

Slipping down or stepping up.

WALLOW, FOLLOW, OR LEAD

*“Be thine own palace,
or the world’s thy jail.”*

John Donne (1572–1631), English metaphysical poet

My wife Heather broke her ankle slipping on the ice in our driveway while taking the recycling bins to the curb for pickup. No one heard her cries for help as she lay in excruciating pain. The snow banks prevented any of our neighbors or people driving by from noticing her plight. She resolutely dragged herself back up the frozen driveway to the side door steps. She was yelling for me

or our teenage kids, but we couldn’t hear her. We were inside the house with the doors and windows sealed tight against the winter deep freeze. She resorted to throwing snowballs and chunks of ice at the door to get someone’s attention.

When no one responded, Heather dragged her pain-racked and nearly hypothermic body up the porch stairs and managed to open the door. With

more yelling (it's a wonder she could muster the strength), she finally got our attention. Chris and I tried to help her stand up but her pain was too intense. After being rushed to the hospital by ambulance, she had emergency surgery to repair her shattered ankle. She was off work for weeks and took months to fully recuperate.

With her leg in a cast propped up on a chair, she retold her story numerous times to family members and friends during the Christmas holidays. She'd always end by sincerely reflecting on how lucky she was. "I could have easily hit my head on the big rock in the garden beside the driveway and seriously hurt or killed myself," Heather would say. "Or I could have smashed my wrist or broken my arm, too. I was just lucky it happened before everyone went to school or work or the house would have been empty." She often spoke compassionately about how other people in the surgical recovery ward at the hospital were in much worse shape. During her stay, she tried to cheer them up.

Rick broke his leg falling off a ladder when he leaned over

too far putting Christmas lights on his house. He lay in agonizing pain among the low shrubs near his front porch. He alternately swore and yelled for help. No one heard him. He threw twigs and snow at the front window but could not get a response. When he tried to move, the extreme pain caused him to faint. He awoke and proceeded to yell and curse himself hoarse. He finally lay back in the snow, growing colder and colder. About two hours later his wife came looking for him. Rick had just enough voice left to scream at her for not getting her butt out there sooner.

At the hospital, Rick complained bitterly about the twenty minutes he had to wait for his diagnosis that surgery would be required. During his recovery, Rick was angry about the food, nurses who didn't respond immediately to his every whim, the other "jerks" in his ward, and the weeks of work he'd miss. He bitterly pronounced that this was "some kind of Christmas present." He reserved his fiercest fury for his wife and kids for not hearing him calling them

after his fall. “It figures! You never listen to me.”

During his convalescence, friends or family visiting during Christmas holidays repeatedly heard Rick decry the unfairness of his situation. “If it wasn’t for bad luck, I’d have no luck at all,” he complained. “And, of course, it’s my right

foot. So I can’t even drive the car. But what else would you expect?” He’d provide the litany of activities he was missing out on during the holidays and at work. “And it will take months for me to recover.” The only thing that cheered him up was his plan to sue the ladder manufacturer.

Groaning or Growing

“What we see depends on mainly what we look for.”

Sir John Lubbock (1834–1913), British banker, politician, and naturalist.

Wallowing	Following	Leading
Pessimism	Cynicism/Skepticism	Optimism
Negative	Neutral	Positive
Fear	Caution	Courage
Hopeless	Helpless	Hopeful
Resists change	Watches change	Leads change
Reactive	Passive	Proactive
Makes excuses	Goes along	Gets results
Impossibility thinking	Probability thinking	Possibility thinking
Complaining about what happened	Watching it happen	Making it happen
Losing perspective	Looking for perspective	Shaping perspective
Whining and complaining	Watching and waiting	Promoting and supporting
Life is mostly sin and evil	Life mostly tolerable	Life is mostly goodness and love
Energy vampire	Energy giver/taker	Energy source

“I” check: Now choose your frames.

WFL: WHICH FRAMING LEVEL?

“The meaning of things lies not in the things themselves, but in our attitude towards them.”

*Antoine de Saint Exupery (1900–1944),
French writer and aviator*

A central theme in my decades of attempting to understand, apply, synthesize, and teach leadership skills is that leadership is an action, not a position. Leadership is determined by what we do, not the role we play. Whether or not we’re truly a leader is determined by what we consistently think and do.

