

Chapter 1

Finding Your Powers: The Black American's Guide to Understanding Power in Life

"Nearly 70% of Black Americans report experiencing discrimination regularly."(Color of Change, 2018)

Read that stat slowly and you'll notice, the frequency at which Black Americans experience discrimination is not 'sometimes'. Notice that the frequency at which Black Americans experience discrimination is not 'sporadically', nor is it 'every now and then'. The frequency at which Black Americans experience discrimination is 'regularly'. Potentially, daily. This stark statistic, from Color of Change.org(2018), is a constant reminder of the societal hurdles we face every day. My simple thought on this fact is, "since we will likely deal with challenges that make us feel bad about ourselves, it's important to have something designed to make us feel good about ourselves." Our mood will contribute to how effectively we will be able to overcome these challenges. When your confidence is up, you can be more productive, and you can be more effective. The stat about discrimination also underscores the critical importance of how we, as Black

Americans, need to be selective on how we choose to invest our time and energy. How we choose to spend our days, matters. The energy of our chosen environments can affect the decisions we make. We can't change the fact that there will be obstacles in life, but we can change how we approach and navigate these obstacles. We can't change the fact that there will be storms while we're at sea, but we can change the set of our sails so we can navigate through the storms effectively.

In a world that often seeks to persuade us to focus on external challenges, if we have the proper perspective, we can accept those messages for what they are, and use them as tools to help us contribute positively to the group. Even though challenges have been an inherent part of the Black American experience, it is also important to understand that Black Americans have been overcoming these challenges and creating our own environments of prosperity since the 1800s. Unfortunately, stories like James Forten, Sarah Boone, or Mary Ellen Pleasant probably will not be taught in school, but the truth of our existence is always there for those of us who are willing to learn. Remember, you are a part of a group that has consistently overcome historically challenging odds again and again and again. That spirit of overcoming has likely become a part of your DNA signature, so use it.

If we're not careful, we could be tricked into chasing external validation and becoming overwhelmed by external challenges, at the expense of wisely fortifying our internal validation. Learn about your job, yes. Learn about your family, yes. Learn about the area you live in, yes. But the one thing that you want to make sure you take the time to learn about, is yourself. You are more powerful than you think. This book will give you the framework you can use to turn your time into your greatest asset. Every day is a brick. Don't worry about what the building will look like, just focus on laying the best brick Today.

The allure of external validation is a powerful, yet perilous, siren song. When we talk about external validation we mean; 'a deep desire to gain approval from other people, that exceeds the desire to build self approval'.

Do you want approval from others, more than you want to approve of yourself?

If the answer is yes, why?

If the answer is yes, do you believe that will help you or hurt you as you journey through life?

Wanting acceptance from external forces is a natural desire, but this desire can begin to work against you when your desire for external acceptance exceeds your desire

for internal acceptance. I committed crimes as a young man because my desire for external approval exceeded my desire for internal approval. I wanted to impress friends who were just as lost as I was, and who had contributed nothing to society up to that point, just like I had. These were the people I was trying to impress. Smh. When I step back to think about it, it makes total sense. My deep desire to behave in a manner that pleased mediocre to below average people (people who take more than they give, and people benefit more than they contribute) could only lead me to building a life of mediocrity. It took me a few decades to understand the importance of honestly assessing whether or not I approved of myself. I encourage you to think about that statement, and start working toward self approval, if you haven't already.

In a society that frequently undervalues Black lives and Black contributions, the desire for recognition and acceptance can become an all-consuming quest. However, this pursuit is often a treacherous path, particularly in this current climate. The increased exposure to narratives that perpetuate harmful stereotypes can lead to devastating consequences for those who choose to commit to imitating those character types. Please do not mistake entertainment for guidance. Entertainment is intended to entertain. Even though these character types are a reality in every race, I think it's important to remind ourselves every now and then that we can become whoever we choose to become. We are influenced by others, yes without a doubt, but make sure you put your own special signature on everything you do. YOU are the magic of it all. The more YOU you are willing to bring to the experience, the more magic happens. We will each ultimately be defined by our impact on others, so why not become great at what you're good at, and use that talent to impact other people.

What are you good at?

If you put in the practice, do you believe you could become one of the best in country at it?

You definitely can, but be honest with yourself about whether or not you believe that.

Finding Your Powers: The Black American's Guide to Understanding Power in Life, will give you a truthful strategy that you can use to preserve yourself, strengthen yourself, and strengthen your impact on those around you. We will provide you with a few simple foundational expectations, foundational goals, foundational actions, and foundational values that will allow you to build toward a calm, cheerful, successful life. Foundational expectations will help you understand circumstances that every person should expect to experience in this life, this will help you continue to move forward as

situations arise. Foundational goals will provide you with aiming points that would benefit any person who is committed to moving in the direction of these aiming points. A ship without a destination will soon be shipwrecked, so it's important to have fundamental destinations in life. Foundational Actions will give you daily activities that will undoubtedly benefit any person who chooses to do the activities and confidently navigate the outcomes. It's not about what happens to you in life, it's about what you do about what happens to you, that makes the difference. And lastly, Foundational values will provide you with a few simple values that we can use to evaluate our behavior to make sure we are behaving in a manner that will get us to where we want to go.

Do you expect yourself to behave cowardly or to behave courageously in difficult situations?

Clarifying our expectations in these situations will allow us to more effectively anticipate which actions will lead to our satisfaction, and which actions will lead to our disappointment.

These concepts will likely be a disruption to your current way of living and will require you to have the courage to challenge the ideas and the circumstances around you. However, the resulting relationships and outcomes will be worth it. And just so we're clear, these principles are derived from the oldest book in human history. The beauty of the truths in life is that they are simple. In this complex world with an immeasurable amount of moving parts, it's comforting to know that the truth is still simple.

There are only three primary colors, but look at what artists like Michaelangelo and Basquiat have done with them. There are only 10 digits, but look at what Albert Einstein and Benjamin Banneker did with them. There are only 26 letters, but look at what people like Ava Duvernay and Walter Mosley did with them. The connecting message between these facts is that masterful genius is rooted in simplicity. Do not be confused by the simplicity of the good life.

Why did I write this book?

Simple, because I am a Black American who began in a low-income environment with a low sense of understanding of this country and a low sense of my value in this country. Eventually, I learned enough and tried enough to work my way up the ladder to experiencing success, having a confident understanding of this country, and having a

confident sense of my value in this country. Which makes me uniquely qualified to share my experience in a way that could save someone else a considerable amount of time. I personally believe the historic struggles we have endured, and the consistent resistance to allowing us to simply Be, has made us more powerful than most. I am a person who believes that life happens for us, not to us. It's up to us to discover the lesson, then learn the lesson.

Also, what I have learned in life is that if you can teach a person how to tap into their natural powers, then they can continue to develop their skill on their own and that person can grow into an incredible version of themselves. By helping another person recognize and cultivate their inherent strengths, you can unlock a cascade of transformative growth. Those once hesitant steps now become confident strides, the once muffled voice now finds its resonant power, and the once obscured vision now sharpens itself into a clear path with clear action steps. This act of empowerment allows people to transcend perceived limitations, and to evolve into the remarkable versions of themselves that they were always meant to be. The writing of this book is my latest attempt to help people transcend their limitations.

Keep in mind, this book is for anyone. Any person who reads this book can benefit from the messages they will find inside. The doctor, the custodian, the middle school student, the repairperson, and the window washer. Literally, anyone who reads these messages can benefit from them. This book is intended to give the reader Hope. My definition of Hope, as given to me by my 10-year-old daughter, is; a strong belief in the good things inside of yourself and a strong belief in the good possibilities. Simple, but accurate. My belief is that encouragement is the fuel that powers Hope, so this book is meant to encourage and inform you.

