

Your Past Doesn't Define Your Future

"We are not animals. We are not a product of what has happened to us in our past. We have the power of choice."

—Stephen Covey

REFLECTION

This experience will give you the opportunity to reflect on your identity and how it can strengthen your self-efficacy as you perform an analysis of a past experience, issue or relationship that impedes your continuing growth.



ON MY OWN

PURPOSE

There are many people who don't process their past, continuing to live there in some sense. The past can be either a handicap or an asset. How do you view your past? Is it a handicap? Does it hold you back? Are there reasons that you haven't grown as much as you want to? Depending on the life you've lived, there are many reasons for not wanting to face and process the past, including specific events, relationships, or issues.

If you learn how to leverage your past for your present and future, then your past can be a set of resources that help you make the future better. This is having a growth perspective. You reflect on and assess your past experiences, learn from them, and make decisions that lead to improvements in future performance.

OBJECTIVES

1. Learn to use your past to advance your future.
2. Learn how identity is related to your experiences.
3. Appreciate your past in helping you become the person you want to become.

DISCOVERY EXERCISE

One of the most useful ways of leveraging your past is through analyzing it for areas of strength as well as opportunities for growth. Fill out the three **My Past: Strengths and Opportunities worksheets** available in this experience. One will focus on your family, another on your friends and friendships, and the last on your past accomplishments. For each, write about your strengths within that context and in what ways you can improve and grow.

READINGS

Who Are You Now?

RESOURCES

My Past: Strengths and Opportunities worksheets

EXPLORATION QUESTIONS

In Experiences 1 and 2, what have you learned about yourself, what areas do you want to focus on, and where do you want to grow? Answer the following questions.

1. What are your two most important Learning Outcomes for each of your courses?
2. What are the most significant changes in identity you want? (Review the Theory of Performance from Experience 1.) In other words, what aspect of your identity do you want strengthened?
3. In which three Learning Skills would you most like to achieve growth and why?
4. What are three new experiences you would like to try this term (i.e., brand new situations)?
5. Which personal factors might cause you problems during this term and throughout college?

AM I READY FOR CLASS?

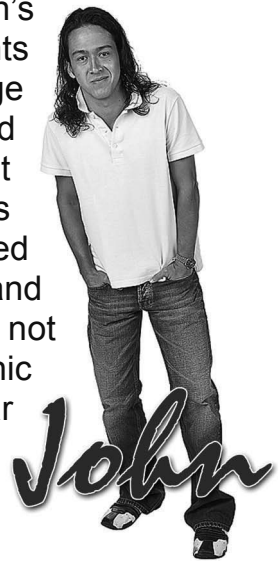
- I have completed the readings I have answered the Exploration Questions
- I have filled out the three My Past: Strengths and Opportunities worksheets

Who Are You Now?

In Experience 1, you were asked to assess yourself as a learner. Who you are as a college student, however, is a sum of many factors, including who you are as a person and how you see yourself as part of a college community—in other words, your identity. To continue our map metaphor, reflecting on your journey along the road that has brought you to this point is helpful. This experience will help you with that reflection and give you some additional suggestions on how to map out what lies ahead.

Of course, life never goes exactly as planned; it would not be very exciting if it did. Developing a Life Vision, however, will allow you to adjust your vision to the successes, changes, and challenges of your life. Having a vision promotes action: “If you have a vision, do something with it,” Anthony J. D’Angelo (author, *Chicken Soup for the College Soul*, and educational leader) recommends in *The College Blue Book*.

John is in the second semester of his first year in college. John tried college for a few weeks right after high school, but he didn’t have any clear idea of what he wanted to do. He left while he could still get some of his tuition back. John’s parents have been saddened by his decision. As Hmong immigrants who had spent many years in refugee camps, they felt that a college education was the ticket to a better life for their children. John worked for a computer trouble-shooting company for two years before he went back to school. He also did some work detailing cars at a family friend’s shop. John knows his parents want him to go into something connected with computers, but he has also found that he loves graphic design and history. He knows he needs to make some decisions on whether or not he’ll be doing a two-year degree at this college, majoring in graphic design or information technology. Or does he want to do a four-year degree in history? That would mean taking college transfer courses now. John knows he’ll need to talk to a teacher or advisor before he makes these decisions. After that, he’ll talk with his parents.



