

TAKING BETTER CARE OF YOU: PART II
I'M NOT A ROBOT ... ANY MORE
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INTRODUCTION

In the following article you will learn far more about me, my upbringing and my life than you would ever want to know. Though my nature is low profile, I offer it to you in the hope that it will be helpful to you in taking a closer look at yourself.

I am convinced that taking better care of you involves looking more closely at your programming and wiring and making appropriate modifications. If, as the old adage goes, "How we do anything is how we do everything", then we need to change some things at least some of the time.

In 2007 I wrote Taking Better Care of You Part I: The Secret Doors. That article is on my web site (www.williampenzer.com) and I encourage you to read it in its entirety, if you have not already, prior to reading this one. My goal was to tell a story about my search for ways of taking better care of me in the hope that it would motivate and encourage you to look into taking better care of you.

It was based on a series of workshops that I attended. It was stimulated by one given by John O'Donahue that strongly impressed me. He asked toward the conclusion of that day's meeting that we come back in the morning having identified secret doors through which we could go to get out of our own way. I thought about that and discussed it with my wife the next morning prior to going to class. Unfortunately, as is often the case in a workshop, time did not allow us to ever get to that subject. I wanted to hear the participant's thoughts and ideas. In many ways I wrote the article to be able to express and share mine.

The five doors I identified were:

Door One: **Participant Observation** – We need to look more closely at ourselves to see how we get in our own way, so we can learn how to get out of our own way.

Door Two: **A Transformational Hypothesis** – At the heart of all change lies the belief and hypothesis that we can. We don't know for sure, but we hypothesize that we may be able to.

* On a sad note, John died in his sleep in January 2008. The world lost a unique philosopher, brilliant poet and truly noble man.

Door Three: **Redefinition** – This involves breaking longstanding habits of mind and body (i.e., thoughts, feelings and behaviors) to create alternatives that move us in the direction of better self-care.

Door Four: **Continuity** – This is the hardest part of the change and modification process which involves sustaining those changes and not “relapsing” back into past unhealthy habits.

Door Five: **Meant to Be** – This door is the more spiritual one. It basically asserts that “timing is everything.”

In Part I, I went on to describe the doors in more detail with examples and show how they related to my own behaviors. I identified what I called the drills I engaged in, all under the heading of “BE PRODUCTIVE!” I also introduced the idea that people who are involved in trying to change and modify thoughts, feelings and/or behaviors are slowly walking across a Bridge I Call Transition. In the spirit of Harry Potter, I identified a magical cape that helps us pass across the Bridge I Call Transition and through the five secret doors that sit upon that bridge. The front of this lovely silken cape is made of gratitude; the back panel, which was equally beautiful, was made of acceptance and this cape was sewn together with golden threads I called compassion for ourselves and for others.

I concluded that as a result of these efforts, I was much less focused on doing and much more motivated to just be and enjoy tranquility and peace of mind. I was not working as many hours as I had previously. I was comfortable being me and accepting my strengths as well as limitations. Most importantly, goofing off was starting to feel like fun and mindlessness was feeling as elegant as mindfulness in the productive sense of that term. I have come from living a purpose driven life to one that is intermittently purposeless. My goal in writing this article is to tell you the wonderful and exciting changes that have occurred since writing Part I.

PARTICIPANT OBERVATION

The reason I went to these wonderful workshops in 2007 is because I was very frustrated with myself. It was one of many reasons that I returned to individual therapy that same year. It was my becoming uncomfortably aware of my rigid, robot-like patterns that stretched across the span of my adult life. The risk of going through Door One (participant observation) is what you may notice about yourself. Very quickly, my less than healthy habits came to the fore, as did my ability to become addicted to just about anything. Fortunately, drugs were something I feared or I might be one of those otherwise intelligent, formerly successful guys who sell the homeless news on almost every corner that I pass. I was certainly heavily addicted to nicotine from age 15 to 42 inhaling both cigarettes and my pipe in alternating fashion. Stopping was a three year ordeal that included lying about having stopped! That really filled my pride bank – NOT!

The issue for me was the wide variety of behavioral addictions I observed. I was the President and poster boy for the Creature of Habit Society of America (COHSOA). I remember when I smoked a pipe, though I had a couple of filled racks, I smoked the very same pipe day and night till it cracked from abuse and overuse. Better my pipe than me! I remember a momentary pang of separation anxiety when one broke and then easily moved on to a different pipe. Letting go of the pipe once it broke was easier for me than letting go of the tobacco it contained.

I also can experience habituated patterns with clothing as well. I can wear the same pair of shoes day in and day out till I wear them out. Pants, not as bad, but still I vary between a couple of favorites. Of late, I have taken a fancy to Tommy Bahama like shirts worn out. However, I quickly concluded that those habits are symptomatic of the problem, but that I can live with them. They are harmless as long as I change my underwear every day and get my pants cleaned periodically. The same is true of my addiction to a soda cup from Target. My wife, however, is forced to return periodically to obtain additional lids and an occasional new cup.

