

The Future of Education



The Humanity Awareness Initiative Lifelong Learning Program

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It is a mistake to think that once your formal education is over, there is nothing more to learn. The truth is you have only just got started. What most education systems attempt to do in our current worldview is to equip you for the world of work: they do not prepare you to live a life in its entirety. However, some nations, such as Denmark are beginning to include programs to help students become active citizens.

Many schools teach study skills, negotiation skills and problem-solving skills, however they do not give you an understanding of your mind, how it works and the source of your motivations – the factors that drive your decision-making: the decisions you make that lead to wellbeing and fulfilment, and the decisions you make that lead to unease and depression.

Most of the world lives in a worldview^[2] that values human efficiency and productivity but pays little attention to social wellbeing and human fulfilment: It is time for all that to change.

Education for wellbeing can be thought of as the “inner curriculum”, whereas education for work can be thought of as the “outer curriculum”. Furthermore, education for wellbeing is a lifelong learning process.

It is becoming increasingly clear that spending time on the inner curriculum – the so-called soft skills - is essential, not just to achieve a sense of personal wellbeing, but also to achieve success in the world of work.^[3] These skills include social, emotional, and ethical intelligence, as well as communications skills.

The most successful individuals, organizations, and nations recognize that both personal development (the inner curriculum) and professional development (the outer curriculum) are equally important.

It is also interesting to note that the Harvard Grant Study^[4], the longest longitudinal study ever undertaken, spanning more than 75 years, concludes that **good relationships are the key to a happier and healthier life** – not money, not fame or anything else to do with our ego’s ambitions, but soul to soul connection.^[5]

Sadly, most people do not turn their attention to the inner curriculum and their relationships until they experience emotional pain or mental suffering, either at work or in their family system. They have not been taught the inner skills necessary to overcome these difficulties – how to manage their emotions, find inner peace, and a sense of purpose in their lives.

Wouldn’t it be better if our education systems recognized the fundamental importance of developing good relationships and the inner curriculum from the outset? Wouldn’t it be better if the inner curriculum were part of a lifelong learning program that starts in pre-school, continues through middle and upper schools, and carries on into our adult lives? Wouldn’t it be better if all education systems focused on life-long learning to improve human flourishing and social wellbeing?

This leads us to pose two critical questions – What is wellbeing, and what are the core principles of the inner curriculum that lead to human flourishing and social wellbeing? Let us start with the first question.

What is wellbeing?

Research on wellbeing is in its infancy. Various approaches are being explored. The OECD is focusing on economic wellbeing and living conditions.^[6] The European Social Survey focuses on subjective wellbeing, in particular, happiness and life satisfaction.^[7] The Wellbeing Economy Alliance takes a more holistic approach to wellbeing; however, as its title suggests, it approaches the topic of wellbeing through the lens of the economy.^[8]

In May 2019, the New Zealand Government unveiled its first wellbeing budget.^[9] Iceland is prioritizing citizen wellbeing by focusing on mental health, childcare and parental leave and green energy.^[10] Using external funding the City of Santa Monica developed a way of measuring the wellbeing of its citizens. After the funding dried up, the City closed its Office of City Wellbeing.^[11]

The dominant focus of these wellbeing initiatives is what we refer to in this paper as the “outer curriculum” – the physical conditions that support the survival, safety, and security aspects of wellbeing, both human and environmental.

The “inner curriculum,” as described in this paper, is hinted at in some of these initiatives through a focus on mental wellbeing. The approaches mostly focus on prevention and remedial or palliative measures – curing or supporting those with mental disease.

As far as we can tell from the available documentation, **there are no nations promoting comprehensive lifelong wellbeing educational programs** as described in this paper.

The Humanity Awareness Initiative recognizes that we grow in developmental stages, and each stage has its own specific needs. We feel a sense of wellbeing when we can meet the needs of the stage of development we are at. When we *believe* these needs have not been met, we feel unhappy; we may even feel sad, angry, or upset. And if, despite how hard we try, our needs never seem to get met, we get depressed and even suicidal.