I personally understand that there are numerous articles whose purpose is to highlight the negative aspects of being Black in America, but that's not what I'm here to do. Negativity is a part of the reality, yes, but so is Triumph. I love being Black, and I wouldn't change it for anything you offer. No thank you chief.

As I have grown throughout my life, I have gotten to the point where I actively search for positive traits in other people. Since I have expertise in the Workforce Development space, I search for traits that would be helpful to a person in their career. If I see a person showing these positive traits while I'm out in the world, I will let the person know that they possess valuable attributes, tell them what those attributes are, and I will ask them if they have considered elevating to a higher or more fitting role.

Just the thought of seeing yourself operating on a higher plane and in a higher role than you currently are, can be the idea that sparks the action. The one thing I am certain about, is the fact that there will continue to be messages designed to make us feel bad about ourselves as Black Americans. So, instead of complaining about it, I created a collection of messages designed to make us feel good about ourselves as Black Americans. Yes, I am my brother's keeper.

The Trenton Miles Story

"For thirteen months, Sir — and counting." Trenton Miles' response to the question of how long he had been working here, resonated far beyond a simple answer about his tenure at the local grocery store. It was a testament to his character, and a quiet declaration of his dedication. At just eighteen years old, this young person consistently stood out as a beacon of professionalism as the customers moved up and down the bustling aisles. Each "Sir" and "Ma'am" was delivered with genuine respect, he stood with confidence, and his gaze was direct and engaged. He wasn't just a cashier; he was also gifted in mental math, calculating each customer's change with uncanny precision, a feat he performed without drawing any attention. His exceptional skills weren't a boast, they were a quiet demonstration of his inherent capabilities, a hidden talent revealed only through keen observation.

This young man, with his unwavering professionalism and sharp mind, possessed the raw materials for success. Recognizing his potential, I shared an opportunity with him: an Electrician Apprenticeship program. I thought his meticulous nature and aptitude for numbers, coupled with his professional demeanor, would be a perfect fit for him and a perfect fit for the program. I saw in him a spark that deserved to be ignited. So, I reached out to the program administrator to let him know about this potential candidate, and that kickstarted the journey toward Trenton's future.

Six years later, Trenton's story is a story of inspired transformation. He's not just an electrician with a regional power company; he's also a budding entrepreneur, running his own thriving business. His journey is a testament to the power of recognizing one's inherent strengths and having the courage to seize opportunities. He has discovered his "Powers," the unique blend of skill, character, and determination that sets him apart. Trenton Miles, once a grocery store cashier, is now a testament to the fact that with

dedication and the right opportunity, anyone can illuminate their own path to success and build a brighter future for themselves and those around them.

Many would say, and I'm included in this group, that there is a transformative power in focusing on internal validation and self-improvement. When we prioritize our own growth, define our own values, and cultivate our own self-respect, we reclaim our narrative. There are many incredible people throughout history who look just like you. All you have to do, is show the courage to become who you were meant to be.

Consider these illustrations that I'm certain we've each seen in life:

1. **The Entrepreneurial Visionary:** A young woman, instead of seeking validation through fleeting social media trends, leverages social media to highlight her products and services, and she invests her time in developing her business acumen. She focuses on building a strong network, mastering her craft, and cultivating a resilient mindset. By prioritizing her internal drive and vision to increase her visibility and sell more products, she targets organizations and groups that fit her customer profile in addition to individuals, and she builds a thriving business, creating opportunities for herself and her community.
2. **The Community Advocate:** A young man, instead of succumbing to the pressure to conform to destructive stereotypes, dedicates his time to mentoring young people in his neighborhood so they have a firsthand example of a positive contributor in their environment. He focuses on building strong relationships and encouraging the young people to grow and seek opportunities, which fosters a sense of belonging, and empowers the next generation. By focusing on internal purpose and community betterment, he cultivates a life of profound impact.

During my days growing up, I enjoyed listening to hip hop music and I enjoyed experiencing hip hop culture on a daily basis. I was a big Jay Z fan, and I also had high verbal linguistic intelligence. Which simply means that I knew most of the words to his songs, and yes, I would frequently rhyme them in any mirror that crossed my path. One of my favorite Jay Z lines from my time as a teenager was from 'Justify My Thug'. The line goes, "Foolish pride, is what held me together through the years I wasn't felt, which is why I ain't never played myself".

This line resonated deeply with me. I didn't interpret this line as arrogance because I feel no resentment or fear when I see a confident black person. I was raised around all black people for the first seven or eight years of my life. This line helped me to get a profound understanding of self-worth. To me, it meant that unwavering self-

validation, and a deep-seated belief in my own capabilities, would be my anchor during times of adversity. This interpretation became a guiding principle, and a constant reminder that external validation is fleeting, while internal assurance is a fortress. By consistently affirming my own value and refusing to compromise my integrity, I have been able to navigate many challenges in life with resilience. Because of my actions and my principles, I have been able to maintain stability and achieve success while staying true to my own path, regardless of external pressures.

One of my earlier run ins with the challenge of external validation came when I was in the seventh grade and a girl told me I was ugly. Now if one of my friends had told me that, I would have hit em with a comeback and moved on to the next thing. However, this was different. This was a girl telling me this. I was sitting in the bleachers in the gym, I want to say it was before a basketball game or something. As I was sitting there, these two girls come up to me, I know them both, and one of them hands me a note, then they walk away. I open the note to read it, and it's a poem about me being ugly. I'm laughing as I write this because I wish I remembered what the words were, but I don't. When I think back to that moment, I remember just feeling embarrassment as I sat there. Not because this was the first time I was called ugly, I come from an extended group of family and friends that can get very colorful when battling with words, so I had definitely been called ugly before. I was likely embarrassed because these people were relative strangers. This was the like the world coming to me while I was just minding my business and saying, "Oh yea bruh, by the way, You're ugly."

I was caught off guard because that's not what I came to the game for lol. I came to the game to watch a beatdown, not catch a beatdown. I guess you can say that for me it was one of those humbling reminders that life gives us sometimes. One point of the reminder is, external validation is fleeting, it will come, and it will go. And the other point of the reminder is, until you validate yourself internally you will always be susceptible to the pain of other people's opinions. As a 12-year-old external acceptance was important to me, but it wasn't some all-consuming thing. And this may sound crazy, but I believe the experiences I had with my family of us viciously clowning each other growing up made the Ugly experience a lot less painful than it may have otherwise been, but it did hurt. I took the pain, and I went back to work. I continued performing well in school and I continued getting better at sports. As time went on I was probably still ugly to her, but the energy from the public at large was that I was trending toward the opposite of ugly. Fast forward four years from the note and I'm a junior in high school. At that time I'm still a good student, and I'm a really good basketball player, who had recently been on the cover of the local sports page in the newspaper because of the season I was

having. So, I'm sure you can imagine my delight when the same girl who handed me the Ugly note was trying to get me to take her out on dates four years later.

I did not take her up on the offers, and that was the first time I began to think that dealing with acceptance from others can be a very tricky thing. It could build me up, but it could also destroy me. On some level I began to establish the belief at that point that it would not be wise to build my self-esteem on something as fickle as acceptance from other people. Like the three little pigs, building my self esteem on acceptance from others, would be like building a house with straw. And unfortunately for us, there are big bad wolves all over the place who are more than willing to blow your house down.

The core of my argument lies in reclaiming our expectations. We must refuse to allow society to dictate who we become. We must take control, define our own goals, and chart our own paths.

Expectations are the primary determinants of satisfaction or disappointment

If we allow external forces to set our expectations without taking a minute to evaluate whether the expectations are helpful or hurtful, we are perpetually at the mercy of society's whims. However, by periodically evaluating our own expectations, we gain a deeper understanding of our desires and motivations, and we can build our self-esteem on our own terms.