The bigger problem for me was that these same habituated and addictive patterns dominated the major areas of my life. I literally became addicted to seriousness and being productive. When I wasn't seeing people in my office trying to be helpful, doing paperwork or helping my staff, I was consumed with getting tasks done and things accomplished. Not only was I the poster boy for COHSOA, but I had a Ph.D in "To Do List" making and could win a prize for crossing things out. If you promise not to tell anyone, I will share with you that sometimes I added tasks that I had already done to my list for the sheer joy of crossing them off my list !! Somehow that seems similar to sneak smoking, don't you think?

THE GOOD, THE BAD, THE UGLY

Clearly there is a ying and a yang to these compulsive behaviors. The positive is that I have been quite productive in my life on many fronts. I have helped many people, written books and articles, built a counseling center with six offices with ninety therapists between 1976 and the early 90's. It also helped me to do well during my six year tenure as a psychologist for IBM. Despite all of my task orientation, I was an attentive and devoted father as I took and still take that responsibility seriously as well.

The negatives are also clear. My wife was short changed in many ways and so was I. We know that all work and no play is not healthy. However, if your focus is on task accomplishment, you ain't playing very much. You don't go to movies, concerts or sporting events. You don't even watch them on TV because you don't watch TV. You don't gamble, play cards or board games. You just do tasks and serious stuff. Like a factory you produce. I was offered a free cruise to China in the 80's. I declined as it was too much time away from Productivityville. I now regret that robot decision.

Somewhere in my programming the wires got crossed. The task focus became primary and fun ceased to be important. Addiction becomes a career and lifestyle

choice unto itself. The drug of choice in my case is accomplishing something. It came to a point where even my happiness and comfort wires got crossed. I felt those feelings while I was productive, but I felt unhappy and uncomfortable if I attempted to play. You couldn't have given me 50 yard line or center seats at a sporting event or pay for my movie or whatever. I had five positions:

Position One – Seeing people or my staff in my office.

Position Two – Eating a meal, though I rarely went out to lunch during the work day.

Position Three – In my home office, "doing work" .

Position Four – On the beach in Jupiter, Florida with briefcase in hand, writing, reading, dictating and occasionally observing passing pulchritude. Hopefully, my wife does not know what that word means. Okay, I was super- serious, but I wasn't dead!

Position Five – Being a partner and a parent.

FORESIGHT, HINDSIGHT, NO SIGHT

There is yet another way in which my life view was robotic and habits hindered my life. They disabled any real mechanisms of looking ahead and having visions in doing things differently. From time to time, I ponder why I didn't even think about "it". It's the "not considering" that frustrates me greatly. As you will see some of the issues may not have been realistic under the circumstances, but it is the not thinking about, exploring it or checking it out that frustrates me when I look over my shoulder. My drills kept me in a safe, but limited space. Here is a sampling of what I am talking about:

- I went to NYU Grad School. Why didn't I even think about living in Greenwich Village to save the time of commuting? Hold aside that I had little money to afford it, but I certainly could have explored it!
- Why didn't I think about living a year or a summer abroad between college and grad school. Once again I still had very little money and while I probably couldn't have afforded it, once again, I could have explored it!
- Why didn't I ever consider buying an office space and leaving the complex I had been in since 1978. I have paid more rent than I care to calculate as compared to owning a property and receiving the equity benefits. In the same vane, isn't it a bit strange to be in the same office complex for more than thirty years?
- Why didn't I ever consider moving away from my home to a different area of Fort Lauderdale when my kids left home? I have been in the same house since 1982. I don't know if any changes would have been better, but I certainly could have looked around at other possibilities.

As president of the COHSOA group, I don't ever consider breaking the mold, I just keep living in it! Change doesn't come easy and really never has. The one time I took a risk and made a major life change, I took a major hit. I will talk about that soon.

WISH YOU WERE HERE

I need to share an exception to the seriousness and productivity drills that guided most of my life. My wife and I have traveled extensively. Our list of trips begins with a two month, self-planned visit to Europe in 1965. We used "Europe On \$5.00 a Day" and the entire trip including renting a car for the summer, a cruise and a few other extras cost us less than \$2,000.00. That seems incredible by today's standards. I, who can't seem to break out of the mold, really can, but only when I leave it behind.

I can leave town often and do not have the adjustment of several days that some report before they can settle down and relax. I am comfortable immediately and can become less task oriented. It seems as if I am better at leaving the mold behind than I am at breaking or changing it when I am in my natural habitat. It is like being able, rather quickly, to move on to the next pipe once the previous one, to which I had become attached, broke. It is as if I have an on/ off switch. When I am "off duty" I am more able to chill. When I am "on duty" I can mostly do a drill.