All too many people in leadership roles don’t act like leaders. Conversely, many people who haven’t been given formal leadership authority are nonetheless very strong leaders. We all need to be leaders — in our personal lives or taking a leading role in our family, communities, profession, relationships, or workplace. Leaders

are inspired and inspire others. Leaders take action. Leaders are all about *inspir-action*.

Whether we choose to be leaders or not shines through most clearly when we face turbulence, adversity, or unwanted change. Those trying times often involve suffering or loss. That could be loss of a loved one, our health or physical mobility, a relationship, a job, money, autonomy, control, or status.

During these times we can lead, we can follow, or we can wallow.

We decide which glasses we will put on to view our situation. When we choose how to look at the challenge we’re hit with — often unexpectedly — we

choose the frame to put around it. That frame makes our situation appear larger or smaller or brighter or darker. These choices create our reality. Bit by bit, these

***Leaders take action.
Leaders are all about
inspir-action.***

choices accumulate to create our life. They determine our personal health and happiness as well as our team and organization success.

Everyday Choices

Today I can complain because the weather is rainy or I can be thankful that the grass is getting watered for free.

Today I can feel sad that I don't have more money or I can be glad that my finances encourage me to plan my purchases wisely and guide me away from waste.

Today I can grumble about my health or I can rejoice that I am alive. Today I can lament all that my parents didn't give me when I was growing up or I can feel grateful that thanks to them, I was born.

Today I can cry because roses have thorns or I can celebrate that thorns have roses.

Today I can mourn my lack of friends or I can embark upon an exciting quest to discover new relationships.

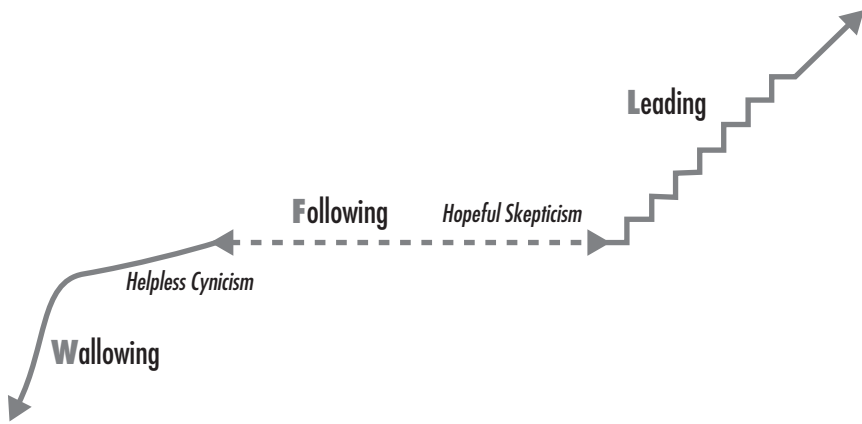
Today I can whine because I have to go to work or I can shout for joy because I have a job to do. I can moan because I have to go to school or eagerly open my mind and fill it with rich new tidbits of knowledge.

Today I can gripe because I have to do housework or I can feel thankful because I have shelter.

Today stretches ahead of me, waiting to be shaped. And here I am, the sculptor who gets to do the shaping. What today will be like is up to me. I get to choose what kind of day I will have!

Author Unknown

WFL MODEL: WHICH FRAMING LEVEL?



Following

The midpoint — and largest section of this diagram — shows that when faced with a setback, major change, or difficulty, many people sit “on the line” in following mode. Followers may be shocked or stunned. Followers are often waiting to see what else might happen. Followers are looking to others for direction. They

may not jump right on the Bitter Bus, but they are at the front of the line to get a good seat. They don’t see the glass as half full or half empty but see both sides — or twice as much glass as is required. Typical comments from followers are, “Somebody should do something about this,” “I am not sure what to do next,” or, “I am just lying low, keeping my head down.”

Followers at the right end of the Following spectrum are skeptical but hopeful. They could be wisely analyzing the situation to understand what happened and what their options might be in dealing with it. To avoid being on the “bleeding edge” of change or jumping in too quickly with a ready-fire-aim approach, they could be weighing how to respond. With the right encouragement or positive influence, they’re close to stepping up to deal with the situation.