Ask yourself:

- What are my top 3 abilities?
- What are my top 3 qualities?
- How do I want to use my talents to help other people?

You may have never considered these questions before now. Don't feel bad if that's the case. I didn't ask myself these questions until my 35th year of life, and it still wasn't too late. Looking back at it now, it's fascinating that I allowed so much time to pass without ever even thinking about doing inventory of myself. On some level I think I knew that I was important, but it never crossed my mind to inventory my skills and my

values, then decide which values and skills I would use to carve out my space in this life. Such a simple concept, but the environments I was spending my days in made such a simple concept seem like it was a galaxy away. By answering these questions frequently, we gain clarity of purpose, and it helps us develop the courage to pursue our own dreams, regardless of societal pressures. Remember, the important things take months and years to build, not days and weeks.

My hypothesis is this: if Black Americans exhibit the courage and self-assurance to define their values and skills, and decide where they want to go in life, then they significantly increase their chances of leading calm, cheerful, successful lives.

This is not to say that external challenges will disappear. If I were to tell you that life is easy, I would be lying to you. Life is dangerous, and life is difficult. And, you can become strong enough to overcome the dangers and the difficulties. Discrimination, systemic barriers, and societal biases will continue to exist. Unfortunately, those three obstacles go back to biblical days with the Egyptians and the Hebrews. However, when we are clear on what to expect in this environment, and we are grounded in our own sense of worth and purpose, we are better equipped to navigate these challenges. How you feel about me, will never be as important as how I feel about me. Also, I will never truly know what's going on inside of another person, but I will always feel what's going on inside of me, so that is the garden I focus on tending to. The discussion of whether having obstacles in life is right or wrong is a futile use of mental energy, in my opinion. We must embrace the unfortunate realities, and work to understand them.

Each of us was dropped into this world in different environments, and each environment has its own unique inherent obstacles. I, personally, am happy to have been given a life. I did nothing to earn this life, so I am grateful for it. I did nothing to deserve this life, with these abilities, so I am grateful for it. Regardless of wherever I was dropped into, it is my responsibility to get an understanding of the environment, then learn how to successfully navigate that environment. I am grateful for this opportunity at life, so I have learned to willingly embrace the challenges. I don't believe my brain is big enough to ever understand why things happen the way they happen in this life, but I do trust that I was brought here to figure out how to be happy and to figure out how to create a life that allows me to feel proud of my contributions. Do not be confused by the simplicity of the good life.

To live a calm life, we must reject the external chaos, and find peace within. To live a cheerful life, we must cultivate gratitude and joy, regardless of external circumstances. To live a successful life, we must define success on our own terms, and pursue it with

unwavering determination. The definition we like to use for Success is; deciding on a clear goal, then moving steadily everyday toward that predetermined goal. Keep it simple.

We must understand that time is our most valuable asset. How we choose to spend our time on a daily basis will determine the trajectory of our lives. Let us choose to invest in ourselves, in our communities, and in our future. Let us reclaim our narrative, and chart our own course towards a life of purpose, fulfillment, and unwavering self-respect. Trust me, your days are one of your weapons. Use your days to stack up good until it's great. Believe it or not, when you move with a clarity of purpose and a clarity of strategy, people normally just get out of your way.

Imagine your life as a block of clay. Society, with its preconceived notions and stereotypes, wants to press you into a pre-made mold – a character archetype based on your race and gender. But what if you chose to be the sculptor instead? What if you decided to shape your own destiny, and carve out your own path?

In these 12 chapters, we will give you the strategies and tools that will help you sculpt your own unique image, and carve out a path for yourself as you embrace the adventure of your journey. These concepts will serve as the foundational elements to the improved version of You. Also, this is not a novel. This book is written like a collection of strategies; complete with multiple headings, numbers, and bullet points. We also use stories to try to illustrate what these concepts and values may look like in real life. To be honest, this book is written in a format that can only accurately described as, “unusual”. But at the end of the day, aren't we all.

Chapter 2

Foundational Expectations: The 6 Human Needs

If you understand what to expect from life and what to expect from people, then you can anticipate what is about to happen.

The beginning of any good strategy is the foundational expectations. If we want to win, it helps to know what to expect in this environment. It helps to be able to anticipate. The ability to anticipate is the primary benefit of having clear expectations for life and for people. The universal truths that you will discover over these next hundred and something pages, will help you get a more usable understanding of what's happening around you. In my opinion, these are the things that really make a difference in life. Listen to me, listen to the other sources, and then arrive at your own conclusions. Don't be a follower, be a student. Take in the information, yes, but as with all things in life, weigh the information, then arrive at your own conclusion. Your unique understanding, and your unique perspective, is the key to it all.

When I built up the courage to evaluate and adjust my expectations, my life began to change for the better. The reason my life began to change for the better is because I was

willing to evaluate what I was doing, and why I was doing it. It's like the story of the little girl at Thanksgiving dinner.

There was a little girl playing at Thanksgiving dinner who was playing in the kitchen while her mother put the ham in the oven. The little girl asked her mother, "Mommy, why do you cut the end off of the ham before you put it in the oven?"

"Well," says her mother, "that's the way my Mother always did it, so I just followed her tradition. I think it helps to release the juices or something, and that's why the ham's always tender. But I did get it from my mother, so you might want to go ask her."

So, the little girl, now determined to get to the bottom of this ham end mystery, went into the back room of the house and approached her grandmother with the same question.

"Grandma, why do you cut the end off of the ham before you put it in the oven?"

"Well," says her grandmother, "that's the way my Mother always did it, so I just followed her tradition. I figured it was to get the end crispy like the rest of it, and maybe lock in the juices. It's my mother's recipe though, so you might want to go ask your great grandmother."

The little girl said "thank you" to her grandma, then she walked down the hall and into the living room and approached her great grandmother with the same question.

"Great Grandma, why do you cut the end off of the ham before you put it in the oven?"

"Well," says her great grandmother, "we had a really small oven, so I had to cut the end off of the ham so it could fit."

"But our oven is bigger now," responds the little girl, "so why do we still cut the end off if we don't need to?"

"Well," said her great grandmother, "I guess because no one had the sense to stop and ask why. Until you."

Take the time to evaluate if your actions are in line with the goals you want to accomplish. It's important to know whether you are getting closer or further away.

Are there things you do that you don't have a clear reason for doing?

In life, we are each susceptible to picking up habits from the environment around us. That is a natural occurrence. It is helpful for us to periodically evaluate some of these actions to make sure they really make sense for who we are Today.

The 6 Human Needs is a concept popularized by Tony Robbins that will help us understand what to expect from people. The 6 Human Needs concept says that the six things every human inherently needs are; Certainty, Variety, Significance, Connection, Contribution, and Growth. When you take a few minutes to think about it, it makes total sense. These are the six things that we are consistently searching for, even though we don't consciously think we are.

The **Why** is what shapes any behavior, so when we understand the why behind the actions, we can better anticipate the behavior. When a child unnecessarily makes a scene in the grocery store, it is likely they are attempting to satisfy certain needs. If we can give them positive ways to satisfy those needs, then we may be able to curb the behavior.

Once we understand the six human needs, it becomes more likely that we can understand people's actions based on the needs they are attempting to satisfy. The six Human Needs concept also claims that when a person finds one activity that satisfies at least four of the human needs, then it is likely that the person will become addicted to that activity. Simple, but also fascinating.

