moving in
Going to college changes your life. Some students can live at home, others travel hundreds of miles to attend college. Some already know people, others go solo. Some students’ concerns center on the dilemmas of college life, others stem from leaving home. Some are first-generation college students; others come from college families. Some are working adults with family responsibilities, and are involved in diverse community activities. Still others have their own special individual, cultural, and family circumstances.

Whether you are moving into college from high school, returning after a few years, or starting for the first time as an adult learner, your daily routines, relationships, and responsibilities will change. You will assume some new roles, engage in a variety of new activities, meet a complex set of new challenges. The changes may feel most dramatic if you are leaving home to be a full-time student living in a college dorm. If you are a young person commuting from home and maintaining contacts with some of your high school friends, the transition may seem less sharp. If you are an adult who enrolls for only one or two courses while continuing your responsibilities to a job and family, it may not seem like much of a “transition” at all. Most of your life may continue pretty much as it has in the past, although meeting course requirements will create substantial added demands. Whatever your status, younger or older, commuter or resident, full-time or part-time, moving into college will have a substantial impact.
In time, your college experiences and activities will change you as well as your life. They will increase your knowledge and competence, and influence your attitudes and values. They will add conspicuously to your career opportunities and modify your avocational interests. Your plans for the future will change. The experiences you encounter, the diverse persons you meet, all will have an impact on the kinds of friends and types of relationships you enjoy. Your cultural and political sensitivities and sophistication will expand, your ability to contribute to your community and to work on other societal issues will grow.

How well you make the transition, how well you manage moving in, will make a big difference to what you get out of college. For some persons, moving in is a major challenge. For others it is less so. Your situation, purposes, and relationship to your college are unique. But you, like everyone else, will experience some changes as you take this step. The students quoted below reflect some typical reactions to this transition:

Mariella reported, “In the car coming to college I was scared. I was scared out of my mind. I knew who my roommate was. We talked a couple of times, but I didn’t know what she was like. I didn’t know what to expect. I thought the seniors were going to be mean to us. I was scared to see my mom drive away. I was really on my own now. I was scared I wasn’t going to be able to make friends. I didn’t think I was going to fit in.”

Mel saw it differently. The summer passed quickly and suddenly “…it’s time to go to school. You’re a little nervous inside about what it’s going to be like, but mostly excited. Actually, it won’t be too different because I’ll be living at home.”

And Tawanda sighed: “I was looking forward to being on my own, having no one there to yell at me, to get away from my parents. Now that I’m here I miss my mom’s always making sure I was on top of things. Now I have to do that for myself.”

But all students are not just out of high school. As Pat told us, “I was cheated as a young person and unable to go to college right after high school. I was raised by my mother, a single parent who thought I should become a nurse. After most of my children were grown, I decided to return to school and get the degree I never had. You ask how I felt. Excited. Not scared, just concerned about getting into the groove of serious reading. I am enrolling half-time. My kids are all in school and my husband has agreed to help with the shopping and cleaning. I know I will have less time with the family, but in the long run our life will be better. I will be able to contribute more and enrich life for all of us.”

A letter from Kay, a high school graduate, suggests some of the issues she is facing making the transition:

Dear Mom,

First of all, I really miss you. It’s so scary to be away at college now. I hate that I’m having to grow up and learn to ‘be responsible.’ I am not sure I can ever get used to dorm living after the comforts of home. It’s noisy. My roommate wants to have her boyfriend stay over and that makes me feel really uncomfortable. Oh Mom—what should I do? But, I can’t go running home to you anymore. You’re ready to get on with your life now that I’m gone. So I feel I have no one to turn to when I
feel overwhelmed by all this newness and strangeness. Does everybody go through this? Maybe it’s especially hard for me because we were so close. But then again, and here’s the part that’s the hardest to say, we had stopped being that close anyway—you had your new boyfriend, and your own job pressures. I feel like I went from being ‘first’ to being ‘third.’ Now I’m afraid that with me here I won’t be anything to you at all, and the bonds connecting us will snap completely. Then what? I don’t feel that I know enough to hold my own with all these new people, these huge classrooms, and the workload. Do you think I can handle it? I don’t want you to worry about me. I’ll feel guilty if I let you down. At the same time, I do want you to worry about me. I want somebody to worry about me.

Well, I guess that’s enough. Is it okay with you if I come home next weekend?

Love, Kay

Kay’s letter shows the ambivalence that often accompanies a change. Kay is afraid of the challenge, of losing her mother’s attention, of growing up, yet there she is in college. She wants to be there; yet she wants to be home.

Although each person we interviewed had a unique story, all of them, commuters or residents, young or old, coming from high school or work, recognized that college was a new experience. The process of making the transition, although anticipated by most, was an unknown. Entering a new environment, taking on new responsibilities, running into new experiences—even when you desire and look forward to all those things—require changes in your routines of when to get up, how you spend your time, where you go, how you relate to others. It triggers new roles, new relationships, and new assumptions about yourself. All these changes require major adjustments.¹

The Transition Process

Moving into college, adding college to an already full and busy life, calls for “transitions.” Transitions vary in how they affect each person.

Most of us like to begin at the beginning, focusing on the new job, the new relationship, the new dream, the new college. But every beginning, every transition, begins with an ending. So it is with you. Your transition really begins with ending high school, ending full- or part-time work, ending being a full-time parent. William Bridges, in his book Transitions, writes “... endings are the first phase of transition.” The second phase is “... a time of lostness and emptiness before ‘life’ resumes an intelligible pattern and direction, while the third phase is that of beginning anew.”²

Entering college involves letting go of the way you were and creating a new identity. If you are coming directly from high school you may feel as if you are in limbo—no longer a high school student, but not fully a college student; no longer a child, but not yet an adult; no longer dependent on parents, but clearly not independent of them. As Myra said, “I’m still in between. I’m a college student, on my
own outside the class, but inside the class I still feel like a high school student. I still feel like I don’t understand what’s going on somehow.” If you are starting college after working full-time, there can be a big discrepancy between being identified as a wage earner and responsible adult, and being treated as a student with a lot to learn. This in-between time can last from a semester to a year.

Some persons delay the transition until they feel more ready. Many high school graduates wait a year or two until they become clearer about whether to go to college and what they want to accomplish. Others enter and then step out for a while. The percentage of students who enter college right after high school and finish in four consecutive years is steadily dropping, because more students are taking time off to figure out why they are going to college, and to clarify their purposes.

Delays or interruptions can be very helpful. You can take the time to become clearer about your purposes, to become more ready for the change. You can create a breathing space between your old life and the new one ahead, and give yourself a chance to reflect on this transition.

Whether you move right into college or delay it somewhat, when you let go of high school, or change the balance between work, parenting, and other activities, the change will stimulate many feelings.

Many mourn or grieve for what is lost. Some incoming students we interviewed did just that. They were confused about feeling sad when they were supposed to be so excited. It is helpful to remember that grief often occurs when leaving one setting for another, or trading off one set of activities and responsibilities for others, even when these changes are desired and voluntary. First-year college students often grieve for the past. At the same time, they are excited about the future. Or they can be scared of the future, but excited about leaving the past. Adults miss colleagues at work, or time with the children when they come home from school. Whatever it is for you, there are going to be conflicting and competing emotions.

Mariella, who felt scared to see her mom drive away, reported a few minutes later how much she was looking forward to college. She said, “All I wanted to do is get away from home. My sister and I fought every single day. My mom would get mad and I was always the one getting into trouble. I was so happy I was getting away from home, and getting away from my parents, and having personal freedom finally.”

When asked what he might say to peers, Joe said, “You’re going to feel like you’re lost for a couple of days. But that’s okay, it’s a normal feeling. You’re going to think it’s a lot of work. The big classes are going to feel awkward.”

Another student, Tyrone, says, “College is the biggest change I have ever had. Even though I still live at home, still see my high school friends, it is a completely different cultural environment.”

THE IMPACT OF CHANGES ON YOUR LIFE
Think of the many changes in your life. Some were bigger than others. Some affected every aspect of your life, others required only a change of routines. The more change, the more coping is required. Transitions change lives in different
ways. To evaluate the impact of a particular transition, you can examine the degree to which it changes:

- your roles as student, family member, friend, child, parent, worker
- your daily routines of studying, playing, and working
- your relationships with friends, teachers, parents, spouses
- your assumptions and the ways you think about yourself

Here are some examples of how these changes affect college students.

**New Roles**

Let’s start with those leaving high school:

You are forced to disengage from a role that was central to your identity—being a high school student. You begin to establish an identity in a new role that builds on the old one. You need to let go of old expectations and dreams if you are going to adopt new roles and expectations.

When Gemeil went to college, he left high school as a football hero, the quarterback of his high school team. It was hard for him to be identified as a student rather than someone identified with sports. Gemeil was a first-year student trying to find a substitute for the football, macho identity. In contrast, his roommate was a first-year student with the behaviors and assumptions of a “grind.” They both had to establish new roles and new identities. The process was somewhat different for each because their past identities were so different. Football is clearly not everyone’s identity; it could be the theater, music, science experiments, cars, basketball. It could be your family and children, church work, volunteering in a hospital. In short, your focus shifts in new settings. Establishing a new identity will be unique for you and for each other person who takes college seriously.

Kay had a different concern as she thought about her changed role. She was afraid that her relationship with her mother was going to remove her from being her mother’s number one concern. In fact, she thought she had moved into third place. Her role as close daughter, she felt, would change now that she had left home. Her mother would become closer to her boyfriend. On the other hand, look at the cases where parents are afraid their sons and daughters will separate. They want the children to grow up, but they have trouble letting them do just that.

One father told us that he hated being at home this summer. His daughter was about to go off to college. The mother and daughter were having terrible fights. He said, “My wife can’t give up control and my daughter wants to start having more say about her life. My daughter keeps screaming that in one month she will be on her own and cannot wait.” This student couldn’t wait for the role change with mother. Neither could her father!

Many students live at home. Seung Woo expressed concern that her roles would not change. She felt that her family would expect her to be the same daughter meeting the same expectations. They had not been to college. They would want her to do the same jobs she had done before, and might not under-
stand the time she needed for study or for just being with other students. She wanted some changes.

Or you may be a returning adult like Pat. You’ll take on the role of student; your roles as parent and spouse will change. You may give up a role as coworker. You may back off teaching Sunday school or drop out of your weekly bridge game or tennis dates.

Your experience may not mirror any of the examples listed. But everyone can look at a new transition—in this case, starting college—and see that roles have changed.

New Routines

All our students reported changes in their daily routines. These changes were very unsettling, whether they involved late-night studying after dinner and the dishes were done, skipping favorite TV shows, getting used to sleeping in the college dorm without their dog beside them, class schedules very different from those in high school, the time they woke up and went to sleep, fitting in grocery shopping, car pooling, and classes.

Like Seung Woo, commuter students complain that their routines at home stay the same while their routines at school are changing. Dormitory students report that they no longer have a parent or sibling to get them up if the alarm clock fails. No school official calls home to report that you missed a class. You no longer need to explain or get permission from parents to socialize all night. You do not have to sneak a member of the opposite sex to your room. In short, each day and night are more in your control. Commuter students try to figure out how to have their parents loosen up and not expect them to do the same reporting they had to do as high school students. Single parents try to figure out day-care arrangements and how to get kids to and from school.

A returning student with children at home reported great difficulty getting a schedule together that attended to both her family needs and her own needs. Another student said, “In high school I was up and ready by 7:30. Here I sleep later and have more time to study because my classes are spread out. In high school my days were filled with classes, then sports, and by the time I ate dinner it was 9:00 P.M.” Another student reported: “It can be distracting to see 100 people around you in class. They come in late and the teacher doesn’t say anything and they can leave class when they want. Before, the teacher would probably send you to the principal. Now it’s coming and going, eating, and doing whatever, whenever you want.”

New Relationships

Going to college involves new relationships—meeting new friends, teachers, advisors. It also means letting go of some previous relationships, and changing others. For some students, meeting new friends and developing meaningful relationships is not easy; for others, redefining old relationships is difficult. But friends are central figures in the continuing drama of becoming and staying an adult. Whether we are young or old, friends provide a framework against which
we measure and judge ourselves. New friends help us when we are separating 
from old relationships and activities, and they support us as we adapt to new roles.

Going to college requires separating from parents and friends who define you 
a certain way, from siblings who may have categorized you as the shy one, the 
loner, or the joker. It means changing relationships with partners or spouses who 
have expectations about you as a wife, mother, and homemaker available to nurture 
all, or as a husband, father, and provider, available for family outings after work.

Remember Kay's letter? She worried about her changing relationship with 
herself. She was afraid of separating, yet acknowledged that it was inevitable. 
Eventually, she will rework that relationship from being a dependent child to 
becoming a young adult in a mature, interdependent relationship.

On the other hand, Carlos, a first-generation college student, reports problems 
changing his relationships with his family. His family is very close. Even 
now, he visits them once a week and calls them every other day. Carlos reports 
that they are constantly "nagging" him for not calling more. They cannot understand 
why he can't come home more often. "They keep saying, 'Why don't you 
come? What's wrong? It's hard for them to understand what it's like to be a college student. Maybe I should have gone further away. Being so close makes it less understandable to them."

The way relationships change or stay the same varies with the individual. 
Martin still feels connected to his high school friends. They get together regularly. However, his high school friends are not a studying group. He feels pressure to 
party with them. "Some of the fellows at college suggested I stay and go out with 
them. I'm torn. I want to be with my old friends or start really making new 
friends." Competing demands and conflicting loyalties are often part of transitions.

New settings like college provide opportunities to meet people whose life 
styles and backgrounds are entirely different from yours. Diversity can be challenging and exciting, but also threatening. If you are a minority member in your 
new setting, you might feel particularly marginal, not part of the new community. 
This marginal status can be a difficult challenge, but over time it can, and 
usually does, change. This book describes many ways students become involved 
and central. But transitions take time. If you are among the majority on campus, 
you need to figure out how to relate to others who differ from you in skin color, 
religious values, sexual orientation, or national origin. Learning to honor and 
embrace diversity is part of your college transition. As one of our interviewees 
said, "Before, I stayed in my little square. Here, the guys are terrific. They are the 
friends I will have for the rest of my life. I do not call my high school friends. 
Here I talk to everyone. I am meeting guys from all over. There's one from 
Mexico, a guy from Russia, someone from New Jersey."

New Assumptions

Transitions not only change roles, relationships, and routines, they can change the way you see yourself and the world. You go from the status of high school 
senior to starting over; from being a manager at work to an apprentice student. 
This status change can influence how you see yourself.
Some students who were well known in high school find that coming to campus can make them feel anonymous. Kay was confused and suffered from a lack of self-confidence because she now saw herself as someone who “can’t handle it,” whereas in the safe comfort of her home she never experienced herself this way.

Mariella put it this way: “It was really hard for me to accept that I had graduated. I still thought of myself as a high school senior. It was all a big shock. But when I finally got here, I realized that I’m in college now and it’s so totally different. It was hard for me to break away from the high school senior to the college freshman. I thought it was all a dream and I’d wake one day and be in high school.”

Evaluating the Impact of College

Calvin moved into the dormitory right after high school. His roles remained the same as friend, brother, child, student, athlete, but his role as best friend changed. He was pulling away from his high school best friend and moving closer to new friends in the dorm.

His routines changed considerably. He was no longer in class from 8 to 3. His schedule varied. He had much more time to use as he wanted. His evening schedule also changed. Now he could go out drinking beer at night with some of his new friends. Before, he had to be home unless he was at a school function.