Also interesting is that I can create a new mold, wherever I go. I quickly establish a new routine and stick to it. The good thing though is that when I am away, the new mold allows for a lot more fun and play. The "drills" are not nearly as focused on productivity and accomplishment. I am still a serious person when I am away, but a lot less so than while I am home. This is why my wife has promoted that we travel a great deal. She even became a travel agent at one point in our lives so we could take advantage of discounts and other perks.

Now let's get back to the emotional dynamics that have, to the best of my understanding, kept this robotic system in place. My hope is that by sharing my underpinnings, it will help you to look more closely at yours. Though we all have had different experiences, the programming process is very much the same across all people.

ON THE MAKING OF A PERSON

The making of a person is a rather complex process as is the end result. People are built from their inherited parts and their life experiences. We are all more randomly created than a finely engineered and tooled machine. If machines were left to the random whims that people are, they would not work very well. Perhaps this why most people don't work all that well, at least in certain areas. Fortunately, despite our flaws and imperfections, most of us are amazingly well built to withstand wear and tear, adapt, cope and survive.

Clearly, some of what we inherit in the way of parts and equipment are pretty set in stone. What you get is what you get in some areas and there is not much you can do about it. In other zones, there is much room for growth and improvement most of the time. Usually, our body and brain grow and expand as we age.

If we are fortunate we start our life with parts that work well. Some defects (i.e., poor vision) can be fixed while others (i.e., blindness) cannot. For all people, life experiences program our minds in a variety of ways. Though we may not come with a totally blank tablet as some philosophers suggest, the bulk of our programming is written after we arrive. Show me a person raised with abuse and I'll show you damages that interfere in obvious and subtle ways. Intriguingly, the same is true for those raised in both overprotective or neglectful homes. The extremes are never healthy for us. They teach distorted lessons that filter our view of ourselves and the world at large.

Often, the genes and the scenes conspire together to create an ill-fitting cloak. If, for example, your mother was and is a "nervous wreck", her genes and the scenes she exposed you to have likely caused you to be one too. The correlation is not perfect and there are always exceptions. Some even go to the opposite extreme. Psychologists call this counter-phobic behavior. Much of the time, however, the scenes and genes win. A major exception is that many people raised by less than kind and caring parents, learn by some form of reverse emotional osmosis, to become a very supportive and loving parent.

The scenes have a tendency to repeat themselves like greasy food. For one, you live with your parent(s) for a very long time. Unfortunately most parents typically stay pretty consistent across that time. The nervous mom continues to be a train wreck unless she gets some serious help. The abusive parent(s) usually stay that way. The same is true for all variations on hurtful scenes. Often, things get worse in a viral like way. Just ask anyone who made a toxic first marriage choice, just to escape from their toxic family.

Another reason is that, as hurtful scenes build one upon another, our sensitivities become heightened. We are more easily wounded. Take the example of a girl who grows up believing mom loved her brother more than her. That could have been shown or imagined in many different ways. As a result, this woman feels inferior and rejected. She carried herself that way from a young age, making her a prime target for other kids to pick on. As a teen, she discovered she could use sex as a tool for attention, caring and "love". She gets it fleetingly, but then just experiences more and more hurt, inadequacy, and rejection. Then she picks a man to marry, against her parents wishes, because she "believes in him", and the story goes downhill from there. Two or three marriages later she has proven the very feelings that she started out with in terms of inferiority. Her home was foreclosed, she declared bankruptcy, is on disability and drinks too much. Her brother is a success in all areas. She proved the very distorted belief with which she began. Self-fulfilling prophecy is undeniable.

As the examples demonstrate, our experiences and our corresponding emotional “shame and blame” entries build up to higher and higher levels and flood us out like a tsunami. They create our “mishagas” - those sensitivities, fears, addictions, phobias, etc, that both guide and limit our lives. For me, the combined influence of my scenes and genes conspired to build a tightly wound person who lost control of his life, experienced panic attacks and agoraphobia and then created a fearful, but proactive and productive robot. Much more to come on this topic soon.

A NOTE ABOUT “MISHAGAS”

Of all the Yiddish words I like to use, this one is my all time favorite. It is a wonderful, textured, multi-meaning word that is associated with silliness, craziness and quirkiness.

However, it is a lot softer and kinder to refer to your or my “mishagas” than to suggest you or I are crazy. Even non- Jewish people respond comfortably.

The important point is that we all possess our fair share or more of “mishagas”! That which is benign and unintrusive is OK. That which gets in the way of our or others comfort, peace of mind and balance needs to be addressed. Mental health professionals of all titles, persuasions and religions mitigate “mishigas”. That is what we do and that is what we do well!

THE MAKING OF A ROBOT

The idea that emotional cess piles on top of itself is an important one. It explains how emotional rocks of cess are built and why they are so difficult to overcome. It is very hard to climb over them or sneak around them. They block our path in so many different ways. When they land in our cess pools they make a mess. For a more detailed explanation of the cesspool and dam see my book, “Getting Up From an Emotional Down”. Happy to give you a copy if you do not have one.

