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Basic Starting Place:

We are aiming for a life of goodness – well-being within ourselves (*eudaimonia* in Greek) and well-being with others - how to live optimally in each of these areas of our lives according to a pre-set vision, theory or set of duties. To live optimally, we have to be able to regulate our thoughts, feelings and emotions, speech, behavior and how we experience the world in our physical bodies, especially stress.

We also are aiming to fulfill our moral duties to others. Morality is essentially concerned with not causing intentional, negligent, avoidable, and unnecessary harm. In normal lives, this mostly includes emotional harm done with words, gestures, and behaviors. Morality also requires us to benefit others, when possible, except for people who are doing harm, as defined earlier.

We have **inner destructive patterns** - resistance to what is good, right, true and beneficial. This inner resistance has the effect of diminishing our well-being in both arenas, well-being within, and well-being with others. This **resistance**, in general, affects our thinking, feelings, emotions, speech and behavior, as well our physical being. In Jewish spiritual psychology, this resistance is called the “Yetzer Ha-Ra.”

The Vision Path – The Means to Create Well-being

In order to proceed in this work, we need four elements. I call this path of these four elements “The Vision Path.” The elements are:

A somewhat precise and reality-based **vision for yourself**, rooted in wisdom, for how we want to be, optimally, in each main arena of our lives, including what our moral duties are.

The **will** to do what is necessary to achieve our visions – going from a good idea to actual implementation.

Acquiring the specific inner life and interpersonal **skills** to be able to achieve our visions – self regulation.

Enlightened Reflection – constant evaluation of all the above.

A path parallel to the Vision path is the “Wisdom Path.” These paths are worked concurrently.

The Wisdom Path

Our visions should be rooted in Wisdom and Rationality, and we must be able to marshal the energies of the Will and manifest all of this in a life of Virtue. To be an agent of the good, of human flourishing, in every arena of our life, as much as possible, we also need a basic map of the inner life. Virtue will be discussed below under skills. In order to acquisition, the path is Virtue, Rationality, the Will, Wisdom and Depth.

Wisdom

1. Insight into yourself
2. Insight into others - overcoming the natural narcissism of the ego-self (defined later)
3. Understanding what is happening between you and another person at a given moment.
4. At a further level, a wise person has some understanding of the human condition and processes that individuals, relationships and groups go through.
5. A wise person has some sense of the good that we are seeking within themselves and with other people; what things should be like.
6. A wise person seeks rich factual knowledge about the things that concern them, not just have opinions.
7. A wise person can be rational – think clearly about all of the above.
8. From my perspective, a wise person can put all of this into action – speech and behavior. Wise speech and behavior together constitute virtue. Virtue takes training.

Rationality – thinking well

1. A grasp of the facts of a situation. The ability to see things as objectively as possible.
2. The ability to create good theories based on facts.
3. To be able to regulate thoughts, feelings and emotions, and therefore speech and behavior.
4. The ability to process well with others – discuss and solve without giving in to unregulated thoughts, feelings and emotions that get in our way.

The Will

1. Strong will -Rigidity to Chaos, Defense Mechanisms, Deceptions, Patterns, Habits, Assumptions, Fast Brain, Slogans, etc.
2. Skillful Will – exerted by the Higher Self – manages and regulates the Ego Self - The Skills to manage the resistance in the ego-self to our vision.

3. Good Will – Connected to Love, Justice, Truth and Beauty – rooted in our visions
4. Transpersonal Will – Connected to the Holy and the Divine

The Map Necessary for Both Paths – rooted in the work of Roberto Assagioli

His terms: the negative forces in the **plastic unconscious** vie to use the **will** to find expression. We must use the **skillful will** to intervene against that expression, and instead express what we find in the **Good Will**

Finley's adaptation

1. Higher Self
2. Ego Self
3. Ego Mind
4. Archetypal Unconscious / The Shadow / The Soul

The Higher Self

1. Observer Mind - observe what is happening in my Ego-Self
2. Objective Mind – what is happening in others, what are their standpoints, what is the objective reality. “Police report” – what happened, in what order - no drama.
3. Rational Mind – Inner processing, using reason, attachment to facts, creating good theories.
4. Moral Mind – Processing and Reasoning when a moral issue is at stake – justice and fairness.
5. Truth Mind – the deeper truth of a situation, how the human condition is reflected in a given moment
6. Beauty
7. Love
8. The Good (philosophic good that guides the life of value)
9. The Holy
10. The Divine

The Ego-Self –

1. Habits of processing external and internal events according to unconscious patterns, some of them destructive. Ego-self is not bad, but it is where bad patterns and habits operate outside the conscious mind. Resistance to our vision and conscious will.

