted manner. Coordinators might give talks at

clubs and societies and organise some media coverage of effective relationships. But these sorts of efforts are secondary to finding protégés and advocates, and for this a much more targeted approach is used. To find Emma, a potential protégé, Chris asked around at boarding houses and at schools. To find an advocate for Emma, Chris used networks in the neighbourhood. Chris would talk to one contact, asking who they might know fitting the profile for Emma's advocate, get some names and get in touch with them, and so on — until finding Claire. Along the way, Chris told a number of people about citizen advocacy. However, this is a very laborious way of spreading the word.

In some ways, publicity can actually be detrimental to citizen advocacy programmes. If the programme is regularly in the media, others may think that it is a service for people with disabilities, able to handle problems on the spot. Some people with disabilities may show up and ask for support. Other services — schools, hospitals, housing bodies — may refer their own clients to citizen advocacy programmes. This might be okay for a programme offering paid advocacy, because each new person can be added to the client list. But citizen advocacy programmes are not set up to handle large numbers of new cases; the major effort is in finding citizen advocates who will provide ongoing advocacy, rather than dealing with an immediate problem.

Furthermore, there is a risk in relying on referrals. Some of those who are *not* referred may be the ones in greatest need of advocacy, because they are unknown to agencies or because agencies are not doing a good job and don't want others to know about it. The ones in greatest need are far less likely to contact a programme on their own. That's certainly the case for potential protégés who cannot communicate.

The upshot is that citizen advocacy programmes seldom have a high public profile. The average member of the public knows something about disabilities, but has little awareness of disability advocacy. The usual idea is that governments and charities deal with disability issues. That there would be people freely choosing to be advocates for individuals with disabilities is an alien concept.

The second method is *valuing* citizen advocacy. This is not such a problem as awareness: once understood, most people see it as highly laudable — at least in the abstract. Welcoming a person with an intellectual disability into your life is another matter. An advocate may well introduce their protégé to family members, friends and others. If they are hostile or undermining, then the advocate may lose incentive. This doesn't seem to be a problem for most of the relationships I've heard about, but no doubt is a factor in some situations.

The more relationships are established in a community, the more protégés will be integrated into people's lives and the more routine this will seem. So as more relationships are created, they should have more support from people in a community.

The third method is for people to *understand* citizen advocacy. This is a big challenge. Society is increasingly based on relying on experts and specialists to fix problems. If you want food, you buy it at a shop. If you have a problem with your body, you see a doctor. There is a general expectation that someone else will deal with social problems. People with intellectual disabilities are commonly seen as someone else's problems: parents, welfare agencies, governments. Why should an ordinary citizen step up and take a major role? Furthermore, specialists are thought to know better: they are experts. So what would an ordinary citizen, an amateur with no formal training, know about it?

Although professionalisation and specialisation are powerful forces, there are counter-movements. Some people grow their own food. Others seek self-help solutions for their health problems or set up groups and networks for sharing information and advice. Citizen advocacy can be seen as part of this flowering of mutual help. However, as it operates in practice, it is closer to a halfway house between mutual help and dependence on experts: the advocates fit into the mutual-help model but the citizen advocacy office is run on an expert model: coordinators are supposed to become experts in establishing and supporting relationships, and some of them become very good at it indeed.

The reliance on paid staff to create and support relationships, however valuable in its own right, is a barrier to wider understanding of citizen advocacy and helps explain why relationship-building has never become a habit in the wider community. Aside from the rare spontaneous relationships, like Nathaniel Ayers and Steve Lopez, citizen advocacy in practice occurs only in areas with offices.

The fourth method, *endorsement,* is for citizen advocacy to be supported by authoritative figures or groups. This is very much part of the citizen advocacy model: reputation is seen as extremely important so that the image of programmes rubs off on protégés, who otherwise are susceptible to image degradation. Programmes seek board members who play significant roles in the community, for example in business or the professions. Funding from governments and reputable companies provides credibility.

Programmes are more credible when they are seen as being independent rather than tools of a funding body: the most powerful endorsements come from those who have nothing to gain from providing endorsement. In this sense, advocates are

powerful personal endorsers of citizen advocacy, because they seek no personal gain and often make great personal sacrifices on behalf of their protégés.

Finally, there is the fifth method, *action*. Because citizen advocacy has obtained only limited backing from authoritative figures and only limited funding, only a few individuals — programme coordinators — actually go about the key functions of recruiting protégés and advocates. At the level of creating and supporting relationships, only a few people ever get to develop the habit. Developing a community-wide, collective habit of doing citizen advocacy is a vision that, unfortunately, is far from current reality.

My view is that to expand citizen advocacy, the most promising path is to promote it as a fully voluntary system.[12] The advocates would undertake their roles without any form of compensation, as at present, but so would the matchmakers. Anyone who wanted to would be encouraged to find a potential protégé, assess this person's needs and then find someone to be an advocate for the protégé. A current advocate would have a head start in doing this.

The main advantage of this sort of system is that the necessity to obtain funding would be removed. Support for relationships could become more a mutual process, with telecommunications enabling connections at a distance. If funding was available, it could be used to promote and support the whole approach or to train people as matchmakers.

The big advantage of a fully voluntary system is that citizen advocacy could expand more easily. Publicity could be used to encourage more people to become matchmakers or advocates.

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12 Brian Martin, "Citizen advocacy futures," *Citizen Advocacy Forum,* 14(I & II), January-December 2004, 44–49.

No doubt there are risks in this approach: some advocates might not be as prepared or supported as much as they should be. Citizen advocacy, as presently organised, has a very strict set of protocols. However, in practice what happens is not nearly as regulated as the protocols might suggest. A fully voluntary system would risk a further loosening of advocate practice, but with the advantage of greater presence in the community and greater overall experience in advocacy. Given the strict protocols involved with citizen advocacy as it exists today, it would probably be better for a voluntary system to have a different name.

These ideas are speculative, because hardly anyone in the citizen advocacy movement is thinking about changing the model. When funding disappears, programmes fold up and that's the end of the story. My purpose here is to point out an alternative way of promoting a good thing.

Conclusion

Most people who learn about citizen advocacy think it is worthwhile. So what can be done to promote it? To answer this, it helps to look at the five tactics of awareness, valuing, understanding, endorsement and action.

Awareness is fundamental — and lack of awareness is a big obstacle to citizen advocacy. Hardly anyone knows it exists. To be taken up more widely, awareness campaigns are needed.

Valuing is far less of an obstacle, because nearly everyone involved with citizen advocacy appreciates it.

Understanding is important — and there are some challenges in understanding citizen advocacy. The basic idea is simple enough: there's someone with a disability who has unmet needs. This person is called a protégé. There's someone else, called a citizen advocate, who stands by this protégé, providing

protection, support and opportunities. Some additional features of citizen advocacy are harder to grasp. The advocate is unpaid and may be committed to their protégé for the indefinite future. This can take a while to understand because commitments to strangers, and to people with disabilities, are not that common. The idea of advocacy is not always easily understood. It can be interpreted as friendship. Some advocates are friends with their protégés, but others are not — their primary role might be to stop abuse or ensure accommodation. There is plenty that can be learned about citizen advocacy. Even so, the basic ideas are the most important and are not too hard.

Endorsement by respected figures is a good way to promote citizen advocacy — but there has not been much high-level endorsement. For citizen advocates, the primary endorsement comes from the programme; family and friends may add their support. In wider society, outside disability circles, citizen advocacy is little known and seldom mentioned by prominent figures. Few leading politicians, doctors, editors, sporting heroes or rock stars make ringing testimonies to the power of citizen advocacy.

Action, the final tactic, simply means doing citizen advocacy. That means the daily or weekly efforts of citizen advocates themselves. This is the core of what keeps it alive.

To sum up, citizen advocacy thrives at the level of protégés and advocates through regular actions by advocates. Citizen advocacy is highly valued by most of those who know about it. The greatest obstacles to the spread of citizen advocacy are lack of awareness and endorsement.

Citizen advocates are not supposed to accept any payment or other compensation. Their efforts are voluntary or, in the language of citizen advocacy, "freely given." In principle, citizen advocacy could readily proliferate, because all an advocate needs

is awareness, understanding and the support necessary to develop a habit — the habit of taking action on behalf of their protégé. In practice, a key obstacle is funding, not for advocates but for citizen advocacy programmes to pay salaries, rent and expenses. Because citizen advocacy is such a challenge to the usual approach — which is for service agencies with paid staff to address the needs of people with disabilities — funding for citizen advocacy has never been enough to cater for more than a small proportion of potential protégés.

Citizen advocacy often works quite well at the level of individuals, but at the level of systems — funding of programmes — it has struggled to maintain a toehold for minimal recurrent support. To me, this suggests it is worth considering a different model for promoting citizen advocacy, based on encouraging lots of people to become matchmakers, most of them unpaid. To do this would require a number of innovations, including how-to manuals for recruiting protégés and advocates and making matches, and a network of matchmaker supporters.

Current participants in citizen advocacy programmes are very unlikely to move to such an alternative because of their commitment to the citizen advocacy model as it exists. It is more likely to occur through the introduction of an entirely new approach.

5
Honour codes

Overview
• Honour codes are intended to promote a commitment to honesty among students.
• Research shows codes can make a difference.
• To promote codes, students should be aware of them, hear them portrayed in positive terms, understand how they work, see peers respect the codes, and regularly follow them personally.[1]

Cheating: the problem

At a small US college, a former student, Steve, set up an essay-writing service, quite openly, advertising himself as "Dr. Research." Apparently he wanted to take revenge on the college for the way he had been treated. He wrote lots of essays to order; some students only wanted a B for their work, because an A would be suspicious. Steve became so good at his job that he was making twice as much as a full professor and wrote a total of 10% of all the essays written on campus.

Why wasn't anything done about Steve's activities? The college depended on attracting students whose parents were willing to pay high fees. The students wanted to have a good time. Most were quite capable of writing adequate essays but preferred to spend their time in other ways. Cracking down on

Steve would have alienated students and threatened the college's finances.[2]

The case of Dr Research is an extreme case of a common problem: cheating in US schools and universities.[3] The problem is also prevalent in other countries.

How can you find out whether students have been cheating? One way is to catch them, for example exchanging answers during exams. But detection catches only a small proportion of cheating. More reliable is simply asking students about their cheating, using questionnaires that ensure anonymity. Of course some students may not want to admit cheating even anonymously, because it means consciously acknowledging their own dishonesty. So the figures are probably underestimates. In any case, they are sizeable, and alarming to many: in 1993, half of US students surveyed admitted copying from other students in examinations.[4]

There have been some prominent scandals when cheating rings have been exposed. In one instance in the 1990s, two dozen students were expelled from the US Naval Academy after an electrical engineering examination paper was stolen and more than a hundred students were implicated.[5] Cheating at military

2 Robert S. Wolk, "'Dr. Research': a quick fix for plagiarists," *Journal of Information Ethics,* 2(1), Spring 1993, 63–71.

3 Donald L. McCabe and Linda Klebe Trevino, "What we know about cheating in college," *Change,* January/February 1996, 29–33. On cheating more generally, see David Callahan, *The Cheating Culture: Why More Americans Are Doing Wrong to Get Ahead* (Orlando, FL: Harcourt, 2004).

4 McCabe and Trevino, "What we know about cheating in college," 31.

5 Jeffrey Gantar and Tom Patten, *A Question of Honor: The Cheating Scandal that Rocked Annapolis and a Midshipman Who Decided to Tell the Truth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996).

academies is especially disturbing, or at least newsworthy, because these institutions are supposed to nurture future leaders.

These days it's possible to buy essays online, written to order so they receive a clean bill of health on text-matching services such as Turnitin used by many colleges to check for plagiarism. In fact, there are so many essay sites that the biggest challenge is choosing the best one.

I think most students are honest most of the time, doing the work required and even learning something along the way. However, there is quite a lot of cheating too. There's a whole movement of staff and scholars concerned about "academic integrity," whose main focus is student plagiarism and what to do about it.

However, there's a big difference between attitudes among teachers and students. Wendy Sutherland-Smith interviewed and held discussions among teachers concerning plagiarism — copying without acknowledgement from published sources or another student's work — and found, not surprisingly, most viewed this as a very serious violation of ethical behaviour. But most students were not so concerned, thinking it wasn't a big deal and that severe penalties were unfair.[6]

In some student circles, good students are expected to help their friends, for example by allowing them to copy assignments or answers on exams. A good student who refuses to go along with this is seen as a spoilsport. In such circumstances, cheating has two sides: gaining unfair assistance and giving it.

Given that cheating seems fairly common, what can be done about it? One option is an honour system. The basic idea is that students pledge to be honest: they are on their honour. Honour systems are intended to promote honesty, most

6 Wendy Sutherland-Smith, *Plagiarism, the Internet and Student Learning: Improving Academic Integrity* (London: Routledge, 2008).

commonly to encourage students not to cheat. They rely on voluntary compliance by students, not intensive monitoring by teachers.

What is the prospect of an honour system working? This would require students on an entire campus following a moral expectation to be honest. If cheating is rife in most schools and campuses, at least within certain student circles, how can a university create a different set of values?

Rice

I first learned about an honour code in September 1965, when I went to Houston, Texas to study physics at Rice University. I don't remember a whole lot of detail from my four years at Rice, but the honour code made a big impression.

Like all new students, I arrived a week before classes began. There were lots of activities to help us settle into life on campus — nearly all freshmen lived in colleges on the campus itself. One of the activities that week was learning about the honour system. We were told about its history and its operation. The most important aspect was that on all important assignments and exams, we had to sign a statement saying "I have neither given nor received any aid on this assignment." Furthermore, we were required to report any honour system violations by other students that we observed. At the end of the week we were given a short quiz on the system.

This initial training was important, but there had to be more to the honour system. One important thing was history. The honour system had been introduced when Rice took its first students in 1912.

Rice is a private university, set up with a bequest from a wealthy businessman named William Marsh Rice. It has always been exclusive, with a small enrolment and high standards. It

had no tuition fee until 1965 — the year I started — and even then the fee was considerably less than most other private universities. When I was there, just 550 new undergraduates were accepted each year.

Most Rice undergraduates had been top-performing students in high school. Many had been top of their class. Did many of them cheat in high school? I don't know, but there was a temptation at Rice. Many students who had been academic stars in high school became, at Rice, ordinary performers. Instead of getting straight As, they were getting Bs and Cs or, in the Rice numerical grading system in which 5 was a fail and the number 1 was the top grade, they were getting 2s and 3s.

The honour system seemed to infiltrate everyone's way of thinking. The training in the orientation week was only the beginning. Every assignment we had to sign the statement "I have neither given or received any aid on this work." But it wasn't the signing alone that made the difference. It was the fact that everyone else was committed to the code.

One of my roommates admitted that he had cheated in high school, where he had been a top student. At Rice, though, he said he would rather fail than cheat. He was working really hard and getting ordinary grades, just passing in some cases. This comment stuck in my memory: it signified how powerful a code could be in changing someone's behaviour.

During my time at Rice, significant changes were made in assessments, allowing flexibility for students. Students could choose the time and day they took final exams.[7] So I picked times that enabled me to recover from one three-hour exam and prepare for the next one. This meant that in the exam room, there

7 This option is no longer available, though take-home exams are still used frequently. I thank Hilary Baker-Jennings, Chair of the Rice Honor Council, for this information.

were students taking exams from completely different courses. Each student pledged not to reveal anything about the exam to any other student. I remember when my roommate and I were in the same class. He took the exam a few days before me — and told me absolutely nothing about it.

We also had take-home exams. We could take it any time we chose over a number of days and we were on our honour to spend no more than three hours on the exam. One year I took a class in quantum mechanics and we had a take-home exam during the semester. One of the questions was really hard — I couldn't make any progress on the calculation. After marking all the papers, our teacher reported that not a single student in the class had solved the problem — and this was a class for physics majors, with lots of top students. The teacher said he should have told us that he had assumed that one of the quantum numbers was zero, which made the problem much easier.

This was a vivid illustration of everyone's commitment to the honour code. We had been on our honour not to look at any references and to spend only three hours on the exam. By going to the library and finding some advanced calculations, we might have been able to make more headway in solving the problem — but no one did this. We all chose to submit our exam papers having failed to solve it.

I'm sure that some cheating did occur. However, it was risky because so many students subscribed to the code.

At a lot of universities, disciplinary tribunals are run by academics and students are treated with kid gloves. When students say they didn't mean to copy because they didn't know it was wrong, they are often let off with a reprimand or a fail for the course. Although administrations say that cheating is dealt with severely, in practice very few students suffer the ultimate penalty of being expelled. This is fair. When lots of students

cheat, it's unfair that just a few, those who happen to be caught, are treated harshly while so many others avoid any punishment whatsoever.

At Rice, alleged violations of the code were dealt with by a panel run by students, and the outcomes of panel deliberations were reported, though without names. When students run disciplinary panels, they tend to be less tolerant of cheating, because they see how unfair it is for honest students. This partly explains why the panel at Rice was so tough. The other part is that when most students followed the honour code, those who did not were especially culpable for letting everyone else down: they dishonoured the code and their fellow students.

McCabe and Trevino

Donald McCabe and Linda Klebe Trevino have surveyed tens of thousands of students at higher education institutions in the US, from small colleges to multi-campus universities, asking them whether they cheat. McCabe and Trevino then look at whether there's an honour code. What they find is that codes do have an effect, even at large universities where many students are part-time and don't live on campus. A code that is taken seriously is linked to less cheating.