Stages of psychological development

The needs associated with the seven stages of psychological development are described below.^{[12], [13]} The first three stages, which coincide with the growth and development of the mind and brain, are focus on our physical and emotional needs. Abraham Maslow^[14] referred to these needs as “deficiency needs.” He posited that our deficiency needs – survival, safety and security - always take priority over our “growth” needs – the needs of the last four stages of development.^[15] We cannot focus on our growth needs until we believe our deficiency needs – the unmet needs from the first three stages of development – have been met.

DEFICIENCY NEEDS

Stage 1: Surviving (0 – 2 years)

The focus of this stage of development is on **meeting our physiological needs** – the essential wellbeing of our body.

The quest for survival begins in the womb. From the moment the reptilian mind/brain – the body-mind – becomes functional, around the end of the first trimester of gestation, the primary focus of the body mind is on homeostatic functioning – maintaining the equilibrium of the body by meeting its survival needs. This focus remains dominant during the birth process and the first two years of life.

Stage 2: Conforming (2 – 8 years)

The focus of this stage of development is on **meeting our emotional need for belonging** – feeling safe and protected in the parental framework of our existence.

Towards the end of the surviving stage of development, the child becomes mobile and learns to communicate. This is when the limbic mind/brain - the emotional mind - becomes dominant. The focus of the limbic mind/brain is on emotional and physical safety – being surrounded by people who deeply care about you; the experience you hopefully have in your family and parental home.

Stage 3: Differentiating (8 – 22 years)

The focus of this stage of development is on **meeting our emotional need for recognition** – feeling worthy in the eyes of our parents and peers. Boys want to feel respected; girls want to feel liked or loved. Both want to feel seen and appreciated by their parents and peers for their achievements.

Towards the end of the conforming stage of development, the child and later the teenager begins to spend more time outside the family home, at school and in the local community. This is the time when the prefrontal cortex – the rational mind – starts to become more dominant. The focus of the rational mind is on emotional and physical security – finding resources to support you when you face difficulties in your life. These could include members of your peer group, religious group, racial group, or people in your work team or family. As you get older, you may get a sense of security from your savings, insurances, and investments.

The causes of adult mental suffering

The root causes of most of our adult mental suffering lie in how well we were able to master the first three stages of development.

It does not matter what others think about your ability to meet your deficiency needs; what matters is the *belief* you formulated when you were young about what you need to do to get these needs met.

Unless you transform your mind and rewire your brain, these limiting beliefs will dominate your adult life.^[16] The limiting beliefs developed during the first stages of development can be categorized into three broad areas, not having enough, not being loved enough, and not being enough.

Much of our human suffering is not necessary. It is created by unhealthy patterns of feeling and acting that helped us to survive the traumas of childhood, but then got stuck in our bodies. These patterns have shaped us so deeply that now we think that is who we are. But these patterns are not our true self. In fact, they cover up our true self and prevent it from shining out into the world.^[17]

Because our minds and brains are growing and developing during the first twenty to twenty-five years of our lives, the beliefs we learn become hard-wired into our brain as synaptic connections. Undoing these connections is not easy: you must diminish the power of the negative, limiting beliefs by developing more powerful positive beliefs. This can take time. Sometimes the best we can do, when we get triggered by a deeply embedded limiting belief, is to use our rational mind to master the upset - reduce the amount of time we spend feeling upset. Rewiring our triggers is what is known as personal mastery.

There are three points I want to make here:

1. If our education systems were grounded in the inner curriculum, we could minimize the formulation of negative limiting beliefs which in turn would reduce the amount of adult mental suffering. Children and teenagers would be taught the emotional and mental skills necessary to deal with their deficiency needs as they arise. They would then become role models for other children and in some cases for their parents. Such a shift in focus is urgently needed in our education systems.
2. Every child does the best they can, with their limited understanding of life, to meet the needs of the first three stages of development – to satisfy their survival, safety, and security needs in the parental and cultural framework of their existence. When parents and teachers support them in learning the inner curriculum, they will turn out to be more rounded and emotionally healthy human beings – happy in their own skin and primed to lead a fulfilling life.
3. The inner curriculum can be regarded as a guidebook or operating manual for life. Each stage of psychological development would have its own chapter describing the needs, challenges and tasks required for finding wellbeing at that stage of development.

GROWTH NEEDS

If our minds are not entirely dominated by satisfying our daily deficiency needs,^[18] or by the limiting beliefs we learned during our childhood and teenage years, when we reach our early twenties, we begin to focus on our growth needs. Currently, only a small percentage of people in the world live in conditions that allow them to do this or have mastered the needs of the first three stages of development.