What is a Life Vision?

A life vision involves looking forward and establishing a map for your life. Because John is the oldest child in his family and a first-generation college student, he has not seen a brother or sister struggle with the decisions he now has to make. Though he’s thought about what he wants to do with and in his life, he’s not had the benefit of seeing how a strong life vision can help with the challenges he’s facing. He’s unsure about where to turn for advice about his future. He talked with his graphic design instructor about how she decided on her career. She talked about how she had always had a passion for drawing. By the time she was in middle school, she had designed birthday party invitations for her family and friends. John’s instructor didn’t know what kind of career would let her draw for a living, though. She was lucky to go on a college tour while she was still in high school; there she learned about the graphic design field. She also knew she liked to teach others. Her career as a graphics design instructor suits her perfectly. She suggested that John reflect on his passions, among other things, in a Life Vision Portfolio.

What is a Life Vision Portfolio?

In general, a portfolio is a collection of representative works. Perhaps you have seen artists carrying their portfolios—large flat cases that contain a collection of their works. Nowadays portfolios are being used in a variety of different contexts. Also, what is in a person's portfolio is more than just a collection of his or her work products. A portfolio is an excellent tool to document growth and highlight the development of skills.

Higher education is an area where portfolios are being used more and more frequently. Many college faculty use portfolios as a key resource during the tenure and promotion processes. It is becoming more common for students to use portfolios when presenting themselves to potential employers. Student portfolios can include grades and transcripts, past employment, a list of skills, areas of strength and expertise, and important credentials.

A Life Vision Portfolio (LVP) is a special type of portfolio that combines a life vision with the concept of a portfolio. In its entirety, an LVP is a comprehensive collection of items that intimately describes a person and tells his or her life story. As you move through this course, you are completing a kind of Life Vision Portfolio through completing the My Life Vision worksheets.

Why is it Important to Develop a Life Vision Portfolio?

While anyone can create and benefit from having a Life Vision Portfolio, it is an especially appropriate tool for students. Because an LVP goes beyond recording or documenting to include reflective thoughts and narrative, it is an excellent means to gain insights about learning and the development of learning skills. This is true for both the student who creates the portfolio as well as any person who reads the portfolio.

A Life Vision Portfolio documents growth over time. For this reason, an LVP should contain many examples of assessment items, including self-assessments. These assessment items focus on providing feedback to improve future performance and aid in the development of learning skills. While your grades are a permanent entry on your college transcript and could be included in a Life Vision Portfolio, they are an example of an *evaluative* item.

By developing a Life Vision Portfolio, you are afforded the opportunity to assess yourself continually and have others assess you. Assessment is a process that represents a positive, win-win situation. You receive feedback that identifies and promotes your strengths while identifying your areas for improvement and providing suggestions on how to implement those improvements. This can be especially beneficial because many students find it difficult to determine or appreciate their progress in areas such as reading, writing, critical thinking, and problem solving. This text contains many opportunities for you to improve your skills in these areas and document your growth.

An LVP serves many purposes including:

- encouraging you and your instructors to regularly reflect on your work in a positive and constructive manner
- encouraging you to take on greater responsibility by actively planning your education and your life
- encouraging you to produce quality work and communicate with a high level of proficiency
- allowing you to see growth in a wide range of learning skills and contexts through the use of assessment and self-assessment

- allowing you to use evaluative items to demonstrate your strengths rather than weaknesses
- helping you to gain self-confidence as you see growth and improvement in your abilities
- allowing you to reaffirm who you are and what your values are
- providing you with a greater sense of empowerment as you make progress on goals and objectives

It doesn't take much to get started with a life vision; all you need is to have an interest in appreciating and guiding your own life. Once you have that, beginning your portfolio makes good sense. And while there isn't a set format for an LVP, having one is important enough that it's part of the requirements for this course. You may be thinking, "Yeah, nice idea, but what do I actually need to DO?" The information in this section provides you with the criteria that your life vision and LVP should meet. It also outlines what additions you will be asked to make to your portfolio during this course. *Remember:* Starting your life vision is the first step in the process of planning and tracking your growth and development, not only as a student, but in all facets of your life.

