

The Concept of Self-Growth for a Life-long Learner

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Abstract:

The concept of self-growth, as a formal or informal process either at the individual level or as an institutional culture, forms the basis of one's way of being. Since each individual is different with divergent life goals, the concept of self-growth can be liberating yet challenging. This presentation focuses ten self-growth factors that involve basic concepts, techniques, and behaviors to help achieve a strong desire and increased capacity through one's concerted efforts and practices. The premise is that one can improve any performance in any area by creating one's own challenges, serving as a leader and mentor, taking control of one's own destiny, and self-assessing and self-mentoring to facilitate self-growth. This session will be valuable to any participant wishing to learn the basic principles and behaviors of self-growth.

Literature Review

Counter to the nature vs. nurture philosophy, the concept of self-growth for a life-long learner begins with a growth mindset and one's choice, conscious decision and emotional belief in self-growth (Dweck 2006, Kuszewski 2011, Sternberg, 2008). Becoming a self-grower incorporates fundamental principles of the Process Education's (PE) philosophy (Apple, Morgan & Hintze 2002) that any person can seek to improve any performance, create her/his own challenges, serve as a leader and mentor to others, take control of one's own destiny, and self-assess and self-mentor to facilitate self-growth. This paper highlights ten components (Jain, Apple & Ellis, 2015) to the process of self-growth. The focus centers heavily on self-motivation, which requires physical, emotional, cognitive and social energies that force the desire for and commitment to realizing a particular goal even when facing a challenge (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Objectives

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

1. Understand and analyze self-growth as an individualistic concept and process.
2. Identify the ten essential principles and behaviors of self-growth.
3. Practice the techniques used in conducting customized principles and behaviors relevant to self-growth and life-long learning.

Methodology

The dissemination of information will be achieved through a brief PowerPoint presentation to explain the ten key components to self-growth. As an interactive session, participants will be invited to:

1. Reflect upon and share personal experiences of self-growth;
2. Utilize a guided group activity for review of and response to create a self-growth model using a variety of critical thinking concepts and dynamics to self-growth;
3. Provide feedback by modeling and sharing group insights on self-growth discoveries.