At the left or cynical end of the Following scale, followers are feeling helpless and cynical. With a slight push or just a bit more negative influence, they’ll start to slide down the slippery slope of cynical pessimism.

Wallowing

The greasy downgrade of negativity and cynicism can very quickly skid over a cliff into the swamp of despair and helplessness. Wallowers take a bad situation and make it worse.

Wallowers use punishment, criticism, and threats to shove others toward higher performance.

Wallowers “blamestorm” rather than brainstorm in their search for someone to point the finger at. Wallowers crave certainty and long for the “good old days” — which they used to complain about incessantly and would resent actually returning to. Wallowers hate “now” and want to be anywhere other than in the present moment. Wallowers are overwhelmed by the problem and narrow their field of vision to few or no options.

Wallowers live in a world of hurt and worry. In positions of power, they use fear to “motivate” and manipulate. Wallowers believe most people are incompetent and can’t be trusted; they focus on weaknesses and gaps. Wallowers use punishment, criticism, and threats to shove others toward higher performance. Bullies are usually wallowers. Wallowers set up destructive magnetic energy fields of negative vibrations.

Wallowers often play the victim. Their world is full of conspiracies with lots of “they” talk; “They are out to get us”;

“They don’t understand”; “They never listen to us.” Wallowers routinely ride the Bitter Bus down Helpless Highway through Frown Town past Pessimism Place, Whining Way, and Dead End Drive into Pity City. Many wallowers drive the Bitter Bus and actively recruit fence-sitting followers to join them.

Leading

Taking the leadership stairs is the way to rise above and master the situation.

Leaders take the initiative to make the best of the bad hand that’s been dealt. Leaders often live with ambiguity and paradox while exploring and creating a broad array of options. Leaders try to live in the moment while building for the future. Leaders believe most people are competent and trustworthy until proven otherwise. Leaders assume good intent. Leaders look for the best in people and focus on reinforcing and leveraging everyone’s strengths.

Leaders face tough times squarely. They don’t sugarcoat

things or flee from difficult situations or touchy conversations. Leaders bring hope by focusing beyond what is to what could be. Leaders are self-aware and build disciplined habits of continuous improvement. Leaders are grateful and look for opportunities to celebrate and recognize progress. Leaders praise and encourage others on to higher performance. Leaders set up affirmative magnetic energy fields of positive vibrations. Leaders are “inspir-actional.”

Leaders are navigators and say, “I am going to do something about this”; “How can we capitalize on this change?”; “We’ve overcome problems

before and we can do it again.” Leaders drive the Success Express and recruit followers to hop on board the Better Bus as they cruise on Positive Parkway through Joyful Junction and Happy Hamlet past Peak Performance Place, past Winner’s Circle, and into Pretty City.

Okay; I can tell you’ve had enough Dad Jokes in this section!

Leaders believe most people are competent and trustworthy until proven otherwise.

Winning Words: Perspectives on Choosing our Perspective

*"In the final analysis it becomes clear that the sort of person the prisoner became was the result of an inner decision and not the result of camp influences alone. Fundamentally, therefore, any man can, even under such circumstances, decide what shall become of him — mentally and spiritually. He may retain his human dignity even in a concentration camp."*⁵⁷

Viktor Emil Frankl (1905–1997),
Austrian neurologist, psychiatrist, and
Holocaust survivor, *Man's Search
for Meaning*

*"Consider these statements: 'I have not done it' or, 'I don't think they should do it' or, 'I don't believe I could do it' or, 'I don't want to do it.' Each of these statements contains an element of personal responsibility that does not use what others have done as an excuse. Contrast those statements with: 'They shouldn't even try to participate in decisions' or, 'Nobody around here could ever do that' or, 'They would never let us get involved.' These statements assign responsibility for actions to some higher authority..."*⁵⁸

Geoffrey M. Bellman, *Getting Things
Done When You Are Not in Charge*

*"People with an external locus of control see the world as controlling them; they are subject to the forces of other people, chance, or of 'fate.' Obviously, both conditions exist at the same time; I determine if I will brush my teeth this morning or not, but I also recognize that there is precious little I can do about the Chinese government's one-child policy or the weather. But the proportion of things which individuals put in each category can vary quite dramatically, and this factor has been shown to be related to a number of different aspects of health and stress."*⁵⁹

Daniel Moerman, *Meaning, Medicine
and the 'Placebo Effect'*

"God grant me the senility to forget the people I never liked anyway, the good fortune to run into the ones I do, and the eyesight to tell the difference. Amen."

