THE WINNING FLAVORS

A Mentorship Guide For:

Motivation and Vision, Emotional stability and Healthy relationships, Purpose, Passion and Ambition, Valor and Resilience, Leadership, Innovation and Entrepreneurship, Discipline and Academic Excellence, among Teenagers and Youth

PHOTO

A Guide for Teens, Youth, Teachers, Parents and Mentors

By"LEOPARD KING"

Anderson Ambindi Murunga

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Motivation and Vision, Emotional stability and Healthy relationships, Purpose, Passion and Ambition, Valor and Resilience, Leadership, Innovation and Entrepreneurship, Discipline and Academic Excellence, among Teenagers and Youth

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this book to God almighty for settling it in my heart not only to write this book but also dedicate my life to the service of our youth and teens. The motivation and calling to calibrate and build the next generation for God's glory through mentorship is the biggest gift I have received from God as I have witnessed transformation which translates to fulfillment to me. Fulfillment is the epitome of my happiness.

I also dedicate this book to my wife Susan Vutare Ambindi for the shared journey of parenting to our youth and teen sons and daughter. Her faith in my parenting and mentorship calling has been demonstrated through her persistent proposing of my name in every opportunity that requires a parent to step up and offer service and leadership to youth and teens. She has done this repetitively even in my absence and without consent. She is always so sure that the teams will benefit from my contributions. This is always well appreciated.

I dedicate this book to my youth and teen sons Andes Agumba Murunga and Aden Andanje Munala respectively and my daughter Shirley-Z- Muhonja Ambindi both who have assisted me to appreciate the life, needs, twists and turns of youth and teens in a practical way as they have opened up to me and also taught me what I needed to know about youth and teen life. They have been my closest friends and my critical thinkers in all my ideas and thoughts. They give me hope for the next generation.

I finally dedicate this book to all my mentees, The Leopard King Prince's and Princesses without whom my mentorship ideas and programmes will have less or no impact outside of my household. Watching the magical transformation of your lives has been my favorite and winning flavor. Thank you for making me a proud mentor and a King to a royal family like you.

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I acknowledge Mr. Alfred Njoroge, the Chief Executive Officer at Merishaw School who has been at the forefront of enabling my mentorship efforts and also Mr. David Gideon Kariuki, the Chief Principal at Merishaw School for the friendship he has extended to me and the rest of the parents as we support students. His fatherhood of many years of success, passion and valor has been worth emulation by all me. I salute my fellow parent Representatives' led by our chairman Mr. Wachira Kahiga who has led from the front and supported me all the time.

I salute all our beloved teachers and staff who go beyond the call of duty to make the mentorship programmes in our school. Their dedication to love and support our sons through learning and mentorship in their various contributions is without doubt exceptional. I applaud the school chaplain, Pastor. Edward Simon Nyakundi, The head of mentorship, Emily Ndeke and the head of Guiding and counseling Deborah Nyakundi.

Finally, I acknowledge and thank my fellow parents and all the parental mentors who have participated in our programmes as mentors and continue to support our sons to succeed.Thank you for allowing me to offer leadership as we go about coaching, Guiding, Counseling and mentoring our sons. Together we calibrate and shape the future generations. I salute you all!

INTRODUCTION

Majority of youth and teens today have little or no motivation in life. Many of them go through a school life without attaching personal motivation or significant meaning to that process; maybe just fulfilling their parent's wishes. The lack of motivation is the most misunderstood subject among parents and teachers that it creates a ponderous box of more misunderstandings within family, chaos while relating with friends and disciplinary cases in schools and colleges severing the relationships with teachers and members of staff. The more misunderstandings continue, the more what should have been a good company and support systems for the teens and youth gets damaged.

The life of everyone involved begins to become miserable, lacking joy, fulfillment and meaning. The teens and youth get labeled as bad or indiscipline while the teens and youth label their parents and teachers as unreasonable and unkind. Everyone becomes unhappy. The youth and teens experience more confusion when they are not able to resolve these misunderstandings. The teens and youth begin to be anxious with how they relate with their parents and teachers even and sometimes avoid each other's company. The amount of frustration and anxiety by everyone involved is so much that life can become tasteless and without flavor. No one becomes happy with the other and no says kind words towards the other. The parents blame their sons and daughter or the teacher while the teachers blame both the student and parents. The academic journey has mostly become tasteless and without flavor for those struggling with their academic work. They begin to feel less motivated as their poor grades continue to damage their self-esteem and hope for proper academic based careers.

Most are putting in the effort with little or no academic improvement not knowing what the problem could be.

Families' and schools' situations such as lack of parental attention and affirmation, parental separation, divorce, domestic violence, negative social media, bullying, puberty & adolescence body changes, obesity, peer pressure, sexual abuse, and substance abuse add salt to injury in the lives of our teenagers and youth.

In most cases, the sons and daughters do not how to express any of these needs. The frustration is what causes mild or severe depression and anxiety as some of the symptoms of depression begin to manifest without parents and teachers realizing it. Known symptoms of mild or severe depression such as withdrawal, lack of focus and concentration, Lack of motivation, a lack of interest in good appearance, laziness and a lack of creativity are on the rise among students. Symptoms of anxiety, such as being restless, attention seeking, and irritability, being easily tired & lazy are common.

This book answers to what is responsible for students' lack of discipline, grooming, Sex & substance abuse & general lack of self-drive, Inability to: concentrate during class lessons, focus during personal studies and be creative to answer exams questions. Any high school teacher will tell you that these are the challenges they handle every day. This book explains how to meet the emotional needs of teens and youth, how to affirm and help the young ones become more resilient. This book also explains how one can create self-drive, motivation; purpose, vision and purpose create a positive self-image. Above all are academic strategies that utilize ones personality to craft winning and effective study methods which keeping you happy while you study.

A WINNING MENTALITY



PRIMARY SELF AWARENESS AND POSITIVE SELF IMAGE

The Winning flavor

Teenagers and youth are largely immersed in their academic pursuit making their academic life either exciting or complicated and distressing. The recipe prescribed in this book produces insights, hope and motivation to work out and excel in their academic pursuit. The recipe solves academic ambiguities and also offers practical study models that can easily make studies interesting and exciting. Most importantly is the recipe that frees the mind and deletes certain negative files in the brain and the mind while adding more flavors to charge and catalyze the mind, heart and soul to have more free space for more academic activities.

The flavor frees and inspires the mind to do more and receive more knowledge and understanding. The heart becomes receptive to Knowledge, Instructions, advice, Mentorship, correction, love kindness, empathy and friendship when it is offered to you.

The soul and heart also finds happiness and fulfillment in showing others love, empathy, care and support. The soul desires to contribute something to his friends and family as a means of finding meaning in life and that is surely a good thing and a great flavor to have in your life mix tape. The winning flavor helps an individual to neutralize, switch off and extinguish or minimize the effects of negative effects to their lives. The individual is able to forgive those who have hurt him or her and release the anger.

The individual is able to make peace with their own past mistakes and rise to be counted as having reformed and done better. The individual is able to make necessary adjustments in their habits and patterns of life, changing their relationships so as to be in friendship circles that aid their objectives and not distract the attainment of their objectives and life goals.

The individual is also able to mend relationships that are important to them or are meant to contribute to their wellbeing. If the other persons involved seem to be struggling to meet their objectives, the individual will make it easier for the other person to settle in and play their roles with the help and support of the individual who has the winning flavor. Winning doesn't get better than this and this flavor is proMax 20. If you have read this book this far, then you already smell the aroma of this flavor.

Able locking out negativities and operating on the fuel of positivity while extinguishing the negative forces that clog the mind, heart and soul.

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PRIMARY SELF AWARENESS

Self-awareness is the ability to connect with one's inner self. It is the understanding of one's individual's very intimate thoughts, worth, fears, values, skills, and capabilities. It can also be said to be the ability to focus on yourself and how your actions, thoughts or emotions do or fail to align with your internal standards. It is a conscious knowledge of one's character and feelings.

With a proper self-awareness, it is easier to navigate your life because you are comfortable with whom you are and you have a degree of self-acceptance.

Psychologists Shelley Duval and Robert Wick Lund proposed this definition: "Self-awareness is the ability to focus on yourself and how your actions, thoughts, or emotions do or don't align with your internal standards. If you're highly self-aware, you can objectively evaluate yourself, manage your emotions, align your behavior with your values, and understand correctly how others perceive you." Put simply, those who are highly self-aware can interpret their actions, feelings, and thoughts objectively. It's a rare skill, as many of us spiral into emotion-driven interpretations of our circumstances.

The extensive definition of self-awareness culminates in answering one fundamental question; **"Who am I?"** To answer this simple yet critical question, you have to methodically answer the very question. We have strengths and potentialities which we do not exploit because we are not aware of them and in the process lose on opportunities that should otherwise have been our best chances at success in school and at home.
We have hurt our friends and parents or children, people whom we shouldn't have hurt if only we knew ourselves better and yet we have judged harshly loved ones who needed our support because we knew nothing about them.

We have burnt our fingers not because we put our hand in the fire but because we didn't know that our fingers had petrol on them; petrol which could attract fire from a distance.
We do not even know our values or our fears, and worse even, we do not know our needs and so we do not get to address them. How about our potential? Isn’t it the reason we have burnout most of the time we are pushing ourselves outside of our potential and thus running on borrowed energy.

Most of us are majoring in our minors and minoring in our majors as parents. We focus on what our children cannot do rather than focusing more on what they can do. We exaggerate our children's mistakes but do not celebrate them when they win.

Self-awareness helps us to understand the relationship between ourselves and others. It underscores the fact that you can only be happy with others when you are happy with yourself and you can only be in union with others when you are in union with yourself. A conflict in self always manifests when you are with others and most often than not, you have little or no control over how the internal conflict manifests itself while with others.

You will know where you need to focus on your life to improve the quality of your life and more importantly you will have gathered a lot of information about yourself. You will also be better equipped to relate with your parents, your children, your teachers, your friends as you take your personal needs and interests into account. You may also be able to understand other people around you better and give them a befitting response to their actions, words, and emotions compared to how it has been before reading this book.

At the end of this study, you will have the power to influence your outcomes, make better decisions and also understand things from more than one perspective.

You should be able to build better relationships and decrease your stress but most importantly, you will be able to regulate your emotions.

It might be a good time to introduce yourself to how much you know about yourself.

What is your name?

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What best defines you? What are your attributes?

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What is unique about you?

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What are your beliefs?

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What are your values?

My values are

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My parents, friends ,teen/youth leaders and teachers observe my values as……

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What are your strengths?

My strengths are:

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My parents, friends, teen/youth leaders and teachers observe my strengths as……
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What are your weaknesses?

My weaknesses are
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My parents, friends teen/youth leaders and teachers observe my weaknesses to be……
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What are my fears? What makes you anxious, what are you afraid of? What bothers you the most?

My fears are
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The reasons for my fears can be explained as follows……
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What are your needs?

What do you need from your parents?

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What do I need from my Teachers?

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What do I need from my Church leaders?

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What do I need from my class mates?

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What's my potential?

Your potential is best described by yourself but your parents, teachers, friends and church leaders may also have an opinion about your potential. My school principal believed in my potential more than my own father and my father said so to me.

What is your potential as observed by you?

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What is your potential as observed by others (Your parents, friends, teachers and church leaders)?

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POSITIVE SELF IMAGE



I AM VALUABLE

Positive self-image means perceiving yourself as capable, good enough and having something to offer to the world.

Sometimes you will fail, but even then you need to perceive yourself as someone who has a chance to correct your mistakes and rise up again. People might judge you harsh and dismiss you when you fail but you can always believe in yourself and in God. Positive self-image is being positive even during your failure and also thinking of yourself as a winner. It also means focusing more on your strengths than weakness, your abilities than your disabilities and also your opportunities than your losses.

Spiritually speaking, having a positive mindset means upholding the right attitude and frame of mind such that you will not lose your positive virtues over negative things which might happen around you. You need to equip yourself with praise, thanksgiving, and forgiveness, and still glorify God despite how you might feel internally. It is the ability to make peace and be at peace even when the world around you is collapsing because God has your best interest in all circumstances. It is a positive mindset that makes us resilient even in times of storms.

Biblical Job must have learned the power of a positive mind from a source higher and more enlightened than most of us. Jesus demonstrated to us what the power of positive energy is by elevating the importance of focus as a means to elevate a positive mindset to the surface in moments of adversity.

During his last moments leading to his divine death on the cross, Jesus went through various forms of pain and suffering from many sources, but he did not give any of them focus and preeminence. Rather, he fought off every possible distraction and maintained his focus on the will of God the Father and fulfilling his divine mission without paying attention to his pain and shame but his mission.

Most people see themselves through their failures and mistakes. Sometimes it is a product of what their friends, teachers and parents tell them. However I would like to take you down a memory lane and prove to you that you are good enough. First I will give you an example of someone who perceived himself positively winning a greater life battle.

DAVID

In the book of 1 Samuel :17, Biblical David, had a mastery of who he was and this is made profound when King Saul questions his capacity and experience to fight a more seasoned soldier in the name of Goliath. Young David tells King Saul that he had the aptitude to face Goliath. This was Astonishing to the king because he was young. When the king sought justification for David's confidence, David drew his inspiration from his past victories. The Bible in 1 Samuel 17: 34-35 settles a matter for David when he was confronted with a message of doubt which praised Goliath as a man who had fought all his youth and that David was just a boy. David said to Saul, "Your servant had been keeping his father's sheep. When a lion or beat came and carried off a sheep from the flock, I went after it and struck it, rescued the sheep from its mouth, and when it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it, and killed it.

Your servant has killed both the lion and bear, and this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them because he has defiled the armies of God."

David was catalyzed by hindsight to defeat Goliath.

Whereas most people perceive themselves negatively, I challenge you to start looking at your life victories since birth, then you will realize that you have been great and good enough all along, winning battles and obstacles.

EMBRACE AND CELEBRATE YOUR POTENTIAL

ASSIGNMENTS

Kindly write down the moments you have ever been proud of yourself and happy with yourself, probably congratulated by friends, yourself or by people around you.

Was it when you beat a friend in a sport, was it when you learnt how to drive, was it passing a specific exam, was it joining a good school, learning how to cook or use a gadget. What moments are the highlights of your joy, pride and successes?

What situations made you feel good, great and on top of the world making you to have accomplished something worthy of celebration?

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RECOGNISE YOURSELF FOR SMALL IMPROVEMENTS

Record any simple improvement that you make in life and count it a win. When you improve by five marks in biology, record it and count it a win. When you reconcile with a friend, record it and count it a win because a lot of people even adults are unable to reconcile with their friends, workmates and spouses. Reconciliation doesn't always mean getting back together but solving the animosity and giving self a chance to have a working relationship that will make co-parenting possible and not another mountain of emotional turmoil.

Beating someone who has always been a head of you in a subject or sport is a big win for life. Celebrate it! Waking up half an hour earlier than usual is a win, celebrate it. The clock has no extra time but you can create extra time to do more by waking up early or staying late into the night.

The process of building your values and attributes doesn't just happen in a day but through perfecting the habit of observing these attributes. Mathew 5: 3-12 has the beatitudes which give many promises and calls them blest those who do specific efforts and the bible gives a reward for each of them. However, it takes continuous exercising of these beatitudes to become. It takes continuous showing of mercy to others to become me4fiful as your trait. It takes many efforts of showing kindness to others to eventually embody kindness as a virtue. Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called the children of God.

CELEBRATE YOUR SMALL WINS

The winning flavor in life is not just represented by the finality of the journey at the finish line. It is a cumulative effect of mindset first, Maximizing on your strengths, dealing with your weaknesses, staying focused and resilient whenever you fail or face obstacles but finally celebrating every little win as you push towards the goal. Celebrating the small wins is what makes life have flavor and taste. Every milestone that you celebrate makes you believe that the next milestone is worth fighting for.

The journey of life has many obstacles, discouragements and failures. If you did not celebrate your first conscious win, the next failure or obstacle seems like a mountain to you but when you celebrate the previous win, the next mountain feels like a huge obstacle before a capable winner way before the climbing starts.

Reward yourself for every single win you have had in the recent past especially those wins that are strategic to your vision, purpose and life goals. Parents should also make it their prerogative to reward their children for their small and big wins alike.

Even God has promised us rewards for abiding with Him. In the book of Luke 18:28, Peter the disciple asked Jesus what they shall get as a reward for leaving behind everything that was precious to follow him.

“Truly truly I say unto you, No one that has left his home, wife, parents or children for the sake of the kingdom will fail to receive 100 fold in this age and in the age to come, eternal life.”

Kindly write down what your previous battles, disappointments, let downs, failures and how you overcame them. Check through your entire life and find your victories and small wins over previous battles. Write all of them down.

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REBRAND YOUR POTENTIAL

The purpose of this exercise is to help you see your capabilities them and see that they are a source of inspiration for your capabilities to win even bigger battles of this life today.

Think about each one of your great moments and write down what attributes and side of you haven't yet written before. In your disappointments and failures, what traits of you carried through the trying moments and what new attributes, strengths and skills did you acquire through that process. How can you redefine yourself in terms of your capabilities, potential and range upon realizing that you have been winning before anyway?

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YOU ARE ENOUGH

The king Saul gave David his Javelin, his shoes and his breast plate. David tried using them and they felt extremely heavy on him. He gave up, removed all of them and used the tools he had at his disposal which was a sling and five stones. Upon rebranding your potential, you will realize that you have always had it in you to win in life. You just need to bring your best version and you're a game.

What do you think? If you still don't feel enough, it is okay, we shall help you. Say so and share why you feel that way.

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Establish your self-belief in God

Your self-belief in God is what will grant you victory in your life. It is the fuel that pushes your life forward. David has now progressed beyond the boardroom meetings and discussions of war strategies. He is right on the battlefield with actual aggression and threat. He is as powered with foresight as he was with hindsight. He responds to Goliath's insults and says, "Today the LORD will let me defeat you. I will kill you. I will cut off your head and feed your body to the birds and wild animals. And we will do the same thing to all the other Philistines too. He invoked the name of God and believed that God will do it for him. Philippians 4: 13 tell us that we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. We all have the capacity to do all things that we set our minds on. We can always call on the name of the lord to carry us through.

What would you like to achieve in life that seems distant, impossible, heavy and farfetched? Do you want God to help you achieve it?

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THE CONCEPT OF SUCESS



PURPOSE, VISION AND CAREER GOALS

Different people perceive success through different lenses. One person perceives success as the ability to accumulate wealth and be rich. When such individuals show opulence and their flashy lifestyles, those who observe them might desire or admire their wealth as the symbol of success. We have had names that command wealth; the likes of the late Njenga Karume, Chris Kirubi. We also have household names that have accumulated wealth but they are known and defined by what they have done with that wealth and not the wealth itself such as Mr. Ambwere who once paid all school teachers from western province at some time the government was unable to pay them. We have the likes of Manu Chandaria whose philanthropy continues to define his legacy in many shapes and forms more than the wealthy identity.

Another person perceives success to be a great cooperate career and being on top of a successful company such as Michael Joseph, the chairman of the board of directors at Safaricom PLC and the Managing director of Equity bank Dr. James Mwangi. Others identify success as being a renowned cooperate and governance leader who espouses certain values and is defined by those values such as Dr. Ezekiel Mutua, CEO MCSK that has largely been at the center of keeping our airwaves suitable for our children. Another was the late Bob Collimore, who embodied empathy and love for community we serve in using his platform as the CEO of safaricom.

There are people who uphold their view of success as attaining high levels of academia as a researcher, lecturer or someone in a cooperate career who has attained the highest levels of education to PHD, maybe a professor.

This is closely related with those people who have had a distinguished career as civil servants in various government departments and have also reached the height of their careers in rank and an educational background to support it.

Young men will be fund idolizing the captains of the careers they aspire to pursue but are likely to be found idolizing their football idols and other sportsmen and celebrities. Young girls who are pursuing education are likely to be inspired by the captains of their choice careers but also highly motivated by women who have broken barriers to success in any field at all.

There are people who perceive success as having a good family that is well knit together and support one another in love and in kind. Raising children who have love and empathy for others, respect for elders and authority and have a work ethic that can deliver any results if they set their mind to it is the best gift anyone can be rewarded in a family set up. The late Gen. Francis Ogolla , Chief of Kenyan defense forces was praised for raising good children as the nation and the world listened to the values that his children embodied in speech and in character. That is not all, his children also said that he loved his staff from the least to the top most and treated them the same way he treated his children with love, care and empathy.

To become successful, you need to settle in your mind on what would represent success for you.

It is most likely a combination of the above factors,. Do you have anyone who is a role model to the kind of success you want? Is it more than one person or it is one person representing everything you want as success?

Everyone needs to solidly and establish their idea of success. Here is a guide that will help you substantiate your ideas of success.

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THE CONCEPT OF SUCCESS

1. **What is your idea of success**
2. **What's your life purpose**
3. **What's your Vision**
4. **What are your career goals**
5. **How will your career goals help achieve your vision and serve your life purpose**

QUESTIONS

Vision

A) **What is your idea and concept of success? What would constitute success for you?**

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Role Models

Do you know anyone who embodies this kind of success you have just described or do you know any two people whose different lives sum up what you may call success? Which individuals demonstrate success and what are your tools of definition for their success?

Describe that person or persons! No answer is wrong

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Do you admire them?

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What exactly do you admire in their lives?

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Would you like to be like them?

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Would you wish to have a life that is reflected in two different people (a little bit of person A and a little bit of person B)?

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If so, would you want to be like any of them or have the life of both of them for yourself?

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What adjustments would you like to make about their lives if you turned out to be like them?

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What more would you do if you turned out like them, or do you want to be just exactly like them and nothing more?

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Do you have anyone that you admire for their personal life or career that you have physical access to and can have a one on one conversation?

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Would you like to meet them and talk to them about how they inspire you and possibly ask them some personal questions to satisfy your curiosity?

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LIFE PURPOSE

B) Once and when you are successful and looking like the image you have created, what do you want to do with that success?

   a. What do you want to use your success for?

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b. How is that success going to make you fulfilled and how are you going to use your success to influence, help, and support or transform others who are around you?

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c. Why do you think you will find happiness and fulfillment by doing the above?

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d. Will you do the above with your time and resources without expecting returns or recognition for doing so?

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e. What things have you realized that make you feel very happy every time you do them?

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f. What circumstances make you feel sad, angry, irritated and frustrated concerning other people? Why is that so?

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g. What news items disappoint you the most and why?

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What news items excite you the most and why

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Career

C) What paths are available for you to attain that success/Vision?
   a. What Job or business would you want to pursue to help you achieve this success?

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b. What business would you want to do?

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c. What goods or services do you think you would be happy to trade in?

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d. Which Sector interests you the most?

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e. What are your hobbies?

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f. What are your fantasies?

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g. What companies do you admire and why?

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h. Which business men or women do you admire and why?

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i. What personalities do you admire and why?

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j. Which careers do would you like to be associated with and why?

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k. What careers scare you the most and why?

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l. What are you scared of about any career and why?

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m. What are you scared of about any business?

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n. What would you like to make your hobby but you are scared for some reason?

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The differential Gap

Once you have been able to identify your life purpose and settled on specific career options which would offer you an opportunity to serve your purpose as you work or using the platform of your work as an enabler, you would then need to establish the gap between that vision and where you stand today.

a) Are your habits and patters consistent with that vision, purpose and career goals?

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Does your corrector support and enable the attainment of this vision, purpose and career goals?

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b) What makes you give the answer above?

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c) What changes may be necessary if this life goal, vision and purpose is to be attained.

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d) What exactly is the kind of person, Kind of habits, kind of character and behavior that would make this vision, purpose and career goals possible?

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e) Are you willing to do everything possible to become that kind of person?

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f) What are you going to do differently to transform yourself into this ideal person suited for your vision, purpose and career goals?

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g) What help and support do you need to make this possible?

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Which kind of people do you need in your life to make this dream possible? Do you have any names that come to you mind?

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h) Which kind of people do you need to distance from your life to make this dream possible? Do you have any names that come to you mind?

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EXTINGUISHING NEGATIVE FORCES

This book has outlined several gaps that make life tasteless for youth and teenagers. This chapter specifically seeks to extract those gaps that affect you as an individual such that they hinder the manifestation of your full potential.

a) Kindly list the things that make you feel unsafe, hopeless, unhappy, restless, distressed, anxious, sad, angry, depressed or aggressive. Say something about each one of them and how it makes you feel or how it affects you.

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b) What do you think are your options? Are there any of these issues which you need to forgive as a way of finding closure? Forgiveness means you letting go of that burden without expecting the individuals to do anything for you. They may not even change, but you will begin to see them differently without the lenses of anger and bitterness. Talk about that!

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Are there any of these issues that require reconciliation with specific individuals, maybe siblings, parents, teachers, friends or any person who has meaning in your life but there is s trained relationship making you lose the maximum potential of that relationship

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c) Are there any of these situations that require help by another person like a pastor, a counselor, an uncle, a parent , another teacher, a grandparent, a friend to help you deal with the issue or mediate for you where you are not sure that you are competent to initiate reconciliation by yourself.? Talk about this

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ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

I have brought on the table my best possible version and I do not care what my previous failures or limitations. I now have everything I need to start all over again, catch up, make up, push myself and achieve the best possible outcome for my academic studies.

ACADEMIC IMPROVEMENTS

For one to improve in their academic, it takes a continuous effort to improve on all those aspects that will contribute to your academic excellence. One needs to first of all identify those things they are doing right and contributing to their known academic successes and do more of that but also realize what changes they need to put in place to improve in those study areas that need improvement.

Change of attitude

Many students struggle with their academic work simply because they have a bad attitude concerning certain subjects. These attitudes could be learnt from friends or born from interactions by friends. Some attitudes are not subject attitudes but attitudes with teachers translating to attitudes about the subjects.

Teacher- student relationship

Improve teacher student relationship can help improve your academic performance. A bad student teacher relationship always causes a strain on the learning process.

This makes the student not to grasp and understand at the optimal possible level because a bad relationship makes the learning experience hostile. It also makes it difficult for the student to ask questions or as for help.

Making healthy school based and home based friendships

Make choices about how you will relate with various people and the value those people bring to you. Those friends who suck your energy and make you feel bad about yourself or cause you to become lazy and indiscipline should be removed from your circles.

Friends who will encourage or challenge you to do things which your parents and teachers have clearly told you are bad should be avoided. Keep only friends who will help you focus on those things that will keep you healthy, mentally sound and academically beneficial.

Gangs that resist authority, rebel every instructions and cheer you for doing the wrong things should be avoided. Bullying gangs must be avoided. Stealing gangs and friends must be avoided. If your friends do not have the discipline to study, chances are high that you will also not put in the time to study.

If your friends are regularly found making mistakes and getting punished, it is only a matter of time before you also start getting into similar mistakes and punished every so often.

You will be labeled and targeted as a threat to order and this will affect your learning negatively.

Creating extra time for studies

My advice to teenagers and youth for creating extra time for studies is usually checking your regular patterns as to whether you are a late night person or a morning person. Once that has been established, you begin to create extra time without focus on studying. You can either stays up late to watch a movie or football then wake up at your regular time. You can also have good family conversations or conversations with friends to create the habit of staying up a little late but make sure to wake up at the right time. Once you have settled and comfortable with creating extra time, begin using the time for studies.

If you are a morning person, you can set out to sleep at your regular time then wake up earlier by half an hour or an hour. You do not have to begin by doing anything major. You can begin by reading a newspaper, watching news or cleaning up your environment and then once it feels normal to sleep and wake up within that pattern, you begin using that time awake for studies. It will not feel like a mountain to create that extra time. Some people absorbed information best in group discussions that personal study while others study best alone. Some people study best when the entire school is quiet while others can study no matter

MASTER STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

1. **Comprehensive Subject analysis**
2. **Identifying gaps and weaknesses**
3. **Prescribing solutions**
4. **Challenging your academic potential**
5. **Challenging career goals and expectations**
6. **Reality check and restorative means and efforts**
7. **VEN strategy- (ONLY APPLICABLE FOR AN EXAM CLASS)**

What else is happening around? Some students will understand straight from the teacher, while others will need to read after the teacher. Some students absorb information well when the teacher writes notes while others will prefer to just listen to the teacher and will make their personal notes after. Know your type and niche. What best describes you? What times do you study the best? Or how best do you absorb information? Is it when the teacher is teaching, or when you read for yourself? What works for you and what times work best for you to study? Is it group work that serves you best or individual studies? Write a brief essay that best describes your study model.

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ACADEMIC FLAVOR

The following are strategies that would make a school going teenager and youth to be excited about their school work and improve in their grades. First of all, one needs to analyze and assess their academic strengths and efficiency but also diagnose any fault lines in their academic pursuit. Sustain put more effort on what is serving your interests but seek help and solutions for what is not serving you adequately.

ANALYSIS & DIAGNOSIS ACADEMIC ATTITUDE, BELIEFS, HABITS, BEHAVIOR AND STUDENT-TEACHER RELATIONSHIPS

An academic flavor begins with being absolutely honest with your attitudes and feelings about all your subjects , all your subject teachers and all the emotions, thoughts and ideas that come to your mind when it is time for that subject. What do you know, feel or say about that subject. What do your friends say about that subject? What do you know, feel or say about the subject teacher. What is your attitude about the subject and exams in that subject? How do you feel or think or say when you sit for those subject exams. What do you feel, think or say when you receive results from those subject exams. Write everything that comes to your mind about each subject including the good, the bad and the ugly. Do not be careful as to what you are writting but write it as raw and authentic as it comes. If you are not truthful, you will be lying to yourself and won't find the change that you need.

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The teacher of English!

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Me and the Teacher of English

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Studying English!

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English Exams!

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Biology!

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The teacher of Biology!

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Me and the teacher of Biology!

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Biology Exams!

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Chemistry!