2. Processes the world quickly, gets us through our days, but not qualified for complex thought.
3. Some Character Flaws and Negative Ego States: Greed, Arrogance, Self-Doubt, Entitlement, Domination, Submission, Gratification, Need for Approval

Aspects of the ego-self:

1. Thoughts and Images - Imagination
2. Feelings and Emotions
3. Drives and Impulses
4. Sensations
5. Intuitions
6. Instincts

Ego Mind – The awake part of the self that deals with the world, unconscious that the Ego Self is driving the will and is both a prism and a prison.

Archetypal Self – The Deeper Unconscious – The Soul - Personality - Many chambers, e.g.,

1. Trauma in the Unconscious
2. Neuroses/Disorders
3. Inner conflicts and wound
4. The Process of Healing
5. The Soul
6. Poetic mind
7. Mystery
8. Religion and Faith
9. Meaning and Purpose
10. Experience of love, justice, truth and beauty\
11. Dreams and fantasies

Inner Life Practices:

First Daily Practice: The Wall of Virtue in Interpersonal Relationships (reducing anger and defensiveness in our relationships with others)

Important note:

Virtue does not mean that you don't think ego-self thoughts, don't feel ego-self feelings or don't have ego-self emotions. You must acknowledge all the thoughts, feelings and emotions in the ego-self. Do not censor. Virtue means *not acting on* thoughts, feelings and emotions that can be hurtful to others or harmful to a relationship. At a more advanced level, we have to practice virtue toward ourselves in our own inner speech toward ourselves. We regulate whatever causes misery within ourselves or how we cause misery to other people. Virtuous regulation is the beginning of the path to rationality, wisdom and depth.

Once the Wall of Virtue is set up, then we can process our thoughts, feelings and emotions in the Wisdom Mills.

First Daily Practice – Wall of Virtue (Divided into Two Parts)

The “Wall of Virtue” is created from wisdom. It is called a “wall” for moments when we can't access wisdom – we have to go to trained responses. Virtue – it does not matter how we feel or what they do – we restrain our speech and behavior according to a pre-set code, until we can calm down and process within ourselves and ideally with another person. The Wall of Virtue is not repression, it is restraint. We restrain destructive behavior, and bounce those energies to the Wisdom Mills (described below).

Wall of Virtue Practice – Adapted by each person.

- I. Soon after waking up**, will yourself not to be angry or defensive that day. You emplace this early morning briefly conceived wall of virtue especially if you live with others – spouse, children, etc. Anything can happen first thing in the morning.
- 2. Later on in the morning**, take about 5-10 minutes for the fuller Wall of Virtue Practice.

Review the vision for your life. What kind of person do you intend to be, especially in your interpersonal relationships? Don't yet focus on your plans for the day. Focus on what kind of person you want to be. Also meditate on self-care.

If you are prone to anger or frustration: “I can have anger, but it is my anger. I will minimize venting my anger on other people.” Anger is often rooted frustration and the need to control. Anger happens before you can think.

If you are prone to defensiveness: “I can feel defensive, but the best thing to do when feeling defensive is just not to talk the defensiveness, and instead de-escalate for now.”

If someone does vent anger or criticize you, say things such as “What exactly what would you like me to do right now?”

Or, “Hmm, let me think about that”

or “Maybe that’s true; let me think about it”

or “Ouch, that was hurtful, but maybe it’s true; let me think about it.”

Or, “Ouch, that didn’t feel so good. I have to exit this conversation.”

If what they want is benign, just do it in order to de-escalate – get into the details of your response another time

The fuller Wall of Virtue requires “The Oath.”

The the Wall of Virtue, The Oath – No Four C’s – No Bad JEDDI

The Four C’s:

1. I will not speak in anger. I can have anger, but I will not speak, text or email in anger. Specifically, I will not **criticize** others (finding fault in an unkind way - including unsolicited advice, dominating others, controlling others or telling them what to do or think),
2. **complain** about them to themselves (often: “why-ning”),
3. **condemn** others (accuse, assume, blame, label, unkindly compare, cut down or put down, insult or show contempt with words, gestures of facial expressions), or
4. engage in escalating **conflict** (arguing). Once you realize things are not going well, disengage.

