



CHAPTER 7

Stress-Prone and Stress-Resistant Personality Traits

Happiness is a decision. . . . Optimism is a cure for many things.

—Michael J. Fox

In the summer of 1966, at the age of 55, Nien Cheng (**FIG. 7.1**) was placed under house arrest in her private home in Shanghai. It was the dawn of the Cultural Revolution in Mao Tse-Tung's communist China. Thousands of innocent people found themselves incarcerated, political prisoners accused of being enemies of the state. Educated in London, employed by Shell Oil as a management advisor, and widow of a former official of Chiang Kai-shek, Nien Cheng quickly became the target of several communist indictments. She was soon moved from house arrest to solitary confinement, in a cell no bigger than a walk-in closet, at the Number 1 Detention House for political prisoners. Convinced she had committed no crime, she defended her innocence despite hunger, disease, intimidation, terror, and humiliation. Many innocent prisoners perished from the torture of the communist Red Guards, yet Nien Cheng was determined not merely to survive but to prove her innocence. Upon her release in 1972, after six and a half years in solitary confinement, she was declared a victim of false arrest.

At this time, she frantically sought the whereabouts of her only daughter. What she discovered about the fate of Meiping Cheng made it impossible for her to remain in her homeland. In 1980, Nien Cheng emigrated to North America, whereupon she wrote of how she prevailed over this tumultuous experience in her stirring autobiography, *Life and Death in Shanghai*. As a guest speaker in my Strategies for Stress Reduction class, Mrs. Cheng was asked what it was that allowed her to survive such a harrowing ordeal. Gracefully, she answered, "I saw my stay at the detention house as a challenge, and with the grace of God, I was committed to proving my innocence." She left no doubt that she demonstrated a special personality in surviving her ordeal.

Until her death in 2009 at age 94, Nien Cheng practiced T'ai Chi ch'uan daily and stayed current with world events. In my last conversation with her, in which she reflected back on that time in prison as well as present-day events, she said, "Patience is an important aspect of survival, as is faith. The pace of the world has become quite fast today.



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FIGURE 7.1 Mrs. Nien Cheng was falsely imprisoned at age 56 for six and a half years during the rule of Mao Tse-Tung. She credited her survival to many factors, including commitment to her innocence and patience, which helped her cope with a grueling ordeal.

Please tell your students how important it is to employ these inner resources.”

Many words can be used to describe the likes of Nien Cheng and others who express the epitome of the triumph of the human spirit—Nelson Mandela, Rosa Parks, and the scores of unsung heroes, who grace the Facebook feeds, have overcome great adversity to declare victory and move on with their lives. That word is resiliency. Resiliency is the new catchphrase in corporate stress management circles. It is also the new buzzword in military training, where soldiers and military officers are being taught skills to cope with stress both on the battlefield and in the transition back to civilian life. The most common definition of resiliency is to bounce back from crisis. The people we call heroes share a common personality trait: resiliency. For some it's innate, for most it's learned.

Although almost everyone has a concept of what personality is, scholars in the field of psychology have yet to agree on a definition of the term. The word originally derives from the Latin word *persona*, meaning mask, as in the masks used by actors in ancient Greek plays. In more contemporary times, personality has come to mean a conglomeration of several characteristics—behaviors, expressions, moods, and feelings—that are perceived by others. The complexity of one's personality is thought to be shaped by genetic factors, family dynamics, social influences, and a wealth of personal experiences. Just as there are many definitions, so there are also many theories of personality that attempt to explain the differences in the psychological make-up from one person to another. The basis of many of these theories centers on whether these traits and behaviors are primarily innate or learned—the nature versus nurture question. No clear-cut answers have emerged, and whether personality can actually be changed is still being argued. The research findings are fascinating but quite inconclusive. Can you change your personality? Like the ability to improve your IQ, the answer seems to be yes! Pessimists can become optimists. Curmudgeons can learn to laugh regularly. Introverts can abandon shyness. Addicts can remain drug free. Currently, a growing body of opinions suggests that the most likely components of one's personality to be alterable are behaviors and traits associated with these behaviors. By changing various personality traits, one can change one's personality. It is this consensus that has led to the formation of, and emphasis on, behavior modification, counseling, and classes in health promotion programming, including stress management.

The story of Nien Cheng is a remarkable testimony to the strength of the human spirit. It is this characteristic, as well as many others, that psychologists and psychiatrists have attempted to study to determine which personality types are prone to suffering the effects of stress, and which seem to be immune or resistant to it. Although the search has not been easy, researchers have identified specific personality traits and behaviors, classified as personality types, that have begun to shed some light on the relationship between personality and disease. They include Type A behavior, codependent personality, helpless-hopeless personality, hardy personality, survivor personality, and sensation seeker or Type R personality. As people strive to learn more about themselves, these labels have now become household words in North America. What follows is a look at these personality types and the factors that separate stress-prone from stress-resistant traits and behaviors.

■ Type A Behavior

In the late 1950s, coronary heart disease emerged as the number one killer in the country, claiming the lives of many men and women, including several politicians, physicians, and executives of the nation's leading corporations. Unlike infectious diseases initiated by viruses and bacteria, this disease was attributed to factors associated with specific lifestyle behaviors and, therefore, was recognized as being potentially preventable. During the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations this "epidemic" was given national attention, and federal funds were appropriated for research to understand the nature of this disease. Like detectives at the scene of a murder, federally funded researchers searched for potential clues that might lead to the development of this killer disease. Studies conducted at Harvard University and the Framingham Study in Massachusetts revealed several factors that were believed to place an individual at risk for coronary heart disease, including cigarette smoking, hypertension, elevated levels of cholesterol and triglycerides, inactivity, diabetes, obesity, and family history of heart disease. Surprisingly, data also revealed that several heart attack victims had few, if any, of these risk factors. So the search went on.

Although assumptions had previously been made about the seemingly obvious relationship between emotional responses and health status, it was the initial work of cardiologists Meyer Friedman and Ray Rosenman whose research in 1964 added one more significant risk factor to the list: **Type A personality**, or a rushed or hurried lifestyle. As the story goes, they stumbled upon this insight while having their office furniture reupholstered, during which they discovered that their patients literally sat on the edge of the chairs while waiting to be seen. This tip led them to look at the psychological profiles of their patients, as well as the usual physical assessments. From their research, they developed an

Type A personality: This personality, once associated with time urgency, is now associated with unresolved anger issues.

Time urgency: A characteristic or behavior of someone who displays Type A personality, someone who is constantly time conscious.

Polyphasia: A trait of thinking or doing many activities at once, also known as multitasking. This is also a trait of the Type A personality.

assessment tool to diagnose Type A behavior, called the Structured Interview. This interview process between the trained physician and patient was designed to measure the intensity, frequency, and duration of several criteria associated with Type A behavior. Later, a second assessment questionnaire, based on Friedman and Rosenman's work, was developed by psychologist David Jenkins and called the Jenkins Activity Questionnaire (JAQ). Because of its simplicity—individuals can fill it out on their own—the JAQ has been used more often than the Structured Interview to assess Type A behavior.

Initially, Friedman and Rosenman referred to Type A behavior as the "hurried sickness." In several research studies, the behavioral traits of "tense" individuals were compared to others who were regarded as "laid back" and called Type B individuals. Striking evidence was observed by Rosenman et al. (1964) in the landmark Western Collaborative Groups Study, which examined more than 3,500 subjects over an 8-year period. Results revealed that Type A behavior was a greater predictor of heart disease than all other risk factors combined. Physiologically speaking, research shows that Type A individuals are more prone to sympathetic arousal (i.e., increased secretion of catecholamines), hypertension, and elevated levels of cholesterol and triglycerides, placing these people at greater risk for several stress-related disorders, but especially coronary heart disease (Rice, 1992). Based on years of research by Rosenman, Friedman, and others, the following personality traits may identify Type A behavior. As you will see, many of these traits are interrelated. Friedman and Rosenman felt that it took only one of these traits to be classified as Type A, though in truth Type A's have been found to share many of these characteristics.

1. **Time urgency (impatience):** Type A people were found to be preoccupied, if not obsessed, with the passage of time and appeared very impatient. Typically these individuals hate to wait in lines, honk at the car in front when the light turns green, and show incredible impatience with others who are too slow with tasks that threaten their own work schedule or personal responsibilities. Type A's feel uncomfortable or guilty about relaxing when there is no set agenda. They rarely take vacations. Everything in the course of a working day—eating, walking, talking—is done with speed. Time itself becomes a major stressor in **time urgency**.
2. **Polyphasia:** **Polyphasia** is engaging in more than one thought or activity at one time. Today, it's called

multitasking. It can lead to sensory overload as the mind juggles thoughts competing for attention. An example of polyphasia is the following: driving to work, talking on a cell phone, putting on make-up or shaving, and listening to the radio, all at the same time. Polyphasia is related to the sense of time urgency in that these people feel that they must do many things at once because their time is so limited.

3. *Ultra-competitiveness:* Type A's are very self-conscious in that they compare themselves with others of similar social status. This trait is exhibited by working extra hours, working on several projects at one time, and vying for top recognition at work. All colleagues or peers at the same status level are perceived as personal threats. Type A's may also appear to be egocentric, perceiving that they are more important than others with regard to their work. Moreover, Type A's are found to be more concerned with quantity of work than quality of work, despite what they may say. The ultra-competitiveness may carry over into non-work-related events, such as sporting activities. This manifests itself when Type A's are in the presence of other people who exhibit a similar competitive drive.
4. *Rapid speech patterns:* Type A people are found to raise their voices in normal conversations, and use explosive words to influence, control, or intimidate others. During conversations, Type A's often finish sentences for people who take their time expressing or articulating their thoughts.
5. *Manipulative control:* Manipulative control is a trait symbolic of a person who is very ego driven. This behavior results from a desire to influence, and even intimidate, co-workers, family members, and acquaintances. Control is achieved through either direct intimidation or circuitously, in a passive-aggressive way. As one might expect, this attitude of dominant control is maintained to promote feelings of one-upmanship. Type A's assert control when they feel threatened.
6. *Hyperaggressiveness and free-floating hostility:* Type A's have a need to dominate other people. They not only strive for high goals, but walk over people to get to the top, showing little or no compassion. These people are very aggressive and may even come across as abrasive. Type A's are also noted to have what is now called free-floating hostility, which

is permanently in-dwelling anger that erupts at trivial occurrences like traffic lights, long lines at the supermarket, or broken photocopy machines. At closer range, Type A's seem to have an inability to express anger in a creative fashion. In many cases, they momentarily suppress feelings of anger and then later explode. Hostility of this nature is also observed to be unfocused, free-floating, and often unresolved. Type A's typically display annoyance with circumstances that would seem barely noticeable to Type B's.

One factor that all these traits share is low self-esteem, here meaning the perception of self-worth based on both how one perceives oneself and how one perceives others' perceptions of oneself. People classified as Type A are also preoccupied with how they are perceived by others regarding material possessions and social status. (The issue of self-esteem will be explained in more detail at the end of this chapter.)

Hostility: The Lethal Trait of Type A's

Originally, time urgency was considered the most critical factor associated with Type A and heart disease, and it was this trait that was thought to be directly related to hypertension. Upon closer examination, several people classified as Type A exhibited neither hypertension nor coronary heart disease, leaving doubt as to whether this criterion merited further research. Investigations by Rosenman (1990) and others suggest that the most important, even dangerous, component of Type A behavior is hostile aggression. Work in this area now supports the idea that this factor alone is more responsible for the strong correlation to coronary heart disease than are all the other traits classified as Type A behavior.

With the suspicion that hostile aggression was the most important predictor of CHD, new ways to assess aggressive behavior were considered. To date, the most popular method is the Cook-Medley Hostility Index, also referred to as the Ho Scale (Cook and Medley, 1954). This index was developed from questions on the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) to measure hostility. Using this and other assessment tools (e.g., Potential for Hostility Scale, or PoHo),

Multitasking: Acting on many responsibilities at one time (driving and talking on a cell phone) to save time, yet potentially compromising the integrity of both outcomes.

several studies have begun to show a strong correlation between hostility and the development of CHD. In one study by Williams et al. (1980), for example, it was found that hostility was correlated with coronary blockage, suggesting that hostile aggression could be used as a predictor for CHD. Studies by Barefoot et al. (1983, 1987) also indicated a strong correlation between hostility and increased risk of heart disease. Using the Ho Scale, Barefoot and colleagues studied a group of physicians over a 25-year period. Those who scored high on the aggression index showed a fourfold greater incidence of CHD than those who scored low.

Hostility is an expression of anger, and anger can surface in many ways, including cynicism, sarcasm, intimidation, and various other aggressive behaviors. It should be noted that impatience is also a form of anger, and although it may not seem as potent as hostility, Friedman and Rosenman were not far off when they cited time-consciousness as the cornerstone of the Type A personality and its relationship to CHD. It may be that impatience festers into what they referred to as free-floating hostility, which in turn snowballs into mismanaged anger. Whatever the case, hostility and aggression are thought to be the most important factors with regard to heart disease, rather than the collection of Type A behaviors as a whole.

Behavior Modification for Type A Behavior

Since the identification of the Type A personality, much research has been conducted to determine if its traits and behaviors can be changed or modified to reduce the risk of coronary heart disease. Friedman et al. (1984), for example, placed more than 500 post-heart attack patients in an education/behavior modification program, including 29 counseling sessions, for a 3-year period. Those who participated in this program showed a 44 percent decrease in Type A behaviors as measured by questionnaires and personal interviews. Many individuals also reduced the incidence of recurring heart attacks. The findings of this and other studies have led many health specialists to develop intervention programs that can alter negative health behaviors and improve health status. The same study also indicated that although the totality of personality will not change, components of it can be favorably influenced and altered to improve one's health status. Currently, behavior modification programs focus on the creative release of anger. It is the findings of Friedman and associates that led to current behavior modification programs in anger management.

Social Influences on Type A Behavior

Several researchers have speculated on the origins of Type A behavior, and the nature (genetics) versus nurture (environment) issue surfaces again. It is well accepted that children model their behavior on that of parents and other figures of authority, including aggressive behaviors. But researchers seem to agree that Type A behavior is a product of broader social and cultural factors as well, including the corporate culture, which breeds employee burnout through long hours, 24/7 accessibility, multitasking, and guilt associated with taking vacation time. Many of the behaviors associated with Type A are often rewarded in our society as positive attributes leading toward success in one's career. Based on the work of Friedman and Rosenman, Schafer (1992) lists these as the following:

1. *Material wealth:* Part of the American dream is to have the freedom to own a house, car, and a number of consumer goods. In a free-market economy, people seem caught up in the accumulation of material goods. This fact became most evident in the 1980s, when sociologists noted a veritable obsession with material possessions.
2. *Immediate gratification:* The ability to drive up to a window and receive service immediately, whether for food, liquor, money, or videos, has had a big impact on our expectations for virtually all goods and services. In general, the pace of life has quickened in tandem with the pace of technology. In keeping pace with technological advancements, people have come to expect immediacy in everything.
3. *Competitiveness:* Competition for grades, salary increases, and sales are just three examples of the ways people feel pressured to become successful and get ahead. There is constant pressure to keep up with the Joneses. Friedman and Rosenman referred to this as "the excess of the competitive spirit," where more never seems to be enough.
4. *People as numbers:* Bureaucratic policies and procedures often make one feel like a number rather than a person. To be identified by your Social Security number for class registration, auto insurance, or taxes decreases the personal aspect of human interaction. This lack of personal attention is thought to contribute to an overall sense of alienation from oneself and others.
5. *Secularization:* As people become less and less involved with spiritual issues and growth, a vacuum

is created, leading to a decline in self-reliance, self-esteem, and social connectedness.

6. *Atrophy of the body and right brain:* Reliance on technology to carry out functions humans used to do can make us physically sedentary. Moreover, there is a general consensus that our society encourages left-brain thinking processes, such as analysis and judgment skills, over right-brain thinking processes, which in excess can lead to increased tension and frustration.
7. *Television watching:* Studies show that the average person watches between 20 and 40 hours of television per week. Many of the qualities and behaviors observed in Type A's are the same ones depicted in television programming. The rise in violent crimes, for example, is thought to be significantly correlated to the preponderance of violence seen on TV. The sheer number of violent acts on television programs implies condoning of this behavior.

It should come as no surprise that the behavioral traits associated with Type A personality precipitate the stress response. When left unmanaged, these create a vicious cycle of perceived stress-related problems spiraling into physiological responses. The pressures of time, threats of competition, and unresolved anger generate a modus operandi of perpetual stress.

■ Did Someone Say Type D Personality?

Research is now shifting its focus from Type A (aggression) to what some call Type D (depression) and others call “psychocardiology” or “behavioral cardiology”: the relationship between emotional stress (specifically, anxiety and depression) and cardiac function. The idea that personality traits associated with anxiety and depression affect the course of heart disease is now supported by clinical data. It is now noted that the words *anger* and *angina* share a common root.

Dr. Johan Denollet, intrigued by the personality differences among heart attack patients, devised a 14-question survey (DS-14) to help determine a person's cardiovascular health based on a proclivity to depression, what he calls negative affectivity (**BOX 7.1**). Questions attempt to identify personality traits such as worry, irritability, gloom, social inhibition, and depression (e.g., “I am often down in the dumps”). With an estimated

one-quarter of the American population on antidepressants, the Type D personality is taking on greater relevance in the medical community with regard to many chronic illnesses.

Given the connection between anger and depression (anger turned inward), perhaps Type A and Type D personalities share some common ground: Stress! The association between stress and heart disease appears so strong that *Newsweek* magazine dedicated nearly a whole issue to the topic in the fall of 2005 with a feature article by renowned cardiologist Dr. Dean Ornish, the first person to prove the reversal of plaque buildup in the arteries. Ornish states that love, expressed through compassion, is often the missing component in people prone to heart disease. Love and compassion, it should be noted, are not traits commonly expressed in either the Type A or Type D personalities.

■ Codependent Personality Traits

The concept of **codependency** was introduced by psychologists in the 1980s to describe individuals who, in simple terms, are dependent on making other people dependent on them as a means of self-validation. In layman's terms, this label has been used to describe people who “love (conditionally) too much.” Codependency is also referred to as an addictive personality because the behaviors associated with it are similar to those observed with other process addictions (“addictions” to behaviors rather than substances). The term *codependency* was first coined by a handful of counselors and therapists who were themselves recovering from chemical and process addictions. It evolved primarily from the study of individuals participating in alcohol rehabilitation programs. Originally, these programs focused solely on the addict. Over time, however, it was found to be imperative to include the spouses and children for greater success of the recovery process of the addict. When family members were introduced into the therapy process, it was learned that many of these individuals “enabled” the alcoholic to continue his or her addictive habits by covering up for

Codependency: A stress-prone personality with many traits and behaviors that seem to increase the likelihood of perceived stress and the inability to cope effectively with it; addictive in nature; based on the need to make others dependent to receive self-validation.

BOX 7.1 Type D Personality Inventory

The following questionnaire is adapted from Johan Denollet's Type D (Depression) Personality Questionnaire, which connects the dots between personality (negativity and social inhibition) to the predictability of coronary heart disease. Please read each question and answer as you are (not how you wish to be), circling the most appropriate answer. Then check your answers with the key below.