Factors that Promote Commitment to the Development of a Life Vision

Being Comfortable with Self-Disclosure and Exploration

Self-disclosure involves dealing with the good, the bad, and the ugly about YOU. It is very important to be true to yourself as you reflect upon your personal history. Many times we are willing to share only those things we are proud of. As you take time to reflect upon past events, activities, behaviors, and people in your life, you must make honest determinations. As you explore new challenges and opportunities, you must learn from the past and apply those lessons to the present and the future. You must stretch your mind, body, and soul to increase knowledge and level of performance. Having a level of comfort with self-disclosure prevents cover-ups and promotes growth.

Valuing the Process of Developing a Life Vision


Charles Garfield, a noted expert on the subject of performance wrote, "Peak performers develop powerful mental images of the behavior that will lead to the desired results. They see in their mind's eye the result they want and the actions leading to it." When you choose to value this process, you choose to value yourself enough to take the first step on a journey of self-acceptance, self-confidence, self-discipline, self-love, and self-actualization.

Having a Mentor Who Supports You and the Process

A mentor is an instructor, coach, advisor, or perhaps a fellow student who can assist you in reaching your goals and dreams. Maya Angelou, a world-famous and award-winning author, shared real words of wisdom when she wrote, "Nobody, but nobody can make it out there alone." As a student, you should develop relationships that are mutually supportive. A mentor can serve as that liaison between who you are and who you want to be, someone who points you in the right direction for success in your college career and in other areas of your life.

You Must have a Plan to Deal with the Serious "Negative Hits" of Life

There is an old adage which says, "into each life, some rain must fall," or putting it another way, "in life, stuff happens." Receiving *negative hits* is a part of growth. It does not matter



"Our lives improve only when we take chances—and the first and most difficult risk we can take is to be honest with ourselves."

*Walter Anderson,
American artist, writer,*

how many blows or hits you receive; what does matter is how you respond to those blows (i.e., being able to pick yourself up, dust yourself off, and continue on). Making a commitment to positively deal with the negative hits of life can be the difference between destructive and constructive behaviors in your moments of distress.

Each My Life Vision assignment you will be given in this course is included in the list which follows. This list represents required submissions; the hope is that once you have started work on your LVP, the benefits will become obvious enough that you will begin to use it for more than just a way to satisfy a course requirement. This is YOUR life you're documenting, after all. Use your LVP as a way to explore the universe that is you.

Experience	My Life Vision Topic
1	Who Am I?
2	Things I Want to Learn in My Life
3	Processing Life's Difficulties
4	Letting Go of Evaluation
5	My Goals
6	Step by Step
7	Role Models
8	My Community

Experience	My Life Vision Topic
9	Failure, Performance, and Evaluation
10	Meaningful Reading
11	Seeing Myself through Learning Skills
12	Coping Skills
13	Friends as Mentors
14	Expanding My Life Experiences
15	Likes and Dislikes



Journal Writing

Journal writing is a process by which you write thoughts, ideas, feelings, experiences, important information, things learned or discovered, assessments, notes, terms, pictures, and drawings, to name a few. Your LVP is a kind of journaling assignment with a specific aim and use.

Journal writing gives you an opportunity to reflect on what you have learned, articulate and generalize concepts, learn from problems or difficulties, and know yourself better. Keeping a journal of this growth is a powerful tool.

Different types of pages in your journal can be designed to serve different purposes. Consider the following forms or pages for use in your journal.

Learning Journal entries are for collecting and developing knowledge from discussions, meetings, and lectures. The prompts support the construction of knowledge so that you can apply this knowledge to your life.

How I'm Doing is the place to stop and reflect where you are on your growth path. It is also documentation of the gains you have made and the reasons for the gain. Additionally, records what you want to focus on in the future and the plans for growth.