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The teacher of Chemistry!

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Me and the teacher of Chemistry!

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Studying Chemistry!

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Receiving Chemistry results!

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Kiswahili!

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The teacher of Kiswahili!

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Me and the teacher of Kiswahili!

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Kiswahili Exams!

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The teacher of Geography!

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Me and the teacher of History

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Me and the teacher of Physics!

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Aviation!

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The teacher of Aviation!

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Computer studies!

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The teacher of Computer studies!

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Me and the teacher of Computer studies!

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What sport or extracurricular activity do you do?

Sport or activity……!

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The teacher or coach of ……!

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Me and the teacher/Coach of……..!

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Playing/ ……..!

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Me and …….!

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What is your current Hypothetical academic potential?

If you list the grades you got in all of your subjects within the last three exams, Take for instance, the highest score of them in their respective subject and label it as your academic potential in that subject .List all your subjects and take the best score in each of them within the last three recent exams and then get the total average and points. That represents your hypothetical academic potential.

Subject	Marks 1	Grade 1	Marks 2	Grade 2	Marks 3	Grade 3	Best score & Grade	
English								
Kiswahili								
Math								
Biology								
Chemistry								
Physics								
French								
History								
CRE								
Agriculture								
Aviation								
Computer studies								
Power mechanics								
Electricity								
Business								
Total								
Mean								

If your hypothetical academic potential falls short of this career admission marks/grade, then we have a lot of work to do. Remember that your hypothetical academic potential is the best marks you have attained in the last three exams which means at your best effort today you are likely to get that grade/score.

Aligning your grades to your career goals

We have scrutinized our passions, our life goals, and vision, even used our role models and eventually crafted career goals that will serve to attain that vision.

The career goal has certain expectations from attitude, discipline, behavior, faith, determination and most importantly academic excellence.

Check from the previous admissions to university and tertiary colleges what the cut off and minimum qualifications have been to be admitted into that career either privately or through public university admission. What has been the entry mark/grade for a degree program?

What has been the entry marks/grade for a diploma in the career?

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What is the cluster combination for your first course?

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What is the cluster combination for your second course?

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How is your first course cluster at your hypothetical academic potential?

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Would you be admitted if you were to be admitted today?

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How is your second course cluster at your hypothetical academic potential?

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Would you be admitted today if you had been selected today?

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Hypothetical Academic differential gap

Having established what your career entry point should be, rate that against your hypothetical academic potential and establish the difference between the two. How many more marks should you get in order to secure a university or diploma admission in your choice career? That is your hypothetical academic differential gap that you must catch up with and fill!

Meditation

Think about that difference, the width and breadth of the gap. Are you willing to fill the gap and attain your dream life or do you wish to change your dreams all together?

What is your comment?

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Do you wish to proceed?

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If you wish to pursue a different lesser dream, then ask for a different manual booklet immediately and start the career goals afresh where you reconsider which career options would enable you to serve the same purpose in life. It means you have given up on your dream before you have even tried. After all, it will still bring you to this stage where you shall still have to process the gap and resolve it.

Is it now clear to you the marks you need to work for and the grades you need to work for in each subject to get a university or college qualifying score and the cluster subjects for your choice career course?

RESTORING ACADEMIC ATTITUDE, BELIEFS, HABITS, BEHAVIOR AND STUDENTTEACHER RELATIONSHIPS

We shall repeat the exercise of building up the differential gap again specifically with the academic outlook. First of all you need to establish whether any of your habits and patterns, if changed would contribute to a better general academic performance. Kindly highlight some of the changes you are likely to make around yourself to aid your academic growth.

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PER SUBJECT ENGINEERING

English

Go back to each of your subject and relook all the comments that you wrote down. Think through them and establish if there are any gaps that need filling for that particular subject. I.e. English

What personal changes do you think you need to effect about that subject?

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What do you need to do about your relationship with the subject teacher?

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What help do you need to make to improve your chances of performing better in the said subject?

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Pray about this subject and everything you wish and hope for about this subject

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Confess and affirm yourself about your aspirations and hope for this subject.

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What is the one single most thing that is a game changer which you must do for this subject?

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What grade/score/marks are you likely to get in your next immediate exam if you employ the changes envisioned?

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If you sustain the same efforts, what grade, marks or score are you likely to get in the second exam after the forthcoming exam?

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If you sustain the same momentum and or improve one more effort area, what are you likely to score in the third forthcoming exam from today?

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Are you able to determine and purpose to maintain the same efforts, focus sacrifice, determination and hard smart work and maintain or even improve these grade/score/marks?

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What score will that be?

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DEJAVU POWER TO MAXIMIZE YOUR POTENTIAL



LOOK AT ME NOW

To maximize your potential is an imaginary exercise that seeks to affirm you of what is possible. It is a concept whereby you refer to your old victories and old talents that have come to bear in your life and tap into the knowledge and confidence of that potential and talent. It is an equivalent of the biblical story of David when he imagined what was possible even when no one else saw it as possible. David was facing a giant in the name of Goliath; everyone including King Saul didn't think that was a possible win against Goliath.

In the book of 1 Samwel 17:34, David firstly looked backwards and realized that he had, with the help of God, killed a bear and a lion with his bear hands. The strength, courage and skill that killed those two beats gave David the courage to face Goliath and killed him using his own sword.

In verse 39, before this fight, King Saul had offered David his personal Javelin, shield, breastplate and shoes but David found them to be too heavy for him. He was not used to them. Instead, he removed them all and used only his sling and five stones to hit Goliath at the forehead causing him to fall, and then he struck him with his own sword.

The soldiers and the king believed that David needed the sophistication but David believed in himself with what he had whithout needing external factors to feel enough.

YOU ARE ENOUGH!

You do not need anything outside of what you already have to win your academic goals.

MAXIMIZING YOUR POTENTIAL

To maximize your academic potential, you will need to dejavu and recall all your best grades ever in each subject. If you got such grades before, then you have the ability to score them again. I have heard teenagers and youth say, they got higher grades because they were in lower classes and grades. I wish to remind them that they were younger and have now matured more. They must believe that with growth comes the growth of their ability. The ability naturally grewe, it is you who is stuck in your past abilities.

I hear students tell me that hwen they were in lower grades, they used to memorise and now the content is wider and they can no longer memorise. I am not asking them to memorise, but am letting them know that even the ability to memorise is not common to everyone. That they could memorise, means their mind had the capacity to take in knowledge and the same capacity can be used to learn with understanding of concepts.

I wish to introduce a parameter which I am calling the hypothetical academic potential. this is assembling your best scores in each subject and cumulating then find an average of what you could heypotehtically score, if you scored your best ever grades in all your subjects. Just imagine what that could turn out to be.

We can therefore take the challenge beginning with an assessment of our most recent scores and then aim higher until we potentially score our very best. The surest of them all is our hypothetical best scores. hypothetically score the What is the highest score you have ever gotten in this subject before now whether it is in the last three exams of even the last six or seven exams?

Your maximum potential is the highest score you have ever scored in that subject or the highest possible target you have just set after exploring all adjustments, whichever is the highest.

Which is your highest potential in?

English.

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Just imagine if you got this score in your Final exams!

What personal changes do you think you need to effect about this subject?

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What do you need to do about your relationship with the subject teacher?

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What help do you need to make and or improve your chances of performing better in the said subject?

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Pray about this subject and everything you wish and hope for in this subject

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Confess and affirm yourself about your aspirations and hopes for this subject.

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What is the one single most thing that is a game changer which you must do about this subject?

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What grade/score/marks are you likely to get in your next immediate exam if you employ the changes envisioned?

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If you sustain the same efforts, what grade, marks or score are you likely to get in the second exam after the forthcoming exam?

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If you sustain the same momentum and or improve in one more effort area, what are you likely to score in the third forthcoming exam from today?.....

Are you able to determine and purpose to maintain the same efforts, focus sacrifice, determination and hard smart work and maintain or even improve these grade/score/marks?

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What score will that be?

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MATH

Go back to this subject and relook all the comments that you wrote down. Think through the comments and establish if there are any gaps that need filling for this particular subject.

Which is your highest potential in?

Math.

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Just imagine if you got this score in your Final exams!

What personal changes do you think you need to effect about in this subject?

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What do you need to do about your relationship with the subject teacher?

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What help do you need to make improve your chances of performing better in the said subject?

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Pray about this subject and everything you wish and hope for in this subject.

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Confess and affirm yourself about your aspirations and hope for that subject.

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What is the one single most thing that is a game changer which you must do about this subject?

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What grade/score/marks are you likely to get in your next immediate exam if you employ the changes envisioned?

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If you sustain the same efforts, what grade, marks or score are you likely to get in the second exam after the forthcoming exam?

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If you sustain the same momentum and or improve one more effort area, what are you likely to score in the third forthcoming exams from today?

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Are you able to determine and purpose to maintain the same efforts, focus sacrifice, determination and hard smart work and maintain or even improve these grade/score/marks?

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What score will that be?

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BIOLOGY

Go back to this subject and relook all the comments that you wrote down. Think through the comments and establish if there are any gaps that need filling for this particular subject.

Which is your highest potential in?

Biology.

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Just imagine if you got this score in your Final exams!

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What personal changes do you think you need to effect about in this subject?

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What do you need to do about your relationship with the subject teacher?

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What help do you need to make improve your chances of performing better in the said subject?

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Pray about this subject and everything you wish and hope for in this subject.

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Confess and affirm yourself about your aspirations and hope for that subject.

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What is the one single most thing that is a game changer which you must do about this subject?

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What grade/score/marks are you likely to get in your next immediate exam if you employ the changes envisioned?

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If you sustain the same efforts, what grade, marks or score are you likely to get in the second exam after the forthcoming exam?

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If you sustain the same momentum and or improve one more effort area, what are you likely to score in the third forthcoming exams from today?

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Are you able to determine and purpose to maintain the same efforts, focus sacrifice, determination and hard smart work and maintain or even improve these grade/score/marks?

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What score will that be?

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CHEMISTRY

Go back to this subject and relook all the comments that you wrote down. Think through the comments and establish if there are any gaps that need filling for this particular subject.

Which is your highest potential in?

Chemistry.

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Just imagine if you got this score in your Final exams!

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What personal changes do you think you need to effect about in this subject?

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.**What do you need to do about your relationship with the subject teacher?**

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What help do you need to make improve your chances of performing better in the said subject?

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Pray about this subject and everything you wish and hope for in this subject.

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Confess and affirm yourself about your aspirations and hope for that subject.

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What is the one single most thing that is a game changer which you must do about this subject?

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What grade/score/marks are you likely to get in your next immediate exam if you employ the changes envisioned?

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If you sustain the same efforts, what grade, marks or score are you likely to get in the second exam after the forthcoming exam?

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If you sustain the same momentum and or improve one more effort area, what are you likely to score in the third forthcoming exams from today?

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Are you able to determine and purpose to maintain the same efforts, focus sacrifice, determination and hard smart work and maintain or even improve these grade/score/marks?

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What score will that be?

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KISWAHILI

Go back to this subject and relook all the comments that you wrote down. Think through the comments and establish if there are any gaps that need filling for this particular subject.

Which is your highest potential in?

Kiswahili.

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Just imagine if you got this score in your Final exams!

What personal changes do you think you need to effect about in this subject?

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What do you need to do about your relationship with the subject teacher?

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What help do you need to make improve your chances of performing better in the said subject?

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Pray about this subject and everything you wish and hope for in this subject.

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Confess and affirm yourself about your aspirations and hope for that subject.

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What is the one single most thing that is a game changer which you must do about this subject?

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What grade/score/marks are you likely to get in your next immediate exam if you employ the changes envisioned?

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If you sustain the same efforts, what grade, marks or score are you likely to get in the second exam after the forthcoming exam?

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If you sustain the same momentum and or improve one more effort area, what are you likely to score in the third forthcoming exams from today?

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Are you able to determine and purpose to maintain the same efforts, focus sacrifice, determination and hard smart work and maintain or even improve these grade/score/marks?

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What score will that be?

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GEOGRAPHY

Go back to this subject and relook all the comments that you wrote down. Think through the comments and establish if there are any gaps that need filling for this particular subject.

Which is your highest potential in?

Geography.

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Just imagine if you got this score in your Final exams!

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What personal changes do you think you need to effect about in this subject?

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What do you need to do about your relationship with the subject teacher?

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What help do you need to make improve your chances of performing better in the said subject?

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Pray about this subject and everything you wish and hope for in this subject. What is the prayer?

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Confess and affirm yourself about your aspirations and hope for that subject.

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What is the one single most thing that is a game changer which you must do about this subject?

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What grade/score/marks are you likely to get in your next immediate exam if you employ the changes envisioned?

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If you sustain the same efforts, what grade, marks or score are you likely to get in the second exam after the forthcoming exam?

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If you sustain the same momentum and or improve one more effort area, what are you likely to score in the third forthcoming exams from today?

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Are you able to determine and purpose to maintain the same efforts, focus sacrifice, determination and hard smart work and maintain or even improve these grade/score/marks?

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What score will that be?

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HISTORY

Go back to this subject and relook all the comments that you wrote down. Think through the comments and establish if there are any gaps that need filling for this particular subject.

Which is your highest potential in?

History.

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Just imagine if you got this score in your Final exams!

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What personal changes do you think you need to effect about in this subject?

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What do you need to do about your relationship with the subject teacher?

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What help do you need to make improve your chances of performing better in the said subject?

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Pray about this subject and everything you wish and hope for in this subject.

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Confess and affirm yourself about your aspirations and hope for that subject.

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What is the one single most thing that is a game changer which you must do about this subject?

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What grade/score/marks are you likely to get in your next immediate exam if you employ the changes envisioned?

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.Are you able to determine and purpose to maintain the same efforts, focus sacrifice, determination and hard smart work and maintain or even improve these grade/score/marks?

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What score will that be?

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Math

Go back to this subject and relook all the comments that you wrote down. Think through the comments and establish if there are any gaps that need filling for this particular subject.

Which is your highest potential in maths?

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Just imagine if you got this score in your Final exams!

What personal changes do you think you need to effect about in this subject?

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What do you need to do about your relationship with the subject teacher?

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What help do you need to make improve your chances of performing better in the said subject?

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.**Pray about this subject and everything you wish and hope for in this subject.**

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Confess and affirm yourself about your aspirations and hope for that subject.

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What is the one single most thing that is a game changer which you must do about this subject?

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What grade/score/marks are you likely to get in your next immediate exam if you employ the changes envisioned?

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If you sustain the same efforts, what grade, marks or score are you likely to get in the second exam after the forthcoming exam?

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If you sustain the same momentum and or improve one more effort area, what are you likely to score in the third forthcoming exams from today?

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Are you able to determine and purpose to maintain the same efforts, focus sacrifice, determination and hard smart work and maintain or even improve these grade/score/marks?

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What score will that be?

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PHYSICS

Go back to this subject and relook all the comments that you wrote down. Think through the comments and establish if there are any gaps that need filling for this particular subject.

Which is your highest potential in?

Physics.

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Just imagine if you got this score in your Final exams!

What personal changes do you think you need to effect about in this subject?

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.**What do you need to do about your relationship with the subject teacher?**

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What help do you need to make improve your chances of performing better in the said subject?

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.**Pray about this subject and everything you wish and hope for in this subject.**

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Confess and affirm yourself about your aspirations and hope for that subject.

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What is the one single most thing that is a game changer which you must do about this subject?

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What grade/score/marks are you likely to get in your next immediate exam if you employ the changes envisioned?

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If you sustain the same efforts, what grade, marks or score are you likely to get in the second exam after the forthcoming exam?

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If you sustain the same momentum and or improve one more effort area, what are you likely to score in the third forthcoming exams from today?

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Are you able to determine and purpose to maintain the same efforts, focus sacrifice, determination and hard smart work and maintain or even improve these grade/score/marks?

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What score will that be?

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AVIATION

Go back to this subject and relook all the comments that you wrote down. Think through the comments and establish if there are any gaps that need filling for this particular subject.

Which is your highest potential in?

Aviation.

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Just imagine if you got this score in your Final exams!

What personal changes do you think you need to effect about in this subject?

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.**What do you need to do about your relationship with the subject teacher?**

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.**What help do you need to make improve your chances of performing better in the said subject?**

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Pray about this subject and everything you wish and hope for in this subject.

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Confess and affirm yourself about your aspirations and hope for that subject.

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What is the one single most thing that is a game changer which you must do about this subject?

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What grade/score/marks are you likely to get in your next immediate exam if you employ the changes envisioned?

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If you sustain the same efforts, what grade, marks or score are you likely to get in the second exam after the forthcoming exam?

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If you sustain the same momentum and or improve one more effort area, what are you likely to score in the third forthcoming exams from today?

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Are you able to determine and purpose to maintain the same efforts, focus sacrifice, determination and hard smart work and maintain or even improve these grade/score/marks?

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What score will that be?

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COMPUTER STUDIES.

Go back to this subject and relook all the comments that you wrote down. Think through the comments and establish if there are any gaps that need filling for this particular subject.

Which is your highest potential in?

Computer studies.

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Just imagine if you got this score in your Final exams!

What personal changes do you think you need to effect about in this subject?

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What do you need to do about your relationship with the subject teacher?

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What help do you need to make improve your chances of performing better in the said subject?

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.**Pray about this subject and everything you wish and hope for in this subject.**

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Confess and affirm yourself about your aspirations and hope for that subject.

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What is the one single most thing that is a game changer which you must do about this subject?

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What grade/score/marks are you likely to get in your next immediate exam if you employ the changes envisioned?

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If you sustain the same efforts, what grade, marks or score are you likely to get in the second exam after the forthcoming exam?

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If you sustain the same momentum and or improve one more effort area, what are you likely to score in the third forthcoming exams from today?

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Are you able to determine and purpose to maintain the same efforts, focus sacrifice, determination and hard smart work and maintain or even improve these grade/score/marks?

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What score will that be?

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SUMMARY OF THE TOTAL TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME

A) After analyzing the changes in every subject, what are the general changes that must happen in order for this composition to become true?

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B) What sacrifices must you make?

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C) What efforts must you make?

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D) What beliefs and attitudes must you uphold?

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E) How will you deal with the teachers going forward?

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What kind of help do you need from your parents, guardians and mentors?

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LOOK AT ME NOW

Dr Stephen Ndegwa, a clinical psychologist at Daystar University, says in his book, "I have a kingdom" , that "we all have a kingdom which we are born to reign over. We however may lose awareness of this kingdom when we are obstructed by patterns of fear. With such patters, kings may live like beggars, bound by fear, low self-esteem, lack of vision and purpose, poverty, guilt, shame and victim mentality. To claim your kingdom is to unstuck from your past and embrace that you are by birth, a King".

Claiming your kingdom means that you are a completely new person with a different attitude and perspective of life. Your world view is completely different. You are ceased with a perfect opportunity to create a new world order using this new world view. The kingdom awaits you. What is your attitude now? What is your dream? What's your potential? How do you wish to face life going forward? You need to relook into the future and confide in yourself, affirm yourself, believe in yourself and be courageous to face your future and ambition. To claim your kingdom, you will need to answer yourself how many years you will need to actualize your dreams and career goals. Which year is that? Kindly write a composition that is titled Project (your birthday of your year of ultimate success). It will be something like project 2035.

ASSIGNMENT

Write a composition describing your birthday in your year of ultimate success. What will that day be like and who will be present? Where will it be hosted and how will it be conducted?

Explain the style and mood of the day!

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ASSIGNMENT

Kindly write your birthday speech on this day thanking your guests and thanking God. What are the accomplishments you will have achieved and how will that have affected your life up to that time? How will that have contributed to the lives of your loved ones?

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ACKNOWLEDGE YOUR NEEDS



WHAT MAKES THE LIFE OF A TEENAGER/YOUTH TASTELESS?

Our teenagers and youth loose flavor in life due to a lack of eight basic principles that make their life tasteless and without flavor.

- L**ack of quality relationships in the home**

Some parents may not have had a close relationship with their own parents while growing up and have adapted to the same distance, withdrawal and silence with their children. Some parents are unapproachable by their children making it difficult or impossible for their children to confide in them whatever challenges they might be facing in life.
You can't be a good support system or even a role model to your children if you are emotionally distant and withdrawn from them.

- **Busy and unavailable parents**

If the parents are busy seeking for the necessary finances to sustain the family lifestyle, then there is little interaction with their children. Many adults who are miles apart from each other are creative to come up with communication mechanisms using digital platforms. However, most parents do not realize the need to keep themselves up to date with their children. It would help a lot to resolve most of the unresolved needs of the teenagers and youth. Unresolved needs contribute to sadness, fear, anxiety, uncertainty, anger and frustration which if not processed properly can cause a teen or youth become an attention seeker and channel that negative energy through unsafe ways such as being irritable, angry, bitter, bullying, uncooperative, indiscipline and uninterested with following instructions in school or at home.

- **Domestic violence, separation and divorce**

The fights between parents cause the children to be overly worried, anxious and mentally disturbed. Parents who are always fighting physically cause their children to worry about the safety of their mothers or fathers if the father is the victim. When separation and divorce occurs, most parents do not see the need to find a language that answers the questions of their children.
Very few parents will find the need to take their children for counseling whenever serious occurrence such as divorce happens.

Separation and divorce causes a major upset in the family patterns and these causes the children to suffer anxiety and in some cases depression. The most affected children are the ones who often have an intense desire for their parents to get back together and may promote reconciliation. Most children drop in their performance in school. I will explain this from a neuroscience perspective later.
The manifestation of this trauma can cause a child to become withdrawn or aggressive. In aggression, they are likely to show anger, stress, and confusion even bullying others. They would do anything in school to allow them go home even if it's committing a mistake in school. They would seek to call home to find out if their parents are okay. In withdrawal, they may have difficulties concentrating in school, and struggle to bond or play with their peers. They may be anxious about the future most of the time.

In an article by the Children's Services, titled: Practice notes for North Carolina's child welfare social workers; it is confirmed that, following their parents' separation, children may regress, display anxiety and depressive symptoms, and they appear more irritable, demanding, experience problems in social relationships and retard in performance at school.

Children and adolescents who experience the divorce of their parents also have higher rates of depressed mood, lower self-esteem, and emotional distress.

Prolonged separation of children from their parents usually causes poor performance in academics, loss of interest in social activities, mood disorders (including depression and anxiety), socio-moral immaturity, and inadequate social skills, and may cause regressive behavior such as bedwetting

- **Parental instability during separation & divorce**

In an article by a scholar Paul R. Amato, published in 2001 by the journal of family psychology titled, the effects of divorce on school performance and behavior in pre-school children in Greece: an empirical study of teachers' views, an argument that is worth consideration emerges. It is that, separation is often associated with increased parental distress, reduced attention paid to the child by one or both parents, disruption of the home environment, conflict over money, custody/visitation, and reduced economic circumstances, all of which are stressors for children.

Research published in the Journal of Men's Health established that divorced people, both men, and women, years after their divorce, suffer higher rates of mortality, depression, illness in general, and substance abuse than married people. Going through a breakup is experiencing real loss and the bigger the love, the connection, and the intimacy, the bigger the pain and suffering. This loss can take over your thoughts and emotions and you will most certainly experience grief. You lost a loved one, who is still living and now there is a void in your life.

Divorce on the other hand strains the social life and financial bearing of partners. Both men and women find it devastating and may lose self-confidence, start battling custody, and may lose hope of ever finding happiness again.

Some women find it difficult to return to their normal selves again after a divorce. Withdrawal and depressions are common outcomes of divorce among the concerned parties. The parents who are processing this loss and possibly going through depression are not in a good mental health state to continue providing their children with the necessary support.

Teenagers and youth have parents who are within the life bracket of parents fighting and jostling for power. It is more often than not the norm to find your parents disagreeing most of the time.

- **Deprivation of basic human emotional needs**

Parental affirmation is the main source of positive self-image and self-confidence. Affirmation is the source of courage and resilience. The most naturally endowed persons to pass down affirmation, courage and self-confidence is usually the fathers. Even the mothers that are strong and courageous once got it from an affirming father and passed it down generations.

The children from a single parent household sometimes are made to feel they are not enough by fellow teenagers. This pressure comes from fellow students and the more their kid stories affect them, the more their self-esteem is damaged causing sadness, laziness, low motivation and depression or in the opposite causes aggression, indiscipline, bullying and anger.

The present parent needs to help affirm their sons and daughters around this subject. Where possible, healthy co-parenting can help the teenagers settle in their mind with the assurance that they are not subject to losing the love of the other parent.

When children feel continuously sad and withdrawn, these deprivations lead to substance abuse and sexual abuse to find a form of pleasure and in some it causes anxiety, depression or suicide if unattended.

- **Unreliable support systems**

Support systems are the anchors upon which stable lives are established. This is where people find encouragement, advice, correction but most importantly unconditional love through changing situations of life. Support systems offer safety, recognition and appreciation to its members because you can always find a shoulder to cry on and hear the magic words, it shall be well.

It is common place to find teenagers and youth having very poor academic grades and they are content with the situation doing absolutely nothing to change that trajectory. It is not a surprise to find parents who are frustrated by the lazy conduct of their children at home but feel helpless to such an extent they do not think they still have any options up their sleeves.

The biggest dilemma by most parents of the Gen Z is the fact that most of them lack initiative completely and will not do anything they have not been told by an adult. Even that, some of them will only do the task after constant reminders or a disagreement, probably withholding certain privileges.

6. A) Family Support systems

The power of family is summarized as meaning that a majority of the needs of a human person are established, sustained and propagated effectively within the family. You are conceived best in a family set up; likely to be raised more properly in a family set up and least likely to suffer emotional and mental trauma when the family is thriving. Some parents are also abusive towards their children and do little to find help for their children except to confirm and cement the bad labels.

Most often than not, the bad conduct is a product of missed family flavor as the family is the best and most suited place to experience the flavor of life while still a full time and present member of that family.

6. B) School Support systems

It is a common thing to find teachers and support staff that have judged their students and concluded that they are lazy, unruly, indiscipline, irresponsible and without initiative. Judging them is not the problem but using an abusive language that elevates the mention of these stereotypes can damage the student permanently and cause the student to adapt the character of a negative self-image.

There is no excuse as to why children should be irresponsible but it is not right to label children and magnify their hopelessness rather than seek to help them or even recommend to their parents to take them for counseling.

6. c) Community support systems

The other major source of a tasteless life is because some of our parents do not engage in any community affairs that would expand the scope of community support systems and also do not have healthy and consistent family relationships in their places of birth or with their friends.

Some of the youth and teen parents do not belong to any religious groups and do not encourage their children to participate in religious organizations. Religion is largely responsible for character molding and building of faith which is a key ingredient in development of confidence and hope in life. There are a lot of lessons taught within these religious organizations that can help ground your children.

If you are not as involved in your religious organization, just attend and bring your children along. It gives you more moral authority to suggest to them when youth camps or related programmes are happening within the religious organizations.

6. D) Peer support systems

Many teenagers and youth do not have strategic friends but friends for convenience. Most teenagers and youth take in friends who will make them feel comfortable around their weaknesses because they are just as weak. They take friends who will encourage them to steal more because they also steal. They will make friends with lazy people so that they do not feel lazy themselves. They join gangs out of peer pressure because those gangs give them company even if they are doing the wrong things.

I always ask my mentors to know their friends. I always ask, what do you have in common with that friend? Most at times, what keeps them together adds no value to the individual and the individual brings little value to their friendships either.

- **Lack of motivation, purpose, Vision and role models.**

When I started out with my clients and mentees, a majority of them did not know where they are in their life journey and as a matter of fact, struggled to articulate their life plans as well as short-term and long-term goals. Most young people did not know their vision or purpose in life. Having a vision means to have a concept and idea of success. It means knowing the circumstances that would constitute success in your perspective.

Role Models

Many of our young people do not know one or several persons who embody the kind of success they may want.

They therefore do not know the resources they needed to accomplish their goals and life purpose. Because their purpose wasn't as articulate, they also did not know the competencies they needed to take the life trip.

- **A lack of self-awareness.**

We have burnt our fingers not because we put our hand in the fire but because we didn't know that our fingers had petrol on them; petrol which would attract fire from a distance. We have strengths and potentialities which we do not exploit because we are not aware of them and in the process lose on opportunities that should otherwise have been our best chances at success in school and at home

Self-awareness enables an individual identify and build on their strengths and opportunities**.** It helps to expand the scope of knowledge of self, their opportunities and potential. It makes life Visionary and predictable; specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and attainable.

Self-awareness is the perfect gift we have in this life because no one is perfect yet most of us do not know our imperfections and so do not know how to moderate them while expanding on our strengths. We do not know nor own our weaknesses yet if we knew our imperfections well, we would trade carefully where it matters the most and safely exit what would otherwise have been dangerous zones as our actions would get us out safely without hurting or endangering ourselves or others around us.

At the end of this study, you will have the power to influence your outcomes, make better decisions and also understand things from more than one perspective of life. You should be able to build better relationships and decrease your stress but most importantly, you should be able to regulate your emotions.

EMOTIONAL NEEDS

MEETING EMOTIONAL NEEDS

Many teenagers and youth will retreat to their rooms whenever their parents come home, especially fathers and they will return to the living room when their parents depart. In some households, whenever mother steps into the home, every panic button is activated as the children scatter and attempt to be busy doing something just because they feel their mother is conditioned to see them busy all the time.
Some parents are approachable while others are not. Some parents pay attention enough to notice significant changes in the lives of their children while others will realize when it is too late. Some parents are abusive in their language to everyone in the house and this can affect the children in several different ways. Some parents are also pre-occupied with personal challenges ranging from financial difficulties, relationship challenges employment and business stress and the extended family constrains that it gets in the way of their parenting roles. When parents are overwhelmed by their personal circumstances, they may fail to notice when their children need them and therefore starve their children of their emotional needs.