Author Unknown

PAYOFFS OF TAKING THE LEAD

***“In the long run, we shape our lives,
and we shape ourselves. The process never ends
until we die. And the choices we make are
ultimately our own responsibility.”***

*(Anna) Eleanor Roosevelt (1884–1962),
American diplomat, writer, U.S. First Lady*

It’s been said that we can’t direct the wind, but we can adjust our sails. The wallower curses the wind, the follower waits for it to change, and the leader adjusts the sails. A rapidly multiplying body of research proves that the payoffs of choosing to adjust ourselves and lead above the line are massive. Here’s just the tip of a very deep iceberg:

- “An upbeat environment fosters mental efficiency, making people better at taking in and understanding information, at using decision rules in complex judgements, and at being flexible in their thinking.”⁶⁰
- “Teaching ten-year-old children the skills of optimistic thinking and action cuts their rate of depression in half when they go through puberty.”⁶¹
- “A study of insurance salespeople (shows) a 56 percent sales advantage among the optimists.”⁶²
- “Optimistic managers are more likely to be engaged managers who are more likely to engage employees; engaged employees, in turn, are more optimistic and productive

than disengaged employees, and their increased productivity increases profitability.”⁶³

- “Of the fifty-four couples, sixteen divorced or separated over the four years, and the more positive their explanations (Ed. note: explanations about/for their partner, i.e., “he was tired” vs. “he was in a bad mood”), the more likely they were to stay together. The upshot of this is straightforward. Optimism helps marriage.”⁶⁴
- Optimists report a higher level of physical and mental functioning than pessimists, according to Mayo Clinic researchers. “The wellness of being is not just physical but attitudinal,” says Dr. Toshihiko Maruta.⁶⁵

...the pay-offs of choosing to adjust ourselves and lead above the line are massive.

- “...optimists had 19 percent greater longevity, in terms of their expected life span, compared to that of the pessimists.”⁶⁶
- “Men with high levels of optimism had less than half the risk for combined fatal and nonfatal myocardial infarction and for angina pectoris. The greater their optimism, the lower the risk for cardiac incidents.”⁶⁷
- “Managers who got sick or who sank to low performance displayed a sense of alienation: they felt externally controlled, often overwhelmed or helpless, and tried to find security by regressing and turning situations back to the way they were.”⁶⁸

Optimism is the ultimate anti-depressant.

COGNITIVE PSYCHOLOGY: CHOOSING OUR REALITY

“Cognition: The process of knowing and, more precisely, the process of being aware, knowing, thinking, learning, and judging.”

MedicineNet.com

Back in the mideighties when I was leading The Achieve Group (now part of AchieveGlobal), Peter Strickland introduced me to the work of Martin Seligman. I was working on my first book, *The VIP Strategy: Leadership Skills for Exceptional Performance* with Achieve cofounder, Art McNeil. We had just hired Peter to head up the trainer-training part of our business associated with Zenger Miller’s programs (also now part of AchieveGlobal). Peter knew I was looking for credible research on the links between self-determination, optimism,

and leadership.

I became an avid follower of Seligman’s leading-edge work at the University of Pennsylvania. He began his distinguished psychology career in the late sixties studying pessimism, learned helplessness, and depression. In 1990 Seligman released his seminal book, *Learned Optimism*.⁶⁹ It is loaded with extensive and solid research from the rapidly expanding field of cognitive therapy — within the larger field of cognitive behavioral therapies. *Learned Optimism* proved that “optimism is essential for a good and suc-

cessful life.” This very practical book is an excellent introduction to the power of cognitive therapy and provides very useful self-assessment tools followed by plenty of suggestions for building optimism at work, as parents with our kids, in schools, in sports, in organizations, and for our own health.