McCabe and Trevino say two elements are critical to the success of codes. "First, a campus must communicate to its students that academic integrity is a major institutional priority."[8] By "a campus" they mean the leaders of the institution, for the example the president. In other words, the most powerful and

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8 These and the following quotes are taken from Donald McCabe and Linda Klebe Trevino, "Honesty and honor codes," *Academe,* 88(1), January-February 2002, 37–41.

authoritative figures must be seen to be taking the issue seriously.

The second crucial element is that students must participate "in campus judicial or hearing bodies that review alleged infringements of the honor code." When students are involved, this gives the code credibility in another way: students know that honest classmates will not be easy on cheating. It's a way of ensuring that the official rhetoric has some substance.

These two features are exactly what I experienced at Rice. There was no disagreement about the honour code — it was promoted and respected from the top down.

McCabe and Trevino make some other observations based on their research. They say "Simply having an honor code means little if students don't know about it. It must be introduced to new students and made a topic of ongoing campus dialogue." Namely, put the code on the agenda of every student.

In their article, they make just one reference to Rice: "Members of the student honor committee at Rice University orient new faculty to the student honor code and keep department chairs apprised of any changes in the committee's emphasis." I don't remember hearing about that when I was at Rice, but then I was never involved with the honour committee. There was bound to be a lot happening behind the scenes.

McCabe and Trevino conclude their article with this comment: "Moreover, the greatest benefit of a culture of integrity may not be reduced student cheating. Instead, it may be the lifelong benefit of learning the value of living in a community of trust." I can relate to that. The experience of Rice's honour code stayed with me long after I'd forgotten most of what I learned in the classroom.

In Australia, no university is well known for using an honour code: if codes are used anywhere, they receive little

publicity. As a result, few people understand how effective a code can be. When I mention the possibility, it's apparent that there's little understanding. My experience makes the possibility vivid; for others, it's merely hypothetical.

What were the things that made Rice's code so effective, at least for me? It is easy to spell out connections to the five methods regularly found useful for promoting good things, as discussed in chapter 1.

Awareness Everyone knew about the code. We were given a solid introduction in our first week and then it was repeatedly brought to our attention every time we did an assignment and signed the pledge.

Valuing The code was presented to us as something highly worthwhile, indeed as a valuable Rice tradition that set the university above and apart from most others. We took pride in participating in an honour system.

Understanding We knew how the code worked. It was quite simple: because everyone, or nearly everyone, was committed to the code, cheating hardly ever occurred, and that meant honest students benefited.

Endorsement The code was supported by everyone we respected. That included Rice's founders and our teachers but, more significantly for new students, the students from higher years. Living in colleges, we met students from upper years on a daily basis. If they had treated the code with disdain or as a joke, we would have done the same. But they were deadly serious about it — and so, soon enough, we were too.

Action We learned to operate using the code and before long it became just part of the landscape, as routine as doing assignments. It became a habit. The external conditions supported this: commitment by others and regular reinforcement. It was far easier to follow the code than to try to cheat.

The Rice honour code operated on two levels: individual commitment and collective participation. Individuals became committed through the five methods: awareness, valuing, understanding, endorsement and action. Each of these depended on nearly everyone else also being committed. Collective participation provided the supportive environment that made being committed seem entirely natural. A person who sometimes cheated who entered the Rice environment became — like my roommate — an honest member of the community.

The five methods are also apparent in the research by McCabe and Trevino. My experience was typical.

The usual idea of honesty is that it's a matter of individual integrity. If people are honest, they'll do the right thing, but monitoring and penalties are needed to catch and discipline cheaters. The experience with honour codes shows the weakness of this picture.

No doubt some students who came to Rice had a stronger prior commitment to honesty than others. Some had cheated in high school; others hadn't. In any case, the low level of student cheating at Rice can't possibly be explained by individual honesty. The key was a culture of integrity that enveloped nearly every student on campus and shaped their behaviour. In other words, developing a habit of being honest is just as much a matter of culture, of collective behaviour, as it is a matter of individual commitment.

McCabe and Trevino emphasise this strongly: "Creating a culture of academic integrity takes years to achieve and demands the commitment of all members of the campus community. Once attained, such a culture requires constant attention and renewal."[9]

A culture of honesty is hard to develop and maintain because there are strong contrary pressures, namely the incentives to get ahead in a competitive system. An honour code is a way to sustain a culture of honesty. The key is ensuring that the environment for each student is one that encourages honesty.

If honesty is a habit, then individuals need to learn the habit and the best support for this is everyone around you having the same habit. You just go with the flow and reap the benefits. However, someone has to be doing the maintenance work to keep the system going. That turns out to be the way it works for all sorts of good things.

Complications and qualifications

So far I've presented the story of honour codes via the example of Rice and with a few quotes from a summary article by Donald McCabe and Linda Trevino. Delving into the research on the topic gives support for this picture but, as is usual in research, there are all sorts of complications and qualifications. McCabe and Trevino, occasionally with collaborators, have studied honour codes for years, and cite many earlier studies. In one of their key articles, published in 1993, they examine honour codes along with "other contextual influences," in other words factors that influence student behaviour aside from their personal commitment to honesty. Based on a review of research in the area, they propose a series of hypotheses, such as "Academic

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9 Ibid.

dishonesty will be inversely related to the perceived certainty of being reported by a peer": they expect that when a student thinks a classmate will turn them in, they will be less likely to cheat.[10]

Most of the hypotheses seem obvious enough; the point of McCabe and Trevino's study was to actually obtain evidence to test them. They surveyed over 6000 students from 31 US higher education institutions, some with honour codes and some without, and statistically analysed the data to test their hypotheses. Students were asked whether they had cheated themselves, whether they knew about cheating by other students, and a host of other questions. Students responded to the survey anonymously — what student is likely to openly admit to cheating? Indeed, some students might not be willing to admit to cheating even on an anonymous questionnaire; McCabe and Trevino note this and other possible limitations of the survey.

They found that students at institutions with codes were less likely to cheat. Why not? Their most important finding was that "Peers' behavior had by far the strongest influence on academic dishonesty"[11]: if fellow students cheat, you are more likely to as well. This suggests, according to McCabe and Trevino, that students learn to cheat by observing others and that when others cheat, this makes cheating more acceptable.[12]

The authors also noted that "understanding and acceptance of academic integrity policies has the strongest association with students' perceptions of their peers' behavior."[13] This means that

if there's an honour code and students understand and accept it, there will be less cheating. If even just a few students are influenced by the honour code, this has a spin-off effect on other students, because when their fellow students are seen as honest, they are less likely to cheat themselves. Just as cheating leads to more cheating by example and setting a norm, so honesty leads to more honesty.

McCabe and Trevino's research is compatible with each of the five methods for doing good things better.

> *Awareness* Greater student awareness of academic integrity policies reduces cheating.
> *Valuing* Students value learning in a culture of honesty which gives them self-respect and pride in their institution.
> *Understanding* Greater student understanding of academic integrity policies reduces cheating.
> *Endorsement* The behaviour of fellow students provides the most powerful endorsement of honesty — or cheating.
> *Action* Behaving honestly builds the habit for future honesty.

One quote sums up most of these points: "programs aimed at distributing, explaining, and gaining student and faculty acceptance of academic integrity policies may be particularly useful."[14] Actually, McCabe and Trevino don't directly discuss the point about behaviour building an honesty habit, but their findings are compatible with it.

Quite revealing are quotes from students asked why they didn't cheat.

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10 Donald L. McCabe and Linda Klebe Trevino, "Academic dishonesty: honor codes and other contextual influences," *Journal of Higher Education,* 64 (5), September-October 1993, 522-538, at 527.

11 Ibid., 532.

12 Ibid., 533.

13 Ibid., 532.

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14 Ibid., 533–534.

• "I like the respect I get at [the institution] and wouldn't do anything to jeopardize that"

• "Peer pressure — you would feel very embarrassed if other students saw it"

• "as for cheating on a test, it's socially unacceptable"

• "I did many of these 'academic dishonesty' things in high school — but not since arriving at [the institution] — the atmosphere is one of respect for the student — and so I have respect for the system"[15]

McCabe, Trevino and their collaborator Ken Butterfield have followed up with further studies that support these basic findings. For example, they compare the effect of traditional honour codes, most commonly found in small institutions where most students live on campus, like Rice, with the effect of modified, less comprehensive honour codes instituted at larger institutions with less campus cohesion. Their conclusion is that modified codes can reduce cheating compared to places with no code at all, but not as much as traditional codes.[16]

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15 Ibid., 534–535.

16 Donald L. McCabe, Linda Klebe Trevino and Kenneth D. Butterfield, "Honor codes and other contextual influences on academic integrity: a replication and extension to modified honor code settings," *Research in Higher Education,* 43 (3), June 2002, 357–378. See also, for example, Donald L. McCabe and Linda Klebe Trevino, "Individual and contextual influences on academic dishonesty: a multicampus investigation," *Research in Higher Education,* 38 (3), 1997, 379–396; Donald L. McCabe, Kenneth D. Butterfield and Linda Klebe Trevino, "Faculty and academic integrity: the influence of current honor codes and past honor code experiences," *Research in Higher Education,* 44 (3), June 2003, 367–385.

It's worth looking at studies by other investigators. Teresa Hall and George Kuh carried out a study of the effect of honour codes using several research methods: interviews with students, focus groups (sitting in with groups of students discussing targeted topics) and analysis of documents, with nine readings of the interview transcripts looking for themes and testing emerging categories. Hall and Kuh studied three large state institutions and concluded that honour codes were "only a mild deterrent to academic dishonesty." They say a code on its own is not enough to ensure integrity. Most students were aware of it but not enough of them properly understood it or accepted its values. Hall and Kuh say that "An academic honor code will not have the intended effect without the endorsement of and widespread support by the faculty."[17] So, although Hall and Kuh are a bit more sceptical about the effect of a code than McCabe and Trevino, they point to the same factors in ensuring its effectiveness: awareness, valuing, understanding and endorsement.

To gain a greater understanding of codes, it is worth seeing what critics say. There are plenty of people who don't think codes are worth bothering with or that they won't work — otherwise nearly every institution would be instituting them. I'm interested in critics who are well informed about codes and their impact and yet remain sceptical. One such critic is Gary J. Niels, who wrote a report on honour codes, with special attention to US secondary schools.[18] He starts out by referring to evidence that

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17 Teresa L. Hall and George D. Kuh, "Honor among students: academic integrity and honor codes at state-assisted universities," *NASPA Journal,* 36 (1), Fall 1998, 2–17, at pp. 2 and 13.

18 Gary J. Niels, *Is the Honor Code a Solution to the Cheating Epidemic?,* 1996, reproduced by the Educational Resource Information Service, ED 423 191, SO 028 965.

there is a vast amount of student cheating. He says "it became apparent from my studies that even though most students believed that cheating was wrong, cheating behavior was often induced by contextual factors."[19] Trying to promote honesty in individuals, for example through moral education, was not likely to succeed because of outside influences on the individual. Niels says "'fear of failure' and 'parents demanding good grades' were consistently scored by students among the top five reasons for cheating."[20]

Much of what Niels says is compatible with the studies by McCabe and Trevino and by Hall and Kuh. Indeed, Niels cites McCabe's work. However, Niels, rather than focussing on the successes of honour codes where they exist, instead points to their limitations at getting to the roots of cheating. He says "To view a traditional honor code as a panacea to the problem of cheating is to underestimate the causes of cheating behavior," which are "complex and multifaceted."[21] Niels advocates reviewing academic policies that foster competition and promoting educational reform that fosters students' commitment to learning.

Actually, McCabe, Trevino and others supportive of honour codes do not see them as panaceas — they are well aware of their limitations, but nonetheless see them as worthwhile. Furthermore, they would endorse Niels' emphasis on contextual factors influencing cheating; after all, an honour code itself is a contextual factor. McCabe and Trevino's 1993 paper is titled "Academic dishonesty: honor codes and other contextual influences"[22] and several later papers include similar phrasing. My guess is that they would support Niels' call to develop policies that promote learning rather than competition.

These supporters and critics of honour codes agree on the importance of contextual factors — they just disagree on the relative importance of honour codes within the panoply of contextual factors. Therefore, it's intriguing to imagine an educational institution that doesn't bother with contextual factors and instead puts trust in finding honest students. The first task is to identify students who actually are honest. Usually there's no direct evidence of a person's honesty, just testimony from the person — which might well be self-serving — and their teachers and others. Far more revealing would be experiments that test honesty, for example giving someone an opportunity to cheat. However, such experiments probably would be considered unethical and if the student knew such tests existed the results would be compromised. The upshot is that there's no easy way, with standard selection processes, to identify honest students.

Set that aside and imagine further an institution able to pick only those students who had been honest previously. Would this be a guarantee of future honesty? Hardly, if temptations were too great. Imagine that the answer sheet for an exam was accidentally emailed to students. Honest students would refuse to read it, but if a few succumbed to temptation, aced the exam and teachers did nothing about the inequity, others might soon decide to take advantage of similar opportunities. This scenario is based on the assumption that students are passive. One obvious response would be for them to tell the teacher; another would be to protest about other students having an unfair advantage. With these responses, we move from individual honesty to contextual

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19 Ibid., 6.

20 Ibid., 10.

21 Ibid., 40.

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22 McCabe and Trevino, "Academic dishonesty."

factors. McCabe and Trevino emphasise the importance of teachers' commitment to honesty — if the teachers don't care, as in this scenario, then students' personal commitments are undermined. When students report problems to teachers, that's exactly what honour codes are aiming for, namely an attempt to bring others into the issue.

The conclusion from this hypothetical scenario is that relying entirely on personal honesty is deeply flawed because there's no easy way to identify honest applicants and the culture might undermine their commitment anyway. An analogy to the strategy of recruiting honest students would be a strategy of recruiting personally committed athletes, but then not having any training programmes for them but instead relying on them to continue with training at their own initiative. Coaches know that most athletes train much harder when the conditions are right, including the influence of peers, namely other committed athletes. Building team spirit, in other words mutual influence to foster achievement, is vital to sporting success. Likewise, to foster honesty, it makes sense to build team spirit of a different sort — mutual commitment to honesty.

The analogy to athletics brings up the role of competition, noted by Niels as a factor in promoting dishonesty. In sports, the ideal of clean and honest competition is often undermined by the desire to win. Seeking to win is a key driver behind the use of drugs in sport, which insiders say is far more common than revealed by the occasional positive drug test.[23] Athletes use various psychological techniques, such as verbal insults, to disturb the concentration of opponents. There are plenty of honest athletes, but incentives to cheat are considerable,

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23 See, for example, Rick McGuire, "Athletes at risk," in Ray Tricker and David L. Cook, eds., *Athletes at Risk: Drugs and Sport* (Dubuque, IA: Wm. C. Brown, 1990), 1–14, at 12.

especially at advanced levels where the stakes are higher. Building team spirit involves fostering a cooperative, supportive atmosphere among athletes, typically those on a team whose opponents are another team.

In academic competitions, in contrast, students seldom operate in teams — they are individuals seeking grades and degrees. There are few cross-institution competitive events, for example Harvard scholarly teams competing against those at Yale. This means building team spirit for honesty is that much harder.

Niels refers to a book by Alfie Kohn, *No Contest: The Case against Competition.*[24] This is now a classic. Kohn surveys the evidence in psychology and other fields concerning competition and makes the startling claim that there is hardly any evidence that competition works better than cooperation. This is startling because western societies are built on competition, especially in education and the economy. Students compete for grades and degrees; workers compete for jobs and promotions. Competition is widely seen as a good thing, bringing out excellence. Kohn says this approach isn't supported by any decent evidence.

Educators commonly seek to encourage a love of learning in students. It is well known that intrinsic motivation — wanting to learn — is far more effective than extrinsic motivation, namely inducements. A student might be encouraged to study by an upcoming exam, but after the exam pay no attention to the material and so quickly forget nearly everything learned. Teachers know that if a topic in the syllabus is not assessed, very few students will bother with it. Assessment — exams, essays, reports, presentations — is what channels student effort. Can

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24 Alfie Kohn, *No Contest: The Case Against Competition* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1986).

assessment be used to foster intrinsic motivation? The answer has to be something like "only with great difficulty."

Few students would attend a university if there were no degrees. Degrees are the key incentive, providing a credential that helps to obtain jobs and status. If the only benefit from attending university was learning, then only those genuinely interested in learning would show up, and that would be just a small fraction of present enrolments.

So here's the problem: most students attend university to obtain credentials.[25] Learning is secondary. Very few students approach a test with the thought of maximising their under-standing. Instead, they want to maximise their score on the test, even if this means reduced understanding. Cramming — studying at the last moment — is widespread, even though it is well known that retention is far less than with steady study over a longer period. Few students keep studying after classes and exams are over, though ongoing engagement with ideas and skills is the basis for improvement and eventually for expert performance. Is it any wonder that some students cheat?

Honour codes, along with other mechanisms to promote student honesty, are thus in conflict with damaging influences built into higher education, especially the quest for degrees and competition with other students. Many teachers valiantly try to push against these influences, for example by encouraging student collaboration in learning and fostering deep learning though personal engagement with material. These efforts are valuable but often overwhelmed by the influence of degrees and competition. Honour codes can still make a difference, but considerable effort may be required to achieve the benefits.

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25 For the wider context, see Randall Collins, *The Credential Society: An Historical Sociology of Education and Stratification* (New York: Academic Press, 1979).

Individual honesty

The evidence suggests that whether an individual student cheats depends greatly on the context, especially on what others are doing. Therefore, to promote honesty, the goal is to promote a culture of honesty or, if you like, of honour. Nevertheless, it is worth asking, what can an individual do? Suppose you are immersed in a culture of cheating. Does that mean you have to join in?