Statistics

In a study conducted over two years, 300 teenagers and youth were observed through a continuous mentorship program. Only 35 percent of the teenagers/youth that were interviewed over the period of two years felt comfortable to be around their fathers.

They would be comfortable to share the same living room, share meals and have both formal and informal conversations.

This category was happy with themselves, at peace in their lives, felt listened to and their emotional needs attended to, felt confident in themselves and courageous to try new challenges, less anxious in their school and at home and were able to focus on their studies in school with continuous academic improvement. Whenever they faced challenges in life, they were able to overcome easily and if they needed help, they sought for help before the situation escalated to get worse.

50 percent of those youth and teenagers preferred to be around their mothers and were comfortable to express themselves to their mothers through both formal and informal settings. Whereas a majority of them were happy and at peace with themselves, they wished their fathers would listen to them and attend to their emotional needs. Some were confident but some lacked courage in the face of a challenge. They sometimes had self-doubts but most of the time had more hope as inspired by their mothers with studies in school with continuous academic improvement.

15 percent of the teenagers and youth considered handling their mothers as an extreme sport. They felt their mothers were unrealistic with their expectations, were verbally abusive and cared less about their feelings. They felt that their mothers are good to be around but it took a very small trigger to get from being comfortable to be around to being very uncomfortable around them. The unpredictable nature of their mothers' emotions made them not to fully express themselves to their mothers. Many of them were anxious and fearful. They wished their mothers would listen to them and attend to their emotional needs. They lacked courage when faced with a challenge. This category for some reason had a higher degree of involvement in bullying others and involvement with substance abuse.

It appears that teenagers can handle the absence, poor relationships and dictatorship by their fathers but cannot cope with the same from their mothers. Mothers are their last hope.

Those teenagers and youth from single parent households were mostly in the custody of their mothers and up to 70 percent of them said they found their mothers approachable and comfortable to be around and to express themselves freely. However 30 percent of them felt that their mothers were complicated, full of mood swings and mostly judged them harshly with insensitive communication that made it impossible to have comfortable conversations. This category felt their mothers were controlling, self-centered and had a lot of dictatorial tendencies.

In cases where the parents were separated or divorced, those who had a working co-parenting arrangement were more emotionally settled and had eventually found a sense of peace. Those whose parents were in the heat of their separation or divorce were restless, anxious and couldn't concentrate and focus on their studies. They were disturbed and sometimes showed anger bursts and unwillingness to cope with disciplinary expectations.

Those, whose parents were fighting violently, were worried about the parent who was vulnerable and couldn't settle in school. The vulnerable parent had to call or visit them in school to assure them that all is well. They tend to dislike the one who is abusive or threatening the other parent. The parent who is perceived as guilty needed to assure the student that this is not going to happen again if the student is to be settled in school.

Those teenagers who did not know their fathers had two outcomes. Those who have been received, embraced and protected by a step father, grandfather, foster father or a male relative within the fathers family were settled and at peace with

themselves.

Those whose mothers gave bad reports about their fathers, frustrated their children engaging or meeting their fathers or did not want their sons to ever ask them or question about their fathers, suffered low self-esteem and sometimes would desire to show rebellion and often showed anger and restlessness.

What is your story?

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Projection

Parents may also project the stress and anger they may be receiving externally to their children or spouses in the presence of their children. If you have a problem with your boss, you should not project that anger and aggression to your children or to your spouse in the presence of the children. Some parents project their anger to their children when it is their spouse whom they are at war with.

Transference

A mother or father may be experiencing withdrawal and coldness from her husband, wife or co-parent due to the misunderstandings in the marriage, relationship, separation or even divorce. When the mothers or fathers are missing the attention which they desire from their partners, they can transference that responsibility of offering attention and affirmation to their sons and daughters.

When the sons and daughters are not able to offer this much needed and exaggerated attention, they may begin verbally manipulating their children and making the children feel like they have abandoned or neglected them so as to achieve the same attention. Children will eventually feel this to be a burden and will begin to avoid you. If they give you the attention, it is because you have blackmailed and manipulated them and so they do not give you genuine or sustainable attention and warmth.

Some of our single parent households might expect excessive compensation of attention by the children until the children feel you are too much in their space and begin to recent you. A few of my mentees have clearly said, they know the difference between a mother showing you love and a mother over depending on you for emotional support that you forget your individuality and stop growing.

They say that just as the mother makes the boy or girl the center of their lives, the mother now becomes the center of their lives in such a way that if you are away for half an hour with a friend, it becomes a third world war yet they say to you unpleasant words.

Some teenagers from single parents' households do not wish for their mothers to get married for the fear of losing their parental attention but they prefer it anyway. The burden of providing happiness for their mothers and the use of any free time to fill them with their ideas has become overwhelming. Be wise!

What is your story?

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What are the human emotional needs?

Emotional needs are feelings or conditions we need to feel happy, fulfilled, self-confident or at peace. Without them, we may feel frustrated, hurt, or dissatisfied. Some examples of emotional needs might include feeling appreciated, feeling accomplished and feeling safe or feeling part of a community. As humans, we seek emotional nourishment as much as food and water. It is your birthright to be emotionally nourished.

I have also expanded the scope of emotional and mental assessment specifically through the exposition of God's word and the themes I find emphasized thru God's words, especially through the teachings of Jesus Christ. Love, hope, peace, and joy are the greatest of them and I will be defining how we manifest emotions of love, hope, peace, and joy.

All of the conditions and circumstances boil down to set of summarized emotional outputs which are to be *Happy, At Peace, Fulfilled, and self-Confident.*

Many people refer to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, a theory in psychology developed by Abraham Maslow in 1943. Displayed as a pyramid structure, Maslow's hierarchy shows the progression of human needs from basic needs like food and water at the bottom of the pyramid to self-actualization at its apex. Maslow's research psychologists have identified nine specific emotional needs common to all people across cultures. Each one of them boil down to this set of summarized emotional outputs which are to be *Happy, At Peace, Fulfilled, and self-Confident.*

Security- an environment that enables us to lead our lives without experiencing undue fear or anxiety and that allows us to develop our potential.

Volition - such that to feel fulfilled, we need to feel like we have the power to exist autonomously and direct our own lives voluntarily without being forced.

Attention - Receiving attention from people we care about and giving them attention in return is valuable.

Giving attention to yourself is equally valuable. Whenever we don't receive attention from those we love, we seek it elsewhere

Feeling appreciated – This is a form of gratitude. We often take for granted the very things that most deserve our gratitude. As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them.

Validation – An emotionally validated person feels that others not only see and hear their emotions but also accept the existence of those feelings. A person who feels that their emotions are not "wrong" or inappropriate is more apt to have a solid sense of identity and worth and can manage emotions more effectively.

Emotional connection - To be emotionally fulfilled, we need to feel connected to other people. We need to experience friendship, love, and intimacy.

Connection to the community - We are social creatures, and our brain is a social organ. We need to feel connected to something greater than ourselves whereby we are part of a thriving community but most importantly thriving in it.

Privacy - Mental and emotional well-being requires that we have time and space enough to reflect on and learn from our

experiences.

A sense of achievement - To maintain our self-esteem, we need to have a sense that we are accomplishing things of value.

Meaning - In the same vein as feeling that we're accomplishing things of value, we all need to have the sense that we're part of something greater than ourselves, having a coherent set of beliefs about life and what it's all for.

Let us do an emotional survey

To be practically happy, at peace, Confident, and fulfilled, one needs to be in an environment where they feel appreciated, feel safe, feel accomplished, Feel affirmed and allowed to be part of a community. These two layers which are the major functionality of our happiness, peace, and fulfillment are **ourselves** and **our environment**. We should know our state of emotional health by whispering to ourselves as to whether we are happy, at peace, fulfilled, or confident.

MACRO-ASSESMENT

Are you happy in your life? Explain

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Are you at peace with yourself and your home environment?

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Are you at peace with yourself and your school environment?

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Are you confident with yourself as you drive through life? Explain

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Do you feel fulfilled in your life? Explain

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MICRO ASSESMENT

Security- *If this emotional need isn't being met:* Make a list of things in your home, school or neighborhood that make you feel insecure or unsafe and then identify action steps that need to be taken to change that. Also identify who could take the action. Is it you or someone else? What keeps you worried or anxious? If it is an individual who makes you feel unsafe, explain the circumstances. Who keeps you anxious or worried?

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As a teenager/youth, you need to seek the answer whether you make your parents feel secure? Do you keep them worried and anxious? Let your parent tell you their truths.

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Volition - *If this emotional need isn't being met: Have a frank conversation with your parents or friends about where you need to have more control or clearer boundaries. It's time to be lovingly assertive about this.*

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Attention -. *If this emotional need isn't being met:* Prioritize quality time with your parents and friends. Set aside time for it in your calendar. Just because we have friends or parents doesn't mean we are meeting their needs for attention or that they are meeting ours. It takes effort.

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As a teenager/youth, you need to seek the answer whether you give your parents attention? Do offer yourself to know how they are feeling and the state of their minds and heart? Do you pay attention when they are talking to you or do you listen while walking away? Do you confirm to them that you have heard and can honestly say back, you said this, wanted this, asked this and need me to do this?

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Feeling appreciated – If this emotion is not being met, then then you can be more intentional in showing gratitude to others and appreciating what they do and what they are good at. You may also consider changing your company such that you spend more time where you are celebrated rather than where you are ridiculed and tolerated.

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As a teenager/youth, you need to seek the answer whether you show your parents appreciation? How much do you show your parents that you are grateful for the lifestyle they have offered you? How much do you show gratitude for the sacrifices they have made for you? How much do you show gratitude for the small and big things your parents do for you?

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Do you show appreciation to your parents when they do something good or you are entitled?

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Do you show appreciation for your teachers?

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Do you show appreciation for your friends?

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Emotional connection - *If this emotional need isn't being met:* Make it a priority to spend time with your friends or even make new ones. If you're feeling lonely in your friendships, see if there are ways to create more emotional connection between you and your good friends**. How will you enhance emotional connection you're your parents or close friends?**

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If you feel emotionally distant to one or both of your parents, talk to them and express your desire to be emotionally connected to them so that you can speak about your issues freely. Write to them a letter if you have to. If both parents are living together, you could talk to the parent who is more approachable to help you out. If you are friends with your parents' closest friends, you may also seek their assistance. It takes a village to raise a child. **What is your situation and what do you plan to do about it?**

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Connection to the community - *If this emotional need isn't being met:* Prioritize spending time with others. Maybe that means arranging a regular coffee get-together in your home. Or can you mentor someone younger than you or do volunteer work for people less fortunate than yourself? That too is a connection with the community. If you do not feel socially connected, join a new club and begin to contribute. Find some charity activities and join in with friends. Create some initiatives that need pooling together of resources and contribute to good causes.

What are you planning to be more emotionally connected to community?

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Meaning - *If this emotional need isn't being met:* You can find meaning in doing those things that you love, supporting a cause, or finding a philosophy/belief system or a political ideology that resonates with you. Do charity work and help others! Somebody once said that the greatest thing about life is that it is meaningless—which gives you the huge opportunity to give it any meaning you want. If you find yourself feeling apathetic or

existentially confused like nothing has any point, focus on the little things, to see the world in a grain of sand. These moments are as meaningful as you want them to be: The pleasure of sipping tea; breathing fresh air; walking and living on a beautiful planet—drink in those moments and let them nourish your soul.

How do you intend to create meaning for yourself?

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Privacy - *If this emotional need isn't being met:* Block out half an hour a day, just for you. Have a long bath or take a walk to digest the events of the day and mentally rehearse for what's coming up. More sensitive people often require more time to fully digest the stimulation (or *over*stimulation) of the modern world. Privacy doesn't mean hiding in your room to do illegal or forbidden things.

How do you intend to achieve your privacy?

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A sense of achievement - *If this emotional need isn't being met:* Make a list of all your achievements—awards, qualifications, languages, promotions, giving up smoking, losing weight, or even all the rough periods you've survived. You must have skills and strengths that got you through those periods. Remind yourself regularly of these. With this record of competences and achievements, what does that make you?

How do you feel about yourself? What attribute do you give yourself?

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What more can you achieve?

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What new goals can you set to charge you into more achievements?

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Feeling appreciated – If you do not feel appreciated, find a good time and talk about it with your parents, friends and even teachers. Begin to show others gratitude and cheer for their success in the presence of your friends and parents. They will subconsciously realize that the same way you appreciate them or others, they owe you some appreciation.

What is your situation and how do you think you will navigate it?

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HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS & SUPPORT SYSTEMS



BUILDING GOOD FRIENDSHIPS AND RELIABLE SUPPORT SYSTEMS FOR TEENAGERS AND YOUTH

John Donne of the year 1624 said: No man is an island entire of itself. Every man is a piece of the continent. A part of the main! My brethren, the word man here accommodates both genders. Bouncing back home, in Eastern Africa, the former founding Tanzania President, the late Julius Kabarage Nyerere, once said: "Unity will not make us rich, but it can make it difficult for Africa and the African peoples to be disregarded and humiliated".

Let us, therefore, try at this early stage of this chapter, to internalize the meaning of the words: **support system**.
A support system is a set of individuals who provide support, care, respect, cheer, affirmation, and feedback. They do not judge you but provide you with a fertile environment for you to genuinely reflect and better yourself as they have your best interests at heart.

Family is the primary place where relationships are made and sustained. It is the place where learning takes place from the formative years of children into adulthood. Friendship starts within the family but gradually extends beyond family as people engage a wider scope of persons in a variety of spectrums such as school, church and neighborhood. Parents who are overly busy deny their children this support system. Parents who are unapproachable also deny their children this support system. Most people who have a successful life experience have a

wonderful support system around them. You are always there for your friends and family when they need you. You listen to them when they need to vent out. You drive them to places psychologically when they don't have a ride, and you cheer them up when they need encouragement. Every person has the confidence to face the world and conquer it whenever they have a solid support system next to them. While in school your closest friends also constitute your support system.

Who are your friends?

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What do you have in common with your friends? Do not be afraid to mention if you are real partners in crime.

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What's the main difference between you and your friends? Discuss each friendship independently!

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BENEFITS OF HAVING A SUPPORT SYSTEM

Research has shown that there are tremendous benefits in having a network of supportive relationships: those with robust social support networks have better health, longer lives, and report higher well-being status. Friends and loved ones can make you more resilient in times of stress, setback, or loss and they can also make the good times even better.

Support systems play two principal roles, one practical and one conceptual. First, they enable us to do things more efficiently and more effectively in contexts ranging from everyday life to school work, careers and in all domains of knowledge, and two, support systems are tools for thought and lifelong learning. In addition to buffering stress, some friends can indeed help you identify when you are stressed or distressed — in some cases, they may notice it before you do. Having a strong support system equips one with better coping skills, reduced anxiety, and low level or no depression, at all.

Social support system refers to a group or network such as friends, family, peers, and mentors that we can turn to, for emotional and practical support. At school, fellow students, supportive staff, and faculty may provide support. There are many practical benefits to having supportive relationships, such as knowing people who can provide you with information, advice, guidance, and also tangible support, such as assistance in times of uncertainty.

This feature of social support can be comforting and enhance your feelings of security. Supportive relationships can also bolster you emotionally when you are feeling down or overwhelmed. Friends and loved ones will listen to your fears, hopes, and dreams, and make you feel seen and understood. They can help you think through alternatives and solve problems. They can also distract you from worries when that is what you need. Doing all these, encourage and lower your stress and feelings of loneliness, emotions which if not managed can lead to depression.

Factors to consider in a peer support system

To determine how to establish a support system, identify your best or closest friends. Who is the person you spend most of your time with as a close friend. List and establish how many they are. Confirm what you have in common and what keeps you together.

If what you have together in common is not anything you are proud of, then they may not be candidates for a support system. Treat them as acquaintances that you occasionally pass time with but not as your support system. You may need to look further in your friendships and determine whom you need to pay more attention to as a close friend and if they meet your expectations become your support system.

When I was in primary school, in grade 2 school, I had a close set of four friends whom we did everything together. We waited on each other in the morning to walk or run to school and back home. Two of us came from well to do family and kept the group funded. If you missed me, you only needed to ask where my friends were and you would find me. One day, we began teaching each other what we knew and before long, I was smoking cigarettes, drinking alcohol and stealing. I was once introduced to opium and saw the evening set in at 3pm. I would be interested with your stories in the company of your close friends. What have you done together and how have you influenced each other over time.

Also, when I was in boarding primary school, we had a set of friends who were close friends at the beginning of the term when I had enough pocket money to spend on them. As soon as my pocket money and shopping was finished, they stayed away from me and avoided me.

Exercise

Kindly tell your story in primary school, in the estate and in high school. Tell me the good, the bad and the ugly stories and how that ended up.

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How to choose a peer support system

Answer the following:

How do you feel when you talk to this person?

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Do they take your feelings into account?

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Do they take your needs into account?

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Do they give advice based on your well-being?

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Do they tell you tough truths when you need to hear them?

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Do they celebrate your triumphs with you?

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Successful relationships require an attitude of giving as much as you take from the relationship. Treat your friends the very same way you want them to treat you so that you become the friend you want others to have. To have happy relationships you need to pay attention to various factors which are essential ingredients for this to happen.

We all need to learn gratitude and appreciation. Tell your friends and family how important they are to you and thank them for all they give you. You need to stay connected through phone calls, texts, and emails; reciprocate invitations. True friends come through when times are tough, and so you should be available whenever needed. Be a good listener and allow your friends to confide in you freely, without being judged. We should also be willing to accept support; some people find it hard to accept support, preferring to be the one always offering it instead. Some may fear becoming dependent or want to maintain their self-image as the "strong" and "together" one. Friends and family often want to feel they have done something for you. Let them! Accepting help can help you. It also keeps the relationship balanced and lets your friends and loved ones know that they have something to offer that you also value.

When you genuinely care about someone you will be excited when they succeed. Support their success. If you find yourself feeling a little jealous, you can acknowledge that to yourself, but don't let it poison your friendship. Open, honest communication is the lifeblood of healthy, happy relationships and therefore the communication lines must be kept open. If a friend does or says something that hurts your feelings, try to deal with it directly. Start by assuming that it is a misunderstanding or that the misstep was unintentional. Ask them about it. (Don't stuff bruised feelings.) Your friend will likely appreciate the opportunity to remedy the situation. Whatever the case, accept apologies graciously as you would hope others would accept your apology.

We also need to respect limits as each person has their setting for how much social interaction they need and want. Know your own and respect that of others, even if it differs from yours. The biggest secret is to know when a relationship is not working for you or if it isn't serving your purposes.

If you find that you are drained whenever you see a particular friend, or that he or she is inconsiderate of your time or feelings, or is unreliable, highly critical of you, or generally negative, they may not be the friend for you. Similarly, if they engage in unhealthy behaviors, such as alcohol or substance abuse, they also may not be a good choice for your social support network. Remember, those in your support system should help you reduce stress, not increase it. They should support your goals and efforts to achieve them, not belittle or undermine or ignore the action milestones toward achieving your goals.

TYPES OF SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Family

The family is a beautiful base for the support of children as little children, as growing teenagers, and as they prepare to embrace their relationships leading into their own families. When the family doesn't offer a reliable support system for the growth and development of children, then the burdens and challenges in society emanating from family can become overwhelming. Family becomes a support system whereby children depend on their parents and also on their siblings. Parents eventually depend on their children as their support system in their later life.

Parents also want to feel that their children appreciate them and recognize them. When you honor your parents and carry their best interest at heart through your conduct, you allow your parents to enjoy and cherish parenthood.

Parents and guardians

Parents offer a stability-enhancing support system not only to their children or teenagers but also to their adult children.

Siblings and cousins

Siblings also depend on each other for friendship, encouragement, and protection.

Community support system and role models

It can be strongly said that one is born in a home but nurtured by the community, the environment in which the baby is born. It is possible to establish a strong support system within your community and neighborhood.

What is the difference between our generation of parents and our current generation of sons and daughters?

Various African communities had their rights of passage for both their boys and girls. As much as each community had its unique rites of passage, the basic principles behind the rights were standard and sought to achieve the same objective. The first objective was integration. During the Rights of Passage, not only were the young men taught integration but also trained on taught their culture and traditions and how to uphold the sanctity of those traditions. This contributed to an individual paying attention to beliefs, maintaining law and order, respect to authority and community service.

Our sense of community today has waned away that we do not feel the need to hold each other accountable due of the little sense of community. We have very little conviction about common beliefs as a generation and therefore susceptible to continued manipulation by external forces. We do not have a common ground against which to hold each other accountable and we should begin caring about community identity especially if we are in the same school. We should uphold community standards and a community culture.

Integration as a peer support system and identity

When a certain age group or age set was initiated, they became an integrated family all familiar with each other. They knew about their backgrounds, weaknesses, strength, family tree, talents, and behavior. This set became so closely knit that they became a new version of a family involved in each other's life. This age set became a form of identity and also became a form of support group and therefore a peer support system; they identified each other as belonging to the same set as the other and in most cases they had a unique name to their set. They attended each other's ceremonies and played lead roles in each other's lives. They took oaths to protect and defend each other and do no harm to each other.

Their oaths included such conditions that if you do another evil, the covenant will cause evil to befall you. They did not gossip about each other and told each other the truth. They also shared their resources. Much as some of these practices are not exactly practical in our modern world, we must find our African groove and substitute our traditional culture with an approach that causes practical integration. Our young men and women are committing suicide because they do not have peers who share common bonds that they can be vulnerable to so as to seek help.

Our young men and women do not have the will to aspire enough because there is no sense of positive peer pressure emanating from their peers to rise to a certain shared expectation to which they pledged allegiance to attain or sustain. The place of positive peer pressure should be encouraged in schools and communities. As a school community, it is possible to exert positive peer pressure on each other.

Mentorship

One beautiful thing which happened during these rights of passage was that you were assigned mentors whom you could talk to any time you needed advice and guidance. If you had a crisis in your life, your peers intervened but also mentioned the same to your mentors to intervene. We were properly cushioned against most unforeseen circumstances in life. Your mentors were like god fathers and god mothers. In our world today, most godfather relationships ended on the day of baptism and there may not have been a direct physical or even virtual engagement with that godfather many years after dedication or baptism.

The church as a support system

Church service is a great support system. Meeting a few friends on a Sunday morning who will genuinely ask to know how you are doing and probably secure a mid-week date is what makes life get sweet. It is a compliment from a friend whether male or female about your nice Sunday best dress or hair. It is that special welcome to a new member with a card and a cup of tea or juice after service. It is that hug from your friend whom you haven't met in a long time and whom you met in this church. It is the hearty conversations after a church service. The church has systems to meet the needs of the poor and those who are with special attention needs such as widows and widowers, orphans, and other special groups.

This is where we affirm strangers, by greeting them by the door with a smile, we say good morning and they say back "hi". That is finding **meaning** when someone is interested to look at you and greet you with honor. You become important as we courteously show you a good seat to occupy with **respect**. We offer **acceptance** and **appreciation** to strangers and even regular members. We show them **recognition** and **attention** when we acknowledge their presence in our midst.

We go much further and **affirm** them by clapping for them as an entire congregation, something some of them last felt in decades when they were baptized at age 10. We show genuine joy and pride to have them around us and finally show them **gratitude** for making a good choice to come to our church.

We go a notch higher when we embrace them at a personal level and show genuine concern to know their name, their family, what they do, and what they need. It is done over a cup of tea after the church service. In church, we see your gifts and your talents, we know the power of God in you and take you thru spiritual formation through a discipleship program, and connect you to other people who will be instrumental in your journey. If you are married, the church will assign you to a marriage enhancement group. The church is the place you will find people cheering for you as you start to get self-confidence and join the worship team, protocol, ushering, youth, and next generation, or children ministry. Celebration will be ours as the church watch you rediscover your identity and witness God's love.

Do not underestimate the affirmation using the word of God that comes from your pastor when they conduct those sermons at mid-week prayer meetings and speak blessings over you, those blessings are an affirmation by the use of the word of God. We are affirmed in bible study and subsequently equipped with knowledge and skills to serve. As you will read about our emotional needs, you will realize that a lot of people have lost the flavor of life and life has become meaningless.

The self-esteem and ego of many young people have been bruised due to several factors such as in the introduction. Parents have their share of struggles where Men have brutalized their wives until they have no self-esteem left in them while women have verbally abused their husbands until their ego is bruised to the core.

Hard economic times have destroyed the family unit as more men are unable to provide for their families and if by chance the women can step up, have used that situation to take over the place of authority, thus damaging the ego of their men even more.

The workplace is no longer the place for parents to find meaning and a sense of contribution because the competition has obscured our humanity. We are corporately driven by the need to make sales and any employee who shows weakness is dismissed without human considerations due to this pressure. All these pressures make it difficult for our parents to be emotionally available for our children. All these people come to church because the church is mentally and systematically structured to offer a support system through all these.

The church has structured its support system to offer spiritual nourishment, encouragement, support, teaching, and training service but most importantly, once the person has been healed spiritually, mentally, and emotionally, the church helps most people find a place to meaningfully contribute to the life of the church and right there they find meaning. They may be treated as useless and feel low about their inability to meaningfully contribute to their family decisions, but they will find meaning when they serve, for instance, as ushers in church and when they teach Sunday school or just guide at the parking lot, as part of the protocol department. When you get fulfilled by serving in church, you become a happy person and export that happiness to your children and spouse.

This healing happens when you are affirmed by God's word and gain faith by hearing repeatedly. You gain an understanding of a new identity through the eyes of the word of God, an identity that now superseded the identity of your workmates, spouse, or siblings.

Once you gain this identity, your self-esteem is driven by the engine of this identity and you become productive at work, at home, and in the marketplace making you full of happiness and have decreased stress and therefore a more effective parent.

School and institutional support systems

Children spend more hours in school than they spend at home in a year whichever way you look at it. In early school days, children only believe what the teacher says over what the parent says. It is for this reason that every parent should find it absolutely important to understand the values of a school and have the conviction as to why you have chosen one school over another.
Finally, the parents should find a way to support the school to attain certain benchmarks of care and wellness offered to the children; not just academically but also an investment into the student wellness.

Why do we need a support system?

We all need to have a support system not just for the bad times but to make our good times better. We need them to enhance the quality of our lives as each one of us needs a kind of safety net. Now is the time to nurture the relationships you already have and to start making more friends. It is also time to assess the network of friends that you have. Above all, be the friend you want to have and uphold the values you learn from the good friends. If you want love, offer them love, if it's attention, offer attention, if it's authenticity, be authentic and if you want availability, be available because a friend is a gift that you gift yourself.
Every individual should have within their support system, peers and mentors who influence them directly or indirectly in their day-to-day decision-making processes. These mentors largely shape the thinking paradigm of their mentees. Mentors train and equip you with higher ideals and competencies which catapult you into a superior version of yourself than you would be without their input.

It is important to have a support system among your peers but also pay attention to mentors. If your mentors are big on family values, yours will get better from where you are through their influence and their example. If your mentors are big on career, business and investments, chances are high that you will learn a thing or two which will drive you to become a better career person and investor or even interested in making long-term investments.

Solve your problems with your support systems

Disagreements with parents, siblings, friends, or mentors mean that you are likely to miss out on the value they add to your daily life and therefore certain gaps will show in your life without your knowledge. Try and make amends with your family members and friends. When you fall out with your father, you miss out on a lot of things. You miss out on affirmations. When you fall out of favor with your best friend or a sibling, you miss out on a lot of good times you once shared. You miss out on someone you can tell your problems but also on someone to celebrate with your wins. You cannot celebrate with strangers and feel fulfilled. Make amends with your people.

Do you have a strained relationship with someone who is dear to you?

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What happened?

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How can you salvage that situation and make ammends?

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FAMILY AND PARENTING

THE POWER OF FAMILY

Many people do not know or understand the power therein family. The power of family is summarized as meaning that a majority of the needs of a human person are established, sustained and propagated effectively within the family. You are conceived best in a family set up; raised best within a family set up and empowered the most if you are living within a functional family unit. You are meant to experience the best version of unconditional love, commitment and responsibility within a family set up and when you are grown; the cycle simply repeats itself with a few reversed roles.

The one who was once a baby, toddler, teenager and finally adult; becomes the father in exactly the same cycle while propagating the importance of the family unit. This is the whole essence of life to be experienced within a family set up. Your family becomes your support system and also the best place to exercise your potential and individualism as well as the family identity with loyalty whereby you cannot be logically disowned as not belonging to that family. Family is everything.

The reason as to why God established responsibilities within the family set up was to preserve the basic human emotional needs of each person being a fundamental need. A wife is commanded to respect and honor her husband because the fulfillment of a man depends on it. The man is commanded to be a loving and tender husband because the thriving of the wife depends on it. The family set up is a place where we exchange the meeting of each other's needs failure to which, the family dysfunctions.

Children were commanded to obey and honor their parents because their parents depend on that obedience and honor to be fulfilled. Parents who are dishonored by their children are very frustrated and sad. Children who disobey their parents cause their parents a lot of pain. This commandment is the first one to come with a blessing of long life demonstrating how important it is

Family is the best place for meeting basic human emotional needs like peace, happiness, fulfillment, acceptance, admiration, and contribution. It is within the family that all forms of affirmation should be experienced whether it is from husband to wife or vice versa. Parents would complement their children and give them a sense of security and not be the cause of their anxiety and lack of self-confidence. The support systems necessary for life are right there within the family setup. Our personality development can be just right if we set the environment in our family dynamics right.

Question

What type of parent are you towards your children? Are you the parent who comes home and the children warm up to you or do you make the children wish you got a call from your boss to return to the office for an emergency so they can breathe?

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What type of child are you to your parents? Are you the type of child that the parents wishes schools would re-open so they can finally stop crying and worrying about what you will do or say next?……
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Sharing meals, holidays, family outings, watching sports or movies, playing games together.

