

## **FROM HOSTILITY TO CO-EXISTENCE THROUGH MEANING: A POSSIBLE REALITY IN A MULTI-CULTURAL WORLD**

**Gideon Millul**

At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century we still live in a world in which hostility, rage, and violence are leading motifs. Addiction and depression have become widespread phenomena, in particular among youth. Thus we note the triangle syndrome of the existential vacuum: aggression, addiction, and depression.<sup>10</sup>

In addition, we still encounter "Theocraticism" (aspiration for government by "our one true" religion/God), as well as "Ethnocentrism" (belief in the superiority of "our" culture which is "above all others"), and "Racism" (identification with groups who have "our" hereditary biological characteristics as the best or "most human" race) from which the concept of inferiority of all those who "do not belong to us" derives, and which leads to the deprivation of rights, liberty, and existence of entire groups of people. Today, we still experience daily atrocities and killings all over the world led by fanatic executors of these concepts.

At the same time, we live in an era characterized by vast and accelerated changes in all fields of life, resulting in a new sort of "Folks wandering" that increases cross-cultural encounters. Worldwide commerce, tourism, and communications "shrink" our planet into a small, multi-cultural village. Thus, increasingly, people are being exposed to other cultures, and they are being influenced economically, socially, politically, and even physically by events happening thousands of miles away.

All this points to new existential needs to bridge inter-cultural gaps of all kinds in order to increase understanding between people on a basis of equality and mutual respect. Such understanding can help to build a foundation for a stable, multi-cultural co-existence. In addition, it can promote the learning of skills for quick adaptation to the rapidly accelerating changes of the modern world, in order to diminish "Future Shock."<sup>16</sup>

### **Building Multi-Existential Bridges**

Awareness of the necessity of living together on this planet illuminates the existential issue of finding ways to establish a reasonable "life partnership." We can accelerate the establishment of a reasonable "life partnership" by recruiting and developing the three human intelligences which we possess: Intellectual (I.Q. – ability to solve logical or strategic



problems); Emotional (E.Q. – self awareness of emotions, motivations, and capacities for social connection); and Spiritual (S.Q. – capacity to cope with problems of meaning and value and significance).<sup>17</sup>

Through human intelligences we can find ways to build multi-existential bridges over the inter-cultural gaps. These bridges will reduce the triangle syndrome of the existential vacuum and enhance adaptation to the vast changes of the modern world and its ever-increasing globalization.<sup>11,12</sup>

Building multi-existential bridges will require changes of personal attitudes, changes of interpretation, and changes of personal conduct regarding cultural and ethnical differences. These changes must be accompanied by the strengthening of personal inner-powers and by finding meaning in the other cultures and in the multi-existential bridges themselves. This is a practical application of Logotherapy to the rapidly accelerating globalization of the modern world.

Maintenance of cultural diversity and simultaneous co-existence are possible as our planet continues to "shrink" if people are willing to quit hyper-reflection upon "our one true religion," "our culture above all others," and "our biological characteristics as the most human." Cultural diversity and simultaneous co-existence with others can in fact both be maintained if people are willing to risk exposure and openness to what surrounds them. And it is possible to do this without giving up the personal lifestyle and the cultural inheritance which is carried by everyone on their life-voyage. This process would preserve a "salad bowl" instead of producing a "melting pot." This modification of attitudes about our multi-cultural village of a planet is a crucial step in the application of logotherapy to find meaning in our life in our multi-cultural world.