Self-Assessment pages are for assessing your performance on a regular basis. Self-assessments allow you to better understand what you are learning and how much you are growing. A good model for self-assessments is the *SII Method of Assessment* which involves looking for Strengths, areas for Improvement, and Insights.

Reading Logs document your critical exploration of texts and assigned readings. A Reading Log has three sections: 1) before you read, 2) while you read, and 3) synthesis and analysis after you read. The purpose of the Reading Log is not to replace highlighting and writing in the book but rather to provide a place where new discoveries and important data can be recorded as well as analysis to help you, the reader, make greater sense out of the reading. You will learn to use Reading Logs in Experience 10.

In summary, journal writing is a powerful process you should use to facilitate the creation of a Life Vision Portfolio. Journaling allows you to become better at processing information, recording development, and assessing learning as it occurs in and out of the classroom. The resulting journal becomes a working document that records your growth and literally grows as your learning skills grow.

Making the Transition to College and to Becoming a College Student

Now that you've had a chance to reflect on who you are at this point in your life, let's look more closely at your new college surroundings and your new role as a college student. For many of you, college is a new environment with all the facets of any new place: a new vocabulary, new people, new buildings and landscape, and perhaps even different food in the cafeteria. This new experience comes with several guidebooks, though, and many people who want to see you succeed. The guidebooks include the college web site, college catalog and Student Handbook, and most likely a college newspaper. Make use of these tools to become familiar with your college. This will help you feel more "at home." Remember, this is *your* college.

Success in college isn't just about knowing where the library is although that certainly makes research easier. There are many college-related and outside pressures facing college students. The following table illustrates some common pressures. Which ones pertain to you?

Table 1 Typical Responsibilities and Challenges Facing College Students

managing your time	managing your money	making decisions on your own
being independent	being self-reliant	being assertive
handling adult responsibilities	solving problems in various contexts	developing leadership attributes and qualities
making social adjustments	choosing mutually supportive relationships	handling peer influences and pressures
examining and/or changing value systems	dealing with loneliness and/or homesickness	dealing with home and family issues
maintaining personal wellness	making choices about alcohol and drugs	coping with stress and pressure
learning in large classes	communicating with professors	adjusting study habits appropriately
finding a role model or mentor	seeking assistance	maintaining balance

Table 2 Activities College Freshmen Engaged in During the Past Year

Activity	%
Smoked cigarettes	2.6
Felt depressed	7.3
Worked on a local, state, or national political campaign	9.0
Was a guest in a teacher's home	18.5
Voted in a student election	20.8
Demonstrated for a cause (e.g., boycott, rally, protest)	26.1
Skipped school/class	27.3
Felt overwhelmed by all I had to do	30.4
Discussed politics	30.7
Discussed religion	30.8
Asked a teacher for advice after class	31.5
Drank beer	33.4
Was bored in class	38.0
Drank wine or liquor	39.2
Publicly communicated my opinion about a cause (e.g., blog, e-mail, petition)	44.1
Fell asleep in class	46.5
Failed to complete homework on time	52.0
Came late to class	53.8
Helped raise money for a cause or campaign	56.7
Performed community service as part of a class	57.2
Tutored another student	59.3
Socialized with someone of another racial/ethnic group	71.2
Attended a religious service	73.2
Used the Internet for research or homework	81.3
Performed volunteer work	87.4
Studied with other students	88.7

2012 Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) Freshman Survey, downloaded from <http://www.heri.ucla.edu/monographs/TheAmericanFreshman2012.pdf>

Higher Education Research Institute
Graduate School of Education & Information Studies
University of California, Los Angeles

With all of these pressures, how do you choose to spend your time? If you are like most college students, research suggests you probably engage in the activities listed in Table 2.

Some of these are productive and constructive activities; others are negative behaviors that can easily turn into roadblocks on the road to success. The challenges of college aren't only about the school and classes. Some of the most significant challenges you'll ever face come from managing your own fears and behaviors.

There are many support systems and services available to you, such as academic and personal advising services, career and financial aid services, and various groups that focus on interests, cultures, and life issues. If you are a single parent, for example, there may be a supportive group of other single parents at your school. If you are a returning veteran, there may be a group of other veterans who include potential friends and study partners.