For most of the nineties, *Learned Optimism* was my favorite book on personal growth and self-leadership. Here are a few of its key points that are relevant to how we choose the frames that create our reality:

- Pessimistic prophecies are self-fulfilling and create a downward spiral — often into depression.
- Depression is a symptom of conscious negative thinking and does not come from underlying disorders, unresolved issues, unconscious anger, or brain chemistry.
- Pessimism is not fixed and unchangeable. Anyone can become optimistic by learning a new set of cognitive skills.
- Our thoughts aren’t just reactions to events; they often change what causes or follows those events.
- Self-direction rather than outside forces explains our actions and gives us control over our lives.
- For the first time in history, a large number of people have a significant amount of choice — societal rights, in fact — and personal control over their lives.
- During a time of dramatic increases in material wealth, severe depression is ten times worse in North America than 50 years ago.
- We all have automatic thoughts or styles of explanation that we try to impose on others for the good and bad events in our lives.
- Our explanatory style develops in childhood and determines whether we’re pessimistic or optimistic (wallowing, following, or leading ourselves and others).
- Cognitive behavioral therapy can permanently reset our explanatory style to optimism, with a low relapse rate.
- Attitude, motivation, and optimism are key predictors of future success.
- Sports teams with optimistic explanatory styles perform better.
- Optimistic U.S. presidential candidates win more elections.

Buddha Was a Cognitive Psychologist

“All that we are is the result of what we have thought. The mind is everything. What we think, we become.”

Gautama Buddha (c. 563–483 BC), “Awakened One” or “Enlightened One”

There are countless pathways to understanding and changing our thinking patterns. I’ve long been studying and applying some of the teachings of Buddhism as part of my spiritual journey and reframing life’s challenges. Morning spiritual reading and prayer/meditation have been key parts of my day for decades. Two of the many books I’ve found useful in my practice have been German-Canadian writer Eckhart Tolle’s *The Power of Now* and *A New Earth*. His books are not explicitly about Buddhism, but modernize and make accessible some of the principles of this spiritual path.

In 2005, Aaron Beck, a psychiatrist and the founder of cognitive therapy in the early 1960s, met the Dalai Lama to compare the core principles of cognitive therapy with Buddhism. Beck also gave the Dalai Lama a copy of his book, *Prisoners of Hate*, which outlined his findings that hatred imprisons individuals who harbor it.

The two agreed on these fascinating overlaps between their two approaches:

Similarities between Cognitive Therapy and Buddhism

I. Goals: Serenity, Peace of Mind, Relief of Suffering

II. Values:

(1) Importance of Acceptance, Compassion, Knowledge, Understanding

(2) Altruism vs. Egoism

(3) Universalism vs. Groupism: “We are one with all humankind.”

(4) Science vs. Superstition

(5) Self-responsibility

III. Causes of Distress:

(1) Egocentric biases leading to excessive or inappropriate anger, envy, cravings, etc. (the “toxins”) and false beliefs (“delusions”)

(2) Underlying self-defeating beliefs that reinforce biases

(3) Attaching negative meanings to events

IV. Methods:

(1) Focus on the Immediate (here and now)

(2) Target the biased thinking through

(a) Introspection

(b) Reflectiveness

(c) Perspective-taking

(d) Identification of “toxic” beliefs

(e) Distancing

(f) Constructive experiences

(g) Nurturing “positive beliefs”

(3) Use of Imagery

(4) Separating distress from pain

(5) Mindfulness training⁷⁰

EXPLANATORY STYLE: DON'T P AND SHOULD YOURSELF

“Pessimists have a particularly pernicious way of construing their setbacks and frustrations. They automatically think that the cause is permanent, pervasive and personal: ‘It’s going to last forever, it’s going to undermine everything, and it’s my fault.’... Optimists, in contrast, have a strength that allows them to interpret their setbacks as surmountable, particular to a single problem, and resulting from temporary circumstances or other people.”⁷¹

*Martin Seligman, Authentic Happiness: Using the
New Positive Psychology to Realize Your
Potential for Lasting Fulfillment*

It’s all too easy to listen to others tell us how we “should” feel about positive or negative events in our lives. We think and act according to our deep-rooted habits about what we think we “should” do in response. Unless we become more aware of our own thoughts, we don’t realize how

automatic — and possibly destructive — they’ve become.