### **An Overview of Cultural Adaptation Models**

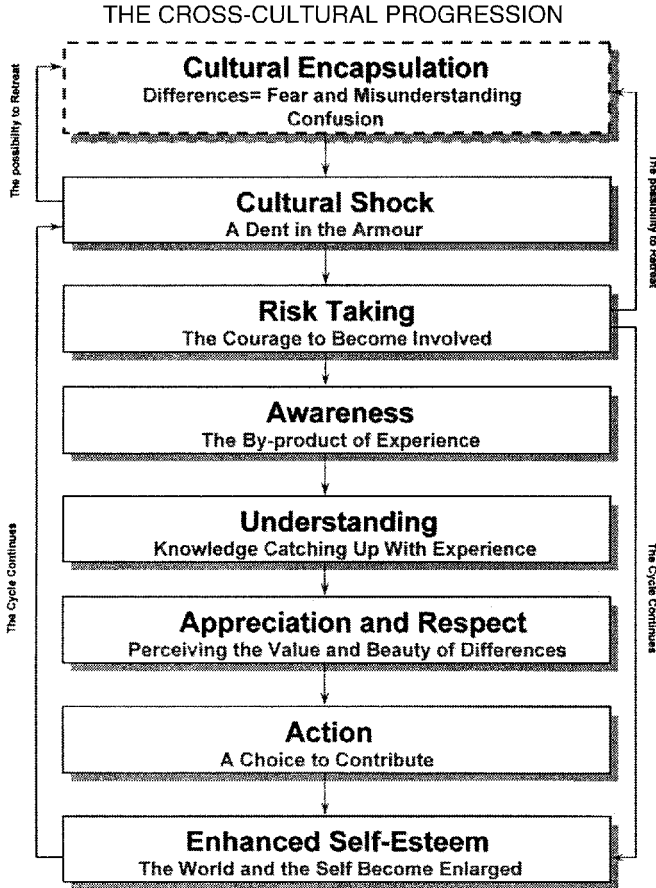
Cultural adjustment and adaptation processes depend upon individual choices/decisions related to coping with daily life events. There are four main, rationally-connected models (as well as one combination of models) that describe the inter-cultural adaptation process:

#### **Cross-cultural Progression Model**

The Cross-cultural Progression model, developed by Pepper,<sup>15</sup> incorporates eight steps in the development of the inter-cultural encounter:

1. *Cultural Encapsulation*, introversion, fear and repulsion.
2. *Cultural Shock*, when an inevitable encounter with another culture occurs. Dents and cracks in the "armor" start here (examples: living and working with people from different origins; marriage of children to partners from different cultures and beliefs).
3. *Taking A Risk* and seeing what happens.
4. *Awareness* of the very existence of diversity.
5. *Understanding* due to knowledge and experience. The beginning of a change in interpretation and in conduct towards the other.

6. *Appreciation and Respect* denotes a turning point towards discovering beauty and value in other cultures.
7. *Action* leading to the doing and the contributing to the world.
8. *Enhanced Self-esteem* as a result of the previous seven steps.



The application of this model can make life meaningful “Through *what we give* to life (in terms of our creative works); by *what we take* from the world (in terms of our experiential values) and...through *the stand we take* towards a fate we no longer can change....”<sup>9</sup>

### Phases of Adaptation Diagram

The Phases of Adaptation Diagram, based on Kupfer, Baruch, and Iflach,<sup>14</sup> illustrates five phases of adaptation people go through where quick adaptation is required due to co-habitation of people belonging to different cultures – examples include: immigration and refuge countries, or countries importing foreign labor.

1. *Idealization*, the future is seen in an overly positive way, with hopes and expectations for a better life and the fulfillment of the things we used to dream about.

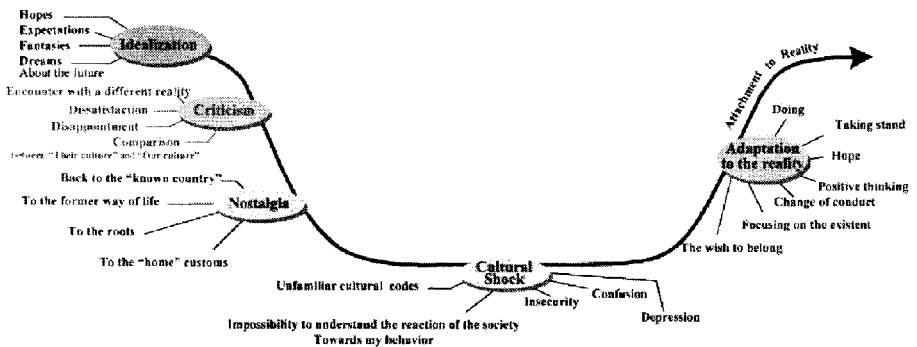
2. *Criticism*, which is sobering phase of seeing things more realistically.