The Need for Certainty

In the intricate tapestry of human experience, the six human needs weave through our lives, shaping our behaviors and guiding our decisions. So, if we can understand our needs, we can evaluate and adjust our behavior accordingly. One of the six human needs is Certainty. By Certainty, we mean predictability, stability, and a sense of control over our circumstances. Certainty provides a foundation upon which we build our lives and gives us a sense of security that allows us to navigate the inherent uncertainties of existence. Knowing that you can go home to the same house every day provides you with a degree of certainty. The mothers in the story continued to cut the ham the way their mothers had cut it before them because it gave them a comforting sense of certainty.

Certainty is the need for assurance, stability, and predictability. Certainty is one of the reasons people stay in bad relationships, and certainty is one of the reasons people continue for years at the jobs they constantly complain about. It's the desire to know what to expect, so we can feel safe and secure in our environment. When we seek certainty, we might find ourselves adhering to routines, establishing clear boundaries, or seeking guarantees. It is natural for us to gravitate towards familiar patterns and predictable outcomes.

How are you seeking Certainty in your life?

Keep in mind, the pursuit of certainty can manifest in both positive and negative ways. Understanding these patterns is crucial to cultivating healthy coping mechanisms and fostering personal growth.

Khadijah, a college student, was in her second year of a graduate program for business administration. For whatever reason, this year was more difficult than last year, and she found herself overwhelmed by the demands of her academic schedule. She started to feel uncertain about whether or not she would be able to handle the increased workload. However, Khadijah had previously learned about the six human needs, so she soon identified that her certainty was being threatened, and the only way to calm her stress was to reestablish a sense of certainty for herself. So, rather than succumbing to anxiety, she created a detailed study plan, and allocated specific times for each subject. She established a consistent sleep schedule and incorporated regular exercise into her routine. Of course she wasn't perfect in her execution, but this structured approach provided Khadijah with clear guidance that she was able to follow, and it provided her with a sense of control, which reduced her stress and allowed her to focus on her studies. By building a reliable routine, Khadijah found the certainty she knew she needed to succeed.

Rakim, a 20 year Systems Analyst nearing retirement, was concerned about his financial stability, and whether or not he would be able to adequately provide for his family after he retired. Rakim was married with three children, and two of those children were approaching college. His certainty was being threatened, and this made him feel uncomfortable. As a response to this feeling, Rakim consulted with a financial advisor and explained that he wanted to build more future stability for himself and his family. They worked together and developed a diversified investment portfolio that balanced risk and gained security. He also created a detailed budget, ensuring he had sufficient funds to cover the essential expenses. This proactive approach provided Rakim with the

certainty he needed to feel confident about his financial future prior to his retirement. Planning and preparation, in this case, brought him peace of mind.

These stories are meant to demonstrate how the need for certainty can lead to positive outcomes when channeled constructively. It is a need that we each have, so it's important for us to understand how we are satisfying this need. By establishing routines, following frameworks, planning ahead, and proactively addressing potential challenges, we can cultivate a sense of security and control.

If your certainty was threatened, how would you handle it?

Lanre, a team leader, had an intense need for control. Lanre believed that by attempting to control the things and the people around him, he would satisfy his need for certainty. Lanre believed his controlling behavior at his last job is what led to the success that landed him his current position, so he viewed his approach as effective. He micromanaged his team, constantly checking their work and dictating every step of the process. He became rigid and inflexible, resistant to any changes or suggestions that deviated from his plans. Lanre's employees dreaded his presence at work, and he began to notice that more and more of his team was 'falling ill' a lot more frequently than normal. Lanre's behavior created a tense and stifling work environment, ultimately hindering the team's productivity and damaging his relationships with his colleagues.

Lanre's need for certainty manifested as an unhealthy need for control, which negatively affected everyone around him. If Lanre had known the importance of periodic self evaluation, it is likely he would have adjusted his behavior before it got out of control. Lanre's goal was team success. Lanre could have satisfied the need for certainty by holding standing meetings on a predetermined day and time with team members to check on the status of projects. Lanre could have made sure to clarify the goal of the task, then allowed for creativity in accomplishing the goal. Team success is more likely when each member contributes and feels that their contribution is valued. Lanre's need for Certainty ultimately compromised his goal for team success.

Do you know anyone that satisfies the need for certainty in an unhealthy way?

Can you think of any positive ways they can satisfy the need of certainty and still accomplish their goal?

This anecdote highlights how the pursuit of certainty can become detrimental if we are not careful. We must periodically evaluate our behavior to make sure our needs are not manifesting themselves as rigidity, control, and resistance to change. When we cling too tightly to predictable outcomes, we limit our ability to adapt and grow. Even

when you expect a certain outcome, be open to the actual outcome, then get creative enough to make the outcome work for you.

By understanding our fundamental human needs, we gain valuable insights into our motivations and behaviors. Recognizing when we are seeking certainty allows us to make conscious choices about how we satisfy that need. Rather than resorting to negative coping mechanisms, we can cultivate positive strategies that promote well-being and growth.

For instance, instead of becoming controlling, we can focus on building trust and communication within our relationships. Instead of clinging to rigid routines, we can develop flexible plans that allow for adaptability. By consciously addressing our need for certainty, we can create a more balanced and fulfilling life.

We can also choose to build certainty in ways that also fulfill other needs. Building a routine, as in Khadijah's case, can also provide a sense of growth, as she is learning and improving her study habits. Rakim's investing also provided a sense of growth as he learned more about finances.

Ultimately, understanding this need for Certainty now allows us to evaluate our behavior to identify which actions are pleasing our need for Certainty, then assess whether the actions are helping us or hurting us. It also helps us identify when we are becoming uneasy because we lack certainty, and allows us to get creative and establish certainty for ourselves. Think of the sports player who wears a certain accessory every game. They are establishing certainty before they go into a high stakes environment with multiple variables. Use these tools to evaluate yourself and help yourself. The more you understand, the less pain you feel.

The Need for Variety

Human beings are creatures of both habit and exploration. While certainty provides a sense of security, it's the need for variety that fuels our curiosity, stimulates our minds, and injects excitement into our lives. Variety is the antidote to monotony, the spark that ignites our passions, and the force that pushes us beyond our comfort zones. Variety is an essential ingredient in a fulfilling and dynamic existence.

Variety is the need for change, novelty, and stimulation. It's the desire to experience new things, to break free from routine, and to explore the unknown. We seek

variety when we feel bored, restless, or stagnant. We can identify this need driving our behavior when we crave spontaneity, seek out new experiences, or intentionally disrupt our routines.

How do you satisfy your need for variety?

Like certainty, the pursuit of variety can manifest in both constructive and destructive ways. Understanding these patterns allows us to harness its power for personal growth and well-being.

Blessing, a passionate cook, found herself growing tired of her usual recipes. She had been cooking professionally for seven years up to this point, and it was all beginning to feel routine. She mainly operated as a private chef, and her specialty was Midwestern styled dishes. To inject new life into her culinary passion, she decided to explore different cuisines. Blessing slightly reduced her commitments as a private chef and she enrolled in a Thai cooking class, started experimenting with Indian spices, and even tried her hand at molecular gastronomy. This exploration not only expanded her culinary skills, it also rekindled her love for cooking. She now had a new excitement as she discovered new creations and experienced new reactions from her customers. Blessing embraced the variety of flavors and techniques, and she ultimately expanded her knowledge and increased the size of the customer base she was able to serve.

John John, a talented guitarist in the 11th year of his professional career, felt his musical creativity stagnating. He did not understand where the feeling came from, but he knew it was there. He had just come off of a two-year travel tour that was an undoubted success, and he enjoyed being a valued band member. They were beginning a three-month break before the next tour kicked off, and John John was determined to inject some variety into his life. He decided to break out of his comfort zone and learn a couple new instruments, thinking that he could add additional flavor to his routine. He started to learn how to play both the piano and the saxophone. John John also explored different musical genres, from classical to jazz to electronic music. This exploration not only broadened his musical horizons but helped him establish new relationships and partnerships that changed the trajectory of his career. The excitement from the new experiences also reinvigorated his passion for music. John John used his need for variety to fuel his creative growth.