5. If you do any of this – apologize. And always know - there are usually ways to get what you want or to correct another person's behavior. Anger and criticism don't work well.

If you are being angered at or criticized, remember: No bad JEDDI

“If someone is criticizing or venting anger at me, I will minimize trying to

- a. **justify,**
- b. **explain,**
- c. **defend,**
- d. **demand** (that they do or not do something),
- e. **deny** (what they have claimed) or
- f. give more **information** (JEDDDI)
- g. **until they calm down and are ready to process.**
- h. Don't tell an upset person what to do. You will understand bad JEDDDI better after reflection and training in the wisdom practice, discussed later. Once you have mastered the basic idea, put “no Bad JEDDI” in your first daily practice, soon after you wake up.

Bad JEDDI does not work. *After a couple tries*, don't tell an angering or resistant person to calm down, what to be, what to do. De-escalate, process later. Learn to draw kind, clear, firm and if needed, ruthless boundaries (without rue).

After three go-arounds, kindly end the conversation.

If another person is escalating on their own, disengage, and if necessary, get out of the room (in extreme cases, out of the house/apartment). Do not leave with a “parting (Parthian) shot.” Just say something like, “this is not working for me right now; I will be back later so we can talk about this.” Avoid passive-aggressive remarks, having to have the last word. Avoid telling other people what they should or should not do without their permission.

In general (memorize and train).

If someone says something with which you disagree, be affirmative and curious before expressing your opinion.

Do not let the behaviors of others determine your behaviors:

“It does not matter what other people do; what matters is the kind of person I want to become.”

“Do not try to persuade a resistant person (a person in an irrational state) to do, not do, understand, realize or be aware of anything. Take no for an answer, or some version of no. Just decide what you are going to do next, and make sure it is wise and does not make things worse. If nothing, then nothing.” ‘Taking no for an answer’ reduces conflict and does not give meaning to the other person being resistant.

You can (must) draw boundaries, just don’t match their anger and criticism.

Remember, a person’s not saying yes is a way of saying no. People often avoid saying “No,” so you have to detect a “constructive” no – anything but yes.

Ask for what you need with great specificity – something that can be video-recorded. In a tough moment, every word counts. Be precise. No big prefaces. One sentence of background, and then ask, “Here is what I would like you to do or not do” (Obverse: “what would you like me to do or not do?)

People can respond with “Yes,” “No,” or “Maybe” (in their own words).

If you are asked to do something or not do something simple that is not immoral, or does not endanger life, limb or fortune and has no long-term consequences, typically let people have what they need for now. Buy time and process later.

Don’t control or boss people around.

No arguing – three rounds, step away. Process later.

The Second Daily Practice – The Wisdom as Insight Practices with a focus on interpersonal relationships

Again, we sit quietly, connect to our meaning and purpose. Review your vision for each of your relationships. (Wisdom as Insight requires that enter into the Higher Self – we waver between Observer, Objective, Rational and Truth Minds.)

Then we look for disruptions within. Once we find a disruption, we work it through, enough for one day. Working it through means understanding the organizing theme of the disruption and then creating an intervention. Here are some main disruptions

1. Anger at others (leading to the Four C's)
2. Anger at yourself
3. Defensiveness (bad JEDDI)
4. Hurt
5. Resentment
6. Despair
7. Depression
8. Grief
9. Guilt
10. Irrational Obligation
11. Feeling Shame
12. Fear
13. Anxiety
14. Envy
15. Destructive drives / need for gratification
16. Ambivalence
17. Domination of Others
18. Accommodating Others
19. Confusion
20. Victimhood
21. Stubbornness
22. Procrastination

In this first teaching on the daily insight as wisdom practice **we will focus on anger at others and resentment**, as they are the most destructive forces in interpersonal relationships. The practices for reducing other disruptions are similar.

We get angry and resentful because, in general, people don't do what we want them to do. Anger usually does not work in the long run. The introduction to the Wisdom as Insight Practices is the "Wisdom Mills." The Wisdom Mills come from the Wisdom practice but are employed when you don't have time for a complete Wisdom Practice.

Wisdom Mills

Wisdom Mill #1: (based on the work of William Glasser)

Know all anger and hurt come from our **needs, expectations, entitlements and demands** (NEEDs) not being met. Our needs should be moral, rational and useful.

Try to define to yourself your irrational or not useful needs or expectations clearly.

“I need to be treated with respect.”

“I expect people not to do irrational things.”

“I demand that people not to get attached to their point of view.”

“I am entitled to get what I want.”