Stage 4: Individuating (22 – 39 years)

The focus of this stage of development is on **meeting our need for freedom** so we can find out who we are beyond our parental and cultural conditioning.

Towards the end of the differentiating stage of development, the teenager begins to seek independence and autonomy. We must let go of our parental and cultural programming, explore who we are, by getting in touch with our values, and letting go or mastering the fear-based beliefs we learnt during our formative years. We must take the courage to find our way in life. We must learn to become responsible and accountable for our actions: we must learn to become conscious.

Stage 5: Self-actualizing (39 – 49 years)

The focus of this stage of development is on **meeting our need for self-expression** by uncovering our natural gifts and talents.

Towards the end of the individuating stage of development, we begin to search for a meaning and purpose to our lives. We are looking for a vocation or a calling that allows us to express our authentic self. This may involve a change in career – a shift from work that brings us the money to survive to finding work that brings us joy. Any fears we have about our survival, which we learned at the first stage of development, will begin to surface at this stage of development.

Stage 6: Integrating (49 – 59 years)

The focus of this stage of development is on **connecting with others** to make a difference in the world through empathic relationships.

Towards the end of the self-actualizing stage of development, we begin to expand our sense of identity to include others who are less fortunate than ourselves or those that live outside our local community. We feel the need to make our gifts and talents available more widely, particularly to those who are disadvantaged or less fortunate than ourselves. Any fears we have about our emotional safety which we learned at the second stage of development will begin to surface at this stage of development.

Stage 7: Serving (59 years and onwards)

The focus of this stage of development is on **contributing to the wellbeing of humanity and the planet** – giving back and feeling a sense of compassion for the world.

Towards the end of the integrating stage of development, we begin to find ways we can alleviate the suffering of others and contribute to the building a better society. We are looking for ways to use our gifts and talents to improve life conditions for future generations. Any fears we have about our self-worth (self-confidence) from the third stage of development, will begin to surface at this stage of development.

What is the inner curriculum?

The inner curriculum focuses on the mind and how it operates; whereas the outer curriculum focuses on the world and how it operates. Together, these two understandings, enable us to feel strong and confident, so that we can flourish, and feel a sense of wellbeing in our lives, no matter where we are in the world, what we are doing, or who we are with. One without the other is insufficient. We need to be able to manage our inner world *and* our outer world. When you live in a VUCA^[19] world, as most of us do, managing your inner world becomes imperative if you want to avoid mental suffering.

The inner curriculum consists of three core principles – living a values-driven life, living a conscious life, and living a purposeful life. These principles create the conditions that allow us to experience a holistic sense of wellbeing with ourselves, other people, and the planetary environment.

Living a conscious life

Most people operate with what is known as a “socialized mind.” They tend to conform to the ideas, norms and beliefs of their family, culture, and society. They try to fit in so they can get their survival, safety and security needs met. Their sense of self is determined by external validation. They lead a dependent life and hide their true self from the world. They live their lives unconsciously according to their parental and cultural conditioning.

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We become conscious when we begin to distinguish our own thoughts, opinions, morals, and values from the group we identify with. We discover who we really are; we become responsible for our lives and we begin to make choices based on our most deeply held values and motivations. We become independent. Developing our conscious awareness is a three-stage process:

1. Becoming aware of how your actions and behaviours impact your relationships and the natural world.
2. Becoming aware of how your thoughts, beliefs and values impact your mental and physical health.
3. Caring about the impact your actions and behaviours have on others and the natural world and caring about the impact your thoughts and beliefs have on your mental and physical health.

The skills required for becoming conscious can be learned at any age. However, they become vitally important at the individuating stage of development. Unless you have developed these skills you cannot master or go beyond this stage of development.