As you can see in Table 3, making it through college isn't a sure thing. But you're not alone, and whatever pressures and challenges you're facing, there are people available to help. Remember Maya Angelou's words: "Nobody, but nobody can make it out there alone." Others who have been where you are now can make all the difference in the world.

Table 3 Degree Completion Rates within 6 Years (Cohort Entry Year: 2004)

	Women	Men
White	61%	55%
African-American	43%	34%
Asian-American	71%	66%
Mexican-American	53%	46%
Native American	41%	38%

Higher Education Research Institute, Degree Attainment Rates at American Colleges and Universities (CIRP 2011)

My Past: Strengths and Opportunities

Name _____

Focus *My Family*

My strengths *(Describe your strengths in the context of your family, using examples to demonstrate each quality)*

My opportunities for growth *(Describe specific opportunities you have for improving your performance within this context. Provide a sketch of the first steps you could take in improving for each opportunity as well as what significant growth would look like.)*

My Past: Strengths and Opportunities

Name _____

Focus *My Friends*

My strengths *(Describe your strengths in the context of your friends, using examples to demonstrate each quality)*

My opportunities for growth *(Describe specific opportunities you have for improving your performance within this context. Provide a sketch of the first steps you could take in improving for each opportunity as well as what significant growth would look like.)*

My Past: Strengths and Opportunities

Name _____

Focus *My Past Accomplishments*

My strengths *(Describe your strengths in the context of your past accomplishments, using examples to demonstrate each quality)*

My opportunities for growth *(Describe specific opportunities you have for improving your performance within this context. Provide a sketch of the first steps you could take in improving for each opportunity as well as what significant growth would look like.)*



IN MY CLASS

Identity, Efficacy, and Personal Factors

WHY

Efficacy comes from the inner strength of knowing and believing in yourself (identity) and effectively addressing key personal factors that can act as roadblocks or speed bumps, impeding and slowing your progress. We can't control everything in life; sometimes accidents and setbacks simply occur. These are our personal factors, and they do have an impact on our performance. The strength of your affective skill set (how you cope and respond, emotionally), the strength of your identity, and your belief in your own ability to make a difference (your efficacy) are what determines the quality of your life, both now as well as in the future.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This learning activity will teach you to:

1. Begin to believe that you are capable of changing your own perceptions of your past in order to increase your future growth.
2. Have the confidence that any future personal factor can be addressed and handled in a productive manner.
3. Realize that family, friends, and community can support you but shouldn't be allowed to limit you.

PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

If you successfully complete this activity, you will be able to:

Leverage a past or present issue so that it can contribute productively to the way you approach the future

- Discover why you feel bad about the past or current situation
- Determine what strengths you had at that time
- Remove or disassemble the barriers that could restrict your future growth

PLAN

1. Read the scenarios in the Model for this experience.
2. As a team, complete a **Learning and then Moving On worksheet** based on one of the scenarios.
3. Answer the Critical Thinking Questions.

RESOURCES

Performance Levels for Risk Taking

Learning and then Moving On worksheet

MODEL

Scenario One

Lisa is a 22 year-old single mother with a 4-year old son. She has been working since she was 16, struggling to support herself and provide an additional \$10,000 per year to her mom. She continued trying to do this while going to nursing school, but the load of working 30 hours a week, going to

school full time, and taking care of her son was too much, and she started to fail out of nursing school. Lisa was put on academic probation and had to attend an intensive learning camp in order to be readmitted to the program. During that learning experience, she realized that the major reason she had failed was that she was trying to take care of too many people and meet too many needs. After that realization, she confronted her mother, explaining that the long hours and struggle to provide financial support for her mother was too much and that she would not be able to do it any longer. Her mother was extremely angry and said many hurtful things to her, even making threats to cause trouble for her if she didn't continue paying the money. Lisa knew that her mother probably could make life more difficult for her, especially if she convinced other family members to have nothing to do with Lisa. When she came in the next day, she was emotionally drained and feeling hopeless. An instructor sat down with her and they talked at length.