Tactics for promoting individual honesty are exactly the same as for groups — they just rely more on the individual. First is awareness: you need to find out what honesty means. If everyone you know is doing something — offering a payment, sharing answers, whatever — is it really okay? Sometimes you can consult a specialist, or apply general principles, or look to other organisations or societies for models.

If nearly every parent helps their child by doing some of their homework, is this cheating? You might reason that it's unfair to children whose parents are unable or unwilling to give comparable assistance. In thinking this way, you've used another method of promoting honesty: thinking of ways to understand it. You think clearly and logically about what people are doing and then figure out how to proceed.

Being personally honest involves valuing honesty and fairness. That seems obvious enough, but in many cases people think it's okay to obtain special advantages for themselves or those close to them. If some parents are able to afford special tutoring for their children, is this cheating? Perhaps not in the technical sense, but it certainly can give an advantage not available to everyone.

To promote your own personal honesty, it's worth bringing authorities to your support. If you're religious, you might rely on injunctions such as "You shall not steal," and apply this broadly

to any form of cheating. Or you might find writers who provide the same guidance from a secular standpoint.

Finally, and most importantly, is practising being honest. This helps to develop the skills to resist temptations and to behave with dignity. This can be difficult and sometimes, in a culture of corruption, leads to reprisals. How to survive in such situations is another story and may involve more than simply remaining honest yourself: the next step is to intervene against dishonesty, sometimes a perilous enterprise.

Conclusion

An honour code is one way to promote honesty among students. The basic idea is to create widespread commitment to honesty. In an atmosphere in which cheating is abhorrent, fewer students will try to cheat and others will be willing to report violations.

For an honour code to work, students need to know it exists. This is obvious enough: the point is that regular reminders will help keep the code salient. Students need to believe in the code. Again, this is obvious, but there are always some cynics. Students need to understand how the code operates and why it works. This helps them explain it to others and inoculates them against counter-arguments. The code will have greater credibility when authoritative figures support it. This includes leaders of the institution, teachers and, most importantly, other students, given that peer influence is incredibly strong. Finally, students need to practise the code. The more they follow it in everyday encounters, the more it will become a habit, built into their behaviour.

One of the crucial parts of an honour code is that students help to run it, for example participating in the tribunal to judge violations of the code. This gives the code greater credibility and also gives students a sense of participation and ownership.

An honour code is an example of a contextual or system-based approach to honesty. Rather than trying to select individuals who are honest, the approach assumes students are strongly influenced by their environment, in particular how other students are behaving. An honour code usually works best when it is long established and where most students live on campus and know each other well, maximising mutual influence.

If an honour code were the primary influence on students, cheating wouldn't be a problem. The trouble is that there are other influences, especially competition between students for grades, the general quest for degrees, and the attractions of other activities such as socialising. (Study? How much easier and nicer it is to purchase a written-to-order essay on the web and go to a party!) One solution to the challenge is to promote cooperation as an alternative to competition. This is possible within classrooms to some extent, but in the education system as a whole, grades and degrees are crucial. It doesn't matter whether you know far more than a Yale graduate because, without a high school diploma, your prospects are not nearly as good. As long as credentials are more important than actual learning, and credentials are keys to careers, cheating will be a problem.

This examination of honour codes reveals several things. Taken as a good thing in itself, an honour code can be promoted by awareness, valuing, understanding, endorsement and action, the same methods used to promote other good things. Honour codes are just one way to promote student honesty, but they must confront a deeper problem, namely the primacy of credentials. Promoting an honour code promotes honesty within an education system, but the system has structural shortcomings, notably credentialism. This is a reminder that when promoting good things, it is worth looking at the wider picture and examining alternative ways to achieve fundamental goals.

6
Health

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Overview

• Good health can be promoted using the methods of awareness, valuing, understanding, endorsement and action.

• Action at the individual level is possible. Far more effective is changing the environmental conditions so that healthy habits become the default option.[1]

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To illustrate methods for promoting good health, I use two examples: running to work and a low-salt diet. In between, I will comment on health as a good thing and mention the role of nudges.

Running to work

In the early 1970s, my wife and I lived in Sydney. We didn't have a car, so we chose rented accommodation in locations convenient to where we worked and not too far from shops.

I was doing my PhD in theoretical physics at Sydney University. On many days I would stay home and work, and usually get much more done. I wanted to go running for the exercise, but found it difficult to maintain my commitment. I'd often say to myself, "I'll do it later today"; later in the day, I'd

say, "I can skip it today and run tomorrow." It was classic procrastination.

On days when I went to the university, it was a lengthy process. I'd walk a few minutes to the railway station, then wait five or ten minutes for the train — which was often late — ride the train 12 to 15 minutes to Redfern station and then walk 20 minutes to my office. The whole process took maybe 45 minutes, quite a bit of time to travel just five or ten kilometres. I could have cycled this distance in a fraction of the time, but I didn't dare because the traffic was so dense and chaotic and the pollution so great. Indeed, I could have run the distance in 45 minutes.

That's when I got the idea of running to work. I could save time by combining commuting and exercise and reduce the motivation required for running. So I resolved that when we moved out of Sydney, we would try to find a place to live that enabled me to run to work.

That's exactly what happened. I obtained a job in Canberra and we bought a house three or four kilometres from the Australian National University, where I worked. I could run to work and get my exercise without much willpower required.

Whereas previously I kept postponing running, with various rationalisations going through my mind, now things were different. When it was time to leave, I'd put on running clothes and off I'd go. I didn't think a thing about it. People who drive to work don't usually require any special motivation to get into the car — when they are ready to go to work, that's just what they do. It was the same for me to run to work.

Running invigorates me. For the rest of the day I feel better physically and mentally. Though running requires effort, paradoxically it gives me energy. Best of all is the calming

effect: after a tense day at the office, the run home usually puts my worries into perspective.

People sometimes ask about it. "Do you run in the rain?" or, more commonly, "Is there a place to shower?" I keep several changes of clothes in my office and wash off as much or as little as needed. Running in the rain is fine — it's better than running in a lot of sweat on a hot day.

I feel safer running than cycling. Usually I run on the grass next to streets and cross them only when there's no traffic. When we moved to Wollongong, we found a house in an even more favourable position, with no busy roads to cross the whole route to the university.

My vehicle — my body — breaks down occasionally, with a sprained ankle or inflamed Achilles tendon. Nearly anyone who exercises a lot experiences injuries. However, I never time myself when running and have never competed in races or joined fun runs. I'm primarily a commuter runner. This lowers the risk of injury.

I've met lots of people who say they couldn't run because of knee or other problems. A good alternative is brisk walking, which has many of the same benefits as running but less pounding.

I've been running to work for 35 years. It's a routine and nothing special for me. But in the wider society, it's highly unusual. I've never met anyone else who commutes by running, though occasionally someone tells me about someone they know who does. A fellow in New York contacted me to say he'd been running to work for seven years.

If getting regular exercise is a good thing,[2] what have I done to make this a habit? Five methods are relevant: awareness,

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2 There is a vast body of research on health. On exercise and health, see for example Eliza F. Chakravarty et al., "Reduced disability and

valuing, understanding, endorsement and action — the same five methods relevant for promoting and protecting a range of good things, as discussed in chapter 1.

First, I became aware of exercise as worthwhile. That was back in the 1970s during the initial jogging boom.

Second, I valued running, recognising it as beneficial physically and mentally. In fact, the main reason I like to run is that it makes me feel better, especially mentally. It reduces stress and keeps me alert.

Third, I knew the arguments about the value of exercise. Being a runner made me especially receptive to information about running.

Fourth, I referred to authorities about the value of running — authorities in this case mainly being researchers, like my brother, a physiologist who has researched exercise-related topics such as the effect of sleep deprivation on performance.

Fifth — and most importantly — I actually did the running. I developed a habit and have stuck with it. So at the individual level, I've used all the standard five methods to promote running to work.

These five methods for fostering my running are nothing special — they apply to many dedicated athletes. What is a bit

mortality among aging runners: a 21-year longitudinal study," *Archives of Internal Medicine,* 168 (15), 11/25 August 2008, 1638–1646; Joanna Kruk, "Physical activity in the prevention of the most frequent chronic diseases: an analysis of the recent evidence," *Asian Pacific Journal of Cancer Prevention,* 8 (3), 2007, 325–338; Ralph S. Paffenbarger, Jr. and Eric Olsen, *LifeFit: An Effective Exercise Program for Optimal Health and a Longer Life* (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 1996); Roy J. Shephard, *Aging, Physical Activity, and Health* (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 1997). On exercise and mental functioning, see John J. Ratey with Eric Hagerman, *Spark: The Revolutionary New Science of Exercise and the Brain* (New York: Little, Brown, 2008).

different in my case is that I set up "environmental conditions," namely the relationship of things around me, to foster my running. We don't have a car, so there's no temptation to drive. We don't have Internet at home (yet), so to read my emails and use the web, I need to get to my office at the university. The distance is just right for running because we bought our house with this in mind. I've arranged clothes, towels and the like so it all operates smoothly.

These environmental conditions could come unstuck, of course. This happens whenever I'm injured. Another possibility is that some other form of transport could become more convenient. I've talked to environmental science students who said they bought a car fully intending to keep riding their bicycles, but as soon as they had the car, they hardly used their bicycles. What's convenient is a powerful influence. So it makes an enormous difference that we don't have a car.

I do have a bicycle, but the route to the university is extremely hilly. Running is almost easier, because it's like using an extremely low gear. I could take the bus, but the buses are infrequent and usually late (though occasionally early), so door-to-door travel time by running is about the same. On the other hand, if a free bus went by our house every few minutes, that would be a large temptation. There is a free bus to the university, but nowhere near us.

Creating the environmental conditions to foster commuting by running is a delicate operation. So far, I've built most of the tactics for fostering running into my routine. However, what I've done has little relevance to others. In fact, in all my years of running to work, no one has ever been sufficiently inspired by my example to try to do the same thing. Why not? I think there's a status hierarchy in ways of getting to work, and running is near the bottom.

My observation, over many years, is that the modes of commuting with the highest status are those that cost the most, use the most fossil fuels and require the least physical exertion. A private jet or helicopter is reserved for those at the very top. Driving a car is next, noting that bigger and more expensive cars are more prestigious. Then come going by train or bus, followed by walking and cycling. My conclusion is that for getting from point A to point B, there's more status in not using your muscles. Working up a sweat is something to be avoided.

There are some challenges to this hierarchy, especially by cyclists and walkers, but in a car-dominated society like Australia, cycling is seldom seen as high status, except within cycling subcultures.

In order for cycling, walking or even running to work to be widely taken up, the wider social environment needs to be encouraging.[3] In the Netherlands, cyclists are given much more support through a comprehensive set of cycle paths, some through the countryside and others in urban areas. Rather than cyclists riding on a designated portion of the road also used by motor vehicles, they have paths separated from the road by a grassy strip. There are still lots of cars in the Netherlands, as well as many buses and trains, but cycling is catered for in a way alien in Australia.

In the Netherlands, the cues are very different. Because there are so many cyclists, it is hard to avoid being aware of the cycling option. More cyclists, including many who could afford cars, mean that cycling is perceived as having greater value. People understand the value of cycling and there is authoritative

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3 For an assessment of the limited amount of research in this area, see James F. Sallis, Adrian Bauman and Michael Pratt, "Environmental and policy interventions to promote physical activity," *American Journal of Preventive Medicine,* 15(4), 1998, 379–397.

endorsement through the provision of supportive infrastructure. Finally, lots of people cycle — they do it. At a social level, all the tactics of promoting good things are used in relation to cycling.

Let me summarise. In relation to combining commuting and exercise, there are at least three levels for examining tactics.

• The level of personal motivation: doing it on the basis of willpower.
• The level of personally constructing one's environment, as I've done in relation to running.
• The level of socially constructing the collective environment, as in the Netherlands in relation to cycling.

Identifying three distinct levels is a simplification, because there are all sorts of possibilities in between. For example, a couple of friends or family members might assist each other with willpower or constructing their environment, either one of them shaping the other's environment — as parents do with children — or both shaping their joint environment. The Netherlands example is just one way for social arrangements to influence people's inclination to cycle, and interacts with the way individuals go about adapting to their environment. Nevertheless, talking of three levels — personal motivation, personal environment and social environment — is a useful simplification.

Health as a good thing

Being healthy is more than not being ill. It means body and mind functioning at top capacity. It means being able to cope well

with stressors such as exertion, allergens and worries. It includes feeling full of energy.[4]

The value of good health is most obvious when you don't have it. If you always have pain in your fingers, then absence of pain is wonderful — especially if you love doing work with your hands. If your lungs aren't working well and you have to gasp for every breath, the ability to breathe freely is seen as a delight. And so on through a gamut of problems, from abscesses to vomiting. Many people would trade in their wealth or opportunities for a clean bill of health. Even with the best medical care, neither good health nor long life can be guaranteed.

How could good health ever be a bad thing? It's possible to think of a few circumstances. Sometimes people take their health for granted. A bout of illness makes them realise how wonderful it is to be well. Then there are the children who, because they are ill for long periods, develop advanced capacities for reading, imagination or other capacities that wouldn't have been likely otherwise. Ill health is sometimes a valuable warning to change your ways. Becoming ill can be a way to escape a damaging job or impossible demands in a relationship. Then there are the people who are doing bad things, such as killers and torturers. If they become unwell, others benefit. So actually there are quite a few potential advantages to bad health.

Despite these exceptions, good health is usually worth promoting. But within the health professions, promoting health beyond its average level is a fairly low priority. Nearly all the effort goes into addressing bad health. You go to a doctor when you break your arm or develop heart palpitations but seldom visit doctors when you're feeling well. The so-called health

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4 In the 1940s, the World Health Organisation defined health this way: "health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity."

system is actually an illth system, with the main emphasis on repairing problems and comparatively little attention to helping people develop optimum health. There are some government-funded and private bodies whose official task is health promotion, but their efforts are usually short on funds and recognition.

What can be done to promote good health? A host of measures can be listed, from flossing your teeth to getting suitable exposure to the sun for vitamin D production. Here I will focus on three main areas: diet, exercise and mental state.[5]

The first method to promote health is awareness. Most adults are quite aware. However, some young people take their health for granted, having not learned its significance.

Next is valuing good health. Nearly everyone does. They even value the things that foster good health, but don't do them nearly as often as they might.

The third method is to understand what promotes good health. Many people know the basics. They know asparagus and apples are good for you — as part of a balanced diet — and that potato crisps and soft drinks are not so good. They know that getting regular exercise is healthy. They know that being calm and focussed — the opposite of high stress — is desirable. But understanding isn't enough. Lots of people understand the importance of healthy practices but do other things anyway, for example not eating many vegetables and not doing much exercise.

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5 Research shows that several modifiable factors contribute to well-being and longevity: not smoking, physical activity, moderate weight and healthy diet. See for example Rob M. van Dam et al., "Combined impact of lifestyle factors on mortality: prospective cohort study in US women," *BMJ,* 337, 2008, 1440–1447; Laurel B. Yates et al., "Exceptional longevity in men," *Archives of Internal Medicine,* 168 (3), 11 February 2008, 284–290.

The next method is authoritative endorsement. These days, nearly all medical authorities support healthy behaviours. For example, official recommendations are to have five or more servings of fruit and vegetables per day. However, this doesn't seem to have made a lot of difference to what people eat.

The final method for individuals to promote good health is to actually do the things that promote it, such as eat plenty of vegetables, exercise nearly every day and meditate, relax or take other measures to foster a calm mental state. By doing these things regularly, they become habits.

Sally has healthy habits. She carefully plans what she eats, for example being sure to have cruciferous vegetables such as cauliflower and broccoli (with anti-cancer properties) and limiting her intake of highly processed foods and the wrong types of fat. She swims for 30 minutes six days per week. She's chosen a job that offers regular challenges without high stress, and she meditates ten minutes every morning and evening. She gets plenty of sleep and avoids risky activities like smoking, heavy drinking and fast driving. She spends a lot of time with a group of close friends whose company she appreciates. Every spare minute she devotes to amateur theatre.

Need I say more? Sally is a mythical creature who is doing everything right to be healthy, and happy as well. She has the required habits. What helps keep the habits going? She is aware of what's required to be healthy, regularly checking research on diet and exercise. She values being healthy, being proud and protective of her habits. She understands exactly what she's doing. For example, she knows the research on the anti-cancer properties of foods. She backs up her choices by referring to health authorities who are credible scientifically.

I've referred to Sally as a "mythical creature." Actually, a few people are just like Sally, but not many. Sally is mythical in

that she makes good decisions in the face of pervasive pressures to deviate from a healthy lifestyle. These pressures are obvious enough, but let me point them out anyway.

Everyone is aware of unhealthy options. Cigarettes are available for sale in supermarkets. Sugar-rich drinks and pastries are widely available. A comfortable chair is available in front of the television. The video game is nearby — far more obvious than the gym. And so on.

Many unhealthy choices have high status. Until recently, smoking was a sign of maturity and sophistication, and still is in some circles. When going to a restaurant, or serving a meal with guests, in most groups a steak has more status than nuts or lentils. When offering tasty treats to guests, a pastry heavy with butter and sugar is usually seen as more suitable than celery and carrot sticks.

Next consider understanding of choices in relation to health. I've said that most people know which choices are healthier, but they also know some other things that provide a superficial rationale for taking unhealthy choices.

For example, eating a few sweets isn't that bad, as long as they are part of a balanced diet. Having a few drinks is seldom dangerous. Missing exercise for a week now and again is not hazardous. Many people rationalise their choices by seeing them as temporary: "I'll just have a few beers" or "I'll start exercising later" or "After this project I'll take a break and relax a bit." There are lots of other rationalisations, for example "My father smoked like a chimney and lived to be 92" or "You've got to die from something" or "I want to enjoy life."