“I need people to take my good advice.”

“ I expect them to believe me.”

We take our focus off of what others have done, and focus instead on what our need was.

We assess whether our NEED was Moral, Rational and Useful. We typically find that if our NEED's create anger or another disruptive ego-state, they don't pass the MRU test.

We therefore must change our needs

Wisdom Mill #2 (based on Albert Ellis). A – B – C – D

Activating / Adverse Events are run through a **Belief** system (produced by the ego self) and then manifest as emotional **Consequences** that appear rational and warranted (ego-mind). We need to have an inner **Discussion**.

Try to define your irrational belief, for example: “People should be what I want them to be.”

Replace irrational “Beliefs” (shoulds), with Beliefs that lead to good emotional consequences, no matter what the Activating / Adverse initial event was.

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Main point: Move away from irrational needs and beliefs and focus deeply on “what is,” reality, how things are, what the other person is like, what the situation is, what is happening. Move away from immediately going to needs and “should's” and focus first on “what is.”

If you realize that you have acted on irrational needs or beliefs (“should's”), just take responsibility and move on.

Always remember that the ego-self has its own algorithm for how to respond to external and internal events. We must exert the higher self on to the ego-self and perform interventions.

The result of the Wisdom as Insight Practice is that you are able to detect ego-states that might not be manifested in immediate emotions or behavior but rather might be festering within the unconscious ego-self

Insight Practice of Defining Ego States.

1. An “ego-state” is an organized sub-personality, consisting of various patterns of the Ego-Self. Our normal, functioning, regulating ego-state is the “A” self.
2. When under stress, we often go to a “B” self to handle a situation – for example, anger, defensiveness, despair, guilt, confusion.
3. When the “B” state wears out or is unsuccessful, various other ego-states may appear. An angry ego-state might give over to a despairing ego-state or a depressed ego-state. We all have “A, B, C, D . . .” selves
4. Eric Berne and Thomas Harris: Parent, Adult and Child ego states, and versions of each

Practical Wisdom – Skills in Interpersonal Relationships

Once you have set up your Wall of Virtue and engaged your Wisdom Mills and can detect and manage ego-states, you now are ready to engage in practical wisdom – applying wisdom to interpersonal relationships in a pro-active way.

Types of conversation, verbal “transactions” – what is happening between people:

1. Anger and Defensiveness – Four C’s and Bad JEDDI
2. Venting at the other,
3. Venting or Complaining to others about something else (maybe fine with a therapist, but others have their limit)
4. Banter
5. Work conversations
6. Sharing feelings in a public setting (any kind of group psychology)
7. Intimacy
8. Asks
9. Decisions
10. Solving – Giving advice

11. Sounding Board
12. Processing – reasoning with others including proper rebuke, apologies and forgiveness.
13. “Games” (see below)

Processing with Another

Relies on wisdom, virtue and training:

For anything complex that you want to discuss, you and the other must know how to process. “Processing” is a skill that has to be learned. There are many rules. Knowing how to process with another is a crucial life skill.

Processing can only occur when people can make a basic commitment to virtue and wisdom and can act accordingly.

Prior to processing with another:

You must internally work through an incident BEFORE you process with another person. As always, we sit quietly, connect to our meaning and purpose.

If you intend to process an incident with another person, have your wall of virtue up. Before you process with another, do your own inner “police report” (the other person will have a different police report; that is to be expected).

When you process with another person, they are often not interested in your feelings or narrative. You have to be prepared to guide a conversation toward simplicity, not narrative and feelings. Narrative and feelings are for later.

Try to assess objectively what happened. Examine your narrative.

The “police report.” The ability to tell what happened, the basic outline, no narrative. A simple account of what happened.

1. Have you been wronged, or just had a need or expectation frustrated?
2. Was something in you triggered?
3. Hurt does not permit you to anger in anger for Four C’s.
4. Knowing why you do what you do is not an excuse; it is an explanation. We do things because we can.

If you were wronged, was it intentional or was the other person merely negligent?

1. If you were intentionally wronged, how should you rationally process this with another person? Some people are punitive and in a weak moment, intend to hurt.
2. What outcome are you looking for? Even if you have been wronged, you must learn the skill of “rebuke” – discussed later. Virtuous processing.
3. In essence, move from your “right brain” (feeling center) to your “left brain” (rational – analytical). Also understood as moving from limbic system to pre-frontal cortex.
4. Expressing emotions and feelings? Not when they are toxic – emotions and feelings are good until there are not.
- 5.