Our emotional cess influences our mindly programs. The bedrock they create are formed out of a crazy glue that sticks strongly together. This bedrock defines who we are and influences many decisions, reactions and feelings. The reason feelings can be irrational is because of the influence of cess. The reason we can make so many self-defeating choices (see www.stopglop.com) is directly related to our cesspool. Therapy takes a sledge hammer to those rocks, one slow visit at a time. It also strengthens the dam which sits in front of the pool. It works, but it takes longer than anyone would like. The good news is that it takes much less time than it used to, given the progress we have made both with medications and with our understanding of the mind and the tools (i.e, cognitive behavioral therapy, EMDR, etc.) that have been developed.

Let's look at how the productive and task oriented robot grew within me. I hope it will help you to see and understand how your "mishagas" was created as well.

- I was raised by frightened parents who taught me to be afraid and to always try to control a dangerous world and myself. The tee shirts read, "BE CAREFUL", "WATCH OUT", "DON'T...", "USE TIME WISELY". The rules were laid down early and I followed them because I was shy and non-confrontive. I didn't enjoy being chided or criticized. The good boy that I was became the good man that I am. In and of itself that is a good thing. But...
- Mother stressed school work and doing well. Father stressed being careful, protecting oneself and staying alive. These combined early to limit my spontaneous child parts. A great example is when Mom walked me to and from elementary school, (other kids my age went by themselves), and we did multiplication tables and spelling words to use our time "wisely". The robot learned early that one never wastes "time". It is an issue I still struggle with all these years later. But, I've gotten much better of late!
- As an only child, my parent's sole focus was on me. That made following the rules even more important. It also made the spelling tests all the more important. All this important focus on me was damaging. Perhaps all of this emphasis on my performance made me dislike school, rebel and not try hard enough. I was a low B student through high school and a B/ C student my first 2 years of college. I much preferred to play, ironically enough. I lived for the school yard and the street. In those places I was free of supervision and worry.
- I know that I covered over whatever inner wounds and insecurities I was feeling by taking on certain images. I was "rocky" in Junior High with a motorcycle jacket, boots and Sal Mineo hairdo. Does anyone even know who he is? I then converted to "ivy league" introduced to me by a very close friend. Sad to say, he voted most likely to succeed, in high school, hit a rock wall made of crazy glue and emotional cess after achieving tremendous success as a psychologist and psychoanalyst. He stopped working for the bulk of his life and ultimately committed suicide. That's a whole other article. Or maybe it is this very one, just with a different ending.

- Another image issue had to do with the young robot's choice to graduate high school early to become a college boy early. The emphasis, unfortunately, was on boy, as I was not socially mature. Sheltering a child and interfering with his independence does not offer much in the way of either maturity or self-confidence. I was out of place in college for the first several years and it showed. By January of my second year in college I was blackballed by a fraternity. My immaturity and poor judgment brought it on myself. It was an image issue all the way. This is what I mean by the viral spiral of cess.
- Not only did I not behave appropriately, but I had a beef with the president of the fraternity because I wanted a real "hell" night. The story itself is not worth telling, but I definitely didn't use good judgment. Upon hearing the news that I had been blackballed the first person I called was my father who, best as I can remember, tried to be supportive and reassuring.
- In April of 1960 my father died at age forty-nine of a heart attack. In that unplanned and unexpected moment he validated everything he ever taught me about how scary and dangerous life can be. I don't think I was ever the same after his death. The fun loving part of me died with him. I felt abandoned, unprotected and on my own having to fend for myself. I flash back to being 7, 10 or more years old. Once a month my father went to a Fraternal Order meeting. I can see myself lying awake until I heard his key in the door at about 11pm. My protector was home and I could fall off to sleep with that reassurance. The truth is, unwittingly, he and Mom taught me to see things that way. His death left me unprotected.
- After Dad's death we had little money. Mom went back to work and I continued working part time while attending full-time college. All this money stuff just intensified my anxieties. The good news is that it pushed me towards being a serious student. In my junior and senior years I came close to being a straight A student. Studying replaced play, not completely, but significantly. The previously programmed robot began to grow.
- A neighbor friend was my role model in this regard. He studied all of the time so his grades would get him into medical school. He could spend five plus hours preparing for a biochemistry test. At that time that made no sense at all to me. Subsequent to my father's death I followed my friend's lead and spent even more time preparing for a test, as he was definitely smarter than I. The unfortunate story here is that he got into medical school, but his "mishagas" knocked him out. He could not deal with the blood and guts" of medicine despite his

excellent grades. Life can get us one way or the other and punch us wherever we might be vulnerable. As my role model fell by the wayside, my robot shined brightly.