What about the role of authorities? They regularly advise healthy practices, but others often have more influence: peers such as family, friends and co-workers. If everyone else in your house has pizza and soft drink for dinner, it's easier to join in

rather than make yourself a salad. When your co-workers drive to work, you feel you'll look foolish riding a bicycle. Where are the authorities when you need them? If your boss set the pace by ordering gourmet health foods for staff functions, arranging a cycle club for commuting, mandating rest breaks, and promoting fun and laughter, you'd be much more likely to join in.

Health promotion often relies on the power of education to change people's behaviour. The idea is that if people just knew what makes them healthy and understood why, then they'd be more likely to do those things. It sounds plausible and is effective for a small proportion of people, but is overwhelmed by counter-pressures. To really make a difference, the environment — things around a person — needs to change, so healthy behaviours become the easiest option and you have to go out of your way to do really unhealthy things.

What this means in terms of tactics is that the way society is organised needs to ensure that awareness, valuing, understanding, endorsement and action are oriented to healthy outcomes. An example is anti-smoking measures. Australia has some of the most stringent anti-smoking measures in the world and, as a result, a fairly low rate of smoking for a wealthy country. I remember when the university administration first introduced a policy banning smoking inside buildings. There were some holdouts, especially staff who insisted on continuing to smoke in their own offices. But enough staff supported the policy so that peer pressure was huge: smoking in a building was seen as anti-social. Within a few years, it almost never occurred. Smokers congregated outside the entrances to buildings, so later on a policy was passed that there was to be no smoking within 10 metres of a building entrance. This was seldom policed and often disobeyed, but gradually it had some effect too, because it was easier to ask smokers to move away from entrances. Most

recently, smoking has been banned in a large open area between buildings.

This is just one small example from a wider process of mobilising against smoking, one of the most successful health-promotion campaigns of the past half century. It is founded on mobilising people — mostly non-smokers — to take action against smoking, and gradually reducing the opportunities and incentives to smoke.[6]

> *Awareness* More and more places — cinemas, buses, office buildings, people's homes — are explicitly smoke-free. Non-smoking signs and an absence of smokers operate to make smokers aware of concern about smoking.
>
> *Valuing* More and more people see a smoke-free life as sensible.
>
> *Understanding* People know why they should avoid tobacco smoke.
>
> *Endorsement* Medical authorities are unanimous in advising against smoking.
>
> *Action* Many more people are gaining experience as non-smokers. For example, when smokers try to stop, they can gain assistance from doctors and friends.

Reducing the incentives to smoke can be seen as an example of promoting a good thing, though in many ways it's better conceived as stopping a bad thing. The key point here is that change has been driven largely through changing the environment rather than by separate individuals making decisions to

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6 The best source on anti-smoking campaigning is Simon Chapman, *Public Health Advocacy and Tobacco Control: Making Smoking History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007).

stop smoking. Indeed, changing the environment has made it far easier for individuals to quit. Cigarette advertisements are nowhere to be seen, prices are higher, lots of places are smoke-free and many people don't want smokers around. It's a big shift from when non-smokers felt assaulted whenever they ventured into public spaces.

Now wait a minute. I started out to discuss tactics for good health, but I've somehow switched into a related but different topic: how to oppose dangers to health. But aren't these the same? Not quite.

The usual approach to health is to oppose the bad things. The medical approach is to attack disease: antibiotics against infections; surgery, chemotherapy and radiotherapy against cancer. This approach is so dominant that health is often seen as a matter of dealing with disease. However, the treatment or even the absence of illness doesn't automatically mean good health.

There is an analogy to war and peace. Peace is sometimes thought to be absence of war, which is sometimes called "negative peace." But there is something worth aiming for that is better than absence of war: a society with high levels of justice and freedom in which all people are supported to achieve a high quality of life. This is called "positive peace." Pushing for positive peace is complementary to opposing war.

The same sort of thing applies to health. Treating disease is worthwhile, but so is promoting high positive levels of health — through means such as exercise, diet and mental harmony.

If absence of disease is called "negative health" by analogy to negative peace, then vibrant good health can be called "positive health." In this picture, where does opposing smoking fit in? It's useful to arrange possibilities on a spectrum.

• Treating disease (for example, treating cancer)
• Detecting disease (for example, screening for cancer)
• Preventing disease (for example, campaigning against smoking)
• Promoting positive health (for example, designing environments to have clean, unpolluted air).[7]

In this chapter I focus on the last two.

Nudges

Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein have come up with the valuable idea of a "nudge" — a way of influencing people's behaviour through the way choices are made available to them.[8] Their argument is based on two key points. First, people are greatly influenced by subtle aspects of their environment; in particular, their choices are influenced by the way choices are presented. A lot more people will stick with whatever they're doing or given — the default option — than will take the effort to change. So if your telephone number is in the directory until you make a special request to remove it, most people's numbers will be listed, but if your number is only in the directory if you specially request it, few people will bother.

7 These options can be related to levels of prevention as studied in epidemiology. Primordial prevention, which involves addressing social and environmental conditions underlying the causes of disease, overlaps with promoting positive health. Primary prevention, which involves addressing specific causes of disease, is what I've caused preventing disease. Secondary prevention is what I've called detecting disease. See R. Bonita, R. Beaglehole and T. Kjellström, *Basic Epidemiology,* 2d ed. (Geneva: World Health Organization, 2006), 103–110.

8 Richard H. Thaler and Cass R. Sunstein, *Nudge: Improving Decisions about Health, Wealth, and Happiness* (London: Penguin, 2009).

Thaler and Sunstein argue that those who design the "choice architecture," namely the way choices are made available, can benefit people by using people's tendencies toward inertia (not changing the status quo) and by presenting options in a simple and informative way. They call this approach "libertarian paternalism." It is paternalistic in that the choice architects are setting things up for the general good; it is libertarian because no one is forced to choose particular options, as there are always opt-out possibilities. They give numerous examples involving retirement and investment plans, energy conservation, schooling and health.

A nudge, in the way Thaler and Sunstein think about it, is usually designed and implemented by government, namely by policy designers and implementers, or occasionally by their equivalents in industry. So the Netherlands government, by building lots of cycle paths, gives a nudge to cycling. Lots of people still drive cars, but cycling is far more common than it otherwise would be. In this sense, town planning — or lack of planning in some cases — is a nudge-production process. People are encouraged but not required to adopt certain behaviours.

Building a new freeway is a nudge towards driving. Indeed, it is more than a nudge, because many freeways ban cyclists, pedestrians and various other transport options. Non-drivers can get to their destination by other routes, but at much greater inconvenience. For many choices, Thaler and Sunstein prefer nudges that don't force people or impose excessive costs.

The idea of a nudge can easily be expanded to cover your own efforts to construct the environment that shapes your behaviour. When I arranged my life — no car, living a convenient distance from work, etc. — to make running the default option, I was essentially creating a nudge for myself.

Thaler and Sunstein leave out one way of designing nudges. This can be illustrated by an example they use early in their book. They note that the order in which food is displayed in a cafeteria affects people's choices of what to buy and eat, so by suitably arranging the food, people can be nudged to have a healthier diet. They give five options for the manager of a student cafeteria.

1. Arrange the food to make the students best off, all things considered.
2. Choose the food order at random.
3. Try to arrange the food to get the kids to pick the same foods they would choose on their own.
4. Maximize the sales of the items from the suppliers that are willing to offer the largest bribes.
5. Maximize profits, period.[9]

Option 1 is Thaler and Sunstein's preferred nudge. But there's another option: let the students design the nudge. If this is too difficult to arrange, choose a random selection of interested students, inform them about nutrition and the influence of food arrangements, and follow their advice within the constraints of legality, ethics and financial viability.[10] This could be called "participatory paternalism," because the people affected are helping design their environment.

Thaler and Sunstein repeatedly emphasise that their proposals do not sit on one side or the other of US politics: they are neither liberal nor conservative, neither Democratic nor Republi-

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9 Direct quote from ibid., 2.

10 There is a large amount of research on the use of randomly selected decision-makers. See for example Lyn Carson and Brian Martin, *Random Selection in Politics* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1999).

can. Their description of nudges as "libertarian paternalism" captures both elements of US politics, libertarianism being a market approach, allowing consumer choice, and paternalism being a government or large-organisation approach. What this configuration misses is participatory politics, in which people cooperate in shaping the conditions of their lives, including the nudges.

Salt

Many people enjoy the taste of salt — as long as there isn't too much of it. Many eaters add a bit of salt to their food, for example finding the taste of a baked potato without any seasoning to be bland or unattractive. So bring on the salt, not to mention butter and cheese. But if you add butter or cheese, you may not need the salt, because many manufacturers add salt to these products.

Salt refers to sodium chloride. It is much the same substance whether it is table salt, sea salt or rock salt.

For many years I used to think that humans have an innate craving for salt, because it's necessary for survival. Sodium is part of the metabolism of every cell in the body, based on an interplay between the elements sodium and potassium. Some animals seek out salty foods and travel great distances to salt licks.

Then I read Trevor Beard's book *Salt Matters* and discovered I was wrong. He writes:

> There is a popular theory that a liking for salt helped our ancestors to survive in salt-poor environments. However, explorers and anthropologists have reported the exact

opposite — they find that salt-free societies *dislike* salt, often very strongly.[11]

In industrialised societies today, people often have ten times as much salt as necessary. All that is required for survival is a fraction of a gram per day, yet people typically have at least several grams.

This heavy use of salt isn't driven by biology but rather by cultural and economic factors. Salt is added to foods as a flavour, a preservative and, in bread, as a dough improver. People get used to the taste of salty food and come to expect it.

Decades ago, salt played a valuable role as a preservative, but today, with freezing, refrigeration and vacuum sealing of food containers, there isn't the same need for salt — but it is still heavily used. It is cheap and adds flavour.

Excess salt intake is a key to a contemporary health problem: hypertension, otherwise known as high blood pressure. Eating a lot of salt can, in many individuals, contribute to hypertension that in turn is a risk factor in heart disease, stroke and kidney problems. In a country like Australia, half of all adults develop high blood pressure. Excess salt is also linked to other health problems including Meniere's syndrome, osteoporosis and stomach cancer.

How much salt is too much? In Britain, the maximum recommended daily intake is six grams. Less than this might still be excessive in susceptible individuals.

Eating processed foods greatly increases average salt intake and also increases the intake of sodium relative to potassium.[12]

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11 Trevor C. Beard, *Salt Matters: The Killer Condiment* (Sydney: Hachette Australia, 2007), 4 (emphasis in the original).

12 I mainly refer to salt, taking it as a surrogate for sodium, but there are sources of sodium other than sodium chloride, for example monosodium

In a potato, without added seasoning, there is more potassium than sodium. In a serving of potato crisps, there is a *lot* more sodium than potassium. The more food is processed, usually the higher the sodium-potassium ratio. Bread may have 100 times as much salt as the wheat from which it is made.

Cutting back on salt is one way to reduce the risk of hypertension. One initial step is not to add any additional salt when eating: get rid of the salt shaker. That's useful, but it eliminates only a small proportion of the salt ingested by most people in industrialised countries. The major challenge is cutting back on processed foods with lots of added salt, everything from potato crisps to cakes. Instead of having a pastry, have a bowl of fruit — fruit has hardly any salt.

Reducing consumption of high-salt foods is easier said than done. Eating at restaurants is risky. A single fast-food meal with hamburger and chips can contain several grams of salt. A business lunch is likely to be loaded with salt unless you choose very carefully. At a cocktail party, the savouries are likely to be salty. Sitting in front of the television eating corn chips — more salt.

Cutting back on salt intake can improve one's diet generally. Fresh fruits and vegetables, ideal foods for a low-salt diet, are highly recommended by nutritionists. Fresh, unprocessed meat is also compatible with a low-salt diet.

It might seem that cutting back on salt is going to lead to very bland meals, but not necessarily. On reduced salt, your taste buds gradually adapt so that foods with just a little bit of salt in

glutamate. It is possible that sodium without chloride has less effect on blood pressure: Theodore A. Kotchen and Jane Morley Kotchen, "Dietary sodium and blood pressure: interactions with other nutrients," *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition,* 65 (supplement), 1997, 708S–711S.

them taste salty. Celery, for example, is not seen as particularly tasty on its own and is commonly eaten with a dip or sauce, but on a really low-salt diet celery will taste salty on its own.

So what are the tactics for maintaining a low-salt diet? All the standard methods apply.

Awareness You need to be aware of salt as a health issue.

Valuing You need to value a diet low in salt. Alternatively, you need to value a healthy blood pressure.

Understanding It helps to know how a low-salt diet will prevent or ameliorate hypertension and other health problems.

Endorsement Most medical authorities agree on the importance of maintaining a modest salt intake.

Action You need to initiate and continue a low-salt diet.

For those who know about and value a low-salt diet, the hard part is maintaining it. People know what they need to do, and they want to succeed, but salty-food temptations are ever-present. Processed foods loaded with salt fill supermarket shelves and are a special risk when dining with friends. So the next step is to adapt the methods to shape one's environment.

Awareness You could put a sign in the kitchen — such as "beware the salt fiend" — and ask your family and friends to remind you about salt when eating together.

Valuing You can train yourself to appreciate low-salt dishes, and have your friends reinforce this attitude. One way is to prepare extremely appetising low-salt menus and express your appreciation. When encountering an extremely salty food, like soy sauce, respond with "yuk." Ask others

to help you find low-salt options. If there's a support group for hypertension, join it — or set up your own group.

Understanding You could read articles about high blood pressure and explain them to friends, using the long-standing principle that the best way to learn something is to teach it. Read the book *Mindless Eating*[13] and some of the scientific studies reported in it, so that you know how to take control of your diet.

Endorsement You can seek out others who are willing to support your approach, such as friends or doctors, and get them to reinforce your decisions.

Action You can make low-salt eating easier by shaping your environment. Don't buy salty grocery items; give away the ones you have already. If you are tempted to snack, put healthy choices, such as apples and unsalted peanuts, in the front of your refrigerator and cupboard shelves. Use ideas from *Mindless Eating* to make it easier for you to pursue your diet and enjoy it.

The common theme in these suggestions is to arrange your life so less willpower is required to adhere to a low-salt diet. To achieve this requires a lot of support from friends and family and a fair bit of personal commitment to set up and maintain the conditions to support the diet. Once these conditions are achieved, though, low-salt eating may become normal, desirable and appealing.

Only a few individuals have the capacity for this sort of personal planning. After all, advertisers, marketers and well-meaning family and friends are constantly touting salt-heavy

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13 Brian Wansink, *Mindless Eating: Why We Eat More than We Think* (New York: Bantam, 2006).

choices. Although some people try to help and some shops offer reduced-salt products, many temptations remain.

Can something be done at a wider level? One possibility is gradually reducing the amount of salt in food manufacture. Imagine this scenario: all companies agree to reduce salt in their products by 5% within a year, with similar reductions each year until an optimal level becomes standard. Companies could still market high-salt options if desired, but they would become the exception rather than the rule — and have a significantly higher price. A gradual transition would not require sudden drastic investments in new food manufacturing technology. This is certainly achievable: some companies have been able to make much larger reductions.

If such a transition were implemented, hardly anyone would notice. Few people would notice the change in any given year, and people's palates would adjust to the lower salt levels. (In fact palates can adjust far more rapidly, within a matter of weeks.) Public health could be improved and people would actually enjoy their food more, by being better able to appreciate the natural tastes of unsalted products.

What's stopping this change? Mainly lack of sufficient incentive to make any change. Sodium chloride is cheap and the technology for producing it is standard. No one is going to change unless there is some incentive. Those concerned about hypertension are not politically organised. In a market economy, their influence operates to diversify consumer choice, namely to offer low-salt products for the minority who seek them. It doesn't matter that nearly everyone would benefit from lower salt levels across the board.

Back in 1980, when I lived in Canberra, I was a member of a small group called Community Action on Science and Environment (CASE). Our members included a few activists,

PhD students and a couple of untenured researchers (one of whom was me). We picked a few issues of interest to us — I remember salt, sugar and head lice — and prepared leaflets or short reports aimed at making members of the public more aware of the issues.

Being involved with CASE is the main reason for my interest in salt. My blood pressure is quite low and hasn't increased over the years, so I may be one of the few who are not very susceptible to hypertension.

In pursuing the salt issue, we obtained a leaflet from the Finnish government titled "Rationale of 'new salt'," recommending replacement of typical sodium-chloride table salt with a mixture composed of 65% sodium chloride, 25% potassium chloride and 10% magnesium compounds. This would reduce sodium intake, improve sodium-potassium balance and increase magnesium intake. Inspired by this example, we wrote to a number of manufacturers about this possibility and received a few replies essentially fobbing us off. Our main output on this topic was a two-page leaflet titled "The myth of salt" covering the facts we had discovered.

To have had a chance of influencing government policy or industry practice, our group needed inside connections or powerful backers, such as concerned politicians as personal friends or an industry group with a vested interest in new salt. Alternatively, dozens of active new-salt activist groups around the country might have been able to put the issue on the public agenda. That didn't happen then and, so far as I know, hasn't happened anywhere since.

Our group only survived for a few years and then members went their individual ways. To have an impact on an entrenched problem, staying power is vital. Coincidentally, at exactly the same time and in the same city, Canberra, a much more long-

lasting initiative began: the Salt Skip Program. The program encourages people to eat low-salt foods and assists by providing information about how to go about this.[14]

One of those involved for the long haul was Trevor Beard, whose comprehensive book *Salt Matters* was published in 2007. Going through my file of old documents on salt, I discovered a newspaper article from 1983 reporting Beard saying "Although the link between salt and high blood pressure has been known for about 80 years, there are still some doctors who are sceptical and who demand proof." He was planning a study of lowered salt intake on hypertension.[15]

There has been some campaigning. In 1996, a group of British medical specialists set up Consensus Action on Salt and Health (CASH), which holds annual salt awareness weeks and puts pressure on food manufacturers to reduce salt levels in their products. CASH is now a charity with its work carried out by a team of nutritionists, still supported by the medical professionals who set up the organisation.