Minimal, Incremental Processing:

Oftentimes people have to engage in minimal, incremental processing to learn the skills of not venting, and not talking too much in general. For example, if someone is hurt:

Person A: (says something that person B experienced as hurtful)

Person B: “Ouch, that didn’t feel so good! (no anger, four c’s, passive aggressive, persuading. Just announcing a simple fact).

Person A: “I am so sorry!” (no bad JEDDI)

Come back later:

Person A. “I’d to process a bit what happened. I see how my words were hurtful. May I explain what was on my mind?”

Person B: “Sure.”

Person A: (explains in a non-hurtful way)

Person B: “Understand now. Thanks.”

Process more when people are calmed.

Once both are calm and staying behind their “walls of virtue”:

- a. Mutual “police report.” The police reports will vastly differ.
- b. If a person is not behind their wall virtue and goes to toxic feelings, processing becomes almost impossible. At least one person has to have the wall of virtue up.
- c. Mutual sharing of feelings – ideally shared in respectful and digestible ways.
- d. Mutual sharing of needs and goals.
- e. Willingness not to solve, not to escalate, but come back later.
- f. If you need to rebuke another person for their wrongdoing or negligence:

- g. Tell them exactly what you recall they did. They may not recall it or may differ in the police report. After a few tries, don't try to persuade another person of your recollection.
 - i. If the recollections do not match up, ask “had they done what you recall, would it have been wrong?” (the magical subjunctive)
 - ii. If there is no buy in to what happened, processing an event is usually not possible.
 - h. If there is buy in to a police report, define the wrongdoing or negligence in a way that is not hurtful. Avoid metaphors. No Four C's. Just what they did.
 - i. Tell them what you would them to do: apologize, retract, clarify etc.
2. If you need to share your feelings with another person, make sure they are in a mental space to hear you out. Remember: one does not have to respond until ready. Oftentimes wise to say “let me think about that. Can I digest and get back to you later?”

Processing An Apology

If at any point you realize that you have hurt or wronged another, plan to apologize. Rehearse what an apology is:

1. No “if” apologies. If you did something wrong or hurtful, actually apologize.
2. Exactly what you did and apologize for that exactly.
3. You may offer an explanation, not an excuse. I
4. If the other person. does not want to hear your explanation, that is up to them.
5. Say you will try very hard not to do it again.
6. Ask them if they want anything else to make it better.

Processing an Ask

Asks require that your Wall of Virtue is in place and that you have done reflective work in your Wisdom Mills.

In your reflective state, after meditating on “what is,” make a plan to ask for what you need. You have worked through irrational needs and beliefs. You will aim for precision. You memorize your ask:

1. Simple, specific, time frame, motivation is clean and goal is clear.
2. Be prepared to Take No for answer. (Yes, yes with explanation, Maybe, No with explanation, and No). Process later (next set of podcasts).
3. Remember: Don't try to persuade a resistant person. Just decide what you are going to do next. They probably already know all your explanations and have answer for all of them.
4. Prepare to process (see above).

Decisions:

- a. Share the theories, values, axioms and premises that are at play.
- b. Adduce verifiable facts; acknowledge when one is operating under inferences, beliefs, opinions or when the facts are in dispute. (Police Reports)
- c. Devise decisions, policies, strategies that line up with the values and facts.

Vision for Ourselves

Aspects of Human Realization – Focus on what we do by our personal and human nature.
Authentic Happiness.

1. Safe and healthy, physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually healthy
2. Moral – have a conscience, including empathy. Do not cause intentional, unnecessary, avoidable or negligent harm to the innocent; benefit the worthy when possible.
3. Respectful
4. Rational – reasoning well, including moral issues – processing, problem solving.
5. Wisdom: Insightful - Reflective - Inner clarity – insight into self, others, motivations, the situation
6. Capacity for care, love, generosity, tolerance and intimacy
7. Ability to thrive in community – social interaction
8. A sense of power and freedom in life
9. Capacity for depth and transcendence.
10. Creativity /Adventure

Rabbi Mordecai Finley Combined Virtue and Wisdom Practices Outline 1.3 – June, 2021

11. Grieving well
12. Industrious / Work,
13. Learning
14. Pleasure/fun
15. Cultivating Virtues – Spiritual well-being over pleasure gratification
16. Continuous development physically, socially, morally and spiritually
17. Meaning in life; purpose, transcendence.
18. Knowledge of the Divine – Devotional Life