3. *Nostalgia*, the phase in which longing and yearning arise for the familiar and the known which were left behind. This phase includes the sticking to memories, but these may be selective and may include idealization.

4. *Cultural Shock* as a result of a clash between different cultures. It may occur when confronting unfamiliar and undesired situations, when feeling lack of control over what happens, or when facing rapid changes and excessive stimuli (example: facing changes in climate, unfamiliar food, unexpected habits, breakdown in communication, or “odd” thinking). This phase might deepen uncertainty and lead to collapse of clear concepts/ideals that existed up to that time, resulting in disorientation and distress, as a reaction to over-stimulation.<sup>16</sup> This phase can lead to despair, stagnation, depression, retreat, and existential vacuum, but it can also be a turning point towards hope, growth, and adjustment.

5. *Adaptation To Reality*, if the individual decides to confront reality and wishes to make the best of it. Here, the person tries to find a combination, among the components of his own culture and the new cultural codes and norms, thus creating a synthesis that will enable the individual to adapt.

#### THE PHASES OF ADAPTATION DIAGRAM



The fifth step – Adaptation To Reality – once again points to the fact that “Man cannot avoid decisions”... because “reality inescapably forces man to decide...”<sup>9</sup> remembering that “not to decide” is also a decision. Logotherapeutic principles, applied in this model, can be employed as a method of strengthening self-worth and elevating recognition of life-worth, as well as fostering hope, self-discovery, personal growth, adjustment, and attachment to the reality of life.

## Bridge to Adaptation Illustrative Model

Along the path of an inter-cultural encounter, nearly everyone steps on the bridge to adaptation. On one side of this bridge are the known and the familiar to us (our home culture, family recollections, and flavors of our childhood, etc.); while on the other side lies the new, different, and alien world.

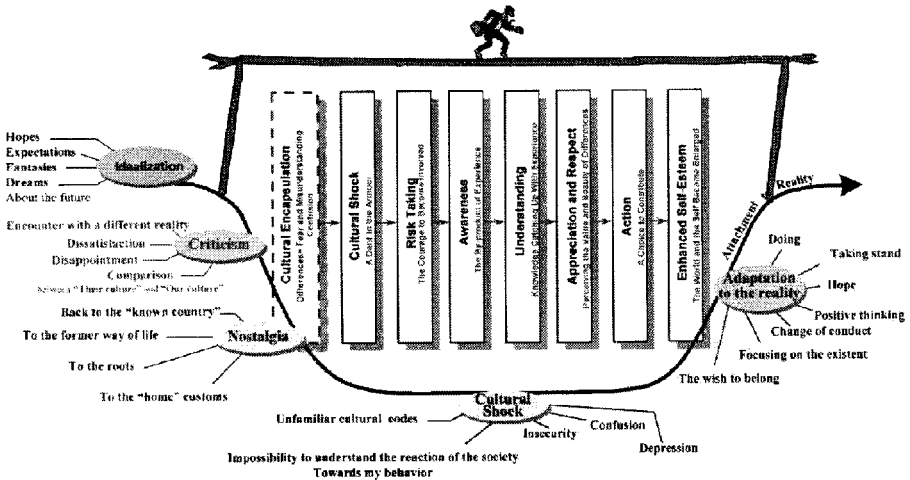
Each one marches on this bridge at their own pace, but the 'walking distance' of the younger generation seems generally much faster than that of the older one. Sometimes, they are already on the other side of the bridge, while the elderly are close to their starting point. Some people never cross the bridge. An example is "generation gaps," where the elderly stick to their original culture and ideals, rejecting anything different, while the youngsters wish to adjust to "be like all the others" and consequently distance themselves from the "traditions" (including from the adults).

Focus on purpose in life, finding meaning, and change of attitude, could be employed to promote understanding and acceptance. Thus, these logotherapy concepts may be seen as fundamental for progress across "the Bridge to Adaptation."

## Inter-Cultural Adaptation Stages Combination

The Cross-cultural Progression Model, the Phases of Adaptation Diagram, and the Bridge to Adaptation are complimentary to each other. They can be combined to describe the inter-cultural adaptation processes experienced by many different human beings.