	Never	Somewhat	Maybe	Often	Always
1. More often than not, I feel "blue" or unhappy.	0	1	2	3	4
2. I tend to make mountains out of molehills.	0	1	2	3	4
3. I am shy and reserved with people I meet.	0	1	2	3	4
4. I tend to get overwhelmed with responsibilities.	0	1	2	3	4
5. I am not a very sociable person.	0	1	2	3	4
6. I tend to get frustrated easily.	0	1	2	3	4
7. I find social interactions rather awkward.	0	1	2	3	4
8. I tend to be a loner.	0	1	2	3	4
9. The word "moody" describes me well.	0	1	2	3	4
10. In the company of others, I tend to be reserved.	0	1	2	3	4
11. It's a bother to maintain relationships.	0	1	2	3	4
12. I tend to worry a lot about most things.	0	1	2	3	4
13. No one can relate to me and my problems.	0	1	2	3	4
14. I would best describe my tendencies as pessimistic.	0	1	2	3	4

Negativity Index:

Add scores for questions 1, 2, 4, 6, 9, 12, 14 _____

Social Inhibition Index:

Add scores for questions 3, 5, 7, 8, 10, 11, 13 _____

Scores of 10 or higher for both Negativity and Social Inhibition suggest one is very likely classified as a Type D and possibly prone to coronary heart health issues.

Data from Denollet, J. Standard Assessment of Negative Affectivity, Social Inhibition, and Type D Personality. *Psychosomatic Medicine*, 67(6), 2005.

them, allegedly out of concern, loyalty, and love, but in fact to act out their need to be needed. Thus, these individuals were labeled **enablers**, and strangely enough, it was observed that many of their own personality traits and related behaviors were of an addictive nature as well.

Enablers: A term coined in the alcohol recovery movement, referring to a person who enables a spouse, parent, or child to continue either a substance or process addiction.

Further studies on this group of people, many of whom were adult children of alcoholics (ACOA), led researchers to redefine the parameters of the enabler personality type and the traits associated with it.

Codependency, as defined by Melodie Beattie in her book *Codependent No More* (a book that continues to sell millions of copies each year), is "an addiction to another person(s) and their problems or to a relationship and its problems." This personality first became evident among children of alcoholics, but now, three criteria have been established as precursors to the development of this personality: having

alcoholic parents or guardians, having divorced parents, or having emotionally repressive parents. A fourth criterion suggests that codependent traits are simply a product of American social mores. Regardless of one's background, codependent traits and their related behaviors are thought to develop early in childhood, in a lifestyle or environment that is chaotic, unpredictable, or threatening. Children are believed to unknowingly adopt various codependent behaviors as **survival skills** in their developmental years, usually to win approval and love from the parents and elders who most influence their lives, as well as to cope with family stress on a day-to-day basis. In many cases, these children assume adult responsibilities long before they reach high school. As they mature, they carry these survival skills—many inappropriate—into adult relationships as excess baggage. Nevertheless, these skills remain the first line of defense in their attempt to deal effectively with others and themselves, yet the nature of these characteristics only perpetuates the stress cycle of threatening perceptions and consequent physical arousal.

Psychologist Ann Wilson Schaef (1986) describes codependency as a **process addiction** because each behavior is like a “fix” to acquire self-validation. But like the effects of a chemical addiction, the “high” is only short-lived so these behaviors are continually repeated. New process addictions include constant checking of email and voice mail and constant cell phone use. The traits associated with this personality type are many and have been criticized by some (Katz and Lieu, 1991) as being so widespread that they include nearly everyone living in the United States. Perhaps because the identification of this personality style emerged from psychotherapy and not clinical medicine, it has not been researched to the same extent as Type A personality. Regardless, there are several key traits that stand out as indicative of individuals who validate their own existence through the approval and manipulation of others. It should be pointed out, first, that codependent people are extremely nice and very well liked because they like to please others. (Many gravitate to the health-care industry; Schaef points out that many nurses are first-born children of alcoholics.) Either individually or collectively, the traits associated with codependency are not considered bad; in fact, many of them are looked on as being quite admirable. However, it is the habitual exhibition of these traits, in an obsessive-compulsive manner, that defines the codependent personality. These traits include the following:

1. *Ardent approval seekers*: Codependent people know how to say the right things, wear the right clothes,

and do the right things to draw other people to them and to avoid rocking the boat. Often they ask for an opinion or feedback on their performance and appearance, looking for approval from others.

2. *Perfectionists*: These people are extremely well organized and are in the habit of going beyond a quality job every time. They do, however, get caught up in details, spending extra time on every project or activity to make everything just right. They get very stressed (either annoyed or worried) when things aren't perfect.
3. *Super-overachievers*: This trait means being involved in an abundance of activities and obligations—school, sports, social functions—and receiving stupendous recognition for all of these (**FIG. 7.2**). These people do it all, and they do it all extremely well.
4. *Crisis managers*: Perhaps because of the environment in which they were raised, codependents thrive on crisis. They constantly try to make order out of chaos and, for the most part, are successful at it. They rush to take control in time of crisis and show that they can be counted on to be there and steer the ship back to a safe harbor.
5. *Devoted loyalists*: Codependents are extremely loyal to friends and family, despite their addictions and abusive behavior. It has been suggested that extreme loyalty may be shown for fear of rejection and abandonment.
6. *Self-sacrificing martyrs*: People who express this personality put everyone else first, before their own needs, to the point of sacrificing their own time, values, property, and even life goals.
7. *Manipulators*: Unlike Type A's, who use intimidation and dominance to manipulate others, codependents manipulate others through acts of generosity and “favors.” They feel that the ability to express their own emotions and control their own lives is nowhere

Survival skills: A term associated with codependency in which certain behaviors are adopted in adolescence to “survive” demanding, alcoholic, or abusive parents.

Process addiction: The addiction to a behavioral process such as shopping, intercourse, gambling, television watching, cutting, and codependent behaviors.

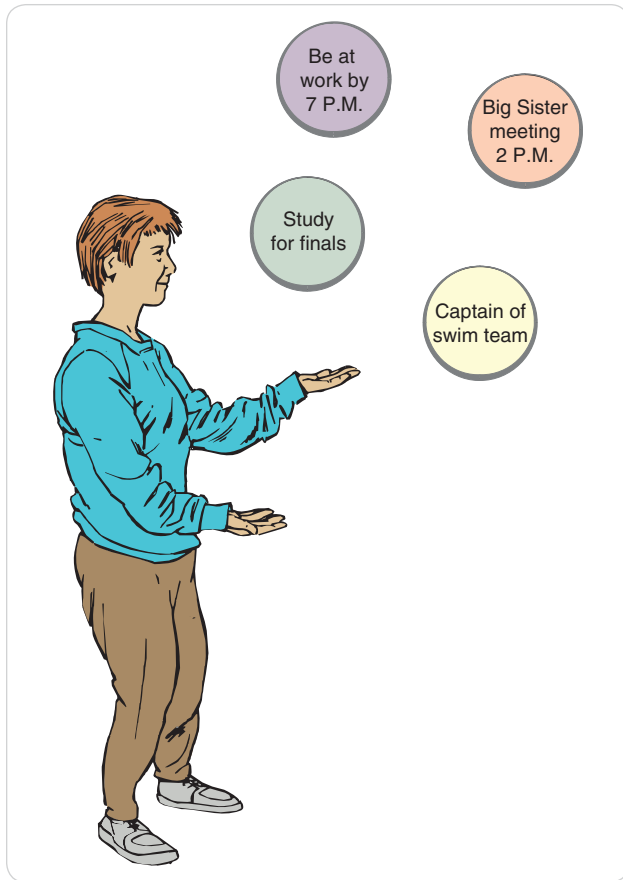


FIGURE 7.2 People with a codependent personality are typically super-overachievers. They take on many responsibilities and do them all extremely well.

as easy as doing these for other people. Control and manipulation are performed in a humbling fashion. Codependents adopt what Schaefer calls the **illusion of control**, wherein they try to control others and their environment to compensate for the fact that they cannot maintain self-control (e.g., of emotions or perceptions).

8. *Victims:* In tandem with repeated acts of martyrdom, these people perceive that they never receive enough gratitude or credit for self-sacrifice. These people find it impossible to say no but feel taken advantage of

Illusion of control: A term used in association with codependent behavior, thinking that one can control (manipulate) things/others that one really cannot.

Reactionaries: A term associated with the codependent personality illustrating a behavior of reacting, rather than responding, to stress.

after the fact when feeling used sets in. Both crisis management and simple charitable tasks are unconsciously described by the codependent individual as “I’ve been wronged.”

9. *Feelings of inadequacy:* Simply stated, codependents have a black cloud of inferiority over their heads, despite the fact that they are overachievers. (Remember, every action is a “fix” of self-validation.) They feel that the quality and quantity of work done are never to their satisfaction, that more is always expected of them. By being dependent on others for approval, they forfeit self-reliance, the ability to turn inward for strength, faith, and confidence. Self-reliance is the ability to be inspired from within, not motivated solely by external factors. And feelings of inadequacy dissolve self-reliance.
10. *Reactionaries:* Codependent individuals tend to overreact rather than respond to situations. At a young age, these **reactionaries’** expressions of concern and worry were perceived as expressions of love. But worrying is an immobilizing emotion that inhibits the ability to respond adequately to a given situation. When small problems arise, overreacting makes them appear catastrophic, which in turn makes them all the more important to address.

Schaefer elaborates on several behaviors that appear to be hallmarks of the codependent personality in her book *Codependence: Misunderstood, Mistreated*. The manifestation of codependent traits includes the following behaviors:

1. *External referencing:* This is a process whereby an individual gains feelings of importance from external sources. Codependents often doubt their own intrinsic value, so the greatest percentage of their self-validation is derived externally. An example of this behavior is trying to live up to other people’s expectations.
2. *Lack of emotional boundaries:* This means that an individual takes on other people’s emotional feelings—sadness, happiness, fear, or whatever people around them are feeling or thinking. Codependents often cannot delineate where their feelings end and where the feelings of others begin.
3. *Impression management:* Codependents are always trying to be good people, and they believe they can control the perceptions of others by their good deeds. Their main goal in life is to try and figure out what others want and then deliver it to them. They develop amazing abilities to learn about

the likes and dislikes of other people. They truly believe that if they can just become what others want, they will be safe and accepted. When things go unexpectedly wrong, they often use the words, “I’m sorry,” to win sympathy and approval.

4. *Mistrust of one’s own perceptions:* Codependents tend to ignore their own perceptions of situations unless or until they are verified externally by others. Even though they might have a very clear impression of a person or a situation, they often dismiss it as being crazy or mistaken. They have learned not to trust their own intuition.
5. *Martyr syndrome:* There is a difference between helping people in need and living their lives for them. Codependents will help anyone (most often their immediate families), and they help them with everything. They say yes because they don’t know how to say no. They are afraid that saying no will mean permanent rejection. Martyrs actually perpetuate chaotic situations by accepting responsibility for spouses, parents, and other family members to keep the household together, rather than blowing the whistle on inappropriate behavior.
6. *Lack of spiritual health:* Codependents adopt a mode of dishonest behavior (lying) to survive. The habit of lying begins as white lies to appease people. In this process, they also lie to themselves, hiding their own feelings. In the opinion of Schaefer, “Lying does not keep with our deepest spiritual self. Lying to ourselves is always destructive to the self, and it is always destructive to others.” According to Schaefer, this is a form of spiritual destruction. The mental, emotional, and often physical imbalances spill over into a spiritual imbalance as well.

Estimates by Larsen (1983), Wegscheider-Cruse (1984, 2008), and Schaefer (1987) suggest that the codependent personality is so prevalent in the United States that it has become “the American personality,” with over 96 percent of Americans exhibiting traits of codependency (and leading to what Schaefer calls “an addictive society” as a whole). This number is quite likely inflated, but according to data provided by the National Association for Children of Alcoholics (NACoA) for 2007, one out of every eight Americans (approximately 12.5 percent) is an alcoholic. Also, data show that 76 million Americans (approximately one out of every four children) are directly affected by the behavior of an alcoholic—this does not include other family members or co-workers.

A spokesperson for the NACoA stated that the terms *enabling* and *codependency* are the primary focus of intervention. (Some estimates are that each alcoholic negatively affects between 10 and 12 people, thus surpassing the country’s population.) In many families where one or both parents are alcoholics, children often assume the role of an adult, handling many parental responsibilities. These children learn to react to family crises by taking charge in hopes of winning love and approval. Like Type A behavior, codependency is not gender specific, and both personality types include the inability to recognize and express emotions. But unlike Type A individuals, who operate on the energy of misdirected and unresolved anger, codependents are motivated by fear—most notably, fear of rejection, fear of the unknown, and fear of failure. The codependent personality has many similarities to what medical researchers have identified as the cancer-prone personality (Type C personality), which is described as a people-pleasing and emotionally repressed personality.

■ Helpless-Hopeless Personality

The **helpless-hopeless personality**, while less defined by various traits than the Type A or codependent personality, nevertheless is a stress-prone personality based on low self-esteem. Seligman (1975) was the first to study this personality and to derive the theory of what he called learned helplessness. Seligman described people with this personality as those who have encountered repeated bouts of failure, to the point where they give up on themselves in situations where they clearly have control. That is, repeated failure becomes a learned response. Seligman noted that the signatures of learned helplessness are (1) poor self-motivation, where no attempt is made at self-improvement; (2) cognitive distortion, where perceptions of failure repeatedly eclipse prospects of success; and (3) emotional dysfunction, where repeated failures result in chronic depression. Dr. Arthur Schmale (Locke and Colligan, 1986) also has studied individuals whom he classifies as the helpless-hopeless personality. These individuals, he found, perceive that their problems are beyond the range of their own resources and ultimately give up. Schmale defines the helpless-hopeless personality as “Feelings

Helpless-hopeless personality: Describes a person who has given up on life, or aspects of it, as a result of repeated failure.

of frustration, despair, or futility perceived as coming from a loss of satisfaction for which the individual himself assumed complete and final responsibility by a sense of frustration that one has failed miserably at accomplishing anything in life.” In a study reported by Locke and Colligan (1986), Schmale and Iker surveyed the personalities of 51 women using psychological tests and personal interviews to detect an intrinsic state of hopelessness. Based on the analysis of these tests and interviews, eighteen women were predicted to contract cancer, and these predictions held true.

Perhaps the characteristic that best identifies the helpless-hopeless personality is referred to as an external **locus of control**. This concept was developed by psychologist Julian Rotter in the early 1960s. Rotter theorized that behavior is normally influenced by both internal and external sources. A preponderance of external factors reinforcing behavior constitutes what Rotter defined as an external locus of control. Examples of external factors might include other people, luck, the weather, chance, or even astrological influences. Conversely, people who demonstrate an internal locus of control feel responsible for their own actions as derived by the internal resources of self-confidence, faith, intuition, and willpower.

Rotter observed that those individuals identified as having an internal locus of control were, on the whole, healthier and more productive individuals. They were observed to be information seekers and goal directed, and to obtain a sense of mastery to cope with problems. Individuals who were identified as having an external locus of control often showed signs of apathy and complacency. The helpless-hopeless personality is the epitome of an external locus of control. Such attitudes and behaviors appear to have been learned early in life, when failure with tasks was a common occurrence. The lack of success, coupled with less-than-desirable environmental factors, shapes the individual's personality to feel helpless in stressful situations and give up productive attempts to overcome the circumstances perceived as stressful. Rotter believed

Locus of control: A sense of who or what is in control of one's life; people with an internal locus of control take responsibility for their actions; those with an external locus of control place responsibility on external factors like luck or the weather; the latter is associated with the helpless-hopeless personality, a stress-prone personality.

that although many features of personality were fixed entities, locus of control was not an absolute; it could be changed to the advantage of the individual. This is the premise of many drug- and alcohol-treatment programs, wherein patients are taught to capitalize on aspects of their lives they do in fact have control over so as to beat the chemical dependency.

Extreme examples of individuals with the helpless-hopeless personality type include alcoholics, drug addicts, abused children, abused wives, some elderly, and some of the nation's homeless. Although these examples may seem distant from the average person, everyone experiences moments of hopelessness. However, repeated bouts of failure at any time in one's life could allow shades of this personality to manifest. Because of the failure-control issues involved, the helpless-hopeless personality is considered synonymous with an ongoing stress response.

■ Resiliency: The Hardy Personality

Using the framework of the mechanistic medical model, many researchers in the 1960s and 1970s were trying to find a relationship between personality traits and the leading killers in the country, coronary heart disease and cancer. Growing evidence suggested a link between mind (negative thoughts) and body (physical symptoms), and this in turn spurred the pessimistic suggestion that the greater the stress level, the greater the chance of disease and illness.

But one group of researchers, headed by Dr. Suzanne Kobasa and Salvatore Maddi, became interested in individuals who despite stressful circumstances appeared *resistant* to the psychophysiological effects of stress. Kobasa et al. (1979, 1981, 1982, 1983) studied several hundred AT&T employees during the period of federal deregulation when scores of executives were laid off or transferred to other positions. In this study, more than 700 executives were given a version of the Holmes and Rahe stress inventory and a checklist of physical symptoms and illnesses. Although hundreds of executives showed physical symptoms of stress, under the same circumstances several did not. When this smaller group of individuals was studied further, it became quite obvious that what distinguished them from those who succumbed to the stress were specific personality traits enabling them to cope with their perceptions of stress. Kobasa et al. found

BOX 7.2 Hardy Personality Profile: Test Your Hardiness

This questionnaire is adapted from the work of Suzanne Kobasa, co-creator of the hardy personality. This inventory is based on 12 questions. In the words of Kobasa, "Evaluating hardiness requires more than a quick test, but this survey will give you an idea of your degree of hardiness." Using a scale of 0–3, estimate your answer for each question. Please answer how you are, not how you would like to be. Then score your answers for Control, Commitment, and Challenge.

0 = strongly disagree, 1 = mildly disagree, 2 = mildly agree, 3 = strongly agree

- _____ 1. My best efforts at work/school make a difference.
- _____ 2. Trusting to fate/universe is sometimes all I can do in a relationship.
- _____ 3. I often wake up each day eager to start, work on, or complete a project.
- _____ 4. Viewing myself as a free person tends to promote stress and frustration.
- _____ 5. I would be willing to sacrifice financial security in my work if something really challenging came along.
- _____ 6. I get stressed when my plans go awry and my schedule is disrupted.
- _____ 7. Anybody, from any social demographic, can have an influence on politics.
- _____ 8. Without the right breaks, it is difficult to be successful in my field.
- _____ 9. I know what I am doing and why I am doing it at work/school.
- _____ 10. Becoming close to people makes me feel a sense of obligation to them.
- _____ 11. I relish the chance to encounter new situations as an important part of life.
- _____ 12. I really don't mind when I have lots of free time with nothing to do.

Score: To estimate your level of hardiness, calculate the scores for each component (by adding and subtracting where indicated). A total score of 10–18 indicates a hardy personality, 0–9 suggests moderate hardiness, and a score less than 0 indicates low hardiness.

Control Score = _____
 1 _____ + 7 _____
 subtract
 2 _____ + 8 _____

Commitment Score = _____
 3 _____ + 9 _____
 subtract
 4 _____ + 10 _____

Challenge Score = _____
 5 _____ + 11 _____
 subtract
 6 _____ + 12 _____
 Total Hardiness Score _____

three specific personality traits that collectively acted as a buffer to stress and contributed to what Kobasa called the **hardy personality** (BOX 7.2):

1. **Commitment:** The dedication to oneself, one's work, and one's family that gives the individual a sense of belonging. Commitment involves an investment of one's values and life purpose to the growth of one's human potential and is a direct reflection of one's willpower.

