

# Character and Freedom: Your Steps to Life Mastery

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"Love life, engage in it, give it all you've got."

Maya Angelou

## 1. CREATING YOUR CHARACTER TO ACHIEVE FREEDOM

What are *Character and Freedom*? **Character** is how you express who you are in the world. You can easily see the character of others, but it is sometimes hard to see your own character clearly. This book gives you tools to help you look at yourself. It will help you see who you really are and what you want from life. **Freedom** is the chance to live in the world, enjoy your life, get what you want, and help others. Freedom is directly related to **Responsibility**. The more responsible you are in life, the more freedom you have. You carry your freedom around inside yourself. You may not understand this now, but it will become clear later. *The Steps to Life Mastery* chart shows you how the book is organized.

### STEPS TO LIFE MASTERY

STEPS	RESPONSIBILITIES
1. <b>RESPONSIBILITY</b> TAKE CHARGE OF YOUR LIFE	A. UNDERSTAND YOUR HISTORY B. BECOME READY TO CHANGE
2. <b>INTEGRITY</b> EXPRESS YOUR REAL SELF	C. BE HONEST, TRUSTING AND TRUSTWORTHY D. PRACTICE CREATING HARMONY
3. <b>AWARENESS</b> CREATE A FOUNDATION FOR GROWTH	E. LEARN COMMUNICATION SKILLS F. UNDERSTAND YOUR LIFE ELEMENTS
4. <b>TOOLS</b> LEARN LIFE SKILLS	G. AVOID SELF-DEFEATING BEHAVIOR H. APPLY SKILLS TO SOLVE YOUR PROBLEMS
5. <b>MASTERY</b> DEVELOP PERSONAL GOALS AND ACTION PLANS	I. DEVELOP A LIFE MASTERY GOAL AND PLAN J. DEVELOP A PROBLEM RESOLUTION GOAL AND PLAN
6. <b>CONNECTION</b> MAINTAIN POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS	K. DEVELOP YOUR SUPPORT SYSTEM L. IDENTIFY IMPORTANT ROLES IN YOUR LIFE
7. <b>RESILIENCE</b> COPE WITH LIFE CHALLENGES	M. UNDERSTAND AND COPE WITH CHANGE AND LOSS N. APPLY THE WELL-BEING FORMULA TO YOUR LIFE
8. <b>SERVICE</b> HELP OTHERS	O. LEARN TO HELP EFFECTIVELY P. PROVIDE SERVICE TO OTHERS

When we went to school, there was no time spent on helping students discover their Real Self. We also didn't spend time on developing Social Responsibility. Somehow, you were supposed to figure this out on your own. Well, many of us spent our teens, 20s and 30s trying to figure this out. We all spend time trying to figure out what happiness is. That was OK then, most of us made it through. But some of us didn't make it. Some of us got lost along the way. We've learned a lot. We all want to

know who we really are, and where we fit into life. That's what we want to share with you. We've found an easier way to figure these things out. That's the reason to take this class this semester. It may save you some pain. It may help you stay on an easier path in life.

You see, all of us want to be happy. But we really do not know what that means or how to find it for ourselves. We find happiness moment by moment. But we really want to be accepted for ourselves. We want to be loved. We also want to do what we think we are supposed to do. Sometimes we do things just to see how they make us feel. We do things without thinking. Every time you do things without thinking you place yourself in harm's way. If you follow the directions in this book and do what it asks, you may find happiness for yourself. No one can tell you what is right for you. Only you can find it. Some of us make it harder than it has to be. Hopefully you will not do that. If you do, well, good luck.

The world you live in is much more exciting than it was just a few years ago. There is so much to do. There is so much to learn. There are so many more deadly risks we can take. What should I study? Whom should I date? Should I use alcohol or drugs? What about sex? Who can I trust? Where do I turn if I need help? We want to show you the link between Character and Freedom. Then you can decide for yourself where and how you fit in to the world. We know that your decisions will direct you. When we make bad decisions, we suffer. When we make good decisions, we find happiness. Sometimes neither the pain nor pleasure is instant. But one or the other comes each time we make a decision. Once you see the whole picture and how everything fits together, you can choose the right direction for you.

#### ***DEVELOPING YOUR CHARACTER STRENGTHS***

Life can be difficult, that's just the way it is. Life makes you constantly grow and learn. This book shows you how to develop your Character Strengths. It also shows you how to overcome Challenges to your Character. Your Character Strengths are always developing. Just like staying in physical shape, you must work on your Character Strengths. It is perfectly OK and normal to get discouraged at times. You will also feel unhappy when sad or bad things happen. Later in the class, you will learn how to deal with these hard times. Even bad times and sad times teach us things about life. Everything gives us a chance to learn.

## CLASS OBJECTIVES FOR CHARACTER AND FREEDOM

1. Understand the Steps to Life Mastery.
2. Respect others' privacy and confidentiality.
3. Become aware of your Real Self and life purpose.
4. Carry out weekly action steps to improve yourself.
5. Understand your beliefs, attitudes and reactions.
6. Change negative beliefs that don't serve your interests.
7. Create positive relationships.
8. Learn skills for coping with life challenges.
9. Practice leadership, teaching and helping others.
10. Provide service to others.

### CREATING CLASS RULES

Your facilitator will follow the rules of the school district in terms of privacy—this means class privacy does not apply to situations involving concern about suicide, threats of harm to others, child abuse, or doing things to endanger yourself. In these situations, the facilitator will tell your parents and other appropriate authorities. Your facilitator will also tell other teachers and administrators about your progress in class. He or she won't talk about private details of your life.

A rule everyone must follow is respecting others' privacy. Don't share anything someone else says or does in class outside this room. Confidentiality means, "When you leave, do not repeat whom you see here, or what you hear here." Talk about why this is important, and then make a commitment to keep things shared in the class confidential. Just a reminder--racial, religious or sexual comments, or harassment are not acceptable at any time. Be aware that people here have gone through all kinds of experiences. What else do you need and want to make the class comfortable? **Write below two rules that will make the class safe and fun.**

1.

2.

Share and discuss what you have written. Then the class needs to agree. Once everyone agrees on ground rules, your facilitator will provide a poster board and markers so you can write down and post these rules. Whenever a new student comes into the class, explain the class rules to him or her.

Put your name in the front of your book. During class, you complete a number of requirements that are explained to you as we go along. A list of requirements appears at the front of your workbook. These include exercises and testimonies you share with the class or with your facilitator. You must complete all requirements to get class credit.