If you are not taught how to become conscious, then the process of becoming conscious is usually triggered by repeated emotional upsets, or bouts of depression or mental stress. The pain you are feeling gets your attention. As you become more aware of how your subconscious thoughts influence your actions, your life conditions will change. Most importantly, your relationships will improve. You will begin to experience the joy and contentment of being your true self as you embrace your authenticity. Developing conscious awareness becomes vitally important at the individuating stage of psychological development. You cannot complete this stage until you are fully conscious.^[20]

There are two keys to becoming conscious. First, you must cultivate presence by connecting to your true self. This is who you really are under the layers of all your conditioning. Second, you must develop your Inner Witness, also known as the Observing Self. Without a sense of presence – living in the now rather than in the past or the future, you cannot access your Inner Witness. These two keys promote self-awareness.

Living a purposeful life

At one level, we are all the alike; we all have the same human needs and desires. At another level, we are all different; we all have unique gifts and talents. To find fulfilment and wellbeing in the later stages of development you must do three things to promote your internal alignment:

1. Embrace your self-expression: Discover, access, and develop your natural gifts and talents so you can find meaning and purpose in life.
2. Connect with others in empathic relationships: Use your gifts and talents to make a difference in the world.
3. Contribute to the wellbeing of humanity: Improve the lives of others and future generations through compassionate acts of service.

Self-expression becomes vitally important for our wellbeing at the self-actualizing stage of development. Connection becomes vitally important for our wellbeing at the integrating stage of development; Contribution becomes vitally important for our wellbeing at the serving stage of development. It is important to teach children how to self-express, connect and contribute as soon as possible in their lives so they can easily master these stages of development later in life.

Living a values-driven life

As we grow and develop, we naturally include and transcend six modes of decision-making – instincts, subconscious beliefs, conscious beliefs, values, intuition, and inspiration.

During the first three stages of development, we mostly use our instincts, subconscious beliefs, and conscious beliefs to make meaning and decisions. During the later stages of psychological development, we shift into values, intuition, and inspiration-based decision-making.

When we reach the individuating stage of psychological development, we shift into values-based decision-making. One of the best ways to facilitate this transition is to teach people (children) how to explore their values and make values-based decisions when they are young.

The main difference between belief and values is that beliefs tend to separate people, whereas values tend to unite people. It is much easier for groups of people from different ethnic backgrounds or religions to agree on a common set of values than to agree on their beliefs. This is because we are all human beings; we all have the same needs. Whatever we need is what we value. Values are our natural inner guidance system. Beliefs are the guidance system imposed on us by our parental and cultural conditioning.

In a complex, rapidly changing world, you cannot rely on information from the past (beliefs) to make decisions about your future. You need a decision-making mechanism that anchors you to what is important in your heart. Living according to your values, enables you to live with integrity and authenticity.

The shift to the inner curriculum

Whereas the inner curriculum is the same for all children and adults, no matter what their background, (because we are all human beings) the outer curriculum will be different depending on the worldview of the community to which you belong and the environment in which you live.^[21]

The inner curriculum teaches us what are known as the soft skills – how we relate to ourselves and others. The outer curriculum teaches us the hard skills – how to become productive members of society. It is these inner skills – our relationship skills – that the Harvard Grant Study recognized as being most important for living a fulfilling, healthy life.

Up to this point in our human history, there is little doubt that the outer curriculum has dominated our education systems: there has been very little focus on the inner curriculum.

This is now changing because of three main factors: the confluence of advances in psychology, science, and spirituality in our understanding of human motivations, the recognition that the experiences of the early years of our lives have a significant impact on our ability to find wellbeing in our adult lives, and the increasing prevalence of mental disorders, particularly among the young and those in demanding business careers.

We have come to realize that our early experiences mould our personality in significant ways. During the first twenty years of our lives, we develop a false self. This is the self that has learned to meet its needs inside the worldview to which you belong. It is not who you are. You must let go of your limiting formative beliefs – your programming and conditioning – to find your true self and embrace your unique self.

The focus of the inner curriculum in the HAI is to minimize the need for children and teenagers to create a false self, to help them discover their true self and embrace their unique self from an early age. The true self is a recognition of our shared humanity. The unique self is a recognition of our gifts and talents.

The integration of the HAI inner curriculum into our education systems will have a significant impact on how future generations govern themselves. One could state that at this transition point in time ...

The evolution of consciousness of humanity depends on the global adoption of the inner curriculum and the consequent advancement of our collective psychological development.