2. **Control:** In this case, control means a sense of personal control, a sense of causing the events in one's life rather than a feeling of helplessness. Self-control, or empowerment, helps one overcome

Hardy personality: A term coined by Maddi and Kobasa; personality characteristics that, in combination, seem to buffer against stress: control, commitment, and challenge.

factors and elements in one's environment so that one does not feel victimized.

3. **Challenge:** The ability to see change and even problems as opportunities for growth, rather than threats to one's existence. Challenge, in Kobasa's mind, symbolized a hunger of the heart that serves as an inspiration. Challenge can also be viewed as a sense of adventure.

The results of this and similar studies with lawyers, housewives, and other groups revealed that the traits of the hardy personality were not limited to white, upper-middle-class, executive males employed by AT&T, but were found in people from both genders and all races and religions. In addition, Kobasa concluded the following:

- A hardy personality may override a genetic disposition to illness.
- A person can exhibit several Type A traits without risk of heart disease.
- Inner resources are more important than strong family support during high-pressure jobs.
- Some people observed as hardy showed signs of Type A personality minus feelings of hostility. These people enjoyed life so much they would often hurry with some tasks to enjoy others.

Kobasa and a colleague, Sal Maddi (1982, 1999, 2002), are of the opinion that although the hardy personality appears to be innate, the traits of commitment, control, and challenge can be learned as well. In a study to determine the efficacy of teaching hardiness skills to Illinois Bell executives over an 8-week period, sixteen executives experiencing stress-related health problems were divided into two groups: a treatment group to learn hardiness skills, and a control group. The skills taught to the treatment group were (1) **focusing**, or recognizing the body

signals of stress (e.g., muscle tension); (2) **reconstruction**, reinterpretation of a stressor, and viable options to resolve it; and (3) **compensation**, turning control of personal talents into abilities that accent strengths rather than foster helplessness. After exposure to the new behavior skills, the treatment group scored higher on the hardiness scale, and even demonstrated a decrease in resting blood pressure, while the control group showed no change. The research findings of Kobasa et al., which closely parallel the theories of Abraham Maslow and his concept of self-actualization, led them to believe that commitment, control, and challenge were necessary traits to maintain a buffer against the effects of stress, and that a hardy personality contributed to overall good health. Today, Maddi continues his research of the hardy personality at the University of California at Irvine where he calls hardiness a type of "existential courage" (Maddi, 2004). His research adds to the body of knowledge in the discipline of positive psychology. Maddi's faculty Web site states that he is especially interested in stress management and creativity. Through deepening the attitudes of commitment, control, and challenge and marking hardiness, persons can simultaneously develop, reach their highest potentials, and cope with any stress encountered on the way.

Reivich (2003) and Al Siebert (2005) have taken the premise of the hardy personality and renamed it for the twenty-first century. Each calls it "resiliency." Resiliency can best be defined as the ability to pick yourself up after being knocked down in the face of adversity from life-changing events (**BOX 7.3**).

■ Survivor Personality Traits

Aron Ralston is a survivor—perhaps the epitome of it. While rock climbing in the southwest corner of Utah's desert in spring 2003, Ralston got caught. An 800-pound boulder wedged itself over his right arm, pinning him against the side of a mountain. Unable to free himself, Ralston did the unthinkable. After days of deliberating about his situation, he pulled out his pocket knife and proceeded to amputate his own arm. Once liberated from the boulder, he was still a long way from safety. He rappelled 80 feet down the rock face and then hiked several miles in the direction of his car to reach help. Although Ralston's story, portrayed by Academy Award-nominated actor James Franco in the biopic *127 Hours*, is unfathomable, he stands in good company among those who survive, even thrive, in the face of unbeatable odds

Focusing: The ability to recognize the body signals of oncoming stress (e.g., muscle tension, increased breathing, sweating).

Reconstruction: The reinterpretation (from negative to neutral or positive) of a stressor (also known as reframing).

Compensation: The ability to cultivate and utilize one's strengths in times of need, rather than claim victimization.

BOX 7.3 Resiliency 101

The newest buzzword in stress management is the term “resiliency,” a twenty-first-century makeover of the hardy personality. More than just the ability to bounce back from personal setbacks, resiliency is the ability to overcome the tremendous stress of trauma, loss, and tragedy. In the words of philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, “That which doesn’t kill us, makes us stronger.” Moreover, the traits of resiliency are now considered to be those that enrich our lives—an attitude of *can do*. The alchemy of resiliency includes optimism, courage, flexibility, humor, compassion, and the ability to adapt to change (rather than be a victim of circumstance). Al Siebert, author of *The Resiliency Advantage* and *The Survivor Personality*, explains that resilient people have the ability to create good luck out of circumstances that many others see as bad luck. Others describe resiliency as our capacity to not only deal with discomfort and adversity, but also thrive in the face of chaos. Professional dancer Adrienne Haslet-Davis is one such example. Nearing the finish line at the 2013 Boston Marathon, she was thrown off her feet during the second bomb explosion. Her husband (an Air Force captain who served in Afghanistan) quickly put a tourniquet on her leg. She was rushed to the hospital, where doctors did all they could to save her foot, but to no avail. She ended up losing her foot and lower leg. This event has not deterred her from her passions. Adrienne is committed to continuing her career as a dancer and vows to complete her next Boston Marathon, even if she has to crawl across the finish line.

For some people resiliency comes naturally, yet many believe that it is a life skill that can be learned and practiced by everyone. Resiliency training is available for people from all walks of life, including returning soldiers from Iraq and Afghanistan, first responders (police and EMTs), corporate executives, and Olympic athletes. Courses in resiliency, from those taught at the Mayo Clinic to nearly all branches of the U.S. military,

include some or all of these aspects to strengthen the resolve of those moving through life’s transitions:

1. *Positivity*: Carrying a positive attitude about life and your role in it
2. *Creative problem-solving*: Focusing on the solution to a problem rather than the problem itself
3. *Compassion and gratitude*: Being grateful for what you have rather than what you don’t have; seeing yourself as a victor, not a victim; and honoring the connectedness of life through service to others
4. *Self-care*: Honoring yourself to engage in personal wellness activities
5. *Humor*: Having the ability to laugh at yourself without sacrificing self-esteem
6. *Purpose in life*: Being able to cultivate a meaningful purpose in one’s life through change

The topic of resiliency is being studied from a great many perspectives, including brain activity scans (fMRIs) during the practice of resiliency skills to the inclusion of mindfulness meditation as a resiliency-based activity. These and other topics were the subject of discussion at the 2013 Harvard Medical Schools conference on resiliency, under the direction of Herbert Benson, M.D.

In a quiet corner of the second floor of the Claude Moore Nursing Education Building at the University of Virginia is the Resiliency Room. This room is used for yoga classes, mindfulness meditation, and personal solitude for students and faculty alike. As professionals on the front lines of health care who help others cope with the spectrum of issues from disease to death, resiliency is considered a necessary skill in nursing. Students, faculty, and staff are all encouraged to make good and frequent use of the room. The University of Virginia is not alone with this strategy. *Fortune* 500 corporations and the U.S. Army are exploring ways to create resiliency centers for their employees as the rapid pace of life quickens.

(and making a mockery of all reality TV shows). Moreover, anyone who has heard the story of Ernest Shackleton and the crew of the *Endurance*, for example, knows the story of incredible and grueling survival in the world’s most inhospitable climate, Antarctica.

Al Siebert, the author of *The Survivor Personality*, has studied the likes of Ralston and Shackleton—that is, people who have kept a cool head in the face of danger and come out alive from their ordeal. Siebert defines this type of personality as someone who responds rather

than reacts to danger. The traits of a **survivor personality** include acceptance (of the situation), optimism, and creative problem solving. Beyond the classic will to survive, this personality type integrates the right-brain abilities of intuition, acceptance, and faith with the left-brain skills of judgment and organization. Siebert suggests that the survivor personality has mastered an integrative problem-solving ability with the use of **biphasic** (left and right brain) **personality traits**: proud yet humble, selfish yet altruistic, rebellious yet cooperative, spiritual yet irreverent. Perhaps the most important trait is mental flexibility, according to both Siebert and Peter Suedfeld (Jenkins, 2003). Beyond the will to survive, the foremost character trait of a survivor is intellectual flexibility. As the expression goes, there are three ways to cope in times of crisis: leave the environment, change the environment, or change your attitude. The survivor personality isn't determined by genetic make-up. Instead, those who study the survivor personality agree that these traits can be learned and practiced by anyone, whether it's Nien Cheng, Aron Ralston, or someone with a flat tire on a highway in the middle of nowhere.

■ Sensation Seekers

If you are familiar with extreme sports, the X Games, or even the reality shows that depict extreme survival challenges, then no doubt you are familiar with whom psychologists refer to as **sensation seekers** or Type R (risk taker) personalities, a term coined by Zuckerman (1971) to describe people whose personalities appear to be dominated by an adventurous spirit (**FIG. 7.3**). For these people, adrenaline is their drug of choice. Studies by both Zuckerman (1971) and Johnson, Sarason, and

Survivor personality: The traits that comprise a unique winning attitude to overcome adversity and challenges, no matter what the odds may be, so that one comes out the victor, not the victim.

Biphasic: Survivor personality traits; the ability to use both right-brain and left-brain thinking processes to successfully deal with a problem or stressors.

Personality traits: Thoughts and behaviors that combine to form or color one's personality; in this case, cognitive traits associated with survival.

Sensation seeker: Also known as Type R personality, these courageous people confront stress by calculating their risks in extreme situations and then proceeding with gusto.



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FIGURE 7.3 Calculated risk taking is what separates sensation seekers from those who choose to sit on the sidelines watching the world go by. To accomplish a goal under these conditions is thought to augment self-esteem, which in turn enables one to deal more effectively with stress.

Siegel (1979) found that people who are inclined toward “extreme” activities providing intense sensation, like rock climbing, skydiving, windsurfing, hang gliding, and exotic travel, are better able to cope with life events than those who are more inclined to avoid taking risks. It is hypothesized that in their intentional exposure to “approachable stress,” or sensation activities, they calculate the risks involved. This prepares them for unexpected stressful events, which they also approach in a calculated manner. In other words, sensation seekers think through their strategies rather than reacting impetuously. They are spontaneous, yet calculating. An additional hypothesis suggests that the inner resources required to perform sensation activities (e.g., confidence, self-efficacy, courage, optimism, and creativity) are the same qualities used as coping skills to deal effectively with stress. These hypotheses do not imply that sensation seekers do not have stress; rather, they try to meet it head on and aim to overcome it. Examples might include athletes who participate in extreme sports.

In a questionnaire designed to assess this characteristic, Zuckerman focused on four specific traits—adventure seeking, experience seeking, disinhibition, and susceptibility to boredom—to define the parameters of sensation seeking. Results suggested that individuals who had a low stimulation threshold are more vulnerable to stressful life events. Perhaps for that very reason, many outdoor education programs, including Outward Bound, Project

Adventure, and National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS), use the concept and application of calculated risk taking in their activities to build “survival skills” that will carry over into the everyday lives of adolescents and corporate executives alike.

■ Self-Esteem: The Bottom-Line Defense

There are many traits common to all individuals, which makes distinguishing among personality types and their related behaviors difficult at times. Level of **self-esteem**, however, appears to be a critical factor in how people respond to stress, regardless of personality type. Low self-esteem is the common denominator in stress-prone personalities, as can be seen in Type A, codependent, and helpless-hopeless types. High self-esteem is a prerequisite for creating stress-resistant personalities because it is directly linked to the accessibility of one’s internal resources. Self-esteem is often described as self-value, self-respect, even self-love. It is reflected in the things we say, in the clothes we wear, and perhaps most evidently in our behaviors. Self-esteem has also been described as the harmony or discrepancy between actual self-image and ideal self-image, where high self-esteem is harmony between the actual and ideal, and low self-esteem is the distance between the two.

When we place little or no value on our self, we become quite vulnerable to the perceptions of stress. Conversely, with high self-esteem, problems and worries tend to roll off one’s back and might even go unnoticed. Self-esteem is continually fed by the thoughts, feelings, actions, and even memories that contribute to our identity. Self-esteem, however, is a variable entity; it rises and falls, like ambient temperature, over the course of a day. But these variations remain within a specific range where the core of one’s self-value resides. Individuals with stress-resistant personalities typically have a high level of self-esteem. For this reason, it is the construction and maintenance of high self-esteem that is the goal of many behavior modification programs involving recovering addicts, battered wives and children, and juvenile delinquents.

In his classic book *The Six Pillars of Self-Esteem*, Nathaniel Branden calls self-esteem the immune system of the consciousness. The author of several books on the topic of self-esteem, Branden highlights what he calls the six pillars (practices) of self-esteem, the internal resources that guide us on the human journey:

- *The practice of living consciously:* Living in the present moment, rather than confining yourself to past or future events, and being mindful of each activity you are engaged in.
- *The practice of self-acceptance:* The refusal to be in an adversarial relationship with yourself.
- *The practice of self-responsibility:* Choosing to acknowledge responsibility for one’s feelings, such as saying, “I am responsible for my own happiness,” rather than surrendering your feelings to the whims of those you are in a relationship with.
- *The practice of self-assertiveness:* Honoring one’s wants, needs, and values, and seeking appropriate ways in which to satisfy these.
- *The practice of living purposefully:* Getting out of the thought processes of hoping and wishing, and instead doing what you need to do to make your goals happen.
- *The practice of personal integrity:* Working to achieve congruence between your values and actions.

Researchers are now placing a greater focus on ways to raise self-esteem as the primary goal in stress management therapy programs. As might be expected, prevention is more effective than rehabilitation, and for this reason, a special task force was created in California to incorporate self-esteem lesson plans into classroom curricula at the primary- and secondary-education levels. It is too early to know any results from this curriculum change, but it is hoped that, by giving attention to this crucial element of human potential, significantly fewer problems with **substance addiction**, divorce, and homelessness will result in the coming decades. According to child psychologists Harris Clemes et al. (1990), the seeds for self-esteem are planted early in childhood and comprise four basic elements: connectedness, uniqueness, power, and models. All four of these factors need to be present, and cultivated continuously, to ensure a high sense of self-esteem. And these four characteristics are essential for self-esteem not only in early childhood development, but also in all

Self-esteem: The sense of underpinning self-values, self-acceptance, and self-love; thought to be a powerful buffer against perceived threats.

Substance addiction: The addiction to a host of substances, from nicotine and caffeine to alcohol and various drugs.

developmental stages throughout one's life. They are defined as follows:

1. *Connectedness*: A feeling of satisfaction that associations and relationships are significant, nurturing, and affirmed by others.
2. *Uniqueness*: A feeling that the individual possesses qualities that make him or her special and different, and that these qualities are respected and admired by others as well as oneself.
3. *Power*: A sense that one can access inner resources as well as use these resources and capabilities to influence circumstances in one's life, and not give one's power away to other people or things.
4. *Models*: A mentoring process by which reference points are established to guide the individual on his or her life journey by sharing goals, values, ideals, and personal standards.

Individuals with low self-esteem often feel powerless, are easily influenced by others, express a narrow range of emotions, become easily defensive and frustrated, and tend to blame others for their own weaknesses (**FIG. 7.4**). Individuals with high self-esteem promote their independence, assume given responsibilities, approach new challenges with enthusiasm, exhibit a broad range of emotions, are proud of accomplishments,

and tolerate frustration well. Because high self-esteem is central to the stress-resistant personality, much attention is now placed on ways to increase self-esteem in people of all ages. Among the many ways to raise and maintain self-esteem, Clemes gives the following suggestions:

1. Disarm the negative critic. Challenge the voice inside that feeds the conscious mind with put-downs and negative comments. A critic taking only one side is unbalanced and dangerous to your self-esteem.
2. Give yourself positive reinforcements and affirmations to remind yourself of your good qualities. Write these down, and look at the list when you're feeling down.
3. Avoid "should haves," where you place a guilt trip on yourself for unmet expectations. Learn from the past, but don't dwell on it. Look for new opportunities for growth.
4. Focus on who you really are, your own identity, and your role models or mentors (**BOX 7.4**).
5. Avoid comparisons with others. Respect your own uniqueness, and learn to cultivate it.
6. Diversify your interests. Don't put all your eggs in one basket. Diversify so that if one aspect of your life becomes impaired, other areas can compensate to keep you afloat. (For instance, if you see yourself solely as a student and you do badly on an exam, this will pull down your self-esteem like a rock.)
7. Improve your connectedness. Widen your network of friends, and find special places in your environment that recharge your energy and strengthen your social bonds.
8. Avoid self-victimization. Martyrs may be admired, but begging for pity and sympathy gets old and the effects are short-lived.
9. Reassert yourself and your value before and during a stressful event.

Is there a difference between self-esteem and self-image? Yes! Self-image, how you perceive yourself, and self-esteem, how you value yourself, are related, yet two different concepts. Self-image is recognized as being a by-product of one's level of self-esteem. This difference between self-esteem and self-image became quite clear in the early 1960s through the work of Maxwell Maltz, author of the book *Psycho-Cybernetics*. In his work as a plastic surgeon, Maltz was intrigued to learn that after

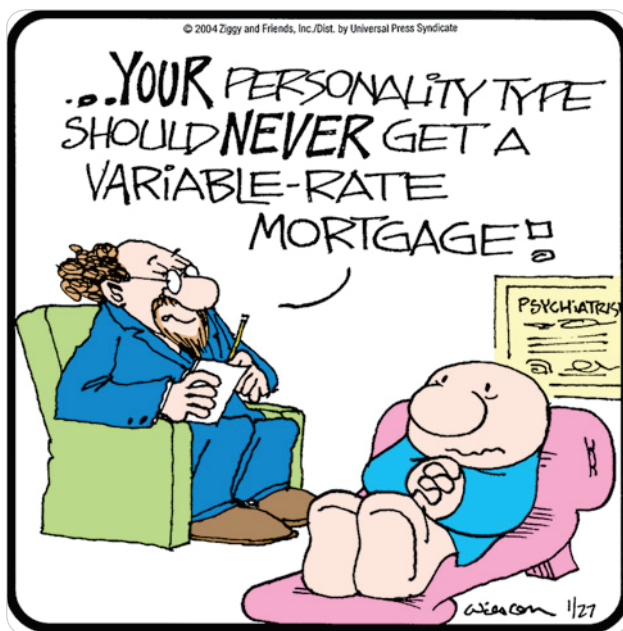


FIGURE 7.4

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BOX 7.4 Technology and Personality

The Internet has opened a whole new avenue to explore personality traits. Take a glance at any page from Facebook, Twitter, Match.com, or the domains that include personal avatars and Internet video games, and you are likely to see more than simple lifestyle preferences. Similar to a Halloween costume, what appears on the computer screen is likely to be different than what meets the eye during a face-to-face exchange. Internet games give a whole new meaning to the term *role playing*. However, changes to or magnifications of one's personality are not new to the Internet generation. Long ago, psychologists noticed that people behave differently behind the wheel of a car than they might in an aisle of a grocery store. With two tons of metal behind one's persona, aggressive behaviors are more common. Before caller ID, people could also hide anonymously behind the voice piece of a telephone. In each of these cases, Freud would say the alter ego has taken center stage. Has the Internet expanded the bandwidth of the alter ego? That's the opinion of Robbie Cooper and Tracy Spaight (2007), co-authors of the book *Alter Ego: Avatars and Their Creators*.