CASH has obtained sympathetic media coverage that operates to encourage or shame companies into taking action. As a result of CASH's initiatives, quite a few companies have agreed to voluntary salt reduction targets — and met them, some companies dramatically reducing salt levels in their products. CASH has achieved results through promoting awareness and understanding of the issues and through the credibility of its experts. CASH has gone international through World Action on Salt and Health (WASH).

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14 Beard, *Salt Matters,* 17–109.

15 Karen Milliner, "1,000 volunteers wanted to forgo salt for study," *Canberra Times,* 28 June 1983, p. 9.

I haven't been able to find any recent information about Finland's "new salt." But, according to Beard, Finland's government continues to be in the forefront of action against high-salt diets:

> The government withholds the subsidy on drugs for high blood pressure unless the doctor certifies that the patient has followed an ideal diet and lifestyle for six months, including skipping salt. If drugs are still needed despite that background, the doctor must also certify that the patient agrees to continue an ideal diet and lifestyle indefinitely (to permit better control at a lower dose).[16]

In most countries, however, the usual medical response to high blood pressure is to prescribe a drug. Some doctors encourage reduced salt intake and some people with hypertension learn about the low-salt approach. This creates a demand for low-salt foods and in turn promotes the commercial availability of lower-salt products.

Despite improvements in some countries and by some companies, the food environment is still heavily salt-laden, certainly compared to low-salt societies. This illustrates a common pattern. There are lots of things that can be done to promote good health. Some are encouraged by authorities, but the onus is largely on individuals to use their willpower to follow the advice. A few individuals can shape their personal environments to make healthy habits easier to sustain. But all too often little is done at the collective level. The default option is not as healthy as it could be.

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16 Beard, *Salt Matters,* 216.

Conclusion

Running for exercise and having a low-salt diet illustrate a general approach. You can promote your own good health by adopting healthy habits. Obviously enough, it helps to be aware of what these habits are, and to value them. Understanding the reason for the habits is also helpful. When authorities support the habits, that's another advantage. The key is to actually adopt the healthy habits.

Some people have tremendous willpower and can maintain healthy habits in the face of continual temptation, for example the temptation to skip exercise today or to indulge in some junk food. Relying on willpower is the most difficult road. It is far easier to construct your personal environment so healthy choices are the easier option. So you join a health club and arrange with friends to visit it regularly, or you make sure unhealthy food choices are not available at home. The more you can arrange things so you make good choices without having to agonise over them, the easier it is to maintain healthy habits. What this means is applying the tools of awareness, valuing, understanding and endorsement to constructing your personal environment.

Constructing your environment is a powerful option, but it has limits in a society in which unhealthy options abound and indeed are promoted by sophisticated marketers. It is all very well to keep only healthy foods at home, but what about the temptations of restaurants or your best friend's home cooking? The wider solution requires social change.

In a health-friendly social environment, the default options — the easiest options — would be healthy. The easiest transport options would be walking or cycling, and using motorised vehicles would be more inconvenient (except for people unable to walk or cycle). You would have to go out of your way to find high-salt products. And so forth.

Many campaigners have pushed for changes to promote public health, everything from sanitation to smoke-free workplaces. These campaigners are the keys to healthy living, because the changes they promote make a big difference to vast numbers of people. No single individual can bring about the changes needed, but every individual can contribute. Indeed, being involved in a campaign is a good way to become aware of all the facets of good health.

Appendix: health disputes

As I was working on this chapter, there was a news story questioning the need to reduce salt intake. The *Sydney Morning Herald*'s treatment, titled "Low salt diet not all it's cracked up to be," begins

> Public health advice to minimise salt consumption to lower blood pressure is based on spurious science and does not recognise the complex role of sodium in the body, say scientists whose study attacks the basis of dietary guidelines.[17]

This sounds significant. So I looked up the study but all I found was this modest conclusion:

> Sodium intake in the US adult population appears to be well above current guidelines and does not appear to have decreased with time.[18]

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17 Julie Robotham, "Low salt diet not all it's cracked up to be," *Sydney Morning Herald,* 22 October 2010, p. 3.

18 Adam M. Bernstein and Walter C. Willett, "Trends in 24-h urinary sodium excretion in the United States, 1957–2003: a systematic review," *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition,* 92, 2010, 1172–1180.

The basis for the news story claims seems to have been comments in the study about factors contributing to hypertension. If the rates of hypertension are rising but salt consumption is roughly the same, then other factors are probably responsible, such as obesity. However, there's no contradiction. If high salt intake is one factor that contributes to high blood pressure, then it's worth addressing even if other factors are involved and need to be addressed too.

Assessing the relationship between salt intake and hypertension is complicated by the role of groups with vested interests in salt in foods. Salt industry advocates and scientists with ties to industry like to cast doubt on salt-hypertension research findings. Pharmaceutical companies prefer that hypertension be addressed by drugs, and many doctors are influenced by drug marketing.

At least as important is people's acquired taste for salt interacting with a dietary environment laden with salty products. People who like the taste of salt are more likely to be receptive to reports like the one in the *Sydney Morning Herald*: it provides an excuse for not going to the trouble of pursuing a low-salt diet.

The dispute over salt and hypertension is just one example of disputes over health matters, which range from cholesterol and trans-fats to cancer treatments.[19] What is the implication for those pursuing healthy lifestyles?

It is impossible to be absolutely sure about any health measure. Furthermore, vigorous debate can be valuable to help stimulate research into points of disagreement and encourage

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19 An excellent source on the ways the US food industry promotes its interests over those of its customers is Marion Nestle, *Food Politics: How the Food Industry Influences Nutrition and Health* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002).

consideration of alternatives. It is futile to expect debates to cease and everyone to agree about salt, exercise or anything else.

Yet this does not imply a do-nothing stance. Because people have options, there is no neutral position. Going along with a standard high-salt diet is just as much a choice as minimising salt intake. Neither one is neutral. Scientists may not agree, but agreement is not a prerequisite for taking action.

When vested interests are involved, it is sensible to subject their claims to extra scrutiny. After examining the arguments, or deciding who to trust, then it's time for action. Whatever you do is a form of action — including doing what you've always done.

7
Organisations

Overview
• The usual approach to improving organisations is to fix problems.
• A different sort of approach, appreciative inquiry, is a participatory process for investigating an organisation's strengths and building on them.
• The key elements of appreciative inquiry readily map onto the five methods for promoting good things.[1]

In industrialised countries, most people spend a lifetime working in organisations, whether businesses, government bodies or non-profit agencies. Some organisations are productive and stimulating; others are inefficient and soul-destroying.

As well as working in organisations, nearly everyone deals with them, or their products, on a daily basis. This occurs when purchasing goods and services and when negotiating one's way through transport and communication systems. Because organisations affect every aspect of life, good organisations are valuable entities and are worth protecting and promoting.

How do members of organisations go about making them better? The usual way is to fix problems. Every organisation has problems such as poor communication, unproductive workers, inefficient technology and disputes over priorities. Quite a few

organisations are even worse, with entrenched systems of abuse such as exploiting workers or selling products with known dangers. These are all problems needing to be fixed.[2]

The problem-fixing approach starts with identifying problems. This is followed by examining possible remedies, picking an optimal solution and implementing it. Suppose the problem identified is that too many workers are poor performers. The solution might be to put them on probationary regimes and, if they don't improve, dismiss them. Implementing this plan requires assessing workers, selecting ones for the probation treatment and then dismissing those who don't shape up.

The huge US energy company Enron used a system known as "rank-and-yank." Enron was noted for hiring the best and brightest talent. Every six months, each worker's performance was scrutinised and ranked and the bottom 15 percent of workers lost their jobs.[3] Enron went bankrupt in a mire of debt, deception and corruption.

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2 See, for example, Seth Alcorn and Michael A. Diamond, *Managing People during Stressful Times: The Psychologically Defensive Workplace* (Westport, CT: Quorum, 1997); Manfred F. R. Kets de Vries and Danny Miller, *The Neurotic Organization: Diagnosing and Changing Counterproductive Styles of Management* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1984); Deborah M. Kolb and Jean M. Bartunek (eds.), *Hidden Conflict in Organizations: Uncovering Behind-the-Scenes Disputes* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1992); Kathleen D. Ryan and Daniel K. Oestreich, *Driving Fear Out of the Workplace: How to Overcome the Invisible Barriers to Quality, Productivity, and Innovation* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1991).

3 According to Peter C. Fusaro and Ross M. Miller, *What Went Wrong at Enron: Everyone's Guide to the Largest Bankruptcy in U.S. History* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2002), 51–52, Enron management used rank-and-yank arbitrarily to reward loyal employees and crush dissent, thereby drying up sources of feedback.

There are disadvantages in focusing on problems. Workers can become risk-averse, knowing if they are associated with things that go wrong they may be blamed and penalised. So they are less likely to take initiative. They also may start playing games to hide problems or sabotage the work of co-workers, so others will be blamed. A problem-solving orientation can, ironically, lead to the real problems being hidden and pseudo problems becoming the target as part of a jockeying for power and position.

Much of the work in organisations requires collaboration. Ideally, workers cooperate to get the job done. Effective cooperation requires trusting others. But if, as at Enron, the spoils go to the winners in a competition for credit, cooperation will suffer.

There's an even bigger problem with focusing on problems: in putting attention on what's going wrong, the sources of strength in the organisation are neglected and left unsupported. The problem orientation in organisations is apparent in the ubiquity of gossip, nearly all of which is negative. Workers gripe about pathetic decisions by management; managers gripe about hopeless workers. All complain about co-workers who are seen as difficult.

Is there an alternative? Is it possible to imagine workers regularly talking about how well things are going and how proud they are about what their managers and co-workers are doing?

Appreciative inquiry

In the 1980s, David Cooperrider and Suresh Srivastva developed a different approach to organisational development. They called it "appreciative inquiry." The word "appreciative" refers to something that improves, namely appreciates, like money at compound interest. In practice, it means focusing on positives.

"Inquiry" is a process of investigation. In brief, appreciative inquiry — AI for short — means investigating what is operating well, finding out the things that make this possible and strengthening those things.[4]

It sounds simple enough. Focus on the positives rather than on the negatives. Does it really make a difference? Diana Whitney and Amanda Trosten-Bloom give the following example in their book *The Power of Appreciative Inquiry*.

> A classic example of AI's commitment to the affirmative is the case of British Petroleum's ProCare, a U.S. auto repair business. At the end of its first year of operation, ProCare's customer surveys showed that 95% of all customers were 100% satisfied — an astonishing statistic that anyone in the auto repair industry will confirm. ProCare was not satisfied, however: They decided to conduct customer focus groups. Unfortunately, they only asked the 5% dissatisfied customers about their dissatisfaction. Then, on the walls in every station they posted vivid descriptions of the identified causes of dissatisfaction. Within a short time customer satisfaction ratings dropped, along with employee morale and retention.
>
> After hearing about the success gone astray, a team of Appreciative Inquiry consultants made suggestions to help the failing business. They recommended that focus groups be conducted with the 100% satisfied customers. With great

4 See for example David L. Cooperrider, Diana Whitney and Jacqueline M. Stavros, *Appreciative Inquiry Handbook* (Brunswick, OH: Crown Custom; San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2005); Sue Annis Hammond, *The Thin Book of Appreciative Inquiry* (Plano, TX: Thin Book Publishing, n.d., c. 1998); Jane Magruder Watkins and Bernard J. Mohr, *Appreciative Inquiry: Change at the Speed of Imagination* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer, 2001).

skepticism and a moderate amount of curiosity, the leaders of ProCare agreed. The results were stunning. Customer satisfaction ratings reversed once again, this time for the better, as people began to learn and replicate their root causes of success.[5]

AI was initiated in the United States and has been taken up in numerous countries. The example of ProCare is one of many. Most of them, even if described briefly, actually reflect quite a complex process. That's because organisational change itself is almost always complex. Is it possible to extract the core elements of the AI process?

AI can appear in many different forms. Whitney and Trosten-Bloom list seven change agendas suited to AI, eight forms of engagement and eight principles. For them, though, the core of AI is encapsulated in four Ds: Discovery, Dream, Design and Destiny, supplemented by a preliminary necessity, affirmative topic choice — which can also be termed Definition, becoming a fifth D before the other four. Their book, a practical manual, devotes a chapter to each of these five elements.

Affirmative topic choice refers to the topic investigated using the AI process: it has to be something affirmative, namely positive or good. Rather than focusing on problems, the focus is on something the organisation aims to be good at such as service delivery, customer retention, happiness at work or organisational learning.

Choosing a positive aspect seems simple enough, but actually it is delicate as well as crucial. If the boss sits down and decides "we're going to investigate how to promote new

5 Diana Whitney and Amanda Trosten-Bloom, *The Power of Appreciative Inquiry: A Practical Guide to Positive Change* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2003), 11–12.

business," this may not resonate with the workers. The topic choices need to be ones that will motivate everyone involved, because AI is a participatory process. Sometimes a core group can develop the topics, but in larger organisations it is often better to involve a cross-section of workers in a lengthy process. Whitney and Trosten-Bloom give ten steps to affirmative topic choice, starting with an introduction to AI, including interviews, identification of themes and selection of topics.

Discovery is the process of finding out what the organisation does well. It is normally done using interviews. Interviewers, after careful preparation, talk to organisation members, asking them to tell stories about successful moments in the work. Who does the interviews? Organisation members themselves. It's a participatory process.

Interviews are powerful tools. They can serve their obvious function, finding out about what the interviewees think. They also empower the interviewers, whose role is crucial to the success of the process. They forge links between organisation members. AI practitioners often recommend that people interview others they know least, so that interactions across the organisation are strengthened. Interviews also promote mutual learning: participants learn about the organisation in ways that would otherwise not occur.

The participatory nature of the discovery phase — with both interviewers and interviewees being from the organisation, typically from all levels — is the second distinctive feature of AI. The first feature, focusing on the positive rather than problems, is initiated in the first stage, affirmative topic choice, and continues throughout all the other stages. The second feature, extensive participation by organisation members, also started with the process of choosing the topic but is highlighted in the discovery phase.

Dream is the process of finding a vision of the future. The vision needs to be a collective one, developed through a participatory process, that captures what the organisation is capable of at its best.

The dream phase continues and builds on the characteristics of the prior stages. It is positive: a dream of an organisation functioning ideally rather than fixing problems. It is based on the stories that came out of the discovery phase. Those stories show what is possible; by examining them, common themes can be pulled out and put together to create the dream.

Design is choosing the sort of organisation its members desire. Like the prior stages, it involves a lot of discussion among everyone involved. Design can be a choice about what sort of business the organisation should be doing or what sort of relationships should exist in the organisation.

Whitney and Trosten-Bloom describe a design by a Canadian healthcare company.

> During their strategic planning process it became evident that long-term care was an emerging market and a strategic opportunity for the business. After several hours of dialogue and deliberation they decided to forego this opportunity because nursing homes were incongruous with their personal values and dreams. Their preferred world was one in which people age with dignity at home, in the care of their families. Rather than entering the long-term care market, they determined to leverage what they were anticipating in the way of demographic changes by investing in the creation of a home healthcare business that continues to be highly profitable today.[6]

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6 *Ibid.,* 198.

Destiny involves implementation of the dream and design. Because AI has so many variants, what goes on in the destiny phase varies from case to case. One possibility is that the earlier phases have generated so much energy that individuals and groups are going ahead with ideas. Another possibility, more formal, is setting up project and innovation teams to implement facets of the design. Yet another possibility is that organisation members, having been introduced to AI, start applying it to a range of areas and practices.

Destiny is the final phase of the four or five Ds, but the whole process is a cycle. Reaching the destiny phase can mean initiation of new AI cycles.

Methods for promoting good things

AI is a process for making an organisation better, by harnessing the energy of organisation members to focus on the positive, investigate what is going well, envisage optimal futures and develop ways to achieve them. How does AI relate to the five methods for promoting good things? (These are the methods of awareness, valuing, understanding, endorsement and action, outlined in chapter 1, found to be relevant for a variety of good things, such as happiness and health.) One approach to this comparison would be to relate each of the five Ds to the five methods. However, the five Ds are really about how to implement AI. I think it's more useful to extract the key elements of AI. Here's my list.

- Focus on the positive.
- Involve as many people as possible in conversations.
- Develop a collective vision.
- Enable people to take initiatives toward the vision.

Now consider each of the five methods for promoting good things, applied to AI.

Awareness Make people aware of the good thing.

This is central to the entire AI process, with its relentless attention to what is working well.

Valuing Encourage people to value the good thing.

This is also central to AI. It involves appreciation of what is going well, another meaning of "appreciative" in appreciative inquiry.

Understanding Help people to know why something is worthwhile.

Understanding is a key outcome of AI. AI is a form of inquiry, namely a search for knowledge — knowledge about the positive workings of the organisation.

Endorsement Have respected figures support the good thing.

Formal endorsement by top managers is assumed in AI. In many cases, AI is initiated by CEOs. Sometimes the CEO asks for help from consultants, who convince the management team that AI is worth trying. For AI to be successful, employees need to be allowed to participate and to take initiatives. This would be unlikely without top-level support or at least neutrality. In writings on AI, there are hardly any examples in which workers initiated the process in the face of managerial opposition. Much of the challenge for AI proponents is to convince managers to support the process. So it is reasonable to say that endorsement is central to AI.