These anecdotes demonstrate how seeking variety can lead to positive outcomes when channeled constructively. By exploring new hobbies, learning new skills, and embracing diverse experiences, we can cultivate a sense of excitement and fulfillment.

Jalisa, constantly seeking excitement in her relationships, jumped from one partner to another, never allowing herself to form deep connections. She craved the thrill of new beginnings, the novelty of each new romance, and at the same time she avoided the commitment and vulnerability that comes with lasting relationships. In order to truly love, you must be willing to get your heart broken. This is an unfortunate reality that some of us believe can be avoided. In her desire to avoid the required vulnerability, Jalisa allowed her need for variety to fuel her actions. This pattern reduced the potential for future relationships, and left her feeling emotionally unfulfilled and ultimately alone. Instead of being a need that served her in a positive way, Jalisa's need for variety became a destructive cycle. Her lack of understanding of the need allowed it to get out of control and adversely affect her performance.

The pursuit of variety can begin to work against us when it manifests itself as impulsiveness, instability, and a fear of commitment. When we constantly seek new experiences without allowing ourselves to fully engage with them, we miss out on the depth and richness of life.

By understanding our inherent human needs, we gain valuable insights into our motivations and behaviors. Recognizing when we are seeking variety allows us to make conscious choices about how we satisfy that need. Rather than resorting to negative coping mechanisms, we can cultivate positive strategies that promote well-being and growth.

For instance, instead of engaging in impulsive behaviors, we can seek variety through planned adventures, creative pursuits, or intellectual exploration. Instead of avoiding commitment, we can find ways to inject novelty and excitement into our existing relationships.

We can also satisfy multiple needs at once. Blessing, the adventurous chef, also experienced growth as she learned new skills and connection as she shared her new food with friends and family. John John, the multifaceted musician, also experienced growth through learning new instruments.

Ultimately, understanding this need for Variety now allows us to evaluate our behavior to identify which actions are pleasing our need for Variety, then assess whether the actions are helping us or hurting us. It also helps us identify when we are becoming uneasy because we lack variety, and allows us to get creative and establish variety for ourselves. Think of the married couple who frequently take trips or try new events. They are injecting variety into an environment of routine stability. Use these tools to evaluate yourself and help yourself. The more you understand, the less pain you feel.

The Need for Significance

Every human being harbors a deep-seated desire to feel important, to feel valued, and to be recognized. So, don't be confused as to why you may have these feelings. This is the need for significance, a fundamental drive that motivates us to stand out, to make a difference, and to leave our mark on the world. It's the yearning to know that our existence matters, that we are unique and worthy of attention. Significance is one of the reasons I wrote this book. If I can use my words to help enough people, then I can feel like my time here mattered.

Significance is the need to feel special, important, and valued. It's the desire to be recognized for our unique contributions, to feel like we matter in the grand scheme of things. We seek significance when we feel overlooked, undervalued, or insignificant. The next time you see a person yelling in an environment where yelling is not taking place, ask yourself, "Did something just happen that made the person feel insignificant?" Yelling is commonly a reflexive attempt to regain significance instantly.

The pursuit of significance can take many forms, some constructive and others destructive. Understanding these patterns allows us to channel this powerful need towards positive outcomes.

Imagine the story of Koyin, a seasoned business professional who felt a strong desire to make a lasting impact. Koyin had experienced progressively consistent success in her career over the last 15 years, and was locally recognized in her role on the Workforce Council for a recent initiative that provided jobs and work based learning opportunities for thousands of youths in her state. After success of the initiative, Koyin decided that she wanted to leverage her expertise to personally contribute to those coming after her. She began mentoring young professionals, sharing her knowledge and experience to help them navigate their careers. Instead of hoarding her knowledge, she made a concerted effort to share her knowledge in a manner that would be helpful to young people. She took pride in their successes, knowing she had played a vital role in their development. Koyin found her feeling of significance in empowering others.

Jeffrey, a retired music teacher, had not been working for the past six months, but he still wanted to feel like he was making a difference. He was six months removed from his position at the neighborhood high school after 30 years of service. Jeffrey was well known locally for his integrity, his reliability, and his willingness to help out anyone who needed assistance. In order to satisfy his need for significance, he volunteered at a local

soup kitchen, providing meals and support to those in need. For the next 10 years after retirement, Jeffrey chose to contribute his time and efforts to various projects intended to uplift the community. He found fulfillment in knowing that his efforts were making a tangible difference in the lives of others. Jeffrey found significance in serving his community.

Koyin and Jeffrey are illustrations of how seeking significance can lead to positive outcomes when channeled constructively. By contributing to the growth of others, individuals can cultivate a sense of purpose and value.

Chloe, driven by a need for Significance, became obsessed with social media. She spent the bulk of her days, both in public and in private, with her face intently focused on her cell phone. After a couple years of observing, Chloe decided that she wanted to become a part of the world that she had been secretly entertained by. She decided that her goal was to become significant in that world. In line with the culture of the environment, Chloe posted provocative content, engaged in online arguments, and constantly sought attention from her followers. She did not employ a clear strategy for her pursuit, and she became consumed by the pursuit of likes and comments, and ultimately began measuring her self-worth by the number of online interactions she received.

Lines between reality and social media began to blur, and this behavior ultimately left her feeling empty and unfulfilled, even though her goal of significance was reached. Her lack of understanding of her needs ultimately led to challenging times. Chloe's need for significance manifested itself as an unhealthy obsession with external validation. Instead of becoming consumed by the environment, Chloe could have identified clear goals that she wanted to reach in terms of likes and comments, etc., and she could have gotten clear with herself on the impact she wanted to have and where she wanted it to lead. If Chloe had laid out her mission and objectives, she would have increased her chances of having success on the journey. Chloe neglected to view herself as a Producer, which made her more susceptible to being overwhelmed in the Consumer environment.

The pursuit of significance can become detrimental when it manifests as attention-seeking behavior, a need for constant validation, or a focus on external markers of success. When we base our sense of worth on the opinions of others, we become vulnerable to their judgments and lose sight of our own intrinsic value. Establish your intrinsic value first, then spend time around the people who value the good parts about you.

By understanding our inherent human needs, we gain valuable insights into our motivations and behaviors. Recognizing when we are seeking significance allows us to make conscious choices about how we satisfy that need. Rather than resorting to negative coping mechanisms, we can cultivate positive strategies that promote well-being and growth.

How are you satisfying your need for significance?

For instance, instead of seeking validation through social media, we can focus on building meaningful relationships and contributing to our communities. Instead of striving for external markers of success, we can focus on developing our talents and pursuing our passions.

We can also satisfy multiple needs at once. Koyin, the dedicated mentor, also experienced contribution and connection. Jeffrey, the community volunteer, also experienced contribution and connection. This shows that fulfilling one need does not mean we must ignore the others.

Ultimately, understanding this need for Significance now allows us to evaluate our behavior to identify which actions are pleasing our need for Significance, then assess whether the actions are helping us or hurting us. It also helps us identify when we are becoming uneasy because we lack significance and allows us to get creative and establish significance for ourselves. The quickest way to establish significance is to help someone. It establishes an immediate positive connection in that moment. Use these tools to evaluate yourself and help yourself. The more you understand, the less pain you feel.

The Need for Connection/Love

At the core of our being lies a profound yearning for connection, a fundamental human need that drives us to seek out meaningful relationships, to experience intimacy, and to feel a sense of belonging. This is the need for connection/love, the emotional glue that binds us together, creating a sense of unity and shared experience. It's the desire to feel seen, understood, and accepted, the desire to know that we are not alone in the world. Each of us was brought to this world by someone else, and because of someone else's actions. So, a desire for connectedness is part of our existence.

