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7 STEPS FOR PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

By Karl Arnold Belser, Ph.D.

I have reformulated ideas from Vern Black's book *The Integrity Tone Scale* and from Werner Erhardt's *Erhardt Seminars Training* (EST), which was popular in the 1970's and early 1980s, as a 7-step personal development process. I used these seven steps to overcome vision loss and become a disk drive expert and prolific inventor, and I think the principles are worth reviewing today, 30 years later.
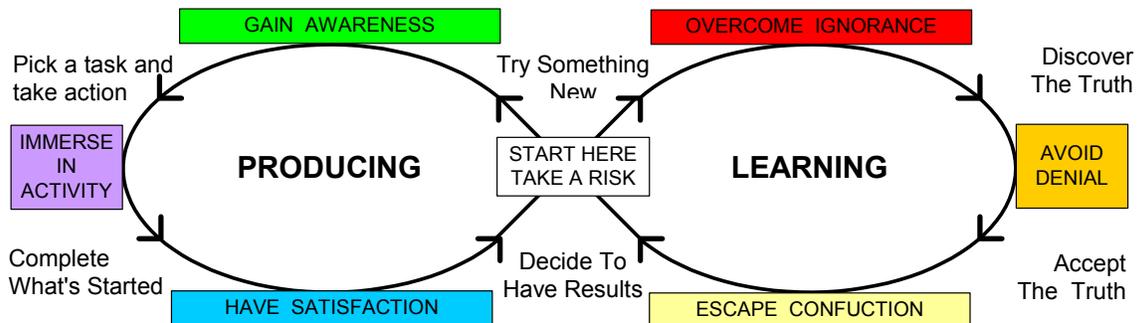

Figure 1. The Personal Development Diagram

One must decide to take a risk in order to start the personal development process. One of two states may then occur: Awareness if a person knows what he is doing and ignorance if he doesn't. I know that ignorance is a necessary part of personal development because only by overcoming my mistakes do I learn.

The right loop is the learning process. It consists of the states of ignorance, denial and confusion. These three states are traversed by: trying something new, discovering the truth when unwanted consequences occur, accepting this truth, and then deciding to have results.

The left loop is the producing process. It consists of the states of awareness, activity and satisfaction. These three states are traversed by: trying something new, picking a task and taking action, completing what's started, and deciding to have results again.

I may be in several of these learning or producing states for different situations.

Lastly, I know that I can become confused if I don't write about the situations that are bothering me. I believe that the language of my subconscious mind is emotion and that my conscious mind is the interpreter of my experience.

The Personal Development Diagram in Figure 1 is my guide, and a poster of it has hung on the wall of my office since 1983.

The seven steps are:

1)   TAKE A RISK by trying something new.

2)   OVERCOME IGNORANCE by discovering the truth.

3)   AVOID DENIAL by accepting the truth.

4)   ESCAPE CONFUSION by deciding to have results.

5)   GAIN AWARENESS by seeing what needs to be done and doing it.

6)   IMMERSE IN ACTIVITY by being productive.

7)   HAVE SATISFACTION by completing what's started, and then go back to step 1.

The following sections expand upon these steps using a real-life example.

1. TAKE A RISK

Central to my process is a personal journal, and I begin by listing 3 "wins" per day to change my attitude.

The wins could be as simple as: I cleaned my house, I invited a friend to lunch, or I completed my income taxes. As I list more wins, my attitude improves, and I become willing to take a risk and deal with my current problems.

My imperative to move forward is: "Try Something New".

2. OVERCOME IGNORANCE

I define ignorance as a lack of knowledge or comprehension about my problem areas. I know that I'm ignorant when I'm experiencing sustained feelings such as fearfulness, depression or hopelessness.

James was a manager at a large disk drive company when he lost his central vision in both eyes. He hated his job, and one day he started crying at work. He contemplated suicide.

There were many situations associated with his feelings, severe stage fright when he had to speak at work, depression with an unhappy home life, hopelessness because nothing excited him. He wrote in his personal journal about what he felt until he uncovered the truth, which was that he liked technical work, not management.

My imperative to overcome ignorance is: "Discover The Truth."

3.   AVOID DENIAL

I define denial as the refusal to admit the truth. I know that I'm in denial when I'm experiencing sustained feelings such as outrage, righteousness, and anger.