Things have come a long way since the days of Dungeons and Dragons. In a piece aired on National Public Radio, commentator Ketzell Levine reported that online games such as Everquest and Star Wars Galaxies include players who use avatars with different genders, races, and physical attributes. Personalities are certainly more complex than what we reveal to others on a day-to-day basis. In a unique way, the Internet not only allows us to try on different personalities or magnify our best characteristics,

but also levels the playing field regarding race, ethnicity, gender, and many disabilities. In this regard, virtual personalities open the potential to augment one's sense of confidence and perhaps even courage, traits associated with a stress-resistant personality. There is also concern regarding the transfer effect of war-based video games and how this may trigger neural responses during episodes of anger. Perhaps the real question is, what beneficial transfer effect, if any, occurs from the virtual world to the actual world we live in? The jury appears to be out on this issue. Across the country, however, it is not uncommon to hear conversations in middle school and high school staff lounges bemoaning the negative change in students' interpersonal communication skills in tandem with the proliferation of Internet activity, where comfort level with one's online persona does not transfer to face-to-face encounters. This, unlike the virtual world, is where the greatest percentage of stressors exists.

Omar is a recent graduate of Metro State University in Denver, Colorado. He believes there are pros and cons to online video games. He is no stranger to spending time playing X-Box 360, poker on Full Tilt, and first-person shooter games such as his favorite, Team Death Match.

"There certainly can be an addictive quality to these games. I lost a semester of school due to my [Everquest] video habit. I kept putting off my homework to a point where I had to drop all my classes for a semester. On the plus side, I ended up meeting some neat people from Florida and Las Vegas."

performing scores of nose jobs and facelifts, his clients didn't seem all that much happier with their new appearance. (Similar results have been observed with participants in the television reality shows *Extreme Makeover*, *Dr. 90210*, and *The Swan*.) After scores of interviews with patients, he came to the realization that before any external changes take place, the real change first has to take place inside. In other words, if people change their physical image but their self-image remains poor, no amount of surgery will change how one feels about oneself. The changes have to come from within first, changes that nurture and cultivate our inner resources such as confidence, courage, love, compassion, and willpower. If your level of self-esteem is low, so, too, will be your self-image. Through

his principles of psycho-cybernetics, Maltz suggests that we first work within before changing external features. Working within means focusing on our positive aspects; shedding old beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions that trap us in the mindset of low self-esteem; and learning to use our inner resources to move out of crisis into creative opportunity.

High self-esteem is considered the best defense against stress; strategies used to combat stress are useless without a strong feeling of self-worth or self-value. Although an abstract concept, your self-esteem should be attended to regularly, every day, like brushing your teeth and eating. It is that important.

SUMMARY

- Personality comprises several traits, characteristics, behaviors, expressions, moods, and feelings as perceived by others.
- Personality is thought to be molded at an early age by genetic factors, family dynamics, social influences, and personal experiences.
- Personality is thought to be a fixed entity, not subject to significant changes; however, the most likely part of personality to change is behavior.
- Personalities can be classified as either stress prone (seeming to attract stress) or stress resistant (providing a buffer against various stressors).
- Type A, codependency, and helpless-hopeless are three personalities that have been associated with both acute and chronic stress. They have one common factor: low self-esteem.
- Type A personality, “the hurried sickness,” was first observed by cardiologists Rosenman and Friedman as a major risk factor for heart disease. Later studies revealed that the trait of hostility is most closely linked with hypertension and coronary heart disease.
- Type A behavior is not gender specific; as many females demonstrate Type A behavior as males. However, desire for higher social status is thought to be strongly correlated with Type A behavior.
- Codependency, first observed in the spouses and children of alcoholics when recovery programs began to include family members, is now thought to apply as well to children of broken homes and those with emotionally repressive parents. Codependents are people who validate their existence by serving others at their own expense. Codependents typically operate from fear of rejection, failure, and the unknown.
- The helpless-hopeless personality develops as a result of repeated bouts of failure over time, to the point where individuals no longer feel competent to try things they really do have control over. Low self-esteem and an external locus of control appear to be significant factors in this type of personality.
- The hardy personality and the sensation seeker are two personalities currently believed to be stress resistant. The commonality between the two is high self-esteem.
- The hardy personality was identified by Kobasa and Maddi, who observed that some people under severe stress did not succumb to stress-related ailments while others did. People who showed a strong sense of commitment, control, and challenge were labeled hardy personalities.
- The survivor personality uses biphasic personality traits to endure danger with a level head. Everyone has the ability to access these traits.
- Zuckerman identified the sensation-seeking personality as those people who seek thrills and sensations but take calculated risks in their endeavors.
- Self-esteem is a crucial cornerstone of personality. Low self-esteem attracts stress; high self-esteem seems to repel it. Clemes states that self-esteem consists of four components: connectedness, uniqueness, power (control), and models. The strength or weakness of these components is highly correlated with level of self-esteem.

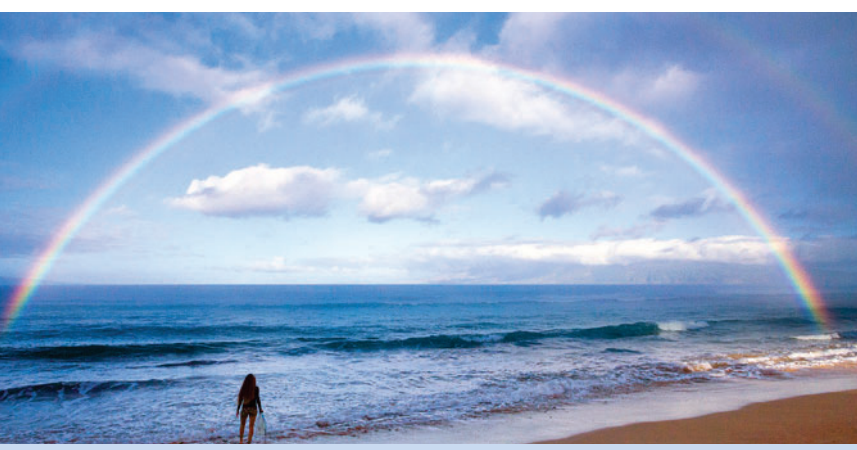
STUDY GUIDE QUESTIONS

1. List the stress-prone personalities and give an example of each.
2. List the stress-resistant personalities and give an example of each.
3. Define resiliency.
4. Describe self-esteem and explain what role it plays in promoting and resolving stress.
5. List several ways to help promote self-esteem.

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CHAPTER 8

Stress and Human Spirituality

*The winds of grace are blowing perpetually.
We only need raise our sails.*

—Sri Ramakrishna

Laura Wellington was less than a half a mile from the finish line when she heard a loud explosion. Stunned, she stopped to ask someone what had happened and learned that the location where her family was waiting in downtown Boston was bombed. She was quickly diverted away from the marathon route. Once she made contact with her brother, Bryan, via cell phone and learned everyone in her family was safe, she sat down and cried. At that moment a married couple walking by stopped to comfort her. The man asked if she had finished the race. Laura shook her head no, whereupon he took his coveted Boston Marathon medal, placed it around her neck, and said, “You are a finisher in my eyes.” In between her tears and sobs, she said thanks. Laura never learned this stranger’s name, but will forever be indebted to his random act of kindness. That afternoon, hundreds of similar acts were performed for total strangers across the city, all in the name of compassion. Equally amazing were the scores of runners who crossed the finish line after running 26-plus

miles only to continue running a few more miles to the nearest hospital to donate blood. In the words of Mother Teresa, “We can do no great things, only small things with great love.” Times of stress may seem anything but spiritual, yet there is always a choice; the ego reacts, the soul responds.

To write a book about stress without addressing the concept of human spirituality would be a gross injustice to both topics. In my quest for understanding and personal journey of enlightenment, I have met these two at the junction of many a crossroad. I know I am not alone. Human spirituality and stress seem to be as inseparable as the Taoist yin and yang, earth and sky, and, quite literally, mind and soul. I became aware of this relationship in my first year of teaching stress management in 1984. Many of the topics I taught, and several of the issues I was asked to address by students, had strong parallels with the cornerstones of several (if not all) religions: relationships, values, the meaning of life, and a sense of connectedness—the common

denominator of these four being a unique level of human consciousness known as human spirituality. British author Aldous Huxley called this the **perennial philosophy**, or a transcendent reality beyond the limitations of cultures, politics, religions, and egos.

The association between eustress (those moments of exhilaration and ecstasy) and spirituality, those cosmic moments Maslow called “peak experiences,” is so profound that it is often taken for granted or overlooked. The converse, distress, is quite another matter. I have learned that, in many cases, stress (specifically, unresolved anger and fear) can be a roadblock to spiritual well-being, and that a strong human spirit can be a vital asset to dismantling roadblocks, resolving stress, and promoting a greater sense of inner peace. In turn, the resolution of life’s stressors can actually enhance the strength and health of the human spirit if we choose to learn from our experiences. Although stress and the human spirit appear, on the surface, to be at opposite poles, they are quite literally partners in the dance of life (**FIG. 8.1**).

It is no coincidence that as the topic of stress grabs headlines across the nation, Americans seem to be on the verge of a new spiritual awareness. In fact, in the past decade alone, the word *spirituality* has begun to take on a greater

Perennial philosophy: A term used by Aldous Huxley to describe human spirituality, a transcendent reality beyond cultures, religions, politics, and egos.



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FIGURE 8.1 In times of stress, people often search for answers to life’s most difficult problems. This search is known as a spiritual hunger and often leads to a deeper search for life’s meaning. A spiritual hunger can progress to a spiritual exploration, thus allowing for a deeper soul growth learning process.

level of comfort in the vocabulary of the media and the population in general. This new awareness of human spirituality, promoted by a nucleus of individuals with grass-roots inspiration, goes by several names—the human potential movement, the consciousness movement, and the New Age movement, among others—all of which imply both spiritual bankruptcy and spiritual awakening in humankind, at least in the Western hemisphere. In his classic book *As Above, So Below*, Ronald Miller describes a collective search for new forms of spirituality with which to make our lives more meaningful and relevant in a world of global social upheaval. With an appetite greater than that which can be satisfied by their existing institutions, people have begun to look beyond their own backyards to answer questions about how they fit into the bigger picture. As indicated by the title of Miller’s book (which is an axiom from ancient Egypt), there is a growing appreciation and understanding that no separation exists between the two worlds. Rather, the divine essence “above” resides within ourselves, making the two one.

The speed of this movement has also been fueled by a growing concern about ecology and the protection of the environment—a wake-up call of sorts. For example, the 2010 oil disaster in the Gulf of Mexico, the dramatic effects of global warming, and the rapid depletion of our natural resources, including the tropical rainforests—all issues on the discussion table at the 2012 United Nations “Earth Summit” in Rio de Janeiro—are fire alarms beckoning us to set aside our cultural and political differences and work together as one people. This was most clearly stated by 2007 Nobel Laureate Al Gore in his best-selling book *Earth in the Balance: Ecology and the Human Spirit*, in which he wrote, “The ecological perspective begins with a view of the whole, an understanding of how the various parts of nature interact in patterns that tend toward balance and persist over time. But this perspective cannot treat the earth as something separate from human civilization; we are a part of the whole too.” This message was echoed once again as a moral imperative in his best-selling book *An Inconvenient Truth* based on his Academy Award–winning documentary. His message is as pertinent today as it was when it was originally written in 1993—perhaps even more so.

■ A Spiritual Hunger?

Genetic engineering. Global terrorism. Cloning. Global warming. Stem cell research. Extraterrestrial life. In times of crises and uncertainty, people of every generation and

every culture have been known to seek help from a divine source. In the past, people took spiritual refuge in their religious traditions, and to a large extent this remains true today. However, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, new questions have emerged that are not so easily addressed by ancient texts, particularly as humans start to play God. Although the fear associated with the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, coupled with a perceived moral decay of the American culture, has sent many people running back to their religious roots, others seem a little disenchanted with the standard religious practices because they do not seem to provide adequate answers to the problems looming on the horizon of humanity. According to a 2012 Pew Research Center (PRC) study, the fastest growing religious group in the United States is made up of people who say they are not religious. Referred to as the “nones” (because when asked about their religious affiliation they reply “none”), the PRC estimates this group to be 46 million people and growing. Nones come from all walks of life, but are primarily under the age of 30. A PRC spokesperson noted that although some nones identify themselves as atheists or agnostics, the majority often describe themselves as “spiritual, but not religious,” suggesting a shifting demographic within the United States (Glenn, 2013).

In what is being referred to by some as the post-denominational age, many people do not feel a loyalty to one particular religion; rather people seek a host of sacred traditions, blending various practices to form their own spiritual path. There are Catholics who practice Buddhist meditation, Jews who participate in American Indian sweatlodges, and Methodists, Lutherans, and Protestants who participate in Sufi dancing. Even hell has gotten a makeover: The biblical conception of the most dreaded place in the universe has moved from a literal to a figurative interpretation. Once described as eternal flames of death, the Vatican currently describes hell as “a state of those who freely and definitively separate themselves from God.” Many of those who claim to have already been to hell (on earth, that is), as well as those who have come close, are seeking a better understanding of God.

The expression used today is **spiritual hunger**, a term that describes a searching or longing for that which cannot be attained by traditional religious practices. Another term used in conjunction with spiritual hunger is **spiritual bankruptcy**, a concept that suggests a sense of moral decay, perhaps caused by an emptiness that cannot be filled with material possessions. Yet a

strong element of human nature (the ego) encourages us to try anyway. One only need reflect on the shootings on several college campuses, or other similar horrific events, to see that something is terribly amiss.

A third phrase commonly heard today is **spiritual dormancy**. It refers to people who for one reason or another choose not to recognize the importance of the spiritual dimension of health and well-being at both an individual and a societal level. The result of such inaction often leads to a state of dysfunction (a term many now call the “national adjective”). Like a person who hits the snooze button on the alarm clock, falling asleep on the spiritual path can have real consequences because one is ill equipped to deal not only with the problems at hand, but also with potential problems down the road.

■ A Turning Point in Consciousness

A number of factors have come together to raise human consciousness to today’s current level of awareness. They include but are not limited to the following:

- Vatican II, which in the 1960s changed the Catholic mass from Latin to various indigenous languages around the world, thereby opening the doors to a wealth of knowledge of Christianity (which had pretty much remained known only to a chosen few because Latin is not a contemporary language).
- The invasion of Tibet by China in 1959, which not only forced thousands of Tibetans into exile around the world, but ultimately allowed for the sharing of their sacred knowledge, which had been largely inaccessible for thousands of years.
- The Apollo Space Project, with its mission to land Americans on the moon in 1969, allowed us for the first time to see planet Earth as a whole,

Spiritual hunger: A term to illustrate the quest for understanding of life’s biggest questions, the bigger picture, and how each of us fits into it.

Spiritual bankruptcy: A term to convey the lack of spiritual direction, values, or less than desirable behaviors, suggesting moral decay.

Spiritual dormancy: A state in which someone chooses not to recognize the importance of the spiritual dimension of life, individually and socially.

suspended in space, a planet without borders. This view altered many minds with regard to the future of the planet and her many inhabitants.

- The proliferation of self-help groups that use variations of the twelve-step program, as outlined by Alcoholics Anonymous, that provide for relinquishing control of addiction to a higher power. Self-help membership is nondenominational.
- The American Indians, particularly the Lakota and Hopi, who for decades have been told by their elders not to share various aspects of their cultural heritage and spirituality because of lack of trust, have now been told this is the time to reveal their sacred knowledge, and they have done so. The Lakota Sioux prophecy foretold of the age of the white buffalo, when a shift in consciousness would appear. A white buffalo named Miracle was born in Janesville, Wisconsin, on August 20, 1994.
- The Hebrew Kabbalah, the sect of Jewish mysticism held only by a chosen few for the past several millennia, has recently been made available to anyone who has an interest in this topic.
- A growing interest in Sufism, a mystical sect of Islam (often symbolized by the photographs of whirling dervishes) with republished and retranslated works of Rumi, Hafiz, and several others.
- Since the early 1970s, near-death experiences (NDEs) have been studied in earnest to learn more about the survivor's recollection. Research compiled by critical care physician Sam Parnia reveals that advances in modern medicine over the past several decades have resulted in a new phenomenon in which millions of documented NDEs have been reported by people from all religious denominations (Parnia, 2013). Those who recall their experience describe a new mission of compassion and inner peace. Children, many of whom have not been exposed to various spiritual matters, come back to consistently describe experiences of a divine mystical nature.
- In the 1990s, South American shamans for the first time shared their wisdom of healing with "their younger brothers" in the Northern hemisphere.
- The Telecommunications Revolution opened the door of information to anyone with access to the Internet. Knowledge from around the world in all

its many sources suddenly has become accessible without the censorship of intellectuals, religious leaders, or politicians, who for centuries have played a major role in keeping people in the dark about a great many issues and facts. Access to information has become a major stepping stone toward higher consciousness.

- The official acceptance of global warming and climate change (Engel, 2002) has become a new wake-up call for planetary citizens to unite in a global effort to reduce greenhouse gases or face potentially catastrophic consequences due to dramatic shifts in population and utilization of natural resources.
- The collaboration between media giant Oprah Winfrey and best-selling author Eckhart Tolle in spreading the message of higher consciousness through his book, *A New Earth*, via her television show, Web site, online chat rooms, and podcasts to millions of people around the world.

Unthinkable right after September 11, 2001, today it is not uncommon to see universities and corporate health-promotion programs including courses on spiritual well-being as well as more traditional programs on physical well-being. Today, as the information age of the twenty-first century unfolds, concepts from all cultures, religions, and corners of the globe are now accessible to us. As the pieces of this jigsaw puzzle called the human spirit are assembled, it becomes increasingly obvious that despite subtle nuances and obvious differences, there are common denominators that tie and bind the integrity of the human spirit. First and foremost is a desire to learn, a personal quest of self-exploration. Be it instinctual or a learned trait, human behavior is often inspired by self-improvement, and herein lies the first step of the journey. In the words repeated by many Zen masters in the spirit of Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu, "There are many paths to enlightenment. The journey of each path begins with the first step."

The material in this chapter is a synthesis of several different perspectives on human spirituality. Some of these ideas may resonate with your way of thinking, whereas others may seem foreign, perhaps even intimidating, to your attitudes, beliefs, and values. The purpose of this chapter is not to intimidate you, but to show that despite our varied backgrounds and religious differences, there are elements common to all of us. I ask you to focus on these common elements, not the differences, as you read. It would serve you best to respect and be receptive to all

ideas different from your own because, as you will see, an open attitude will ultimately strengthen your own beliefs and the integrity of your spiritual well-being.

■ Definition of Spirituality

It would be fair to say that human spirituality has been the focus of countless conversations dating back to antiquity. Yet, despite the millions of words and hundreds of philosophies exploring this concept, human spirituality is still a phenomenon for which no one definition seems adequate. Undoubtedly, it includes the aspects of higher consciousness, **transcendence**, self-reliance, self-efficacy, self-actualization, love, faith, enlightenment, mysticism, self-assertiveness, community, and bonding, as well as *God*, *Allah*, *Jesus*, *Buddha*, and a multitude of other concepts. Yet no aspect alone is sufficient to describe the essence of human spirituality. In various sources, the human spirit has been described as a gift to accompany one through life, an inner drive housed in the soul, and even a living consciousness of a divine-like presence within us and around us. These descriptions are poetic and profound, but they don't bring us any closer to a concrete understanding of what human spirituality really is. In many cultures, the word *spirit* means "first breath": that which enters our physical being with our first inhalation at birth. The Hebrews called this *ruah*, and even as the word is spoken, you can hear the rush of wind pass through your lips. Among some Eastern cultures, *pranayama*, or diaphragmatic breathing, is thought to have a spiritual essence that enhances physical calmness by uniting the body and mind as one, by breathing the universal energy. The ancient Greeks used the words *pneuma* to connote spirit and *psyche* to describe the human soul, the latter of which is now commonly associated with the study of human behavior, psychology. More recently, the World Health Organization (WHO) defined human spirituality as "that which is in total harmony with the perceptual and nonperceptual environment."