His relationships were definitely changing. He didn’t see his parents or siblings often. He was making new friends and relating to dorm counselors, faculty, and student development professionals. In Calvin’s case, his assumptions about himself were shakier than before. In high school, he felt okay about himself. Now he was afraid, wondering if he could make it. He wished that someone had explained the changed routines before he was thrown into what appeared to be “free” hours during the day.

The following exercise, “The Initial Impact of College on Your Life,” will help you do just that. By filling out the form you can visualize how college has changed your roles, routines, relationships, and assumptions. Shauntee, for example, added the role of student to her existing roles as mother of twins, spouse, child of aging parents, best friend, and coworker. Before returning to school, her routines included working, car pooling, cooking, getting the kids to bed, and watching television with her husband in the evenings. Now, she works less, is not car pooling, and in the evenings is doing her homework. Her relationships with her husband, children, mother, and coworkers get less time and energy. Her husband, initially supportive of her return to school, has become increasingly irritated that they spend less time together and that he has more responsibility with the children. Despite the tensions at home, her assumptions about herself changed from feeling like she was treading water to experiencing a surge of confidence and pride that she can handle the course assignments well and is going to get a college degree. Here’s how Shauntee evaluated the impact of college on her roles, routines, relationships, and assumptions about herself.
EXERCISE 1.1
THE IMPACT OF COLLEGE ON YOUR LIFE

1. Your Role Checklist
   a. Please check the roles that were most important before you entered college.
      - [ ] a friend
      - [ ] a grandchild
      - [ ] a best friend
      - [x] a student
      - [ ] a sibling
      - [ ] a parent
      - [ ] a child
      - [ ] a spouse
      - [ ] an athlete
      - [ ] a coworker
      - [ ] other
   b. Now put an X by those that have changed.
   c. Indicate how they have changed.
      I added a new role.

2. Your Changed Routines
   a. Please describe the routines of a typical day in your past life as a high school senior, as a working adult, as a homemaker.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>IN PAST LIFE</th>
<th>IN COLLEGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9:00 A.M. to noon</td>
<td>Work</td>
<td>Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOON TO 4:00 P.M.</td>
<td>Work</td>
<td>School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:00 P.M. to 8:00 P.M.</td>
<td>Carpool, cook</td>
<td>Library, cook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:00 P.M. on</td>
<td>Help with homework, children to bed, TV</td>
<td>Help with homework, children to bed, TV</td>
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</table>

   b. What are the major differences?
      - I watch no TV, spend less time with children, less time at work,
      - lots of time in class, in the library and studying.

3. Your Changing Relationships
   a. In two or three sentences describe how your relationships have changed with:
      - Your parents
         I see them less.
      - Your siblings
         I hardly see them.
PART I MOVING IN

- Your family—children, partner, spouse
  I do less for them.

- Your boss
  No real change here.

- Your best friend from high school, work, or community
  We talk on the phone but rarely have lunch together. Get together for dinner occasionally.

- Your other long-term friends from high school, work, or community
  They are mostly “on hold.” Have an evening together once in awhile.

- Your high school teachers and advisors
  Not relevant.

- Others in your home community
  On hold.

b. Describe relationships that are new this year.
   - I’ve made two new friends at college. I’m part of a study group before class. I’m getting to know my advisor.

4. Your Assumptions
   a. Describe the way you saw yourself last year.
      - I was a frazzled worker and parent.

   b. Point out any changes this year.
      - Now I’m even more frazzled but I feel I am making something of myself.

   c. Describe how you think others saw you last year.
      - As a competent worker and caring parent.
d. Describe how they see you now.

*Often unavailable. Giving more time to myself. Maybe less caring.*

5. As you look at the changes in your life, rate them on a 5-point scale with 5 being a big change and 1 being no change. For those you rated 3, 4, or 5, describe how they have changed.

a. Change in roles

How have they changed?

I have cut back on some and added a new one as a student.

b. Change in relationships

How have they changed?

I feel less available and am not as good a spouse.

c. Change in routines

How have they changed?

In lots of ways to make time for school. Time with the children and helping with their homework has dropped. Less time to do housework. Miss my nightly TV programs.

d. Change in assumptions

How have they changed?

I feel great about myself and the possibilities for the future, for both me and the family.

NOTE: The more these have changed, the bigger your transition.

6. As you think about your changes in roles, relationships, routines, and assumptions, what advice would you have liked from counselors, faculty and administrators, partner or spouse, or family to help you make this transition?

I wish my family understood better what I am going through and how demanding it is. I wish someone at the college had met with me and my family to discuss the changes that would be necessary for all of us.
By filling out the form, Shauntee has pinpointed the changes in her life. She wishes that someone had told her to better prepare her children and spouse for the changes in store for all of them. She also wishes she had better skills in negotiating so that her husband would be a more complete support. But . . . she is proud of herself, and that can go a long way to counterbalance the stress of studying and the irritations at home.

As you can see, for some the transition affects every aspect of life; for others, the changes have less impact. We don’t want you to do anything about these changes. We just want you to realize that every transition will affect your roles, routines, relationships, and assumptions. This very fact explains why change requires coping—even when it is desired, expected, and positive. Now complete Exercise 1.1 to pinpoint how going to college changes your life.

EXERCISE 1.1
THE IMPACT OF COLLEGE ON YOUR LIFE

If you wish, use a separate piece of paper for the narrative responses called for by items 1c, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6.

1. Your Role Checklist
   a. Please check the roles that were most important before you entered college.
      - a friend
      - a best friend
      - a sibling
      - a child
      - a grandchild
      - a student
      - a parent
      - a spouse
      - an athlete
      - a coworker
      - other
   b. Now put an X by those that have changed.
   c. Indicate how they have changed.

2. Your Changed Routines
   a. Please describe the routines of a typical day in your past life as a high school senior, as a working adult, as a homemaker.

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3. Your Changing Relationships
   a. In two or three sentences describe how your relationships have changed with:
      ■ Your parents
      ■ Your siblings
      ■ Your family—children, partner, spouse
      ■ Your boss
      ■ Your best friend from high school, work, or community
      ■ Your other long-term friends from high school, work, or community
      ■ Your high school teachers and advisors
      ■ Others in your home community
   b. Describe relationships that are new this year.
4. Your Assumptions
   a. Describe the way you saw yourself last year.

   b. Point out any changes this year.

   c. Describe how you think others saw you last year.

   d. Describe how they see you now.

5. As you look at the changes in your life, rate them on a 5-point scale with 5 being a big change and 1 being no change. For those you rated 3, 4, or 5, describe how they have changed.
   a. Change in roles
      How have they changed?

   b. Change in relationships
      How have they changed?

   c. Change in routines
      How have they changed?

   d. Change in assumptions
      How have they changed?

NOTE: The more these have changed, the bigger your transition.
6. As you think about your changes in roles, relationships, routines, and assumptions, what advice would you have liked from counselors, faculty and administrators, partner or spouse, or family, to help you make this transition?

The Bottom Line—
Learning the Ropes

You’ve moved from an environment where you knew what was expected of you to one with changed expectations. You’ve begun to let go of high school or work, or you’re adding college to an already full life as a parent and wage earner. Now you’re making the transition to new—or modified—roles, relationships, routines, and assumptions. Identifying the degree of these changes indicates how big this transition is for you.

Mariella has had to adjust to a big school after being in a small school. She has had to adjust to communal living, and that has been hard for her; “I’m not used to having a roommate. I’m not used to having to be quiet while I’m getting ready to go out. I have to go to the bathroom if I want to blow-dry my hair and [my roommate’s] still sleeping. It’s hard to adjust to being away from home and from the family security. It’s been real hard to adjust to so many people here because I graduated from a class of 47 with a student body of 200. Here there are 20,000 people.”

In between the old you and the new you, the old school and the new school, you may feel tentative, even unsure. You may think everyone but you is making new friends and having a wonderful time. However, people’s outsides and insides sometimes differ. You may find that the person you thought was really confident is just as unsure as you.

Adjusting to a new setting takes time. Changes in roles, relationships, routines, and assumptions don’t happen overnight. Eventually, you’ll incorporate your new identity and “learn the ropes.” By next year, you’ll be a college veteran rather than a “new student.” You’ll be a person who can balance work, family, and school rather than someone overwhelmed by multiple roles.

Learning to manage this transition will provide a base for you as you negotiate any new situation. This book will take you through:

■ Understanding the impact of change on your life
Taking stock of your resources for coping with change

Taking charge of your life

**Wrap-Up**

We are *not* saying that the transition into college will be easy or hard. We *are* saying:

- You are not alone
- It is normal to have lots of conflicting feelings during a period of change
- Today is not forever; how you feel today is not how you will feel next year, or the year after
- Be kind to yourself for change is not always easy

**REFERENCES**

Here’s what Bill says about why he is going to college:

“I wanted to go to college to get a good job in the future. Both my parents graduated from college and encouraged me to go. All through my senior year I was taking the SATs and we’d send the scores to different colleges.”

“Did you have any idea what you wanted to do at that time?”

“Yes. I had an interest in environmental sciences, possibly working with a wildlife conservation society or something.”

“Look at your purposes for coming to college. You mentioned environmental science. Name your three main goals and list them in order of importance.”

“The first one would be the job. You want to do something you like and get paid well for it. Next would be the people, the relationships. Possibly meeting a girl, because I guess it would be kind of hard meeting a girl in the workplace. Then just taking advantage of the things a college has, like getting more out of it.”

“How is college going to help you achieve these goals?”

“With the services and resources, like computer knowledge. The college supplies them. It’s your duty to go out and get it.”

Bill is like many entering college students. He is in college because his parents encouraged him to go. He has a general interest in environmental science,
The student believes that college is important for his future. He wants to meet other people and find a girlfriend. But he is not very clear about how college can help him, how to translate these general purposes into concrete plans and action.

Juan starts quite differently:

“I wanted to go to college because I’d be the first one in my family. It makes me feel good and proud. My parents love it. They’re so happy I am here to take advantage of the opportunity. So that’s what I’m trying to do.”

“As you worked toward your decision to go to college, did you have a major in mind?”

“No. I still don’t. It bothers me, but I don’t have one yet. I applied here because it’s close to home. I knew the campus so I just said, ‘I’m going here.’ I live real close, but I still wanted to live on campus. It’s been in my head since the eighth grade. You just want to be here bad. Because it helps you. My goal is to finish in four years.”

“How can college help?”

“I’m not really sure.”

Juan has no clear—or even vague—purposes for his education. The main thing is that he is the first one in his family to go to college. He doesn’t have much sense of how college can help him on his way, beyond having accepted him.

But there are others more like Mary.

“I remember when I was a sophomore or junior in high school. I was like—I’m not going to college. I am sick of school. But then I started thinking, since I want to be a lawyer, I have to continue. My mom always said—because I wanted to take a year off—‘If you take a year off you won’t go back.’ I thought, ‘Yeah, she’s probably right.’ Both my parents wanted me to go to college so it was like, ‘Okay, I’m going to have to go just to get it over with.’ It was the beginning of my junior year that I finally decided I was going to go.”

“How did you decide on law?”

“I’ve always loved law. When my parents got divorced I decided I’d like to go into domestic law, because I like handling families and stuff. Higher education is a big must. You used to be able to get a good job with a high school diploma. Now you need a college degree. So that leads to my second reason. To get a good-paying job. The third reason is to experience being away from home.”

“Let’s take these goals and explain how college will help.”

“Basically, I’m going to study a lot harder courses than I had in high school. It’s going to give me stuff I didn’t know before. I’m going to learn just through the courses in government and politics. I hear with a government and politics degree you can do about anything. I think it will help me get into a good law firm.”

“Where did your purposes come from?”

“I think it was a lot of things. It was stuff I hear from people already in college, people that have gone through college. The main thing is how our society is coping with recession and stuff like that. My family always wanted me to go to college, whether it was near home or away. They wanted me to have a better education so I could be better and get a good stable job. I think it’s a good time for me to go because I know what I want to do. I just want to get into it and get it over with so I can start my career.”
Mary’s reason for going to college is clear: she wants to be a lawyer. She went right from high school, even though she was “sick of school,” because her mother persuaded her that if she took a year off she wouldn’t “go back.” She picked a major that keeps open diverse opportunities. She expects to learn a lot from hard courses, but her main orientation is to get in and “get it over with.”

Let’s hear from one more entering student, Ito.

“When do you first remember deciding you wanted to go to college?”
“I’ve prepared for it since elementary school.”
“So it’s something you always wanted to do?”
“Yeah.”
“If you were to name three goals for coming to college, what would they be, in order of importance?”

“Number one would be the Japanese program. Number two would be the location. Number three would be the cost. I’m interested in Japanese culture and I want to learn Japanese. The Japanese program here will teach me about these things. And the college is nearby and relatively low cost.”

“Where did these goals come from? Were they part of what your family expected, your friends, a combination?”

“The location and cost were because my family is not rich and I don’t want them to have to pay a lot for me. The Japanese business program is my own choice because I’m very interested in Japanese.”

Ito knew from elementary school on that he wanted to go to college, and that his parents expected him to. Unlike Bill’s general interest in the environment, Mary’s orientation toward law, and Juan’s absence of clear goals, he has a very sharply defined focus, based on his strong interest in Japanese, which links to a career in business.

Bill, Mary, Juan, and Ito are going to college for the same reasons most persons give: because someone assumed they would. Because they have a career goal that requires college. In one case, because it’s an opportunity his parents didn’t have. But all these students can get much more out of their college experience than they think.

You may be clear about a future career, a special interest, or a major. Or you may not have any clear goals at the outset. Whatever your position, to really experience career success and to be the best you can be, there are significant areas of competence and personal development you can pursue during your college years. This chapter describes those areas of learning. They will serve you well no matter what your future plans for work, marriage, family, or social contribution. They will serve you well whether you are coming to college straight from high school, or as an adult coming to college either for the first time or after some time out. The knowledge, competence, and personal characteristics addressed here will be useful throughout your life. So whatever your age or condition, we urge you to give them serious thought. Our aim is to help you become more purposeful about this learning, for by taking charge of it you can get much more from the time, money, energy, and emotion you invest. We start with larger learning for career success. Then we turn to larger learning for a good life.
Larger Learning for Career Success

No matter what your specific interests and goals, no matter what your major may be, you need to develop three critical areas: cognitive skills, interpersonal competence, and motivation. If Bill, Mary, Juan, and Ito make significant progress in these areas, their chances for outstanding careers will increase dramatically.¹

COGNITIVE SKILLS

Cognitive skills, the mental processes we develop in acquiring and using knowledge, are the most important factor in career success. One respected researcher studied many occupations: small businesses, counseling, military services, police, sales, civil service, industrial management. His most consistent—and completely unexpected—finding was that the amount of knowledge one had was not related to superior or even marginally acceptable performance. Instead, cognitive skills were the most significant factor in occupational success.

What are these skills?

Written and Oral Communication

Writing and speaking are at the top of the list. These skills are critical in most complex work settings. Without good communication skills, it’s hard to work productively with others. You can’t think clearly unless you can express ideas, feelings, and personal reactions in rich, complex ways.

Communication skills are a stumbling block for many students. It’s hard to admit you don’t write or speak clearly and forcefully. Try to overcome any embarrassment you may have. Practice presentations and ask others for critical reactions. Read your papers aloud to a friend or classmate. You'll be surprised how often you hear awkward expressions or recognize things that are unclear or poorly stated. Ask teachers and fellow students to critique your writing. Revise and tighten. Then revise again. Edit as though every word is your enemy.