Connection/love is the need for intimacy, closeness, and belonging. It's the desire to feel connected to others, to experience love and acceptance, and to build meaningful

relationships. Remember, both the gang member and the church member are satisfying their need for connection/love. We may have opinions on the activities that each group engages in, but we cannot ignore the incentive behind the behaviors. We seek connection/love when we feel lonely, isolated, or disconnected.

The pursuit of connection/love can manifest in both healthy and unhealthy ways. Understanding these patterns allows us to cultivate fulfilling relationships and avoid destructive behaviors.

Rashidah, a compassionate friend, had a natural ability to connect with others. She noticed this ability early on, and she had the courage to lean into and develop it. She prioritized active listening by genuinely engaging with her friends' feelings and experiences. Her friends felt so comfortable confiding in her and seeking guidance from her, that she went on to maintain those relationships for decades. Rashidah became known as a problem solver among her friends, and she always made sure she made time to contribute in a helpful way. She offered support without judgment, which created a safe space for vulnerability. Rashidah put forth the effort to listen and she worked to understand perspectives that differed from her own, and this allowed her to foster deep and meaningful connections through empathy and understanding. Rashidah felt her need for Connection/Love and she committed to becoming a loving and connected person.

Garfield, a devoted partner to his wife of many decades, understood the importance of showing affection and appreciation. He knew that acknowledging the contributions of others was important, so he made it a point to recognize the accomplishments of his counterparts whenever he had the opportunity to do so. Garfield felt his need for Connection/Love so he committed to becoming a helpful bridge to build up others. He made a conscious effort to express his love through both words and actions, consistently demonstrating his commitment and support. He prioritized quality time with his wife and with his family, creating shared experiences that strengthened his bond with the people in his life. Garfield not only cultivated a loving and supportive relationship, he also cultivated a loving and supportive family community through his examples of consistent effort and genuine affection. Connection was important to Garfield, and he behaved in a manner that clearly illustrated his belief.

These are demonstrations of how seeking connection/love can lead to positive outcomes when channeled constructively. By practicing empathy, actively listening, and expressing genuine affection, individuals can cultivate deep and fulfilling relationships.

Now let's consider Shaunte, driven by a fear of abandonment, she became overly dependent on her partner. Shaunte felt her need for Connection/Love so she committed to manipulating situations so she would feel what she perceived as Love. Shaunte had been with her fiancée for seven years, and they had recently gotten engaged one year ago. She constantly sought reassurance, demanded constant attention, and became jealous and possessive when the couple was in public. She felt that her connection was being threatened at all times, and she responded poorly to the need to protect her connection. Although her intentions were positive, her lack of understanding of her needs compelled her to engage in behavior that was interpreted as controlling and unstable by the people around her. Her behavior pushed her partner away, creating a cycle of anxiety and insecurity. Shaunte's inability to harness her need for connection/love manifested as an unhealthy dependence.

The pursuit of connection/love can become detrimental when it manifests as codependency, possessiveness, or a fear of abandonment. When we base our sense of worth on the validation of others, we become vulnerable to their actions and lose sight of our own autonomy. Remember, the first sense of Connection/Love that we need to nourish and protect, is the internal one.

By understanding our inherent human needs, we gain valuable insights into our motivations and behaviors. Recognizing when we are seeking connection/love allows us to make conscious choices about how we satisfy that need. Rather than resorting to negative coping mechanisms, we can cultivate positive strategies that promote healthy relationships and personal well-being.

For instance, instead of becoming clingy or possessive, we can focus on building our own self-esteem, refining the roles of the relationship, working toward the goals of the relationship, and cultivating healthy boundaries. Instead of seeking validation from others, we can focus on developing self-love and practicing self-compassion. We can practice healthy communication skills, and learn to express our needs in a constructive manner.

We can also satisfy multiple needs at once. Rashidah, the empathetic listener, also provided significance to those she listened to. Garfield, the supportive partner, also provided certainty to his partner by his consistent affection. This shows that fulfilling one need does not mean we must neglect the others.

Building healthy connections also means we must understand the difference between connection and control. One is built on a desire to serve, and the other is built on a desire to be served.

Ultimately, understanding this need for Connection/love now allows us to evaluate our behavior to identify which actions are pleasing our need for connection, then assess whether the actions are helping us or hurting us. It also helps us identify when we are becoming uneasy because we lack connection/love, and allows us to get creative and establish connection/love for ourselves. Use these tools to evaluate yourself and help yourself. The more you understand, the less pain you feel.

How are the people around you satisfying their need for connection?

Is it healthy, or unhealthy?

The Need for Growth

Human beings are not static entities. We are dynamic, evolving creatures driven by an innate desire to learn, expand, and transcend our current limitations. This is the need for growth, the fundamental drive that propels us to seek new knowledge, develop our skills, and continually improve ourselves. It's the yearning to become more than we are today, to push beyond our comfort zones and unlock our full potential. The need for growth is why we are walking around town, instead of crawling around town.

Growth is the need for expansion, development, and improvement. It's the desire to learn new things, to acquire new skills, and to become a better version of ourselves. We can identify this need driving our behavior when we engage in learning activities, seek out challenges, or strive to improve our skills and abilities. Never forget that you have the capability to learn anything. People will try to convince you otherwise, but that only works if you allow it to. You taught yourself to walk when no one could communicate with you. This level of ingenuity is still within you, and you can rekindle that flame and get it to burn as bright as you wish. Regardless of how you choose to contribute in this life, use your need for growth to try to become the best in the world at whatever that is.

The pursuit of growth can manifest in both constructive and destructive ways. Understanding these patterns allows us to channel this powerful need towards positive outcomes and avoid self-destructive behaviors.

Monique, a retired teacher, refused to let her age define her. She was 70 years old and she was possibly enjoying the best year of her life. After retiring from her 40 year career, Monique enrolled in online courses, joined book clubs, and attended workshops

on topics that piqued her interest. She leaned into her growth because she felt it would give her new life. And she was right. She embraced the challenge of learning new things. Even when things got difficult, as she expected, she continued finding joy and fulfillment in the process. She was becoming a person that she never thought she was capable of becoming, and that inspired her to go even further. Monique chose to cultivate a mindset of continuous growth, as she demonstrates that learning is a lifelong endeavor.

Andre, a small business owner, understood the importance of continuous improvement. Although he was operating his tax return company for the past couple years, and business was doing fairly well, Andre knew the importance of continuing to improve. He invested in professional development, attended industry conferences, and sought mentorship from experienced entrepreneurs. He pushed himself to engage in new experiences that would allow him to meet other small business owners and stakeholders in the tax industry. Not only did he gain new experiences, he also gained new contacts that blossomed into valuable partnerships. He embraced feedback, learned from his mistakes, and constantly refined his business strategies. Andre also fostered a culture of growth within his company, empowering his employees to learn and develop their skills. He set the example of growth, and he incentivized growth in his employees, which boosted morale and made his company more attractive to the workforce.

Seeking growth can lead to positive outcomes when channeled constructively. By embracing lifelong learning, seeking challenges, and continuously improving our skills, we can cultivate a sense of purpose and fulfillment.

Justin, driven by an insatiable need for achievement, became obsessed with external validation. Justin wanted to illustrate growth in the eyes of a specific group of people, so that he could enjoy the resulting rewards. He became focused on showing his regional managers that he was a leader who commanded respect and could get things done. He constantly pushed himself to work longer hours, take on more responsibilities, and strived for perfection in every aspect of his life. Instead of utilizing his team, he wore on his team to deliver, then took all the credit when projects were completed. Justin wanted his managers to know that it was him. He neglected his personal relationships, sacrificed his well-being, and became consumed by the pursuit of his very narrow view of success. Justin's need for growth manifested itself as an unhealthy obsession with achievement, ultimately leading to burnout and depression.