The “three Ps” of permanence, pervasiveness, and personalization define our explanatory style. Our explanatory style establishes the glasses or frames through which we create reality. If we build the skills or habits of using a

positive or leading style, the three Ps are a stairway to ever higher effectiveness in our personal and professional lives. If we've habitually chosen a negative or wallowing style, we slide ever deeper into the swamp of unhappiness and despair.

The good news is that you can stop P-ing and should'ing yourself! But after years of walking around with "optical-

rectumitis" — and maybe even wet pants — it's not easy to change your crap glasses. You may need a coach, mentor, training, therapy, a support group, structured personal growth program, or other such help. This book is designed to give you the inspiration and action ideas to guide you toward a positive change of your reality optics.

PERMANENCE

EXPLAINING BAD EVENTS:

Permanent (Pessimistic/Wallowing)

"I am a loser."

"My boss is a jerk."

"You're always late."

Temporary (Optimistic/Leading)

"I was really off my game today."

"My boss really messed up this time."

"You've been late three times in the past week."

EXPLAINING GOOD EVENTS:

Temporary (Pessimistic/Wallowing)

"I caught a lucky break."

"Looks like they gave in on this one."

"My competitor messed up."

Permanent (Optimistic/Leading)

"My luck's holding up again."

"I am persistent."

"My service is clearly better."

PERVASIVENESS

EXPLAINING BAD EVENTS:

Universal (Pessimistic/Wallowing)

"All (managers/workers/_____) are idiots."

"I am a terrible parent."

"All instructions and help programs are useless."

Specific (Optimistic/Leading)

"He was really off the mark on this one."

"Our teenager is going through a tough phase."

"These instructions are very poorly written."

EXPLAINING GOOD EVENTS:

Specific (Pessimistic/Wallowing)

*"I am good at problem-solving."
"Our team really pulled together."
"I was persuasive."*

Universal (Optimistic/Leading)

*"I am a strong leader."
"We're an effective team."
"I am a good communicator."*

PERSONALIZATION

EXPLAINING BAD EVENTS:

Hopeless (Wallowing)

*"I am just not smart enough."
"Just like a man/woman."
"With my luck, this is likely cancer."*

Hopeful (Leading)

*"Emotional Quotient (EQ) is much more important than Intellectual Quotient (IQ)."
"I caught him/her at a bad time."
"The odds are in my favor and this is likely benign."*

EXPLAINING GOOD EVENTS:

Hopeless (Wallowing)

*"We barely made it this time."
"I wonder what my spouse is really up to."
"That was a lucky fluke."*

Hopeful (Leading)

*"We're good."
"My spouse is considerate."
"I am lucky."*

***You can override your nature and nurture:
Happiness is an inside job.***

POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY AND HAPPINESS

***“Happiness does not depend on outward conditions.
It depends on inner conditions. It isn’t what
you have, who you are, where you are, or what you
are doing that makes you happy or unhappy.
It is what you think about it.”***

*Dale Carnegie (1888–1955), How to Win Friends
and Influence People, American writer, speaker, and
developer of self-improvement courses*

In 1996, Martin Seligman was elected president of the American Psychological Association by a landslide. This set him casting about for a central theme for his time in this key leadership role. A few weeks later — still puzzling over a theme — he was weeding in his garden. His five-year-old daughter, Nikki, was throwing weeds in the air and singing. This distraction caused

Seligman to yell at her to stop. A few minutes later she came and said, “Daddy, I want to talk to you.”

“Yes, Nikki?”

“Daddy, do you remember before my fifth birthday? From when I was three until I was five, I was a whiner. I whined every day. On my fifth birthday, I decided I wasn’t going to whine anymore. That was the hardest thing I have ever done.

And if I can stop whining, you can stop being such a grouch.”

From the mouths of babes!