- Getting into graduate school took a leap of faith for me as my GRE's were humiliating. My college professor, Mort Feinberg, author of "Why Smart People Do Dumb Things", convinced the admitting professor at NYU to give me a shot. They let me in on probationary status and I never looked back. My serious, productive, don't waste time robot was fully formed in that period. I was a A/B student for all four years, but for a C in Physiological Psychology. I studied so hard that I not only knew most of the answers on an exam, but the page number on which it appeared. I read a complicated learning theory book as often as I used to read comic books. My comic book days were gone forever. Work and seriousness replaced fun and games. I didn't waste time! I wore the tee shirt day and night.
- My six years working as an organizational psychologist at IBM continued my productive pursuit. My son was born six days after I began working so the stakes were higher than ever. Three years later my other son arrived and we bought a large home that cost \$50,000 against a salary of about \$15 – 18,000. Those were big sums back then. And even bigger sums relative to my meager origins. The stakes kept building and I kept trucking robotically along.

I went from a new employee at IBM to one of the top ranking psychologists among a group of 40+. Life was working well for me and I was working as hard as I could. I did allow for occasional TV, ping-pong and a few other "waste of time" moments. Not a lot, but some. Then on a whim we moved to Florida and it slowly but surely all came tumbling down. Like Jack and Jill and Humpty Dumpty combined, I had a great fall and there were no kings horsemen around. Yes, there was plenty of horse manure aka cess!

- Realize that I am leaving out so many experiences that fed into the buildup of my emotional cess. I forgot to tell you about the group of friends in the Bronx that I hung out with all the time. They decided that they didn't want to be friends with my best friend, who was quite a wild child. But they decided, so as to not hurt his feelings, to exclude me as well for no reason at all. Unfortunately, his cess and "mishagas" landed him in jail and rehab more than once, despite his high IQ. Unfortunately, I have met many "brilliant/idiots" in my life.
- I forgot to tell you about the many, many times that my father's worries converted into causing me to feel lesser than. I forgot to tell you of the terrible fights that my parents would have because my mother was

later than my father expected her to be and my father paced the house and stared out the window of our apartment waiting to sight her return off in the distance. Instead of being relieved to see her, he exploded with fury. Don't forget this was BC (before cell phones) .

- I forgot to tell you that at thirteen, the pressure I felt to do my Bar Mitzvah right and perfect was so strong as to limit my enjoyment of the moment and perhaps affected my view of religion from that point on.
- I forgot to tell you that when my mother finally allowed me to walk home from elementary school for lunch by myself it was pouring rain and I assumed that all bets were off because Little Billy isn't allowed to walk in the rain. I was so sure of that that I just stood in place waiting for her to arrive with my lunchbox in hand. She, on the other hand, was looking out the window waiting for me to turn the corner (she must have learned that from my father) and to her credit determined not to allow the rain to interfere with my first solo trip home. So when I went to the office crying and they called her she couldn't hear the phone ringing because of her head being out of the window.

Need I really say any more about the pile up of cess one upon the other? If so, I have 9220 more incidents to report and I'm sure many others have escaped my memory.

The real question for you to begin to ponder is what forces contributed to "making" you? Focus upon the positive influences, but also on those areas that are not working so well for you. What filled your pool and what put holes, cracks and crevices in your dam? From where does your "mishigas" originate?

MY ANXIETY/ANALYSIS YEARS OR HOW SIGMUND MADE ME CRAZIER BEFORE HE MADE ME SANER

The one time I threw caution to the wind, didn't pay much attention to my lists and broke the mold by moving to Florida, I fell fast and furiously down the mountain of my mind. I had the pleasure of personally experiencing what I eventually came to call an emotional down. My degree did not come with a vaccine.

As I said, I enjoyed a very successful career at IBM as an Organizational Psychologist from 1966 -1972. My main job was studying morale and job satisfaction. I was asked to conduct interviews in our Miami office. In December of 1971 I left LaGuardia airport in a near blizzard. I arrived on a beautiful, balmy 75 degree and sunny South Florida day. That evening I called my wife and said," There is a better way to live and I am not willing to wait until I am 65 to do it."

By the summer of 1972 I had resigned my position with IBM, sold our house and our family was flying courtesy of Eastern Airlines to South Florida. My plan was to work

for the airline for a year or so, while simultaneously starting up a consulting company called Morale Inc. Unfortunately, my situation at the airline was unacceptable and I resigned within a few months time. I had a small consulting contract with IBM, but the insecurity of not having a job and a paycheck overwhelmed me and flooded me with anxiety. The CEO of Morale Inc. had very low morale even before he launched the company.