As authors, we each have 30 years of writing practice. Even so, we revised each chapter four or more times before sending it to the editor. Every chapter will be revised again before it goes for final publication. Then we will get further suggestions from a copyeditor. We are still learning.

Critical Thinking and Conceptualizing Skills

We are constantly flooded with information from television, newspapers, magazines, books, friends, and relatives. Conceptualizing skills help us make sense of this chaos. They involve skills such as:

- determining the factual accuracy of a statement
- distinguishing between verifiable facts, value claims, and reasoned opinions
- distinguishing relevant from irrelevant information, claims, or reasons
determining the credibility of a source
- identifying ambiguous claims or arguments
- identifying unstated assumptions
- detecting bias
- identifying logical fallacies
- recognizing logical inconsistencies in a line of reasoning
- determining the strength of an argument or claim
- identifying problems and defining them in clear workable terms
- inventing answers rather than simply searching for them
- understanding many sides of a controversial issue
- learning from experience (translating observations from varied experiences into general propositions that can guide future action)

Mary's success as a lawyer will depend heavily on top-notch critical thinking and conceptualizing skills. Bill won't be successful in environmental sciences if he can't identify unstated assumptions, detect biases and logical fallacies, and understand many sides of complex issues. Remember the range of information and issues Victoria thought through when deciding on her major. Mary, Bill, Juan, and Ito will make sound decisions about their majors and college programs only if these skills are well developed.

Use the following “Inventory” to assess your “good thinking.” You already have some of these “good thinking behaviors” well established, but there may be others that aren’t typical of you. Check your responses and select the most important things to work on. Then identify courses, classes, extracurricular activities, or other opportunities where you can strengthen these behaviors. If you don't have a sense of appropriate opportunities, talk with other students or ask faculty members or student personnel services professionals for their suggestions.

Exercise 2.1 is the first of a number of reflective exercises you are asked to complete as you work your way through this chapter. Try to give each one adequate time and thought. Discuss them with other students, or with friends, faculty members, your advisor, or student personnel professionals. They can help you get a better perspective and see other angles. At the end of the chapter you are asked to review them and set priorities among the areas you identify for further work.

**EXERCISE 2.1**

**GOOD THINKING BEHAVIORS INVENTORY**

Check the appropriate column for each item.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>VERY OFTEN</th>
<th>OFTEN</th>
<th>SOMETIMES</th>
<th>RARELY</th>
<th>NEVER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I define goals or problems clearly.</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I make clear plans for doing a task.</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I persist in thinking things through.</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. I am flexible in the ways I think through a problem or task. □ □ □ □ □ □
5. I seek out supporting information or reasoning. □ □ □ □ □ □
6. I continuously check the accuracy of my information. □ □ □ □ □ □
7. I spot and correct errors or mistakes. □ □ □ □ □ □
8. I use precise language. □ □ □ □ □ □
9. I draw on my past knowledge and experience. □ □ □ □ □ □
10. I apply my existing skills appropriately to new situations. □ □ □ □ □ □
11. I examine data, situations, and problems from a variety of viewpoints. □ □ □ □ □ □
12. I seek alternatives beyond the first “best” answer. □ □ □ □ □ □
13. I raise questions when causal relationships don’t seem legitimate. □ □ □ □ □ □
14. I try to identify my own biases and faulty logic. □ □ □ □ □ □

The most important items for me to work on are:

_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________

Some of the most useful courses, classes, extracurricular activities, or other opportunities to strengthen these behaviors are:

_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
INTERPERSONAL COMPETENCE

Interpersonal competence is the ability to work cooperatively with others, to seek and offer help, to influence others, to perform well in various situations and relationships. It is the second most important factor in successful careers and a satisfying life. What does this kind of competence include?

Nonverbal Communication

About 80 percent of communication is nonverbal. It is the feelings behind the words, the signals sent by gestures, posture, dress, personal mannerisms. It is the messages sent by material possessions, how they are organized, how they are displayed. Writing and speaking well are important, but usually the nonverbal communication has greater impact, whether we are sending or receiving. If we are in doubt, if the verbal communication is ambiguous, we usually trust the nonverbal communication.

You hear pots and dishes banging in the kitchen and your spouse says, “How about a little help with the dishes?” Your father says, “Will you turn that stereo down or shall I turn it down for you?” You know you aren't being asked simple questions. You see two people talking, heads close together, or walking hand in hand. You recognize the intimacy. You have to get past a secretary and through a closed door to see a school principal or a faculty member. You understand that person is important or busy, or wants to appear that way. And when you find that person leaning back behind a big desk, looking at you silently without offering you a seat, you know you'd better state your business and be quick about it. You know you are not likely to get a full hearing, that you are not meeting a warm, friendly person who is apt to be sympathetic. Thus, skill in “reading” nonverbal communications can be very important.

More important, perhaps, is awareness and control of your own nonverbal signals. We send many mixed signals because our verbal and nonverbal messages don't match. If, when face-to-face, someone says, “It's been great talking with you. I'd really like to get together again,” but never returns your calls or gets in touch, it can be confusing. But it's not surprising if we soon put more stock in the lack of follow-through than in the nice words.

Accurate Empathy

Accurate empathy is the ability to sensitively diagnose what people are experiencing or where they are coming from, based on what they say or do. It includes the ability to respond to people in ways that let them know you understand. This skill is obviously important in any service or helping occupation like sales, teaching, counseling, law, medicine, and such. But it also is central to working with others in any job, volunteer activity, church, or community group. Accurate empathy is critical for developing and sustaining long-term relationships, for being an effective parent, for coping with family problems.
In college you need to develop mature, supportive relationships with other students. You will meet many people whose backgrounds, beliefs, and behaviors differ from your own. You may live closely with roommates or housemates off campus. You will be in study groups, both giving and receiving help. You will participate in diverse extracurricular activities, internships, and other learning opportunities outside of courses and classes. In all these varied contexts, accurate empathy will be key to effective collaboration and contribution.

**Strengthening Others**

_Strengthening others_, helping them feel and be more effective, is another key part of interpersonal competence. You are able to strengthen others through accurate empathy. In fact, one reason accurate empathy is so important is that it helps others know you have understood them, that you have tried to respond appropriately.

There are three ingredients here, the most important of which is respect and positive regard no matter how much a person differs from you. It rests on the belief that, with help and encouragement, people can do good things and be effective. We know, for example, that having positive and high expectations of students in schools and classrooms leads to better performance.

The second ingredient is the ability to give help, whether it is asked for or not, in ways that help another person not just solve a problem or do a task, but become more confident and effective. Finally, and most difficult for some of us, is the ability to manage our frustration and anger so we don’t vent it inappropriately.

**MOTIVATION**

In addition to cognitive skills and interpersonal competence, appropriate motivation is critical for career success.

“Motivation” refers to whatever seems to lead you to do what you do, think what you think. Some motives are rooted in basic impulses and needs for things like food, security, sex, and love and respect from others. Other motives are based on interests, aspirations for the future, talents, or personal characteristics we want to express. People who succeed in meeting their needs and achieving their goals share several characteristics. They are clear about what’s driving them, what they want to do, where they want to go. They have clear purposes. They set high standards for themselves, work hard, and take risks. They have self-confidence.

**Clear Purposes**

“When the going gets tough, the tough get going.” But you don’t do that without _clear purposes_. Clear purposes that can help drive your college education include (a) vocational plans and aspirations; (b) personal interests; and (c) issues concerning values, lifestyle, and family. Being clear about these areas releases energy and excitement about academic studies, extracurricular activities, friends, and working relationships that help you make progress.
We use the term “vocational plans” in the broad sense of a “calling.” There is a huge difference between a “vocation” and a “job.” You can think of your career as a succession of jobs, or you can think of various jobs as all contributing to some larger work or contribution. How you think makes all the difference. The key problem is finding a meaningful vocation within the job structure of our society. Alienation from work typically occurs because we can’t find that calling within the jobs available. Work that is a vocation is the way many of us add meaning to our lives. It’s the way we redeem our lives from futility, boredom, and aimlessness.

Bill’s career in environmental sciences or wildlife conservation can add much meaning to his life. Mary’s career as a lawyer can give significance and purpose to her existence. Ito’s business career, making use of his Japanese studies, can provide a framework for ongoing identification with his own cultural heritage.

Interests in sports, the arts, theater, literature, social problems, games, travel, and foreign countries can give you a lot of satisfaction and stimulation. They enrich your life, provide opportunities to share experiences with others, make you a more interesting and enjoyable friend and partner. A good life results when you cultivate and balance these interests with your vocation. Using college to develop personal interests as well as your vocational plans requires setting clear priorities that recognize both.

Issues concerning lifestyle and family also come up. Do you want to make a lot of money, have a fancy house on a spacious lot, two cars in the driveway? Or will a modest income without lots of expensive things be okay? Do you want to get married and have a family? How important to your life are frequent contacts with close friends? What trade-offs will you make to maintain an important relationship? Your goals need to recognize these diverse, and often conflicting, alternatives.

Between one- and two-thirds of all students (depending on the college) change career plans and aspirations during college. That’s good. It often means they have become clearer about themselves and what is important, about their own strengths and weaknesses. It means they are having experiences that raise useful questions, that they are open to those experiences and trying to profit from them.

Balancing vocational plans and aspirations with personal interests, and at the same time taking account of lifestyle and family issues, is a complex task. It never gets settled once and for all. The trick is to be clear enough about your purposes so they give meaning and coherence to your existence; so your motives provide good drive for your time, energy, and emotion. It’s also important not to be so inflexible that you resist changing those purposes when you feel it is appropriate.

Thinking about what you enjoy doing and what you are like is a good way to get purposes in perspective. Exercise 2.2, the “Who Am I—Who Do I Want To Be?” worksheet, helps you identify some of the activities you’ve enjoyed in the past, the skills those activities called for, and the personality characteristics associated with them. It also helps you think about what kinds of activities you want to enjoy in the future, together with the skills and personal characteristics you will need to pursue them. You can reexamine and rethink your responses when
you find yourself becoming less motivated, less clear, more confused about why you are in college and what you want to get out of it. Sharing your responses with a friend or two, getting their reactions, will be helpful as well.

Here’s what some of Bill’s responses to this exercise might be:

One of his most enjoyable activities during early childhood was going hiking and camping in the mountains with his parents. Some of the skills called for were learning how to use an ax and hatchet, how to build cookfires and keep them going, how to organize a knapsack so it is comfortable to carry, how to set up and take down the tent. One of the personality characteristics he developed was stoicism, the ability to suffer discomfort—from blisters, mosquito bites, and sleeping on hard ground—without complaining. He also developed the ability to keep going even when he was tired, sore, hungry, or thirsty; to carry an appropriate share of the weight; and to work with others setting up camp and doing other chores.

This activity continued into adolescence, when he became old enough to go off on expeditions with friends and trek off the beaten paths through high country. In addition to strengthening the skills and characteristics developed in childhood, he learned how to read a compass and a topographical map, how to anticipate changing weather conditions, how to make collaborative decisions, and how to follow through under difficult circumstances. During adolescence he also enjoyed fixing up the cars and off-road vehicles that he used to get himself and friends out into the wilderness. He became a skillful auto mechanic, able to drive through various types of terrain, and knowledgeable about getting out of mud holes and snow drifts. He became resourceful, able to keep calm in emergencies and to be creative about dealing with difficult conditions.

Now, as a young adult, he is into rock climbing. He has learned how to use mechanical aids and developed technical skills to handle difficult pitches. His arms and fingers have developed strength. He can keep cool and function smoothly when exposed to sheer drops.

While he’s been in the mountains he’s seen the effects of wasteful forest management, run across piles of litter by an isolated lake, and found himself surrounded by people when he sought solitude. His interest in cars and off-road vehicles has dropped away as he has observed some of the damage caused by unrestrained use. He thinks a career in environmental sciences might give him a chance to continue his enjoyment of the outdoors while he helps preserve those opportunities for others in the future. He recognizes he will need to learn a great deal about the complex interactions among people, wildlife, land use, and business interests. He will need to become politically skillful, develop a long-range perspective, and sustain effort in the face of compromise and failure. In later adulthood he hopes to explore the Andes and apply his knowledge and competence to global environmental issues.

That limited hypothetical response for Bill is clearly very different from the responses that Juan, Ito, or Mary might give. Your responses will have their own unique character. If you try to set down some of your key areas of enjoyment, skills, and personality characteristics and describe their future shape, you may find trajectories similar to Bill’s that will enrich your purposes for college.
EXERCISE 2.2
WHO AM I—WHO DO I WANT TO BE?

Complete the worksheet for “Who Am I” up until your current age. Switch to “Who Do I Want to Be” at the appropriate interval. Use a separate piece of paper to write out your responses for each period.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Most Enjoyable Activities</th>
<th>Skills Called For (musical, creative, good with people, mechanical ability, etc.)</th>
<th>Personality Characteristics (sense of humor, cooperative, dependable, leadership, risk taking, serious, independent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early Childhood</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adolescence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young Adulthood</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Adulthood</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Later Adulthood</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Having purposes consistent with your values helps orient your life toward things you feel are worthwhile and desirable. The values that underlie Bill’s choice of wildlife conservation will differ in important ways from those underlying Mary’s decision to be a lawyer. They both will differ from the values associated with Ito’s orientation toward Japanese studies and business.

In large measure, your values are what make you unique. You are not born with them. They are shaped as you grow up with your particular parents, in your particular community and culture. Some people, for example, place a strong value on material possessions, a fine house, a new car every two or three years, the latest appliances, and so forth. Others value freedom, flexibility, and pursuing personal interests more than money or possessions. Some people place a high value on friendships or on spiritual well-being and give these priority when they invest their time and energy. To make life, career, and educational decisions that lead you in satisfying directions, you need to be clear about which values are most important for you. Without that clarity, or if your decisions are based on what someone else thinks is worthwhile or desirable, you usually end up bored or frustrated.
Again, we can use Bill as a hypothetical example. The value he listed first was being out in nature. It originated early, in sharing the frequent hiking and camping trips with his parents and their joy in those times together. This value is important to him because it provides a chance to get away from pressures of school, to test himself under challenging conditions, to experience the beauty of the peaks and valleys, woods and streams. He reflects this value in his life by spending a major portion of his limited funds on quality equipment, and by allocating many weekends and vacations to hiking and camping activities. This value was one of the primary factors in his choice of a major and future career orientation.

The value he listed second was making a substantial income. His parents were well-off, with a nice suburban home, a van for their camping trips, and ample time and money for those excursions. They felt comfortable underwriting his hiking and camping because it was a healthy outlet that stopped him from smoking and kept him in good physical shape. The high school friends he went hiking and camping with were similarly affluent and didn’t have to worry about pinching pennies when they went on their trips together.

He reflects this value in the way he spends his money and by his part-time employment at a sporting goods store where he can get his equipment at discounted prices. It influences his career and educational planning because he assumes he will go directly to work after graduation for a government agency or conservation organization.

He listed his third value as open, clear, honest communication. He developed this value during the wilderness excursions with his friends, and in rock climbing. He learned that you can’t pull together under difficult circumstances unless everyone can be clear about what they think and how they feel. Grudging agreement, passive resistance, and ignoring fear, frustration, or anger, all can break up the group, kill a trip, or result in serious difficulties. Open, clear, honest communication is important to him because he’s uncomfortable if he doesn’t know where he stands with friends or authorities, and he doesn’t feel very skillful in reading between the lines. His directness and occasional emotional confrontations with friends and acquaintances reflect this. He looks forward to a career where he can use solid research and hard facts to confront people and practices destructive to nature.