### THE COMBINATION OF THE INTER-CULTURAL ADAPTATION PROCESSES



### Stages of Multi-cultural Growth

The Stages of Multi-cultural Growth model by Pepper,<sup>15</sup> describes three stages of growth, concerning relationships toward other people or cultures. Each stage is discussed from four perspectives:

1. The level of *Self-awareness*.
2. The level of *Emotional Response to Differences*.
3. The *Mode of the Cultural Interaction*.
4. The *Approach to Teaching*.

STAGES OF MULTICULTURAL GROWTH

	Stage One	Stage Two	Stage Three
<b>Level of Self Awareness</b>	My perspective is right (Only one)	My perspective is <u>one</u> of many	My perspective is changing and being enhanced
<b>Emotional Response to Differences</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fear</li> <li>• Rejection</li> <li>• Denial</li> </ul> (We're all alike)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interest</li> <li>• Awareness</li> <li>• Openness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appreciation</li> <li>• Respect</li> <li>• Joy</li> <li>• Enthusiasm</li> <li>• Active Seeking</li> </ul>
<b>Mode of Cultural Interaction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Isolation</li> <li>• Avoidance</li> <li>• Hostility</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integration</li> <li>• Interaction</li> <li>• Acceptance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transforming</li> <li>• Internalizing</li> <li>• Rewarding</li> </ul>
<b>Approach to Teaching</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eurocentric</li> <li>• Ethnocentric Curriculum</li> </ul>	Learning <u>about</u> other cultures	Learning <u>from</u> other cultures

**Risk Taking → Personal Gain → Ongoing Process**

Ultimately, the individual determines the Stage they are in. By this decision, the individual is responsible for personal ethnocentrism vs. growth – will it be on a course which means in the long run encapsulation, rage, hostility, and struggle, or will it be in the direction of acceptance, living together in mutual respect, and growth oriented. This model gives those who are involved in the inter-cultural encounter an opportunity to find meaning in

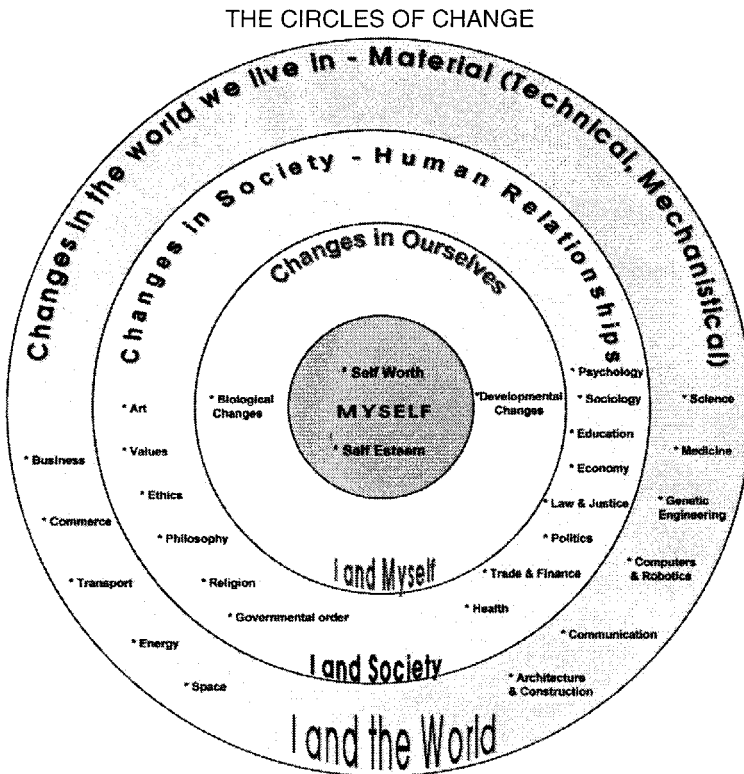
life by the very “encounter with others, with fellow human beings and their unique qualities.”<sup>9</sup>

### Tools for Developing the Skills

In order to build stable inter-cultural bridges between people, and thus diminish the triangle syndrome of the existential vacuum, conceptual and practical tools are needed. Tools that will support personal and social understanding, strengthen self-esteem, and promote human spirit are called for. Five such tools (out of many possibilities) are mentioned below for purposes of illustration.