Sharing a meal and coffee with your family is what triggers the mind to release the feel-happy hormones. Why don't you do it and feel good? Is it that hard to just sit at the same table and eat together? Serving your children or your spouse food, then eating from a different place denies you the precious happy hormones which should make both of you happy. Delicious meals also cause your brain to produce happy hormones. Why don't you double the experience by making and eating delicious meals together?

Why do we call to take out our family and friends for a date and then spent the entire time smiling on social media talking to people who are not present on the table. Is it too difficult to show some interest in what your children like so you have more stuff to talk about? Is it asking for too much to show interest in what your parents do so you have one more thing in common to advance your communication and bond? When did you last have a family holiday or camping with your children?

There is a time my son went for a church camp for one week. During the last two days, we were called in as fathers and father figures to spend more time with our young men. Despite having missed our sons for a whole week, the boys retreated to their boys square within less than fifteen minutes and withdrew from their fathers. The fathers also began camping one with another. The man who was next to I requested me not to leave his company because he was already out of conversation with his son and it was feeling awkward to be with his son in silence.

During one of my school visits, my other son questioned why most parents were glued on their phones or their sons playing on their parents phones as opposed to enjoying each other's company talking or eating together.

CHALLENGE

I challenge you to have an open discussion with your children even if they are grown now and you will be surprised how much of their stories and tales will shock you. You can be sure that many of us are guilty of the inability to give our children the attention they need when they come to our space. Mostly, it is because that is how we were parented while growing up for various reasons. Our instincts are a total reflection of how we were parented.

What is your story?

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Sibling relationships

The family is the perfect place for children to develop relationships among themselves. Children who are many in a family relate easily with others in school and work setups and also in marriage. They find it easier to negotiate and navigate situations than those who grew up as lone children or two children separated by huge age gaps. Children have a way of learning how to take initiative among themselves and how to internalize the perspectives of their siblings without hating them for being different.

Children born and raised in a community of siblings and cousins know how to disagree and mend their disagreements more easily than lone children. Lone children who are exposed to other children in the home front do not have major problems but those who are overly controlled or only relate with adults may tend to struggle to create healthy relationships when they become adults; especially with the opposite sex.

Those who are withdrawn, do so as a way of avoiding exposing their low interpersonal skills or fear of rejection. However, some, who are loud, do so in because they are poorly prepared to negotiate for their space and therefore are helpless to the extent they can only state their perspective. An alternative perspective becomes a burden because they were not wired to see life thru multiple perspectives since they were children. Last-born children are used to being the center of gravity and attention. They easily become an emotional burden when they are suddenly expected to drop the Toto and baby/ boyi mentality and learn how to feel complete by themselves without the protection of their parents or big brother/ sister. This is especially when they join boarding schools where they are not privileged to be the center of attention. They are likely feel abandoned and not cared for.

Last-born, men and women, also struggle a lot with the need to express their voices. In most cases, all family decisions are made by the older siblings and they become bystanders in the family equation.

What is your story?

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Duty of Gratitude by children

Children too have duty of care for their parents and the elderly in society. Parents desire the appreciation by their children considering the sacrifices that parents put in to provide for their children a good education. Some parents are providing for their children while living beyond their means or sacrificing a lot for their children and the best the children can do is to show appreciation and demonstrate the good will of a grateful child.
When children fail to meet their parents expectations especially academic expectations, the children need to show their goodwill and effort to get better and to improve and not appear to be content with lower standards of academic performance.

It is also beautiful for the children to show a genuine concern for their parent's wellbeing. Most parents are strong because they appear so for their children to live worry free, but sometimes parents deserve encouragement from their children by showing that they are grateful and not entitled. That's all that the parents will ever desire as an encouragement for this tough life and economic times.

Whenever parents have strained relationships, it is good for the children not to judge their parents but allow the parents to solve their own issues without the children taking sides and determining which parent is wrong and who is not.

What is your story?

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Duty of care by children

The older parents mostly have health challenges and suffer loneliness most at times. Children should understand that sometimes all the parents need is company and an assurance of their children's love and support. On the flip side of it, the relationship between grandchildren and grandparents is very symbiotic. Grandchildren raise children with a much more free hand allowing for independence, initiative and creativity. Grandchildren also cement the concept of identity into the minds of children.

The grandparents are the epitome of cultural identity and sometimes religious identify if their religion aligns with the religious identity of the parents. The bottom line is that the grand children benefit just as much from history and parables, puzzled, riddles and idioms from their grandparents expanding their mental capacities and power of imagination. Children develop their identity better when they are with their grandparents because of the free nature of expression unlike the suppressed individualism around parents if they happen to be strict parents. Grandparents also make up for the gaps of the parents which help the children to feel complete and cared for in different ways even if they cannot articulate it.

What is your story?

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PARENTING

There is no manual from which we can copy the best family model but we can continuously learn from each other's experiences and lessons over time. I will be happy to share my experiences on the family front in my household as well as what I have observed across other families. I have also received interesting feedback from my children on how some of their friends have experienced family life. I get to hear a lot of feedback from teenagers as I offer mentorship counsel and advice in different setups including both school and church setups.

Family is a safe space for the expression.

All our children need to properly develop the right people skills. Parents need to create a safe space for their children to express themselves without fear. I have been to forums where children cannot spend a significant amount of time with their parents without immediately disengaging.

The problem with most of us is that our communications with our children are mostly transactional when they need something or about school work. We should create more space that allows us to communicate casually, play, and have leisure such as camping, riding bikes together, and playing a sport. Laugh and make jokes and learn from each other. I encourage you to try something out until you find what allows you to have a safe space for expression within the family.

What is your story?

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Open communication

When I took my son to school for the second term of form one, most of the teachers and some parents would reach out to speak to me. I am also the class representative for my son's class. For some, it is because I am a public figure. At some point, I stopped to engage with the boarding master Mr. Franklin. My son Aden came to me and said, "I have something I wish to say respectfully! Sometimes you punish me. I have to wait for a long time while you speak to your friends that you even forget I was there waiting for you. Like right now, I have a heavy bag full of books and don't know whether I should put it down first or just hang on. You took a long time speaking to Mr. Franklin. Please do something about it. I am requesting respectfully!"

This was a good realization on my part but that is not what makes me proud. What makes me proud is the fact that my son feels he is safe to speak his mind and is not afraid that he might be skinned alive for speaking his mind. The respect is the other gold and I thank God for it.

Do you have open lines of communication, even for the uncomfortable conversations? What is your story?

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Family is a place to be known and understood

I am not a body language expert! All I am trying to say is that as a parent you should have an idea about those non-verbal cues of your child such that you can probe them further to confirm your fears about them. You cannot tell without spending quality time with your children so that you can connect a specific reaction to an event and a consistent pattern of behavior with specific stimuli. That way you can always tell when your children are being bothered by something even if they don't say it.

How would you tell as a parent if your son or daughter is bothered, not at peace, struggling with something in their lives or is afraid of something?

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How do you express yourself as a son or daughter if you are under duress, have made a mistake, have failed, need assurance or need help?

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A family is a place of inspiration and motivation

Strength can always override and cushion the weaknesses of our children and bring out more of their potential than their failures to the surface. So, we don't say, stop wasting time on TV but we say the other thing they should do like it's time to sleep.

We do not complain and insult the child for not having cleaned their room, we should whisper into their ability to clean and say something like you should by now have cleaned your room, please hurry up! We retain the fact that the potential to do it is right there and we activate it rather than magnify their weaknesses and mistakes.

You do not insult the child by saying "You can't even do simple things like washing dishes" but no matter your tone, just say. "Wash those dishes; Now!

As a parent or child, are there any realizations of patterns of your communication which you honestly acknowledge that needs to change? What are some of those?

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Pay attention and be present in body, soul, and spirit as a parent
During the funeral service of the former president Moi's lawyer, the late Hon. Mutula kilonzo, His son, now Gov. Mutula Kilonzo Jnr said that if he went to his father's office, his father would sit up straight and face him. He would then close all his books and files and pay total attention to him. The people who worked with the late advocate said he did not allow anyone to disrupt his meetings. Only his son, Gov. Mutula Kilonzo Jnr was allowed to walk into his meetings uninvited. This is exactly the point I am making.

Most at times parents are not present for their children and when they are present, they are too busy and removed from their children. We go to events but remain celebrities neglecting our children whom we brought out for dinner or coffee. We take our children out and then call in our friends to join the outing and talk to our friends for the entire time.

My story
Anyone who has been around me knows I always give them my attention even while I am in church. If my children walk to me while I am in church, it doesn't matter how high-ranking the person I may be talking to will be. I will excuse myself and listen or attend to my children. I will have to explain to my children that they have to wait but to talk directly to them first. Sometimes they are just asking for a hug and they will walk away asking for nothing more after because that access and attention is available.

As I have narrated previously about my incidence in school where my son, Aden, came to me and said, that he has to wait for a long time while I speak to my friends that I even forget he was there waiting for me. This gives me reason to think about how I can improve in my other public spaces to accord my children total attention especially if I am with them in public places where they are the reason we are in that public place to start with.

What are your stories as a parent or as a youth/teenager?

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Listening to our children

I know people without numbers whose children couldn't tell what they were struggling with and when they said it, they were not listened to. Three of these cases are cases where children wanted to change their careers and in two cases, they wanted to change schools but the parents would hear none of it claiming that the children were not being responsible enough.

One child was sexually abused in school and when he asked the parent to move him to another school, maybe the parent was not as equipped on how best to realize what the problem was. The parent refused completely and insisted that the child must return to school without excuses. The son committed suicide a day before opening day.

Another young man was finding it difficult to cope with his college course and wanted to change his career. When he told his father about it, the father didn't have an appropriate way to handle the situation. Maybe, there were other underlying issues that the parents didn't know. The young man committed suicide.

A young girl went to the bathroom and found other girls acting lesbian and when she reported it, the other girls made it their business to molest her. When she told the parents that she can't go back to school, the parents did not take time to want to know why but insisted she must play ball. The girl went back but refused to study, refused to do any homework and wrote nothing on her exam paper so she can be number last. When she came home again, she told the mother that, she knows the father will beat her up, but no matter how much she is beaten, she is not going back to that school and she would rather die than be molested and bullied again.

A young man was facing peer pressure in school where a majority smoked weed and other substances. In this school, if you did not play ball, you will be bullied and mistreated for the fear that you can reveal their drug abuse. The rule was that, during the holidays, you have to get the weed, take a photo and post to the gang whatsapp group. The young man did exactly like the rest of the boys wanted.
One day the mother found the roll of weed in his room and brought hell down to the son with each possible insult and even beat him up mercilessly. The sad part of this is that the young man had gone through this difficult moment all alone and unable to tell his mother to seek help.

The young man did not touch opium but looked for some leaves, dried them and tried to fool his friends.

He deserved to be celebrated and helped in the situation and not punished without being heard. He decided to now smoke the real thing and the journey to recovery has been difficult.

What are your stories as a parent or as a youth/teenager, on listening or being heard?

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Learn to get feedback from your children

Feedback is a critical part of parenting which most individuals use to improve at work and in church but don't think it is an important tool at home. Feedback from parents towards children is a positive ingredient in developing a good family life. However, the best way to have your children value feedback with enthusiasm is to create avenues where they can also give you feedback useful for furthering your family experience.

Is this possible in your home to solicit feedback or to give feedback, even the uncomfortable feedback?

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What are your stories around feedback?

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Be an example of the values you teach

When I went to pick up my son from school on closing day, I was with a friend who also had his son. Immediately they alighted at their destination, I remained with my son in the car. We later stopped by the supermarket to buy the items he will need the following term. After the shopping, he hugged me and said. "Thank you Dad for coming to pick me up from school and for taking me to the supermarket." I was honored that my son is not entitled. When we give our children the finer life, a sense of entitlement can easily set in. Unfortunately, there is no class to teach gratitude or entitlement except by being an example of someone grateful for life and the small things to those around you. Thank your children too when they do something that is right and they will reciprocate gratitude.

My father used to go to the farm with us that we never saw farming as a heavy task or punishment. He sprayed our animals with us making it easier to love the job. He collected eggs and fed our chicken making the job enjoyable. I suspect that it would have seemed burdensome if he only instructed us to do by ourselves without his example. A lot of children resist taking up assignments due to the lack of example.

We used to spend quality time with my other son upcountry whereby, we wake up together and go to the farm together. We would put fertilizer on our maize together and support our construction workers together and many other assignments. He knows that I value all people no matter their social class and I have demanded some of these standards from him when opportunities presented them. I usually take them to children's homes to see that not everyone has the assurance of a meal and a place to call home.

We take donations to children's homes regularly in the company of my children and take very interesting feedback about their experience in the children's homes.

What values do you think your children have taken from you?

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What example do you think your father or mother has set for you?

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Discipline and punishment

A lot of parents struggle with how to cause discipline in their children with some feeling helpless. Mostly it is because they were disciplined and punished differently than what our environment dictates. Some are raising their children exactly how they were raised and punishing their children the same way they were punished.

It is not good that the only time you talk to your children is when you want to punish them. Sometimes, we punish our children when we are angry with other parties and situations from work or within the family. It is important to punish your children only when your mind is processing their situation and not when you have carried your office stress to your son or daughter.

A lot of what we call indiscipline is not necessarily because a child intentionally chose to do or fails to follow instructions. Most often than not, it is the subconscious mind projecting inconsistent mental patterns which are borrowed from varied experiences and other people around you which could be friends or even parents. Error, mistakes, and indiscipline are indicators of what is wrong with us. It is a shout for help, a scream for attention.

Mistakes are not entirely bad because they help us correct what is wrong with us. Suppressing the conflicts thru punishment without an audience doesn't always help construct the holistic person. It could be an internal battle with self-esteem, anger, and resentment coming from our homes and parental effects and how we adapted to our attachment to the universe as young children.

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Indiscipline, mistakes, and errors as we know it is a Godly gift that we have to bring to the surface those thinking patterns which are influenced, externally acquired, or forced on us but inconsistent with our mindset.

Indiscipline and bad behavior are like the fever you get when you have Malaria, diarrhea or vomiting you have when you have food poisoning or the back pain when your spine is not aligned. The parenthesis of this submission is that error, mistakes and indiscipline are indicators of what is wrong with us. It is a shout for help, a scream for attention. Mistakes are not entirely bad because they help us correct what is wrong with us. Suppressing the conflicts thru punishment without an audience doesn't always help construct the holistic person.

Enforcing alternative habits and patterns is one way to cure the pure mind and that is what we mostly do. Enforce, remind. Teaching a new value system puts the mind to order and with that, the mind organizes the entire life of a person. Correction is that attempt to condition the mind in a certain repetitive pattern that seeks to amend, substitute, improve, or rehabilitate the wrong mindset and habits. Correction may include punishment and chastisement and this aspect calls for awareness and objectivity as you punish your child using models that yield results.

How is discipline enforced in your home to you or by your parents?

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Teach children compassion and empathy

It is important for your children to understand that life is experienced differently by each individual child. You should demonstrate this by how you handle your children each for who they are. Do you compare your children one to another or do you try to appreciate each child from their points of strength?

Do you show favoritism? If you demonstrate to your children that you have different perspectives of loving and showing support to each child independent of the other but love, appreciate and support each of them anyway, they begin to interpret empathy easily. When you use the same yard stick for everyone and one paint brush for everyone, they are not able to empathize with others because life then becomes linear to them with only one shade of black or white.

When you empathize with your children and others, it is possible to have self-care. In order to empathize with others, children need to feel it from their parent thus not losing out on valuable friendships based on misunderstanding. You should show your children love even during misunderstandings.

They will also learn to acknowledge their weaknesses and deal with their failures and mistakes because they have come to appreciate others. They will give other people a fair chance, second chance and room to redeem themselves from their mistakes and failures. This can only happen in the midst of compassion and empathy.

If you cannot have compassion towards others, you are likely to judge yourself harshly. You are also likely not to have self-love if you cannot empathize with others. Empathy enables you to view yourself in many different perspectives making it possible to acknowledge and validate yourself in various changing circumstances.

How do you show or experience empathy in your family?

PARENTAL AFFIRMATION

It is my son's 16th birthday and I am figuring out how to make it memorable. I have put together a team of three fathers and their teenage sons. A camp looks like a great idea for a birthday gift. Doesn't it? We have played, swam, slaughtered, roasted, and eaten and everyone is happy. I challenge the boys with a cash reward if anyone of them can do 50 push-ups. One young man attempts and only does 20 push-ups. He makes a second attempt and makes it 36 but oops! He has muscle pull.

The second young man attempts and does only 20 push-ups. On his second attempt, he goes past 20 and we are all cheering for him. He gets to 30 and starts to show signs of being worn out. I start affirming him as he pushes his limits. I tell him that for as long as he hits 40 push-ups, I will give him the money. He regained his drive and smashed the 40 mark. He had the strength to take it to 50 but he came short at 46 pushups. Not bad for believing in yourself to such a point as doubling your previous record! The shock of my life was still being sharpened.

My son wasn't even going to try. He gave up and knew that he won't get anywhere close to the target so it was all pointless. I affirmed his athletic abilities and how he is the envy of anyone athletic in terms of height, physic, and stamina. My son got the magic desire form out of nowhere. He was ready to give it a shot. This one didn't want to even start, so I had to start motivation from the beginning. The young man hit 52 straight push up's on his very first attempt and smashed the targets. He got his cash reward for it. That's the power of affirmation.

Affirmation is emotional support or encouragement. It is usually a sentence, of powerful words put together, like a positive statement, aimed to tap into your conscious and unconscious mind to motivate you, to challenge you, to push you to reach your full potential in life.

Affirmations have the power to motivate you to act on certain tasks, help you to concentrate on achieving your goals in life, and give you the power to change your negative thinking patterns and replace them with positive thinking patterns or assist you in accessing a new belief system.

When our sons and daughters hear from someone they can trust like a father "That they are beautiful, Strong, intelligent, powerful and handsome", they believe it and internalize what parents say to them because it is authentic. Children do not internalize the classroom teaching of what love is; they define it as they experience it. If their parents demonstrate what love is, the children can easily rate and measure love when they come across someone offering love.

Anyone else bullying them and saying negative things cannot break their spirit as they are late in time. Imagine your daughter believing a bad report about them before they believed your report and God's report. Tell your children good reports about them. That is all they need to win in life. We should learn to love our sons and daughters and show them their significance and importance beyond demanding that they read and pass exams. We should particularly build their self-esteem so that their esteem and self-worth is not defined by others.

Affirmation deficiency

The lack of affirmation by one or both parents leaves some children emotionally crippled. An emotionally crippled person is unable to feel or show true emotions and so cannot form stable relationships with others. An emotionally crippled person has been rendered indecisive, alienated, uncaring, confused, or helpless in conjunction with experiencing debilitating emotions such as worry, fear, panic, or despair.

This state of being emotionally crippled is largely associated with a lack of affirmation by one or both parents.

A lot of us missed out on the affirmation which should have come from our parents and teachers leading to limited self-confidence, poor self-concept, and being emotionally crippled. We do not know how powerful affirmation is because we were born to parents who were struggling and broken by poverty and their poor self-image is all we got while growing up.

A young girl who has experienced cruelty or lack of affection from her father or mother will be desperate for someone to appreciate her. Lack of affection might as well mean a present father who did not show his affection and did not express himself to the daughter for the daughter to feel loved, special and valuable. If your daughter has felt unloved, unwanted, neglected, and treated harshly, she will project this need onto someone else by desiring that someone who represents a male figure do the things her parents didn't do for her. They desire to date early in life, just to feel they are special to someone.

The male figure will interpret that the young lady loves and needs him. She will indeed need him but for completely different reasons. She will be needy and insecure seeking constant confirmation whether you love her. She will be possessive and jealous because she is coming from a place of pain and insecurity.
She is most likely to be aggressive in protecting the love she now has being driven by the fear of the love she lost, (the rare expression of love by of her parents). This leads to insecurity, jealousy, possessiveness and regular fights to tame and control the man which eventually breaks the relationship.

A young man who doesn't feel loved by his father and mother will also be desirous to feel loved and will project this desire to a female who will interpret that the young man loves her. He will be needy and insecure most of the time with an exaggerated need for affirmation and confirmation that you love them.

He will be excessively possessive and jealous because he is coming from a place of pain and insecurity. He is likely to seek to be loved, affirmed and respected more than he is doing for the relationship.

Incidentally, these are the types of relationships that end up being toxic when these needs are not met. When two insecure people meet, they are trauma bound to each other because there is little true love that exists. True love exists when one feels they have something to offer and wants to give their portion of love. Receiving love is necessary but it begins with someone being in a position to offer love. Love that begins by needing and demanding love can easily become toxic when these needs are not eventually met. Separation and divorce becomes inevitable.

None is giving love but instead expecting to draw love. What binds these two people together is their need to feel loved and less of the love they can offer. Unfortunately, both of them are seeking to be loved with little love to offer which becomes traumatically binding and toxic.

Even Jesus was affirmed by his father to build confidence

A father owes their child affirmation. Affirmations of a father build confidence in a child while also causing believability among those who see or experience this moment of affirmation.

The book of Mathew 3: 13-17, presents us with Jesus being baptized. As soon as Jesus was baptized, heaven was opened, and the people saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, **"*This is my Son, whom I love; with Him, I am well pleased*."** The confidence of Jesus was affirmed while the people present believed at this moment. In Mathew chapter 17, verses 1- 8, we see Jesus go up the mountains with Peter, John, and James. Jesus is transfigured as they watch. His face shines like the sun, his clothes become

white as light, and there before they appeared Moses and Elijah talking with Jesus.

While he was still speaking, a bright cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud said, **"*This is my Son, whom I love; with Him, I am well pleased. Listen to Him!*"** How many times have you affirmed your son or daughter in private and how many times have you affirmed your children before their contemporaries or before your contemporaries?

Parental affirmation builds courage

Fathers and mothers can help build their children's courage if they affirmed them even in what we may perceive as danger. I attribute my courage to the tales about my people but also the fact that my father sent me to herd large herds of cattle all alone in the thickets as a young man; among many other factors.

The first miracle that Jesus ever did was not planned for. It is Jesus mother, Mary, Who challenged Jesus that they had no wine. Jesus answered his mother by saying that, My time has not yet come, yet the mother still set him up by telling the people to listen to and obey whatever he will tell them. Jesus eventually performed his first miracle after being affirmed by the mother to take the courage and dare the miraculous.

Parental affirmation: Mohammad Ali affirms his daughter;

My all-time favorite role model, Mohamed Ali, the greatest of all time (GOAT) is the best example of the power of affirmation and I will quote him in three varying incidences. His daughter who is now a retired world boxing champion, just like her father, narrated the fiber of her father, Mohamed Ali. One of Ali's daughters was being bullied in school and Ali handled it most epically from point of understanding and revelation, which is

exactly what I am pushing or pulling you to explain; "She called my father in tears when she was 7 years old.

Kids were teasing her saying, "you do not look like your dad, and we've never seen him.” She was fair-skinned, didn't look like him and he wasn't living with her mother." Leila continued. We do not believe your father is Mohammed Ali."My father got on the plane the next day, flew to school, and called an assembly.

When Mohammed Ali landed, the whole world stopped moving because he was the most famous man in the whole world. He asked my sister to pick out the students who were teasing her. They walked to the stage, he shook their hands to their disbelief and he said to them, "This is my daughter!" "My father then took her home at the end of the day and walked with her up and down the streets holding her hand as the world came to a standstill crowding every possible space to see the greatest man, Mohammed Ali, and his daughter."

As Mohammed Ali signed autographs both in school and in the streets, he solved the single most need of his daughter which was affirmation. The whole world was able to see that Ali was proud of her daughter and the daughter's self-image, self-esteem, self-concept, and self-worth were resolved for the rest of her life. Affirmation is the difference between your self-confidence and the lack of it.

Have you felt affirmed by your parents? Describe the incidences!

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If the people around you cannot affirm you, make sure you meet that need. Enjoin people in your life who believe in your potential and will challenge you to use that potential. Find something that you are good at and do it to boost your self-esteem. When you succeed, you will believe in possibilities and do even the difficult things. If your father cannot affirm you, find a father figure in a mentor or pastor. If your mother cannot affirm you, find a mother figure to offer that much-needed oxygen.

Self-affirmation and resilience

The other critical layer of affirmation is self-affirmation. It is not always that we will have a spouse, a parent, a teacher, a boss, or a contemporary who affirms you. Sometimes, we might need to affirm ourselves through our situations without looking out for external aid; especially if the external aid is not as available. This is what we call self-affirmation, self-charge and it is as practical as you see it. You can change yourself; your self-affirmation can achieve miracles in your life. I dare say that self-affirmation is the measure of your faith. The degree and extent to which you affirm yourself under your circumstances is the functionality and measure of your faith thereof.

Meshack, Shadrack, and Abednego

The power of self-affirmation prevails in Daniel 3:15- 18 when Meshack, Shadrack, and Abednego are accused of disobeying the worship of King Nebuchadnezzar.

A determination is made and they are asked to worship an idol the moment the music is played. Meshack, Shadrack, and Abednego affirm themselves as they tell of the king. They say, "Far from it, that we should worship your idol. Our God will deliver us, but just in case He doesn't, so be it. We shall face your judgment with courage." That is self-affirmation in the circumstance.

Paul and Silas

In Acts 16, Paul and Silas are thrown in prison for a charge of disturbing the peace of the Romans. They are brought before a magistrate who issues, according to me, the worst form of judgment. Paul and Silas were brought before the public square, beaten up, then thrust into the inner cells, meaning the deepest possible, and chained on locks. Paul and Silas affirmed their faith in God. They affirmed themselves in faith, sang praises, and prayed to God. They did not complain but prayed in hope and suddenly, there was a great earthquake so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's bands were loosed.

Have you ever cheered yourself out of a problem and succeeded?

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Prodigal son

One other great story of self-affirmation in the Bible is found in the prodigal son narrative. When he had suffered in a distant land, he charged and affirmed himself, he said, “My father’s servants eat and leave food on the table yet am here suffering. I will go back to my father and ask for forgiveness. I will ask him that I have sinned against him and God. I will ask him to hire me as one of his servants”.

Have you ever found yourself stranded for help but still took another difficult journey or step as the only way to redeem yourself?

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Sometimes, those around us can doubt us and criticize our ability to achieve certain things but if we affirm ourselves enough like Young biblical David, then we can achieve anything that we set our minds to. King Saul told David that Goliath was a seasoned soldier all his life while David was just a young boy.

David replied that he had experienced victories before over a bear and a lion and the same God who delivered him from the bear and the lion will deliver him from Goliath.

When King Saul offered him Shoes, a Javelin and a shield, David took them off and said they were unnecessarily heavy and went bare feet to war. He got his victory. I hope you now understand when I say that my courage comes from herding large herds of cattle as my father trusted me with such wild responsibilities.

Have you ever been doubted by those around you but chose to encourage yourself and won anyway?

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School commendations and rewards by parents

School based recognitions motivate students to further their ambition. They would put in effort to maintain the top spot. Parents too should commend their children when they perform well in school or if they excel in certain responsibilities. Many schools do not believe in extra-curricular activities and would do anything to push everyone to get good academic grades. Some head teachers go to great extents to ban participation in activities such as drama, music, sports, etc.; claiming that it wastes time for studying.

Some children have been abused by their parents or some teachers as useless and trouble makers not amounting to anything but when they excel in a sport; it automatically heals the anger and frustration of their low self-esteem. When a child heals their self-esteem, the effects are seen in all their activities including class work and cooperation with fellow students.
Poor children with good academic ability have chances of getting scholarships but poor children with talents such as music, arts, and sports have fewer chances of scholarships in our African context.

Excelling in sports or art makes your mates respect you, admire you, and cheer for you. This is an emotional need for every child to feel valued, loved, and needed. Through excelling in sports and arts, children heal a lot of their self-esteem issues emanating from a lack of approval and validation from parents, teachers, and

peers. The new self-confidence feeds into their ability to achieve more with their lives and to have a positive outlook in life.

My high school Chief Principal knew how to affirm his students and motivate them to do better once they made an effort to become better. During the assembly, he once singled out a gentleman called Boaz Moseti. Mr. Ashitiva congratulated him for achieving improved behavior and being very neat and clean unlike before. He asked the entire school to clap for the "young man" as was his quote. Boaz was my classmate, and since I was his class prefect since form one, I believe that my opinion may not be too far from the truth. The transformation of Boaz began when he joined the school choir. Not only did he sing as was his love for music, but was required to keep certain standards to do the music that he so much loved. Our patron was the deputy principal and Boaz was good in music.

Mr. Minishi saw the talent in students such as Vincent Andambi. In one of the school awards, Vincent Andambi was awarded and affirmed as the most improved and well-behaved student while he was in form three. That should tell you that he reformed and improved from something. This revolution began with his involvement in the school drama and Mr. Minishi giving them lead roles as an actor.
Vincent later became the leader of the drama team. It was impossible to compare the two versions of him given his previous streak of finding Vincent with disciplinary issues.
Sometimes, affirmation of what the students can do or is capable of doing could heal a multiplicity of struggles within a student's mind especially if he is talented in some skill.

These talents once further developed and the student affirmed taking away the feeling of being unloved or unwanted at home or

in school; their lives change forever and for the better. It is worth noting that the same positive attitude exhibited in sports and creative arts is likely to help the student believe in him/herself in their academic work since their self-esteem and anxiety have been dealt with. Even if they do not need to play soccer or rugby professionally in later years, their victories in sports and creative arts will boost their self-esteem and help their restlessness if they have personal anxieties from family situations.

What are you good at and how does it make you feel about yourself. Mention all the things you are good at!