Sometimes defining what a concept is *not* becomes a type of definition in itself. For instance, human spirituality is neither a religion nor the practice of a religion (**FIG. 8.2**). Religions are based on a specific dogma: an active application of a specific set of organized rules based on an ideology of the human spirit. Being actively involved in a religion is considered enhancing of one's spirituality. This is one of religion's primary goals, and on the whole, religions are very effective in this. But now and again it has been noted by several psychologists that, like too much of anything at



FIGURE 8.2 When people hear the word *spirituality*, many think of religion. Although spirituality and religion share common ground, they are not the same thing. Spirituality is inclusive whereas religions are exclusive.

one time, too much religion can impede the growth of the human spirit for some people, leading to what psychologists Anne Wilson Schaef (1987) and Leo Booth (1991) call an addiction to religion. By the same token, elements of spirituality pushed to the extreme are considered unhealthy, too. Comedian Steven Wright jokingly states, "My girlfriend and I had conflicting attitudes. I wasn't into meditation and she wasn't into being alive." There is no doubt that religion can promote spiritual evolution; the two are very compatible. But individuals can be very spiritual, and not "religious" (in the sense of attending services), just as they can be very religious but have poor awareness of their spirituality. It is often said that where religion separates, spirituality unites. In the words of psychiatrist Viktor Frankl, "Spirituality does not have a religious connotation, but refers specifically to the human dimension." Spirituality, like water, and religions, like the various containers that attempt to hold it, are related yet separate concepts (**FIG. 8.3**). Like a Venn diagram (**FIG. 8.4**), spirituality and religion share common ground, but they are not the same thing.

To define a term or concept is to separate and distinguish it enough from everything else to gain a clear focus and understanding of what it really is. All nonrelated aspects must be factored out to reach a clear and undiluted meaning.

Transcendence: A means to rise above the mundane existence to see a higher order to things, often used to describe human spirituality.



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FIGURE 8.3 Although no language can adequately describe the concept of spirituality, the language of metaphor works the best. Spirituality is often described as being like water. Religions are similar to containers (some beautiful, some questionable) that hold water.

This is where the difficulty lies when one attempts to formulate an adequate definition of the word *spirituality*. It appears that human spirituality encompasses so many factors, possibly everything, that to separate anything out denies a full understanding of the phenomenon. On the other hand, perhaps at this time, we just don't possess the vocabulary to express it to our complete comprehension. Sometimes, to understand a concept, you just have to experience it, and experiences will certainly vary, as will their interpretation. Typically, people tend to describe their collective spiritual experiences as a journey or path. Most important, for a path to enhance the maturation or evolution of the soul, it must be creative, not destructive; progressive, not regressive. It must stimulate and enhance, not stifle, spiritual well-being. Given this premise, remember, too, that there are many paths to enlightenment. No one path is superior to the others, so it doesn't matter which path you take, but only that you keep moving forward (growing) on the path you have chosen. To quote Carlos Castaneda in *The Teachings of Don Juan*, "Look at every path closely and deliberately. Try it as many times as you think is necessary. Then ask yourself, and yourself alone, one question. Does this path have a heart? If it does, the path is good; if it doesn't, it is of no use."

Theories of Human Spirituality

Human spirituality has been studied by several academic disciplines—most notably, philosophy, theology, sociology, and psychology. More recently, this topic has begun to be investigated in the fields of physics, nursing, and clinical medicine as well. Thus, human spirituality will be described henceforth in terms of the various theories devised to provide a better understanding of this concept in several different disciplines.

In the scientific disciplines, theories give rise to operational (working) definitions. From these definitions come conceptual models. From models come tools to assess and measure, and from measurements come a holistic picture of understanding. More often than not, the synthesis of a number of theories offers a mosaic that, up close, may look confusing, and even incomprehensible, but from a distant perspective, it closely approaches a representation of this mystical phenomenon. If human spirituality were compared to a huge mountain, then the individuals who created these theories are the ones who have bushwhacked a path to the top by articulating their own perspectives. Metaphorically speaking, what follows is an aerial view of this mountain, capturing but a few of the many paths reaching toward the summit. The paths described here are by individuals who have encountered and studied

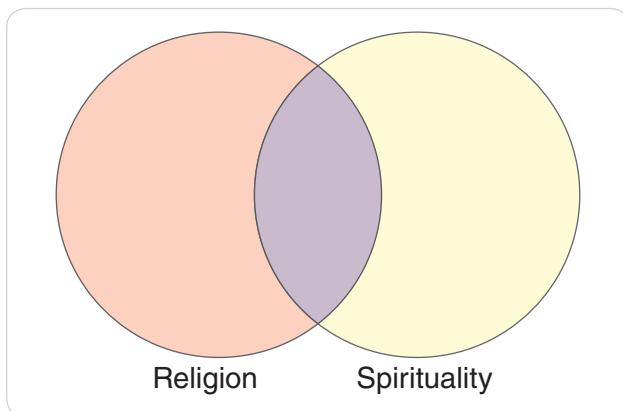


FIGURE 8.4 A Venn diagram depicts the concepts of spirituality and religion nicely, where the two circles contain common ground but are not the same.

matters of the soul with various prophets, sages, and masters. Their personal perspectives, which arise from a range of disciplines and cultures, contribute pieces of the mosaic we call human spirituality. But they only begin to illustrate the nature of this unique human characteristic.

The Path of Carl Jung

Typically, when individuals first consider the source of the human spirit, their search leads them to external things, like nature and the heavens above. It was the work of psychiatrist **Carl Jung** who, as a pioneer in psychology, turned the search inward to explore the depths of the mind, as a means to understand the spiritual nature of humanity. Jung was fascinated with the human psyche, especially the relationship between the conscious mind and the unconscious mind. He spent much time learning about intuition, clairvoyance (dreams foretelling events that later actually happened), seemingly bizarre coincidences, and supernatural occurrences. His fascination led him to explore the mystical side of the mind, and for this reason he was ridiculed by many of his contemporaries. Yet, with time, perceptions have changed. Although Jung is still considered ahead of his time by many, today his theories are recognized as the cornerstones of not only mental and emotional well-being, but also spiritual well-being. And although Jung did not advocate any particular religion, his work is studied, taught, and cited by psychologists, theologians, and spiritual leaders around the world. Moreover, his work has given impetus to a new discipline of healing called **transpersonal psychology** or **psychospirituality**, the study of the relationship between the mind and the soul.

Unlike his mentor, Freud, an atheist who hypothesized that humans functioned at an instinctual level, Jung proposed that there was a spiritual element to human nature, a spiritual drive located in the realm of the unconscious mind, which manifests itself when it bubbles to the conscious level. As a man who studied the myths and belief systems of many cultures on virtually every continent, Jung observed similarities in the symbols in dreams and art by various races of people who had no possible way of communicating them to one another. From research conducted during his professional experiences as well as intensive self-reflection, Jung theorized that these similarities were often represented in symbolic forms he called **archetypes**. Archetypes are primordial images or concepts originating in the unconscious mind at a level so profound that they appear to be common elements, or elements of unity, among all humankind.

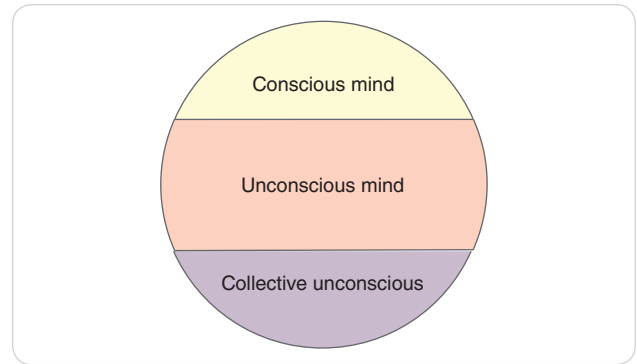


FIGURE 8.5 A symbolic representation of Jung's view of the mind with the collective unconscious residing in the depths of the unconscious mind. This aspect of the mind surfaces to consciousness through intuition, creativity, and dreams.

Jung proposed a dichotomy of levels constituting the unconscious mind: the personal unconscious and the collective unconscious (**FIG. 8.5**). The latter he described as universal consciousness: a unifying force within all individuals, or the collective soul. He believed that the collective unconscious was divine in its nature, the essence of God within all of us. According to Jung, this divine essence manifests in the conscious mind through several cognitive functions, including intuition, creativity, and the interpretation of dreams.

In his exploration of dreams, Jung discovered several people who dreamed of events they could have no possible knowledge of at a conscious level, only to discover that their dreams emerged as crystal-clear predictions of circumstances yet to come. In addition, sometimes during

Carl Jung: A twentieth-century psychiatrist who, under the initial tutelage of Sigmund Freud, forged a new premise of psychology honoring the importance of the human spirit. He became the second greatest influence in the field of psychology.

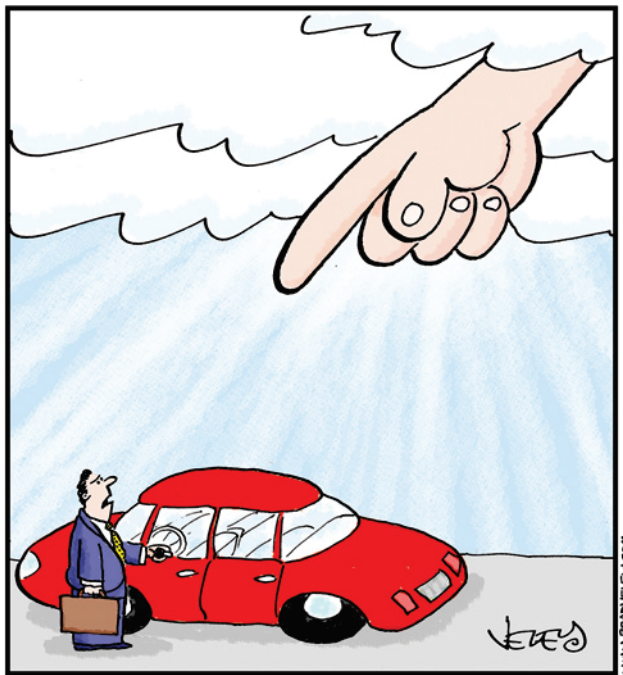
Transpersonal psychology: A discipline in the field of psychology that recognizes the spiritual dimension of the human condition.

Psychospirituality: A focus in the field of psychology, influenced by Carl Jung, to acknowledge the spiritual dimension of the psyche.

Archetypes: A Jungian term to describe primordial images that become symbolic forms with an inherent understanding among all people.

his counseling sessions, Jung would find himself in awe of coincidences that unfolded right in front of him. One example was listening to a client's dream about spotting a fox while the two were walking along a dirt road, only to have a fox appear seconds after the animal was mentioned. Studying the phenomenon of coincidences more closely, Jung concluded that when two seemingly unrelated events happen at once, there is a reason and purpose for it, whether significant or banal, a purpose that cannot be explained rationally by cause and effect. He coined the term **synchronicity** to explain this phenomenon. He also hypothesized that in reality there is no such thing as coincidence; rather, everything is connected, and events unfold simultaneously for a reason. His study of Taoism and the *I Ching* led him to believe that there is a connectedness extending beyond the individual throughout the entire universe, a concept not well accepted in the West during his lifetime (FIG. 8.6).

Synchronicity: A term coined by Carl Jung to explain the significance of two seemingly unrelated events that, when brought together, have a significant meaning.



"Look, I've got a really busy day planned. I don't have TIME for a complete shakedown of my belief system!"

FIGURE 8.6

Jung was once quoted as saying that "every crisis a person experiences over the age of 30 is spiritual in nature." While some only credit Jung with addressing the midlife-crisis phenomenon, Jungian psychologists have maintained the importance of spirituality to the individual, especially at midlife. With regard to this spiritual crisis, Jung further believed that modern men's and women's inability to get in touch with their inner selves provided fertile ground for life's stressors. He added that sickness is a result of not being whole—that is, never connecting with the divine qualities of the unconscious mind to clarify values and gain sharp focus on one's life's meaning.

Another of Jung's theories is that there are characteristics of the personality called the shadow that individuals keep hidden, even from themselves, but which they usually project onto other people. Confronting the shadow of the soul, or attaining profound self-awareness, allows individuals to come to terms with several issues that form the undercurrents for stress in their own lives so that they may become whole.

In a story recounted in his autobiography, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, Jung tells of a young boy who asked an old wise man why no one in this day and age ever sees the face or hears the voice of God. The wise old sage replied that man no longer lowers himself enough to God's level. Jung tells this story to reinforce the idea that people in "civilized" cultures have become distant from the wisdom and knowledge seated in the fathoms of the unconscious mind. Instead, they see God primarily as an external force or supreme being in the clouds. By contrast, Jung suggested that God is a unifying force that resides in all of us, in the depths of the unconscious mind. Like the ancient Asian mystics he studied, who practiced meditation to attain spiritual enlightenment, Jung advocated personal responsibility to examine the conscious and unconscious mind in an effort to find what he called psychic equilibrium. In *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, he further warned that the advancement of technology and materialism, now accepted by many to be stressors, would further widen the gap between the conscious and unconscious minds. Jung believed that as technology and materialism increased, people would spend less and less time cultivating their inner selves. This observation, made in 1933, has come to pass at the beginning of the twenty-first century. It is interesting to note that Jung advised one of his clients that psychoanalysis alone would not cure him of his chronic alcoholism. In a letter to this client, Jung suggested that his best chance for cure was a "spiritual conversion." After Roland H.'s recovery, which he attributed to spiritual

enlightenment, he and a friend, Bill W., started the now well-known organization for problem drinkers called Alcoholics Anonymous. Although this program is not tied to any particular religion, it is based on a very strong sense of spirituality.

Shortly before his death in 1961, Jung was interviewed by John Freeman of the British Broadcasting Corporation. When asked if he believed in God, Jung replied, “No.” Then he paused for a moment, and stated, “I know.”

The Path of M. Scott Peck

In 1978, **M. Scott Peck** ushered in a new age of spiritual awareness in American culture with a seminal book entitled *The Road Less Traveled*, now considered to be a classic. As a psychiatrist who spent many years counseling clients with neurotic and psychotic disorders, Peck became aware of a commonality among virtually all of them: either an absence or immaturity of spiritual development. He also noted that not all people were at the same level of spirituality, which made it a challenge to treat his clients.

Upon intense reflection on his own spiritual beliefs, coupled with what he observed in his clients, Peck developed a framework he called the road to spiritual development. This framework consists of four systematic, hierarchical stages of spiritual growth and development (**FIG. 8.7**): **chaotic antisocial**, **formal-institutional**, **skeptical**, and **mystic-communal**. (These stages are similar to James Fowler’s stages of faith.) Admittedly, as Peck states in his book *The Different Drum*, not everyone falls neatly into one of these four categories. Some people hover between stages, and others migrate back and forth from one stage to another. Despite its shortcomings, which Peck admits to, this model provides a basis from which we can begin to understand the maturation of the human spirit. The stages are described as follows:

Stage 1: The chaotic antisocial individual. The first stage of Peck’s road to spiritual development is an undeveloped spirituality or, in some cases, a spiritual absence or bankruptcy. As a rule, young children fall into this category because of their immaturity, but among adults, the chaotic antisocial individual is someone whose life is in utter chaos. This chaos can be represented by various attitudes and behaviors, including drug or alcohol addiction, codependency, or a helpless-hopeless attitude. Chaotic antisocial individuals can be very manipulative and unprincipled, and they often find that controlling others is easier than

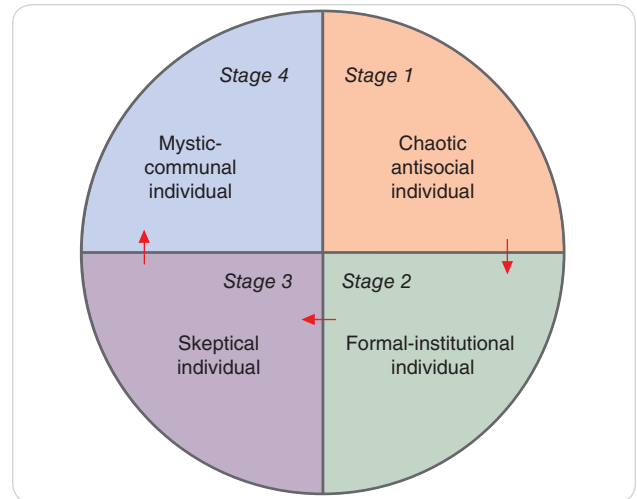


FIGURE 8.7 A symbolic representation of Peck’s conception of human spirituality as a maturation process with four hierarchical stages.

taking responsibility for their own lives. Individuals at this stage have a poor self-relationship; completely avoid self-awareness; maintain poor relationships with family, friends, and co-workers; hold a weak value system with many unresolved conflicts; and show an absence of a meaningful purpose in their lives. Some people remain at this stage their whole lives. A life-threatening situation, however, can act as a catalyst to move to the next stage. In preparation to leave this stage, the chaotic antisocial individual looks for some kind of structure to make order out of the chaos, and to

M. Scott Peck: A contemporary psychiatrist who re-introduced the aspect of human spirituality and psychology with his classic book, *The Road Less Traveled*.

Chaotic antisocial: The first stage of Peck’s hierarchy of spiritual growth in which one’s spiritual essence is lacking (spiritual bankruptcy).

Formal-institutional: The second stage of Peck’s hierarchy of spiritual growth where one tends to find comfort in the guidelines of religious institutions.

Skeptical: The third stage of Peck’s spiritual hierarchy where one shuns all religious dogma.

Mystic-communal: The fourth stage of Peck’s spiritual hierarchy in which one perpetually and joyfully seeks life’s answers in the mystical divine universe.

help slay some personal dragons masking themselves as chronic stressors.

Stage 2: *The formal-institutional individual.* Institutions such as prisons, the military, and, in many cases, the church provide structure. They offer rules, structured guidelines, and dogma to help individuals leave personal chaos behind and rebuild their lives. People who make the transition to this stage from the chaotic antisocial stage desperately need rules, dogma, and guidance to survive. Although many young people enter this stage through the influence of their families (e.g., going to religious services with their parents), Peck found that adults enter it by making an almost overnight conversion, a “born-again” transformation. In essence, they adopt the dogma of an institution as a means of personal survival. Peck observed that when an individual advances to this stage, it may be not only very sudden but also perhaps unconscious. A relationship with God parallels the parent–child relationship, where God is a loving but punitive God. In the words of Peck, “God becomes an ‘Irish cop’ in the sky.” A supreme being is personified in human terms, and perhaps most important, God is purely an external figure who rewards and punishes one’s behavior. People who advance to this stage come looking for personal needs to be met and for life’s answers. Quite often they find what they are looking for. Comfortable with this stage, many people stay at this level for the rest of their lives. Some, however, may slip back into the first stage, and then oscillate between the two. Others eventually leave this stage because of unmet needs. They become skeptical of (perhaps) all institutions, yet remain spiritually stable enough to avoid slipping back to stage 1. At this point, such people begin a free-floating process, unanchored to anything.