Action Do the good thing.

The destiny phase is essentially implementation of the design, which is based on the vision developed from the discovery.

In summary, the key features of AI map directly onto the five methods for promoting and supporting good things.

Methods and goals

When people think of good things, they normally think of an end state, for example being happy or being skilled. However, AI is not a state of being — a well-functioning organisation — but rather a method for members of an organisation to move towards a better state. Is there some discrepancy here?

Actually, the tension or difference between methods and goals is present in most good things — or maybe I should say good processes! Consider peace, for example, commonly thought of as a goal, either the goal of a world without war or something stronger such as a world with justice, equality and respect. However, some peace activists say the process of moving toward a peaceful world is as important as the goal itself. There is a saying: "There is no road to peace; peace is the road." In other words, living in a peaceful way — a process — is both goal and method. Similarly, many writings stress that happiness is not a final state of bliss but rather a continual process.

There is a curious feature of language, at least in English, concerning goals and methods. There is no special word for peace as a process; to distinguish between peace as a goal and peace as a method requires a cumbersome explanation. Many people do not grasp the difference between them, in part because the distinction is so seldom articulated. Similarly, there is no special English word for happiness as a process, an absence that contributes to many people thinking of happiness as a state of being, often in the future. That in turn helps explain why the insight that happiness is, or can be, in the now is often seen as so profound.

In relation to organisations, the English language is even less helpful. There is no standard word for the process of becoming a better organisation, though there are plenty of descriptive phrases such as "organisational development" or "the learning organisation," none of which has become standard. "Appreciative inquiry" is a particular way of going about the process of organisational improvement. Not only is there no standard word for the process, there is no standard word for the goal, namely a well-functioning organisation. The word "organisation" is neutral in respect to performance and the experiences of group members.

Some might argue that not too much distinction should be drawn between goals and methods, because methods should always incorporate the goal. That is certainly what AI does. The goal is an organisation that operates superbly; the AI method is to become aware of what things are already operating well and do them more and better.

Individuals and structures

Many good things can be promoted at two levels, individual and structural. For example, individuals can develop habits of happiness and health, but these habits are far easier to maintain if supported by structures in the wider society, everything from jobs to transport systems. So what about AI?

AI operates at both levels, but primarily at the structural level: the organisation. It is a collective process, built on interviews, stories, themes and group initiatives. So it is reasonable to expect that when AI is used, many individuals within organisations will become enthusiastic about their jobs and how to do them better and will help others to do likewise. That is exactly what happens. In example after example, AI unleashes enormous energy from organisation members.

Consider quite a different situation: a dysfunctional organisation in which one lone worker tries to make things better. If you are the lone worker, you can become aware of what it takes to make things operate better and take steps to live a more productive working life — but it can be a tough road. Individuals can make a difference, inspiring others. How to do this is not so obvious. If you're more productive than your co-workers, you may be resented as a rate-buster and become a target for undermining. If, by trying to improve things, you appear to support the boss, you might be ignored or harassed.

Trade unionists subscribe to the principle that collective action is far more powerful than individual action, as in the slogan "The workers united will never be defeated." Effective unions operate against exploitation and abuses by managers, for example pushing for higher pay and safer working conditions and challenging arbitrary treatment. Their traditional orientation is as a counterweight to employers, though some unions become lapdogs for management. The point is that unions achieve their goals largely through collective action.

AI operates the same way, but without the usual management-union divide. It's worth remembering that unions are organisations too; some have many paid staff. There's nothing to stop unions using AI to become more effective. This leads to an image of both management and unions using AI — and perhaps even working together.

My friend Lyn Carson has vast experience fostering public participation,[7] both inside and outside of organisations, and is a fan of AI. As well as using AI in organisations, she says it can be used with small groups too — just apply the same principles. She found it effective with a women's group for mutual support

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7 Her website is "Active democracy: citizen participation in decision making," http://www.activedemocracy.net/.

set up by a number of friends. Furthermore, she has tried out a type of personal AI: *discover* what you do well, *dream* of yourself at your best, *design* a way forward and act to achieve your *destiny*. Imagine the potential if individuals, groups and organisations all used AI simultaneously!

8
Chamber music

Overview
• Amateur chamber music is a satisfying activity for participants — a good thing.
• Amateur chamber music can be promoted by awareness, valuing, understanding, endorsement and action, at both individual and group levels.[1]

I play the clarinet. I learned classical style and that's what I usually play. When people think of classical music, they usually think of orchestras. There are also concert bands, in which clarinet sections are the equivalent of violin sections in orchestras. And there's another type of music — chamber music.

Chamber music involves a small group of classical musicians playing together. When I play a duet with flute, that's chamber music. When I play in a woodwind quintet — flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon and French horn — that's chamber music. So is a string quartet or a trio for piano, flute and cello. There are some larger combinations, up to 10 or 12 instruments. Larger than that and the group might be called a chamber orchestra.

The term chamber music comes from the history of these small ensembles playing in chambers, otherwise called rooms.

Today, the term applies to music played by any small classical ensemble, even when performed in a large hall.

From the point of view of most participants and audiences, chamber music is a good thing. I'm going to focus on amateur music, because professional music raises various complications including money, careers and competition for prestige. It's easier to argue that amateur chamber music is a good thing: people do it because they want to, usually with no audience. They get together with each other to play music because they enjoy it.

My focus is on chamber music because that's what I know most about. The same sorts of comments could be made about other sorts of amateur music — jazz, rock, folk and much else — and about other forms of amateur activity, such as drama.

Playing at home and beyond

My parents met each other in the orchestra at Purdue University in 1941. They each played flute. They kept playing flute for over 65 years thereafter. Dad played in some orchestras and bands, but the mainstay of their playing was chamber music.

Dad's idea was to have a woodwind quintet in the family. He would play the flute part and my mother the oboe part (on flute). I was started on clarinet and my brother on horn. But my sister was too small to play bassoon, so the plan came unstuck. But the plan was not all that important. The main thing was playing chamber music. Dad played flute and clarinet duets with me. When I was good enough, I joined my parents to play trios, or quartets with my brother on horn.

For a quintet or larger, we needed to invite others. I remember visiting bassoonists and horn players. My aunt played piano and my uncle played bassoon, but they lived on the other side of the country, so there were only very occasional get-togethers. Few families have enough players to play lots of chamber music,

so playing with others — strangers, at least initially — is part of the tradition.

Playing chamber music is much more satisfying when the music is challenging but not impossibly difficult for the players. That means you need to be good enough to play the music but not so good that it's boring. To have a satisfying session, you need to find a group of players of about the same standard. That's not always easy.

To arrange chamber groups, it helps to know other musicians in the locality and find ones who are compatible, in playing ability, punctuality and personality. Developing networks of players can be quite an art. Decades ago, to assist the process, several players started the Amateur Chamber Music Players (ACMP). It grew, filling a need, and now goes by the name ACMP—The Chamber Music Network, because too many people confuse amateur — being unpaid — with amateurish.

The ACMP's base is in the US but there are members all around the world. The core of the ACMP is a list of musicians. Anyone who wants to can have their name listed in this directory. Each musician has their name and contact details listed, plus their instruments and a rating of playing ability. This is a self-rating based on questions such as the amount of time spent practising per week and whether you've played certain pieces. Strong experienced players are rated A and those less advanced are rated D. The ratings are important because a group of As can play difficult pieces but Ds would be wise to try easier ones.

If you're travelling to Peru or Romania, you can look up the ACMP directory and contact someone who looks like a reasonable prospect, set up a playing session and have some fun playing music and meeting new people. The ACMP newsletter is filled with stories about musical adventures while travelling.

In my own region, there is a separate organisation called the Amateur Chamber Music Society (ACMS). Originally designed for players in New South Wales, most of whom live in Sydney, it now lists individuals from across the country. ACMS is a model for how to organise chamber music.

Like the ACMP, the ACMS produces a directory of all members with names, addresses, phone numbers, email addresses, instruments and self-ratings. Members are welcome to contact others to arrange to play with each other. In addition, the ACMS organises several "playing days" during the year. Members sign up for a playing day and the organisers arrange individuals to play in groups, matched as well as possible for ability and aiming to fit everybody into a group for each of the sessions, typically 90 minutes long. String players might be grouped into quartets but if there is a surplus of cellists, for example, some of them could be grouped into cello duets. Wind players might be grouped with each other or in combinations with strings. Pianists can be grouped with either strings or winds or both. The complexities increase when someone has to cancel out at the last minute, requiring rearrangements of the groupings.

The highlight of the year for the ACMS is a music camp lasting three days, held in Wollongong. In recent years, more than 100 players have attended. The two morning sessions, 90 minutes each, are pre-arranged by the organisers. The two afternoon sessions are "self-arranged": participants can arrange groups in advance or do it on the spot using sheets of paper on the wall in the main room — or they can skip a session and go to the beach.

Each year the music camp is slightly modified based on feedback from the year before. The starting times change a bit or the barbecue menu is modified. However, the core of the camp

remains the same: amateur musicians play chamber music with each other, doing something they enjoy with others.

Amateur chamber music is, most of the time, a good thing. Participants enjoy it. It's not easy: playing a musical instrument requires practice, indeed years of practice to become reasonably good, plus ongoing playing to maintain one's skills. This is part of the attraction: playing music together is an accomplishment, all the more satisfying through the collective effort required. It is easy to put on a CD with professionals performing pieces flawlessly; that can be enjoyable, to be sure. Making the effort to play the same works yourself, however inadequately compared to professionals, can provide a different sort of satisfaction, sometimes much deeper.

A good session requires everyone to concentrate to play at their best. If the music sounds decent, that's nice too! However, perfection is seldom the goal. Many players would rather tackle a challenging piece, perhaps going through it slowly and with mistakes, than a really easy one. Playing music can be a way of entering the experience called flow, in which focused effort using well developed skills absorbs one's capacities so that time passes pleasantly; consciousness of self may melt away.

Orchestra politics

How is chamber music different from playing in an orchestra or concert band? The most obvious difference is that orchestras and bands have dozens of players, sometimes more than a hundred, whereas chamber groups typically have two to six players, occasionally up to a dozen or so. Orchestras and bands, along with size, usually have a different sort of interpersonal politics. There are status hierarchies in orchestras: playing in the firsts (the violinists playing the first violin part) is more sought after than playing in the seconds; being on a higher desk (the front of

the section) usually signals more status; being the concertmaster — the leader of the violins and of the orchestra — is the pinnacle among the players. The decision about who gets to play the first, second, third and fourth horn parts can be contentious.

For some instrumentalists, even getting into an orchestra is a challenge. There are often many more capable flautists than there are parts in an orchestra, so being chosen is a matter of competition. In a professional orchestra, the competition is about careers and can be fierce, sometimes ruthless. In amateur orchestras, the stakes seem smaller but the competition can be just as fierce, because opportunities to play, especially to play a good part, may be limited. A good player — or someone who thinks they are good — wants to play in a good orchestra.

Amateur orchestras sometimes have auditions, but often players obtain their positions through appointment by the conductor or orchestral manager. This means it can be more a matter of who you know than how well you can play. Some orchestras are models of harmony, musically and personally, but many are riven by petty rivalries and jealousies.

Then there is the conductor, a person with considerable power to shape the choice of programmes, the selection of players and the conduct of rehearsals. A good conductor can inspire musicians; a poor one might waste time, choose inappropriate music or even humiliate players.

A few orchestras operate as participatory democracies, making collective decisions and sorting out problems in a sensitive way. Many, though, are patronage systems, with the conductor and other key figures handing out favours. Few players are willing to voice their true feelings for fear of losing their opportunities.

Chamber groups, in contrast, are far more likely to run things themselves. In a woodwind quintet, for example, every

player has a separate part, so no player is formally superior to another. Composers of chamber music most commonly assume the players have roughly equal proficiency.

There's a partial exception in some groups. For example, in a string quartet there are two violins, one viola and one cello. The first violin part is usually more challenging and likely to carry the melody and thus for most players is more desirable, leading to occasional competitive tensions among violinists. Sometimes these can be resolved by the two violinists switching back and forth between parts or by the group finding someone who is happy with the second violin part. There's no such resolution in most orchestras if more than one violinist wants to be the concertmaster: changing orchestras is not that easy and having different players as concertmasters for different pieces is seldom the done thing.

Chamber groups have frictions and other problems, to be sure — just like any group of people trying to accomplish things together. All I'm suggesting is that the problems are likely to be less acute when the groups are small (making them easier to form and reform) and the players are amateurs (so careers are not at stake).

I once met a professional cellist from Germany. He said he enjoyed playing with amateurs because, even though they seldom could play as well as professionals, they wanted to play. He mimed professional string players who took a few strokes of the bow and then looked at their watches, waiting for the rehearsal to be over. Amateurs are more likely to want to keep playing after the scheduled time. (It's only fair to note that some professionals are keen to play even in their leisure time.)

Promoting chamber music

Let me now turn to the five methods for promoting good things outlined in chapter 1 — the same methods relevant for a variety of good things, such as happiness and health — and see how they apply to amateur chamber music. I will start with methods at the individual level.

Awareness Amateur musicians are certainly aware of chamber music. They have to take some initiative to be involved.

Valuing Adult amateur musicians believe chamber music is a good thing. If they don't, they can easily stop playing and drop out of engagements. On the other hand, children who are learning instruments often do so only because their parents insist. Some of them don't like it and do little practice. Music teachers are frustrated by these reluctant learners.

Understanding Amateur musicians know why they value chamber music: they enjoy the music, have the satisfaction of engaging in a challenging activity, and usually like being with other musicians.

Endorsement This is the weakest element. Amateur music-makers seldom receive a ringing endorsement from wider society. Some professional musicians ignore amateurs or even denigrate them. Endorsement mainly comes from other amateur musicians. Within the scene, reinforcement is powerful, but outside classical music circles the very existence of amateur chamber music is little known.

Action The most powerful promoter of amateur chamber music is actually playing. It provides both the incentive and the practice necessary to maintain one's skills.

Overall, a person voluntarily engaging in chamber music is likely to be reinforced in the behaviour. The biggest obstacle is at the action level. *If* you are regularly practising and playing, it's easy to keep going. But chamber music requires more than one person, and this is where problems can arise. What if there's no one around who plays a suitable instrument at a similar standard and who also wants to play with you? It then becomes very easy to stop practising — what's the use if you never get to play? — and, after a while, you become less proficient and hence less attractive as a playing partner. Getting out of practice is a big hazard; it is both the cause and consequence of not playing regularly.

To address the action level more completely, we need to look at the wider picture. If there is a supportive culture of chamber music, it's far easier to keep practising and playing. This can occur within a family, as I experienced myself, or in a school or local community. Organisations such as the ACMP and ACMS institutionalise the support. Consider how the ACMS promotes chamber music.

Awareness The ACMS puts out newsletters and sends emails about playing days and other events. By encouraging musicians to make music, it serves as a node for fostering individual awareness of chamber music.

Valuing The existence of the ACMS is testimony to the value of chamber music. Those who join already value it; by being in touch with others, this is reinforced.

Understanding For the most part, members of the ACMS already understand what chamber music is all about. The main role of the organisation is enabling members to be in touch with each other; when they are together, members share stories and experiences and thus gain a greater understanding of the role of chamber music in people's lives.

Endorsement The very existence of the ACMS serves as an endorsement of chamber music, demonstrating that others care enough about it to put energy into establishing and maintaining the organisation and its activities. Some generous professional musicians serve as tutors at playing days and the Wollongong music camp, providing validation for amateur efforts through their encouragement and enthusiasm. The ACMS organises a monthly public performance by its members, attended by families and friends of the performers, plus a few members of the public. Despite its limited profile, these concerts provide a degree of wider endorsement to amateur players.

Action The ACMS, by organising playing days and the music camp, fosters the playing of chamber music. Those who perform at one of the monthly concerts have a great incentive to rehearse. That's certainly my experience: there's nothing like an upcoming performance to motivate personal practice and rehearsals.

I've talked about the ACMS, as an organisation, as if it operates with some sort of collective agency. In reality, relatively few members take active roles in the support functions such as preparing the newsletter, organising the playing days and music camp, arranging playing groups for these events, maintaining the website, handling the finances and much else. So what helps

these key ACMS members maintain their commitment and thus enable many others to benefit?

At an individual level, key ACMS workers obtain satisfaction from their unpaid efforts: they see what a good time others are having and feel good they are able to contribute. Furthermore, these ACMS individuals work as a team, towards a collective goal, and there is satisfaction in working with others. Because there is no boss at the top to lord over others, some of the negatives of many conventional workplaces are avoided. No one is required to do the ACMS work; some individuals help for a year or two and then pass the baton to others.

To go a bit deeper into the success of the ACMS, we need to look at what enables the key workers to continue their efforts and seek continual improvement. One factor is awareness of what works well. Every year at the annual music camp, participants are encouraged to fill out a questionnaire about different facets of the camp: the pre-arranged sessions, the self-arranged sessions, the library, the concerts, food, accommodation and so forth. Results are tallied and sent to all members and used to help plan the next year's event. Informal feedback from members supplements the questionnaires. This learning process has become institutionalised — it is a tradition.

Another factor is the high professional skill level of many amateur musicians. A surprising proportion are doctors, scientists, engineers or teachers, while a good number are musicians by trade, especially music teachers. The median age of participants is definitely over 50 — some keep playing into their 80s and 90s — so these are people with a lot of experience of life and working relationships. They take pride in applying their skills and experience to organising chamber music.

In summary, the ACMS is an example of how to promote a good thing — amateur chamber music — at the collective level.