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PARENTING STYLES

Children have never been very good at listening to their elders, but they have never failed to imitate them. The best kind of parent you can be is, to lead by example. A wise man once said that it is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men. As parents, we are supposed to train our children by teaching them good values. The scripture puts it right, "*Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it*" (Prov.22:6). This is wisdom from God Himself, that we should train our children.

It does not say we live with our children; it says we train them. Some parents just live with their children, they don't train them. My advice is: from today try not to just live with your children. Train them too. The concept of parenting styles is not unique to parent children relationship but also relationship between one parent to another. Even when parents are not able to live together for whatever reason, how they handle each other has a major bearing on how the children interpret parenting. Before I exhaustively discuss parenting styles, here is some wisdom from my mentor.

Wisdom from senior parents

One of my mentors is Prof. Charles Kimani Njoroge; a professor of food processing and post-harvest technology, and a father of three girls; 34, 31, and 27 years old. He gave me some insights into his journey of parenting. He says "It's important for the children to know your background both social and financial. It's good for them to know that nothing comes easy and without hard and smart work one cannot achieve anything. Also, it's good for them to know that you can't achieve anything without support from others both relatives and others in society. For us to raise successful children, we have to be there for them in their dreams.

When children are very young, play with them, treat them to something that makes them feel loved, help them with things they can't do themselves like homework, etc. Treat their mother/father well particularly in their presence. Teach them to respect other people if they want to be successful.

For us Christians, let them know that God is central in our lives and most of what we are is not necessarily because of our abilities but because of his favor. Support your children at all times. Discipline them and teach them the word of God. If they want something that you can't afford, tell them so and buy what you can. If you can't buy any let them know. Kids are very smart. Treat them so. Discipline them when you are not angry and are therefore rational.

They should obey the set rules and if not defined consequences will follow. Motivate them with rewards when they achieve something. Don't openly compare them to other better-performing ones otherwise, they may get discouraged. Find out what their dreams and goals are and support them to the best of your ability. If it does not work out, support whatever else they want to do. Don't make them into what you are or wanted to be, if they are not interested.

Parenting styles

Parenting styles used in psychology today are based on the work of Diana Baumrind, a developmental psychologist, and Stanford University researchers, Eleanor Maccoby and John Martin. Each parenting style has different effects on children's behavior and can be identified by certain characteristics, as well as degrees of responsiveness which is the extent to which parents are warm and sensitive to their children's needs, and demandingness, which is the extent of control parents put on their children in an attempt to influence their behavior.

Every parent has a different approach in how to interact and guide their children. A child's morals, principles, and conduct are generally established through this bond. Different researchers have grouped parenting styles into four more psychological constructs. Every category employs a unique approach to how parents raise their children. Generally, each parent will fall into one of these categories and sometimes have some characteristics from another category. The four known parenting styles can be summarized as: Authoritative, Authoritarian, Permissive and Neglectful. Your parenting style can affect everything about your child from their self-esteem to their academic success. How you interact with your child will affect the rest of their lives.

Authoritative parenting style

The parent is firm, has high expectations over their children, highly instructive to give direction, manners and discipline but also highly sensitive to the needs of the child. The parent listens to the child and attends to the needs of the child as they arise. The parent communicates frequently to listen and takes into consideration the thoughts and feelings and opinions of their children. The parent allows natural consequences to occur e.g., if a child fails a quiz when they didn't study, the parent uses that opportunity to help their child to reflect and learn. Authoritative parents are nurturing, supportive, and often in tune with their children's needs. They guide their children through open dialogue to teach values and reasoning. Children who have authoritative parents tend to be self-disciplined and can think for themselves. The children may consider their parents as strict but they also know that they are loved because their parents listen to them and identify their needs every time they express such needs.
Authoritative parents provide their children with rules and boundaries, but they also give them the freedom to make decisions.

Parents validate their children's feelings while also making it clear that the adults are ultimately in charge. They invest time and energy into preventing behavior problems before they start. Parents put a lot of effort into creating and maintaining a positive relationship with your child. Parents explain the reasons behind your rules, set limits, enforce rules, and give consequences, but also consider your child's feelings. Parents also use positive discipline strategies such as praise and rewards

How authoritative parenting affects children

This is the best model of parenting and produces disciplined children who can express themselves but also respect authority and work to achieve their goals. They are used to meeting the expectations of their parents. They follow instructions in school and at work because they are used to meeting the instructions of their parents. Research has found kids who have authoritative parents are most likely to become confident, responsible adults who feel comfortable self-advocating and expressing their opinions and feelings.

Children raised with authoritative parenting tend to be happy, confident, and successful. They're also more likely to make sound decisions and evaluate safety risks on their own. Authoritative parenting is linked to academic achievement, heightened self-esteem, and social resiliency. Kids with authoritative parents tend to have close, nurturing relationships with parents. They are respectful and responsible. They manage their aggression and are self-regulating. They are more likely to be happy and successful and they also clearly express their emotions. Kids who are parented authoritatively can be trusted to make the right decision on their own, and they often set high expectations for themselves.

Authoritarian parenting style

Parents of this style tend to have a one-way mode of communication where the parent establishes strict rules that the child obeys. There is little to no room for negotiations from the child, and the rules are not usually explained. They expect their children to uphold these standards while making no errors. Mistakes usually lead to punishment. Authoritarian parents are normally less nurturing and have high expectations with limited flexibility.

Children that grow up with authoritarian parents will usually be the best-behaved in the room because of the consequences of misbehaving. Additionally, they are better able to adhere to the precise instructions required to reach a goal. Furthermore, this parenting style can result in children who have higher levels of aggression but may also be shy, socially inept, and unable to make their own decisions. This aggression can remain uncontrolled as they have difficulty managing anger as they were not provided with proper guidance or room to express it. They have poor self-esteem, which further reinforces their inability to make decisions. Strict parental rules and punishments often influence the child to rebel against authority figures as they grow older.

In this model, the parent is highly instructive, doesn't give chance to listen to the child and dictates always. The parent is not sensitive to the needs of the child. When a child asks for an explanation on anything, you will respond by saying, "Because I said so" Your rules may be harsh in this model, the parent is highly instructive, doesn't give chance to listen to the child and dictates always. The parent is not sensitive to the needs of the child. When a child asks for an explanation on anything you say, you will respond by saying, because I said so. Your rules may be harsh.

This parenting style mostly breeds rebellion or hypocrisy. Children begin to rebel from their parents and withdraw from the presence of their parents. They may also show their parents the image they want to see but behave completely different away from their parents. Whereas the parents may think they have raised obedient children, their children are likely to disappoint their expectations.

Most of the time, they were never allowed to be in touch with self and personal ideas. Once left alone later in life, they may continue rebelling authority or fail to know what to do since they never developed the muscles to make independent decisions.

How authoritarian parenting affects the child

When raised by an authoritarian parent, children are often well-behaved at home, but may rebel when with their classmates, friends and teachers. Kids may also struggle with their social skills, be indecisive and trouble thinking on their own, Low self-esteem, Poor judgment of character, have anger and resentfulness. The children might be hostile and aggressive. Some research also indicates that children whose parents were authoritarian reported more substance use and higher instances of depression.

Permissive parenting style

Permissive parents tend to be warm, nurturing and usually have minimal or no expectations. They impose limited rules on their children. Communication remains open, but parents allow their children to figure things out for themselves. These low levels of expectation usually result in rare uses of discipline. They act more like friends than parents.

Limited rules can lead to children with unhealthy eating habits, especially regarding snacks. This can result in increased risks for obesity and other health problems later in the child's life. The child also has a lot of freedom as they decide their bedtime, if or when to do homework, and screen time with the computer and television.

Freedom to this degree can lead to other negative habits as the parent does not provide much guidance on moderation. Overall, children of permissive parents usually have some self-esteem and decent social skills. However, they can be impulsive, demanding, selfish, and lack self-regulation. This parenting style gives too much room to the demands of the child. Most of happenings are determined by the child and the parent speaks less into the order of things allowing the child to dictate his own terms of life even when they are wrong.

If you set rules, but rarely enforce them and you do not give consequences for the rules you set out, then you are permissive. Permissive parents are lenient, only stepping in when there's a serious problem. They're quite forgiving and they adopt an attitude of "kids will be kids." Oftentimes they act more like friends than authority figures.

Permissive parents cater to their children's needs without giving much expectation and mostly they are compensating for something is not right in the family set up. When they do use consequences, they may not stick. For example, they'll give privileges back if a child begs, or they may allow a child to get out of time-out early if they promise to be good. Permissive parents are the total opposite of firm.

How permissive parenting affects children

Since they have a high standing in the household, children of permissive parents are accustomed to getting whatever they want. They may exhibit more behavioral problems as they don't appreciate authority and rules. They lack responsibility, are impulsive and aggressive, lacking taking of personal responsibility when situations arise around them.

They always find someone to blame for all their challenges and never point to self, After all, their parents never hold them to any standard. This breeds entitled children who do not respond to correction and feel annoyed when they are told something different what they wanted to do. The children struggle in school when they are given instructions by another authority. They are used to having their way and think that is how the world operates, on their terms. They hardly keep their jobs because they do not receive instruction and supervision positively.

If they are business owners or bosses, they are likely to treat their employees badly because they do not know how to listen to other opinions and react badly to reviews, feedback or dissenting opinions by others. They eventually become authoritative parents when they grow up, by not listening to their children.

They struggle with independence when they grow up because, there shall be no parent to give you what you want, and taking responsibility for self will be a struggle. They struggle with anxiety and depression. They are impulsive with outbursts and aggressiveness. They struggle to perform well academically and yet do not take personal responsibility. They feel that the teacher or their parent should be responsible for their performance.

Kids who are parented permissively often act entitled, egocentric, and selfish. These children might also fail to put effort into school, work, or social endeavors since they don't have to put in any effort at home. Additionally, kids raised by permissive parents are at a higher risk health problems like tooth cavities and obesity because their food is not checked against the health implications and their lack of hygiene is not demanded of them.

Neglectful parenting style

Children are given a lot of freedom as this type of parent normally stays out of the way. They fulfill the child's basic needs while generally remaining detached from their child's life. An uninvolved parent does not utilize a particular disciplining style and has a limited amount of communication with their child. They tend to offer a low amount of nurturing while having either few or no expectations of their children. The children of uninvolved parents usually are resilient and may even be more self-sufficient than children with other types of upbringing. However, these skills are developed out of necessity.

Additionally, they might have trouble controlling their emotions, less effective coping strategies, may have academic challenges, and difficulty with maintaining or nurturing social relationships. The parent is removed from the lives of their children and do not get engaged in their affairs. The parent doesn't know when they are opening school or even closing school. The parent may not be sensitive to the needs of the child and doesn't make the effort to meet the emotional needs of the child.

Parents do not check the child's homework and most of the time do not know where their child is or who their child is with. They don't spend much time with their children and they also do not set many rules since they won't be present to supervise the

observation of the rules. Most at times, it is the parents who are likely to set a bad example of breaking the rules they expect of their children. The children raise themselves into any fashion. At times, uninvolved parents lack knowledge about child development—or they may believe that their child is well when they are struggling. It is not possible to know when the child needs the parents' attention and may fail to offer the emotional needs.

How uninvolved parenting affects children

Research has found that kids with uninvolved parents have the worst outcomes, and they're more likely to experience Substance use and abuse, act Rebellious, act delinquent (vandalism, assault, rape or petty theft), have low cognitive and emotional empathy and have low self-esteem. Children of uninvolved parents might, for example, get in trouble at school or with the law. In addition, they might hesitate to form bonds with other people and exhibit depression. If they form bonds, they feel comfortable with friends who are also in similar situations and this makes it difficult to be appreciated in school for anything good. They would later have a form of self-acceptance as deviant and continue to wreak havoc in school.

Scriptural Presentation

Luke chapter 15: verse 31.

"My son, the father said, you are always with me, and everything I have is yours." The entire scripture is that of the prodigal son but most importantly how the father of these two young men raised them and the parenting style he applied. We collectively agreed that the father had raised his two sons with a permissive parenting style.

It is the entitlement which made the younger son demand for his share of wealth. It did not occur to him that it is the father who had built it. When the younger son asked the father for half of his wealth as an inheritance, the father gave him without any instruction, conditions, firm stand, personal responsibility or expectations. Most of happenings around that inheritance were driven by the demands of the younger son dictating his own terms. The young man went ahead and sold all his belongings and left home without and reprisals or consequences from the father. It is no wonder that the young man was able to squander all of it without caring that he may one day be in want.

When famine hit that nation, he had no savings because he had not learnt to earn his own money. Only when he learnt how to work for his own money that he remembered that he could work for his father for a better reward. It is only in his new mindset after hitting rock bottom that he realizes the value of work.

The elder son also displays similar tendencies that show the fathers permissive parenting style. In verse 31, the father says that, if the son wanted to merry, he would have been allowed. It clearly shows that anything done in that home was child driven. No wonder the second son has poor self-esteem. He says that he has been slaving for his father. He had never realized that he was the owner of the estate that remained due to his father's lack of leading the conversation which would have defined son ship to the second son.

If you know you are a 50 percent owner, you can have it but if you don't knows, it's on you! That's the permissive father. If you want a goat to eat with your friends, it is on you and if you want to sell it all, it is also on you! Just choose and there will be no objection from me. The service we discussed which is dispensed within the service was the power of parenting.

Positive Affirmation and Reward

Authoritative parenting has it that the parent seeks to establish a good bond with their son that their sons may not wish to sell their property and walk away from their family. This model of parenting also has positive affirmation to their children that the elder son would not have failed to know his place in the family.

It is true that he was disciplined but he had low self-esteem that he was afraid to use something that was within his reach. He says, not as a request to use, but as a complaint that he has not been given. His temper tantrum when he refuses to celebrate with everyone until the father pleads with him also confirms the aggression and anger as the downside of this parenting model.

Discuss the parenting style in your house. Do both your parents have the same parenting style?

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THE ROLE OF PARENTING IN IDENTITY/PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT

The way children are handled from the day of their birth up until they become adults, there are certain fundamental developments that take place purely on account of the environment they are raised in. My mentor, Mrs. Grace Thuku, an advocate of the high court and a mother of three and a grandmother has very interesting advice on parenting. She says that children need to be allowed to do their own thing without interference irrespective of the losses and or damages which come with it.

If a child goes to the toilet, let him learn how to clean him/herself up without undue interference from the adults. It doesn't matter whether the child will roll the entire tissue roll on the floor. The child learning the craft is the most expensive commodity here. Mrs. Thuku asserts that the old traditional proverb that when a child cries for the razor blade, give him or her, holds. If the child wants to put his fingers atop the flames of a candle or lamp, let them. That is the only way they learn caution and internalize that not everything should be put through the mouth and not everything is to be touched. In the process, the child internalizes a selective mechanism by observing and applying restrained curiosity, and in the process, they can regulate their safety.

Mrs. Thuku emphasizes that, when you try to control and overly stop them at everything, they persist with aggressive curiosity and you just never know when their curiosity will heighten in your absence and more so, in the most dangerous circumstances. She has a thought-provoking philosophy that the child should be allowed to feed themselves. “Whether they are putting the food in the nose or the eyes let them learn!” She says. Isn't that the best way to know where exactly to put what? It must not be a worry that the child is making their clothes dirty or your house dirty. It is not your house alone; it is theirs too.

The parenting expert adds that it doesn't matter whether the child starts to feed from the living room and finishes in the bathroom. “Let the child learn how to eat and how to starve and you will never have this nonsense of choosing which foods are good for eating and which ones are bad for your child. When a child is starving, they eat anything and everything without being choosy.” She says.
My mentor Mrs. Thuku, suggests that you should give the child small portions of food so that the child can learn to ask for more food or can still have some appetite just before feeding. “Do not give the child excess food such that the only language the child knows is to reject food before the first bite. Let the child know how to beg for food and he or she will appreciate the value of food and will never waste food when they grow up, they will save a lot of money on their food budgets and become wealthy just because you taught them how to eat food in small portions.” She says.

Her sentiments are greatly supported in a reasoned manner as presented by one of the most respected psychologist in history, Eric Erickson. He argues that an individual's personality begins to develop since birth and undergoes a metamorphosis at every stage of development depending on whether they developed properly and successfully learnt the skillset of that stage. Eric Erickson argues eight developmental stages but I will just present on five of them because my target audience and the parents of that audience fall within the five stages of personality development.

Some of the struggles of adults have something to do with how they developed their personality during these preliminary stages. The beauty is that my target audience of teenagers and youth has a perfect chance to correct most of these struggles due to the strategic nature of their stage of life.

1. Trust vs. Mistrust

The first stage of identity development begins right from childbirth and is dependent on the primary caregivers offering reliable, predictable, and consistent care. Within the period of birth up to 18 months, a child develops trust or mistrust depending on their environment. The infant is uncertain about the world in which they live and so they look up to their primary caregivers, the nannies, and the parents for stability consistent care, and trust. If the child receives consistent predictable and reliable care, they develop a sense of trust that they will carry throughout their relationships even in the future because they shall believe the world is a safe and secure place where they can live in trust.

However, if the children feel uncomfortable and are not given predictable, reliable, and consistent care in infancy, they are always anxious suspicious mistrust other people even in the later stages of life because they do not feel the world is safe reliable, consistent, or predictable. I have written more insights about this in my book, “The wounded child in every adult.”

Success at this stage of Infant's life leads to a life of an infant who is always optimistic about life. They believe the world has accepted them, and there is a place for them in the broader equation of life. Life has setbacks, but children who developed this stage under hospitable care will always believe they can surmount the setbacks and bounce back. They easily trust other people because they believe the world is full of good people since their infancy. However, if this stage is not properly developed, such infants live up to view the world from a perspective of Fear and mistrust; they always feel that the world is unsafe and that there is no one to be trusted. They mistrust the world and even if they are confronted with failure, they easily give up because their perspective of life is already founded on hopelessness and pessimism.

How do you usually view life? Do you trust people on the first instance unless they disapprove you or people have to prove themselves? Do you see negativity in every situation or do you see solutions in situations? Be honest with yourself! Explain a few incidences that validate your response

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Request your parent to tell you the story of your life at this stage.

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Request your parents to give you your childhood photos at this stage and stick them here.

2. Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt

This stage occurs between **18 months to 3 years** and Kids develop a sense of personal control over physical skills and gain independence. When you see your son and daughter begin to exercise autonomy and start to walk away from their mother; choosing and picking the toys they want to play, with the color that they want to get as a toy or work clothes; when they begin to choose what to wear and they begin to say I don't want to eat these, I want to eat the other one, the parents should be careful to just exercise what we call safe control and not to be overly controlling.

The children should be allowed to exercise free will and learn to be self-supporting and self-reliant with the support of their caregivers or parents. Parents should allow an environment of tolerance because in so doing you are allowing these children to develop independence and autonomy and an ability to make decisions on their own. While being patient with the children and allowing them to succeed at the tasks that they have independently chosen.

While allowing these safe controls, the parents should however watch out for possible accidents not to occur but also watch out if the children seem to be failing at the tasks they are attempting. The children should not be allowed to continually fail but instead could be assisted to accomplish the said tasks. If they try something they fail then, you have to help them to make sure that they succeed because if they do it again and again and fail again and again, another failure to put on the shoes, they put the left foot on the right foot and the right on the left foot and they've tried continuously, Help them before they start to internalize failure and therefore begin to be ashamed of their failures at the attempted tasks.

They might stop believing in themselves and start doubting their selves. You should be careful not to criticize this failure, just assist them to accomplish the task and cheer them on.

Success at this stage will make children more confident because of the support that they received to become independent. They are therefore secure and can survive in any environment by themselves. They will always have confidence in themselves and trust their ability to navigate through life issues. They will be able to hold opinions and believe in their opinions.

They can trust their creativity, their resolve, and their innovation and will not always wait to be influenced because they have an opinion of their own. However, if kids are overly criticized, overly controlled, and not allowed to assert themselves, then they begin to feel inadequate and they are therefore unable to survive going forward. They become overly dependent on others, they lack self-esteem and they feel a sense of shame and doubt in their abilities to do things and will stay in the safe zone of not attempting anything new, even when their circumstances demand that they take action.

How do you view yourself? Do you feel confident and enough?

Can you survive in any environment without fear and navigate issues as they arise? Do you have personal opinions and beliefs you hold to dearly? Do you believe in your creativity or do you doubt yourself and feel ashamed of yourself sometimes?

Write your story of how you perceive yourself with regard to independence!

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What do you remember about yourself at around this stage?

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Request your parent to tell you the story of your life at this stage.

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Request your parents to give you your childhood photos at this stage and stick them here

3. Initiative vs. Guilt

The next stage takes place between ages 3 and 6 and this is when the children develop their sense of initiative. This is the time when a child interacts with other children at home; makes the initiative to play with others, and asks for help from other children. Children assert control over all the other children and that is when their social interaction tells them to level up their initiative responsibility and ambitions at this stage.

If the parents allow them to have initiative such as teasing, playing with a disk, constructing houses, and initiating competitions should allow the children to explore within the limits and support them, giving them a chance to be able to gain responsibility and ambition and develop their self-confidence and a sense of initiative at this stage.

It is the ability to make friendships at the toddler stage which makes it easy for children to make sound relationships as adults and goes a long way to affect their self-confidence around others or how comfortable they may feel being around others, even though they be strangers to each other. If this is not well managed at this stage, the self-confidence of these children would be hampered.

Parents should not stop their children from relating with other children. It ought to be a deliberate effort to support children to engage with others and learn life from the perspectives of other children so that in the future they can learn to be more accommodative of varying opinions and world views.

Write your story of how you perceive yourself with regard to your ability to take initiative!

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What do you remember about yourself at around this stage?

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Request your parent to tell you the story of your life at this stage.

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Request your parents to give you your childhood photos and stick them here

4. Industry vs. Inferiority

At about ages 9 to 12, children begin to compete with their peers to see how they measure up. They flex their strength to know how strong, how smart, how fast, and how superior they are compared to others. They develop a sense of pride and self-esteem, a sense of accomplishment of work whenever they perform well. They compete in sports or social activities in family life; they compare what their parents have against what the parents of the other children have. They want to touch to feel the contrast between what is being said by the other children. They want to know what they are better at, and what the other children if at all, have what it takes to beat them.

At this point, they are likely to develop their industry. At their level and language, their sense of industry might appear immature but when you do not give them an opportunity, they start feeling inadequate and feel they don't measure up. This is the point kids do not want to get along with others if they have negative experiences at home with their parents. This is the time the guardians and parents are supposed to encourage them even when they fail at a task and they shouldn't tell them that they are not good enough but tell them to try again.

If they fail at something, they need somebody to hold their hand and tell them that they can make it. They need somebody who can sit them down and help them pull up their socks and train for whatever is the missing link and give them a little tip on how to get better than they are but if you criticize them or if you do not encourage them if you tell them that they are not good enough, then they will always feel inferior to other people. They will not feel good enough in a crowd and going forward in life they will lose their self-esteem.

Legendary world boxing champion Evander Holyfield said**," I lost my first fight at the boys club at 11 years old and quit the team.**

My mother told me I had to go back because she raised no quitter, I lost a second fight and quit again, and still, my mother wouldn't let me. She made me go back and try again.

This is the best age range to allow your child to try as many things as possible. It doesn't mean they will end up playing a musical instrument or being an athlete; they are discovering their talents through trials and they are also learning to tell themselves that they are good at something. All this goes a long way to boost the self-esteem of the child and the parents should play a supportive role.

Write your story of how you perceive yourself with regard to your abilities and superiority!

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What do you remember about yourself at around this stage?

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Request your parent to tell you the story of your life at this stage.

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Request your parents to give you your childhood photos and stick them here

5. Identity vs. Role confusion

This next stage, between the ages of 12 and 18, is the most crucial in the life of kids. It is the time when kids are beginning the adolescent stage. Within these ages, children resolve two fundamental crises, one is identity and another is roles in future life. Both boys and girls want to answer the question, "Who am I" and this question particularly means who is my father? What is my religion, what is my community, what is my race? What do I want to be, or whom do I want to be like? They explore various roles and ideas.

Roles

When parents force their teenagers to get accustomed to their ideas about the future, the adolescents feel pathetic. They don't make conscious choices of their identity and what happens is that they develop a weakness of self-concept and self-image and experience confusion in roles of life. In such a case, they will be unsure of their identity and become confused about the future and anything goes for them because they are not checked by their principles and beliefs. They are mostly shaped by the environment and peer pressure.

The teenage is the stage when peer pressure becomes big cancer as young people have neither a drive of their own nor clarity on which path they wish to uphold. When one's identity is properly developed, children are confident with themselves as they mostly know what to do, when to do it, and how to do it. Those whose identity has not developed properly, will mostly not be confident to make decisions or take direction in life, but will rather wait on someone else to make the decisions on their behalf, or they will emulate someone else even when they are being misled.

They mostly succumb to peer pressure and are swayed by their environment rather than control their immediate environment.

Once a teenager is settled in the mind about what he or she is, and has the aspiration on whom to be in life, there is a degree of fulfillment and direction. Teenage comes with temperaments, value systems, attitudes, belief systems, and character befitting the person you have become and whom you aspire to become.

It is the bigger version of self. Once identity is exhaustively resolved in your mind, during your teenage years, your behavioral patterns and paradigm support a lifestyle that is consistent with what you want to become. Your speech, reasoning, arguments, as well as persuasions, are just as though you are already that person. You, therefore, have the persona.

A boy or girl would systematically settle their roles in life and find a sense of purpose through their mentors, teachers, parents, or even themselves. It is these roles that end up defining the character of the individual to match the roles and purposes they have embraced during this stage. They embrace the disciplines which are consonant with their life roles as well as their career trajectories.

Guiding and counseling departments are crucial in this stage of a child's life and those students who allow themselves to be influenced by teachers, parents, and older mentors end up making better choices for life.

Identity

Those children who have a family background with a lot of unanswered questions or hidden facts mostly bring up these issues during adolescence. President Obama as a teenager had to leave the great United States to come and answer this question of who am I in a small quiet village in Kogelo. Role models become very important in this case because they tend to adapt to the identity of their role models.

They simply align their attitudes and mannerisms with their role models.

Other children make decisions after considering many factors as to what they want to do and who they want to become, they then begin aligning their attitudes and mannerism to suit the person they have chosen to become and the roles they have chosen to play in life. Children, who are not living with both their parents, begin to ask questions about their fathers, and most of the time, they want to meet their fathers and resolve the identity crisis. It doesn't mean they specifically want to abandon their mother for their father, but they want to resolve that conflict of reality by themselves and make their conclusions on how they want to deal with that reality going forward.

It doesn't mean that those who do not know their fathers are damaged in any way, my main point is that at some point, the question of identity is best resolved within this age bracket and whenever it is not resolved, then it continues to bother the teenager into his or her adulthood, causing a lack of focus and a lack of self-esteem and in worse cases self-destructive behavior.

Some children who are not raised by their fathers resolve to take up the identity of their mothers' family if they feel welcomed, accepted, appreciated, and loved in the family of their mother. I know people who are close to me who have taken the identity of their mother's family and they feel complete and not in any way hindered by this identity; it is largely because the mother's family has embraced, integrated, and supported them.

In some instances, children take up the identity of their mothers directly. Some communities uphold matriarchal identity and their children have their mothers' names as their last names and that matter is completely settled for them.

The late, Dr.Dan Oyuga Anne, a computer engineering expert was my fellow leader at the Christian Union choir and he used to tell us that he was raised by his mother and that he is properly grounded by his mother and will forever honor his mum as his surname.

Clara, one of my mentees, permitted me to mention that during her teenage at age 15, she took her mother to task wanting to know her father. After too much pressure, the mother finally helped her to trace her father and after she met her father, she made peace with herself based on the experience she got from the interaction. She was able to move forward after she met her father.

The argument here is that identity is a need that even just knowing who it is and having your own opinion of who your father is has settled the case of an identity crisis. The child can move forward without anxiety and unanswered questions. The good, the bad, and the ugly are answers too and they get to solve the anxiety of identity crisis.

The 44th president of the United States is a good example of the impact of identity. As a teenager, he had unresolved identity issues. He made peace with his race and made it clear that he is rooted in the African American community, Visited his father's ancestral home in Kogello to reunite with his father's family and changed his name from Barry Obama to his father's full name; Barack Hussein Obama. His middle name, which was also his father's middle name, became a subject of discussion during the 2008 presidential campaigns. Obama would do what politicians do, which is give you what you want to see and tell you what you want to hear. Obama argued that his middle name is Steve, a name I have never heard after he ascended to office, instead, he was sworn into office by his father's full name, which is Barack Hussein Obama.

This goes a long way to remind us that prejudice is an indictment of identity development. We need to equip our children with tools that will make them confident in their identity but also prepare them for the unfortunate reality that they will find mean gestures among their peers. Those mean gestures should not make them doubt themselves.

Write your thoughts about yourself with regard to identifying your role in life.

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Write your thoughts about yourself with regard to your identity.

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What questions would you like answered now or in future?

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Request your parent to contribute to this discussion and capture their contributions to help you resolve any thoughts you need to resolve.

PAIN AND TRAUMA

PAIN

The biggest challenge in human endeavor is finding a way to cope with emotions which mostly are caused to us by external factors. We have varied emotions or strong feelings derived from varying circumstances, moods, and relationships with those around us. The brain integrates emotions, emotional behavior, and motivation. It interprets fear, helps distinguish friends from foes, and identifies social rewards and how to attain them.

There is a complex but bi-directional influence on how the brain mediates the experience of both pain and emotions through different conceptual and neuroanatomical processes. Pain and emotions have a shared construct which is overlapping in concept and function begging the question to answer, in what way pain is different from any other emotions.

Pain has two components, physical and emotional. Physical pain has a sensory component while emotional pain has a psychological component. Physical pain informs the brain of the source of the pain while emotional pain causes distress after the experience. There is an overlap on how the brain experiences both physical and emotional pain as research from the University of Michigan suggests that the brain process social rejection, betrayal, job losses, grief and other emotional stress like it does physical injury.