You can probably suggest some alternatives for Bill’s fourth and fifth values, where they came from, how they might be reflected in his life, and the potential influences on his future.

Use the “Value Analysis” worksheet to clarify your five most important values. When you have done this, look at them in relation to your responses for the “Who Am I—Who Do I Want To Be?” worksheet. These two exercises can provide a solid basis for thinking about courses you want to take. They can help you set priorities among varied extracurricular activities and learning opportunities beyond courses and classes. When it comes time to decide on a major, you will want to review and update them. If you take them seriously you will be in a much better position to act on Victoria’s advice, and “do it for yourself.” You
EXERCISE 2.3

VALUE ANALYSIS

On separate sheets of paper, answer the following questions about each of your five most important values.

First value:

What is this value?
Where did it come from (parent, peer, culture, yourself, other)?
Why is it important to you?
How is it reflected in your life? If it is not reflected, explain why.
In what ways will this value influence your life, career, and educational planning?

Now do the same for your second, third, fourth, and fifth values.

You can manage your college career in ways that strengthen your ability to pursue both work and a lifestyle that you most enjoy and that reflects your most important values.

Self-Confidence

Self-confidence plays a vital part in whatever you do. We’ve all seen people choke under pressure. A champion tennis player double-faults at a critical point, or goes from “being in the zone” to hitting everything out or into the net. An expert golfer shanks a crucial drive into the rough. A person asked a difficult question stumbles and rambles, looking down or away. Our minds go blank and we blow an easy exam question.

Strong motivation depends on your sense that you can do what you set out to do, influence others, have an impact on events. It rests on past successes and on learning from failures. Cognitive skills and interpersonal competence are important to a successful career. But they won’t add up to much without self-confidence, without a strong sense of your own competence. Persons who can take action to solve problems and cope with difficulties have successful careers and satisfying lives. Persons who experience the world as a series of insurmountable obstacles do not.

Use the “Self-Confidence Inventory” to see whether there are things you would like to work on during college. Here again, you may be very confident about some of these activities and less so about others. The college environment is full of challenges where you can test yourself and practice. Intentionally taking on some of the challenges to broaden and strengthen your self-confidence can have lasting payoffs.
EXERCISE 2.4

SELF-CONFIDENCE INVENTORY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>V. OFTEN</th>
<th>OFTEN</th>
<th>SOMETIMES</th>
<th>RARELY</th>
<th>NEVER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. It's hard to ask my teachers for help.</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I talk easily with people in high positions.</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I try to avoid oral presentations.</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I contribute to class discussions.</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I confront persons in authority when I think I'm right.</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I don't let important officials intimidate me.</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I take on difficult problems.</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I seek leadership positions.</td>
<td>□</td>
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<td>□</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. When I disagree with teachers I say so.</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
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<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. I “block” on exam questions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. I seek out new experiences.</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
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<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. I seek out new relationships.</td>
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<td>□</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Some of the things I would like to work on are:

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________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

Some of the most useful courses, classes, extracurricular activities, or other opportunities for me to develop interpersonal competence are:

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

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________________________________________________________________________________________
Larger Learning For a Good Life

The larger learnings we discussed previously are necessary for career success and for a good life. But they’re not enough. High-level critical thinking skills, interpersonal competence, and strong motivation anchored in clear purposes and values, all supported by self-confidence, are excellent cornerstones. But you need other building blocks for a solid foundation. You need to amplify emotional intelligence, move through autonomy toward interdependence, and develop integrity. College experiences can contribute as powerfully to these kinds of larger learnings as to those required for career success.

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Daniel Goleman, psychologist and former reporter for The New York Times, asks why some people with high IQ flounder and those with modest IQ do surprisingly well?” Goleman argues that the difference can be found in what he labels “emotional intelligence.” Amplifying emotional intelligence is a challenge for all of us throughout life. It is an especially critical task for adolescents and young adults.2

Emotional intelligence includes three major elements:

1. Self-awareness. Recognizing your feelings as they happen and being able to monitor them from moment to moment is the cornerstone.

2. Managing emotions. After self-awareness comes the ability to handle or express feelings in ways appropriate to the situation, or to pursue activities that help burn off, soothe, or temper the feelings. Emotional self control—curbing impulses, delaying gratification, restraining anger, expressing respect and appreciation—are critical ingredients for any complex relationship or achievement.

3. Self-motivation. Harnessing powerful feelings in the service of larger goals powers creativity, mastery, or significant achievement. Being “in the zone,” “in the flow,” characterizes peak performance in most domains. Persisting in the face of frustrations, delays, and complications is part of most complex tasks.

Anxiety, anger, depression, lust, and shame can derail any of us. You can’t learn when grabbed by powerful emotions like these. Becoming more sensitive to your feelings, more aware of how they are influencing your behavior, is the starting point.

Anger and fear trigger primitive reactions. Adrenal glands go to work. The heart rate accelerates. Muscles tense. Blood sugar flows into muscles. Digestion slows down. Pupils dilate. We sweat to cool off the heat generated by the impending struggle with the exam or the rival team.
Delicious food makes us salivate. Impending intimacy makes our hearts race. These innate reactions from the autonomic nervous system were once biologically relevant. Now, too often they are over-reactions that can build up powerful pressures if they are not recognized and dealt with. They cause tension, resentment, and suffering. We need to learn how to release these feelings before they explode.

There are other kinds of emotions like love, rapture, sympathy, longing, grief, wonder, awe. Sometimes laughter or tears are the only signs. Some cultures and some families see these as signs of weakness or vulnerability. They don’t express such feelings easily, and so you may not be able to identify them easily. These emotions are not related to the survival of the fittest, but they provide the basic substance for a rich and satisfying life.

Many of us are not fully aware of our sexual or aggressive impulses. When they aren’t explicitly recognized and expressed, they come out in other ways. We overeat or diet, sleep a lot or lie awake, drown ourselves in work or escape to the TV, deaden ourselves or get high with drugs or alcohol. So our first task is to become more aware of these impulses. Then we can try to find more productive ways to handle them.

We all need to learn to cope with fear and frustration. All students face these emotions. A little can help you get “psyched up” for a test or a game. Too much can freeze you, or provoke the “fight or flight” reaction. Unreasoning parents, arbitrary authorities, impersonal institutions, and inflexible rules can frustrate strong needs. We have to work or study with people who have backgrounds, tastes, habits, and values different from ours. Most of these forces don’t give in easily. Temper tantrums and sulking don’t help, and often make things worse. There are no guidebooks for handling infatuation, seduction, disdain, or rejection. Whether we are powerfully attracted or repelled, we need to develop more appropriate responses than those brought with us from childhood.

Use the “Emotional Intelligence Inventory” to see if there are characteristics in this area you would like to work on. You may not be accustomed to thinking about your emotions in these ways. You may not feel comfortable considering some of these responses. Often, however, those feelings of discomfort are clear signals of something worth further exploration. So try to be open with yourself to identify areas worth pursuing.

For example, you might want to work on the combination of numbers 3 (When I’m sad I try different ways to get beyond it) and 8 (If I get depressed I explore the reasons with others). To address these you might want to ask a faculty member or advisor about some helpful readings, or set up an independent study for a more detailed examination of depression, its causes, symptoms, and useful responses to it. There may be an appropriate support group among the activities at the university. Or you might want to talk with one or two friends about being sounding boards for each other when you’re feeling down. Perhaps you want to work on blowing off steam in ways that don’t hurt you or others. You might want to get more involved in a contact sport, or maybe develop a schedule to jog or work out at the fitness center.
### EXERCISE 2.5

**EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE INVENTORY**

Check the appropriate column for each item.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>VERY OFTEN</th>
<th>OFTEN</th>
<th>SOMETIMES</th>
<th>RARELY</th>
<th>NEVER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. When I’m frustrated I try to be clear about what caused it.</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. When I’m strongly attracted to someone I try to understand why.</td>
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<td>□</td>
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<td>□</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. When I’m sad I try different ways to get beyond it.</td>
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<td>□</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. When I get angry I understand why.</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I can tell the difference between wanting a sexual relationship and really caring for someone.</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
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<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. When I feel frustrated I find a solution and go on to something else.</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
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<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I understand what makes me happy.</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. If I get depressed I explore the reasons with others.</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
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<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. When I’m feeling hurt by another person I examine why that should be.</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. I blow off steam in ways that don’t hurt me or others.</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
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<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. I express love and affection in ways appropriate for the relationship.</td>
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<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
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<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. I can let people know I’m angry with them without hurting them.</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Some of the most important items for me to work on are:

_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
Some of the most useful courses, classes, extracurricular activities, or other opportunities for me to work on managing emotions are:

THROUGH AUTONOMY TOWARD INTERDEPENDENCE

“Autonomy” means to be self-governing, self-determining, independent. “Dependent” means relying on others for support. “Interdependence” occurs when there is mutual support, when others rely on us as we rely on them. Becoming an adult means moving beyond individual independence to relationships of mutual respect and support. Most young persons entering college feel a new sense of freedom and independence. Too often it’s the independence of a hog on ice. You’re on new and slippery territory. There can be some clumsy thrashing around or awkward immobility. You’re free from familiar restraints and outside pressures. You can stay up all night and sleep all day. Go to class or not. Study hard or goof off. Often an outside observer’s dominant impression is instability.

The independence of maturity is different. You are secure and stable. You coordinate actions to serve immediate and longer-range purposes. This kind of maturity requires both emotional independence and instrumental independence, and then recognition and acceptance of interdependence.

Emotional independence means you don’t have pressing needs for reassurance, affection, and approval. You begin by disengaging from your parents. Perhaps for the first time you begin to see parents for what they are, middle-aged persons, neither all-knowing nor all-powerful. Your childhood faith in these strong and reliable guides confronts evidence of weakness and fallibility. Doubt, disillusion, anxiety, and anger may set in. Peers become more reliable sources of support and counsel. Other adults who don’t seem to share your parents’ limitations often play key roles. With time, you don’t need these supports so much. You can risk losing friends, suffer disapproval, or lose status to pursue a strong interest or stand by what you believe.

Instrumental independence has two elements: the ability to carry on activities and to solve problems your own way, and the ability to be mobile to satisfy your own needs and desires. It means the ability to think for yourself and trans-
late your ideas into action. It means taking off for a weekend, week, summer, semester, or longer to travel, get a job, pursue a relationship, or do some important volunteer work.

Maturity in this area comes when you recognize that you can’t operate in a vacuum, that your life is inevitably connected to others and to society. You realize you depend on those relationships and societal supports. Connections with parents get reexamined. You realize they can’t be dispensed with, except at the price of continuing pain for all. You recognize that you can’t be supported indefinitely without working for it, that the benefits of a social structure require contributing to it. Caring and being cared for, loving and being loved, must go hand in hand.

As this change occurs, your relationships become more equal and reciprocal. You can better balance your needs to be distinctive and to be part of a larger whole. You respect the autonomy of others while finding ways for give-and-take with an expanding circle of friends. You become clearer about how much giving and receiving you can handle. But because conditions and relationships change, autonomy and interdependence are never settled once and for all. You must continually re-create your own mix.

Use the “Achieving Interdependence Inventory” to see if there are things in this area you want to work on. Perhaps, for example, you might want to work on items 6 (I have friends who depend on me), 7 (My friends and I have different opinions), and 9 (My friendships include giving and taking, caring and being cared for). You might set up something like Victoria’s tutoring group, or create a study group with persons from diverse backgrounds where you explore alternative points of view as you examine key concepts or experiences. You might want to get involved in ride-sharing or exchanging child care. Like Bill, you might want to join outdoor activities or other clubs that involve team work in challenging situations.

**EXERCISE 2.6**

**ACHIEVING INTERDEPENDENCE INVENTORY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Very Often</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I feel comfortable going to a party alone.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I express opinions different from those of my parents.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. I do things contrary to my parents’ wishes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. I think seriously about advice I receive from my parents.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. My parents and I agree to disagree about some attitudes and values.  
   VERY OFTEN  OFTEN  SOMETIMES  RARELY  NEVER

6. I have friends who depend on me.  

7. My friends and I have different opinions.  

8. It is okay when some people don’t like me.  

9. My friendships include giving and taking, caring and being cared for.  

10. I contribute to college or community organizations.  

11. I seek opportunities to volunteer my time and services.  

12. I take trips alone.  

13. I seek opportunities to experience new places.  

14. I seek employment to help support myself.  

The most important items for me to work on are:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Some of the most useful courses, classes, extracurricular activities, or other opportunities for me to move through autonomy toward interdependence are:

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________________________________________________________________________
DEVELOPING INTEGRITY

The dictionary defines “integrity” as “the quality or condition of being whole or undivided; completeness.” When you have integrity, what you say or do in one situation is consistent with what you say or do in another. The beliefs you express to one person or in a particular context are consistent with the beliefs you express to another person elsewhere. Most importantly, the words you say, the beliefs you describe, the values you assert, are consistent with your actions. You “walk your talk.” You have integrity when word and word, word and deed, deed and deed, all hang together. They ring true like a well-made bell.

Like the expectations and behaviors in relationships with others that get built into us while we’re growing up, we also acquire attitudes, values, and beliefs from our parents and culture. Most of these are implicit and unconscious. They are hard to identify. As we grow up, our lives extend beyond our family and community into different worlds and relationships. We run into information about other cultures and ways of living. These confrontations often challenge our own unquestioned assumptions. They suggest beliefs and behaviors that may seem more appropriate for your generation, more suitable for the times and places in which you find yourself. Developing integrity means examining the attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors you have unconsciously acquired. It means discarding some, modifying others, adopting new ones, so that finally you have something that fits you well.

It’s like taking your high school clothes to college. You see lots of different styles and outfits. Some are appealing, some turn you off. Most people spend a lot of time and energy trying out different combinations, creating mixes of the old wardrobe with new items. You check out how this fits and feels, how others react, what seems to work when and where. Gradually you sort out what you want to keep and what you want to throw away. Often it’s hard to part with old favorites, those well-worn jeans or shirts that have shaped themselves to your special contours. Sometimes you take them out again to see how they feel, how well they seem to represent you. Eventually you develop your own style and build a new wardrobe that is truly yours. You have invested in it. You know it will last awhile. Of course, as time passes and circumstances change, there is perpetual renewal and replacement. It’s never settled forever.

That’s what developing integrity is like when it comes to your beliefs, your values, and your actions. The arts, humanities, and sciences are filled with works and issues that raise questions of value and meaning. A study group where participants share their own points of view and examine their own backgrounds in relation to them provides useful insights on many of these items. You can design term papers and class projects that address the moral and ethical position taken by different characters, or which are embodied in various professional decisions. Writing and thinking about such issues, discussing them with classmates and friends, will also increase understanding and retention of the ideas themselves. You can ask a spouse, child, or friend to point out your inconsistencies. You can get involved with social action groups or volunteer activities that put your action behind your beliefs. Use the “Integrity Inventory” to check out where you seem to be in this area. Then identify what you want to work on and how you might proceed.
EXERCISE 2.7
INTEGRITY INVENTORY

Check the appropriate column for each item.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>VERY OFTEN</th>
<th>OFTEN</th>
<th>SOMETIMES</th>
<th>RARELY</th>
<th>NEVER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Some of the most important items for me to work on are:

_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

Some courses, classes, extracurricular activities, or other opportunities for me to work on so I can increase my integrity are:

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_________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________
Wrap-Up

You’ve covered a lot of territory and looked at ways to think about larger learnings for a career and a good life. As you have seen by now, there are many college experiences, resources, and opportunities that can work on some of these. But it’s hard to tackle them all at once. It’s better to focus on some of the most important learnings for awhile and then to turn to others. Ideally, you will achieve balanced learning and personal development across all these areas as you move through college, and you will continue to grow and learn when you go on to the next part of your life. Exercise 2.8, “Priorities for Career Success and a Good Life,” can help you get started on some of the key areas you want to pursue. Here is an example to give you a sense of how to proceed.