Stage 3: *The skeptical individual.* When a person questions the dogma and rules necessary to maintain membership in a church or other organization that has provided some security, and becomes skeptical about the answers (or lack of answers) received, he or she may eventually leave the safety the organization once provided. Peck said that this is a crucial stage of spiritual development, when one begins to question the understanding the institution represents. This is also a very risky stage because there are no guaranteed answers elsewhere. Tongue in cheek, Peck calls people in this stage born-again atheists. People become skeptical when they find that the institution they joined does not fulfill or answer all their needs or expectations. Frustration turns into

distrust, and they often leave the institution they once joined for refuge, becoming very cynical about it and perhaps about life in general. The skeptical individual is looking for truth, and according to Peck, is more spiritually developed than many devoted churchgoers. Some college students, and even more college graduates, reach this stage after years of following their parents’ religious lead, and then finding that the beliefs on which they were raised no longer seem adequate for the situations in which they currently find themselves. The skeptical individual finds him- or herself in a very tenuous position, however, because everyone needs sure footing or an anchor eventually. Two outcomes are possible at this stage. Either one samples other church institutions and makes a half-hearted compromise along the way, or the individual progresses to the next and final stage of spiritual development.

Stage 4: *The mystic-communal individual.* In the continual search for answers to life’s questions, some people eventually come to the realization that there are questions that have no answers. Unlike the skeptical individual who fights this premise, the mystic-communal individual takes delight in life’s paradoxes. These people find comfort in the unanswerable, yet like sleuths, they seek out the continuing challenge, ever hungry for clues and possible answers. People in this stage of spiritual development love a good mystery, and they love to explore. Mystic-communals begin to depersonify God and come to the realization that God is an internal source (the power of love, faith, and will) as much as an external source (an unexplained energy or consciousness). Mystic-communals begin to see an outline of the whole picture even though several pieces are missing. These people see spirituality as a living process, not merely an outcome or heaven-oriented goal. Perhaps as important, they see the need to build and maintain a sense of community by developing quality relationships built on acceptance, love, and respect. They see and feel the need to be connected. Upon arrival at this stage, individuals realize that it is only the beginning of a very long but fruitful journey.

Like Jung, Peck hints that the continued inability to deal with psychological crises often manifests itself as spiritual immaturity, or not progressing through these stages of spiritual growth. And, similar to Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, Peck agrees that individuals regress when stressful situations cause them to lose their footing on this road. For example, a person in the mystic-communal stage who experiences the death

of a loved one may feel anger or guilt if the death is perceived as a form of punishment (Why me?). Many stressful situations cause individuals to focus on the external side of “God” (or lack thereof), often causing them to slip back into stage 2 or 3. Although the road to spiritual development is an independent one, Peck suggests that we are not alone on this journey. Love and grace are the guides that lead the way, when we choose to listen.

The Path of Hildegard von Bingen

The word *spirit* often conjures up the expression *mystic* for many, and in the case of **Hildegard von Bingen** this adjective is most accurate. However, the word *mystic* alone is not enough to describe this unique woman who lived in Germany at the turn of the twelfth century (1098–1179). *Visionary, poet, composer, healer, artist, and saint* are also words used to describe her, yet even these seem inadequate to capture the essence of Hildegard von Bingen. Born of a noble family near the town of Mainz, Hildegard was 8 years old when she first experienced a vision of light, followed by a period of intense illness. At first not familiar with the meaning of her experience, she soon understood that this vision was in some way a message from God. Not long after her first vision, she acquired a remarkable psychic ability, which left her family rather puzzled. As was the custom of her day, Hildegard, the tenth child in her family, was brought to a monastery to be looked after and raised in the hope that her work and accomplishments would please the church.

The first vision was actually one of many to occur throughout her life. Hildegard was encouraged by members of her order to write what she saw in these visions.

What I write is what I see and hear in the vision. I compose no other words than those I hear, and I set them forth in unpolished Latin just as I hear them in the vision, for I am not taught in this vision to write as philosophers do. And the words of the vision are not like words uttered by the mouth of many but like a shimmering flame, or a cloud floating in a clear sky.

In what is considered to be her most impressive writing, *Scivias*, she describes a series of visions illustrating the story of creation, the dynamic tension between light and darkness, the work of the holy spirit, and several words of encouragement to ponder and savor as we each journey on the human path. Her writings didn’t go unnoticed. Word soon traveled to Pope Eugenius III, who sent for copies of these writings. So impressed was he that he not only gave

his blessings, but also sent words of support to Hildegard to continue her writings, thus making her a celebrity.

In the time of the Dark Ages, the vision Hildegard saw wasn’t just a ray of light in the shadows—it became a philosophy that breathed life into a people with a spiritual hunger. And in a time when women took a back seat to the dominance of male authority, Hildegard’s presence and renown demonstrated a higher order of humanity.

Her message was simple: There is a holistic nature to the universe, just as there is a holistic nature to humanity. And just as man and woman are essential parts of the universe, so too is the universe an essential part to be found within each individual. In other words, this message is similar to the axiom, “As above, so below,” or “As the microcosm, so the macrocosm.” As if extending an invitation into nature, she encouraged the “greening” of the soul, a process whereby one engages with the natural world as a part of it, instead of shutting oneself off from it. Hildegard also spoke to the principle of each soul. She routinely emphasized that our soul is not to be found in our body; rather, it is our body that resides in our soul. The body, she said, is the instrument of the soul, a means by which our divine essence can function in the material world. The soul, a unique aspect of our divine nature, is boundless and contains our dreams, hopes, wishes, and desires. Can all things be spiritual? This, indeed, was the message of Hildegard von Bingen. From her visions described in *Scivias* she learned that all things are sacred, “Every creature is a glittering, glistening mirror of divinity.”

In times of spiritual hunger, people often look back to those in earlier times who were able to hold the light of divine essence and in turn share it. Perhaps this is why today, after nearly 1,000 years, the music composed by Hildegard von Bingen has been recorded in a popular CD entitled *Vision*, along with a similar best-selling recording of Benedictine monks entitled *Chant*.

The Path of Black Elk

American Indians in the United States number some several hundred tribes. Although cultural differences abound among them, from the Algonquins in the Northeast to the Navajo in the Southwest, their spirituality is fairly

Hildegard von Bingen: An early Christian mystic who added a feminine voice to a male-dominated Christian theology.

consistent regardless of tribe. One voice that ascended the heights of consciousness in American Indian culture was that of **Black Elk**, a medicine man of the Ogalala Sioux (Lakota) nation. His mystical visions, recorded by John G. Neihardt in the book *Black Elk Speaks*, have galvanized the understanding and appreciation of American Indian spirituality, also referred to as **Mother Earth spirituality**. Despite the devastation of his culture by European traditions and values, Black Elk's vision was quite profound and elaborate with respect to the essence and integrity of the human spirit and the bonding relationship between the two-legged (man) and his natural environment.

Perhaps the features that most distinguish American Indian spirituality from that of other cultures are its set of values demonstrating respect for and connectedness to Mother Earth. Black Elk is not alone in voicing this philosophy; it has been expressed by a great many American Indians. In the words of Shoshone shaman Rolling Thunder, who describes the earth as a living organism, "Too many people don't know that when they harm the earth they harm themselves" (Boyd, 1974). In his book, *Mother Earth Spirituality*, Ed McGaa (Eagle Man) both expounds on Black Elk's vision and augments this knowledge with additional insights of the American Indian culture to provide a more profound understanding of Black Elk's enlightenment. The following is a brief synopsis of Black Elk's influence on spiritual healing.

First, despite the conviction of Christian missionaries that Indians were pagans, American Indians had established a very profound relationship with a divine essence. Unlike Europeans, who personified this higher power, American Indians accepted divine power as the Great Mystery, with no need to define or conceptualize God in human terms. In the words of Chief Seattle, transcribed for a letter to President Franklin Pierce in 1855, "One thing we know, our God is the same God. You may think you own Him

as you wish to own land, but you cannot. He is the God of man; and his compassion is equal for the red man and the white. The earth is precious to Him, and to harm the earth is to heap contempt on its creator. Our God is the same God. This earth is precious to Him" (Gore, 1993) (**BOX 8.1**). This preciousness was and continues to be represented in the bonding relationship between each American Indian and the earth's creatures, the wind, the rain, and the mountains.

North American indigenous peoples see Mother Earth as a symbol of wholeness and represent it with a medicine wheel. Just as the seasons are divided into quarters, so too are many concepts of American Indian spirituality. Some, for example, identify four elements: earth, fire, water, and air; four earth colors: red, yellow, black, and white; four directions: east, west, north, and south; and four cardinal principles or values of the Red Way: to show respect for Wankan Tanka (the Great Mystery or Great Spirit), to demonstrate respect for Mother Earth, to show respect for each fellow man and woman, and to show respect for individual freedoms. The American Indian medicine wheel is a symbol of Mother Earth spirituality from which the lessons of nature are used to better understand oneself (**FIG. 8.8**). To people of these cultures, each quadrant of the wheel represents a specific aspect of spiritual growth and various lessons to learn. The eastern quarter represents the Path of the Sun, where respect is shown for ourselves, others, and the environment. The southern quarter is the Path of Peace and is characterized by the traits of youth, innocence, and wonder. The western quarter is referred to as the Path of Introspection, where time is allocated for the soul-searching process and striving for a balance between physical substance and spiritual essence within oneself. The northern quarter represents the Path of Quiet, which symbolizes the importance of mental health, in which the intellect is stimulated by the lessons of nature.

Although there are several ceremonies to celebrate American Indian spirituality—the most famous being a feast of Thanksgiving taught to European settlers nearly 400 years ago—one practice, called the **vision quest**, exemplifies the strong bond with Mother Earth especially well. The vision quest is recognized as a time of self-reflection, which helps one to understand one's purpose in life, to become grounded in the earth and centered with the Great Spirit, and to reach a clearer understanding of one's contribution to the community. During a vision quest, an individual isolates him- or herself in the wilderness, on a hilltop, a large meadow, or any area that provides privacy. The vision quest creates an opportunity for emptying the mind (meditation) and body

Black Elk: An early twentieth century Native American elder whose perspective of spirituality is often cited as the clarion vision of our relationship with Mother Earth.

Mother Earth spirituality: The expression used to describe the American Indian philosophy with the divine through all of nature.

Vision quest: An American Indian custom of a retreat in nature where one begins or continues to search for life's answers.

BOX 8.1 A Letter from Chief Seattle (1855)

The president in Washington sends word that he wishes to buy our land. But how can you buy or sell the sky? the land? The idea is strange to us. If we do not own the freshness of the air, and the spark of the water, how can you buy them? Every part of this earth is sacred to my people. Every shining pine needle, every sandy shore, every mist in the dark woods. All are holy in the memory and experience of my people. We know the sap that courses through the trees as we know the blood that courses through our veins. We are part of the earth and it is part of us. Perfumed flowers are our sisters. The bear, the deer, the great eagle; these are our brothers. The body heat of the pony and man belong to the same family. The shining water that moves through the streams and rivers is not just water, but the blood of our ancestors. If we sell you our land, you must remember it is sacred.

Each ghostly reflection in the clear water of the lakes tells of the event and the memory in the life of my people. The water's murmur is the voice of my father's father. The rivers are my brothers. They quench our thirst, they carry our canoes and feed our children. So you must give to the river the kindness that you would give any brother. If we sell you our land, remember that the air is precious to us. The air shares its spirit with all life which it supports. The wind that gave our grandfather his first breath also receives his last sigh. The wind also gives our children the spirit of life.

So if we sell you our land, you must keep it apart and sacred as a place where man can go to taste the wind that is sweetened by the meadow's flowers. Will you teach

your children what we have taught our children; that the earth is our Mother? What befalls the earth, befalls all the sons of the earth. This we know: the earth does not belong to man, man belongs to the earth. All things connect, like the blood that unites us all. Man did not weave the web of life, he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself. One thing we know: our God is your God. The earth is precious to him and to harm the earth is to heap contempt on the creator.

Your destiny is a mystery to us. What will happen when the buffalo are all slaughtered, the wild horses tamed? What will happen when the secret corners of the forest are heavy with the scent of many men and the view of the ripe hills is blotted with talking wires? Where will the thicket be? Gone! Where will the eagle be? Gone! And what is it to say good-bye to the swift pony and the hunt—the end of living and the beginning of survival. When the last red man has vanished in his wilderness, and his memory is only the shadow of a cloud moving across the prairie, will these shores and forests still be here? Will there be any spirit of my people left? We love the earth as a newborn loves his mother's heartbeat. So if we sell you our land, love it as we love it. Care for it as we have cared for it. Hold in your mind the memory of the land as you received it. Preserve the land for all children, and love it as God loves us all. As we are part of the land, you too are part of the land. It is precious to us, it is also precious to you. One thing we know: there is only one God. No man, be he red man or white, can be apart. We are brothers after all.

Modified by Ted Perry, loosely based on Chief Seattle's 1854 oration, "The Great Ecology" as it appeared in the *Seattle Sunday Star*, Oct. 29, 1887.

(fasting). The emptying process allows the human spirit to be filled with energy from the Great Spirit, leading the individual toward a path of self-enlightenment and self-improvement. Typically performed as a rite of passage from adolescence into adulthood, a vision quest can also be taken any time there is a need for spiritual growth or guidance.

Nearly extinguished by Christian missionaries a century or more ago, many elements of American Indian spirituality are now beginning to be recognized and respected, particularly in light of concerns about the poor "health status" of the planet (the environment). Ironically, it is now the "white man" who is adopting this value from the American Indian.

The Path of Matthew Fox

Matthew Fox is a former Roman Catholic theologian who, much like American Indians in the centuries before, was silenced by the Vatican in 1989 for his "progressive" views on human spirituality and has since been excommunicated from the church. The premise of Fox's theory is that the

Matthew Fox: A Christian theologian renowned for his theory of creation spirituality and many other concepts. He was silenced by the Vatican in 1989 for one year followed by excommunication in 1999. He is now an Episcopal minister in California.



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FIGURE 8.8 The Native American medicine wheel, which honors the four directions and the four seasons (Mother Earth spirituality).

Judeo-Christian concept of spirituality, formulated when it was believed that the earth was the center of the universe, has not kept pace with scientific discoveries of the earth as but a piece of the whole universe and by no means its center. Fox has attempted to unite many concepts of theology with the laws and theories of physics in what he terms **creation spirituality**. Creation spirituality suggests that divinity can be found in any act of creation, from the atom to the far reaches of the cosmos, and every particle in between. The seed of creativity is energy, an element that binds all things together. And, as stated in the first law of thermodynamics, energy is neither created nor destroyed.

Fox was inspired by the work of the thirteenth-century German theologian Meister Eckhart, many American Indians, Albert Einstein, and a divine presence he terms the cosmic Christ. Through these influences, he has developed four paths or attitudes of creation spirituality (**FIG. 8.9**), which in his opinion raise individual

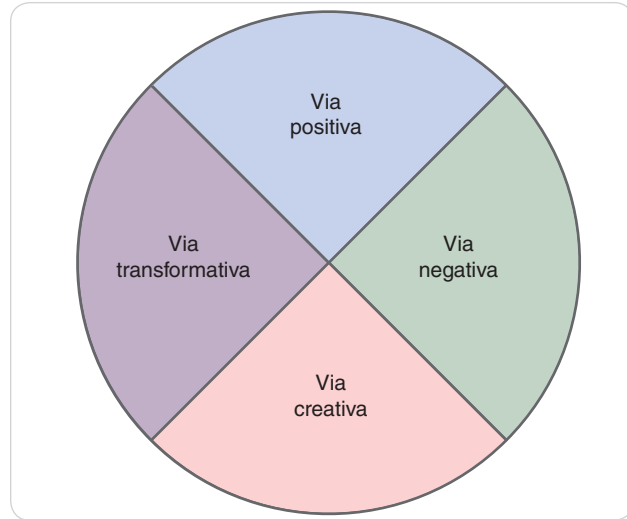


FIGURE 8.9 A symbolic representation of Fox's creation spirituality.

consciousness and thus the spiritual level of humankind as a whole. These paths are as follows:

Path 1: *Via positiva*. A sense of awe and wonder at the design and creation of all that surrounds us. Like the wonder of a young child, via positiva is a continual awareness and appreciation of all things, from the simplicity of a blade of grass to the mechanical complexity of the space shuttle. All creation should be celebrated, not feared or shamed.

Path 2: *Via negativa*. The process of emptying or letting go of thoughts, feelings, values, even possessions that weigh down, enclose, and smother the soul, depriving it of nutrients for growth. Via negativa is a period of darkness, silence, even fasting of the soul, for only when emptiness occurs is there room for new growth. This stage also goes by a less favorable name, "the dark night of the soul." This process may be emotionally painful at times, yet it is necessary for the maturation of the human spirit.

Path 3: *Via creativa*. A breakthrough or explosion of enlightenment, which fills the space vacated through the cleansing process of via negativa. This enlightenment may come in the form of divine inspiration, intuitive thoughts, or imagination. Via creativa is human creativity, which increases the quantity and quality of awe in the universe.

Path 4: *Via transformativa*. Fox calls via transformativa the path of struggle, compassion, and celebration. With this path comes the responsibility to act on the

Creation spirituality: A term coined by theologian Matthew Fox to describe the paths of human spirituality blending the laws of physics and theology.

Via positiva: Fox's term to describe a sense of awe and wonder of creation.

Via negativa: Fox's term to describe the act of emptying and letting go of unnecessary thoughts and feelings.

Via creativa: Fox's term to describe a breakthrough or moment of enlightenment.

Via transformativa: Fox's term to describe the euphoria from the realization of insights and the responsibility to share these with others.

enlightenment and inspiration from via creativa by channeling divine energy into personal acts of creation, and using this positive creative energy for the betterment of humankind.

Fox suggests that all people see themselves as acts of creation, deserving of awe and wonder. In turn, the ability to use one's imagination and creativity will add to the awe of the universe. These four paths align themselves in what Fox calls a sacred hoop, or a circle symbolizing wholeness, with each path nourishing the others to their full potential. The connection between each element of this hoop is compassion. Compassion, as defined by Fox, is a continual celebration of life and includes the fulfillment of love, forgiveness, and a personal as well as public display of one's spirituality. Thus, human spirituality involves the integration of all four paths into one road, or what Fox refers to as a “**personal cosmology**”—a relationship to the divine presence that dwells in us.” When asked how to cultivate this divine relationship, Fox in turn asks these questions: What poets do you read? What music moves you? What acts of creation are you involved with? What social issues are your passion? What work do you most love doing? What pain is in your emptiness? When do you feel a connection to the universe? From Fox's perspective, the fulfillment of these answers nurtures the growth of the human spirit.

The Path of Joan Borysenko

New to the emerging discipline of psychoneuroimmunology, **Joan Borysenko** hit the ground running as cofounder, therapist, and director of the Mind/Body Clinic affiliated with the Harvard Medical School in Boston, Massachusetts. Through working with her mentor, stress physiologist Dr. Herbert Benson, her patients, and her personal journey of self-enlightenment, Borysenko began to synthesize an understanding of the connections among the body, mind, and soul. One observation inspiring her journey was that some of her clients' personal faith seemed to be stronger than any clinical medicine—faith that caused cancerous tumors to go into spontaneous remission, healed several illnesses, or simply brought inner peace in the last moments of life.