My anxieties drained me and interfered with my ability to move about comfortably and this, in turn, affected my ability to market myself. Everything had to be done long distance via the mails and via publishing articles and advertising in a variety of business journals. Although these efforts generated some work, it was not sufficient. I was forced to give up my dream. Hindsight being clear, that in many ways was fortunate, but at the time it was a knockout punch to my self-esteem. I was unemployed, building a home I could ill afford in Fort Lauderdale, demoralized and flooded with anxiety. It is in that setting that I began my career as a clinician at Nova University in 1973 and began a fiveyear psychoanalysis to help me overcome my anxiety and panic disorder.

The brief version of my longterm analysis was that it took much too long, felt much too insensitive and allowed a lot of irrelevant issues to come into play. It also lacked the reassurance I desperately needed that someday I would be OK. All requests for support yielded a similar response from my analyst, "We have to keep analyzing."

I had previously experienced being a psychoanalytic patient while attending a post-graduate training program in clinical psychology in Manhattan, New York. Even though at that point I had no symptoms, one of their self-serving requirements was that you be in psychoanalysis with one of the professors of the school. This insured that they kept their caseloads well filled, while pounding away at our vulnerable minds. I ultimately quit the psychoanalyst I was seeing because I found it to be an abusive experience. The one in Ft. Lauderdale was not overtly abusive, but my feeling about psychoanalysis is that it is less than warm, kind or supportive.

The analyst is very quiet and the client does most of the talking. I vividly remember him interrupting me in mid-sentence saying, "Our time is up for today". When I tried to finish my sentence he dismissed me and said, "We will continue next time". It may have been fitting in the mid 1800's in Vienna when Freud developed these techniques, but it clearly didn't fit the 70's with our human relations emphasis. Unfortunately, the 70's were still the dark ages for understanding and helping people's minds.

In many ways, I learned how to help others by doing the opposite of what I experienced in both of these analyses. I am an active talker in my therapy work once I have a sense of where the person is at and their needs. I am also reassuring in a variety of ways at least when I am optimistic of a positive outcome. When someone is going through an emotional down it is important that they feel hope and optimism, rather than the more natural feeling of futility

To make a long analysis short, the truth is it ultimately did help me, but it was like going from Miami to New York by way of Cuba. If you don't know when to make a U turn you are never going to get there. I don't believe and have not found necessary in my helping others that they have to revisit every dirty emotional diaper of their lives. Much can be done in the here and now to focus on modifying distorted belief systems that may or may not have come from those early diapers.

While I believe our history is relevant and our trauma and experiences can be scaring to us emotionally, (think cess here)I have found that the helping process can be moved along in a more active way. I truly believe that under today's conditions what took me five years to achieve with my analyst could be accomplished in five to nine months today. That could be done with a month's worth of twice weekly visits and then four+ of once weekly. I can't swear it won't take a little bit longer depending on the individual circumstances, but I can swear that it will not take five years or even two.

What I did learn from that experience in the 70's is what I previously stated. The family in which I grew up taught me from an early age on that life was very dangerous, very scary and to be traveled cautiously. Here are some more illustrations:

- My parents had a party for my oneyear birthday to celebrate that I survived under their care for one year.
- There are pictures of my mother giving me a bath wearing a mask when she had a cold just so I would not get her germs.
- In the 5th grade, I was invited to a birthday party and all of the other boys and girls parents allowed them to walk to the party by themselves. My father insisted that he walk me there and pick me up which was painfully embarrassing at that time.
- When I wanted to ride a two wheel bike my father hired a neighbor girl a year older to check me out and make sure that I could really ride.
- When I proudly received my New York State driver's license at the age of 18 after more driving lessons than had ever been purchased in the history of the Bronx, New York, my father hired one of his co- workers (as my father did not drive) to check me out and make sure I was drive-worthy. Like a tax return I was always being audited

Of course, all of these and the thousands of other instances that must have occurred were not very pride worthy and certainly did not bolster my confidence in myself or in my view of the world as anything other than a snake pit of disasters waiting

to occur. It is a hop, skip and a short jump to go from the fact that I was out of work and out of money with a family to support, to having fallen into the center of that pit.

Clearly, the unspoken messages of my past were, hold your ground, stay in only safe space, don't rock the boat, and whatever you do don't break the mold. Coming to Florida and leaving a good job behind violated those guidelines and what occurred validated them in powerful ways. From that point on, especially as I continued to rebuild my life and move forward successfully, I wasn't going to rock the boat any more.

As a result of all of these different but related circumstances, I needed to feel in control, feel as if I was striving to achieve and accomplish and protect the mold that I worked so hard to build. This was not a conscious process, but part of a too tightly woven programming. This combined to limit my play, maximize my work and keep me, "in control". The workshops I attended in 2007 and beyond and the therapy I entered into around that time were a search for alternatives and rebalancing of my programs. I believe I felt I had paid my dues, served my time and now needed more than travel away from home to change the course of my life. Interestingly, it is Tuesday and I am on the beach alternating between editing this article and reading a book.