EXERCISE 2.8

Career

Priorities for Career Success and a Good Life

Directions: Take time to look over your responses to the exercises you have completed for this chapter. For each exercise you identified one or more areas to work on. Pick your top priorities from each one and list them under the headings below. Then decide which ones you want to work on now and some ways you might do so.

Because you may want to continue addressing some of these areas for personal development, conclude the exercise by identifying a time when it would be good for you to complete it again, identifying other priorities and ways to work on them.

Good Thinking Behaviors Inventory

Examine data, situations, problems from a variety of points of view.

Try to identify my own biases and faulty logic.

Self-Confidence Inventory

Talk easily with people in high positions.

Seek leadership positions.

Emotional Intelligence Inventory

Blow off steam in ways that don’t hurt me and others.

Express love and affection in ways appropriate for the relationship.
Achieving Interdependence Inventory

Contribute to college or community organizations.
Seek opportunities to volunteer my time and services.
Seek opportunities to experience new places.

Integrity Inventory

Discuss my most important attitudes and values.
Make my daily life more consistent with my most important beliefs.

My top priorities for now are:

Try to identify my own biases and faulty logic.
Talk easily with people in high positions.
Contribute to college or community organizations.
Discuss my most important attitudes and values.
Make my daily life more consistent with my most important beliefs.

Some ways I can pursue these are:

Organize study groups with persons in my courses whose backgrounds are different from mine.
Participate in student government and work toward a leadership role.
Volunteer to help at the Senior Citizens' Center.

I think a good time for me to redefine these priorities would be:

Next spring, when I am thinking about my summer activities and how I want to organize my time for the next academic year.
Now complete the exercise yourself. Your priorities for your own development, for the larger purposes you want to pursue, and the ways you think you can pursue them, will obviously be different from our example. If you take this exercise seriously and follow through with the activities you identify, then these larger purposes for career success and a good life will not simply be academic abstractions. They will take on real meaning as part of your college experience.

If you have trouble identifying activities or approaches you might take to work on your priority areas, consult your advisor, a faculty member, or a student services professional. They can supply some good ideas.

**EXERCISE 2.8**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRIORITIES FOR CAREER SUCCESS AND A GOOD LIFE</th>
<th>name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

*Directions:* Take time to look over your responses to the exercises you have completed for this chapter. For each exercise you identified one or more areas to work on. Pick your top priorities from each one and list them under the headings below. Then decide which ones you want to work on now and some ways you might do so.

Because you may want to continue addressing some of these areas for personal development, conclude the exercise by identifying a time when it would be good for you to complete it again, identifying other priorities and ways to work on them.

Good Thinking Behaviors Inventory
Self-Confidence Inventory
Emotional Intelligence Inventory
Achieving Interdependence Inventory
Integrity Inventory

My top priorities for now are:
Some ways I can pursue these are:
I think a good time for me to redefine these priorities would be:

The next chapter, *Taking Stock*, helps you become clearer about where you stand as you address these purposes.

**REFERENCES**

Think back on the transitions in your life. Some you probably handled well, others less smoothly. You may find it puzzling that you pulled through one change like a trooper only to flounder in the face of another. People react differently to different transitions because of their unique strengths and resources. Each of the students we interviewed approached college with different resources.

We have developed a “4 S System” as a guide for taking stock of your resources. Your potential resources include:

- Your Situation—your situation at the time of the transition
- Your Supports—those people and assets that bolster you
- Your Self—who you are, your optimism and ability to deal with ambiguity
- Your Strategies—what you do to cope

Often, people complain about not understanding how they are handling change. The 4 S System is designed to take the mystery out of change. Understanding the system will not necessarily make the change more enjoyable or less miserable, but by taking stock of your resources—your Situation, Supports, Self, and Strategies—you get a picture of your strengths and deficits as you negotiate the college transition. By looking at them together, you can see which are your strengths and which resources need strengthening.

One person might have lots of Support from home and school; another might have little Support but lots of coping Strategies. Another might see the Situation and Supports as very low, but knows that he has the inner resources, the Self, to make it work.
You can see how the system works by contrasting the different resources Kathleen and Josh brought with them to college. Josh's Situation when he entered college was positive. He came from a family where college was the norm. College came at a good time in both his and his family's lives. He had no real stress, other than the usual pains of growing up and separating. His Supports in college were low. He knew no one and felt out of it. He wondered how he would become part of a crowd. When looking at his Self, he knew he was an optimist and saw the glass as half-full. Because of that, he felt that his Supports would increase if he just gave them time. He felt he was a good cop. His high school counselor had commented on his ability to get along with anybody. In summary, his Situation, Self, and Strategies were strong resources as he entered college. His low resource was Supports but he felt he could and would be able to change that.

Kathleen's family had moved from Ireland to Virginia three years before she entered college. She was the first person in her family to even consider college, let alone apply. Her high school counselor identified her as a student with great potential. The counselor took special interest in Kathleen, helped her complete the applications, and convinced her parents that college would be valuable. Kathleen felt her Situation was problematic. Although everyone finally agreed she should go to college, there was underlying resistance. She felt her family needed her to stay home, to work, to contribute financially. She was frightened that college would be too much for her. Although Kathleen's Supports were weak at home, they were very strong at college. The high school counselor had contacted the admissions director and set up a special mentor for her. Her mentor found two other students, also the first in their family to attend college. Kathleen felt well supported by the mentor and the students. She was pessimistic, afraid of the big change in her life. She also did not know which Strategies to use. The ones she used at home did not seem appropriate in this new setting. Kathleen's strength was her Supports at college. She needed to work on her home Situation, her Self, and her Strategies.

Examining your Situation, your Self, your Supports, and your Strategies helps you see if the balance of resources at a particular time will make the change possible and positive. You can use this process all through college—in fact, all through life. In Chapter 10, “Taking Control and Keeping It,” we discuss how to increase your coping strategies, and how to turn the S's that are not your strengths into resources that work for you. But for now, just enjoy your strengths and understand that your 4 S's can change, do change, and will work for you. By taking stock of your mix of resources, you can assess how well equipped you are to deal with any transition—in this case, the college transition.

The 4 S System

The 4 S System rests on several assumptions:

- No one factor is necessary for coping with change; rather, many factors play a role: your Situation, Supports, Self, and Strategies.
Everyone has a balance of resources and deficits for facing transitions.

These potential resources and deficits are not permanent but change over time.

There are things you can do to turn the deficits into resources.

**TAKING STOCK OF YOUR SITUATION**

Students’ situations, when they come to college, vary greatly. For some, it is a good time to come to college, for others it poses enormous problems because of family pressures and difficulties. Whenever you make a transition, you must look at the total Situation. Are you going to college at a good time in your life, or are there too many other problems? Is attending college your choice, or do you feel pushed by peers, family, employer, or other external circumstances? Do you assess your college Situation as positive, negative, or in-between? Do you assess the rest of your life as positive, negative, or in-between? Are there other pressures in your life or is this a calm period?

How you assess your transition can make a tremendous difference in how you cope. Your Situation is not static; it is constantly changing. This means that you need to reassess your Situation with each change, deciding whether or not it is a resource or deficit. A few examples of different Situations illustrate the importance of taking account of this particular S.

**Vincent:** “This is both a good and bad time for me to come to college. This is a good time because if I sat out a year, I might have not wanted to go. But it is really a bad time because my parents had to buy two cars and we were up against it financially. But my father said, ‘We can handle it; so go ahead.’”

**Betsy:** “Thank heavens I got into college. I needed to get away from my family. My parents fight all the time and I feel caught. Being at college is great. It is a relief.”

**Aurelia:** “I really wish I had control over my life. I would have liked to take a year off and not come right to college.”

**Carlos:** “College is what I always wanted, but I feel very torn. My mother is dying of cancer, my father is falling apart. I go home every weekend and feel as if I am not doing anything right.”

Vincent, Betsy, Aurelia, and Carlos all have different Situations that will influence how they handle college. It is possible that Carlos’s Situation of family illness might interfere with his initial success. If it does, that does not mean he is not college material or that he will not be a great success when his Situation has calmed down. Someone else might have financial problems, another might have everything in place.

We’ll fill in the “Situation Review” for Kathleen so you can see how it works.
EXERCISE 3.1
Kathleen

YOUR SITUATION REVIEW

1. Give examples of ways you evaluate this transition of coming to college as:
   - [ ] positive
   - [ ] negative
   - [x] mixed

   It is mixed because my family needs me at home. I am new to this country.
   Even though my high school counselor thinks I can manage I am not sure I can handle all the reading and writing.

2. In what ways is this a good or a bad time in your life to come to college?

   It’s as good a time as any for me I guess. But it would be a better time for my family if we were more established and my father had a better job.

3. What do you control in this transition?

   I can work hard at my studies and try to make friends.

4. What seems out of your control?

   My parents feelings and limited money. All the long homework assignments they give me.

5. Was coming to college your choice? If yes, what was your thinking? If no, whose choice was it?

   It was my high school counselor’s idea. I went along when he talked my parents into it.

6. In what ways were you strongly influenced by someone else? Some external circumstances?

   I did pretty well in high school and my counselor helped a lot.

7. In what ways do you feel hopeful or pessimistic about your chances of handling this transition positively?

   Sometimes I feel hopeful. Then when my work piles up and I don’t do well on tests I feel pessimistic.

8. What areas of your life are: very stressful?

   The courses and heavy homework assignments. My parents’ feelings.
moderately stressful?

least stressful?

My mentor and student friends. Life in the dorm.

9. Taking everything into account, do you feel your situation is:
   - a high resource?
   - a low resource?
   - a mixed bag?
   - okay?
Please explain.
It’s a mixed bag.

10. As you make this assessment, can you identify what you base it on?

11. What are the implications of your responses?

As you can see, Kathleen’s Situation is mixed. It has both positives and negatives. If she can arrange a meeting between her mentor, herself, and her parents, perhaps she can begin to take control of her Situation and make it less of a mixed bag.

By answering the following questions you can clarify whether your Situation is working for or against you at this time. We emphasize at this time because Situations change. For this exercise, and for Exercises 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, and 3.5, you will need to use separate sheets of paper.

**EXERCISE 3.1**

**YOUR SITUATION REVIEW**

Use a separate sheet of paper to complete this exercise.

1. Give examples of ways you evaluate this transition of coming to college as:
   - positive
   - negative
   - mixed
2. In what ways is this a good or a bad time in your life to come to college?
3. What do you control in this transition?
4. What seems out of your control?
5. Was coming to college your choice? If yes, what was your thinking? If no, whose choice was it?
6. In what ways were you strongly influenced by someone else? Some external circumstances?
7. In what ways do you feel hopeful or pessimistic about your chances of handling this transition positively?
8. What areas of your life are:
   very stressful?
   moderately stressful?
   least stressful?
9. Taking everything into account, do you feel your situation is:
   □ a high resource?        □ a low resource?
   □ a mixed bag?           □ okay?
   Please explain.
10. As you make this assessment, can you identify what you base it on?
11. What are the implications of your responses?

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**TAKING STOCK OF YOUR SUPPORTS**

Most people need Support from others to help negotiate a transition. In fact, for many, social Support is the key to handling stress. People receive Support from their intimate relationships, their family units, their larger network of friends, and their institutions through faculty, student personnel services professionals, peers, or administrators.

Support can include any of the following:

1. Affection—respect, love, caring, understanding
2. Affirmation—agreement that what you have done is appropriate or understandable
3. Assistance or aid—tangible help like tutoring, editing, study groups, party mixers for finding dates
4. Feedback—responses that reinterpret situations, provide a different perspective, challenge or reaffirm your interpretation

Those we interviewed illustrated a variety of Supports:

- “My Supports are my mom, my dad, my pastor, my boyfriend, and my boyfriend’s mom—so you see, I have lots of Support. Even more than in high school because my dad has gotten more involved. My mother listens for any slight change in my voice and is always asking, ‘Are you okay?’ My dad
is totally supportive because he has taken sociology, psychology, and biology, and he's there. My boyfriend is in his second year of college in another state, but he understands what I am going through and he helps keep me focused.”

- “My mom calls and tries to give me Support. She keeps telling me that I’m going to make it through. That helps me give myself Support. Also I get lots of Support from my grandmother. I feel I need more faculty Support to help me adapt to college.”

- “I have a confusing Support system. My parents are divorced. My mother and stepfather Support me financially. My dad is just there for moral Support. But I get more emotional Support now than in high school because I’m going to be the first one in the family to go to college. I am a male Hispanic and this is a big deal in our family.”

- “When you ask what Supports I need, I need a computer. I talked to my dad and maybe he will get me one for Christmas.”

- “I owe credit to my high school counselor for writing such wonderful letters of recommendation. I am getting little Support from my parents. I am doing it on my own. I have gotten a loan. If I had a problem, I would not go to my parents, I would go to a friend. My father doesn’t ask me how I am doing, and my mother always asks. She worries too much.”

- “My Support comes from church. I go home every other week and go to church with my folks.”

- “The university has been very supportive. They go out of their way to help us, especially new students. They create extra programs to make students more aware of the different groups here. I am Asian American, meeting all kinds of different people. Also, they have many programs, like special tutoring. I do not plan on using any of these extra services but it makes me feel more secure knowing that they’re there.”

- “I got Support from the Black Student Alliance. This gave me a group with whom to identify. I was scared that I would be the only African American, but I soon saw that I was not alone. There is a counselor in the Minority Student Services who is like my mentor. She is always there for me at any time. She is my main Support.”

On the other hand, some students felt they were not getting the Support they needed:

- “I feel I need more faculty Support to help me adapt to college. I wish there was someone who could check on you at times to make sure everything is going okay, and if not, then give you advice on different services the campus offers.”

Support from family, friends, school officials, employers, and others are critical for college students. The same student might experience both Support and sabotage. For example, Marie, a returning student, felt she got great Support from her husband, children, and parents when she decided to return to school. At
first, she was delighted and felt fortunate. After six months of writing papers on
weekends and evenings, she began getting negative comments from her husband
like, “I see the dishes are not even washed,” and from her children, “You’re no fun
anymore.” Marie was terribly upset by these comments, felt guilty, and was about
to withdraw from school. Her faculty advisor gave her so much encouragement—
her grades were all As—that she decided to stick with it.

We all need Support, but there are times when we get it from one person and
not from another. As we have also seen, there are times when those giving us
Support take it away. Support is not one-dimensional; it comes from many
sources, in many ways. To one person, getting a computer would be the needed
Support; to another, talking to Mom; to another, a husband and children who will
help with the shopping, cooking, and cleaning. What we strive for is to have our
overall Support be more positive than negative.

Let’s see how Kathleen’s Supports are working for her.

EXERCISE 3.2

YOUR SUPPORT REVIEW

1. Describe the kind of support you are receiving.

   Affection I am getting includes
   My high school counselor, my college mentor, my two friends, and
   my roommate.

   Affirmation I am getting includes
   My mentor and roommate think I am doing OK in my studies,
even though sometimes I only get C’s on my tests.