It has been scientifically established that Physical and emotional pain gets to the brain thru different pathways. However, the brain responds by triggering messengers to cause a survival or coping mechanism to overcome or withstand that pain.

The messengers are chemicals that are secreted from various glands according to which messengers were activated.

Each messenger is activated according to the signal of pain which the brain received from varying sources and it is intended to cause the brain to trigger another set of messenger/s which will go into the bloodstream to achieve various results; according to the specific messenger/s released into the bloodstream.

Agents Of teenage Mental and Emotional Stress

Betrayals

When I was in primary school, we had friends who came close to you so as to benefit from your pocket money but as soon as you ran out of money, they alienated you and avoided you openly. Friends have betrayed each other; confidants have betrayed each other; teammates have betrayed each other and left a bad taste in the mouth. Trust has been destroyed between partners leaving behind a sense of loss and betrayal. The pain of betrayal is very painful because it comes from people you love very much and people whom you have trusted deeply. Such betrayals are too deep that their pain takes a lot of effort to heal and restore.

Have you ever felt betrayed? Tell that story or stories of betrayal!

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Rejection

A lot of adults and therefore parents are facing rejection at work and home. Many people are struggling with rejection within their social circles and do not know what to do with their situation. This can cause a lot of emotional pain and if not properly processed could cause damage that will affect other faculties of our lives. When they come home, they may also experience rejection from their own family of wife and children. Fathers and mothers are rejecting their children and children too are causing their parents rejection anguish due to varied reasons.

Parents are rejecting their children when they make mistakes that are construed to bring disrepute to the family name. If a girl gets pregnant while still unmarried, parents are likely to send her packing and ask them never to come back.

Fathers and mothers are completely turning their backs on their children because a child was concerned about the welfare of one of the parents who seemed to be vulnerable in their misunderstandings as a couple. Children have been rejected and disinherited. This can be very painful and impact the mental state

of an individual so much such that if not properly assisted, it could change the course of their lives completely.

What is your experience with rejection?

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Bullying

There are many restless teenagers and youth who bully others particularly to earn significance and power to themselves. They mostly do so as a way to make up for their feeling of insignificance and powerlessness in the hands of their environment. Sometimes bullies are also people who have been bullied before or been handled with cruelty by their care givers when they were children.

The most significant person in this discussion is not the bully but the victim of bullying. We have had tales of how form ones get to be bullied almost as a tradition in many schools.
The ones who bully will most likely have been victims of bullying when they joined new schools or when they joined form 1. The pains of bullying can cause one to be continuously anxious, fearful, have low self-esteem and withdraw from others.

Have you ever been bullied? Have you bullied others at some point? Did you witness bullying? How did it affect you?

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Being Orphaned

Many people don't seem to care much about orphans after they lose one parent or both. How many parents imagine seeking counseling for their children? How many parents or adults follow up to know how exactly their children feel days or months after the loss of a parent? Most widows and widowers believe because they are managing their emotions, their children are managing at the same rate and competence. Contrary to what adults believe, children mostly have less capacity and competence to express these emotions, leave alone to you.

The loss of a mother or a father continues to haunt the children emotionally unless they have adequately been able to vent it out in some form. Just check around you. You will find a support group for widows and another for widowers but will hardly find one for orphans. There is counseling at the individual or group level for widows and widowers but non for orphans, yet they are more vulnerable given their younger ages. Loss of a close friend can also cost the peace of a teenager and youth in ways that can destabilize their emotional stability.

Have you been orphaned? What is your experience? If not, who do you know within your circles to be orphaned? How does that affect you and what are your thoughts about such people? Do you feel empathy for them? How do you explore that empathy?

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False accusations and malicious damage

False accusations and malicious damage can be very damaging to the emotional well-being of a teenager. False accusations take place in churches, in homes and in school. It is sometimes very sickening to note the length and depth some people would go to achieve their end and then put the blame on a completely innocent person.

When I was in high school, as a prefect we caught some boys in the gay act. They ran off but left behind a T shirt. My head prefect took that T shirt and moved from one class to another to establish whether anyone could identify it. Before long, a name was flying around school as the gay person.

This was a big deal for our school as the other students would not take it kindly that their reputation would be associated with this. As a school that always participated in soccer, drama, music, science congress and related activities, public reputation was key. As a prefect I had ever saved another such student from mob justice before he could get hurt. He confessed it to be true that he was gay. However, the name that was flying around as the owner of the T-shirt was not the victim. I personally got a confession from the real gay person from that very scene in a completely different set up many days, long after the damage had been done to an innocent student who knew nothing about his accusations.

It is only the other day that I forgave myself for having been party to such an unfortunate situation that destroyed an innocent life emotionally and mentally.

Have you been falsely accused before? How did that affect you and how did you handle it? Have you overcome that accusation? Is it still haunting you?

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Domestic violence, separation and divorce

The fights between parents cause the children to be overly worried, anxious and mentally disturbed.

Parents who are always fighting physically cause their children to worry about the safety of their mothers or fathers if the father is the victim. When separation and divorce occurs, most parents do not see the need to find a language that answers the questions of their children.

Very few parents will find the need to take their children for counseling whenever serious occurrence such as divorce happens.

Separation and divorce causes a major upset in the family patterns and these causes the children to suffer anxiety and in some cases depression.

In some instances, one parent may restrict the other parent from accessing their child and believe that they are enough and all that the child needs. When the other parent try's to access the child or the child try's to access the other parent, one parent takes out their anger to the child and threatens them with foretold consequences. Studies have shown that a child develops better when they have access to both parents.

Have you experienced separation, divorce or domestic violence? How has that affected you? How have you dealt with the emotions around this subject? Do you need help?

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Stigma and stereotypes

Teenagers are also concerned about what they see their parents go through. Within their circles of friends, they hear a comment made about family set ups and get affected. This happens especially if their family set up resembles one that has been ridiculed. There is stigmatization towards the single parents, mothers or fathers, widows, widowers, the separated and divorced. There is also a group that you won't hear mentioned anywhere until they join the separation or widowed group.

Sometimes they get to be heard only after they join the suicide group or the murdered group. These are people in abusive relationships and toxic marriages. Divorce, separation and domestic violence by themselves cause emotional burden to teenagers more than to younger children because teenagers and youth have already formed a greater part of their lives around both their parents living together. Stigmatization and stereotypes cause double jeopardy of pain.

Have you suffered any stereotypes or stigma? How did this affect you and how did you handle it? Does it still affect you today?

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Disability and people living with sickness

Teenagers and youth who are themselves disabled or have a member of the family disabled can bear a form of emotional pain not told. They endure stressful lives facing one form of rejection or another, discrimination and stigmatization.

They move around watching their backs because they are sure that someone is making a negative comment behind them. Those who are visually impaired, physically challenged, autistic, with speech impairment require our love and support.

In the same breath therefore having a member of the family or parenting children that have suffered and Cerebral palsy and continue to live with the effects of the same, pauses serious economic and cultural constraints on their parents. Some of these parents have resigned from regular employment to optimize the provision of care to that special child at home. Family members on the other hand look at these mothers as social misfits in that culturally cerebral palsy is not a medical condition but is brought about by some witchcraft or it is a result of denial of certain rites to ancestors. These mothers aren't assisted but are mostly left to languish in poverty and rejection as they take care of these special children.

Governments, Kenya included have no precise policies and mitigation structures for neurodevelopment disorders that include CP, intellectual disability, dyslexia and autism.

Access to public information about these disorders in children is very limited with medics being the main reservoir of why and how it happens to the very young children, who are in most cases ignored, locked up at home or chained to limit their community calls stubborn nature.

Worse of the CP cases is the growth abnormalities that come with folded limbs, twisted necks, lack of or very limited speech and very limited mobility.

Do you have any special needs?

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Who do you know around you that needs special attention? What could you do to support this individual emotionally or any other way?

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Discouragements

There are many voices which discourage our teens and youth. Many of your friends will tell you that you cannot make it in whatever you are trying to do. They may even laugh at you for attempting to do something that you love. Your friends may push you out of your own choices and preferences. Sometimes our siblings also discourage us from the choices that we make. Friends and siblings can discourage our good behavior because our good behavior exposes their otherwise behavior. They can encourage us to be rebels so that they do not stand out as the only rebels.

Sometimes discouragements are internal emotions when we try something but fail at it. We need to find something that will keep us motivated and hopeful trusting that even if we fail, we can always try again.

What discouragements have you faced in the past? How did you handle them? Is there any of them that is still stuck with you?

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What are your discouragements at school?

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What are your discouragements at home?

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Childhood Trauma

One day, I was at the barber shop to shave my hair. After the shave, a young lady washed my head with a little facial scrubbing to remove the dead skin from my village face after a prolonged season of hand on farming. Within this therapeutic process, we had an interesting conversation with the young lady. I asked her whether this was her dream job. She said, she enjoys the job but her dream job is to be a morgue attendant or pathologist. She says she would like to prove to the world that handling dead bodies isn't a big deal after all. Girls too can handle dead bodies just like men and screw sharp equipment through human bodies and blood oozing out won't a big deal to them.

This hit me hard for a young girl only aged 19. The psychologist in me was aroused to interrogate this line of passion. The young lady must have found it therapeutic to meet a customer who seemed interested in the story of her life in such a personal way and spared me no detail. Most outstanding was the fact that one day, they went to a hospital mortuary to visit a sick relative and because children her age were not allowed into the hospital, she was left in the care of another relative who would exchange places to visit the relative after the first lot came back. The little 4 year old was simply playing around the hospital when she lost her way into the mortuary side. After many hours of searching for her, she was found right in the midst of dead bodies and playing with the pathology equipment even trying out what they could possibly be used for.

It is my reasoned view that this dream job is not from a place of passion but rather subconscious effects of childhood trauma for a girl who witnessed a horrendous sight which her age should not have exposed her to such trauma of witnessing dead bodies, human fluids and pathology equipment.

What is Childhood Trauma?

Childhood trauma occurs in many forms for different people such as children's sexual abuse, physical abuse, neglect, rape, kidnapping, fires, violence in the home, shootings, wars, witnessing death, suicide and murders, car and plane crashes, floods, or natural disasters. Childhood trauma affects some children immediately while some people do not manifest it until later in life when triggered by certain circumstances. In severe cases, brain alterations occur as a result of trauma. When trauma occurs to someone early in life, the brain is susceptible to alteration when various areas of the brain respond impacting the future functioning of the brain. Special trauma therapy may be needed to change or heal from such an impact.

Loss of love, parental love or experiencing of parent to parent abuse.

Childhood trauma is also a form of emotional pain experienced during childhood which immensely affected the wellbeing of the child. Divorce and separation is a major pain in the lives of children especially if it is not handled in a healthy manner in the best interest of the child. The sense of loss can traumatize the children. Physical, emotional and verbal abuse by one or both parents one to another can harm the emotional and mental wellbeing of a child to get to traumatic levels. When one parent abuses another in a manner that the children can realize the level of abuse, it affects the children and if the children are not supported, then they gradually get traumatized.

When children witness abuse of one parent to another, they get emotionally bruised and become anxious of what could happen next. They become fearful of the abusive parent and build resentment and hate toward the abusive parent with sympathy for the victim. When this experience is prolonged or the severity is high, it becomes a traumatic experience for the child.

Separation of parents and divorce

It usually subjects the children to a sense of loss of love and if the parents do not have a safe way of the child still experiencing the love of both parents, then it becomes a source of emotional trauma. One parent may make it their business to alienate the children from the other parent by saying bad things about the other parent but the net effect is that the child's thoughts and emotions get confused and inconsistent with what they feel and if the exposure is heightened, then it becomes a traumatic experience for the child especially if the child genuinely loves the parent from an authentic place and is attached to the parent.

What many people do not realize is that when you intentionally or unknowingly break the spirit of your partner, two things happen. Your partner is not able to function properly with a broken spirit and therefore the children miss out on gains which they should be receiving from the parent. Secondly, a broken parent is likely to be preoccupied with his or her pain and sorrows that they might explode on their children or withdraws from their children given their vulnerability. Most parents who do not listen to their children or fail to notice major changes in the attitudes and behavior of their children are mostly buried in their own pains and sorrows. They are emotionally unavailable for their children. They even may also pass down these fears, anxieties, bitterness, stereotypes and hatred to the children through the way he or she interacts with the children.

The child grows into an adult with deposits of childhood trauma in their **unconscious mind** and will continue being active behind the scenes in their lives. The unconscious mind stores memory and the toxicity of traumatic events which happened to a child before they were conscious to remember the events while the subconscious mind does the same for events that happened when the child can recognize and therefore remember the traumatic events.
You will understand how the unconscious mind and subconscious mind work to affect your quality of life when I discuss healing of the mind later in this book.

At this stage all I can say is that, the major problem with childhood trauma is that most of the time, it is buried in **our unconscious and subconscious minds**. We do not recall at all the torture which our nannies, friends, little sisters and brothers or even parents afflicted upon us when we were toddlers between birth and two years. It was all happening while we were unconscious, with reference to our memory. As we grew up from three to five or six years, we began being conscious and understand what was happening around us.

We know how we felt at the time but can no longer remember the detail of how we experienced it and how it affected us. The details are scanty yet the effects are buried in our subconscious minds and continue to trigger us every now and then.

To be triggered means to be awakened to feel the raw power of that trauma in such a way that you are operating on the mindset, energy, feeling and world view of that traumatic experience and moment in the present. It is to experience a strong emotional reaction of fear, shock, and anger or worry especially because you have been made to experience a pain from the past even though you might not remember exactly what it was from the past.

What are your childhood traumas?

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Effects of childhood trauma

Childhood trauma causes a pessimistic and negative world view

In the study of Erick Ericson's stages of identity and personality development, the very first

Stage of identity development begins right from childbirth. If the child receives consistent predictable and reliable care, they develop a sense of trust that they will carry throughout their relationships even in the future because they shall believe the world is a safe and secure place where they can live in trust.

However, if the children feel uncomfortable and are not given predictable, reliable, and consistent care in infancy, they are always anxious suspicious mistrust other people even in the later stages of life because they do not feel the world is safe reliable, consistent, or predictable.

Success at this stage of Infant's life leads to a life of an infant who is always optimistic about life. They believe the world has accepted them, and there is a place for them in the broader equation of life. Life has setbacks, but children who developed this stage under hospitable care will always believe they can surmount the setbacks and bounce back. They easily trust other people because they believe the world is full of good people since their infancy. However, if this stage is not properly developed, such infants live up to view the world from a perspective of Fear and mistrust; they always feel that the world is unsafe and that there is no one to be trusted. They mistrust the world and even if they are confronted with failure, they easily give up because their perspective of life is already founded on hopelessness and pessimism.

If you want your children to be optimists and to show love to the world, then love them from day one of their birth and make sure their nannies are doing nothing but showing love and care for them.

Nannies who mistreat children or starve children of food or any form of punishment are denying the children a huge part of their self-identity and it is likely to haunt their lives in adulthood. A lot of our early childhood experiences continue to manifest subconsciously in us today whether it was a good experience or a bad experience leading to trauma.

Children who receive love and affection, attention, care, protection, and empathy tend to espouse these values and virtues as they grow up.
They find it easy to integrate with others and trust other people. They develop what is called secure attachment.

Secure and insecure attachments

Secure attachments rely on the extent to which parents and caregivers have the physical and emotional proximity and resources to be dependable, and respond reliably and sensitively to a child's basic needs, making them feel safe and giving children a stable base for exploring the world. The infant knows that they are safe to venture out and explore and that the caregiver will always be there to welcome them back and provide comfort in times of stress or anxiety. These relationship bonds can form a blueprint that can be transferred to teachers and other members of staff in the school.

When children have a secure attachment with their parents and caregivers, it is an important protective factor for their mental health, while insecure attachments can be a risk factor for the development of emotional and behavioral problems.

As much as insecure attachment pause a risk to the emotional development and behavior patterns of such a child in school, it really matters whether the teachers will identify the problem and help the child to solve the shock of parental detachment.

If the teachers do not understand this and in turn punish the child for asking for help indirectly through their behavior, then the situation can get worse. Whatever the adults might classify as stubbornness or bad behavior from such a child might be their way of shouting for help that something is wrong with their mental patterns and their safe normal mental patterns have been disrupted. In most cases, rather than finding help, most children are mated with severe punishment destabilizing their mental wellbeing the more. Not all children are lucky to have positive experiences as children. Some are exposed to too much trauma which continues to affect them as adults without safe spaces to heal. These experiences birth what we call insecure attachments.

Childhood trauma causes Insecure attachments even in adulthood

Insecure attachment happens when parents and caregivers, rather than give their children a routine, safe and consistent environment of peace, love, and tranquility, subject them to a different environment which causes fear, anxiety, and a sense of abandonment. The child interprets this as what John Bowlby terms as negative, inconsistent, inappropriate, neglectful, or abusive exposure. When a child's caregiver at home or teachers in the school environment is a source of fear rather than a source of safety, this can be highly toxic to a child's development.

Some children facing these experiences may share with their parents daily if they are day scholars but if they are in boarding school, then they have no parent to confide in.

some parents also ignore such feedback. To protect themselves, the child may behave in ways that are designed to promote their survival, and this is what Dr. Gia Marson calls Survival mode.

While a child is in survival mode, just trying to cope with their fear and anxiety, it may be difficult for school staff to understand and manage their situations as they are not entirely trained for early childhood education like the modern crop of early childhood education teachers might be. The children may find it difficult to ask for help and manage their thoughts, emotions, and behavior. They may not be able to form positive relationships with staff and peers or concentrate and take part in learning as they always struggle to calm themselves down.

The children become demanding and rejecting at the same time. They become quickly or disproportionately angry or upset, at times with no clear triggers. Because they find it difficult to ask for help, they are scared to be vulnerable and might mask this by being highly controlling of others through unpredictable outbursts and bullying. They may show little emotional response or confused and confusing responses such as laughing when they or others are hurt. The children may daydream or be hyperactive or constantly fidget or move finding it difficult to focus and concentrate in class. All these behaviors may cause great difficulty in terms of classroom and school management and if not addressed by a professional may affect the child as follows. The child will be labeled as rude and stubborn by both the teachers and fellow pupils.

In most such cases, the parents might react harshly without attempting to understand what is going on in their child's life rather than trying to help the child. Isn't that the African parent for you? Beat that nonsense and crap out of the child. Rude and stubborn is not a label of affirmation. The teachers will use the child as an example of bad things further breaking the self-esteem of the child.

The parents are probably a pastor like me or a rich businessman or politician who is craving recognition through their child. The parent, therefore, is ashamed of their child's bad school report and doesn't pride in the son. The son or daughter doesn't feel loved in school or at home and as a result rebels against teachers and parents. This kind of environment obscures the power of affirmation due to that child. They miss out completely feeling that their parents believe in them.

They miss out on every important moment of their life and grow up believing that they were never loved enough because they were never affirmed enough. All this was triggered by one step during early childhood. The step was either abuse during early childhood, early detachment from the parents while too young, or both. It is possible to heal and overcome the effects of bad experiences as a child if you can remember them and make peace or talk about them. The bad thing about our early childhood is that most of the time we do not remember the details of what happened making it difficult to deal with childhood trauma.

Childhood trauma breaks a child's self-esteem even as an adult

It as it may, after this hiding period, Moses received a unique childhood compared to other Hebrew children. He was cared for by his biological mother with lots of love and protection after Miriam suggested to Pharaoh's daughter, to find a nanny for the baby in Exodus 2. Moses was later adopted into royalty as the son of the pharaoh's daughter and lived in privilege and safety.

As much as he would later hate to see his Hebrew people mistreated, his surroundings were the epitome of royal leadership and formed a part of his identity as a leader.

The childhood of Moses as predestined by God would make him suitable as a deliverer of the Hebrew people.

His self-esteem might have been challenged to the extent that he wasn't an eloquent speaker, but it was not as damaged as that of the Hebrew slave children and adults.

My psychology on personality development explains the reason why the Hebrews would be afraid of going into the Promised Land and prefer to return to slavery in Egypt every time they were provoked by challenges such as hunger, thirst, or war. Their childhood of slavery witnessing their parents as slaves who couldn't express their free will had stripped them of their dignity and self-esteem. They didn't believe they had it in them to withstand any threats, or pressure or even take up opportunities. After all, all the young male Hebrew were killed. It therefore meant that a majority were women and much older males. The bigger numbers of males were born in the wilderness.

God gave us evidence of how brutalization takes away one's self-esteem. In Exodus 13: 17-22 God didn't lead them through the land of the Philistines because, if they faced war, they would return to Egypt. He led them through a longer route for their sake.

Do not brutalize your children or their mother or father physically, mentally, or emotionally because that disempowers your children killing their self-esteem.

Bad and sad news

The news of murder, rape, gangs, burglary and road accidents are too much in our news today. We must not make it normal to watch a rape or murder story and neglect how our children have perceived or received the very news and how it has affected their thoughts and feelings.

The Childhood trauma of poverty

The African history is full of Childhood trauma. A majority of Africans do not need to be introduced to poverty. They know poverty and its pangs.

Most children went to school without basic necessities such as food or even learning materials.

Most African children slept in and on what they cannot give a name today. I remember while in class eight, one of my teachers reprimanded my sister not to come to school with shoes because there was no other child with shoes and that teachers had worse shoes than the shoes she had. That is representative of what most people endured. These brutalities continue to manifest in our lives subconsciously in more ways than we know it but they have a common source.

The greatest source of Africa's poverty is the long and rich history of slavery, colonialism and exploitation of the African person. If the children did not experience this trauma, they witnessed the trauma of their parents and if they did not witness, then they had a secondary experience when they were told of it by their grandparents, parents or in history books. The larger trauma is the intergenerational trauma where a parent raises their child exactly as they were raised forgetting that some of it was purely trauma at its best.

The best of this trauma of poverty is that most children aspired to get out of poverty and help their parents' live better lives. In the process they came across role models around them making it easier to believe that they too could succeed and beat the chains of poverty. Grandmothers and grandfathers who encouraged their children to hope and trust in a brighter future saw their children achieve those dreams.

Poverty has affected many modern families in two extreme ways.

Whereas some parents experienced extreme lack during their childhood, they eventually became successful and can provide for their families adequately. Some have compensated for their poverty by providing their children with everything the children want and anything they missed during their childhood.

This exaggerated compensation may affect the child negatively especially if the child is not groomed to understand specific values such as financial discipline, contentment and changing seasons of both abundance and lack.

Some parents have incidentally believed that their childhood poverty is what caused them to work hard and succeed and they therefore create artificial hardships and lack as a way to motivate their children to work hard. In most cases, these children might rebel and perceive this artificial lack as punishment therefore having bad world views about themselves and their parents. The outcome is an unhealthy parent child relationship with many untold consequences.

Modern day - childhood trauma

The study which I conducted at a small scale supports that the spate of school fires in the study which I conducted at a small scale supports that the spate of school fires in the last several years was linked to post election violence of 2007/8. Some of the ring leaders of such school arson were victims of the post-election violence.

We may not appreciate it now but the children who feel isolated and disenfranchised by the political system by way of witnessing their parents, kinsmen and friends take the heat of teargas and police brutality will shade off these toxicities in the distant future. They will download the feeling of hate and separation at their workplace or even in church or surprisingly in their marriage when the marriage starts to show cracks.

Loss of childhood love affecting Parents behavior passed down as trauma to their children

Projection is a recipe for transfer of trauma to your children as this becomes the new reality for the children. Seeking support and healing.

Childhood trauma refers to experiences that are emotionally or physically harmful to a child, causing lasting effects on their mental, emotional, and physical well-being.

These traumatic events can include abuse, neglect, witnessing violence, experiencing natural disasters, or the loss of a loved one. When children experience trauma, it can have long-lasting effects on their overall development. They may struggle with trust issues, low self-esteem, difficulty regulating emotions, and even physical health problems. However, with the right support and resources, childhood trauma can be overcome.

Those of us who grew up feeling rejected and isolated would easily feel jealous when someone else has something that we don't have. We are likely to feel bad when someone else is promoted before us. We may realize that we easily feel bad when someone else is honored and respected more than we are honored. It might be childhood trauma where those children around you were favored while you were not and you have never realized that part of your childhood.

We need to seek help and heal rather than making that our narrative and story which we use to shape the opinions of our children. In some instances, we may exercise favoritism towards our children or feel jealous when our children have a bond with their mother or father.

If this happens, we may take it negatively after being triggered by our childhood feeling of rejection and abandonment.

Those of us who had abusive fathers may have easily taken their example and become brutal with our children unknowingly beginning a new version of trauma towards our children sustaining the Trans generational trauma. If our parents brutalized us, the natural instinct for discipline is harsh slaps because that's the only thing you know. If your teachers beat you up mercilessly, then you may easily have that as your default response to any mistakes. Your body makes the choices for you. That is a sign of trauma that needs to be processed.

Some of the transfers of trauma to our children are purely how we handle our spouses with the lenses of our own trauma through what we call projection and transference. The example that we set and the experience which we create for our children therefor become a new trauma transferred from their parents.

Projection

In psychology is when you express the feelings that are within yourself onto someone else as a mechanism to protect yourself from being made to feel worse than you already feel just within yourself from a traumatic emotional past. It is a defense mechanism that distorts your perception of reality. Is the sense in which one seems to direct the feelings they have towards one person to another completely different person for reasons of battles happening in their subconscious and unconscious minds.

As parents, we need to be aware of ourselves, enough not to project undue emotions to our children. Sometimes, we project the same emotions to our spouses within the presence of our children causing a lot of confusion to their interpretation of what may be happening.

You can hate the experience you had with your father or step farther, and on a bad day or bad season hate on your husband for absolutely no making of his own but because he has become the father figure in your life.

He therefore becomes the object of your internal aggression. Your father can hate your mother become indifferent with her because something has triggered the bitterness he once harbored with his female teacher over a statement she made or a way she communicated with him.

As a teenager or youth, you also need to be aware not to project your negative aggressions. You can pick arguments with your teacher because they speak hitting the table or holding their waist just like your mother who would beat you up once she does that. One way of coping with this is to tell those childhood stories and laugh about them. You will no longer feel bad about those experiences but yield laughter and empathy when you think about them. Whatever you do in your family set up emanating from your childhood trauma, you pass it down to your children as a new form of childhood trauma; if you do not process it.

A friend, sibling, parent or teacher can highlight something that affects them negatively which you need to be aware of and possibly do something about but instead, you will perceive such information by feeling more insecure, attacked and judged.

Instead, you may react in a manner that reinforces your initial actions or attitude where you actually treat the person who is a victim of your bad behavior as your enemy and reinforce your bad behavior even more believing that you are saving and protecting yourself from external aggression. Your perception doesn't allow you to see anything wrong with your attitudes, actions and insecurities but instead you turn and twist your arguments.

You who are the aggressor now see yourself as the victim and the actual victim of your behavior becomes an adversary worthy of running away from and doing everything to protect yourself from him or her.

In reality you are projecting your fears and insecurities onto someone else and desiring to do anything possible to change that person so that they become the twisted version which you desires them to be to suit your false sense of insecurity.

In this pursuit, if the true victim were to succumb to your projection, they will experience a total sense of loss of identity living with you or dealing with you. What you desire them to become, is to be more victimized and brutalized by your behavior so that you feel safe. This safety which you seek in actual sense is safety from your ghosts of emotional trauma rather than anything which your friends, family or teachers have done most of the time.

Most often than not, that family cannot hold as this is an irreconcilable difference which cannot be reconciled when one brain processes their perception from their subconscious mind while the other is processing their perception from conscious and logical premise.

How has your Childhood trauma affected you?

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Do you feel that, your parents' childhood trauma has affected you?

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How to overcome Childhood trauma

One crucial way to address childhood trauma is by seeking professional help. Mental health professionals, such as therapists or counselors, can provide a safe space for children to express their feelings and work through their traumatic experiences.

Through talk therapy, play therapy, or other evidence-based interventions, these professionals can help children process their trauma, develop coping mechanisms, and build resilience.

Another important aspect of overcoming childhood trauma is creating a supportive environment. This involves involving caregivers, teachers, and other significant adults in the child's life. By educating them about trauma-informed care and providing resources for understanding and responding to the child's needs, they can offer stability and consistency that promotes healing. Building trusting relationships with caring adults helps children feel safe and secure, enabling them to gradually recover from their traumatic experiences.

In addition to professional help and a supportive environment, self-care plays a vital role in overcoming childhood trauma. Teaching children healthy coping strategies like deep breathing exercises, journaling, or engaging in creative activities allows them to release their emotions and manage stress effectively. Encouraging regular exercise, good nutrition, and adequate sleep also contributes to their overall well-being.

Moreover, connecting with others who have experienced similar traumas can be incredibly beneficial. Support groups or community organizations can provide a sense of belonging and validation while offering opportunities for learning from shared experiences. Being surrounded by individuals who understand and empathize with their struggles can help children feel less alone and encourage them to build resilience.

It is crucial to remember that overcoming childhood trauma takes time. Each child's healing journey is unique, and progress may not be linear. It requires patience, understanding, and ongoing support from both professionals and loved ones.

By prioritizing the well-being of these young survivors, we can create a future where they can thrive despite their past traumas. Investing your time and though to the word of God is also essential for overcoming childhood trauma.

One can look backwards with the heart of God's word and allow the past to remain in the past as they resolve to be a new creation. Forgiveness is divinely enabled making it possible to forgive incidences and persons whom you might remember with guilt or hate.

HOW PAIN AFFECTS A TEANAGERS LEARNING AND BEHAVIOR

A lot of the challenges in most teenagers' lives are born from their emotional pains. These pains manifest in different ways affecting the quality of life of teenagers and youth. For example, the academic performance of any child would be affected by their emotional pains in a significant way unless and until they can resolve it or find a motivation to build resilience for their emotional pain. The quality of relationships with fellow teenagers and youth, siblings, teachers and even parents is largely guided by the state of their emotional and mental wellness. The worldviews of the individual is also predetermined by their state of minds and hearts. All the above can properly be understood after explaining certain principles.