As with ignorance, James wrote in his journal about each situation: outrage that his managers promoted him too quickly (They were at fault), righteousness because his wife wouldn't go to work (she was at fault), anger at himself for not being tough enough (he was at fault). At some point he saw that blaming everyone was futile. He already knew the truth, and he just didn't want to accept it. Finally he accepted the fact that he could only change himself.

My imperative to avoid denial is: "Accept The Truth."

4.   ESCAPE CONFUSION

I define confusion as the quality or state of being disordered or mixed up. I know that I'm confused when I'm experiencing sustained feelings such as reluctance, self-consciousness, or guilt.

James's doctors told him that he was permanently
disabled after he lost his central vision. He still wanted
to work, but he couldn't work in the lab, and he didn't want
to be a manager. He was confused. Should he give up and
take disability, or should he try to find another way to
make a living?

Acceptance of the truth was a freeing experience for
James because he knew that he could choose a new course of
action, even though there might be a loss.

At some point, as he wrote in his journal, he had an
idea. He could redefine his job so that he was not limited
by his low vision. His company didn't fire him, and he
wanted to meaningfully contribute to its disk drive business
without being a manager.

My imperative to escape confusion is: "Decide To Have
Results."

5. *GAIN AWARENESS*

I define awareness, the opposite of ignorance, as
having or showing realization, perception, or knowledge. I
know that I'm aware when I'm experiencing sustained feelings

such as curiosity, freedom, challenge, hope, or anticipation.

James used a telescope, magnifying lenses, and a computerized speech synthesizer to function somewhat normally with his central vision loss, but he couldn't work in the lab. He was an experienced engineer and was curious about all aspects of disk drive operation. He studied the disk drive and then wrote working papers and patents about improvements that he discovered. Again the journal writing process (writing working papers) was useful in clearly presenting the possibilities. He gradually became knowledgeable in most aspects of the technology.

My imperative to gain awareness is: "Pick A Task And Take Action."

6.   IMMERSE IN ACTIVITY

I define activity as a pursuit that produces results. I know that I'm engaged in meaningful activity when I'm experiencing sustained feelings such as purpose, motivation, or enthusiasm.

James was now an expert in disk drive system architecture, so he quit the large disk drive company and

joined a start-up company. Shortly thereafter another large disk drive company purchased the start-up, and he adapted his new technology to the new company's products. He now wrote many working papers, always keeping the 'big picture' in mind. The results were several new projects.

My imperative to move from the state of activity is: "Complete What's Started."

7. *HAVE SATISFACTION*

I define satisfaction as the happiness that comes with a successful conclusion. I know that I'm satisfied when I'm experiencing sustained feelings such as contentment, benevolence, and gratefulness.

James felt satisfied because he earned enough money from the start-up company to retire. He now had free time to consider new ventures. He wondered if losing his central vision wasn't really a blessing in disguise.

The imperative to move from having satisfaction back to take a risk (Step 1) is: "Decide To Have More Results."

In conclusion, the 7-step personal development process characterizes what I call aliveness, and my aliveness won't end if I never give up.

SIDEBAR

HISTORY OF THE PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT DIAGRAM

Vern Black, who was one of the staff members of the Erhardt Seminars Training (EST) in the early 1970s, wrote a booklet called *The Integrity Tone Scale* from which the table in Figure 2 was copied. He claimed that the Integrity Tone Scale was the underpinning of EST, which was enormously popular during the 1970s and early 1980s. However, Werner Erhardt never gave out any written material. I don't know who copied whom, but the EST terminology agrees well with that of the Integrity Tone Scale.

Werner and his trainers regularly used items from this table. For example, Werner used to say that a person was "above the line" if his integrity was at or above the DETRIMENT/RESPONSIBLE row. He would point out that you are above the line if you keep the agreements that you make. He also made people memorize a phrase something like "Whether you know it or not, you are the cause in the matter." He inspired many people, including me, to make a difference.

See the positive article on EST in Psychology Today in August 1975

http://www.rickross.com/reference/est/estpt8.html

and the critical article from The Skeptics Dictionary

http://skepdic.com/est.html.