### The Circles of Change

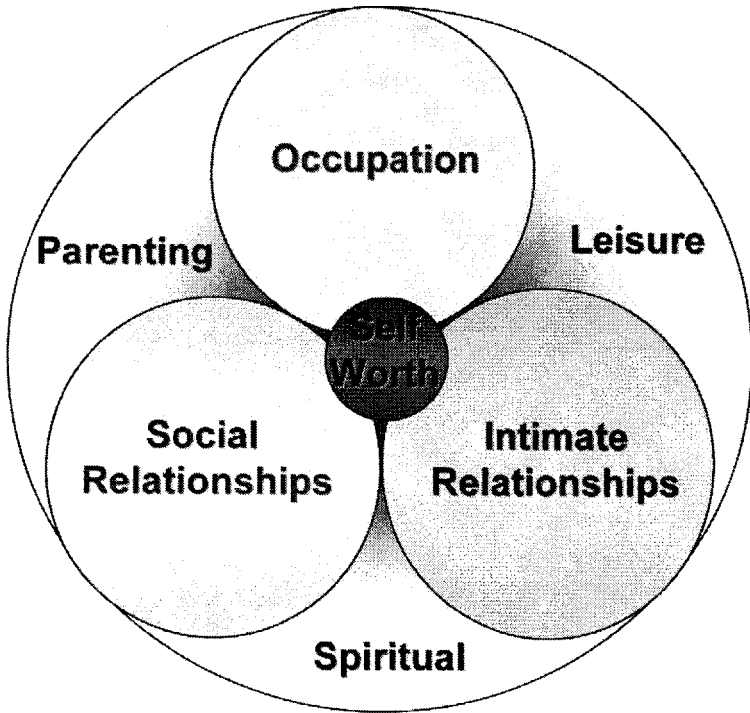
This tool was inspired by James C. Crumbaugh’s article “Logotherapy as love therapy.”<sup>4</sup> It serves as an introductory tool for recognizing the individual’s personal strengths that are necessary for coping with changes and adaptation processes. It examines personal reactions to external and internal changes, their effect on the individual’s behavior, the individual’s relations with self and surroundings, and the impact these have on the individual’s self-worth.



### Life Tasks and Life Circles

This tool, developed by Clair Hawes, based on Alfred Adler's "three great problems of life,"<sup>1</sup> can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the individual's functioning in relationships with others and the implications for "self-worth" and "self-approval"<sup>7</sup> from a holistic point of view. This tool gives a here-and-now picture of the individual's relationship with self and with the surrounding world. The results enable the individual to recognize personal strengths and use them to promote better communication, connection, and relationship within the individual's life tasks and circles, ultimately improving self-worth and self-approval. This tool also helps the individual to see the cost vs. benefit of each aspect of present life tasks.

LIFE TASKS AND LIFE CIRCLES

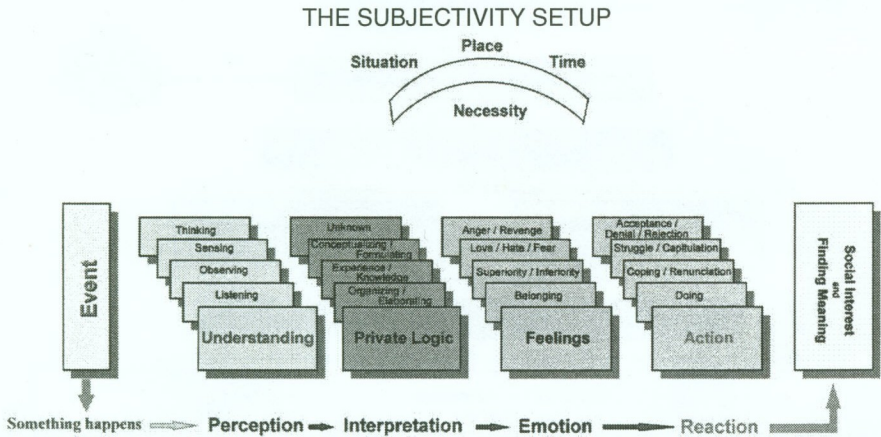


This tool encourages the individual to choose the position he or she should take toward current realities; it encourages the individual to examine the attitude developed vis-à-vis people and things to which the individual is connected. If a person wants to change the existing picture, this may be facilitated by putting forth "W.H." questions: **Why** does the individual want to change, **What** does the individual intend to change, **How** can the individual change, **Who** will be involved in the change, and **When** does the individual intend to make the change.