Seligman describes this encounter in his outstanding book, *Authentic Happiness: Using the New Positive Psychology to Realize Your Potential for Lasting Fulfillment*. His encounter with Nikki is described in an early chapter entitled “How Psychology Lost its Way and I Found Mine.” Seligman writes of his conversation with Nikki, “This was an epiphany for me....I’d spent fifty years enduring mostly wet weather in my soul and the last ten years as a walking nimbus cloud in a household radiant with sunshine ...in that moment I resolved to change...raising children, I know now...was far more than just fixing what was wrong with them. It was about identifying and amplifying their strengths and virtues, and helping them find the niche where they can live those positive traits to the fullest.”⁷²

Seligman, who elsewhere in that book described himself as a natural pessimist studying optimism, has authored 20 books and 170 articles on motivation and personality. This

turning point with Nikki led him to found the Positive Psychology movement. Here’s an excerpt from the Positive Psychology Center spawned by Seligman’s pioneering leadership of this rapidly growing movement:

*“Positive Psychology has three central concerns: positive emotions, positive individual traits, and positive institutions. Understanding positive emotions entails the study of contentment with the past, happiness in the present, and hope for the future. Understanding positive individual traits consists of the study of the strengths and virtues, such as the capacity for love and work, courage, compassion, resilience, creativity, curiosity, integrity, self-knowledge, moderation, self-control, and wisdom. Understanding positive institutions entails the study of the strengths that foster better communities, such as justice, responsibility, civility, parenting, nurturance, work ethic, leadership, teamwork, purpose, and tolerance.”*⁷³

This new approach has been at the forefront of explosive levels of research on happiness and leveraging strengths. In *Authentic Happiness*, Seligman provides this useful formula to help us determine “what you can change and what you can’t” (the title of one of his earlier books):

$$H = S + C + V$$

Our enduring level of **H**appiness is a result of our **S**et Range plus our **C**ircumstances and **V**oluntary Control. We can’t do much about our **S**et Range. It’s how we showed up on this earth. **C**ircumstance is a grayer area. Some circumstances — such as our childhood, country of birth, ethnicity, and key people in our lives — we

Just My Luck

“Luck is another name for tenacity of purpose.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882), American essayist, philosopher, poet, and leader of the early 19th century transcendentalist movement

Luckily, I caught Richard Wiseman in a radio interview late one night on my way home from the airport. When I got home, I immediately looked him up on the Internet and ordered his book. Wiseman is Professor of the Public Understanding of Psychology at the University of Hertfordshire in the United Kingdom. He’s been extensively studying luck over a number of years by interviewing and running experiments with very lucky people who seem to lead charmed lives and very unlucky people who seem to have their own black cloud following them around.

His findings are further proof that we make choices to wallow in and create our own bad luck, or lead ourselves toward attracting “lucky” breaks in our lives.

In his book *The Luck Factor: Change Your Luck and Change Your Life*, Wiseman outlines four principles he has found define lucky people. Through his “luck school,” he’s retrained up to 80 percent of the unlucky to reverse their fortunes and attract good luck. His four principles involve key elements of leading: engage others in conversations and social interaction; listen to your intuition and trust hunches; develop positive expectations

inherited. Our **Circumstances** factor gets fuzzier when we look at how today's situation is also in large part based on past decisions we've made. The most hopeful aspect of this whole formula — and the core of framing our life in leader mode — is **Voluntary Control**. Regardless of what's come before or where we are now, we

can change our present reality by what we focus upon. And that will bring us a different future.

Seligman's web site, www.authentic happiness.com, has a series of free assessment tools and plenty of practical ideas to help you climb the leadership stairway.

about the future; and strengthen resilience and persistence to eventually turn bad luck into good.

These few excerpts of his luck research further illustrate the magnetic power of the energy force fields we choose in framing, explaining, and acting on the good and bad events in our lives:

- "My research revealed that the special kind of expectations held by lucky and unlucky people had a huge impact on their lives. The unique way that lucky people thought about their future was responsible for them being more effective than most when it came to achieving their dreams and ambitions. Likewise, the unlucky expectations held by unlucky people resulted in them being especially ineffectual at getting what they wanted from life."⁷⁴

- "Lucky people see any bad luck in their lives as being very short lived. They simply shrug it off and don't let it affect their expectations about the future. Unlucky people are convinced that any good luck in their lives will only last for a short period of time, and will quickly be followed by their regular dose of bad luck."⁷⁵

- "Luck was not a magical ability or a gift from the gods. Instead, it was a state of mind: a way of thinking and behaving. People are not born lucky or unlucky, but create much of their own good and bad luck through their thoughts, feelings and actions."⁷⁶

In a hurricane, it's the palm tree that survives.