INTEGRITY TONE SCALE

STATE OF INTEGRITY	EMOTIONAL TONE SCALE	ATTITUDE	PROBLEM RECOGNITION	SOLUTION (LOVE) RECOGNITION	HOW TO MOVE OUT
Empower/Source	Serenity of Beingness Games Action	Serenity Ecstasy Joy Compassion	Liberty	Trust Faith	Expand Responsibility Increase Integrity Empower Others
Abundance	Exhilaration Aesthetic	Gratefulness Cherishing Ardor Enchantment	Welcome	Devotion	Economize Study for Even More Results Strengthen Elements That Cause Abundance
Normal	Enthusiasm Cheerfulness	Enthusiasm Admiration Cheerfulness	Opportunity	Enhancement	Strengthen Positive Results Adjust For Any Diminished Results
Emergency	Empathy Strong Interest	Amusement Liking Satisfaction Expectation	Challenge	Cooperation	Be At Purpose Promote Economize Prepare for Expanded Activity Stiffen Integrity
Danger	Wondering Caution Mild Interest Concern Mild Anxiety	Curiosity	Lure	Discovery	Recognize Detrimental Elements and Handle Directly Insure Ethical Behavior
Non-Existence	Contented	Hope Distant	Feel Separated	Unimportant	Make Goal Locate Channels of Communication Communicate to Make Yourself Known Find Out What Is Needed or Wanted Start Doing It

Detriment/responsible	Disinterested
	Guilt
	Embarrassment
	Bored
		Disappointment
		Disinterest
		Reluctance
		Self-consciousness
		Feeling Wrong
		Indifference
		Boredom
			Obligation	Endeavor
				Assist
				Agree With
					Clean Up Damage
					Acknowledge Your Trustworthiness
					List Your Valuablenesses
					Demonstrate Your Valuableness
					    (Serve)
					Validate Your Accomplishment
					    And Give Yourself A Gift

Uncertainty	Monotonous	Annoyance Vexation Exasperation	Infringement	Evasion Deflection	Choose

Adversary (Band #1)	Antagonism
	Hostility
	Pain
		Defiance
		Shock
		Outrage
		Reasonableness
			Attack	Suppression	Recognize Your Opposition
					    to Results
					Discover Your Positions and
					    Their Payoffs
					Choose to Play for Results

Adversary (Band #2)	Anger Hate	Arrogance Conceit Contempt	Insult	Dominance	

Disloyalty (Band #1)	Resentment
	No Sympathy
	Unexpressed
	    Resentment
	Covert Hostility
		Humiliation
		Resentment
		Petulance
		Sullenness
		Suspicion
			Conspiracy	Stealth	Decide To Trust Yourself
					Tell The Truth About Your
					    Experience
					List The Decisions To
					    Trust Yourself

Disloyalty (Band #2)	Fear Despair Terror	Apprehension Fear Dread Worry	Threat	Protection	
Disloyalty (Band #3)	Numb Sympathy Propitiation	Loneliness Yearning Sympathy Propitiation Despondency Numbness	Trap	Rescue	
Disloyalty (Band #4)	Grief Making Amends Undeserving Self-Abasement Victim Hopeless	Grief Remorse Making Amends No Help No Hope	Burden	Solace	
Disloyalty (Band #5)	Apathy	Apathy	Overwhelm	Surrender	
Disloyalty (Band #6)	Useless Dying Failure Pity Regret Accountable Blame Shame Controlling Bodies Protecting Bodies Worshipping Bodies Sacrifice Hiding Being Objects Being Nothing Can't Hide Total Failure	Ruin Self Pity Blame Shame Condemned Greed Jealous Malice Anguish Nothing	Betrayal	Revenge	

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Figure 2.   The Integrity Tone Scale

The author received material from Vern Black after he had left the EST organization, and realized the following:

1) A person is not a point on the Integrity Tone Scale as Vern Black and Werner Erhardt asserted. Rather a person manifests a collection of behaviors each having a position on the scale.

2) The process of moving up The Integrity Tone Scale is the process of learning relative to a particular situation. Hence the process is iterative. A linear table with a top and bottom is inappropriate. The diagram should be a loop.

3) The learning process is really the process of personal growth, which never ends unless one gives up or dies. Hence the learning process is infinite and might best be indicated by an infinity sign.