But just as faith can heal, so its absence can quicken the pace of physical illness and even death. Borysenko is among a growing number of clinical specialists who believe that the mechanistic approach to medicine is very much outdated. As explained in *Guilt Is the Teacher; Love Is the Lesson*, the mind and spirit play a crucial role in the health and healing process of the body. For example,

for a new medicine to be proven clinically effective, it must cure more than 35 percent of the people who use it. Below this point of demarcation, cures are considered the result of the placebo effect, or healing by faith alone (Brody, 2000). That is, sugar water and sugar pills have a healing rate of 35 percent (and in some cases up to 70 percent) among people who believe they will cure them of their disease. In addition, in a now-famous study cited by Borysenko, patients who had a view of nature outdoors from their rooms were released from the hospital sooner, indicating a significantly faster recovery rate, than those patients who had either no view or a view of adjacent brick buildings (Ulrich, 1984). These facts and several others indicated to Borysenko that a significant factor in the human equation has been ignored regarding the treatment of illness and disease—the factor of human spirituality.

In her campaign of health promotion, which has included several books, interviews, and national presentations, Borysenko advocates healing the human spirit as an integral part of physical healing and emphasizes the important role of spirituality in the self-healing process. Spirituality is defined by Borysenko (1990) as “a reconnection (remembrance) of our eternal connection with a life force or power that we are a part of.” Strongly influenced by the works of Jung, Larry Dossey, and others, Borysenko advocates the importance of building a relationship with the inner self and taking the time to get to know the real self. The distance that people keep from this self-center—distance created by shame, guilt, and the expectations of who we should be rather than who we really are—is fertile ground upon which to sow the seeds of stress. She also believes that through the ability to know the self we strengthen the bonds with higher consciousness as well as with the people within our community. In her original definition, influenced by Richard Lazarus, she believed stress to be the inability to cope, but she now proposes that stress is a lack of connectedness.

Personal cosmology: Fox's term to explain one's personal relationship with the divine that dwells in each of us.

Joan Borysenko: An early pioneer in the field of psychoneuroimmunology who emphasized the importance of spirituality as part of the mind-body concept.

Borysenko (1990) describes two possible attitudes relating to the development of the human spirit: **spiritual optimism** and **spiritual pessimism**. She defines spiritual optimism as “an intuitive knowledge that love is the universal energy and the human condition is ripe for learning experiences in which love manifests.” Conversely, spiritual pessimism she describes as an attitude that nurtures low self-esteem, guilt, and all that impedes the way of love. Borysenko adds that spiritual pessimism is directly tied to low self-esteem, which produces psychological helplessness. In her work, she has observed many emotional roadblocks that not only impede spiritual development, but also appear to wreak havoc on the physiological systems of the body, leading to the onset of disease and illness. These emotions are commonly seen in the stress response: fear, anger, worry, and guilt, with guilt (in her opinion) as one of the largest obstacles to spiritual growth. Like Fox, Borysenko emphasizes the importance of compassion: “the flower of psychospiritual growth.” To access this and other spiritual components of human nature, Borysenko advocates the practice of meditation to calm the mind and find peace in the soul. Stress, she says, is an obstacle to the spiritual nature of humankind. Meditation, like a warm wind that clears the sky of clouds to allow a view of the heavens, clears the mind of the taxing and toxic thoughts that obstruct the pathway of nutrients to the soul. Meditation, she believes, is a process for emptying the mind and making way for new insight into the real self, an insight that can guide one around the obstacles of life.

In her book *A Woman's Journey to God*, Borysenko notes that women constitute the greatest percentage of Americans she labels as “religious drop-outs”—those women who leave the institution of their religious upbringing to wander, drift, and possibly reconnect to another affiliation with more acceptance. One reason for this apathy can be found in the language of several religions where male pronouns

describing God exclude the female gender—a big issue to many women in an age of equal rights. She states that the white-male hierarchy has become a huge roadblock on the spiritual path to women of the baby-boomer generation and their children.

Borysenko describes each woman's quest for a relationship to the divine as a spiritual pilgrimage. Although not outlining a systematic progression of steps on this pilgrimage, Borysenko shares her insights on how a woman might journey through various stages of the feminine quest. Borysenko suggests that each woman connect to the creative aspect of the divine and not see God entirely as a male entity. She cites menses and childbirth as examples of the creative process. Next she conveys the importance of resolving anger issues that develop (some as early as childhood) in what she terms as the first step to healing. Borysenko then speaks of the practice of rituals as a means to remember the divine connection. Rituals may include baby showers, candle ceremonies, retreats—anything to place one in the conscious recognition of God or Goddess. A final aspect of the feminine path Borysenko talks about is the connection to other women through support groups, prayer circles, or other venues where women can share their stories. For generations upon generations, stories have been the vehicle by which women have passed on spiritual truths to each other and their children.

In *A Woman's Journey to God*, Borysenko writes, “A quiet awakening is under way as women are coming together to worship, to tell stories, and find their place spiritually, if not always religiously, in the household of God. Women's spirituality groups are popping up everywhere. . . . Women often report a deep sense of connection to God as part of friendship, or mothering. We see God in others.” It is this aspect of the feminine path that Borysenko shares in the hopes of inclusiveness and healing of the human spirit.

Spiritual optimism: Joan Borysenko's description of an intuitive knowledge that love is *the* universal energy.

Spiritual pessimism: Joan Borysenko's description of an attitude that nurtures low self-esteem, guilt, and other less-than-becoming behaviors.

Deepak Chopra: A contemporary physician and metaphysician originally from India, he presents and integrates the ageless wisdom of spirituality, quantum physics, and medicine.

The Path of Deepak Chopra

One might think that spirituality and medicine would go hand in hand because both honor the essence of life, but that is not how Dr. **Deepak Chopra** or any of his physician colleagues and peers were introduced to the science of medicine. An endocrinologist by training, Chopra came to the United States from India and landed a job in New Jersey in 1970. With his sights set on a bigger hospital, he soon ended up outside of Boston, working as chief of staff at New England Memorial Hospital. Frustrated at the limitations of Western medicine, Chopra returned to his Indian roots and began to explore Ayurvedic medicine,

an ancient form of holistic health care, which, when translated, means the Science of Life where mind, body, and spirit connect as one. On a path that led him from allopathic to holistic medicine, Chopra soon discovered that mind-body medicine, or psychoneuroimmunology as it is referred to clinically, is really mind-body-spirit medicine, in which the human spirit plays an integral role in the healing process. His search into psychoneuroimmunology and the essence of spirituality led him to study with the founder of Transcendental Meditation (TM), Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, where he began to understand the concepts of mind and consciousness. This exposure to consciousness began to galvanize his understanding of the intricacies of the human condition in states of disease and health and matters of the soul.

But Chopra didn't rest there. An avid reader, he, like a child with a crayon, began to connect the dots of wisdom from all corners of the earth, including the writings of Einstein, Blake, Rumi, the *Bhagavad Gita*, the Bible, the Koran, Lao Tzu, Tagore, and others to synthesize a comprehensive if not universal understanding of the nature of God and the laws that govern all creation.

The author of several books, including *Quantum Healing*, *Perfect Health*, and *Ageless Body, Timeless Mind*, Chopra has now focused his attention on the matters of the soul. In his book *The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success*, Chopra presents a simple guideline of seven principles for embracing the spirit of life in everyday living.

The Law of Pure Potentiality. Understanding that at the core of our essence is pure consciousness, the law of pure potentiality reminds us to enter in silence the core of our being and tap the universal wisdom in which to create and reach our potential. In the Western culture, it is common to seek validation through external objects. The law of pure potentiality reminds us that we only need look inside to find our divine essence. Once this source is accessed, we become co-creators and active participants, rather than passive victims on the human journey.

The Law of Giving. According to this law, the universe is a dynamic cornucopia. Nothing is static. Energy flows freely. In support of the axiom, "As you give, so shall you receive," the law of giving reminds us to keep open the channels of our heart, for when the heart is closed, the energy becomes blocked and the stagnation of universal energy leads to an atrophy of the spirit. Chopra points out that the derivation of the words *affluence* and *currency* has nothing to do with money. Rather, it means to flow, a lesson the law of giving teaches. Nature abhors

a vacuum; however, she is not fond of gluttony either. The law of giving reminds us to walk in balance.

The Law of Karma (or Cause and Effect). As if taken from a law of physics stating that every action has an equal and opposite reaction, the law of karma invites us to become more responsible for our thoughts and actions. The law of karma, similar to the Christian expression, "As you sow, so shall you reap," invites us to shed the habits that inhibit our growth, break the bonds of conditioned thoughts, and become responsible (the ability to respond) for our every action.

The Law of Least Effort. Nature teaches us that water finds its own level. The universe unfolds in its own time and place. If we try to rush it, we only tire ourselves. The law of least effort invites us to go with the flow, not resist what we cannot change or influence. Chopra writes that nature's intelligence functions effortlessly. To be in harmony with nature means to go with the flow. One aspect of least effort is to accept those things we cannot change. A second aspect of least effort is to initiate self-responsibility rather than cast blame on others. The law of least effort asks us to travel the human path lightly, discarding those opinions, beliefs, and attitudes that are defensive in nature, for when we carry these, the human journey becomes a struggle, rather than a delightful sojourn.

The Law of Intention and Desire. We attract what we submit to the universal consciousness through intention. "Intention," writes Chopra, "grounded in the detached freedom of the present, serves as the catalyst for the right mix of matter, energy, and space-time events to create whatever it is that you desire." The Buddha once said that all suffering comes from desire. What is implied in the teachings of the Buddha is that the partner of desire is

The Law of Pure Potentiality: A reminder to be silent and look within for guidance and insights rather than validation through external means.

The Law of Giving: A reminder to live life with an open heart to give and receive freely.

The Law of Karma (or Cause and Effect): A reminder that we reap what we sow.

The Law of Least Effort: A reminder to go with the flow with things that we cannot control as well as to live in harmony with nature.

The Law of Intention and Desire: A reminder to set our intentions for both big and small goals, yet not become encumbered by the ego's desires.

detachment or letting go. Attachment to our desires most likely will create suffering when our intentions are not fully realized. As you intend, so must you detach, and let the universe take care of the details.

The Law of Detachment. The law of detachment is an invitation to let go of our desires, wishes, and dreams. It's not that we don't want the desired outcome, but detachment allows the desire to stand on its own two feet. This law serves as a reminder that we are co-creators in the universe of our lives, but not codependent on it. Detachment means to let go of the emotions that align with our desires—fear and anger, if our desires go unfulfilled. The law of detachment is one of the hardest laws to honor because we often place our security in those things we keep near us. Implicit in the law of detachment is the concept of trust. When we let go of thoughts, wishes, and desires, we are trusting that whatever the outcome, it is in our best interest. So if we apply for a job (intention) and we don't get it, we must realize that at a higher level of consciousness, this was in our best interest. Those things in our best interest will come back to us as intended.

The Law of Dharma or Life Purpose. Each of us has a unique gift and talent to share with the community of humanity. This law invites us to realize what our life purpose or mission is, and to act on it, so that we help raise consciousness for one and all. *Dharma* is the ancient Sanskrit word for purpose or mission. The acceptance of life on Earth requires that we not only realize our purpose, but also act to fulfill it so that all may benefit from it.

In his acclaimed book *How to Know God*, Chopra uses the template of the seven chakras as a way to expand one's level of awareness to a higher level of consciousness. It is Chopra's thesis (and he is not alone in this thought) that each person must journey back to the divine source by cultivating a relationship through mind and heart.

The Law of Detachment: A reminder to release and let go of all thoughts that hold back our human potential.

The Law of Dharma or Life Purpose: This law invites contemplation of one's purpose in life.

Jesus of Nazareth: A remarkable spiritual leader with a timeless message of compassion, forgiveness, and integrity.

Unconditional love: An altruistic love expressed by Jesus of Nazareth, where nothing is expected in return.

In doing so, we come to realize that we partner with God in the creation process of our own lives.

Chopra has become a bridge that unites not just spirituality and medicine, but many facets of humanity that have become divided through ego and fear. If asked, he and others like him will tell you that we, the human species, stand on the precipice of great change. For us to weather this change and become self-realized, we must work to evolve our soul growth, and this can be done by honoring and practicing the seven universal laws of spirituality.

The Path of Jesus of Nazareth

More than 2,000 years ago, a unique man appeared in the Middle East, and his presence has since left an indelible mark on humanity. His teachings were profound, his healings miraculous, and his death a mystery. Some people called him a prophet, others called him the Messiah, and still others called him a heretic. Little is known about **Jesus of Nazareth** other than that he was born in a barn, worked as a carpenter, shared his philosophies with others, and died a cruel death. He never wrote down any of his teachings; rather, he shared his simple yet profound wisdom with followers who yearned to understand his enlightenment, and they in turn created a community years later called Christianity. Decades after his death, in an effort to remember those teachings, his followers recorded his wisdom, stories, and healing practices in a collection of manuscripts now known as the New Testament of the Holy Bible. Scholars and theologians continue to study and interpret his words of wisdom today. It may be difficult, if not impossible, to separate the messenger from the message, but if we focus on the fundamental principle taught by Jesus, we find that his basic premise is the power of **unconditional love** (FIG. 8.10). What follows is a small sampling of insights and reflections on this theme (Borg, 2008).

When Jesus began teaching in the Middle East, there was much civil conflict and strife. The Hebrews in Jerusalem were oppressed by the Romans and in essence were treated as second-class citizens in their own country. Many were searching for a political leader to save them and return them to a life of undisturbed peace. In this time of ambivalence and hatred, Jesus preached and practiced the power of unconditional love. He was charismatic, his style was uniquely humble, and he attracted many followers who in their hearts believed he possessed the qualities of a great political leader. But Jesus of Nazareth regarded himself as a spiritual leader only. By his example and teachings, he showed men and women



FIGURE 8.10 A symbolic representation of human spirituality from the perspective of Jesus of Nazareth.

how to restore and maintain inner peace through a loving relationship with God. Beyond all else, he believed that through love all things were possible.

Based on the inspirational words of Jesus and his followers, many people have since attempted to illustrate the concept of love on the canvas of their own hearts. Scottish theologian Henry Drummond described love as a spectrum of several attributes, including patience, kindness, generosity, humility, unselfishness, and sincerity. Theologian Thomas Merton wrote in his book *The Ascent to Truth* that love is the source of one's merit, and as such, it is in love that God resides. Psychiatrist Gerald Jampolsky defines love as an experience absent from fear and the recognition of complete union with all life. To Jesus, the expression of love was like a passageway. For love to be effective as a channel of communication or healing energy, there must be no obstructions and no conflicting thoughts to pollute it. In other words, there must be no conditions or expectations placed on the expression of love. Like a child who acts spontaneously, the expression of love must be uninhibited, not filtered by conscious (ego) thought. As Jesus elaborated, people under oppression, whether by foreign rulers or the perceptions of their own minds, begin to close and harden their hearts. Their ability to feel and express love is overridden by critical, judgmental, and conditional thinking, thought processes often rooted in fear. But as described by Ken Carey in the book *Starseed*, these two concepts are mutually exclusive: You cannot experience love and fear

at the same time. From the writings of Jesus' followers, we see that it is fear, expressed in terms of hatred, greed, and guilt, that is the greatest obstacle to love.

Love has an inherent healing power all its own, and it was this power that Jesus demonstrated in performing his miracles of giving sight to the blind and health to the infirm. Inspired by the book *A Course in Miracles*, Jampolsky cites love as a divine energy that knows no bounds. In his own book, *Teach Only Love*, Jampolsky explains that when love is undiluted it becomes the most powerful source of healing energy. When there is a conscious shift from the motivation of fear to the motivation of love, then nothing real is impossible.

Once while teaching, Jesus was asked about the greatest rule to live by. His reply was to love unconditionally—specifically, to love God and to extend this love to each human being as you would to yourself. Jesus further explained that God resides in each and every one of us: “The Kingdom of God is within you.” These words, although not new, were novel in their meaning. Given the hatred and fear in the hearts of the Hebrews at the time, it seemed incongruous to love one's enemy as Jesus suggested. His message here was that forgiveness is a crucial element of unconditional love. To elaborate on this theme, he shared the story of the prodigal son, a young man who wasted his inheritance on foolish pleasures and then came crawling back home destitute. Yet his father welcomed him back and forgave him completely. This was an example of the depth of God's unconditional love for all people.

Jesus also spoke about faith and its relationship to love. Faith, a confident belief and conviction in the power of God's love, is the intent or desire to express love. Jesus explained the concept of faith through metaphors and parables. In one such case, he compared faith to a tiny mustard seed, implying that a small seed of faith could expand to phenomenal proportions and overcome the trials of human experience. To paraphrase the words of theologian C. S. Lewis, faith is a necessary virtue to complete the will of God. And in the words of President John F. Kennedy, “God's work must truly be our own.”

Paul, one of Jesus' earliest followers, in a letter to friends in the city of Corinth (which has since been recited at many weddings), described love this way:

Love is patient and kind, never jealous or envious, never boastful or proud, never haughty or selfish or rude. Love does not demand its own way. It is not irritable or touchy. It does not hold grudges and

will hardly ever notice when others do it wrong. It is never glad about injustice, but rejoices whenever truth wins out. Above all there are three things that remain, faith, hope, and love. The greatest of these is love. Let love be your greatest aim.

The Path of Joseph Campbell

The word *myth* comes from an ancient Sanskrit word, meaning the source of truth. Today the word *myth* has become synonymous with the word *fallacy*, but it is fair to say that every myth is based on a source of truth, perhaps exaggerated to make a point, but truth nevertheless. **Joseph Campbell** is the most respected scholar in the study of mythology. For more than 60 years, he studied myths, legends, and stories from all cultures, from the ancient Hindus to several American Indian tribes. Campbell left no stone unturned when it came to looking behind the message of each story. What he found was not only astonishing parallels (e.g., virgin births, resurrections, healings), but remarkable patterns, regardless of the story's origin, which speak to the nature of the human spirit. His own quest brought him to the front door of psychologist Carl Jung, mystic Jiddu Krishnamurti, poet Robert Bly, and scores of luminaries over the world, all of whom added to his collective wisdom.

Campbell's work went largely unrecognized outside of academic circles during the twentieth century until PBS television host Bill Moyers aired a six-part special, titled *The Power of Myth*, with Joseph Campbell in the spring of 1987. Campbell died soon thereafter on October 30. Despite his death, his work grows increasingly popular as people discover the links between mythology and spirituality—a legacy for all to share.

In the first episode with Bill Moyers, Campbell explained the connection between mythology and human spirituality like this:

Myths are clues to the spiritual potentialities of the human life. Our problem today is that we are not well acquainted with the literature of the spirit.

Joseph Campbell: Renowned for his wisdom about human mythology gathered from all cultures over time, Campbell's greatest work illustrates the human experience as the hero's journey as exemplified in the template of every great story.

Hero's journey: Mythologist Joseph Campbell's classic template of the human journey with three stages: departure, initiation, and return.

Having studied the myths and legends of every culture throughout the ages, from Zeus to *Star Wars* (George Lucas was a student of Campbell's), Campbell noticed an interesting trend. In each myth there is a hero, and although the face of the hero may change over time, the story line remains consistent. In his book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Campbell highlights the progression of the **hero's journey**, which, as it turns out, mirrors our own life sojourn. The stages include departure, initiation, and return. Let's take a closer look at each one.

