

## UNDERSTANDING THE HUMAN CONDITION 4

1. Even when things are at their most bleak and we believe we have no power to change the darkness into light, even at this point of despair we do have choice. Our choices may not be appealing, they may be very restricted and limited, but there is always choice. We can always choose the way we respond to tragedy and trauma. We can always choose if we are crippled by events or whether we rise above them. If we look around us, we can find lots of evidence about the different approaches that people have to crisis, conflict, change and difficulty.
2. The process of personal improvement is one that has many twists and turns, and many of us, as we aspire to improve who we are, are disheartened when our attempts to improve are thwarted. In fact, if we find our endeavours to improve do not deliver their promise in a smooth, instant and uninterrupted fashion we feel we have failed. But this is not failure, this is simply an unrealistic expectation of growth. The instant, immediate society and culture we now live in superimposes itself on everything we think, feel and do. And so, we use that as our gauge for almost everything. But growth does not work like that. Growth has clear, distinct stages; look closely at nature and you will get many of the clues that demonstrate how the process works.
3. When we stop hiding, most of all from ourselves, we experience immense relief and liberation. Our need to hide, deny, pretend and be something that we are not, takes place in the name of self-preservation. We have mistakenly constructed the belief that this is the best way to survive in a world in which we need to feel we matter. The folly of this premise is, whilst we are busy being something we are not, we are unable to be happy and to fulfil our potential. So, the very thing we are all in pursuit of - happiness - sadly remains out of our reach.
4. We need to realise that nothing stands in our way more than we do. It is because we have created a culture that is so condemning and belittles the individual when mistakes are made, that we spend so much time concealing and denying our mistakes. This is why we push blame elsewhere and rarely take responsibility for our own activities. So do not make the biggest mistake of all which is to miss the opportunity to learn from your own mistakes.
5. Although to forgive can help the person you offer that forgiveness to, the real benefit of forgiveness is to you. Forgiveness frees you from bitterness, pain, and blame. It allows your wounds to heal and facilitates acceptance and peace of mind. We all have the need to be forgiven at some time and therefore it is right we afford forgiveness to others.
6. What we eat, what we drink, what we think, how we relate, how we pass our time, all affect our perception and our reality. We can begin turning our lives around by modifying our diets. 'Food affects mood'. If we were to realise our brains are made of mainly fats, water, vitamins and minerals, we would more readily grasp the concept that 'we are what we eat'. And so, to focus on personal development without taking proper account of our diets, is equivalent to trying to drive a petrol car on diesel fuel - it just will not work properly. So, ask yourself, are you using the best fuel to get you to your destination?
7. When we get the balance right between exercise, diet and nutrition, water, positive thinking, and sleep, then we are able to achieve a level of well-being we had probably not thought possible. A level of being that is characterised by a peacefulness, a quiet contentment, a sense of intrinsic value and worth. A level of being that is amazingly aware, driven by positive healthy motivations, with the vitality and energy to execute our ambitions and aspirations.