   Aid I am getting includes
   My two friends help me meet other people. My mentor sometimes
   helps me with my studies.

2. In any of the areas listed above, do you feel you need more support?

   I wish I had more affirmation from home. I need more help
   with getting my homework done and managing my time.

3. Describe the friends you talk to. What about?

   I talk a lot with my two friends who are also the first to go to
college. We talk about different ways to get homework done,
about what kinds of extracurricular activities to do, and about
boys we like. We also talk about our problems with our parents.
4. Describe the family members you talk to. What about?
   So far I only really talk with my mentor. She has encouraged me to
   ask my teachers questions when I don’t understand and I have done that
   with one teacher twice after class. We also talk about my parents and
   what I might do for a major.

5. Describe the faculty members or other college personnel you talk to. What about?
   I don’t talk with any other faculty members. My advisor seems
   very busy so I use my mentor for choosing my courses.

6. Do you sometimes feel that the people in your world are undercutting you? Please explain.
   My parents do really undercut me. I always have the feeling they
   would rather I was home.

7. Do you feel you are able to initiate support by telling others what you need? Please explain.
   It is hard for me to ask for help. I am used to being pretty much on
   my own and managing for myself. In Ireland we lived in a small town
   and everybody knew everybody else and helped out without you asking
   for it. Here we live in a suburb and nobody knows anyone else or
   helps them.

8. Do you feel your support system is
   ☑ a high resource? ☐ a low resource?
   ☑ a mixed bag? ☐ okay?
   Please explain.
   It’s a mixed bag, because of my parents’ attitudes and limited
   money.

9. What are the strongest parts of your support system?
   My mentor and my student friends.

10. What are the weakest?
    My family and my teachers.

11. Are there ways you can strengthen your support system?
    I don’t have any good ideas about how to do this right now.
As you can see, her main problem was guilt about not helping out at home. She doesn’t have ideas about how to strengthen her Support system. She would find suggestions in Chapter 10, “Taking Control and Keeping It,” about how to strengthen her Supports. Complete your own “Support Review.” Go to Chapter 10 if Supports seem to be a low resource or mixed bag.

EXERCISE 3.2

YOUR SUPPORT REVIEW

Use a separate sheet of paper to complete this exercise.

1. Describe the kind of support you are receiving:
   - Affection I am getting includes
   - Affirmation I am getting includes
   - Aid I am getting includes

2. In any of the areas listed above, do you feel you need more support?

3. Describe the friends you talk to. What about?

4. Describe the family members you talk to. What about?

5. Describe the faculty members or other college personnel you talk to. What about?

6. Do you sometimes feel that the people in your world are undercutting you? Please explain.

7. Do you feel you are able to initiate support by telling others what you need? Please explain.

8. Do you feel your support system is
   - a high resource?
   - a low resource?
   - a mixed bag?
   - okay?
   Please explain.

9. What are the strongest parts of your support system?

10. What are the weakest?

11. Are there ways you can strengthen your support system?

TAKING STOCK OF YOUR SELF

What personal characteristics do you bring to the college transition? When you try to answer that question, you get into the challenging task of defining who you are. Psychologist Martin Seligman asserts that whether you are an optimist or a pessimist is central to how you handle life. As Seligman writes, “The defining characteristic of pessimists is that they tend to believe bad events will last a long time, will undermine everything they do, and are their own fault. The optimists, who are confronted with the same hard knocks of this world, think about misfortune in the opposite way.
They tend to believe defeat is just a temporary setback, that its causes are confined to this one case. Optimists believe defeat is not their fault."

Those who feel they have control over their lives, who are optimistic about their power to control at least some portions of their lives, tend to experience less depression and achieve more at school or work. They are even in better health. Seligman suggests that the individual’s “explanatory style”—the way a person thinks about the event or transition—can explain how some people weather transitions without becoming depressed or giving up. Since many transitions are neither bad nor good, but a mixture of both, a person’s explanatory style becomes the critical key to coping. A person with a positive explanatory style is an optimist, while one with a negative style is basically a pessimist. The good news is that pessimists can learn the skills of optimism and improve their lives.

Another way to assess your Self is to identify times when you are challenged and when you are overwhelmed by change. For example, if your grades placed you on probation, would you assume that they will never get better, that you are a failure, that maybe you are not college material? Would you feel overwhelmed and defeated, or challenged and determined to do better?

It is interesting to see how our interviewees saw themselves:

- “I define the transition of coming to college as challenging rather than overwhelming. I feel confident that I will make a 3.0.”
- “I wish I were more of a resource for myself, but I’m rather shy. I don’t speak up a lot. I need help in this area.”
- “Although I feel in control of the decision to come to college, I still think I need to become more independent. My way of dealing with stress is very unorthodox, because I only study right before the test and I don’t worry about it until then. The only thing I worry about is my car breaking down. I approach most transitions with underconfidence. I set very high standards and am afraid I will not meet them.”
- “I have the confidence I can do it, but then I still feel a little fear. I am trying to do it on my own, without help. I wish I just had a little more confidence.”

Exercise 3.3, “Your Self Review,” helps you reflect on how you respond to challenges and how you rate your Self as a resource. Before filling it out let’s see how Kathleen sees herself.

**EXERCISE 3.3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YOUR SELF REVIEW</th>
<th>Kathleen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

1. In what ways do you feel challenged by the college transition? Please explain.

Learning to do all the course work has been my biggest challenge. At the beginning it was very uncomfortable not knowing anyone except the two students my high school counselor found for me. I wasn’t used to all the noise and partying in the dorm.
2. In what ways do you feel overwhelmed by it? Please explain.
   I feel overwhelmed when I can't keep up with my studies and
   when my parents want me to come home and help out.

3. Do you feel both challenged and overwhelmed? Which is the predominant feeling?
   More overwhelmed I guess, most of the time.

4. Do you generally feel a sense of control or mastery as you face transitions? Give examples.
   In the past I've generally felt pretty much in control. I knew my way
   around our village and county in Ireland and was a good student. After
   we got here from Ireland I was able to do my school work and help
   out at home with odd jobs.

5. Do you usually face life as an optimist rather than a pessimist? Give examples of some
   things that lead you to feel optimistic or pessimistic.
   Generally, I have been pretty happy-go-lucky. I used to sing a lot. And I
   felt I did quite well in high school and was popular enough. When I got
   good grades and was chosen for the glee club that made me feel optimistic.
   Now, when school work piles up, when I don't get good grades, and when
   I run out of money I get more pessimistic.

6. Do you define your Self as resilient in the face of change? Give examples.
   Yes. My mother got sick soon after we arrived here, and I was able
   to take a lot of responsibility for shopping and cooking. I did not have
   a lot of trouble getting accepted in school and doing the work.

7. Have you uncovered ways to make your prior learning count? If so, what are you doing? Note:
   To answer this question, please go to Exercise 3.4, "Assessing Your Prior Learning." After
   you fill that out, you will be able to decide whether to apply for such credit.
   I haven't tried to do this. There might be a possibility because
   I know Gaelic and have read quite a lot of Irish plays that seem to
   be part of some of the literature courses.

8. Taking into account all of the above, do you rate your Self as:
   √ a high resource?   ❑ a low resource?
   ❑ a mixed bag?      ❑ okay?
Please explain.
I have been able to come through a number of difficult situations and changes so far. I think if I work real hard and am patient with myself and my parents, I will get through college OK.

9. If you do not see your Self as a high resource, do you have any ideas about how to strengthen your Self? How to become more of an optimist?
   I think I am OK as an optimist.

Kathleen sees college as overwhelming. But her past experience of coping with the move from Ireland and helping her family makes her feel somewhat optimistic about being able to cope with the various challenges. Now see how your Self review comes out.

**EXERCISE 3.3**

**YOUR SELF REVIEW**

Use a separate sheet of paper to complete this exercise.

1. In what ways do you feel challenged by the college transition? Please explain.
2. In what ways do you feel overwhelmed by it? Please explain.
3. Do you feel both challenged and overwhelmed? Which is the predominant feeling?
4. Do you generally feel a sense of control or mastery as you face transitions? Give examples.
5. Do you usually face life as an optimist rather than a pessimist? Give examples of some things that lead you to feel optimistic or pessimistic.
6. Do you define your Self as resilient in the face of change? Give examples.
7. Have you uncovered ways to make your prior learning count? If so, what are you doing? Note: To answer this question, please go to Exercise 3.4, "Assessing Your Prior Learning." After you fill that out, you will be able to decide whether to apply for such credit.
8. Taking into account all of the above, do you rate your Self as:
   - a high resource?
   - a mixed bag?
   - a low resource?
   - okay?
   Please explain.
9. If you do not see your Self as a high resource, do you have any ideas about how to strengthen your Self? How to become more of an optimist?
Your resources include the knowledge and competence you already have. This learning comes not only from formal schooling, academic studies, or special courses, but also from prior work and life experiences. Some of our most powerful and useful learning has occurred on a job, through a volunteer activity, pursuing some special interest or hobby, or because of some special circumstances you have faced.

Your particular supply of knowledge and competence provides the building material already available as you construct your college experience. It’s like building a house. You already have some cornerstones, perhaps even a solid foundation. You have some scaffolding, perhaps some walls, or a room or two nearly finished. You probably have some finished trim or nicely designed doors or windows. You may have a floor plan or a general design—or perhaps you’re still looking for one.

Whatever your condition, it is very helpful, as you are taking stock of your Self, to become clearer about the knowledge and competence you already have. Then you can make better judgments about the additional things you need to know, new abilities you want to acquire, personal qualities you want to strengthen. With this awareness, you can use your time, energy, dollars, and emotions more efficiently. You can capitalize on what the college has to offer, create your own opportunities for special learning, and get much more from your total experience. In many institutions, you can save time and money by getting credit for the college-level learning you already have acquired.

Barry is an adult who decided to assess his prior learning. He wanted to finish his coursework for the Bachelor of Science degree, with a major in “Information Processing Systems” from the night school. As an older student, Barry was eager to complete college as fast as possible. While attending Evening College, he heard about “Life Experience Portfolio Evaluation.” After discussing his background with a counselor, he registered for the “Portfolio Development” class. Here he developed skills in analyzing, identifying, articulating, and documenting experiential learning for academic credit. His completed portfolio consisted of a résumé, autobiography, chronology, competency statements, and extensive documentation. Barry, who had been a computer operator and systems software programmer, discovered that his prior learning could be applied to his degree.

Here are some guidelines that will help you decide whether to seek such credit:

1. Credit is not awarded for the experiences you have had, but for the learning that has resulted from those experiences. It is important to keep that distinction in mind as you consider evaluation.

2. The learning should have general applicability outside of the specific situation in which it was acquired. For example, you may have learned the specific procedures for processing personnel applications at one company. If you also learned principles and techniques that would apply at other companies, then this may be a situation where you can receive college credit.

3. The learning should include both theoretical and practical understanding. Even though you may not have applied the knowledge you possess to a prac-
tical situation, you should be aware of how to do something; you should understand why you are able to do what you do. You should not expect to receive college credit for application of a manual skill or a narrowly prescribed routine or procedure. Simply being able to manipulate a machine or carry out a practical activity without understanding the concepts, principles, or theoretical underpinnings is not sufficient.

4. It should be possible to evaluate the learning. You should be able to describe precisely what you know and can do, and what appropriate attitudes you have developed as a result of your experiences. You should be able to demonstrate on tests, through actual performances or products, or to an expert in the field, that you currently possess the learning you claim to have.

5. Your knowledge must be current. You should have attained from your experiences at least the same degree of knowledge or competence as has been attained by others through their college experiences and activities.

6. What you have learned must be related to courses, disciplines, academic areas, or academic programs offered at your university.

Exercise 3.4, “Your Self Review: Assessing Your Prior Learning,” can help you decide whether it is appropriate to seek credit for the knowledge and competence you have already achieved from previous work and life experiences. You might want to explore, with an appropriate faculty member, advisor, or student development professional, the alternatives available at your institution.

**EXERCISE 3.4**

**YOUR SELF REVIEW: ASSESSING YOUR PRIOR LEARNING**

Use a separate sheet of paper to complete this exercise.

1. Do you think you have acquired college-level skills or knowledge?
   
   For example, you may have run a business, written for a newspaper, worked in a political organization, acted in community theater, traveled and learned a foreign language, read a lot of history or classical literature on your own. If you can document or demonstrate what you have learned from activities and experiences like these, you may receive college credit for your knowledge of accounting practices, your journalism skills, your knowledge and understanding of local political practices, your acting ability, your language skills and literary understandings, after they have been appropriately evaluated.

2. Can you supply a realistic appraisal of your prior learning that satisfies the following questions?
   
   a. Does it have general applicability?
   
   b. Can it be documented, demonstrated, and evaluated?
   
   c. Does the learning you received relate to specific majors, programs, or courses in the curriculum?
   
   d. Does it include both theoretical and practical understanding?
   
   e. Is it current?
3. Are you aware of the following ways to assess prior learning for college credit?
   a. College level examination program (CLEP) (yes, no)
   b. Documented competency statement (yes, no)
   c. Portfolio (yes, no)
4. Looking at your prior learning, do you feel that you have some that merits college credit?
   If yes, consult your advisor or counselor for help in selecting the right approaches for you.

**TAKING STOCK OF YOUR STRATEGIES**

There are many actions you can take to cope with a Situation that is taxing or challenging.

1. You can change the stressful Situation. For example, you can say to yourself, “I got an F on that paper, but I am going to try to get the instructor to give me a chance to rewrite the paper so I don’t have to get the F.”
2. You can change the meaning of the stressful Situation. For example, “I got an F on that paper. I am disappointed, but I see it as a warning, and even as an opportunity to get extra help. I would rather have the F my first year when there is time to do something about it.”
3. You can relax in the face of stress. For example, “I got an F. I am going to try to improve it, but mostly I am going to try to stay relaxed so I do not freeze and keep getting Fs. To stay loose, I might go for a run, work out, go out with a friend, watch TV, meditate.”

As you can see, some of these Strategies are problem-focused, designed to alter the situation that causes distress: “I received an F in the course. I am going to try and have that changed.” Others are emotion-focused, designed to regulate your feelings: “I can try to deal with my feelings about receiving the F and explain it so that I do not feel diminished.”

The good news is that there is a cognitive framework for thinking about coping. The bad news is that there is no magic coping Strategy. The effective coper uses lots of Strategies flexibly, depending on what is going on. For example, if there is hope of getting the F changed, then use one of the problem-focused Strategies. You can drop the class, for example. If, however, there is no hope then try to regulate your emotions.

When we asked students what Strategies they used to cope with the newness of college, they responded in a variety of ways:

- “I live four hours away and can’t talk to my folks every day. But I am having to write letters. This, for me, is a new way of relating to my parents.”
- “I used to be embarrassed asking questions if I did not understand something in class. Now I am learning to ask instead of sitting around and doing nothing. I used to sit by myself if I was lonely. Now I’m learning to talk to a few people.”
“I write everything I need to do in a weekly planner. Then if someone asks me to go somewhere, I look at my schedule and then give the answer. I am in a special program because my English is not good. I need to develop more Strategies in language and also need help in motivation. My family is motivated for me. I wish I had more motivation. I have some but I need a lot more.”

“I need help in time management. I need to spend less time with my friends. I know it’s hard, but it has to be done.”

“I need help with motivating myself to study. I need help not to watch too much TV. I am trying to get in an isolated area so I won’t be able to turn the movie on or lay on the bed. I am torn between studying and friends. I want to be with my friends but I know I should study. I need some Strategies for sorting this out.”