The Wollongong music camp has become so successful that it attracts players from other parts of Australia, some of which do not have a local organisation to organise events. When there is no supporting organisation, then much more depends on individual initiative — and that usually means there's not as much chamber music.

Conclusion

To promote amateur chamber music, it's worth addressing both individual and collective levels. For individuals, the five methods of awareness, valuing, understanding, endorsement and action are important. Action is the key: musicians need to keep playing, otherwise they soon get out of practice.

The habit of practising is much easier to maintain if there is a supportive environment. If others want to play music with you and expect you to play at a suitable standard, it is a powerful incentive to maintain personal playing habits. But it's not always easy to find the right sort of people to play with, at a similar standard. Organisations like the ACMS facilitate the process.

The ACMS operates at the collective level. Again, action is the key. Regular events — playing days, concerts and the annual music camps — structure the organisation's efforts. The ACMS, as a voluntary organisation, relies on a fairly small number of individuals to keep things going. The example of the ACMS illustrates how efforts at the individual and collective levels reinforce each other.

9
Conclusion

> **Overview**
> To do good things better:
> • focus on the good things
> • promote awareness, valuing, understanding, endorsement and action
> • turn doing the good thing into a habit
> • act at the individual level and at the collective level.[1]

There are plenty of good things happening in the world, but they seldom receive much attention compared to nasties like war, murder, torture, exploitation and poverty. That may be the explanation for why there is relatively little public attention to good things and how to do them better.

However, agreeing on what is good is not always easy. Critics abound concerning widely touted goals such as education, religion, national prosperity and environmental protection. So to start examining good things, it is useful to choose things widely endorsed as worthwhile and to restrict discussion to their positive aspects. An example is friendship: it is widely thought to be a good thing except when used for nefarious purposes such as organised crime.

It can be a challenge to focus on good things and to think about protecting and promoting them. The usual emphasis is on

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1 I thank Lyn Carson and Ian Miles for valuable feedback on drafts of this chapter.

problems and how to fix them. In organisations, addressing problems is the standard approach, which is why appreciative inquiry, with its attention to what is working well, is such a contrast.

Many good things, such as happiness and expertise, have been studied in depth, though most people know little about the research. Nearly all this sort of research is specific to the topic studied. Research on happiness seldom intersects with research on expertise, and neither has been connected with research on honour systems. Because research most commonly delves into topics in depth, learning more and more about ever narrower topics, there is a role for pulling together findings from in-depth investigations, providing an overview of a field and indicating areas needing further study.

My aim has been a horizontal kind of investigation. Rather than delving ever deeper into narrow topics — a vertical style of investigation — my approach is to look at diverse case studies, across a range of topics, and see whether there are common patterns. Some of the case studies I've chosen are in well-established research fields, such as happiness. For these, I can draw on the findings in the fields. Other case studies I've chosen are less commonly studied, like amateur chamber music and citizen advocacy. For these, I've drawn on personal knowledge.

In a traditional scholarly analysis, this would be the point at which I review other research on the same topic. The trouble is, I haven't been able to find very much that is relevant. There's certainly plenty of research in some areas, like happiness and health. But I haven't been able to find studies that look at disparate good things and find commonalities in the ways to promote them.

There are several possible reasons for this research gap. One is the usual emphasis on fixing problems rather than doing

good things better. Another is research specialisation: researchers know an incredible amount about their topics. In research fields, there is high status in becoming an authority in a well-defined area. In contrast, there is little encouragement to develop cross-disciplinary syntheses, because experts in each discipline see that as encroaching on their territories. Few scholarly journals publish integrative treatments of diverse issues.

I diverted even further from scholarly norms by deciding to write this book in an accessible style, avoiding the typical academic prose that so often is indigestible to anyone outside a field and sometimes to those in it too. An impenetrable style does not guarantee insights, nor does an easy-to-read style mean lack of content, though that is a usual assumption in scholarly circles, in which "journalistic" is a term used to condemn writing that is readable and hence, presumably, not sufficiently rigorous or serious.

Personally, I set myself the goal of writing about challenging topics in a way that is easier to read and understand than the usual academic prose. I have introduced personal experiences as an aid in this. It isn't necessarily easier to write this way: it is a different approach and requires its own discipline.

The five methods

By surveying a wide variety of good things, an important pattern emerges. Five key methods are valuable for supporting and promoting good things: awareness, valuing, understanding, endorsement and doing. These might seem obvious — and they are in quite a few cases. However, it is useful to point them out because sometimes they are absent or inadequate.

Awareness To support a good thing, it helps to be aware of it. This might seem trivial, but there are quite a few good things

that people don't know about. Citizen advocacy is a wonderful way of protecting people with intellectual disabilities, but it is little known aside from those directly involved. Similarly, amateur chamber music and student honour codes are not well known to non-participants.

Even for things that are familiar, awareness may be perfunctory. Everyone is aware of happiness, but many people only think about it occasionally.

Greater awareness can help in promoting good things. For example, citizen advocates often tell friends and neighbours about their relationships with their protégés. Citizen advocacy relationships are inspiring good news stories, and deserve a wider circulation. The implication is that when a good thing isn't widely known, promoting awareness is a key task for those who believe in it.

There is plenty of promotion in the world, notably by advertisers, and good things have to compete in a marketplace of aggressive selling. Supporters of good things can have a tough task organising a campaign of promotion — or they may not bother, simply assuming that good things speak for themselves. Unfortunately, this is seldom the case. Promoting awareness — in appropriate ways, to suitable audiences — is a key task for promoting good things.

Valuing To support a good thing, it's important that people value it. That seems almost too obvious to mention, but actually there are plenty of worthwhile things going on that people don't value very much, often because they take them for granted. Many people — especially young people — take their health for granted. They are aware of good health as an abstract concept, but don't take care of their own bodies. They can get away with poor diet, lack of exercise, smoking and heavy drinking for years or even decades, sometimes not appreciating the absence of

serious disease until it is too late. If asked, they might say they value good health, but this abstract commitment isn't pursued in daily behaviours.

Understanding To support a good thing, it's helpful to know why it is worthwhile, and furthermore to know what keeps it going. Consider happiness. Most people are aware of happiness and think it's worth pursuing, but have mistaken ideas about what makes them happy. So they may spend endless effort on a fruitless quest, never realising what is going wrong. Studying and applying the latest research on happiness — or, alternatively, ancient wisdom — is the basis for a far more effective search.

Understanding is especially important for those who try to help others, for example coordinators of citizen advocacy programmes or designers of public health programmes. A deep understanding aids in developing, maintaining, testing and improving the most effective systems.

Endorsement Most people are influenced by what they believe others think and do. If your friends and family members act as if something is good, then you're more likely to agree. When respected authorities — doctors, scientists, experts, or perhaps politicians or celebrities, whoever you look up to — support a cause, then you're more likely to as well. Endorsement can come from the bottom or top of the social pyramid: sometimes children's preferences influence parents, though more commonly it is the other way around.

Without credible endorsement, promoting a good thing is far more difficult. Some courageous individuals proceed in the face of indifference or hostility, but they are a minority.

The implication is that winning over others is crucial to promoting a good thing. This applies especially for relatively

unknown options like citizen advocacy and honour systems that are fully supported in only a few places. But it also applies to familiar things like happiness. Martin Seligman sought to get the numbers to become president of the American Psychological Society so he could use his status to support positive psychology and thus put happiness research on a stronger footing. In essence, he was seeking the power of endorsement to influence his colleagues in psychology.

Action   The most important method of promoting good things is to do them. The appropriate slogan is "do it." This is slightly different from Nike's marketing slogan "just do it" because "just" implies doing it is all that's required. To be effective in doing a good thing, the aim should be to turn it into a habit. So maybe the slogan should be "do it in a way that ensures you keep doing it."

Action is especially powerful because it changes the way people think. If you feel shy but pretend to be confident, namely act as though you are confident, then after several months of pretending you may actually feel more confident. What happens is that the mind adapts to the behaviour. This is not necessarily positive: people who commit crimes can eventually see their behaviour as normal or justified. But action for good things works in a positive direction. You are more likely to justify your behaviour, seek out information about it, notice endorsements for it and value it. In short, action contributes to all the other methods of promoting good things.

Action is the core technique for promoting the good things I've looked at. For example, the foundation of the writing programme is regular writing — a habit of writing. In citizen advocacy, it is often quite hard to find someone to commit to being an advocate, but once a person makes the commitment and starts the relationship, it is far easier to keep going. In debates

about whether to institute honour systems, there are plenty of objections. In an actually functioning honour system, support comes far more easily because participants understand, through their actions, what is involved and can see that it works.

Maintaining the habit

The key techniques for promoting good things are awareness, valuing, understanding, endorsement and action. So far, so good. But there's another step: how to turn these into habits. Without regular reinforcement, good things might only be here today, gone tomorrow. So the challenge is to set up systems that maintain the habit.

An individual can set up a personal system. This might be a personal ritual for expressing gratitude, an arrangement with friends to exercise together or membership in a writer's group. Personal systems can be quite effective, but they still rely on individual initiative. Only some people are able to set up such systems. Furthermore, there may be contrary pressures, for example temptations to eat unhealthy food or to read emails instead of doing daily writing.

The most effective systems for maintaining habits are built into the way social life is organised. An honour system is, in effect, a system for maintaining a habit of honesty in student work. Citizen advocacy is a system for initiating and maintaining an ongoing relationship — a sort of habit — with a person with a disability who is in need.

The crucial challenge in promoting good things is to make changes at the system level. Doing good things needs to become the easy option. It should be the way people do things when they go about life doing what seems natural.

In lots of areas, there is a long way to go to reach this sort of situation. In western societies, achieving happiness is largely

left to individuals who face all sorts of distractions and temptations, such as the pursuit of money or getting drunk. There is plenty of information available from happiness research about ways to achieve more lasting satisfaction, but the effort largely relies on individual initiative. The collective systems — the economic system, the education system, and so forth — are not built around maximising happiness, and often push people in opposite directions.

Citizen advocacy is itself an intervention at the system level. In the world, there are many people with intellectual disabilities who have serious unmet needs — and sometimes a friend or even a stranger decides to advocate on behalf of one of these individuals. That is a good thing, developing spontaneously. Citizen advocacy aims to set up more relationships like this. But it is hampered by lack of awareness, lack of understanding and lack of authoritative endorsement.

Looking at good things through the framework of tactics provides guidance for both individual and social action. Individuals seeking to do good things — for themselves or for others — can look at the five standard methods: awareness, valuing, understanding, endorsement and action. That's a start. The next step is to set up systems around each of these methods so that they foster a habit.

At the social action level, campaigners can proceed using the same five methods. It's easy to say but often not so easy to do. Especially hard is keeping the focus on good things. It's so easy to start complaining about the negatives!

One of the problems with promoting good things is that often there is no obvious enemy. There's no group consciously trying to prevent people being happy or becoming better writers or setting up honour systems or running for fitness. Actually, there are quite a few people trying to promote these and other

good things, and seldom any organised opposition. The obstacles are built into the way social life is arranged, and in some ways changing social arrangements is far more difficult than confronting enemies.

In classic Hollywood movies, there are the good guys and the bad guys. The set-up is good versus evil, personified by individuals. Real-world problems are different. There are lots of complexities; personalities are only part of the story. It's easy to understand Hollywood story lines, because they tap into familiar ways of thinking about the world. In principle, ways to promote good things are also easy to understand: use a set of methods, and help change systems so good habits are easy to maintain. But this story line is not nearly so familiar. The challenge is to make it seem so obvious that everyone gets it, and participates.

Appendix
A long road to looking at good things

I've been interested in strategies and tactics for a long time — decades actually. So why not look at strategies and tactics to protect and promote good things such as friendship, happiness and expert performance? Well, it didn't come naturally.

In 1976, I moved to Canberra and soon joined Friends of the Earth. It was an energetic group of young activists. At 29, I was the oldest one in the group, yet many of the others had far more experience in activism.

FOE was concerned with many environmental issues, for example forestry and whaling. However, the big issue at the time, where most effort was targeted, was nuclear power, especially uranium mining: Australia's major role in the production of nuclear power was providing uranium for fuel. FOE was the main group campaigning against nuclear power, though within a few years other organisations were created with a dedicated focus on nuclear power.

The anti-nuclear campaign had both negative and positive dimensions. The negative side was opposition to nuclear power by pointing out its many problems: reactor accidents, long-lived radioactive waste, proliferation of nuclear weapons, high cost, threats to civil liberties and mining on Aboriginal land, among others. The main emphasis in campaigning was telling people all the bad things about the nuclear option.

The positive side was a different energy future involving energy efficiency, renewable energy technologies like solar and wind power, and social changes to reduce energy needs, such as promoting public transport and cycling and producing more food

locally. However, the positive side didn't receive nearly as much attention as the negative. Negative arguments seemed stronger: they were more focused on the movement's immediate goal of stopping uranium mining. Furthermore, the media were more interested in bad news: the 1979 Three Mile Island nuclear accident received saturation coverage, and the 1986 Chernobyl accident was the clincher, making nuclear power untouchable in much of the world.

The positive argument — there are viable alternatives to nuclear power — was really a reserve argument to be used when people wanted to know how the world could cope without the nuclear option. There was a problem with the positives: not everyone agreed about the alternative. Some people preferred technical fixes: keep the world operating just like it is, except use a different technology. So instead of nuclear electricity, use electricity from wind power and solar cells. Instead of using oil, obtain fuel from farming waste, and make car engines much more efficient. Other people preferred social change, like town planning to reduce transport requirements and, more fundamentally, cutting back on consumerism.

Disagreements in the movement were routine, but it was important to be united in campaigning, and the easiest thing to agree on was what we were against. The movement was the anti-nuclear movement, and it was "anti": the emphasis was on what we saw as the problem, not on solutions.

A few years later, I became interested in peace issues and in 1979 helped set up Canberra Peacemakers, at that time the only peace group in the city. People talked about the peace movement, but it was better described as the antiwar movement. Once again, the emphasis was on the problem, not on the solution.

The problem was a big one: war. Within a couple of years, the movement grew enormously, but the focus narrowed: it became opposition to nuclear weapons and nuclear war. There were huge rallies around the world. In Canberra in 1982 we had the biggest rally and march that anyone could remember. It seemed like the movement would keep growing until it was successful. After all, the future of the human species was at stake, and popular opinion was strongly in favour of reducing nuclear arsenals. But within a few years, the movement dwindled away to nothing and nuclear war dropped off the media agenda. After the end of the cold war in 1989, it seemed the danger had passed — except that there were still tens of thousands of nuclear weapons in arsenals around the world.

I was interested in strategy against the war system. Most people in the movement focussed on nuclear weapons. Sure, they are bad, but I saw them as one manifestation of the war system. Without tackling the system, problems were going to recur. So I delved into what I thought were the driving forces behind the war system: the state, bureaucracy, the military, science and technology, patriarchy … yes, it certainly was the big picture. Tackling these roots of war meant having strategies against the state, bureaucracy and so forth.

The encouraging part of this exploration was that no matter what problem I thought about — little or big — I could find people trying to challenge it, and sometimes whole movements. My main message to peace activists was to look at the roots of war and start thinking how to challenge them.[1] Unfortunately, not many were listening!

The other side of my analysis was to think of alternatives to the war system. I looked at several I thought were especially

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1 Brian Martin, *Uprooting War* (London: Freedom Press, 1984).

promising: social defence, peace conversion and self-management. In Canberra Peacemakers, most of our effort was oriented to social defence. Most people had never heard of it. We came up with a description: "nonviolent community resistance to aggression as an alternative to military defence." It means using strikes, boycotts, sit-ins, vigils, rallies and various other methods to oppose an invasion or coup.[2]

Quite a few people had written about social defence and there were advocacy groups in a few countries. In Canberra Peacemakers we produced a broadsheet, organised workshops, produced a slide show and worked with members of a community radio station.

We raised awareness about social defence, but it was tough going. Most people, when they think of "defence," think of military defence — and they think of defence by professionals, namely military personnel. They don't think of citizen action; they don't think of what they might do themselves to resist aggression. So we pulled out the best examples we could find, for example popular resistance to military coups in Germany in 1920 and Algeria in 1961, and civilian uprisings that, with little or no violence, had ousted dictators in places like Guatemala and Haiti.

We made contact with other groups promoting social defence, in the US, Netherlands, Italy, Britain and elsewhere. But we were going against the tide. Perhaps it was too early to have a chance of converting from military defence to social defence.

Meanwhile, I became involved with the issue of dissent, initially collecting information about scientists who came under attack because of their environmental teaching or research.

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2 My publications on this are at http://www.bmartin.cc/pubs/sd.html.

Environmental concern is mainstream today, but in the 1970s taking a pro-environment position was risky for a career scientist. These scientists had publications blocked, access to research data restricted or tenure denied.[3]

Over the years, this led me into a wider variety of cases of suppression of dissent, from doctors to government employees.[4] In 1991, a new organisation was set up to support whistleblowers in Australia and before long I became involved. Indeed I was president of Whistleblowers Australia 1996–1999 and continue today as a vice president.

Looking at whistleblowing was definitely a matter of regularly confronting negatives. An honest employee raises concern about some problem in the organisation — dubious finances, appointments, products, whatever — and before long suffers a host of reprisals including ostracism, petty harassment, reprimands, demotion, punitive transfers, referral to psychiatrists, dismissal and blacklisting. The impacts on whistleblowers are horrific.

The usual response to this is to advocate laws to protect whistleblowers, but unfortunately such laws hardly ever seem to work. Often they aren't enforced or employers know how to get around them. More fundamentally, whistleblower laws operate too late and too slowly. Usually the worker has already spoken out and suffered reprisals.