The Negativity effect

I will simplify all these into a layman's language and state that the human mind has evolved to focus on threats to its survival as a means of self-protection from danger. The brain and the mind have a high sensitivity to all manner of threats; physical, mental, and emotional to assist the body flee from such threats.

As a result, any negative thought, harmful thought or feeling, and destructive pattern or danger will be most recognized by the human brain than a positive alternative.

According to Dr. Rick Hanson Ph.D., a psychologist, our brains have been have been hardwired through evolution to focus on the negative than the positive. Traced back to prehistoric days, primitive man had to be able to register threats to avoid danger and increase survival rates.

Individuals who were more attuned to danger (negative stimuli) stayed alive longer and passed on their genes to subsequent generations.

The negativity effect is the brain's tendency to be impacted more by negative events than positive ones. Studies have shown that the brain's electrical ability increases when focusing on negative stimuli as compared to positive ones.

We remember insults and criticism more than we do praises, dwell on negative and hurtful events more than constructive and positive ones, and mostly make decisions based on avoiding negative results than being inspired by positive possibilities.

We remember all the bad incidences in school, bullying, our lost clothes, our academic failures and group breakups more than we do good happenings. We may eventually perceive ourselves negatively most of the time and say our environment is negative and bad.

To illustrate how resilience works, when victims of torture begin the healing process, Jorge Barudy, a leading neuron-psychiatrist, and former victim of torture in Chile presented to the UN Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture (UNVFVT) how children and adolescents are specifically affected by torture. He showed MRI images of the brain clearly showing torture's devastating effects on the hippocampus (the part of the brain associated with thought, emotion, and memory) because of massively elevated levels of the stress hormone, cortisol.

The hippocampus allows humans to feel empathy. Victims' ability to feel empathy is affected by torture. The victims also suffer from attention and memory disorders and their self-esteem is damaged, “he said.”
Hand in hand with the negativity effect, the body has a way of helping to protect itself from possible harm called fight and flight

Fight and flight
If we understand this part of our minds and bodies, we will solve most of our life challenges as teenagers and youth. We usually experience fear when we sense we are in danger. When our brains alert our bodies to the presence of danger, our bodies respond automatically and speed our heart rate and breathing to increase oxygen and blood going into muscles, tighten our muscles, and deactivate certain bodily functions not immediately important such as digestion, release adrenaline to give us energy.
Cortisol is also released to relieve pain. This can also block rational thinking and also sweat so we don't get too hot.

A group of changes that occur in the body to help a person fight or take flight in stressful or dangerous situations. This is the body's way of helping to protect itself from possible harm. During fight or flight, certain hormones, such as adrenaline and cortisol, are released into the blood. To be specific, through a combination of nerve and hormonal signals, this system prompts your adrenal glands, located atop your kidneys, to release a surge of hormones, including adrenaline and cortisol.
Adrenaline increases your heart rate, elevates your blood pressure, and boosts energy supplies. Catecholamine hormones, such as adrenaline (epinephrine) or noradrenaline (norepinephrine), facilitate immediate physical reactions associated with a preparation for violent muscular action and: Acceleration of heart and lung action.

Flop, friend, or freeze

Besides fight and flight, the body could also initiate three other modes namely: flop, friend, or freeze. Fight; involves physical fighting, struggling to save, or fighting verbally such as saying No or issuing counter verbal threats. Flight involves putting distance between you and the danger which may include running or backing away. Freeze means going tense or silent, which is a common reaction to rape and sexual violence.

It is not giving consent but a survival response to avoid further hurt or threat to life.

Flop is similar to freezing except your muscle become loose and you cannot move. This reaction is one to reduce the physical pain of what is happening to you or your mind can shut down to protect itself from further pain and damage. A friend is calling a friend or a bystander for help, for example shouting or screaming for help. A friend could also mean befriending the person who is dangerous and negotiating, pleading, or enticing the dangerous person. This is not permission but purely survival.

HOW EMOTIONAL STRESS CAN CAUSE LOWER/POOR ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

It might be intriguing for the biochemist in me to start having fun digging into neuroscience and endocrinology so as to explain this but I will keep it simple. I will just explain two components and you will have a clear bearing of all this.

Neuroscience is the study of how the nervous system develops, its structure, and what it does with a focus on the brain and its impact on behavior and cognitive functions while endocrinology is the study of hormones and glands. **A hormone is a chemical messenger** that travels from one endocrine gland or organ in your body to another part of your body through your blood.

However, I choose to end my depth in the definition of these two fundamental components associated with the brain for purposes of our study of pain and its interaction with the brain and the outcome thereof.

Physical or emotional pain is interpreted thru the same mechanism by the brain where the chemical messengers interpret a feeling or sensation; send the message to the brain causing the brain to react by releasing a set of appropriate chemicals to the bloodstream to act as signals of response. Neurotransmitters, such as serotonin and dopamine, are used as chemical messengers to send signals across the brain network.
Brain regions receive these signals, which results in us recognizing objects and situations, then assigning them an emotional value to guide our behavior and making split-second risk/reward assessments.

Overall, the brain seems geared towards maintaining a positive frame of mind. Being in a good mood makes us more likely to seek new experiences, be creative, plan, procreate, and adapt to changing conditions. Being in the right frame of mind makes one to: Be creative, focused, and productive.

There is one particular system in the brain associated with pain called the limbic system. This system is domiciled in the part of the brain called the cerebrum which is the largest part of the brain. The limbic system is the major brain network underpinning mood. It's a network of regions that work together to process and make sense of the world. The limbic system also regulates biological functions in line with our mood, such as accelerated heart rate and sweating triggered by feeling flustered. Researchers have increasingly been looking towards newer networks to understand how the brain controls mood.

Two particular networks that stand out across numerous studies are the **autobiographic memory network (AMN)** and **the cognitive control network (CCN)**. **The autobiographic memory network** processes information related to ourselves, including recalling personal memories and self-reflection. It comprises brain areas inside the prefrontal cortex, which sits in the front of the brain; and parietal regions, which sit behind the frontal lobe and are important for mental imagery. **The cognitive control network** links up regions that coordinate our attention and concentration so that we can complete tasks. It recruits a circuit of the front part of the cingulate cortex and dorsolateral prefrontal cortex, which are specialized for cold, unemotional, rational thought. These two networks are thought to have a strained relationship.

The autobiographic memory network switches on when someone is preoccupied with thoughts concerning themselves. This causes the task-oriented cognitive control network to switch off, thereby reducing our ability to complete whatever task we're supposed to be doing. Conversely, the autobiographic memory network is suppressed when the cognitive control network is required to gather the attention needed for a task at hand. This is in line with the notion that we "lose ourselves" when we are absorbed in doing something. When the two networks don't work properly, they can result in what psychiatrists refer to as mood disorders.

This is a good place to master because you will soon understand why depression causes one to manifest the symptoms they do such as lack of focus at work and inability to be productive in their personal lives, projects, and business.

Depression also manifests thru a lack of self-love due to the inability to self-reflect and a lack of proper memory, a memory that should assist one to be consistent with their identity as mastered by their memory. It is the reason anyone in depression doesn't care about their personal appearance and personal grooming.

In this case, **the autobiographic memory network** isn't properly activated to allow you to think about yourself. You lose your sense of value, dignity, and appearance. You do not pursue thoughts and actions which will enhance your wellness as a person due to this system being shut down or being in a mixed signaling state. This explains why parents, who are in depression, will sometimes not consider their own safety in an abusive relationship. In the alternative, a depressed person is unable to focus on tasks and will most often be lost in deep thoughts worrying and feeling pity for self while trying to relieve the moments of what happened and how badly it affected them. The sense of memory and self-thought is more geared towards the bad memories and the bad emotions of trauma, danger, mistreatment, injustice, or hardship making it practically impossible to concentrate on any task other than more worry, fear, and anxiety.

Depressed people could also show an excessive and obsessive attachment to work.

I will shortly explain how that works but the cognitive control network which enables one to focus on tasks can cause someone to also overindulge in a task if. When one indulges in a task, they trigger the reward system which makes one feel good upon accomplishing that task. The feel good makes one to want more tasks accomplished causing more focus on work and total self-neglect.

If the tasks are physically involving, then the person gets addicted to work. Someone can start working in the morning and work all day without stopping and without a track of time. Physical activity causes muscle contractions which in the process release some of the feel-good hormones such as endorphins and oxytocin.

These hormones have a net effect of a good mood causing the brain to interpret that you should continue the supply of these hormones to counter the effects of the otherwise negative emotions.

There is a time I was depressed and used to work on the farm from morning till it was dark into the night. If I was not working on the farm, I would be on my construction site working till late into the night. To a significant extent, I forgot about personal care, I even forgot to eat. I look at some of my videos done around that time and laugh at myself because I look like someone I can't recognize.

All these were part of the healing process because when you accomplish something, thru hard work, you somehow begin to cause a chemical balance in the brain and could easily strike that code that reduced the imbalance or caused a complete equilibrium to realize yourself and come to your senses.

Gaining a balance of the two networks

The autobiographic memory network, largely responsible for memory, could easily be manipulated to yield the desired result for a depressed person. If this network is what triggers thoughts about self and takes us down memory lane, then we can borrow the power of the positive memories which exist in our memory bank. Digging into our past victories and good memories is what switches on the autobiographic memory network. It is all about the memories of what is positive and great about you.

When I was in depression, I took a lot of time thinking thru positive memories of my past and was preoccupied with my photos since childhood and all the great memories of my past. This long journey of the great me, began to awaken a new realization of what was possible because I had achieved these levels of greatness before.

Remember, these two networks are thought to have a strained relationship.

The autobiographic memory network switches on when someone is preoccupied with thoughts concerning themselves. This causes the task-oriented cognitive control network to switch off, thereby reducing our ability to complete whatever task we're supposed to be doing.

It therefore means that we also need to voluntarily switch on the Cognitive Control Network. To switch it ON, one needs to take up simple tasks, focus and finish them. When you consciously pay attention to a brief assignment, you normalize the functionality of this Cognitive Control network. We also need to underscore that by accomplishing the brief task; you excite your reward centers and cause a feel good mood in your brain. Being in a good mood makes it possible to plan, become lively, focused, creative and productive which makes it possible to do bigger tasks for longer and voluntarily.

When there is what I am calling a respectable balance, it means the individual can voluntarily switch on or off either of the networks. Without that critical respectable balance between the two opposing brain networks, one is unable to initiate a task, leave alone focus on a task. The balance makes it possible to focus on self and self-love/care and also voluntarily switch to initiate tasks and focus on them to completion.

Workaholics

When you lack work life balance, it is a sign that you do not have a respectable balance in your brain at the time. In fact, you are likely to abandon self-care and care for your loved ones.

People who overly indulge in the cognitive control networks such as workaholics and people who spend more time reading and doing research, run the risk of downplaying the see-saw swing and oscillation to and from both switches. They tend to gradually slow down on self-care, and slowly abandon caring for their needs and wellbeing.

This happens mostly when someone in a position of stressful work environment focuses on the job too much. It inhibits the swing that switches between the two sides of the network.

The stress is interpreted by the brain as a negative emotion thus increasing the imbalance sitting On the Cognitive Control network and switching off the autobiographic memory Network which processes information related to ourselves, including recalling personal memories and self-reflection. Our rationale and conscience can easily fail. Our sense of interpreting the world around us properly gets compromised.

Have you ever realized, why during exam time, students appear to be lost in a world only known to them and fairly removed from their usual selves? They are likely to neglect self-care such as taking showers, brushing their teeth and wearing clean clothes.

These are the reasons, why the school or any work environment should make it possible for workers, students, lecturers, and leaders to have some vacation time or playtime. This should allow the setting in of the autobiographic memory network to kick in and enhance personal reflection and self-care enhancement.

It may seem as if the cognitive control network makes it possible for us to focus on work, studies and related tasks anyway; to each person is a degree of resilience, a threshold beyond which both networks will deliver neither work focus nor self-care.

Sports and creative arts such as music and drama are great to enhance the learning process of the students. It helps the student bring their brain to balance, to be creative, innovative, and more productive based on the fact that they love what they do.

Furthermore, sporting exercise helps muscle contraction to trigger hormones in the blood that lead to secretion of the feel-good hormones and enhance the peace, good mood, and relaxation of the individual.

Happy emotions hormones

The feel-good hormones include dopamine, serotonin, endorphins, and oxytocin. These are hormones that give an individual an experience of happiness and pleasure.

Dopamine supports feelings of reward and motivation while serotonin helps maintain emotions in balance. Oxytocin is the love hormone that gives you a rush of pleasure from affection and connection. Oxytocin provokes a feeling of contentment, calmness, and security which are commonly associated with bonding and mating. Parents who live together and bond together in harmony are more likely to feel calm and content because of their conducive sexual life. Sexual gratification produces large amounts of oxytocin.

Some parents in conflict are also likely to be found involved in extramarital sexual intercourse because the brain has already registered sex as a source of huge amounts of oxytocin that would help the brain to provoke a sense of contentment and calmness after sex. When you hear that teenagers are engaging in gay activities, it is mostly because they were introduced to it through peer influence but gradually begin to feel a sense of false pleasure. It is false pleasure because it makes you feel pleasurable on one hand but destroys you on the other hand. This is discussed under unsafe modes of pleasure.

A DANGEROUS LIFE OF ADDICTIONS



OVERCOMMING ADDICTIONS – ALCOHOL, SMOKING, SEX, PORNOGRAPHY, GAMBLING AND DRUG ABUSE

All addictions are premised on one principle which if understood and appreciated becomes the master key to solving any form of addiction. All addictions are premised on the pursuit of happiness, Peace, self-confidence, and personal fulfillment. When our emotional needs are not met, we tend to desire something that will compensate for that sadness. The other attraction happens when one is subjected to extreme stress. Stress of the mind and heart causes one to desire an outlet in the absence of which, they begin to seek alternative ways of exciting their minds and alleviating pain.

Emotional needs are feelings or conditions we need to feel happy, fulfilled, or at peace. Without them, we may feel frustrated, hurt, or dissatisfied. Some examples of emotional needs might include feeling appreciated, feeling accomplished and feeling safe or feeling part of a community. In the absence of these feelings of happiness, peace, accomplishment or fulfillment, and confidence or good self-esteem, we feel frustrated, sad, hurt, dissatisfied, or with low self-esteem needing to do something about it.

When you attempt to do something for the first time, your brain registers such an event as a memory.

Every time you are hurt, sad, or unfulfilled, the brain will stimulate the mind to offer itself a similar event as the last one so that the mind can feel happy, peaceful, or fulfilled again.

It is for this reason that you should discover the things you love to do so that you can do them regularly and register happy memories along your hobbies.

Those who get introduced to alcohol, drugs, sex of any form, betting which acts as a reward or pornography, registers markers and memories of dopamine which is a happy hormone. Advancing the triggering of this hormone through repeated use or similar activities makes your brain desire regular events, activities and consumptions until the brain is unable to control the urge.

The **inability to control** your mind to **overcome the urge** to pursue the events or substances which will trigger feel-good/happy hormones is what we call **addiction.**

Excessive eating of Food, entertainment, alcohol, pornography, masturbation, drugs, gambling, women, and sex are all an attempt to create happiness for self. They all have one result which is the release of happy hormones such as dopamine, Serotonin, Oxytocin, and endorphins. The outcome is usually a sense of happiness, peace, confidence, and fulfillment. In a depressive world, it is very natural for the human person to desire to feed their happiness with any of these activities which eventually become addictions.

Dopamine: Known as the “feel-good” hormone; a neurotransmitter that’s an important part of your brain’s reward system. It’s associated with pleasurable sensations, along with learning, memory, and more.

Serotonin: is a hormone and neurotransmitter that helps regulate your mood as well as your sleep, appetite, digestion, learning ability, and memory.

Oxytocin: Often called the "Love hormone" oxytocin is essential for childbirth, breastfeeding, and strong parent-child bonding.

It can also help promote trust, empathy, and bonding in relationships. Levels generally increase with physical affection.

Endorphins: the hormones are your body's natural pain reliever, which your body produces in response to stress or discomfort. Levels may also increase when you engage in reward-producing activities such as eating, working out, or having sex.

Prolactin: Prolactin is a hormone that promotes physiological responses to reproduction, stress management, and emotional regulation.

Endocannabinoids: These neurotransmitters are vital behaviors such as exercise, social interaction, and eating. They also help regulate trusted source processes such as pain, metabolism, cardiovascular function, learning and memory, and addiction.

Norepinephrine/noradrenalin: This is a stimulating neurotransmitter dopamine transmission, a substance linked to levels of happiness.

Adrenaline: Adrenaline lowers stress by regulating heart rate, blood vessel and airway diameters, and aspects of metabolism.

Alcohol

Whether a person was influenced to take alcohol or began by imitating another, there is evidence that most men especially would take alcohol to gloss over their sadness, stress, or shame to avoid the reality of such emotional and mental pain. Men whose egos have been bruised in their homes will drink as a way to gain some confidence to say what is on their minds unfiltered or have the excuse to express theirself without fear because alcohol gives them such confidence. Alcohol also has high contents of dopamine which is a happy hormone. A lot of people use alcohol as their form of daily or weekend rest. If they are not meeting to share drinks in their homes, they are in clubs making a statement to each other using alcohol as a tool for making that statement. Sex has also become the most exploited form of leisure in modern days. All these things need to be understood well so that each person has a clear command and control of their lives rather than being victims of circumstances.

Laboratory studies confirm that alcohol does indeed reduce pain in humans and animals. Dr. John Mendelson, a clinical professor of medicine at the University of California in San Francisco, explains that “Alcohol floods the brain with dopamine, creating feelings of euphoria. It also inhibits judgment and memory. Together, these effects can temporarily relieve feelings like sadness and stress,”

Alcohol can depress the central nervous system slowing down the brain's sensitivity to pain and thus offering a sense of relief. It is important to note that while alcohol achieves this outcome, it does so at the expense of another set of vital functions of the brain.

Alcohol makes it difficult for other brain areas controlling memory, speech, and judgment to function properly creating the likelihood of injuries, speech tampering and loss of memory of what happened while they were drunk.

While intoxicated with alcohol, people make poor judgments even though they appear to be excited, relaxed, and free from pain. Since alcohol suppresses the central nervous system blocking the ability of the brain to receive the pain signals, the body could self-destroy.

Teenage and alcohol

We already know that alcohol interferes with communication pathways and affects how the brain functions. In the long term, drinking causes alterations in neuron sizes, brain size, and accuracy of brain interpretations of information. Simply put, if the brain is caused to have continuous impaired speech, continuous loss of memory, and poor judgment as a routine then the brain and sound mind are on their way to being completely wasted. Adolescents are still developing their brains' structure and functional abilities and therefore alcohol exposure could damage the proper development of the brain more permanently compared to adults whose brain is already fully developed.

Drugs

Young men and women alike use drugs to feel happy or as we may call it feel high. The hard drugs have high contents of dopamine which is a happy hormone. These feelings of high are usually to make up for a feeling of abandonment, a lack of appreciation, or affirmation. It is usually to make up for a sense of emptiness and a lack of self-drive.

It is a coping mechanism to run away from certain self-doubts or feelings of pain, anguish, loss, and or shame. Hard drugs such as Heroin and Bang and Cocaine have high dopamine content. Heroin users typically seek the associated high, which is generally experienced as a rush of euphoria.

It can increase the body's dopamine levels up to 10 times its normal level.

Drug abuse can interfere with this normal communication process. For example, cocaine acts by binding to the dopamine transporter, blocking the removal of dopamine from the synapse. Dopamine then accumulates in the synapse to produce an amplified signal to the receiving neurons. This is what causes the euphoria commonly experienced immediately after taking the drug.

What many people do not know is that as much as the hard drugs have high dopamine levels that cause one to have a feeling of happiness, the desire to want more of it causes high consumption to numb emotional pain or cause excitement. The problem is not just the addiction but that high levels of dopamine destabilize the brain chemical balance and that is when a drug addict begins to fall off from the normal life experience and begin to behave abnormally and without empathy to realize the pain of those around them.

Stress smoking, Caffeine, and nicotine

Caffeine causes neural excitation in the brain, which the pituitary gland perceives as an emergency, and stimulates the adrenal glands to release adrenaline. Caffeine also increases dopamine levels. Smoking and excessive intake of nicotine, highly available in tea and tobacco are used to reduce stress and improve mood causing happiness.

It stimulates the central nervous system altering the brain function and increasing the levels of neurotransmitters. It has antidepressant properties. Those who smoke or who use it through tea are likely to be addicted to it In pursuit of happiness and a good mood.

Low to moderate doses of caffeine (50–300 mg) may cause increased alertness, energy, and ability to concentrate, while higher doses may have negative effects such as anxiety, restlessness, insomnia, and increased heart rate. Still, the cumulative research on coffee points in the direction of a health benefit.

Many people smoke to alleviate stress. There is a major difference between smoking and drinking alcohol. Whereas alcohol has dopamine as its main ingredient, tobacco has nicotine as its main ingredient. Both, nicotine and dopamine are neurotransmitters. Smoking has many other side effects and health risks such as cancer, heart disease, stroke, lung diseases, diabetes, and increased risks of tuberculosis but I will only discuss how nicotine affects the individual. Nicotine affects the human person the same way whether it is in tea or tobacco.

As a neurotransmitter, nicotine increases the brain's level of dopamine; stimulating its reward centers and making a person ingesting it feel good. Nicotine also improves brain function and mood. Nicotine can make you alert by improving attention, accuracy, response time, short-term memory, and working memory.

Nicotine has not been found to directly cause mental health conditions but studies show that there is a relationship between depression, anxiety, and nicotine such that withdrawal of nicotine causes one to feel stressed and depressive needing more nicotine to revive their mood. According to a 2014 meta-analysis of 26 studies about smoking and mental health published in the British medical journal, quitting smoking is linked with lower levels of anxiety, depression, and stress as well as improved positive mood and quality of life compared with continuing to smoke.

What is your story with alcohol or drugs? How have you encountered alcohol and drugs directly or indirectly?

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Sex, Clubbing and Nudity

The fashion and entertainment industries are those that will remain lucrative all day because they offer what human beings are seeking; Happiness and excitement! The only difference is that there is no limit as to how much excitement is enough. Once one element excites your mind, it will take something better or different to feel the same level of excitement.

This syndrome is responsible for men and women having multiple sexual partners in a quest for that elusive happiness and excitement which eventually fades away causing one to move to another partner or add to the list. Most of the time it is an addiction to desire more and more attraction or more and more winning over a man or woman to feel the reward of having won over the man or woman you pursued. Once the target is accomplished, there is no longer excitement in the chase.

Men and women do club touting; drinking in one club and after some time changing to another club on the same night. Some change clubs three to five times in the same night just to cause the elusive excitement because drinking in one club is exciting for only this while; after which there is no more excitement in your mind.

Men are excited by the image of girls showing off what their mama gave them, their bursts, and general nudity. The flirting exercise is a form of seeking for happiness and excitement which they claim is not available in their homes.

The music, the dance, the twerking, pole dances, and sometimes outright pornography become the newfound seeking of the elusive excitement. After you flirt, club trout, enjoy pole dances, or even engage in sexual fantasies and change women on the same night and top up with alcohol or drugs, the following day, you will suffer two syndromes. Everything you experienced yesterday or for a few days will no longer be exciting and you will desire to have something different. You will desire a different set of women, a different brand or quantity of alcohol, a different feel of music, etc. to feel excited. The other threat is that you will now become depressed and unable to function properly or be productive in the absence of these excitements.

The problem with all these hyped activities which some of our teenage sons engage in is that you will not find the same modes of pleasure in school.

There will be no alcohol, drugs, clubbing, nudity or obscene music in school. That will make a teenager who had been having this lifestyle over the holiday restless most of the time. This is the reason we have a lot of drugs sneaked into schools these days. Young men and women are struggling to find fulfillment and excitement to feel happy. Those who expose themselves to sex now find only the company of men and are likely to begin gay activities or lesbianism for the girls. One of the reason gaysim is on the rise is because the parents will be unsuspecting when you keep the company of your male friends or female friends as a girl. The only way to beat an addiction is to subscribe to a higher power that enables you to be fulfilled and content with what you have and be able to determine when to stop without being a slave to your success.

You can build your spirit to override your mind by feeding the spirit person to have the capacity to withstand the urge of the mind. This is mostly achieved through reading God's word, prayer, attending events and activities that encourage you to prioritize God's way of life, and also fasting. That is why it is advisable to lean to Gods word for our ultimate pleasure. The other solution is to engage in leisure activities such as hobbies and the other activities I have already explained as tips on how to make the mind happy. Find a hobby, cry when sad, smile and laugh, attend comedy shows or stay around funny people, listen and dance to good music, do exercise by walking, jogging, riding bikes or going to the gym, set small goals and accomplish them, busk in the sun and walk barefoot, eat healthy.

You can also play with pets, watch the wild, hug your partner and friends and children, kiss your partner, co compliment and Inspire someone and make them happy, help the needy, rest, sleep and have leisure time, serve in church and serve in your community. All these cause fulfillment to the heart.

With this knowledge, kindly do not start as it will be difficult to get out. If you are already struggling with sex, kindly say so that you may find help.

What is your story with sex, clubbing and nudity? How have you encountered these directly or indirectly?

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PONOGRAPHY

Adult People hooked up to pornography do so as a means of seeking sexual pleasure through such fantasies that they may not get due to their non-commitment to a permanent sexual relationship or the fear of committing to a sexual relationship but seeking pleasure in the sexual experience anyway. However, most of the time, it is because they are seeking a form of excitement. Unfortunately this excitement registers dopamine in the brain and keeps urging you to experience that excitement one more time. every time you are sad or depressed, your brain will refresh your memory to desire this pornographic experience and that is how addictions kick in. addictions occur mostly to people who are going through a form of pain or influenced by their peers.

Pornography alerts the brain so fast because it is a sight to the visuals of nudity. It alerts the brain so fast that the brain doesn't

have access to other memories in your brain faster than it does to the memories of pornography.

People, who watch pornography, remember and think about the images they have seen more frequently than any other memory they might have. It is the reason people addicted to pornography cannot perform well in school due to the inability of their brain to prioritize other memories of learned knowledge over pornographic memories. While attempting to think about other interests and priorities, pornographic images stored in their memories will always come up first anytime they attempt to remember anything. While the sight of pornographic material causes happiness and alertness in the brain, the memory of the images causes emptiness because the memory creates an urge to feel the same levels of happiness that existed before.

With this knowledge, kindly do not start as it will be difficult to get out. If you are already struggling with pornography, kindly say so that you may find help.

What is your story with pornography? How have you encountered it directly or indirectly? How has it affected you?

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Gambling

Many people do not understand why Gambling is addictive. Gambling is always done to win the jackpot or the bet. As a result, while one is betting, they are motivated and therefore feel very happy from within when they have the promise of a win. Gambling works in the same manner on the brain as other addictive habits. Gambling in particular motivates and activates the reward center of the brain making the brain respond positively and actively to be rewarded with a win of the jackpot. The brain brightens up and releases dopamine which is a feel-good hormone. When someone loses their bet, they feel bad about it causing a need to feel happy again. Betting and anticipating a reward becomes the source of happiness looking forward to another win releasing more dopamine in the process. The bigger the bet, the greater the anticipation of a reward and therefore more dopamine levels!

Gambling works in the same manner on the brain as other addictive habits. Gambling in particular motivates and activates the reward center of the brain making the brain respond positively and actively to be rewarded with a win of the jackpot.

Every child gets motivated to do more when they are promised a reward. Every employee works extra when they are promised a promotion or salary increment when they meet targets. The brain brightens up and releases dopamine which is a feel-good hormone. Gambling is always done to win the jackpot or the bet. As a result, while one is betting, they are motivated and therefore feel very happy from within with the promise of a win. Unfortunately, only one or very few people get to win leaving a lot of the rest of the multitudes feeling bad and disappointed.

This disappointment creates a concentration of stress hormones due to the disappointment.

This gambler will feel depressed and disappointed until they find another way of brightening up their mood. The most familiar way to brighten up their mood is to bet and expect a reward again. Over time, they will realize that they are always happy while betting and soon after betting. The brain registers this moment of fame and happiness and leads the brain to desire to experience this good moment again and again, especially after failing. This creates a cycle of continuous betting.

What is your story with Gambling? How have you encountered it directly or indirectly? How has it affected you?

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INDISCIPLINE, BULLYING, POOR GROOMING, PEER PRESSURE AND ATTENTION SEEKING

I have already explained in the topic that explains emotional pain how when a teenager who is undergoing emotional pain is likely to lose interest in how they groom themselves and have a lower self-image and self-worth. In this poor self-worth, they are likely to groom poorly, not birth, not have clean clothes or a good clean shave. They will be comfortable with how they look even when they are untidy.

Those Kids who do not feel that are given attention by their parents are likely to commit petty offenses intentionally to get noticed. They can step on you , hit you at night or just mess up your book so that you acknowledge their physical presence. Those who have been shamed or have poor self-esteem could withdraw but some could become aggressive and bully others so that they feel powerful. Those who bully others are usually very bitter with their own lives, find their homes miserable, tasteless and they do not feel loved. They bully others because they are projecting their personal anger with life.

They are actually jealous that someone else has a happy life and seems peaceful and enjoying the company of self. They will bully anyone who appears weak just to gain their own satisfaction of relevance and significance. They will also feel that someone else is feeling worthless and painful after they mistreat them just like they feel inside them. Anyone who bully's others needs urgent help to meet the emptiness of their lives and the struggles that cause them to want to cause pain and anguish to others.