Instructor: Who is the most important person to you?

Lisa: My son.

Instructor: Who is going to help him become the high-quality person you want him to become?

Lisa: Me.

Instructor: How are you going to make this happen?

Lisa: By becoming a nurse.

Instructor: Who has the power to make that happen?

Lisa: Me.

Instructor: So what changes do you need to make in order to make that happen?

Lisa: Stop trying to take care of my mom through working those hours and find other sources of emotional support.

Talking to her instructor didn't change the world. It didn't make Lisa's mother into a different person, and it didn't automatically solve anything. But the interlude did help Lisa see clearly that she was the only person who knew what mattered most and who could do what was necessary to keep that priority straight.

Scenario Two

Jordan was the youngest of three boys and was always considered the baby of the family. Both of his parents babied him much more than his brothers, helping him whenever possible. His older brothers were five and seven years older, talented athletes, charming, and well-liked and respected by family, friends, neighbors, teachers, and the community in general. They won just about every award the school gave, from perfect attendance to perfect citizenship, both earning straight As. The shadows they cast were wide and long and often completely eclipsed Jordan. He knew that to follow in their footsteps, he'd have to be perfect, whether in speaking out in public, writing an essay for school, or playing the piano. This anxiety was nearly incapacitating. Jordan took a tremendous amount of time to write anything, needing it to be perfect before he was even willing to commit it to paper. He also became very quiet, not wanting to speak out until he was 100% sure of everything he was going to say. As for playing the piano, he would lock himself in the music room, constantly practicing by himself until he had learned each section perfectly before letting anyone in. In an attempt to help him be successful, his father took charge in Jordan's first writing course, editing and rewriting his essays. His instructor realized a great deal of what was happening and began to intervene, challenging Jordan to change his attitude about perfection. The first assignment was for Jordan to express himself by writing

4. What are at least three common issues or problems that people have that hold them back?

5. What is the relationship between issues and barriers?

6. In order to have a “Can Do” attitude, what must you do about personal factors?

7. What are four things your team has learned that you must do if you feel that something is holding you back?

8. What does risk-taking have to do with not letting your past define your future? Provide a scenario to demonstrate your answer.

Performance Levels for Risk-Taking

Level 5—*Entrepreneurs/Visionaries*

1. Help others see the upside potential versus downside; focus on the benefits and are realistic about costs.
2. Hide risk within rich meaningful context and make great intuitive leaps.
3. Don't worry about failures because they feel successful and have developed their own superb support system.
4. Have a hit ratio of failures turned into successes so high that they are fearless.
5. Articulate a wonderful picture of the future and constantly seek high quality in whatever they do.

Level 4—*Leaders*

1. Engage in quality risk analysis, comparing the upside to downside and costs to benefits.
2. Have a vision for their lives and the lives of others and can intuitively make key day-to-day decisions.
3. Have developed strong emotional skills and surround themselves with others who can help them.
4. Having learned to turn failures into successes are able to help a group take risks and manage their fears.
5. See the potential in opportunities and will challenge themselves and others to respond to opportunities.

Level 3—*Experimenters*

1. Play with comparing the upside to downside and costs to benefits.
2. Have life plans that change over time and will rely on strong gut feelings.
3. Have developed a stronger sense of emotional maturity and understand how to get support.
4. Have experienced some success from failures and can manage fear to tackle more difficult risks.
5. Explore future possibilities and are open to experiences that will help them improve.

Level 2—*Followers*

1. Rely on others to tell them which risks have a strong upside and benefits.
2. Look for a vision that rings true from others and rely on others to make intuitive decisions.
3. Live on the emotions of others and migrate to relationships that fill their personal gap.
4. See others turn failures into success & manage fear by following these people when they taking risks.
5. Live their lives with the vision of others and must be challenged to change.

Level 1—*Immobilized Individuals*

1. See only the downside to everything and costs as overwhelming.
2. See the present in concrete terms and must have tangible evidence for decisions.
3. Have very low emotional development and compensate with dependent relationships.
4. Have not experienced a significant success from a failure and fear both failure and success.
5. Cannot see beyond today and have a limited view of life, thus are fixed.