OTHER INFLUENCES

I think being a therapist can be very influential in reinforcing robotic patterns and programs while promoting a more serious philosophy of life in and of itself. I have met many, too many people, who have lived a casual, carefree and playful lifestyle who come to me with depression, anxiety or divorce because of the consequences of "excessive play." In that way I believe helping people through such crises did not help me to see an alternative or more balanced view. In fact, it reinforced the view I already had. All work... may make Bill a dull boy, but at least he is not declaring bankruptcy, getting divorced, losing his home to foreclosure, going to jail or smoking crack, etc.

In addition, I encountered many people in and out of my office whose serious, productive, task orientation was even stronger than mine and yielded even more successful fruits than I had been able to sow. One person, in particular, comes to mind, who played a significant role in my life. The philosophy that was espoused and modeled was hard work sometimes seven days a week - even at a pretty old age, when most very wealthy people would have long retired or at least taken it down a notch or two. One day when we were talking, he asked, "Do you like the work you do?" I said, "I really do and helping people is a gift and a blessing and makes me very proud." I was told in no uncertain terms, "Never stop!"

For many years I have embraced that view, but one of the many changes is that I am beginning to challenge it. Even though I feel I am at the top of my form in helping people effectively and efficiently, I may want to retire in the next couple of years. It is not easy to deal with people who are unhappy when they first arrive in my office and remain unhappy for a while. Although I don't feel burnt out, I do feel it might be more pleasant

as I get older to work in a different environment which is fundamentally happier. I have often kidded over the years that in my next life I am coming back as a Wedding/Bar Mitzvah band leader as they only deal with happy people- at least until the person making the party has to pay the bill !. I have long retired my sax and clarinet so that is out of the question. I do have a few alternatives in mind.

THE OTHER DOORS

I think we have spent enough time going through Door One: Participant Observation. As a result, I looked around for ways to modify my behaviors. I embraced Door Two: A Transformational Hypothesis.

I can't honestly say that I walked into therapy and on the first visit said, "I am tired of being a robot. Please fix me." My focus was actually on other issues that may have had some relationship to my robot-like ways, but not in any direct sense. It, didn't take long before we crashed into my walls made of crazy glue and rocks of emotional cess. As I previously outlined, my issues involved my need to be in control, being a person of extremes, and being a person programmed to remain vigilant at all times. In addition, I was taught early on to use his time wisely. All of these were the building blocks of the robot. All of these were explored and challenged as I walked through Door Three: Redefinition.

A variety of issues combined to enable me to make some significant shifts in my view of the world and myself which in turn allowed me to integrate a more playful nature into my serious one. At first it required conscious thought and efforts. I had to literally say to myself "Don't be a robot," in order to adjust. It reminded me of when I first learned to drive a car which required constant inner chatter to keep me focused and to insure my safety and that of my passengers. It occurred again years later when I first drove stick shift. Over time, what demands hypervigilance becomes automatic pilot. The same was true with regard to shifting how I reacted to a variety of situations. Over the last twelve months a move toward more fun and less work has begun to occur naturally. Of interest is that, just as the robot needs more robotic behaviors, so the more playful parts beget more play. Perhaps it is just my tendency to become addicted to whatever I prioritize, although in this case it does seem more like an integration of the serious with the non-serious. It really feels like balance for me.

I am pleased to report that I am not having any difficulty at this time with what is the most difficult door, Door Four: Continuity. The struggle to sustain continuity is what typically creates the yoyo that we seem to go through, not only in dieting, but in most behavioral change. The smoker stops smoking then starts again and then stops and then starts again. It is the same with most behavioral change. Old programs and our walls made of crazy glue along with the cess that built them call our name. Yoyos occur because underlying programs often don't get addressed. The diet doesn't last until the cause of overeating is understood and released in a healthier way. (seewilliampenzer.com, "YoYo No More: My Skinny on Being Fat). In the last few years

of therapy I have dealt with a lot of that cess in a way that has freed me from the programs that have guided my journey for so long.

It is also possible that, given my age, I have come to realize, if not now, when? Perhaps my dam feels that I have earned the right to a slower pace and a more relaxed way of living. After all, going to the movies in the afternoon or watching a football game is not exactly bizarre or destructive behavior. It is what comes naturally to most people as they strive toward balancing out the stress with some rewards. I always say, "Better late than never." So it is high time that I reap some of the benefits of a more relaxed way of life, payback and dividends for years and years of serious effort. In this sense, Door Five : Meant to Be has come into play literally and figuratively. In many ways, timing is everything in all of our modification efforts..

In addition, that I am sitting on the beach on this afternoon dictating this part of the article certainly shows that I haven't turned into a "wild and crazy" kind of guy. That I will shortly put my recorder down and pick up a Pat Conroy novel that I am reading reflects very clearly the integration that I have achieved. The robot would go from this article to the next article to reading a technical journal as well as dictating a few letters to making a few serious phone calls, etc, etc. The new me takes time for serious tasks and time for more playful and relaxing moments, even though I will still admit that many of my more serious tasks are relaxing as well. The good news is that my more playful activities are comfortable and relaxing, too.