## The Subjectivity Setup Instrument

This tool clarifies personal points of view, and it leads to changes in attitudes and then changes in conduct. The tool helps the individual consider alternatives.



The Subjectivity Setup Instrument was developed from the perspective that reality is experienced through interpretation, and therefore people should acknowledge subjectivity, accept it, and understand that different interpretations are possible.<sup>2</sup> This Instrument (based on the sequence: **P**erception, **I**nterpretation, **E**motion, and **R**eaction = P.I.E.R.) raises awareness of the important fact that human actions stem from subjective interpretations of events that the individual experiences. The instrument shows how actions come as responses to the emotions that are developed through the individual's private logic.

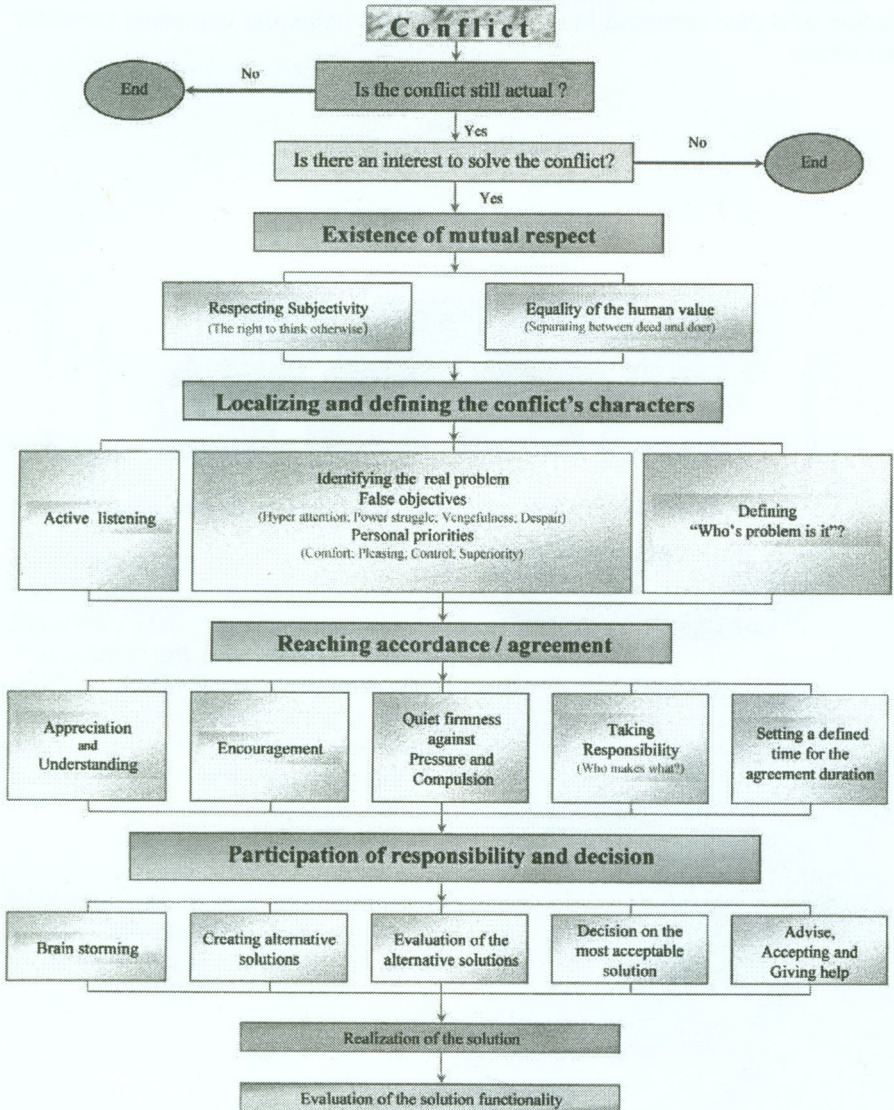
## The Conflict Solving Model

This model, based on principles developed by Rudolf Dreikurs and Thomas Gordon,<sup>6,13</sup> can be used both as a tool for understanding the roots of conflict and as a guide for solving conflict. It includes four major necessary steps:

1. *Mutual Respect.*
2. *Defining the Conflict's Characters.*
3. *Reaching Accordance/Agreement.*
4. *Participation in Responsibility and Decision Sharing.*

Inter-connected and comprehensive sub-steps, necessary for the achievement of the major steps, are included in the model. As a comprehensive model for daily human relations, the Conflict Solving Model can be used as a cornerstone for strengthening interpersonal tolerance in a world where co-existence and finding meaning can be translated into meaningful life.

## CONFLICT SOLVING

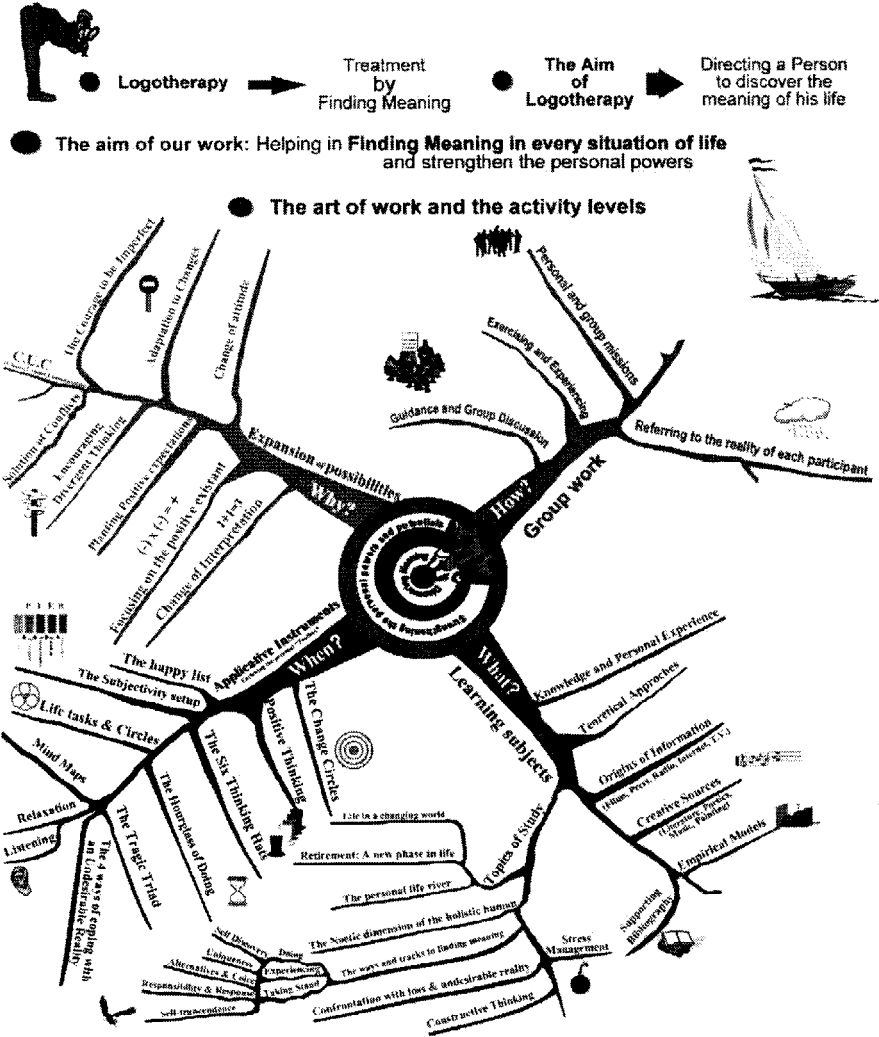


### The Mind Map

As "thinking is the ultimate human resource,"<sup>5</sup> the organization of thought and the development of constructive thinking are very important to us. Therefore, acquisition of thinking techniques is valuable help to us among our tools for developing skills. One such tool is the Mind Map, developed by Tony Buzan,<sup>3</sup> that activates associations, connections, and contexts,

combining the activities of the two brain lobes and furthering fluency and creativity. With the Mind Map we can get a concentrated picture of current thinking, as, for example, in the Logotherapeutic mind map that we created.