Kathleen was not unlike some of the students just described. Her “Coping Strategies Review” made it clear she did not have many ideas about what to do.

**EXERCISE 3.5**

**YOUR COPING STRATEGIES REVIEW**

1. Describe Strategies you use to take action, to change the Situation.
   
   I work hard to try to get on top of it.

2. Describe ways you try to change the meaning of the Situation.
   
   I have talked with my mentor and my friends about the Situation, and with my parents. That has helped me understand it a bit better, although I still don’t really accept it.

3. Describe ways you try to control or regulate your emotional reaction to the Situation.
   
   I just try to keep busy and not let it get me down.

4. Which Strategies seem to work best for you?
   
   Working hard and keeping busy.

5. Do you see ways to increase your coping repertoire?
   
   No, I don’t see any right now. Maybe my mentor or friends could help.

6. Taking all of the above into account, do you rate your Strategies as:
   
   - a high resource? ✓ a low resource?
   - a mixed bag? ❑ okay?
Please explain.

I guess I would rate them as a low resource, because all I seem to know how to do is keep working away, hoping it will get better.

Filling out the exercise, “Your Coping Strategies Review,” will give you an idea about whether or not you use lots of Strategies flexibly. If your responses are similar to Kathleen’s, the chapter on “Taking Control and Keeping It,” gives you specific information on ways to increase your coping Strategies.

EXERCISE 3.5

YOUR COPING STRATEGIES REVIEW

Use a separate sheet of paper to complete this exercise.

1. Describe Strategies you use to take action, to change the Situation.
2. Describe ways you try to change the meaning of the Situation.
3. Describe ways you try to control or regulate your emotional reaction to the Situation.
4. Which Strategies seem to work best for you?
5. Do you see ways to increase your coping repertoire?
6. Taking all of the above into account, do you rate your Strategies as:
   - a high resource?
   - a low resource?
   - a mixed bag?
   - okay?

   Please explain.

Wrap-Up

You face each transition with potential resources: your Situation, Supports, Self, and coping Strategies. These 4 S’s are not static. You are likely to pursue significant learning several times during the course of your life. Every time you start a new program, your Situation differs. You might enter college the first time as an unmarried person, dependent on parents, or you might enter as a married person with children. You also bring different Supports each time you pursue serious learning. You may use different Strategies. You probably are the
same in terms of Self, but even that changes over time. Very simply, you can break down the components of change in order to evaluate what makes things work for you, what hinders your adaptation. You can discover clues as to what to do next.

The final exercise, “Taking Stock of Your 4 S’s—A Summary,” helps you visualize each S, marking which ones need strengthening.

Jim had retired from the army. He returned to school to prepare himself for a new career. His Situation was a plus. He had a family, his wife was working, his children on track. This was a good time for him to return. He felt Support from the army in terms of retirement benefits, and from his wife and children. He was optimistic about his ability to handle college. He had been unaware of the possible credits for prior learning and saw that as a plus. But he was concerned about his need to learn more about Strategies. By taking stock of his 4 S’s, Jim could focus on what he needed to do.

Unlike Jim, Kathleen’s summary of her 4 S’s shows she needs help. In Chapter 10, “Taking Control and Keeping It,” we’ll see what kinds of help she might get.

### EXERCISE 3.6

#### TAKING STOCK OF YOUR 4 S’s—A SUMMARY

To summarize your resources, go back over each S and rate it either as a strength or as a resource needing strengthening.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A STRENGTH</th>
<th>NEEDS STRENGTHENING</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Your overall Situation</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Your overall Supports</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Your overall Self</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Your overall Strategies</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. List the S’s that you need to strengthen. Keep them in mind as you complete this book.

| I need to strengthen my situation with my parents and with improving my school work and studying more effectively. I need to learn more strategies for coping with challenges other than just working, working, working. |

Each person has different resources, some of which need strengthening. The summary exercise provides the information you need to highlight where you are and identify which S needs strengthening. Taking stock is the first step to changing.
### EXERCISE 3.6

**TAKING STOCK OF YOUR 4 S’s—A SUMMARY**

To summarize your resources, go back over each S and rate it either as a strength or as a resource needing strengthening.

<table>
<thead>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

1. Your overall Situation
2. Your overall Supports
3. Your overall Self
4. Your overall Strategies

5. List the S’s that you need to strengthen. Keep them in mind as you complete this book.

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### REFERENCES


College is about learning. Moving through college depends on it. How you think about learning, and how you act on that understanding, will heavily influence what you get out of college. It will determine how well you achieve your purposes. Your larger learning for career success—cognitive skills, interpersonal competence, motivation—will rest on those decisions. So will your larger learning for a good life—amplifying emotional intelligence, moving through autonomy toward interdependence, developing integrity. The choices you make about how you invest your time, energy, and emotion can be more sound—or less—depending on how well you understand and apply what we know about learning.

**Mental Models**

“Know thyself.” That age-old precept is the cornerstone for effective learning. Socrates said, “An unexamined life is not worth living.” Current cognitive psychologists document the powerful ways our prior beliefs, our “mental
models,” influence how and what we learn. We are all “meaning making” creatures. From our earliest days we are trying to make sense of our world. The meanings we make—and remake and remake—provide an ongoing, increasingly complex and increasingly solidified, context against which new experiences are interpreted and assimilated.

Most of us assume we respond like a camera and tape recorder. Sights and sounds that hit our eyes and ears get faithfully reproduced in the brain. Not so. Using new technologies, scientists—neurophysiologists, molecular biologists, neuroanatomists, chemists, medical researchers—now can directly observe mental activity. They can record how the brain responds to varied stimuli, how it carries out varied tasks. Certainly there is not yet agreement on a comprehensive theory about how the brain functions. But there are findings that help us know more about learning. One major finding, consistent with a substantial body of psychological research, is that the brain does not simply reproduce external reality. Instead, apparently, about 80 percent of what we perceive and think we have understood is rooted in prior attitudes, information, ideas, emotional reflexes. Only about 20 percent comes from the “external reality.”

Learning is a whole-person, whole-brain activity. Intellect and emotion are inseparable. That’s why knowing thyself is so important. That’s why examining your own prior history, prior knowledge, preconceptions, attitudes and values, and emotional reflexes is critical for significant learning.

Your Brain

Cognitive scientists and brain researchers give us insights about brain functioning and learning. Here are two lists. The first comes from Dee Dickinson, head of Seattle’s New Horizons for Learning Project, based on the work of Marian Diamond at the University of California, Berkeley:

- The brain is remarkably plastic across the life span.
- Powerful learning is prompted when all five senses are engaged.
- Adequate time is needed for each phase of information processing (input/assimilation/output).
- Emotional well being is essential to intellectual functioning, indeed to survival.

The second list comes from K–12 research summarized by Geoffrey Caine and his wife Renate:

- Body, mind, and brain exist in dynamic unity.
- Our brain is a social brain.
- The search for meaning is innate.
- The brain establishes meaning through patterning.
- Emotions are crucial to patterning.
- Learning involves conscious and unconscious processes.
Complex learning is enhanced by challenge, inhibited by threat.  
Every brain is uniquely organized, with resulting differences in talent and preference.

Take special note of the next-to-last item on this list. When we are threatened, emotions take over. We usually revert to more primitive responses. New learning drops away. We choke. Every athlete recognizes this dynamic. It’s why serving out a tough tennis match can be so hard. It’s why that smooth, relaxed rhythm gets lost when we look down a steep pitch of deep moguls. It’s why final exam performance often falls seriously short of what we really know and can do. We need challenges to learn, but not threats.

**Your Intelligences**

Ted Marchese—a long time friend and colleague, whose brilliant overview *The New Conversations About Learning* supplies much of what we are sharing—gives a nice example, which helps us move such findings closer to how you can manage your own learning.¹

Imagine an experiment in which rats are being raised in a series of five boxes. In the first box you have a single rat, raised the usual (sterile) way. In box two, you have a rat raised the same way, except that it is given toys to play with. In box three, same idea, except that the rat’s toys are changed every week. Box four, same idea, changed toys, but there are several rats growing up together. In box five, you have several rats, rich toys, but each rat is removed from the cage every day and lovingly stroked for 15 minutes. At the end of a time period, all these rats are given learning tasks to accomplish: pushing levers for food, finding their way through mazes, and so on. The findings, when you look at their respective abilities to learn these tasks, is a learning curve that goes up steadily from the first box to the fifth . . . a 25 percent gain in “rat intelligence” if you will, attributable to differences in upbringing.

Now, you are probably saying, “Yeah, but I’m no rat.” True. But it’s also true that rats and humans share about 95 percent of their genetic material. The important thing about these findings is not just what they tell us about educationally powerful environments for learning. They also demonstrate the brain’s ability to develop new capacities, depending on the environments it encounters, the situations it experiences. These findings demonstrate that “intelligence” is not a given, fixed at birth. Given the right conditions we all can become more complex, fully functioning persons, across the life span. Certainly early experiences, genetic dispositions and capacities are important. Yet, except for cases of extreme deficit or deformity, they do not determine what or how much you can learn.

And of course, one major difference between you and a rat is that you have the capacity to create your own environments for learning, for increasing your own intelligence. You can take action to fashion the combinations of challenges and supports—the rich mix of new toys, companions in learning, and loving strokes—that will maximize the learning, the increased capacities, called for by
your purposes. And the good news is that there are several kinds of “intelligence” you can build on and strengthen.

There has been a growing consensus that IQ is not the whole intelligence story. True, it might predict certain language and math skills, but it does not reflect intelligence in living. The links between IQ and other test scores like SAT tell only a partial story—yet that is the part of the story on which admissions directors rely. And more important, many learners evaluate their own intelligence based on such scores.

In other words, colleges and universities tend to think of intelligence as the part of us that enables us to do the academic tasks set forth by the curriculum and the faculty.

Wrong. Intelligence, according to Howard Gardner, Professor of Education at Harvard, is not a one-dimensional factor. His theory of “multiple intelligences,” which proposes different kinds of capacity, supports many types of intelligence—each legitimate, each to be honored. The problem is that the educational system focuses on only one or two kinds. But in life you will utilize many different kinds of intelligence.

Gardner, of course, includes verbal and mathematical skills but also includes spatial capacity, kinesthetic, physical fluidity, musical, personal, interpersonal, and intrapersonal. “The operative word in this view of intelligences is multiple.”

Knowing these different kinds of intelligence might help you understand yourself better. As you read about them, think about which intelligences you use.

1. Linguistic—Capacity to use words, “Word Smart.”
2. Logical-Mathematical—Capacity to use numbers, “Number or Logic Smart.”
3. Spatial—Ability to perceive the visual-spatial world accurately, “Picture Smart.”
4. Bodily-Kinesthetic—Expertise in using one’s whole body, “Body Smart.”
5. Musical—Ability to appreciate and express in musical forms, “Music Smart.”
6. Interpersonal—Sensitivity to others’ feelings and moods, “People Smart.”
7. Intrapersonal—Self knowledge, “Self Smart.”

Thomas Armstrong developed a checklist for assessing the variety of your intelligences. Martina, overwhelmed with the necessity to write papers with proper footnotes, began to feel “stupid.” Her profile on the checklist showed that she excelled in interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences. This was confirmed when she took a temporary job organizing a political campaign. At first she was reluctant to interrupt her studies, but after two weeks of receiving kudos from the officials of the organization, commenting on her “people skills,” she said to her advisor, “I am really very smart. It just doesn’t show in the conventional way.” Her renewed self-confidence enabled her to return to her master’s thesis. She realized she would never be an academic scholar but that she was “Self and People Smart.”

To develop your own profile complete Exercise 4.1 to assess the kinds of intelligence that currently work for you.
EXERCISE 4.1

ASSESSING YOUR MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES*  

Check items that apply.

LINGUISTIC INTELLIGENCE

☐ write better than average for age
☐ spin tall tales or tells jokes and stories
☐ have a good memory for names, places, dates, or trivia
☐ enjoy word games
☐ spell accurately
☐ appreciate nonsense rhymes, puns, tongue twisters, and so on
☐ enjoy listening to the spoken word
☐ have a good vocabulary for age
☐ communicate to others in a highly verbal way

What other linguistic strengths have you?

LOGICAL-MATHEMATICAL INTELLIGENCE

☐ ask a lot of questions about how things work
☐ compute arithmetic problems in your head quickly
☐ enjoy math class
☐ find math computer games interesting
☐ enjoy playing chess, checkers, or other strategy games
☐ enjoy working on logic puzzles or brain teasers
☐ enjoy putting things in categories or hierarchies
☐ like to experiment in a way that shows higher order cognitive-thinking processes
☐ think on a more abstract or conceptual level than peers
☐ have a good sense of cause–effect for your age

Other logical-mathematical strengths:

*From *Multiple Intelligences in the Classroom*, by Thomas Armstrong. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. Copyright © 2000 ASCD. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.
PART II  MOVING THROUGH

SPATIAL INTELLIGENCE

- report clear visual images
- read maps, charts, and diagrams more easily than text
- daydream more than peers
- enjoy art activities
- like to view movies, slides, or other visual presentations
- get more out of pictures than words while reading
- doodle

Other spatial strengths:

---

BODILY-KINESTHETIC INTELLIGENCE

- excel in one or more sports
- move, twitch, tap, or fidget
- mimic other people’s gestures or mannerisms
- love to take things apart and put them back together again
- enjoy running, jumping, wrestling . . . running to class, jumping over a chair
- show skill in a craft
- have a dramatic way of expressing yourself
- report different physical sensations while thinking or working
- enjoy working with clay or other tactile experiences

Other bodily-kinesthetic strengths:

---

MUSICAL INTELLIGENCE

- notice when music sounds off-key or disturbing in some other way
- remember melodies of songs
- have a good singing voice
- play a musical instrument or sing in a choir or other group
- have a rhythmic way of speaking or moving
- unconsciously hum
- tap rhythmically on the table or desk
are sensitive to environmental noises
respond favorably when a piece of music is played

Other musical strengths:

INTERPERSONAL INTELLIGENCE
enjoy socializing with peers
seem to be a natural leader
give advice to friends who have problems
seem to be street-smart
belong to clubs, committees, or other organizations
enjoy informally teaching
like to play games
have two or more close friends
have a good sense of empathy or concern for others
other seek out your company

Other interpersonal strengths:

INTRAPERSONAL INTELLIGENCE
display a sense of independence or a strong will
have a realistic sense of his strengths and weaknesses
do well when left alone to play or study
march to the beat of a different drummer in your style of living and learning
have an interest or hobby that you don’t talk much about
prefer working alone to working with others
accurately express how you are feeling
are able to learn from your failures and successes in life
have high self-esteem

Other intrapersonal strengths:
Nancy recounted her daughter Karen’s experience when she was writing her master’s thesis on Howard Gardner’s work. Since Karen’s strong suits are spatial and artistic, Nancy suggested to Karen that she present her master’s thesis as an artistic presentation, rather than written in the required academic form. Karen immediately replied: “You must be crazy. They teach Gardner; he is their Guru, but they grade the old-fashioned way.” Despite Karen’s realistic warning, we are including this section for conscious-raising purposes. Whether or not your professors stick to a monolithic view of intelligence as verbal and mathematical, if you do not fit in that mold do not, we say DO NOT assume that you are not intelligent. Do assume that you have other intelligences, many of which will more directly lead to career and life success.

Now that you have a richer sense of the kinds of intelligence you can bring to bear to accomplish your purposes, you need to determine what kind of learning you want.