My preference is to encourage workers to develop skills so they can be more effective in addressing the issue of concern,

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3 Brian Martin, "The scientific straightjacket: the power structure of science and the suppression of environmental scholarship," *The Ecologist*, 11 (1), January-February 1981, 33–43.

4 Brian Martin, C. M. Ann Baker, Clyde Manwell and Cedric Pugh (eds.), *Intellectual Suppression: Australian Case Histories, Analysis and Responses* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1986).

skills such as gathering information, building a personal support network, preparing a cogent argument and liaising with outside groups.[5] With these skills, the goal is to tackle the problem, not just to speak out about it. The reality is that most whistleblowers have very little impact on the problems they raise the alarm about. Often it is better to lie low and wait for the right opportunity to expose the problem. Often leaking information to media or action groups is far more effective than speaking out and becoming a martyr.

In the back of my mind, I was always aware of the shortcomings of focusing on trying to fix problems. With whistleblowers there were usually two problems: the one they spoke out about — corruption, abuse, danger to the public — and the treatment of the whistleblower, namely reprisals. But where in this focus on whistleblowers and their tribulations was there any attention to what was going well in organisations? Well, it wasn't anywhere.

In my studies of nonviolent action, I became interested in a process called political jiu-jitsu. Protesters sometimes are physically attacked. In 1930, Gandhi organised a protest to challenge the British salt monopoly in India. At that time, India was a British colony. As part of the British government's exploitation of the country, salt was taxed and Indians were banned from making it themselves. The tax wasn't all that great but Gandhi realised it was a powerful symbol of the oppressiveness of British rule.

The British conquered India in the 1700s. At that time, the standard of living for Indian workers wasn't that different from British workers, but British colonial exploitation strangled the Indian economy. Today, we might imagine that in 1930 Indians

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5 Brian Martin, *The Whistleblower's Handbook: How to Be an Effective Resister* (Charlbury, UK: Jon Carpenter; Sydney: Envirobook, 1999).

were all passionate for independence, but actually the country was fragmented by class, caste, religion and gender. The British used divide-and-rule techniques to maintain control with only a tiny physical presence.

Gandhi's great challenge was unite the Indian people against British rule. (Meanwhile, he was also opposing other forms of oppression such as caste.) The salt protest was designed to do this. Gandhi organised a 24-day march to the sea with the intention of making salt from seawater, a form of civil disobedience to the salt monopoly. The march captured the imagination of people around the country and put the British rulers in a dilemma: act against Gandhi and the marchers and stimulate even greater resistance, or let the march continue and gather momentum.

I won't go into all the details; one facet is important here. After the conclusion of the march, Indian protesters staged nonviolent "raids" against a saltworks. They walked forward, peacefully, until they were met by police, armed with batons, who beat them, often brutally, leaving them injured and bleeding; other activists carried them away to hospitals.

The usual idea is that nonviolence is weak: a bit of violence stops the protests. But this ignores the impact of the interaction on others. The salt march and subsequent arrests and beatings inflamed the nation, helping foster a spirit of resistance that transformed the struggle. The British, by beating a few defenceless protesters, massively stimulated support for the independence struggle within India.

One of those witnessing the beatings was a US journalist named Webb Miller. He wrote eloquent accounts of what he saw and managed to get them past British attempts at censorship. His stories were read widely in Britain, the US and other countries

and were instrumental in changing attitudes about the independence struggle.

Richard Gregg, a young man from the US, went to India in the 1920s to study Gandhi's campaigns. He wrote a book titled *The Power of Nonviolence* in which he coined the term "moral jiu-jitsu" to explain the reaction to the salt march beatings and other such assaults. Basically, he likened nonviolent action to the sport of jiu-jitsu, in which the opponent's weight and momentum are used against them: when nonviolent protesters are attacked, the result can be greater support for the protesters.[6]

Decades later, leading nonviolence researcher Gene Sharp took Gregg's concept and modified it. Gregg had given a psychological explanation for moral jiu-jitsu. Sharp instead gave a broader explanation involving social and political factors, calling the phenomenon "political jiu-jitsu." Sharp gave lots of examples, for example the shooting of protesters in the 1905 Russian revolution that undermined support for the Czar and laid the basis for the successful 1917 revolution.[7]

With colleagues Wendy Varney and Adrian Vickers, I wrote an article about how sometimes there was very little resistance to violent attacks, using examples from Indonesia, including the 1965–1966 massacres in which over half a million people were killed. Following reports from referees, I introduced

political jiu-jitsu as a concept to help make sense of what had happened.[8]

This got me thinking about reactions to violent attacks and in 2002 I had an insight: why is it that violent attacks on protesters sometimes *don't* generate greater support? I started thinking of what the attackers did to prevent the jiu-jitsu effect. This led me to develop the backfire framework.

The basic idea is that powerful perpetrators of something that people might see as unjust — such as beatings or killings of peaceful protesters — will use five sorts of methods to inhibit public outrage.

- Cover up the action.
- Devalue the target.
- Reinterpret what happened by lying, minimising the consequences, blaming others and framing events differently.
- Use official channels to give an appearance of justice.
- Intimidate or bribe people involved.

When I started looking at injustices — for example the massacre of protesters in Dili, East Timor, in 1991 — I found evidence of these methods, often all five of them. So political jiu-jitsu didn't always occur when nonviolent protesters were attacked — it depended on the outrage-management methods used by the attackers and on how effectively they used those methods.

To distinguish this model from Sharp's concept of political jiu-jitsu, I adopted the term "backfire": when the methods to inhibit outrage are unsuccessful, the attack can backfire on the attackers, namely be counterproductive.

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6 Richard B. Gregg, *The Power of Nonviolence,* 2d ed. (New York: Schocken Books, 1966).

7 Gene Sharp, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* (Boston: Porter Sargent, 1973).

8 Brian Martin, Wendy Varney and Adrian Vickers, "Political jiu-jitsu against Indonesian repression: studying lower-profile nonviolent resistance," *Pacifica Review,* 13 (2), June 2001, 143–156.

Rather than just apply this model to violent attacks on peaceful protesters, I started looking at all sorts of issues. I collaborated with Sue Curry Jansen, an expert on censorship, to examine instances in which attempted censorship had backfired, such as the defamation suit by McDonald's against two anarchists, Helen Steel and Dave Morris, over their participation in writing a leaflet titled "What's wrong with McDonald's?"[9] I collaborated with Steve Wright, a leading authority on the technology of repression, on tactics used by governments that manufacture, sell and use torture technology.[10] In the following years I looked at the beating of Rodney King by Los Angeles police in 1991, at the dismissal of biologist Ted Steele from the University of Wollongong in 2001, at the My Lai massacre during the Vietnam war in 1968 (in collaboration with Truda Gray), and at the 1994 Rwanda genocide, among others.[11]

At some point during my work on the backfire model, applying it to one case study after another and finding ample evidence of the same sorts of tactics, I realised I was focussing on bad things, such as censorship, unfair dismissal, torture and genocide. These are all important: being able to predict the tactics used by powerful perpetrators can be valuable. But what about the other side of life? What about good things?

That was the genesis of my study of ways to make good things better. I had looked at tactics used by perpetrators of things perceived as unjust and at counter-tactics by those

9 Sue Curry Jansen and Brian Martin, "Making censorship backfire," *Counterpoise,* 7(3), July 2003, 5–15.

10 Brian Martin and Steve Wright, "Countershock: mobilizing resistance to electroshock weapons," *Medicine, Conflict and Survival,* 19 (3), July-September 2003, 205–222.

11 See "Backfire materials," http://www.bmartin.cc/pubs/backfire.html.

opposed to injustice, so I was attuned to looking at tactics. However, looking at good things was not an obvious switch. Although I had long been interested in alternatives, such as alternatives to nuclear power and to the military, an alternative is not quite the same thing as a good thing.

An alternative is something that could exist, or maybe it does exist but could be expanded or improved. Energy efficiency, for example, is good if it's cheaper and less dangerous than producing energy from nuclear power, coal or even solar power. However, energy efficiency is not a good thing in isolation. It's part of an energy system and, in that context, it's a good thing as an alternative to bad things. That's fine, and I'm all for energy efficiency, but it's not quite what I wanted to tackle. A good thing is something in the here and now that well informed people widely recognise as worthwhile and, if asked, would desire to do better or to do more of it. In other words, I wanted to look at tactics in support of good things seen as good in themselves.

The difference between alternatives and good things is a matter of degree — there's a big overlap. Tactics for doing good things better can be applied to promoting alternatives and every good thing can be seen as an alternative. I suppose I wanted to get away from issues that are highly contentious.

I've already mentioned that there's a lot more research on understanding and fixing problems than on understanding and promoting good things. There's also vastly more research on explaining and understanding than on practical action; in the social sciences, there's hardly any analysis of tactics. By studying tactics to do good things better, I've departed from the mainstream of research. That's fine with me.

My approach

My aim was to come up with a set of methods — which might also be called actions or tactics — that protect and promote good things. So how to proceed?

I could start by looking at good things, such as happiness and friendship, and seeing what sorts of things protect and promote them. This would be the approach of grounded theory: look at the data with few preconceived ideas and gradually build up a theoretical framework — a set of ideas — that fits the data.[12] This would be a promising approach for studying a particular area, such as friendship. I could look at actual friendships, observing them myself or inspecting primary data, and develop a set of tactics for protecting and promoting friendship. This would be most valuable — but it is a different sort of project. There would be no guarantee that the tactics to support friendship would apply to other areas. I was looking for a more general framework than is likely with a grounded theory approach.

To speed up the process, instead of looking at individual friendships, I could look at the work of others who have studied friendship, drawing on their generalisations. Ideally, I could find a definitive account of research into friendship and could pick out a set of methods to promote it. This wouldn't take nearly so long as developing my own grounded theory and would enable me to do the same with a range of other topics, such as happiness.

However, finding a definitive account of research in an area is not always easy. I started reading general books on friendship,

12 Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research* (Chicago: Aldine-Atherton, 1967).

finding a range of perspectives and comments. What I would have liked to find was a textbook on friendship, summarising research findings in the field in a logical way. Textbooks do this in quite a few fields, such as nutrition, government or nursing. That's because these areas are so developed that there's a body of established research findings and lots of students taking classes to become practitioners — nutritionists, political scientists or nurses, for example. But friendship is not a field like this. There is no standard occupation of "friendship promoter" and, therefore, little incentive to codify the research findings in a convenient form such as a textbook. The same applies to several of the good things I proposed to look at, such as citizen advocacy and chamber music.

Because of this shortage of easily accessible frameworks in particular areas, I decided to use one of my own. One way would be to use a framework in an area where there is a degree of consensus, such as happiness, or to develop a framework of my own from scratch. I wasn't making much progress when I had an idea: what about using my framework for studying tactics against injustice, but adapt it to look at good things?

As already described, according to the backfire model, powerful perpetrators of something potentially perceived as unjust are likely to use one or more of five methods to reduce outrage:

- Cover up the action.
- Devalue the target.
- Reinterpret what happened by lying, minimising the consequences, blaming others and framing events differently.
- Use official channels to give an appearance of justice.
- Intimidate or bribe people involved.

So far, this framework doesn't have much connection with methods for protecting and promoting good things. The connection comes from looking at counter-tactics to the perpetrator's tactics. These can be conveniently grouped into five categories, responding to each of the perpetrator's tactics.

- Expose the action.
- Validate the target.
- Interpret the events as an injustice.
- Avoid or discredit official channels; instead, mobilise support.
- Resist intimidation and bribery.

I had found, through looking at a wide range of struggles, that these five types of counter-tactics were often used.

My next thought was to apply these counter-tactics to good things. Of course, to support good things, there's often no injustice or opponent. What or who, for example, is the opponent of friendship? So adapting these tactics against injustice to become methods to support good things wouldn't necessarily make a lot of sense.

To see whether this approach would work, I examined case studies, such as happiness and chamber music, to see whether the methods were involved. This required modification of some of the tactics.

Expose the action becomes expose the good thing or, for an individual, becoming aware of the good thing. The key concept here is awareness.

Validate the target becomes value the good thing. The key concept is validation or, in other words, seeing something as having value. I chose the word "valuing" as clearer than "validation."

Interpret the events as an injustice becomes interpret the thing as good or worthwhile. Interpretation is essentially to explain something. In the backfire model, reinterpretation — by the perpetrator of something perceived by others as unjust — is *explaining away,* namely explaining things in any way except that what happened was unjust. Possible techniques include lying, minimising the consequences, blaming others and framing the events in a way that makes them more acceptable. None of these techniques seems very relevant to good things, unless what's involved is countering the opponents of good things. So as a preliminary version of this tactic, I simply used understanding as the key concept.

Avoid or discredit official channels; instead, mobilise support. Figuring out how this applies to good things was not easy. The idea in the backfire model is that when a powerful individual or organisation does something seen as reprehensible — a massacre of peaceful protesters is a prime example — then to dampen popular outrage, those involved may use experts, government agencies, official investigations or courts to give an appearance of justice, but without the substance. Many people believe that formal procedures do indeed provide justice, so referring a matter to an ombudsman or a court makes it seem like things will be dealt with properly. My studies showed that this is often an illusion. In the aftermath of prominent massacres and police beatings, governments set up inquiries that either whitewashed the perpetrators or targeted low-level functionaries. In cases of whistleblowing and unfair dismissal, the various appeal agencies typically are slow, procedural and expensive: they operate in ways that dampen outrage.

So what does this imply for good things? When powerful perpetrators do bad things, the official channels seldom work — they give only an appearance of justice. That's why it's neces-

sary to mobilise support, as an alternative to formal processes. For good things, official channels should do exactly the opposite: they should work. So for the corresponding tactic I came to the idea of endorsement: to support good things, they should be endorsed, whether by powerful bodies or by lots of people.

Resist intimidation and bribery is the final counter-tactic in the backfire model. It doesn't immediately seem all that relevant to good things. Why would intimidation and bribery be involved, after all? To get a useful tactic for supporting good things, it's useful to think about the core idea behind resisting. Resisting as a counter-tactic means doing something about the injustice despite the risks and temptations, namely despite the risks of retaliation and the temptations of some form of reward. Applied to good things, the implication is simply to do the good thing.

In summary, by adapting the counter-tactics for increasing outrage over injustice, I came up with a preliminary list of methods for supporting good things.

- Become aware of it.
- Value it.
- Understand it.
- Have it endorsed.
- Do it.

It's a very simple and general framework, which is exactly what I wanted. A complex framework, with lots of variations and qualifications, would not be so useful. As a general framework, it is more likely to apply to different sorts of good things, whereas a framework specific to one good thing might not be so relevant to another.

Is there something important not included in this simple framework? I could find out by looking at case studies. I had

some confidence in the framework's coverage of methods of support by noting that the five methods cover different domains.

- Become aware of it: domain of information
- Value it: domain of emotion
- Understand it: domain of knowledge or cognition
- Have it endorsed: domain of authority
- Do it: domain of action.

In practice, these domains overlap. For example, emotion and cognition interact. But is there some important domain missing? I was soon to find out.

I started by analysing writing: if being able to write well is a good thing, then how can it be protected and promoted? It turned out that all the five methods are relevant. But there was something else. As an individual, you can support your own writing by being aware of it and so forth — especially by doing it — but I soon realised that the key to easily maintaining a writing habit is not eternal vigilance, namely using willpower to keep writing, but being in a supportive context. For example, if you have a room and a time and a plan, daily writing is far easier to maintain.

So there's another dimension, which can be called context or the environment. But it's not just one more method to add to the list, because every one of the five methods is relevant at both the individual level and the level of the context or environment.

I soon found that much attention to doing good things is oriented to the individual. The vast motivation industry is symptomatic. Promoting individual motivation certainly can be valuable. It typically covers all five of the methods for supporting the goal: awareness, valuing, understanding, endorsement and action. But in many cases changing one's environment isn't emphasised so much. And the option of changing social

arrangements, namely people working together to change the environment in ways to support good things, was missing.

In real life, the process of protecting and promoting good things is complicated, contingent on circumstances and sometimes filled with dilemmas. No model can possibly capture the full complexity of life — nor would it be sensible to try to attempt a full representation, because then the model would be reality itself. The whole point of a model is to simplify the thing being modelled, to aid in making sense of it. There are always many different ways to model something, so the key to a useful model is choosing a viewpoint helpful for the purpose intended.[13]

The model I outline here is intended to assist practitioners — namely, people trying to do good things better. Scholars usually have a different aim: they want to understand and explain the world. Sometimes this is useful for practical purposes, but often it is not, because it serves the purposes of academics more than anyone else, with the result more obscure than practical.

The model here is intentionally simple. That's partly so it can apply to many different sorts of good things. It's also simple because people trying to do good things already know a lot of the detail, usually far more than any outsider can hope to grasp. The value of the model is to point to some obvious elements found in lots of different cases and thus to encourage reflection about what is being done in any particular instance. If the model points to one or two things that might have been overlooked, I think it is worthwhile.

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13 Brian Martin, "On the value of simple ideas," *Information Liberation* (London: Freedom Press, 1998), 143–163.

Index

Good things in life, such as happiness and health, are often taken for granted. All the attention is on problems. Yet good things do not happen by themselves — they need to be fostered. How to do this is the theme of *Doing Good Things Better*.

For years, Brian Martin has studied tactics against injustice. He has now turned his strategic focus to good things, looking for common patterns in what it takes to protect and promote them. Some of his topics are familiar, like writing and happiness. Others are less well known, such as citizen advocacy and chamber music. The same basic tactics are relevant to all of them.

Doing Good Things Better provides ideas and inspiration for fostering the things you care most about.

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