Table 1 Components to the Self-Growth Process

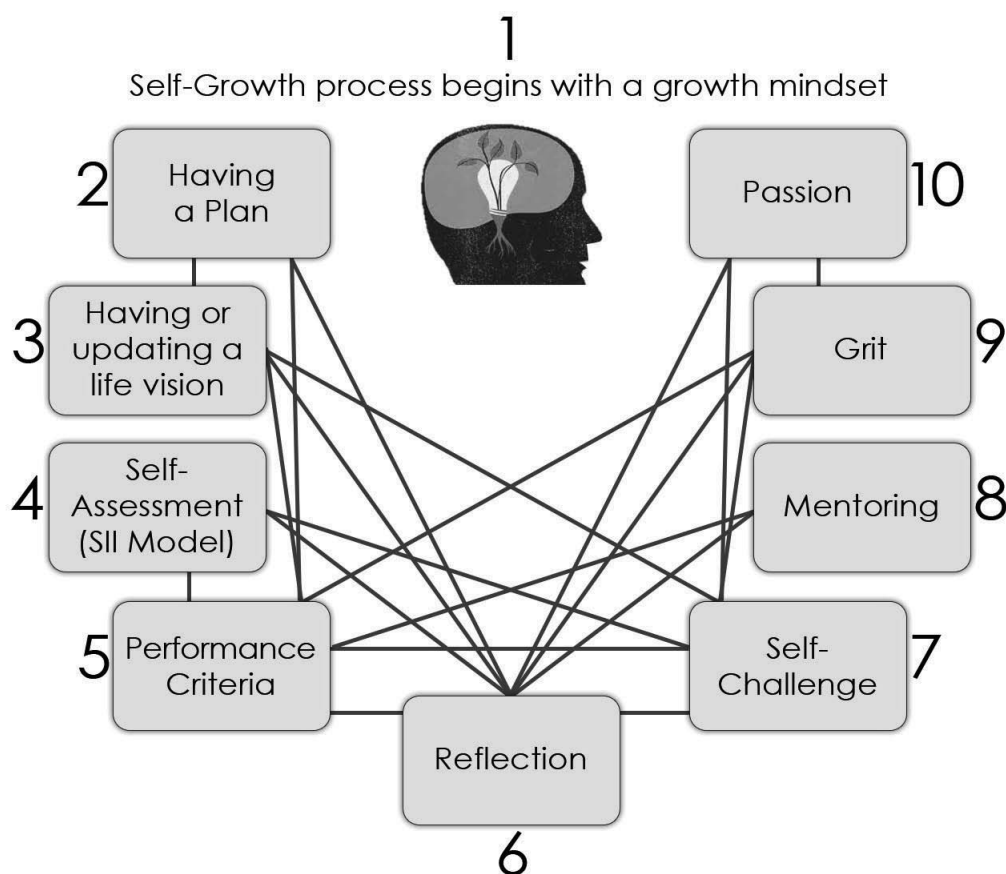
Key Components	Explanation	Steps, Actions and Activities
1 Having a growth mind-set	Starting with an unconditional and unwavering belief in self: <i>I believe I can grow! I can be a star!</i>	All aspects of the Theory of Performance can be improved: identity, learning skills, knowledge, context, and personal factors, and the rate of this growth is in their own hands.
2 Planning	Thinking before doing	Detailing an overall strategy with reasonable timelines for each of the desired aspirations. A concept map can help organize links between identity, skills, knowledge, context, personal factors, and fixed factors.
3 Developing a life vision	Initiating or updating a life vision of what one wants to achieve or become in life	Knowing and analyzing who you are, where you come from, what you want to become, and what you would like to accomplish; or, determining what one wishes to be, or achieve in life. Making a list of the most important aspirations with achievement of at least one growth goal and/or accomplishment within the next year, or on a short-term basis, and laying out action plans for your personal profile and life accomplishments that will guide you in the way you wish to live your life.
4 Setting the performance criteria	Measuring the performance	Determining one's current level of performance with respect to self-growth. The key is to continually increase the level of performance from the current level with clear understanding of the elevated levels and the corresponding, pre-established measurement criteria.
5 Self-assessment	Assessing each significant performance with purpose to improve the <i>next</i> performance	Continually assessing and envisioning outcomes for strengths, improvements and insights.
6 Reflection	Increasing self-awareness and metacognition	Taking time to step back from doing to understand why you are doing what you are doing. This updating of your intrinsically driven inner compass helps you to align your actions and decisions with your values to keep you moving towards your life vision
7 Self-challenge	Taking significant risks and continually pushing one-self outside of the comfort zone	Learning to eliminate self-doubt and boosting self-image through preparation, commitment, and timely completion of the established as well as impromptu actions, activities, and challenges.
8 Mentoring	Self-improving self and improving others	Establishing a clearly-bounded, trusting, and confidential relationship based on mutual respect to achieve clearly-defined goals using the SII principles.
9 Grit	Perseverance and commitment in spite of personal factors	Having self-control, acceptance of failure as a necessary condition to self-growth, open-mindedness, optimism, courage, patience, persistence, hard work, willpower, mental toughness, tenacity, perseverance and resilience.
10 Passion	Self-motivation to walk the walk to own values	Taking the first step and continuing the commitment with same conviction, energy and enthusiasm throughout!

Source: Jain, C., Apple D. K, & Ellis, W. Jr. (2015)

Discussion

The self-growth process involves an understanding of a growth mindset, behaviors, sustained commitment and the practice of ten key components (Table 1). It incorporates the PE principles of planning, reflection, mentoring as well as the Strength, Improvement and Insights (the SII) model of assessment. It also requires grit, tenacity and perseverance as essential values in promoting life-long growth and learning. As an individual process, it warrants an in-depth understanding of the connectivity among the components that are vital to self-growth and life-long learning.

Figure 1 The Process of Self-Growth: Understanding the Connectivity



Conclusion

An individualistic and context-driven concept and process, self-growth and life-long learning begin only when one accepts being in-charge of one's self-growth capacity to elevate one's status as an empowered individual. Reflection and metacognition or "thinking about thinking" are critical to the development of an authentic, personalized life-vision. This involves a heavy reliance on individual cognitive perceptions and advanced-level learning skills. Finally, development of one's own critical growth components, their connectivity, and one's sustained commitment (grit) are critical to an enduring process of self-growth and life-long learning.

References

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