### LOGOTHERAPEUTIC MIND MAP



### Logotherapy Elements in the Skills Development Tools

The tools described above for helping develop the personal skills that can allow people to build stable inter-cultural bridges lean basically on the three components of meaning fulfillment described by Viktor Frankl (Doing, Experiencing, and Taking A Stand) and on the five tracks to finding meaning of Joseph Fabry (Self-Discovery, Uniqueness, Choices, Responsibility and

Self-transcendence).<sup>8</sup> Further elaboration regarding how the tools lean on the five tracks of Joseph Fabry is presented below.

### **Self-Discovery**

- Experiencing the changes in the life circles; being aware of how changes affect us.
- Discovering the position where a person stands, at a given moment, within their life circles.
- Acknowledging that subjectivity is part of being human; discovering that everyone has their own truth.
- Experiencing that it is possible to change interpretations.
- Finding out that acceptance and respect pave the way to conflict resolution without victors or losers.
- Experiencing constructive thinking that leads to creativity and enriched alternatives.

### **Uniqueness**

- Emphasizing the importance and uniqueness of everyone who can use change as a lever for growth.
- Emphasizing the special identity of everyone who contributes to a multi-cultural co-existence.
- Emphasizing the individual identity of everyone who contributes to the enlargement and deepening of the relevant life circles and tasks.
- Emphasizing the special identity of everyone who contributes to the creation of new and fruitful ideas and deeds, out of the strength of subjectivity, in spite of apparent contradictions.

### **Choosing**

- Awareness of the on-going choice processes that everyone undergoes constantly every minute in life.
- Awareness of choices: in coping with changes, dealing with life tasks, making interpretations, etc.
- Deciding on the "W.H." questions and then taking a stand and doing.

### **Responsibility**

- Taking responsibility for the choices that we make and for their consequences affecting self and others.
- Strengthening the response ability to changes, while considering the impacts of the decisions on the various life circles and tasks, and on the reactions of oneself and others.
- Learning to consciously participate in different behaviors, and to take control for personal attitudes toward people and situations.

## **Self-transcendence**

- Getting out of oneself, and being directed to the needs and welfare of others.
- Coping with change for the sake of \_\_\_\_\_.
- Helping others to cope with change and difficulty.
- Trying to understand others.
- Being able to forgive and develop compassion.

### **It's Up to Us: Many Little Steps**

Building multi-existential bridges over inter-cultural gaps can become a reality – it's only up to us. The use of conceptual and practical tools, a few of which were presented here, can foster and support this goal. The tools encompass a wide array of approaches, ideas, and practical applications, all of which contain logotherapeutic principles in their logical and philosophical backgrounds. The tools help us change our approach to life, and they help us acquire skills for mutual co-existence which lead to a better living together with others. Consequently, use of the tools to build multi-existential bridges over inter-cultural gaps enables us to reduce the triangle syndrome of the existential vacuum and point toward increased life-meaningfulness.

In other words, these approaches and tools are directed toward both personal- and social-growth. They make for easier adaptation processes in encounters with people having different cultures. They reduce feelings of strangeness and hostility, enhance the taking of responsibility, and promote saying “Yes” to life and to people amongst whom we live. They assist in taking a new and different perspective of life, of the situations with which we are confronted, and of the tasks we are still demanded to fulfill. They lead to a change of behaviors, experiences, and attitudes, based more solidly on our personally-meaningful values – which is the essence of logotherapy.

In our experiences in working with these approaches and tools, we have found significant improvements in life qualities of the majority of the students who participated in our courses. We believe these improvements were expressed by better interpersonal relations, by changes of concepts and attitudes, by development of personal potentials and strengths, and by more affirmative stands toward life.

Let's conclude with a saying from a poster issued by UNESCO in honor of the year of the child: If many little people in many little places take many little steps the face of the world will be changed!

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