This anecdote highlights how the pursuit of growth can become detrimental when it manifests as an unhealthy obsession with achievement, an attempt to gain approval from a specific source, a relentless pursuit of perfection, or a disregard for personal well-

being. When we prioritize external validation over intrinsic fulfillment, we risk sacrificing our happiness and creating a cycle of dissatisfaction.

By understanding our inherent human needs, we gain valuable insights into our motivations and behaviors. Recognizing when we are seeking growth allows us to make conscious choices about how we satisfy that need. Rather than resorting to negative coping mechanisms, we can cultivate positive strategies that promote well-being and personal development.

For instance, instead of becoming obsessed with external validation, we can focus on intrinsic motivation and personal fulfillment. We can set clear goals, and once we accomplish them, we simply set more goals. Instead of striving for perfection, we can embrace the learning process and celebrate our progress. We can focus on developing a growth mindset, embracing challenges as opportunities for learning and improvement.

We can also satisfy multiple needs at once. Monique, the lifelong learner, also found variety in her new classes. Andre, the skillful entrepreneur, also found significance by growing his business and helping his employees grow. This shows that fulfilling one need does not mean we must neglect the others.

We must learn to distinguish between healthy growth, and a destructive need to overachieve. One is driven by a desire to learn, the other is driven by a fear of inadequacy. One way to do this is to clarify the specific goal(s) that you're trying to reach. Once you accomplish the goal, set more goals. Having something you are moving toward is a key to growth, and having specific goals is a key to accomplishment.

Would you consider reading this book as satisfying your need for Growth?

Ultimately, understanding this need for Growth now allows us to evaluate our behavior to identify which actions are pleasing our need for growth, then assess whether the actions are helping us or hurting us. It also helps us identify when we are becoming uneasy because we lack growth, and allows us to get creative and establish growth for ourselves. We can satisfy the need for growth by learn something new, exercising, or learning more about something we are already familiar with. Use these tools to evaluate yourself and help yourself. The more you understand, the less pain you feel.

The Need for Contribution

Human beings are inherently social creatures, driven by a deep-seated desire to make a positive impact on the world around them. This is the need for contribution, the fundamental drive that compels us to help out, to give back, to serve others, and to leave a legacy that extends beyond our own individual lives. It's the yearning to know that our existence has made a difference.

Contribution is the need to help out, to serve others, to feel like a valuable part of the group, and to make a positive impact on the world. It's the desire to feel like we are part of something bigger than ourselves, that our actions have meaning and purpose. We seek contribution because we feel a sense of responsibility towards our communities, because we want to make a difference in the lives of others, or because we want to leave a legacy. Each of us in America in the year 2025 gets to benefit from so many things and systems having already been built for us. We benefit from so much, so it's only logical that we must contribute. I benefit from the fact that companies and jobs exist. I benefit from the fact that educational systems already exist. I benefit from this home that I did not build, this laptop I did not build, and this smartphone that I did not build. I didn't contribute to these things, but I benefit from them, so I must contribute in some way.

How many systems do you benefit from on a daily basis?

How many items do you benefit from on a daily basis.

The pursuit of contribution can manifest in both constructive and destructive ways. Understanding these patterns allows us to channel this powerful need towards positive outcomes and avoid self-serving behaviors that masquerade as contribution.

Maria, a successful entrepreneur, felt a strong desire to use her resources to make a difference. Maria had experienced success in her industry, and she had a deep enough understanding of her industry to contribute to the industry in a meaningful way. Maria had been in the fashion industry as a purchaser for the past 27 years. She had experienced so much success that she had companies operating in four different locations in three different regions of the country. At this point in her life, Maria wanted to use her expertise to benefit others.

She founded a non-profit organization that provided educational opportunities to train children in her community. She leveraged her business acumen and network to raise funds and create sustainable programs. She not only made her own personal impact on the industry, she was now creating employment pipelines so that young people would have the opportunity to make their impact on the industry. Maria understood her need to contribute, and found fulfillment in using her success to empower others.

Jamarcus, a retired firefighter, missed the sense of purpose he found in serving his community. He was a firefighter for 25 years, and he retired as the fire chief at his station. Jamarcus still remembers when he first started with the fire department, and after his first five years the idea of retirement was not even on his radar. However, as he began to learn more about his fellow firefighters and the community they served, Jamarcus slowly but surely became a staple as a reliable contributor, and ultimately a reliable leader.

In an attempt to reestablish this sense of camaraderie and purpose, Jamarcus began volunteering at a local homeless shelter, providing meals, support, and companionship to those in need. After a few months of volunteering, he increased his involvement and began to develop programs that help homeless youth transition into the workforce. Some even ended up joining the fire department. Jamarcus found immense satisfaction in knowing that his efforts were making a tangible difference in the lives of people who could really use the help. Jamarcus understood and embraced his need to contribute, and figured out how to do so in a constructive and impactful way.

Seeking contribution can lead to positive outcomes when channeled constructively. By using our skills and resources to empower others and serve our communities, we can cultivate a sense of purpose and fulfillment.

Lionel, a wealthy businessman, sought to enhance his public image by donating large sums of money to various charities. He understood the respect that came along with being perceived as a philanthropic, so he worked to create the image of a philanthropic leader in the community. However, his donations were often accompanied by demands for recognition and control. It got to the point that many organizations chose to refuse Lionel's donations, instead of giving in to his self-promoting demands. Lionel used his philanthropy as a tool for self-promotion and to exert influence over the organizations he supported. Lionel didn't understand how to satisfy his need for contribution in a healthy manner, and it ultimately manifested itself as a manipulative pursuit of power and recognition.

The pursuit of contribution can become detrimental when it manifests as self-serving behavior, a need for control, or a desire for external validation. When we prioritize our own ego over the needs of others, we undermine the true purpose of contribution.

By understanding our inherent human needs, we gain valuable insights into our motivations and behaviors. Recognizing when we are seeking contribution allows us to make conscious choices about how we satisfy that need. Rather than resorting to negative

coping mechanisms, we can cultivate positive strategies that promote genuine service and altruism.

For instance, instead of seeking recognition for our contributions, we can focus on the impact we are making on the lives of others. Instead of using our resources to exert control, we can empower others to take ownership of their own destinies. We can focus on building sustainable solutions that address the root causes of social problems.

We can also satisfy multiple needs at once. Maria, the empathetic entrepreneur, also found significance and growth in her work. Jamarcus, the dedicated volunteer, also found connection and significance in his service. This shows that fulfilling one need does not mean we must neglect the others.

Ultimately, understanding this need for Contribution now allows us to evaluate our behavior to identify which actions are pleasing our need for contribution, then assess whether the actions are helping us or hurting us. It also helps us identify when we are becoming uneasy because we lack contribution, and allows us to get creative with how we satisfy that need for contribution. The quickest way to establish contribution is to help someone else. Use these tools to evaluate yourself and help yourself. The more you understand, the less pain you feel.

Conclusion

In essence, understanding the six Human Needs can provide a roadmap to our inner workings, and illuminate the motivations that drive our actions. Understanding the six Human Needs helps us learn more about ourselves.

We suggest that you write down the 6 Human Needs somewhere so that you can see it every day. As situations arise in life that are difficult for you to understand, use the 6 human needs to identify which needs the person is attempting to satisfy.