- **Departure:** The first step in any adventure is to leave your place of origin. Whether one travels like Ulysses on a ship or like Luke Skywalker on a spacecraft, every hero must leave home to go and find him- or herself. The departure stage is also referred to as severance or separation, where the reluctant hero is forced into a situation unwillingly. Campbell cites Adam and Eve as examples of reluctant departure. Stepping outside of the classic myth tale, departure may begin with the first year in college away from home, the death of a parent, or the end of a marriage. Departures can occur in a great many ways. With the first step out the door and across the threshold, the journey has begun.
- **Initiation:** Traveling down the road far away from home, the hero is put to the test. Campbell calls this stage "the road of trials." It can be observed in nearly every story from Frodo Baggins in *Lord of the Rings* to each Harry Potter book. For some heroes, the test may be dragons (the symbol of fear); for others, it may be a symbolic river to cross (the River Styx). For still others, it may be an evil witch, a wicked stepmother, a rescue, or the betrayal of a close friend. In the legend of King Arthur, it began with the apprenticeship with Merlin. In the life of a college student, initiation can manifest itself in thousands of ways, including the roommate from hell or the abusive alcoholic parent. In every mythological story, the hero must demonstrate strength, courage, patience, and willpower. If she fails the first test, another will appear until she is strong enough to conquer it and move on.
- **Return:** At some point in the journey, usually upon success with the initiation process, the hero must return home. Upon crossing the threshold of return, the hero shares the wealth of riches acquired on the road. Symbolically, the return home is accompanied with a trophy of sorts: magical runes, the golden fleece, a broomstick, or Medusa's head. Campbell

Stress with a Human Face



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In 1960, at the invitation of renowned anthropologist Louis Leakey and the government of Tanzania, a young British woman named Jane Goodall ventured into the forests of Africa, known then as the “Dark Continent.” Her assignment was to observe and study the behaviors of the chimpanzee, one of the great apes whose behavior in the wild was virtually unknown at the time. Today, Goodall is recognized not just for her discovery that humans are not the only species to make and use tools, but also for her tireless efforts as an environmental activist to save wildlife habitats around the globe. In her autobiography *Reason for Hope*, she shares both her life’s work and her spiritual insights, for Goodall is a very spiritual person.

Every once in a great while a person enters the world stage and makes an indelible mark in the minds of the entire world. Even rarer is the person who touches our hearts in a way that leaves us inspired to reach our highest potential. Goodall is one such person. Through her unyielding inspiration, compassion, humility, vision, and unceasing effort to make the world a better place, she has been compared to such luminaries as Gandhi, Einstein, the Dalai Lama, and Mother Teresa. In recognition of her achievement and world influence, former United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan appointed her a UN Messenger of Peace in 2002, a title balanced with honor and responsibility. By all counts, Goodall demonstrates the traits of a leader, hero, and role model. She embodies the expression “Live simply, so that others (including all of God’s creatures) may simply live.” In doing so, she reminds us that we, too, must do the same.

Through a wonderful path of serendipity, I found myself having breakfast with Goodall in spring 2004 to collaborate on a project. Despite the clouds of uncertainty, she shared with me her conviction to make planet Earth a better world in which to live and her reasons for hope in achieving this result—symbols of achievement that transcend the limitations of ego. The first was a California condor feather given to Goodall by those who were responsible for bringing this magnificent bird back from the brink of extinction—a symbol of what is possible. The second was a piece of rock from the prison quarry where Nelson Mandela was confined for more than 26 years under the rule of apartheid. Goodall carries it with her as a sign of both forgiveness and powerful, peaceful transformation. The third reason for hope was a mystical experience in Nebraska watching the migration of the sandhill cranes—the same day war broke out in Iraq in 2003. Goodall viewed the experience as a sign that in a world of chaos, there is still beauty, and that beauty is worth saving.

To sit in the presence of Jane Goodall is to experience grace firsthand. She is a very spiritual individual. Moreover, to see her work take root around the world through her youth-based programs like “Roots & Shoots” is proof that one person can, indeed, make a difference. In Goodall’s words, “Each of us has a role to play. Each one of us must take responsibility for our lives and, above all, show respect and love for living things around us, especially each other. Together we must reestablish our connection with the natural world and with the spiritual power that is around us. Despite signs of imbalance, I believe in the power of the human spirit, but we must act now,” she says.

points out that there may be a reluctance to go home, caused either by feelings of shame or the lust for additional conquests. But return we must to complete the story. The stage of return is also called incorporation, where the returning hero is accepted by his family and peers as an equal, and everyone benefits from his wisdom as a master of two worlds: the one he conquered and the one he has returned home to. The return phase offers a promise that all ends well.

There was a time when the sharing of myths was passed down from parent to child, not merely for entertainment

purposes but as wisdom to guide the child on his or her own life journey. Stories from the Bible, the *Bhagavad Gita*, and other sacred scriptures as well as scores of legends, fairy tales, and folklore all serve the same purpose. However, for the most part the tradition of finding wisdom from these stories has vanished in the American culture. In his discussion in *The Power of Myth*, Campbell drew a connection between the rising state of spiritual hunger and the absence of our connection to mythological stories. As he explained, when a society forgoes the power of myth, instead replacing it with information, technology, or perhaps nothing, the society becomes less civilized and more destructive.

Knowing the power of myth himself, Campbell had ever the optimistic outlook on the journey of humanity itself, for he knew the end of the story: “We are at this moment participating in one of the very greatest leaps of the human spirit—to a knowledge not only of outside nature, but also our own deep inward mystery—the greatest leap ever!”

The Path of Lao Tzu

Around 500 B.C., the writings of China’s most famous philosopher, **Lao Tzu**, were first published under the title of *Tao Teh Ching*. Originally written primarily for the leaders of his country, this collection of 5,000 words soon became the doctrine of Chinese living, outlining the path to spiritual enlightenment through inner peace. Lao Tzu used the word *Tao* to describe the movement, path, or way of universal energy. The literal translation of the title of Tzu’s book is “the path that leads straight from the heart,” and the Chinese character for this title symbolizes “walking wisdom.” Tzu’s writings speak of building a peaceful world through inner peace. Only when peace is created within yourself can you move in tandem with the energies that circulate within and around you and to establish world peace.

The concept of Taoism suggests that all things connect with a flow of energy called *chi*. To move along with the patterns of flow allows a peaceful coexistence with both oneself and the environment. Movement against the flow causes internal as well as external disturbances, often with far-reaching consequences. This movement of life energy goes in cycles, like the ebb and flow of the ocean tide. One of the many concepts the *Tao Teh Ching* teaches is balance between the opposing forces of yin and yang, which provides harmony, patience, and timing of the events of life. That is, to move with rather than against the flow promotes and maintains inner peace. Tzu’s *Tao* invites the individual to look inward, beyond the superficial facade of humanness, and sense the inner rhythms that move in

Lao Tzu: An ancient Chinese philosopher and writer. He is the author of the acclaimed book *Tao Teh Ching*, a manifesto for human spirituality based on the concept of balance with nature. Lao Tzu is believed to be the creator of the concept of Taoism.

The Principle of Oneness: A Taoist concept of oneness with nature serving as a reminder of our oneness with it.

The Principle of Dynamic Balance: A Taoist concept revealing the opposites that make up the balance of life.

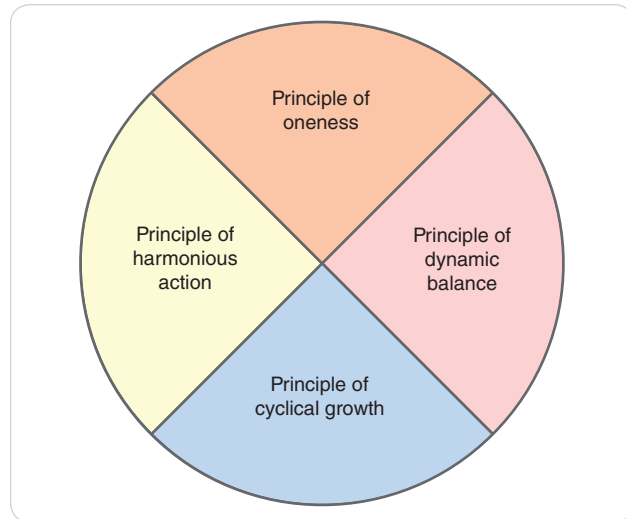


FIGURE 8.11 A symbolic representation of the four principles of Taoism created by Lao Tzu.

harmony with the universal rhythms. By doing this, not only is inner peace achieved, but also harmony with nature and all relationships. Tzu also spoke of the importance of self-reliance: “Wise people seek solutions, the ignorant only cast blame.” Although initially Taoism may seem like a foreign concept, it can be found in many Western writings as well. Perhaps the best example of it is the Taoist mannerisms and character of Winnie the Pooh, described by Benjamin Hoff in the renowned best-seller, *The Tao of Pooh*. In fact, with a closer look, Taoist principles can be found virtually everywhere.

In her book *The Tao of Inner Peace*, Diane Dreher explains that Tzu outlined four “great disciplines” to help achieve inner peace through the way of the *Tao*: oneness, dynamic balance, cyclical growth, and harmonious action

(**FIG. 8.11**).

The Principle of Oneness. The principle of oneness suggests that we are part of the whole, connected to a dynamic network of universal energy. Oneness means to be one with, or a part of, nature, not above or apart from it. When we see ourselves as separate from the whole, we distance ourselves from other people and the natural elements. This distance weakens our spiritual strength. Just as there is strength in numbers, there is also strength in oneness.

The Principle of Dynamic Balance. Taoist philosophy speaks of the composition of all creation as two complementary opposites: yin and yang. In simple terms, yin comprises the quiet, feminine, receptive elements of

nature, while yang is seen as active, dynamic, and masculine. Alone, each side is overbearing. The union of yin and yang within the individual provides a perpetual movement that strives for balance and harmony. After rain comes sunshine. After disaster comes calm. To live in dynamic balance in the world, one must move with the flow through the mountains and valleys of life. To stay always static or always dynamic goes against the laws of nature of which both men and women are very much a part.

The Principle of Cyclical Growth. The natural world consists of many cycles: day and night, birth and death, winter and summer. Each human life is also filled with cycles, from the life cycle of a red blood cell to the highs and lows of our emotions. The wisdom of the *Tao* advocates that these cycles be recognized and appreciated. Too often, impatience blinds human vision to the natural cycles of which we are a part. The universe is not still. The *Tao* encourages patience.

The Principle of Harmonious Action. As a part of nature, we must work in cooperation with it and not try to dominate, monopolize, or destroy it. The wisdom of the *Tao* advises individuals to live in harmony with nature, respecting her many components, including the lives of others. To live in harmony means to live in moderation, not excess; to live with simplicity, not complexity; and to slow down, know oneself, and make wise choices. One concept of harmonious action is called the *wu wei*, which means knowing when to wait for the right moment, and knowing when to be spontaneous, moving with the rhythms of life.

There are many ways to reinforce the attitudes of Taoist philosophy behaviorally. The most commonly known techniques are yoga, meditation, and T'ai Chi ch'uan.

The characteristics of a *Tao* person are very similar to those of the self-actualized individuals described by Maslow, and those of the hardy personality described by Kobasa and Maddi. These characteristics include self-acceptance, humor, creativity, commitment, challenge, and self-control, and they serve as buffers against the perceptions of stress. *Tao* individuals have faith in themselves and what they do. They carry no illusions about who they are. They embrace life joyously. This is what it means to be "one with the *Tao*."

The Path of Albert Einstein

It may seem rather strange to include a physicist among the several people noted here who have speculated on the

nature of human spirituality, yet at the same time it would be a gross oversight to omit this perspective. The fields of physics and theology, which were so bitterly divided more than 300 years ago, are finding they have more commonalities than differences today. These commonalities were first brought to scientific light about 100 years ago by a physicist named **Albert Einstein**, who took it upon himself to challenge the accepted principles of natural physics developed by Isaac Newton. Like an earthquake, Einstein's concepts of the physical laws of nature rocked the foundations of the scientific community. But as can be seen today, the ramifications of this challenge actually parallel, and may eventually validate, the concept of a higher power, albeit somewhat differently from the way that many people currently perceive it. In 1999, *Time* magazine named Einstein "Man of the Century," not solely for his scientific theories or Nobel Prize, but rather for changing the paradigm of thought of humanity in a nonthreatening way.

Curious about the nature of the universe and the laws that govern it, Einstein was convinced that all matter is made up of energy, and that time and space are not locked into a continuum as previously thought, giving way to his famous theory of relativity: $E = mc^2$. Very simply put, this suggests that all matter is energy that is not confined to the "local" concept involving space and time. Although the complexities of this theory are beyond the scope of this book, the premise of Einstein's theory, once rejected by his peers, is now completely accepted by the scientific community, as well as those mystically inclined individuals who see Einstein's theory as a stepping stone toward higher consciousness. Moreover, the impact of Einstein's work has reached far beyond science to the fields of poetry, art, and even psychology. (It was Einstein's theory of relativity that

The Principle of Cyclical Growth: A Taoist concept that suggests that everything is cyclic: the moon, tides, seasons, and all aspects of human life.

The Principle of Harmonious Action: A Taoist concept that reminds us to work in harmony with nature, not in opposition to it or control over it.

Albert Einstein: A world-renowned theoretical physicist who revolutionized perceptions of reality with the equation $E = mc^2$, suggesting that everything is energy. His later years focused on a spiritual philosophy including pacifism.

gave Jung the idea for the collective unconscious.) With energy being the word that opened the door to understanding, theologians also gravitated toward Einstein's theories, making the concept of light a solid foundation from which to explore the divine nature of the universe. Compare, for example, the concept of universal energy with the following description (Dreher, 1991):

We Look at it and we do not see it;
Its name is The Invisible.
We Listen to it and we do not hear it;
Its name is The Inaudible.
We Touch it and don't find it;
Its name is The Subtle.

—Lao Tzu, *Tao Teh Ching*, 14

Stepping out of the scientific box that Newton had created centuries earlier, Einstein paved the way for others to follow. With the initial theoretical basis constructed, other physicists (Heisenberg and Chew) quickly added corollaries to Einstein's theory, leading the way to the field of quantum physics. Today, pioneers in the field of energy medicine credit Einstein with building a conceptual model from which to understand the human energy field and even human consciousness (**FIG. 8.12**). Biophysicist Itzhak Bentov expounded on Einstein's concept that "energy equals matter" in his widely acclaimed book, *Stalking the Wild Pendulum*. From his added insight we begin to see that consciousness is actually a form of energy that surrounds, permeates, and connects all living

objects. Like the atom's electrons, which vibrate to give off an energy field, so too does the human body produce an oscillation and energy field, which Bentov refers to as subtle energy. He hypothesized that this *subtle energy* comprises many layers or "frequencies," which he suggests constitute various layers of human consciousness (and the soul itself).

Since the introduction of the theory of relativity, physicists have discovered that subatomic particles called photons appear to travel at or greater than the speed of light. Renowned quantum physicist Dave Bohm has combined this knowledge with that of emotional thought, neuropeptide activity, and coherence. He too postulates that thoughts are a form of energy: Negative thoughts (e.g., fear and anger) are expressed by electrons, and positive thoughts (e.g., love and peace) are conveyed through the movement of photons. This idea has gained momentum among those who have taken a scientific look at the power of prayer and clairvoyant "coincidences" (McTaggart, 2008). For instance, in the landmark double-blind study designed by cardiologist Randolph Byrd (1986), more than 300 hospital patients were randomly assigned to either a "prayed for" group or control group. Results demonstrated a statistically significant difference on various health parameters between those who received prayer and those who did not, suggesting that there may actually be a healing power in prayer. Even more significant, the people doing the praying lived hundreds if not thousands of miles away from the hospital where the patients were located. Additional studies of prayer have been conducted by the Spindrift Organization in Lansdale, Pennsylvania, using both direct and indirect prayer on the metabolic rate of plants. These studies have produced results similar to those found by Byrd. An analysis of case studies by psychiatrist Jean Bolen in her book *The Tao of Psychology* indicates that distance (time and space) was not a factor among people who experienced a clairvoyant "coincidence," but that love (a positive emotion) was.

Dr. Larry Dossey—author of the books *Space, Time, and Medicine*; *Recovering the Soul*; and *Healing Words*—applauds Einstein for his "quantum leap" of new understanding regarding both the universe and its relevance to human consciousness. Dossey, a former internist at the Dallas Diagnostic Association, synthesized the theories of quantum physics and medicine in an attempt to validate that human spirituality is a vital element in the healing process. Borrowing a term from the field of physics, Dossey refers to



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FIGURE 8.12 A glimpse of the universe depicting Einstein's perspective where everything is energy and the universe is indeed a friendly place.

the spiritual-healing nature of humankind as the **nonlocal mind**, meaning thoughts that are not bound by time or space. Dossey also explains that there is a connectedness to all things in the universe and that this connectedness has a spiritual quality to it. It is this same spiritual quality that Pelletier referred to as the “missing piece” of the stress and disease model, and why he suggested that the principles of quantum physics be included in the study of psychoneuroimmunology. In the words of Dr. Richard Gerber, “With respect to his theory of relativity, Einstein was more right than even he imagined.”

With a greater understanding of the theory of relativity, several physicists have noted connections between the world of physics and the spiritual nature of the universe. In his book *The Tao of Physics*, Fritjof Capra outlined many similarities and parallels between the disciplines of physics and the Eastern mystical philosophies of Buddhism, Hinduism, and Taoism, suggesting that there is an incredible linkage between them and that whether it is called “energy,” the “Tao,” or the “Holy Spirit,” its essence appears to be very similar. Capra writes, “Physicists and mystics deal with different aspects of reality. Physicists explore levels of matter, mystics levels of mind. What their explorations have in common is that these levels, in both cases, lie beyond ordinary sensory perception.” Capra suggests that these two disciplines, in effect, are looking at the same mountain, but from different vantage points and through different binoculars. To Capra, the paradigm shift that occurred in physics with Einstein’s theory of relativity is currently rippling through other Western disciplines, including clinical medicine and psychology. In his autobiography *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, Jung wrote, “There are indications that at least part of the psyche is not subject to the laws of space and time.” The collective unconscious and subtle energy in which all things connect may, in fact, be the same component of human spirituality. As science continues to explore the realm of human energy and consciousness, the fields of physics and theology may not only connect but someday become one and the same (Radin, 2006).

Those who knew him and studied his works say that Einstein was a spiritual man but not a religious one. Yet these same people note that he appeared to be driven by a spiritual quest to understand the nature of the universe. One of Einstein’s most famous quotes speaks to this fact: “I want to know the thoughts of God, the rest are just details.” And although some people infer from his theory of relativity that his view of the cosmos is impersonal at best (with the order of the universe simply calculated by mathematical equations), Einstein retorted, “God does

not play dice with the universe.” From his own writings it becomes very obvious that he was not only a scientific genius, but a world-class philosopher as well. A person who spent much time in deep personal reflection, he once wrote,

A human being is part of the whole, called by us “universe,” a part limited in time and space. He experiences his thoughts and feelings as something separate from the rest, a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal decisions and to affection for a few persons nearest us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty.

Einstein spent the better part of his later years conceiving his unified field theory (a thesis to explain the relationship of gravity and electromagnetic energy), as well as playing a more subtle role as pacifist for world peace—a moral position in which he took great pride. Yet through it all, it was light, symbolically and literally, that fascinated Einstein.

“For the rest of my life, I want to reflect on what light is,” he said.

■ Common Bonds of Human Spirituality

Although no one path seems to offer complete insight into the mystery of the human spirit, some common themes run through the various paths. Specifically, these common themes are four processes that collectively nurture the growth of the human spirit: **centering**, **emptying**, **grounding**,

Nonlocal mind: A term given to consciousness that resides outside the brain (possibly outside the human energy field), which may explain premonitions, distant healing, and prayer.

Centering: A time for soul searching, cultivating one’s internal relationship.

Emptying: Also known as the “dark night of the soul” and the winter of discontent. The emptying process is a time to release, detach, and let go of thoughts, attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs that no longer serve you.

Grounding: The point at which new insights may be revealed to assist a person to move from point A to point B.