**KINDS OF LEARNING, LEVELS OF LEARNING**

There are different kinds of learning, different levels of learning.

Learning can mean to gain knowledge, comprehension, or mastery through experience or study, or to memorize. It can mean to acquire experience of, or skill in, to be informed of, or to find out.

These definitions don’t make distinctions important to you. They do not distinguish between transient or enduring learning, between surface and deep learning, or between learning that is context-specific or broadly applicable. They do not distinguish among types of learning. There can be change in verbal behavior without change in other behaviors, in underlying attitudes or values, in ways of making meaning, ways of knowing, or “orders of consciousness.” There can be changes in specific skills without concurrent changes in more broad-based abilities. Pieces of information can be acquired without increasing general understanding.

Distinguishing among levels and types of learning is critical for improving your learning and for evaluating what you have learned. We can think about “levels” in two ways: (a) different levels of competence; and (b) different capacities for learning.

**Levels of Competence**

Several levels of competence are required for responsible citizenship, career success, a healthy marriage, and effective parenting. A nice fat Bermuda onion gives us a useful metaphor. The layers go from simple to complex. They go from those most susceptible to change and context specific to those that are most generic, nourishing and supporting the outer layers, slow to develop and slow to change. Learning in the outer layers can be dealt with as discrete, separable elements; learning in the core layers is necessarily multivariate and interdependent. Each layer interacts most closely with those adjoining.

*Survival or life skills*, the outer layer, are learnings that most immediately meet the world. They involve caring for health needs, planning and managing time,
choosing an occupation, finding and keeping jobs, buying and selling, and dealing with welfare, health, employment, government agencies and organizations. 

Basic skills—reading, writing, speaking, numeracy—are critical in our knowledge society. Without them survival is possible, but very difficult.

Psychomotor skills may be more important than basic skills in some contexts, but those are becoming rare. For young persons coping with city streets and playgrounds, good coordination, strength, stamina, and fast reactions are probably more important than reading, writing, and arithmetic. Athletic ability and dancing may provide more ready routes to recognition, self-esteem, and status than good control of standard English. On the farm and in the shop, handling tools and machinery precisely and sensitively can sustain employment and income.

Professional-vocational skills depend heavily on adequate basic skills. Most professions and vocations require high-level verbal or quantitative skills to reach positions of significant responsibility.

Intellectual and interpersonal competence are so functionally interdependent that they are properly two parts of a single layer. Professional-vocational success, effective citizenship, healthy marriage and family relationships depend on both.

Intellectual competence is a spacious umbrella. Bloom’s taxonomic hierarchy includes knowledge and comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. Others have added problem solving and problem identification.
Interpersonal competence is equally spacious, including such variables as verbal and nonverbal communication skills, diagnosing and responding effectively to another’s needs or purposes, positive regard for others, the ability to help others in ways they feel strengthened, and the ability to control impulses and hostile feelings so they are not unleashed to make others feel diminished, powerless, or ineffective.

Self-objectification, self-assessment, and tendency to learn are required if survival skills, basic skills, professional-vocational skills, and intellectual and interpersonal competence are to grow. They all depend on the ability to objectify and describe one’s purposes, to assess one’s strengths and weaknesses, and to learn in response to these diagnoses.

Sense of competence, self-confidence, provides the foundation for self-objectification, self-assessment, and learning. Some of the major elements are confidence in one’s ability to work with others, in one’s judgment and decision-making ability; confidence that one can handle unanticipated problems, can find the information one needs, can augment the knowledge, skills, attitudes called for by new situations, can help others release energy to pursue shared goals.

Ego development and self-determination have to do with being purposeful, having a solid sense of one’s identity and values, secure in one’s ability to manage emotions. This core of the onion is where we make and give meaning to our lives. It is from this core that we take charge of our existence and create our future.

Well, that Bermuda onion is one way to think about levels of competence. Others would cultivate a strain with more or fewer layers, reject some and add others, use a different sequence. The metaphor does not pretend to be exhaustive or definitive.

The critical point is that we have an onion. We have multiple layers that interact. In learning you can start with one layer and go toward others. You can start with a particular professional or vocational skill, and also strengthen the most pertinent psychomotor and basic skills. And you can go toward the core, identifying the most critical types of intellectual and interpersonal competence, the areas for self-objectification and self-assessment, where sense of competence needs strengthening, and the pertinent purposes, values, and identity issues that need to be addressed.

Neither the core nor the skin can survive alone. A flourishing, zesty onion requires soils for growth that nourish and strengthen all the layers.

Capacities for Learning

Kolb’s (1984) experiential learning model of personal growth suggests that human development occurs by achieving “higher level integration through dialectical conflicts” generated by increasing perceptual, affective, symbolic, and behavioral complexity. We like to think of these as different dimensions for learning, or as “capacities for learning.” Our capacity to learn, to convert life’s challenges into broadly applicable learning that lasts, grows as we develop increasing perceptual, affective, symbolic, and behavioral complexity.

Increasing perceptual complexity means that we can see distinctions, recognize subtleties, taste differences, and feel gradations that were formerly not accessible. The differences between a novice and an expert wine taster, or appre-
ciating good music or art rest on recognizing increasingly fine or subtle distinctions in form, taste, texture, and expression.

Increasing affective complexity means recognizing and responding to internal stimuli in less totalistic and more differentiated fashion. A powerful personal attraction may become understood to result from a mix of lust, caring, respect, affection, and longing for a past love. An angry outburst may be seen to contain defensiveness based on low self-esteem, hostility toward authority carried on from childhood, or a desire to look strong and impress others.

Increasing symbolic complexity occurs when our knowledge base, conceptual sophistication, and cognitive skills help us name the parts of things formerly seen as unitary. When we come to understand interactions underlying apparently simple cause-and-effect relationships, we can give meanings to what we are experiencing as a result of increasing perceptual and affective complexity.

Increasing behavioral complexity occurs when our words and deeds become more finely responsive to the situations we encounter, when they more accurately reflect perceptual, affective, and symbolic complexities that characterize the context that calls for action. Think of the differences on the basketball court between a Michael Jordan and a high school star. Think of two teachers. One commands a wide range of exercises, group processes, print, visual and technological resources, and evaluation strategies, enriched by solid human relations skills. The other commands lecture notes, a text, and midterm and final exams that combine multiple choice and essay questions. There is an enormous difference in the behavioral repertoires available to each. And it is likely that there are large differences also in perceptual, affective, and symbolic complexity with regard to students, learning, and teaching.

These “capacities for learning” apply across all levels of competence. Strengthening these capacities is necessary for many areas of complex learning. To grow a healthy onion means continual growth in these four capabilities. When your learning achieves increasing complexity in all four areas, you greatly strengthen your capacity to learn at whatever layer of the onion you wish to address.

Maximizing Your Learning that Lasts

Once you have become clear about the kinds of learning and levels of learning you need pertinent to your larger learning for career success and a satisfying life, the question becomes, “What do I actually do?”

Surface Learning and Deep Learning

Perhaps the most important thing to understand is the difference between “surface learning” and “deep learning.” Surface learning relies primarily on short-term memorizing. Cramming facts, data, concepts, and information to pass quizzes and exams. You know how to do it. Highlight texts. Make lists. Create outlines. Develop mnemonics. Rehearse, alone or with friends. Ask questions about things you don’t understand so you have the right answers. Surface learning does NOT
rely on seeking meaning. In contrast to deep learning, it does not ask how the texts, ideas, information, concepts, or data relate to your own thinking, your own attitudes, your own behavior in the world. It does not ask you to reflect on your particular mental models, your own preexisting prejudices. It does not ask how this new learning builds on, connects with, or challenges your prior knowledge and competence. It is that meaning making that is the primary characteristic of deep learning. It asks that you create and re-create your own personal understandings. It asks that you apply new information to varied real life settings and reflect on what those experiences tell you about the validity of the concepts, the limits of their applicability, the shortcomings of your own understandings. It is through recurrent cycles of such behaviors that you generate deep learning that lasts.

Studies in Scotland, Canada, and Australia find that 90 percent of students’ study was characterized by surface learning. From what we know about teaching in the United States, that figure is probably not far off for us as well, because most of our teaching only calls for surface learning. It emphasizes covering large amounts of material, rather than examining, applying, and reflecting on a few key concepts. Most course work is required, in the same amount, at the same pace, for all students in a class. So students have little choice and little influence on what they are asked to learn, regardless of their prior knowledge and competence, or the motives that bring them to the course. Quizzes, exams, assigned papers and projects, with “grading on a curve,” create competitive, threatening environments. These approaches to teaching, and the surface learning that accompanies them, also generate anxiety, fear of failure, low self-esteem.

In *The Power of Mindful Learning*, Ellen Langer, a Harvard psychologist, recognizes the limited value of rote learning, canned assignments, and hurried coverage. Students get on autopilot. With mindful learning you are open to new information, can construct your own categories, and can recognize and try to reconcile diverse perspectives and points of view. You make choices about how you will pursue your learning, devise your own assignments and challenges, identify your own products and performances, consider how you will evaluate those to ascertain what and how much you have learned.

The second important thing to understand is the importance of practice. The most important kind of knowledge for strong performance is “tacit.” Tacit means “expressed or carried on without words or speech,” and “implied or indicated but not actually expressed.” Tennis players talk about being “in the zone.” That’s when everything is flowing smoothly, naturally, when you are not talking your way through a serve, backhand, overhead, or volley. Studies comparing newcomers and experienced workers show that newcomers try to solve problems by reasoning from laws or principles, going to the text. Experienced workers draw on stories, on sharing information with others. They reason from causal models but are always pitting those models against their own experiences in practice. Novices are typically trained to produce the “right answers.” Experts work from socially constructed, experience-based understandings, appropriate for the specific situations they confront. That kind of tacit knowledge comes from rich experiences in varied situations, and from repeated practice over time.
Wayne Gretsky, the star hockey player said, “A good high school player can take the puck down the ice. A good college player can skate to where the puck is. A good professional player skates to where the puck will be.” High performance knowledge is always connected to specific activities, contexts, cultures. Theories and abstractions are helpful conceptual organizers, but effective application depends on tacit knowledge. And that only comes with practice.

Here are some summary principles, in the form of an exercise, that can help you diagnose and strengthen your learning. They are adapted from the Joint Task Force Report from the American Association for Higher Education, the American College Personnel Association, and the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, *Powerful Partnerships: A Shared Responsibility for Learning*.

**EXERCISE 4.2**

**MAXIMIZING YOUR LEARNING**

Learning is about making and maintaining connections: biologically through neural networks; mentally through concepts, ideas, and values; and experientially through interaction between the mind and the environment, self and other, generality and context, deliberation and action.

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<th>VERY OFTEN</th>
<th>OFTEN</th>
<th>SOMETIMES</th>
<th>RARELY</th>
<th>NEVER</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I seek out a variety of world views.</td>
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<td>2. I try to experience culturally diverse perspectives.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. I try to create relationships among my different courses and between those courses and experiences in college and out.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. I try to make connections between what I am learning and my own circumstances and needs.</td>
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<td>5. I seek out relationships with persons whose backgrounds differ from my own.</td>
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Learning is enhanced when it takes place in the context of a compelling situation that balances challenge and opportunity, that uses the brain’s ability to conceptualize quickly and its capacity for contemplation and reflection upon the experiences.

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<th>VERY OFTEN</th>
<th>OFTEN</th>
<th>SOMETIMES</th>
<th>RARELY</th>
<th>NEVER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I deliberately enter new situations I have not experienced before.</td>
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<td>2. I take on new tasks that involve things I do not know how to do.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. When I see problems or conflicts I try to help solve them.</td>
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</table>
4. I set high standards for myself in academics and in other aspects of my life.

5. I take responsibility for leadership when I see the need.

Learning is *developmental*, a cumulative process *involving the whole person*, relating past and present, integrating the new with the old.

1. I try to plan my courses so later ones build on what I’ve learned before.

2. I keep journals, portfolios, and other devices that help me keep track of what I’ve learned and how it relates to past learning.

3. I set aside time each day or week to reflect on what I’m learning and on how it relates to past knowledge and experiences.

4. I discuss what I’m learning with classmates, friends, and relatives to see what they think and whether my own thinking makes sense.

5. I create metaphors and analogies that help integrate and give meaning to different things I am learning.

Learning is done by *individuals* who are tied to others as social beings in competitive and collaborative relationships, enhancing learning through cooperation and sharing.

1. I join, or help form, study groups in my courses.

2. I seek out opportunities to tutor or to help informally other students.

3. I try to establish relaxed relationships of mutual respect and shared learning with faculty members.

4. I share my confusion, uncertainty, mistakes, misunderstandings with fellow students, faculty members, or student affairs professionals.

5. I participate in varied clubs, organizations, and student activities pertinent to my interests and purposes.
Learning requires *frequent feedback, practice, and opportunities to use* what has been learned.

1. I ask for feedback from classmates and teachers about the strengths and weaknesses of my work.
   - Very Often
   - Often
   - Sometimes
   - Rarely
   - Never

2. I reflect on evaluations of my work to understand better what I need to do to improve.
   - Very Often
   - Often
   - Sometimes
   - Rarely
   - Never

3. I rehearse out loud key facts, concepts, and principles to myself or to others.
   - Very Often
   - Often
   - Sometimes
   - Rarely
   - Never

4. I use practical problems or real-life situations to apply and practice what I have learned.
   - Very Often
   - Often
   - Sometimes
   - Rarely
   - Never

5. After a course or unit is over I review it to fix it in my mind for the future.
   - Very Often
   - Often
   - Sometimes
   - Rarely
   - Never

Learning involves *applying* knowledge and skills to *different contexts* and circumstances.

1. I list a range of specific examples, stories, and pictures that illustrate and enrich abstract concepts and principles.
   - Very Often
   - Often
   - Sometimes
   - Rarely
   - Never

2. I take advantage of opportunities for off-campus service learning, internships, volunteer activities, and field research.
   - Very Often
   - Often
   - Sometimes
   - Rarely
   - Never

3. I participate in on-campus programs and activities that help me develop skills, competence, and perspectives pertinent to my purposes and interests.
   - Very Often
   - Often
   - Sometimes
   - Rarely
   - Never

4. I enroll in interdisciplinary programs and courses that ask me to apply academic concepts to practical problems or social issues.
   - Very Often
   - Often
   - Sometimes
   - Rarely
   - Never

5. I ask faculty members to explain relationships among different concepts and principles, and how they apply to specific situations.
   - Very Often
   - Often
   - Sometimes
   - Rarely
   - Never

Learning involves *monitoring* one's own learning, *understanding* how knowledge is acquired, *developing strategies* for learning consistent with one's capacities and limitations, and *being aware* of one's own ways of knowing.
1. I think about how I learn particular subjects or skills best.

2. I consider how my own background and prior experiences influence what I am trying to learn.

3. I seek to understand the different ways knowledge is generated in different disciplines and subjects.

4. I evaluate my own work in relation to the teacher's criteria or expectations.

5. I develop my own criteria for evaluating whether I have reached the standards I set for myself.

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**Wrap-Up**

When you can answer Often or Very Often to most of these statements, you will be on your way to maximizing what you get out of college. You will be taking charge of your own learning. You will be achieving the purposes you set for yourself. You will realize the most value you can from the time, energy, and emotion you invest.

Most important, perhaps, you will be doing that even when you encounter poor teaching, or teaching approaches that don’t match how you learn best. You will be creating your own educationally powerful environments for learning, even if the particular place you find yourself does not encourage such learning.

**REFERENCES**