By consciously addressing our needs – seeking healthy certainty, embracing enriching variety, cultivating genuine significance, fostering deep connection, pursuing continuous growth, and offering meaningful contribution – we gain the power to shape our lives. We can move beyond reactive patterns and begin to cultivate a proactive approach, choosing behaviors that align with our deepest desires. This mindful awareness allows us to navigate life's challenges with greater resilience, fostering a sense of inner calm, cultivating genuine cheerfulness, and achieving a sustainable sense of

success that resonates with our authentic selves. Remember, in order to make it to Life you had to win a race against millions just like you. If you were not amazing, you would not have made it here. Never forget that.

Chapter 3

Foundational Expectations: Life is Like the Seasons

If you understand what to expect from life and what to expect from people, then you are less surprised by what happens.

That is the primary benefit of having clear expectations for life and for people. So, we can protect ourselves when the inevitable challenges come. Think of it like the Weather Forecast. You have a better shot at surviving the storm when you take action after the weather forecast tells you the storm is coming. You don't have to *like* the way things are, but we do suggest that you *learn* the way things are. The difference maker in this life is not what happens to you. What happens happens about the same for each of us. Each of us experiences disappointment, tragedy, betrayal, discouragement, and dissatisfaction. Tragedy and disappointment are not special gifts reserved for certain people. Everyone must navigate these challenges.

It's not what happens, it's what we do about it, that makes the difference in life. A 2023 study conducted by Tom Corley, where he interviewed 177 self-made millionaires, revealed that 41% of those self-made millionaires were raised in poverty. A 2017 study conducted by clinical psychologist Meg Jay for Wall Street Journal, where they

interviewed 400 millionaires, revealed that 75% of them were either raised in poverty, abused as children, or experienced extreme trauma at a young age. Oprah Winfrey, LeBron James, and Barack Obama are just a few examples most of us are familiar with. It's not what happens to you, that makes the difference in your life, it's what you do about what happens to you, that makes the difference in your life. Don't trick yourself into thinking that people who are doing well have it easy. Trust me, it's normally the opposite.

There are some things you may not know about me. A few things you may not know about me are; I quadrupled my income over a three period, I have contributed to sub regulatory guidance and other regulatory instruments that must be adhered to by over 300 million people, and I went to Africa for 10 days with just a backpack, and I returned to America with a business interest in a fashion and materials company that continues to grow and thrive to this day. Shout out to Signature 32. You also may not know; I was kicked out of college at 18 years old, I had been arrested on four different occasions by the time I was 21 years old, and at 35 years old I had two children, was still living in my parents home, and was earning 35,000 dollars per year. I was earning 23,000 dollars a year at 19 years old and I had only increased my value by 12,000 dollars over the next 16 years.

I have been confused before, and I have been lost before, but it was the unforgettable level of embarrassment I felt when the custody battle started, that forced me to accept the fact that I just had not been able to put together a good life up to that point. I had excuses of course, but on the inside, I knew it was me. The example I was setting for my children was not an example that I would want them to follow. I had refused to take full responsibility for my life until I was faced with the reality that I was putting on a trash performance at the game of life, and things were only about to get worse. 35,000 dollars a year, two kids, and at the beginning of a custody battle that would last seven years.

That is where this lifestyle of self-improvement started for me. I was embarrassed enough to be vulnerable, and vulnerable enough to commit to learning. I wasn't proud of the life I had put together up to that point, and it was me that had to do something about it. I accepted the fact that, "I don't know what I'm doing, and I need to learn from the people who do." I needed to learn from successful people who were teaching about life. I didn't know what was right, and I didn't know what was wrong, but I did know that whatever the truth was, it would be simple enough for me to understand it. And it was. Nowadays, I listen to about six different life speakers regularly, and they each talk

about the same things, but in different ways. They each speak about the same things because they are each teaching about the truths of life.

Life, much like the turning of the year, is merely a cycle of distinct seasons. To pretend otherwise, to expect perpetual sunshine and growth, is to set ourselves up for frequent disappointment. Remember, expectations are the primary determinants of satisfaction and disappointment. As a matter of fact, ignoring these inevitable shifts in life is the surest way to be blindsided by life's challenges. Les Brown says, "You're either in a problem, just getting out of a problem, or headed towards a problem." I always chuckle when I hear that line, but the underlying message is that the challenges will inevitably come, so don't get too mad about the problems, they are a natural part of life. Become knowledgeable enough and creative enough to knock the challenges down as they come up. That subtle shift in perspective for me, has been a major key. Understanding and accepting that life is like the seasons is not about resignation; it's about empowerment. It's about recognizing the rhythm of our existence and learning to dance within it.

Winter's Chill: The Season of Disappointment

Let's start where the year starts, the winter. Winter, in its stark and unforgiving beauty, mirrors the times of hardship we will all face. Life is dangerous, and life is difficult. Winter is the season of disappointment, tragedy, and discouragement. We will each experience tragedy in this life, and we will each experience disappointments in this life. The cold winds of adversity can bite deep, leaving us feeling isolated and vulnerable. This is when plans crumble, dreams shatter, and grief casts a long shadow. We might lose a job, experience the pain of a broken relationship, or confront the harsh reality of a health crisis.

During the winter, it's easy to succumb to despair, to believe that the cold will never stop. But remember, winter is a necessary part of the cycle. It's a time for introspection, a time for acknowledging our pain, and a time for building inner resilience. It's a time to learn, to adapt, and to prepare for the **inevitable thaw**. We don't have to *like* the way things are, but it is wise to *learn* the way things are. We must learn to navigate the winter, knowing that spring will eventually arrive. During the winter times

remember to continue to take action, remember to stay mobile, the most common way the winter hurts us is when it immobilizes us.

Like the caterpillar's transformation, a process that seems to break the caterpillar apart before birthing a creature of breathtaking beauty, life often throws us into cocoons of adversity.

For example, Laila's "winter" arrived with the abrupt closure of her small bakery. The bakery may have appeared small to others, but to Laila, this was a dream that she had poured her heart and savings into. She had worked for 15 years as a pastry chef at a very popular fine dining restaurant to save up enough capital to truly chase this dream. So, you can imagine how the day that Laila walked up to open the shop and saw the eviction notice taped to the storefront felt like a physical blow to her stomach. In that moment, it was a confirmation of her deepest fears. "What if it doesn't work?" Many people in that same situation would have crumbled, retreated into bitterness, or fled to a "safer" path. But Laila, although definitely shaken, chose a different route.

She did not deny the pain, but she did not let it define her. Instead, she treated the closure as a forced apprenticeship. She reframed how she thought about the eviction and turned it into a springboard for the comeback. She devoured books on business management, attended free online marketing seminars, and even volunteered at a larger, successful bakery to learn from their operations. Every day, she refined her new business plan, improving her recipes and exploring new revenue streams. She maintained her resilience by connecting with other small business owners, sharing experiences and offering support. She walked daily, finding solace and clarity in nature, and she journaled, processing her emotions and solidifying her resolve. When a local cafe offered her a small corner to sell her baked goods, she jumped at the opportunity. Within a year, she was back in her own space, stronger and wiser. Laila's new bakery was a testament to her perseverance. The "winter" had been brutal, but it had forged a steel within her.

Now, contrast Laila's story with Jalen. When his tech startup failed, the blow was equally devastating. But unlike Laila, Jalen chose a path of retreat. He saw the failure as a personal indictment, a sign of his inadequacy. He withdrew from friends and family, isolating himself in his apartment. He stopped pursuing new opportunities, convinced that any effort would be futile. He spent his days scrolling through social media, comparing his failures to the curated successes of others. He fell into a spiral of self-pity and resentment, neglecting his health and alienating those who cared about him. His life became a stagnant pool, reflecting only the shadows of what might have been. The adversity, instead of refining him, consumed him, leaving him a hollow shell of his