I don't want to make it all sound and seem as if it is a seamless process. There are definitely times when I catch my robot self marching in place toward a productive destination. I am very easily able to catch him and gently, but directly move him to where I want to be. In a sense, productivity and task orientation are more of a choice than they have ever been since I was twenty years old. That is quite a leap of taking better care of me after serving almost 50 years under the control and direction of the robot. For those who might be wondering, I do not put the more playful stuff on any kind of a list. Nor do I check it off in my mind. I just simply take it for what its worth and enjoy both the satisfaction of being able to do it comfortably and the experience itself. I watched the final two of the NCAA tonight. It was a heck of a game that I really enjoyed watching. Not sure I cared who won. I won simply by watching.

A RANDOM SAMPLING OF THE EVOLVED ME

I fear that most people will chuckle about the fact that what I have been able to achieve is so ordinary and commonplace. I guess the biggest problem I face is that I have never been an ordinary and commonplace type of guy. So without any self-consciousness to anyone's reactions, here are some of the many things I can now allow myself to experience and enjoy:

- Watching football practically all day on a Sunday and generally not doing anything productive on that day. Perhaps I do water the plants.
- Watching Dean Martin DVD's from his shows of yesteryear which is both enjoyable and nostalgic.
- Actually watching a couple of recently purchases DVD's whereas in the past I have bought some and stored them away in a drawer never to be seen again.
- Reading through a People Magazine somehow enjoying catching up on the focus of the paparazzi's, even though I don't recognize most of the names.
- Reading novels on a regular basis.
- Staring into space pondering whatever more than ever before.
- Suggesting we go to a local theater to see a show.
- Socializing, being more easy going, hosting parties, talking to people in elevators, etc.
- Planning some serious projects for the future, but with no particular time line or demands involved.
- No longer blowing my hair dry after years of doing that.
- And much more!

WHERE'S THE BEEF?

Of all these positive shifts in the way I live my life at this point in my life, the most incredible has to do with eating meat. Upon returning home from West Africa in 1982 I found that I had completely lost my taste for meat. This was not a safari, but a tour of alternative healing to which I have previously referred and which will be the subject of Part IV of this series. There was no clear explanation for the dramatic change in my eating habits upon my return. Prior to the trip I was a meat eater, regularly enjoying steaks, hamburgers, veal, lamb, pot roast, deli meats, etc. Almost all of that disappeared upon my return home without any overt influence except perhaps the tour leader's comment that he had stopped eating meat at age 25. He was, however, by no means asking us to join him.

Through all these many years I just couldn't envision myself taking a bite of steak, roast beef or a hamburger or anything like that. For whatever reasons, I was able to eat a piece of salami now and then and an occasional piece of bacon and perhaps a hot dog once a year, but for the most part meat was out of my diet. I did eat fish and fowl.

Out of the blue, a few months ago, I had the wild hair thought about eating an occasional piece of meat or at least tasting it. It occurred during the active phase of my focus on not being a robot and, intriguingly enough, during a brief reunion visit with the leader of the '82 African trip who lives in California. I didn't say anything to my wife or anyone else at the time, but just let the idea roll around my mind. Upon our return we were in a hamburger joint where I was able to always get a grilled fish salad which I was

happily eating when my wife went to refill our soda. While she was gone I had the impulse to taste her hamburger and did. Low and behold I enjoyed it. Since then I have tasted all forms of meat, albeit in moderation for health reasons.

The robotic like avoidance of meat is gone, replaced by a more integrated and flexible diet. Clearly, this change as well as many others that continue to occur were “meant to be” – Door Five. One of the many things that can occur as we get older is to take a closer look at ourselves. As we realize that we have less time left than we would like, major transformations and shifts in our priorities can more easily occur. Whoever said “You can’t teach an old dog new tricks” was, in my opinion and experience, dead wrong!

I am sure there are many, many more things I could list that have occurred over the past years. However, I would rather read my novel right now. I hope, beyond my sharing of my experiences this article stimulates you to think a little more about you and the areas that you would like to look at and modify by crossing the Bridge I Call Transition. For me the walk across, depending on which perspective I take, has been painfully slow or remarkably fast. The amount of time it takes to make significant changes in our being is not the significant issue. What is important is that we do. I wish you good luck in that pursuit. This afternoon we are going to the movies. Generally not a big deal, but for me a giant leap forward given I have ten days left to complete the remaining CEU’S I need for my license. It will get done. I’m quite sure of that.

In fact, I did it with time to spare. Tonight I am watching game 2 of the NBA playoffs. A quiet part of me asks, “Have you lost your mind, Bill?” No, in fact, I have found it! I believe my wife would agree and add “finally!”