This is why the Humanity Awareness Initiative stresses the importance of the teaching of the inner curriculum in our schools and colleges and also making these teachings available to all members of society throughout their lives – a lifelong learning system that helps people to grow, thrive, and find a deep sense of wellbeing no matter what age they are at or what stage of development they have reached.

RBarrett, 1st April, 2021.

Annex 1: The Humanity Awareness Initiative (HAI)

The HAI is a global education movement designed to make the inner curriculum part of a lifelong learning system and thereby accelerate the evolution of human consciousness. The HAI aims to create a world where all humans and living beings can thrive. The Humanity Awareness worldview corresponds to the Self-actualizing Stage of Psychological development.

The HAI adopts a multi-generational approach to achieve this objective - a focus on children and teenagers, a focus on adults, and a focus on decision-makers.

Children and teenagers

It is essential to teach the inner curriculum to children and teenagers in schools and young adults before becoming parents. This approach will increase the number of individuated and self-actualized people worldwide over the next twenty to forty years and make it easier for future generations – our children – to master the tasks of individuation and self-actualization when they reach their twenties, thirties and forties.

Adults

It is important to teach both young and mature adults the inner curriculum to begin to change the worldview of our societies from the ground up during the next two decades.

Decision-makers

It is important to teach municipal leaders, business leaders, politicians, and the families of wealth generators (the key societal decision-makers) the inner curriculum, so we begin to change the dominant worldview of our global society in the immediate and near future.

Humanity Awareness Lifelong Learning Programs

The HAI Lifelong Learning Programs consist of a core program for all audience groups, plus specific programs designed to support people transitioning through each stage of psychological development.

In addition to creating teaching materials and courses on the core principles of the inner curriculum outlined above, the HAI identifies and shortlists other education initiatives in different parts of the world that align with the HAI core principles.

The teaching materials of the HAI will support people in different audience groups and different stages of development.

Stages of development:

Surviving
Conforming
Differentiating
Self-actualizing
Integrating
Serving

Audience Groups:

Children
Teenagers
Young adults
Mature adults
Municipal leaders
Business leaders
Political Leaders
Guardians of Wealth

1. See www.humanityawarenessinitiative.org ↑
2. *Worldview Dynamics and the Wellbeing of Nations*, Richard Barrett. ↑
3. *The Inner Curriculum: How to Develop Wellbeing, Resilience and Self-Leadership*, Neil and Jane Hawkes. ↑
4. *Triumphs of Experience: The Men of the Grant Study, and Aging Well* by George E. Vaillant. ↑
5. <http://bitly.ws/aRVu> ↑
6. <https://www.oecd.org/statistics/measuring-wellbeing-and-progress.htm> ↑
7. <http://www.esswellbeingmatters.org/measures/index.html> ↑
8. <https://wellbeingeconomy.org/> ↑
9. <http://bitly.ws/aSp9> ↑
10. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-50650155> ↑
11. <https://santamonicawellbeing.org/about/wellbeing-index> ↑
12. *A New Psychology of Human Wellbeing: An Exploration of the Influence of Ego-Soul Dynamics on Mental and Physical Health*, Richard Barrett. ↑
13. *Evolutionary Coaching: A Values-based Approach to Unleashing Human Potential*, Richard Barrett. ↑
14. *Toward a Psychology of Being*, Abraham Maslow. ↑
15. <https://www.barrettacademy.com/stages-of-psychological-development> ↑
16. These negative limiting beliefs are sometimes referred to as Early Maladaptive Schema. Geoffrey Young the founder of schema therapy has identified 18 schemas. <https://www.schemainstitute.co.uk/understanding-schema-therapy/>. ↑
17. *The 5 Personality Patterns*, Steven Kessler. Kessler presents a way of identifying five survival patterns that we learn during the first five years of our lives. ↑
18. Most people in the world struggle to meet their deficiency needs. They are constantly concerned about meeting these needs either because these needs are real, or they formed limiting beliefs or thought patterns during their childhood or teenage years about how to get these needs met. These beliefs and patterns continue into our adult lives because they are deeply embedded in our psyche. ↑
19. *Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous*. ↑
20. This video explores in detail the concept of Conscious Leadership - <http://bitly.ws/aWSj> ↑
21. There are elements of the outer curriculum which are now becoming common to all communities. Of particular importance are UN Sustainable Development Goals, Climate Change, and care for the natural environment. ↑