HARDINESS AND RESILIENCE: WHEN GIVING IN CAN GIVE US A LIFT

*“Our greatest glory is not in never falling,
but in rising every time we fall.”*

Confucius (551–479 BC), Chinese thinker and social philosopher

We tend to think of unwavering steadfastness and never-say-die persistence as important leadership qualities. To a point they are. But resilience in the face of the hurricane-force winds of change is as often about being flexible like a palm tree rather than unbending like an oak.

Like so much of life, it's about balance. W.C. Fields was on to something about resilience when he quipped, “If at first you don't succeed, try again. Then quit. No use being a damn fool about it.” Sometimes the wisest thing to do is to let it storm, find shelter, and look for an

alternate route to our dream. Maybe it wasn't even the right dream; we may need to accept what the universe is trying to tell us and reset our destination.

Psychologists Gregory Miller and Carsten Wrosch contrasted and studied people who are relentless and unbending and people who accept and flex with life's twists and turns. They found that flexible people were much healthier than their steadfast counterparts. Stress levels were quite a bit lower, and a protein indicating bodily inflammation linked to diabetes and heart disease was much

lower. The flexible, resilient group was able to bounce back more effectively from serious

defeats, less likely to dwell on the past, set new goals, and get on with their lives.⁷⁷

Leading Research and Hardy Perspectives

“The leaders I met, whatever walk of life they were from, whatever institutions they were presiding over, always referred back to the same failure, something that happened to them that was personally difficult, even traumatic, something that made them feel that desperate sense of hitting bottom — as something they thought was almost a necessity. It’s as if at that moment the iron entered their soul; that moment created the resilience that leaders need.”⁷⁸

Warren Bennis, Distinguished Professor of Business Administration and Founding Chairman of The Leadership Institute at the University of Southern California

“I never blame myself when I’m not hitting. I just blame the bat and if it keeps up, I change bats. After all, if I know it isn’t my fault that I’m not hitting, how can I get mad at myself?”

Yogi Berra (1925–), former Major League Baseball player and manager

“Resilient people and companies face reality with staunchness, make meaning of hardship instead of crying out in despair, and improvise solutions from thin air. Others do not... We all know people who, under duress, throw up their

hands and cry, ‘How can this be happening to me?’ Such people see themselves as victims, and living through hardship carries no lessons for them. But resilient people devise constructs about their suffering to create some sort of meaning for themselves and others...an increasing body of empirical evidence shows that resilience — whether in children, survivors of concentration camps, or businesses back from the brink — can be learned.”⁷⁹

Diane L. Coutu, “How Resilience Works,” Harvard Business Review

“Really negative events have the ability to shake up the status quo in your life, which opens the door for change. You could become a depressed, despairing drunk — or you could become a much better person.”⁸⁰

W. Keith Campbell, professor of social psychology at the University of Georgia

“More than education, more than experience, more than training, a person’s level of resilience will determine who succeeds and who fails. That’s true in the cancer ward, it’s true in the Olympics, and it’s true in the boardroom.”

Dean Becker, president and CEO of Adaptive Learning Systems⁸¹

TO KEEP YOU GROWING

Here's where you can find more of my material on the topics covered in this chapter.

www.JimClemmer.com

- A large selection of articles on Attitude and Outlook at <http://www.jimclemmer.com/attitude>.
- A selection of my writing and reader discussions on Attitude and Outlook from my **blog and monthly newsletter** at <http://www.jimclemmer.com/newsletter/?cat=21>.

Books

- Chapter Three, "Responsibility for Choices" of *Growing the Distance: Timeless Principles for Personal, Career, and Family Success*.
- Self-assessment, application ideas, and personal planning exercises in the "Responsibility for Choices" section of *Growing the Distance: Self-Study System*.
- For supervisors, managers, and executives – Chapter Three, "Responsibility for Choices" of *The Leader's Digest: Timeless Principles for Team and Organization Success*.
- Management team assessments, application ideas, and planning exercises in the "Responsibility for Choices" section of *The Leader's Digest: Practical Application Planner*.