The author drew The Infinite Growth Chart in Figure 3 in 1983, independent of Vern Black, to try to fix the problem with the table. The personal growth diagram evolved from there over a period of more than 20 years.
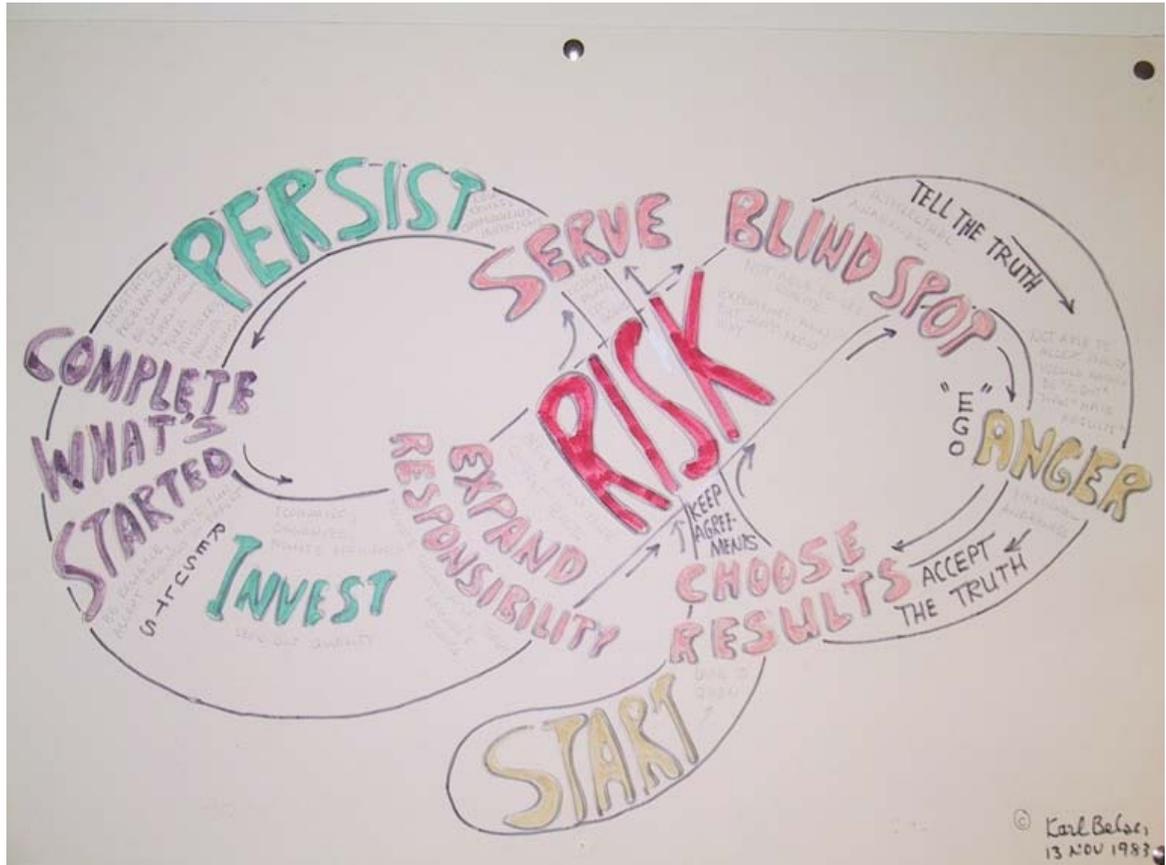
Figure 3.   The Infinite Growth Chart

SIDEBAR

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Karl Belser was born in 1940 in Virginia and has lived in Santa Clara Valley California (Silicon Valley) since 1951. He received his PhD degree in Electrical Engineering from Stanford n 1967.

Karl worked for the IBM Corporation in San Jose after graduation until his retirement in 1996, and after retirement he worked for several disk drive and telecommunications start-up companies. He is a prolific inventor, which he attributes to following the 7 Steps for Personal Development. He holds 64 US patents in the fields of graphics displays, computer printers, disk drives, and optical communications.

Karl has read widely about personal psychology and has done many personal growth workshops, including the Erhardt Seminar Training in 1976. This psychological training was essential in his ability to survive central vision loss in 1984.

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