

Work Adds Life to Your Years

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All people learn, and continually relearn or modify their behaviors throughout their lifetimes and organize their ways of thinking and interacting with other in recurrent types of situations. This learning occurs both by active social participation and by passive experience such as reading or watching other, and includes the development of elaborated systems of thoughts, feelings, and values. The idea is that learning has an external expression (overt behaviors) and an internal expression (covert behaviors).

Formal and informal patterned behavior is shared by members of groups ranging in size from nations to professions, business, and other work groups, fraternal organizations, neighborhood locations, extended and nuclear families.

The learning perspective of human behavior cultivates the following premises: The learning process applies to all humans. Since people affect their environment, the process of influence (and its inverse, adaptation) are interactive. This interaction is characteristic of both the social environment and the people participating within it. Since people influence their environments and their environments influence them, it follows that people have an effect on their own behavior!

Individuals can respond directly to their own behavior, as in feeling guilty because something they have done; and thus in the analytical sense, a person is a part of his/her own stimulus environment. This means that the long chain of individual environment interaction may consist of a person's responding to his/her own behavior and providing consequences for it, while external environment and

consequences are salient at the beginning and end of the chain. In this sense, it is possible to talk of a kind of self-responsibility for human behavior.

Psychological studies show that people can develop adaptational skills (learning to learn) that apply to broad classes of situations. Anthropologists who have done field work in several different cultures often claim to get better at the initial process of adjustment. The same is to say that language learning gets easier after mastering several unrelated languages.

The importance of the situational context of learning is critical but it cannot be overemphasized. The time, place, and consequence of behavior are core determinants of the learning process, and subtle situational differences may lead to entirely different patterns of behavior.

Recurrent or habitual behavior may be viewed as static or dynamic. Static behavior can be seen as adapting to a particular environmental niche or setting, with no pressure for it to change or remain the same (one learns how to do things within an organization and then performs the behavior in appropriate situations). Dynamic homeostatic (equilibrium) processes of mutual influence may be responsible for the consistency of other behaviors (pressure to keep participants in a work group focused on a disliked task or prevent members from discussing an important and controversial topic).

Deviation – amplifying positive feedback processes of mutual influence may lead either to the internal restructuring of a group or to its breakup. For example, an escalating conflict between two groups may lead an organization to reorganize and differentiate into two distinct units, or to restructure itself in some other way, or to expel members of the weaker group one, or several at a time, or two split into two or more new entities, or to self-destruct altogether.

This is not to deny the importance of genetic or physiological influences on behavior. While standards of beauty vary widely from culture to culture, the body one has is largely determined by genetics (though environmental influences such as diet, exercise and healthcare are also important).

This sketch of how human behavior can be understood places considerable importance to the ongoing effect of the environment. For example, internal events such as thoughts and feelings are viewed mainly as the result of previous learning rather than as primary causes of behavior (though once acquired, they are among the factors that determine how the individual act in a particular situation. My own perspective understands human behavior as inextricably bound with its social environment, but most of all it also stresses the capacity of human beings for learning new modes of behavior and interaction, thus for engaging in heavy re-learning experiences regardless of age.

It was Pablo Picasso, the great Spanish painter, who said that he was always doing that which he cannot do in order to learn how to do it. Lifelong learning is seldom easy but always exciting. Even when you have a gift and want to learn, you will make mistakes. But by taking the risk to live your dreams and learning new skills, we all can be on the way to a better performance and better meaning.

PEOPLE BECOME OLD DOGS WHEN THEY STOP DOING NEW TRICKS. The point is that, of course, that you can teach old dogs new tricks, if you engage in the correct learning process. You are never too old to live your calling. You can always learn constructive things and make a difference within your surroundings.

The face in the mirror may not match the playful soul within, but life is always more about what you can give and do. The challenge is for always finding new and better ways to live the next day. We all have a few more hills to climb no matter the age.

Human beings are never done dreaming, working and living!

Will organizations want old dogs? You bet they will. They are looking for well-trained experienced people, willing to be contingent workforce and doing projects as needed.

Lifelong learning is the antidote for feeling victimized by a world of change. Life may be tough, but we are tougher. Joy is what happens to us when we allow ourselves to recognize good things regardless of storms.

If you want to cultivate hope, keep learning and keep turning your gifts into recyclables. To live life to the fullest keep learning, keep praying, keep laughing, and keep loving. Become a possibilitarian!

Work adds years into your life!