Learning and then Moving On: Analyzing an Experience, Issue, or Relationship

Name _____

What is the Problem? *(Describe the past experience, current issue, or relationship in at least one full sentence, explaining how this problem is holding you back.)*

Identifying and Analyzing

1 What are five characteristics of the problem?

2 What are three strengths that you have that will help you to address the problem?

3 What barriers have *you* created that keep you from addressing the problem effectively?

4 Who can you use as a sounding board or to help you think through the problem?

5 What are the real barriers to addressing the issue? *(For each barrier, explain exactly how it keeps you from addressing the problem.)*

(continued on the other side)

Identifying and Analyzing

6 What are you going to do to address these barriers? (*Sketch a plan, identifying short-term action you will take and then medium-term action and the long-term goal.*)

7 Has the way you feel about the future changed since you identified a way to begin addressing the problem? Explain your answer.

8 What this problem has to do with my *identity*:

9 What this problem has to do with my *sense of self-efficacy*:

10 What this problem has to do with my *affective skill set*:



MY LEARNING & GROWTH

CHALLENGE

From your reflections so far, you may have realized that you share similar types of past and current issues with your teammates and classmates. Pick three significant issues that you want to address in order to open up your future to greater self-growth.

TOOLS/WORKSHEETS

Learning and then Moving On worksheet

My Life Vision worksheet

PREPARATION

1. Re-examine the worksheet, **Learning and then Moving On: Analyzing an Experience, Issue, or Relationship**. Think about each of the questions on the worksheet, determining how those prompts are helpful.
2. Prioritize your list of potential problem to solve and select one on which to focus
3. Identify a resource of one or more individuals with whom you can think through this problem

PROBLEMS TO SOLVE

Take a very important past issue, experience, or relationship, and with at least one other person to help you, fill out the form to develop a plan for addressing it. After you complete the form, what did you learn about your own identity, efficacy, and affective skills?

MY LIFE VISION

Processing Life's Difficulties

As everyone knows, we cannot get through life without difficulties. The ways in which we deal with these difficulties will profoundly affect our lives. Developing positive ways in which to meet, deal with, and process the negative experiences in our lives is essential to our well-being. By assessing the ways we have been processing the difficulties in our lives up until this point, we can make more positive changes that will help us to deal with negative experiences in our future.

As you learned from Lisa and Jordan, being able to respond to negative life experiences and learn from them is an important life skill. We not only need to respond to life's difficulties, we also need to find a way to recover from them and to move forward positively in our lives. Some experiences in life can knock people down, and many have a difficult time recovering—some never do. For example, some who have endured the horrors of war continually relive their experiences in their minds to the point where they cannot function in society. Psychologists call this syndrome Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Others also suffer from this disorder: people who survive plane crashes, school shootings, bombings, physical and sexual abuse, tornadoes and severe hurricanes, etc. And although you may never be a victim of these types of violence, other experiences can also knock us down: the death of a loved one, the loss of a job, drug or alcohol abuse, dealing with a troubled child or a mean boss, a divorce or any break up in a romantic relationship, etc. This assignment is important because no one is immune to life's blows. By developing a plan to help you cope with these blows, you may find that you can recover from the pain of most setbacks.

Learning and then Moving On: Analyzing an Experience, Issue, or Relationship

Name _____

What is the Problem? *(Describe the past experience, current issue, or relationship in at least one full sentence, explaining how this problem is holding you back.)*

Identifying and Analyzing

1 What are five characteristics of the problem?

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6 What are you going to do to address these barriers? (*Sketch a plan, identifying short-term action you will take and then medium-term action and the long-term goal.*)

7 Has the way you feel about the future changed since you identified a way to begin addressing the problem? Explain your answer.

8 What this problem has to do with my *identity*:

9 What this problem has to do with my *sense of self-efficacy*:

10 What this problem has to do with my *affective skill set*:

My Life Vision

(continued on the other side)

Name _____ Date _____

Topic Processing Life's Difficulties

Lined writing area consisting of 26 horizontal lines within a rectangular border.