Indiscipline is also caused by how teenagers have been parented. Those who are parented permissively often act entitled, egocentric, and selfish. These children might also fail to put effort into school, work, or social endeavors since they don't have to put in any effort at home.

Research has found that kids with uninvolved parents have the worst outcomes, and they're more likely to experience Substance use and abuse, act Rebellious, act delinquent (vandalism, assault, rape or petty theft), have low cognitive and emotional empathy and have low self-esteem. Children of uninvolved parents might, for example, get in trouble at school or with the law. In addition, they might hesitate to form bonds with other people and exhibit depression. If they form bonds, they feel comfortable with friends who are also in similar situations and this makes it difficult to be appreciated in school for anything good. They would later have a form of self-acceptance as deviant and continue to wreak havoc in school.

When raised by an authoritarian parent, children are often well-behaved at home, but may rebel when with their classmates, friends and teachers. Kids may also struggle with their social skills, be indecisive and trouble thinking on their own, Low self-esteem, Poor judgment of character, have anger and resentfulness. The children might be hostile and aggressive. Some research also indicates that children whose parents were authoritarian reported more substance use and higher instances of depression.

As you can see, a lot of what we call indiscipline is not necessarily because a child intentionally chose to do or fails to follow instructions.

Most often than not, it is the subconscious mind projecting inconsistent mental patterns which are borrowed from varied experiences and other people around them.

When your still and blissful mind tries to process these patterns to bring order to your mindset, it magnifies and brings to the surface the thinking patterns which are inconsistent with your mindset.

Indiscipline, mistakes, and errors as we know it is a Godly gift that we have to bring to the surface those thinking patterns which are influenced, externally acquired, or forced on us but inconsistent with our mindset. Indiscipline and bad behavior are like the fever you get when you have Malaria, diarrhea or vomiting you have when you have food poisoning or the back pain when your spine is not aligned.

The parenthesis of this submission is that error, mistakes and indiscipline are indicators of what is wrong with us. It is a shout for help, a scream for attention. Mistakes are not entirely bad because they help us correct what is wrong with us. Suppressing the conflicts thru punishment without an audience doesn't always help construct the holistic person. Enforcing alternative habits and patterns is one way to cure the pure mind and that is what we mostly do. Enforce, remind. Teaching a new value system puts the mind to order and with that, the mind organizes the entire life of a person.

Correction is that attempt to condition the mind in a certain repetitive pattern that seeks to amend, substitute, improve, or rehabilitate the wrong mindset and habits.

Correction may include punishment and chastisement and this aspect calls for awareness and objectivity as you punish your child using models that yield results.

What is your story with indiscipline? Do you struggle with indiscipline? Are you regularly punished or called indiscipline? Where do you think this tendency comes from?

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RISING ABOVE LIFE STORMS

Teenagers and youth face their fair share of challenges and obstacles while in school, at home and with their friends. Peer pressure is a major thing in the lives of most teens and youth. A strained relationship with parents is a major challenge for most teens and youth. Teens and youth are going through the demand to perform well in school and this is no mean fete for some students in school and campus. If one is not able to identify a source of their strength, then it becomes a huge elephant.

Most parents deny their children a form of resilience they had in their own lives growing up by withholding information on their upbringing. Parents only share their life struggles when they are complaining about something and not as an inspirational story. Parents only share their life pains when they are chastasing their children for mistakes and not when they want to affirm their children to go past their pain and rise to success despite the pain. Every teenage must of necessity sit down with their parents and seek to know the story of their childhood, youth and adulthood. These stories of their triumphs, achievements, school life, pains and gains, cheers, tears and jeers all amount to the fullness of life which teenagers should know and expect the full package of life.

Resilience of my parents

My father

My father is hard work and excellence personified. My father never verbalized the same words but his life has been a life of resilience and never giving up. I have seen him hold on to bounce back a million times in the face of adversity. He has risen again and again in all the failures I witnessed in his life. When his children seemed off track, he always kept pushing them and hoping that his day will come when he will see that particular child come out the way he had hoped for him or her.

When my eldest sister, Ruth Murunga, cleared high school, she immediately after, got married against my father's wish because she was yet to get to college. My father let her settle in her marriage but persisted in the pursuit of her advanced education. He got her a chance at Eregi Teachers training college. Unfortunately, when he took her the admission letter to her marital home, she was expecting her first son Kelvin Okumu. When my dad visited the home to renew this push, he found her expecting her second child, Eugene Munala.

My father did not give up. He kept pushing until he saw my sister join college and finally graduate. She has since retired as a very successful teacher. All my siblings have a story of how my father has never given up on them and how he has always pushed for a better day for all of his children. His mantra is very simple. He has always done everything he can, from the early years of the family to date, and attends to every child of his like that is the only child.

I saw my father practice dairy farming when one day; anthrax wiped all his nine Friesian cows. He had borrowed a bank loan for that business.

I saw his sense of loss and watched him helplessly sitting by a stone with his face covered for a very long time until late into the dark evening of the day without moving. He did not give up. He fought through it all and as I write this book, he still supplies milk within our local community to date and ever generating noble ideas on how his breed can best improve. I was conscious enough when I watched my father lose employment and bounce back.

I walked by his side through political election cycles; watched him campaign hard for himself and other colleagues and watched him lose an election and bounce back into politics through nomination as a counselor.

I watched my father's lowest economic moments when he withdrew five of us from boarding school to a day school. We were embarrassed at first for going to a village school after the prestige of our former schools. Mumias Boys Primary was and remains a prestigious school with a national reputation. He did not buy the shame. He embraced the moment as a father, took care of us, supported my mother in her theological college pursuits sometimes walked us to and from school with pride and determination.

I watched my father lose a whole chunk of sugarcane land to fire. It is the very farm I now live on. He didn't give up. He bounced back and planted again. I would later see him seated at the famous *Omukhuyu* tree, with a mammoth crowd of cane cutters receiving payments the following season. I saw him witness crop failure due to drought and the following year he would sink a borehole. I walked around the farm with him as he showed me which harvest will next pay my school fees and which crop will be our school fees the following term or year.

His projections of farming were three years ahead. He always bounced back and had the last laugh and dance. I have been present during my father's difficult and depressive days emanating from a series of unfortunate events but he always bounced back. In some incidences, he would say things that looking back as a psychologist would argue that they bordered on suicidal thoughts but he bounced back and pulled out of the pits of emotional pain and by God's grace found a reason to dream again.

My father reiterated what he has always told me ever since I finished campus; that he looks forward to a Ph.D. He never misses a chance to remind me of this pursuit. He never gives up. It is this character trait of resilience; bouncing back and rising above limitations which I inherited from my parents.

Resilience of My mother

Resilience is the best gift I ever got from my mother, the mantra to always hope and never give up. It is a value that was also passed down to her by her father who always admonished her to hope for the best no matter the odds which stuck in her face.

There are many things in her life for which she has never given up, even when the course looked like all lost.

She has never given up on the hope to fulfill her dreams, most of which I have mentioned in this entire book.

I see the footprints of her father and mother all around her life. Her father taught her hard work while her mother taught her excellence.

My maternal grandfather traveled to China to solicit funding for a community-based soap-making factory. He got the funds but the government of Kenya denied him a license because of his lack of formal education. For this reason, he turned that unfortunate event to fuel his passion for education. He educated my mother as the first in her community to go to high school and always believed that her unfulfilled dreams will translate into a community project that will cause education in his community. He insisted on this vision as his dying wish.

By God's grace, the dream has been accomplished with my mother being the vision bearer of the Tumaini Community School. I was the translator for the first donor when a community water borehole was first sunk in the place long before the school started. Later a school would be built funded by Literacy for All (LIFA) and later handed to the Government of Kenya. My mother is currently the Chairman of the Board of management of the school. Considering the experiences, she has gone through no one would have expected that she would live to see the dream of her father thrive with her being at the very helm of it. I believe, my grandfather is very proud of her.

Their example has shaped my worldview that no matter how low you may have sunk, there is always hope for a better day. No matter how desperate your situation might become, there is no room for defeat, you can always retreat, re-energize and reinvent yourself for victory.

I admonish you my reader that there is always hope for another day, despite your failures or mistakes. Dust yourself from the fall and rise again. This can only happen if you never give up.

The word of God assures us in Deuteronomy 31: 8 (NIV) that he will never leave us nor forsake us. Do not be afraid and do not be discouraged.

My journeys of resilience are summarized in my Family life, Church Ministry, Music career, Cooperate career, and Leadership threads all with massive failures at some point but I always believed in a better day.

Even this book was born from a dark place. After I overcame depression, I also recalled that twice before I was depressed; once in high school and once in campus. For that reason I thought about you. This book and many others are testaments of my second chance rise through hope and resilience. I launched this book in cildren's schools so that it can always remind them that their father never gave up and lived to fulfil his dream right before them despite his past failures.

Exercise

What are your personal observations or knowledge of the lives of your parents and what instances gave you hope that you can also succeed in life no matter what hurdles you may face?

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Kindly talk to your parents, teachers and mentors seeking to know the stories of their lives! Seek to know their successes, their wins and victories as well as the highlights of their struggles and how they overcame their struggles.

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What struggles have you had in life before now and how did you overcome them?

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What personalities have you known to overcome hard times and what was the end result?

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How has their story inspired you?

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THERAPEUTIC TIPS

THERAPEUTIC TIPS OVER EMOTIONAL AND MENTAL STRESS

Whenever you are mentally or emotionally stressed, you need to find something that will counter that negative energy of stress hormones and do an activity which you love. In turn, this activity is going to elevate your happy hormones despite there being stress around you. You will feel in touch with yourself and keep your motivation despite the presence of threats and mental or emotional stress. The principle is that you can do something that compensates for that negative energy. Doing the things, you love to do and having the freedom to make those choices makes an individual happy. Other instruments of happiness include being accepted in society and having healthy relationships. Happiness is the feeling of contentment with your situation without comparing yourself unfavorably with others. Happiness is the ability to maintain a positive attitude despite the many changes which might occur in your life. One gets to be happy when they allow themselves to maintain a positive attitude in the pursuit of their goals. One can enhance their happiness by keeping fit and enhancing a healthy lifestyle while minimizing the likelihood of diseases/sicknesses.

Power in Hobbies and fulfilling activities

Farming proved to be very therapeutic to me. I started by farming onions and tomatoes in Loitoktok, a place called Kimana. I then ventured into farming pineapples in Malindi after being introduced by my fellow minister and my sister-in-law- Mrs. Mercella Andanje. I then took the challenge further to my farm in Kakamega, and all these efforts became rewarding. Most importantly is the fact that farming became a source of pleasure and emotionally therapeutic that I kept doing it.

Fulfilling activities that leave a smile on your face such as visiting new places or getting a relaxing massage can be fun and leave a smile on our faces. Visiting a loved one such as a family member or a friend can leave a smile on your face and can provide welcome relief from the stress and problems that may accumulate in our daily lives. Furthermore, keeping a smile on your face when encountering difficult circumstances can aid the body's production of serotonin and endorphins, both of which are directly associated with happiness.

What activity makes you happy when you do them? What are your hobbies?

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Setting small targets and accomplishing them

Setting simple goals and accomplishing them is a booster of dopamine; complete simple tasks that make you feel good or set a goal you can easily achieve. The simple fact of even approaching a reward will stimulate these neurotransmitters.

I was able to make progress with some of my building construction projects. I also managed to advance the construction of my building project to a significant stage. This gave me a sense of accomplishment and resulted in happiness. I also learned how to build and the mason in me came alive.

I now enjoy building construction. Maybe I would have made a great architect or civil engineer.

What immediate targets could you set for yourself that you believe you can accomplish and get fulfilled?

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Crying

Researchers have established that Crying releases oxytocin and endogenous opioids also known as endorphins. These are feel-good hormones intended to compensate for the sense of pain, be it physical or emotional. The endorphins make your body go into some form of numbness to obstruct the feeling of pain. It is the reason; your body will naturally initiate a cry upon getting hurt or injured. Crying will keep you healthy at the moment. During crying, tears help clear and detoxify the blood by removing toxins and stress hormones such as cortisol. Crying heals emotions, copes with negative feelings and memories, and promotes healthy circulation within the brain.

Those who can cry can cleanse and balance their brain's chemical function which is another way to increase brain power.

Crying is not that bad after all as it can reduce pain and promote a sense of well-being. Crying also activates the parasympathetic nervous system, which lowers your blood pressure and heart rate thus helping you to relax. Whenever you feel like crying, it is okay to cry and let out that negative energy.

Do you have moments when you felt like crying? How did it go? How did it feel after crying, if you cried?

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Smiling and laughter

When positive thoughts are generated, when you're feeling happy, or optimistic, cortisol decreases and the brain produces serotonin, creating a feeling of well-being. When serotonin levels are normal, one feels happy, calmer, and less anxious, more focused, and more emotionally stable (Scaccia, 2017). Positive emotions impact the brain's prefrontal cortex - located in the front of the brain. When the prefrontal cortex is activated, there is an increase in activity and zeal. This zeal is what makes it possible to focus and also be creative and productive.

Alex Korb, Ph.D., a neuroscientist, coach, and bestselling author says the four ways to boost serotonin activity are sunlight, massage, exercise, and remembering happy events. Laughter has many therapeutic benefits. It can help reduce cortisol and increase serotonin, which helps regulate mood. It may also improve social relationships. When you smile, your brain releases tiny molecules called neuropeptides to help fight off stress. Then other neurotransmitters like dopamine, serotonin, and endorphins come into play too. Endorphins act as a mild pain reliever, whereas serotonin is an antidepressant. The team found that dominant smiles increased levels of cortisol and heart rates.

Reward and affiliation smiles, in contrast, tended to buffer the effects of stress. Smiling increases mood-enhancing hormones while decreasing stress-enhancing hormones, including cortisol, and adrenaline. It also reduces overall blood pressure. And because you typically smile when you're happy, the muscles used trigger your brain to produce more endorphins—the chemical that relieves pain and stress

Also, when you smile, your brain releases dopamine, endorphins, and serotonin. These neurotransmitters are associated with lowering your anxiety and increasing feelings of happiness. Serotonin is often the chemical that anti-depressant medications attempt to regulate.

The researchers found that smiling frequently may make people feel worse if they're sort of faking it — grinning even though they feel down. When people force themselves to smile because they hope to feel better or they do it just to hide their negative emotions, this strategy may backfire. It can reduce stress, help heart health, lower blood pressure, and boost your immune system by decreasing cortisol in the body.

A simple smile, genuine or even forced, prompts the brain to produce endorphins and serotonin, causing positive emotions.

Smiling and laughing are great stress relievers, which may be why research has found out that a bit of laughter might help improve our memories.

Facial expressions do more than expressers of emotions; they also provide feedback to the brain, which influences our emotions. A new global collaboration led by researchers at Stanford University has shown that even fake or posed smiles can make people feel happier. The study is published in Nature Human Behavior. The act of smiling triggers brain chemicals related to positivity, even when the smile isn't genuine, a recent study says.

Just mimicking facial muscular activity, like holding a pencil in your mouth, is enough to generate more positive emotions

Laughter

Researchers investigating the interaction between the brain, behavior, and the immune system found in 2006 that simply anticipating a mirthful laughter experience boosted health-protecting hormones. Laughing swaps, the cortisol in our bloodstream with highly sought-after chemicals in the brain: dopamine, oxytocin, and endorphins. Dopamine can enhance learning, motivation, and attention. Laughter Reduces stress hormones: Cortisol is our primary stress hormone that circulates throughout the body when you're feeling stressed. Genuine laughter can decrease cortisol levels by increasing your intake of oxygen and stimulating circulation throughout the body.

Laughter reduces the level of stress hormones like cortisol, epinephrine (adrenaline), dopamine, and growth hormone. It also increases the level of health-enhancing hormones, like endorphins.

The researchers found that the social laughter condition led to a significant increase in endorphin release in the thalamus, caudate nucleus, and anterior insula regions of the brain. These are brain regions that play a role in arousal and emotional awareness.

Listening to Music and dancing

Humans love music because it makes us feel good, but have you ever wondered why? Most of us loved music for as long as we can recall. Music stimulates oxytocin production. Oxytocin is a hormone responsible for positive and happy feelings. It is also responsible for the feeling of love and bonding. Research also shows that when one listens to music, it releases dopamine to the brain.

Dopamine is a happy chemical that is responsible for reward and motivation. Music boosts self-esteem. When we listen to or dance to music, our bodies release dopamine, which is usually released during pleasurable acts such as sex or eating. Dopamine gives us a sense of well-being and reward associated with motivation and attention.

Motivation and attention are the combinations for a self-esteem boost. Music stimulates oxytocin, a hormone related to happiness. It has been established that singing for about half an hour significantly increases your oxytocin levels thus feeling elated and energetic after a singing session. Oxytocin is the love and bonding hormone, making music a powerful tool for social connection and bonding. Music also helps reduce cortisol levels. Cortisol is essential but high levels cause stress as it is the main stress hormone.

We can therefore say that music reduces stress because it reduces the levels of stress hormone, cortisol. Music also induces relaxation, evokes emotions, especially good memories and reduces agitation.

Music improves the quality of restful sleep when you listen to soft music before bedtime causing a fresh mind and refreshed body the following morning.

It is important that you objectively filter the music you listen to so that you do not listen to music that glorifies destructive behavior.

Which Music do you love listening to? How does listening to music or dancing make you feel?

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Exercise

Physical activity contributes to the production of happy hormones called endorphins which keep our mood happy. Exercise not only keeps us fit and healthy but also protects us from disease and degeneration. It stimulates the production of various hormones, including **Growth hormones** that are crucial to repairing and growth, **Testosterone**, which helps to refresh and reinvigorate the body and aids muscle growth, and **Insulin** and thyroid hormones which help to regulate blood glucose levels and aid metabolism.

Additionally, exercise can assist the brain in producing hormones associated with happiness, such as **Dopamine**, the hormone responsible for making us feel good.

If we can achieve our body shape or weight goals, this hormone will be produced in greater quantities: **Serotonin**, which can help reduce the symptoms of depression, and **Endorphins**, which are directly related to happiness, meaning they can help to reduce physical pain or symptoms of injury in our muscles due to its chemical properties being similar to morphine, which is used for pain relief.

Muscle contractions produce endorphins which are essential in making us feel happy.

Did you know that doing physical exercise, going to the gym, jogging or playing a sport enhanced your happiness index?

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What physical exercise do you do? If not what suggestions do you have for yourself to keep your body physically engaged?

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Busking in the sun is beneficial to everyone. **Light exposure to sunlight especially in the morning hours or in the evening aids** the skin's production of vitamin D. This vitamin not only helps to keep our bones and immune system at full strength but also indirectly stimulates the production of serotonin, a hormone capable of reducing the symptoms associated with depression.

Do you bask in the sun with your natural skin? How does it make you feel?

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Robert Waldinger from Harvard University took over 75 years to look into the lives of 724 volunteers as well as their partners and other family members making a total of 2000 people studied. After analyzing the results, it was true that there is a correlation between a strong relationship, good health, and happiness. A few other factors were established to enhance a positive mind such as Exercise. **The r**esearch concluded that; the people we surround ourselves with and our acceptance in society have a positive effect on our physical and mental being.

Foods

Whenever you feel life is tasteless and you need flavor, rather than seek drug use, alcohol and other behavior that are dangerous for your wellbeing, why don't you try these foods.

A study by the world journal of Psychiatry identified folate, iron, omega-3 fatty acids, magnesium, potassium, selenium, thiamine, vitamin A, Vitamin B6, Vitamin B12, Vitamin C, and Zinc as nutrients that can treat and prevent depressive disorders. Leafy greens, peppers, and cruciferous vegetables such as broccoli and cauliflower boast many of these nutrients and received high scores from this study. From animal protein, seafood such as oysters and mussels and organ meat also received high scores. Another source of elements that are involved in the proteins and chemical balance in the bloodstream or within the brain and body organs are organ meat; such as the liver, heart, kidneys, brain, testicles, tongue, and intestines just to name but a few.

For example, Beef liver is a rich source of copper, retinol (preformed vitamin A), some iron, and B vitamins.

The liver may help prevent anemia, support fertility, aid in detoxification, and prevent certain nutrient deficiencies. Beef hearts are loaded with nutrients to keep your body healthy, including iron, protein, selenium, and zinc. It is pretty low in fat compared to other cuts of beef, with approximately 4 grams of fat per 3-ounce serving.

Chicken liver is higher in minerals like selenium and iron, but as a whole doesn't reach the same level of super food as beef liver. The gizzard is an excellent source of iron and zinc because our chickens grew up happy and healthy on pasture. The nutrients in organ meats (and all meat) are more bioavailable than in vegetables. Too much, however, increases the risk of fibrosis and scarring of the liver and lungs, which are irreversible.

Beyond that, many everyday foods can help stimulate neurotransmitters. A study by the World Journal of Psychiatry identified folate, iron, omega-3 fatty acids, magnesium, potassium, selenium, thiamine, vitamin A, vitamin B6, vitamin B12, vitamin C, and zinc as nutrients that can treat and prevent depressive disorders. Leafy greens, peppers, and cruciferous vegetables (broccoli, cauliflower, etc.) boast many of these nutrients and received high scores from the study. For animal protein, seafood such as oysters and mussels and organ meat also received high sores.

The truth is, many of the food suggestions are the same options that make up the core of healthy eating. In other words, you don't need a fancy diet or supplemental magic pills to stimulate dopamine, oxytocin, serotonin, and endorphins. For starters, eat whole foods and avoid processed foods.

Whole foods and gut bacteria go together, but processed foods full of additives can become problematic. Load up your plate with fruits and vegetables, two food groups that contain fiber. When it comes to animal protein, focus on lean poultry and seafood and limit the intake of fatty meats high in saturated fat. High-protein foods contain tryptophan, an amino acid that your body converts to serotonin. It’s common for people to experience problems or imbalances with brain chemicals. As many as one in four adults have a diagnosable mental health disorder.

Tryptophan is an essential amino acid that the body is unable to produce by itself. **One can also focus on eating foods that are high in tryptophan.** Tryptophan can be sourced from milk, butter, egg yolks, meat, fish, turkey, peanuts, almonds, dried dates, bananas, cottage cheese, and other high-protein foods. The body can use this substance to aid in the production of serotonin and in the neurological processes that help us feel happy. Moreover,

tryptophan works alongside folic acid and iron to assist the body in producing red blood cells. You can also eat your favorite food or favorite snack. If you love ice cream or dark chocolate, you can eat it specifically to quench your craving. This quenching of the craving activates the reward system and eventually leads to happy hormones being released into your bloodstream.

How to create social and pleasure connections

Playing with pets also reduces stress levels. When pets show us attention and a need to play with us, we automatically acquire a sense of meaning and feel needed. This is because our relationship with cats, dogs, or other pets that show us affection can increase the body's production of hormones associated with happiness, including serotonin and oxytocin (a hormone linked to love and relationships).

Hugging or kissing a loved one can be used to display love, kindness, and protection. We generally perform these actions with people we love which, in turn, lead to the body producing several different hormones: **Endorphins** – the happiness hormones – that are associated with feeling enchantment, **Dopamine**, which is produced when we feel satisfied, resulting in feeling happy, excited and stimulated, **Oxytocin**, which is linked to relationships and helps us to build bonds with other human beings

Meditation

It is a form of spiritual or mental relief that can be beneficial after a day full of emotional situations that can leave us feeling down. Meditating, by breathing in slowly and deeply before releasing that air just as gently, can help you gradually rid your mind of any negativity you may have accumulated that day.

Just being alone with your thoughts for a few moments can help you to gain an awareness and acceptance of certain trying situations, leaving you with a more positive perspective. Meditating for at least 30 minutes has also been shown to decrease the production of cortisol; a hormone produced during stressful times, and replaces it with endorphins which are responsible for feelings of relief. Endorphins also produce a happy and refreshed feeling, slowing the aging process and strengthening the body's immune system while simultaneously adjusting brain waves to ensure a calm mind for a better night's sleep.

Compliment someone

You may not see this as building trust, but communicating with others — even strangers — in social settings can reward you with positive feelings. Being kind also can boost serotonin and dopamine. When you compliment someone else's dress or shoes, they most likely will show you appreciation, which is an emotional human need. Some might say thank you and that is gratitude which the mind knows how to interpret and cause the brain to trigger the sense of receiving the gratitude or appreciation extended to you.

Helping the needy.

Helping the needy connects you to them and makes your soul bond with their story and their need and value. Your involvement in other people's lives causes your mind to stimulate your brain to trigger the necessary hormones which enhance your bonding capabilities with the causes you have identified or the people you have chosen to help and increase the production of Oxytocin in your system.

This brings a completely happy feeling, a relaxed mind and body, and a sense of love within you. If you were self-hating and self-isolating, your attitude will change because your body is now conditioned and enabled to love and bond with the world thru the production of oxytocin.
Some simple activities like exercising, cooking, and listening to music can also help boost the production of your feel-good hormones.

Rest, sleep, and pleasure

There is a lot of information concerning the subject of rest, play, and sleep. No matter what you know or what you have experienced; we should all agree that sleep is a form of rest and is refreshing, resting is refreshing, and playing too is refreshing.
To be refreshed means to have a new or fresh energy, new focus, new desire or drive, or excitement. We seek to be refreshed or get to feel refreshed best when we are transitioning from fatigue, exhaustion, stress, being weary, bored, or sleepy. Life is generally stressful with so much to be done in a day and limited resources to enable us to meet our obligations. As a result, life is stressful enough before we get to mention the disappointments and painful experiences; we go thru most of the time. The hurt can emanate from office, from friends and relatives, from the ever-depressive media reports, from within the church, and right within our households. Pleasure, play, and social connection are deeply nourishing and restorative and can be a solution to stress.

There are known effects of not having rest, sleep, or play but there are more insightful psychological and medical reasons which are attached to play, rest and sleep. I have chosen to include a religious perspective on the aspect of rest and sleep.

Whether it is medical or psychological, we need to have a basic understanding of the nervous system and what role it plays to the extent that rest or active states within the nervous system become consequential to our well-being or lack thereof. The nervous system helps all the parts of the body to communicate and coordinate with each other. It reacts and responds to changes both inside and outside the body causing both electrical and chemical messengers to send and receive messages from and to various body parts. For purposes of this discussion, I will call this the "normal state" functional nervous system. Do not use this term in your scientific exams because it's my creation to draw two important parallels.

How often do you engage in leisure activities and vacations with your family?

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The spiritual perspective of rest

The spiritual dimension of rest is quite straightforward. After God created the rest of creation for six days, he rested on the seventh day, Genesis 2: 2. The original Hebrew translation of the Shabbat is to stop or to cease. Verse three is what gives me context. So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy for a reason; because he rested from all his work of creation. He had finished the project. I have read journals attempting to discuss the whole conceptualization of God's rest and I feel sad when the majority of them argue by positing an anti-thesis which is self-contradictory.

If God rested and declared the Sabbath holy and worthy of resting from his works, then we must learn to internalize such simple things as God's principles of rest applying to him first.

Not observing sufficient rest leads to burnout and fatigue causing the brain to lose the chemical balance to function properly. If we persist to work without rest or sleep, the body is likely to shut down for self-preservation but while we last, our sound judgment, mood, self-care and self-love, the focus of the mind, and goodwill are traded for all potential risks that could destroy us and others. All that is bad for the spirit man as it is for the physical man and is bad for everyone including God. Rest and worship God. The New Testament observance of the Sabbath has mixed signals in the yard doing both good and bad to the human person. It is an argument between Jesus and the teachers of the law; arguments prosecuted in philosophical fashions that objectivity is mostly lost because not all minds have the philosophical aptitude. The modern Christian, therefore, gets lost in the philosophical arguments and lacks the logical pragmatism of how to live within a work-life balance and also rest.

In Mark 2:27, Jesus simply clarified that the Sabbath is meant to serve the welfare of man and not make man a slave of the Sabbath.

The purpose of the Sabbath was meant to be understood as to offer us rest and a chance to worship outside of our daily secular responsibilities which were and remain important. In luke1 4:5, Jesus asked the Pharisees whether they will leave their donkey or child in a pit because it is a Sabbath day. The modern Christians usually push their donkeys into the pit on Sabbath days specifically to use this philosophical analogy as an excuse to overwork during the Sabbath missing the arguments of Jesus.

It is a fact that some modern Christians practice their acts of worship in an overworking mode and that they are busybodies without quality lives or production. How do you account for church programs which run parallel with secular jobs such that a church has programs every single day of the week, keeps mothers and wives in church way past the evening into the night for such meetings, and expects these parents and spouses to get home, help their children with homework, know how their children are doing, put the children to bed, be wives and husbands and still rise early the following morning to be productive at the workplace? The weekends which would be their downtime of rest are the time they are heavily engaged with church activities.

I know that some parents who are church leaders may question what I intend to achieve with my arguments but I just have to bring up the arguments and let you be the judge of how you want to live your life. The children of church workers, both mothers and fathers struggle with the continuous unavailability of their parents. The parents seem too lost in church activities over and above their depth in their secular jobs with little or no time for their children. Most church leaders to a large extent are so motivated and devoted to the work of the church ministry and service to the people that they hardly find time to rest their body, soul, and spirit. Some of them hardly find time for their children and when they finally find the time to be at home with their families, they are too tired to be present and focused and energetic for the needs of their families.

What is your family situation?

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In Exodus 18, Moses was devoted to leading the Israelites but also given to settling the disputes among them. Moses had forgotten that he had a wife and two sons. Jethro had to remind him of that responsibility and give him his family. Unfortunately, most of us do not have a Jethro who would call us to order and remind us of the need to take care of our wives and children.

Do you have a balanced life? Do you work or study too much without allowing yourself to rest? Do you rest too much that in turn you are lazy?

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SECONDARY SELF AWARENESS

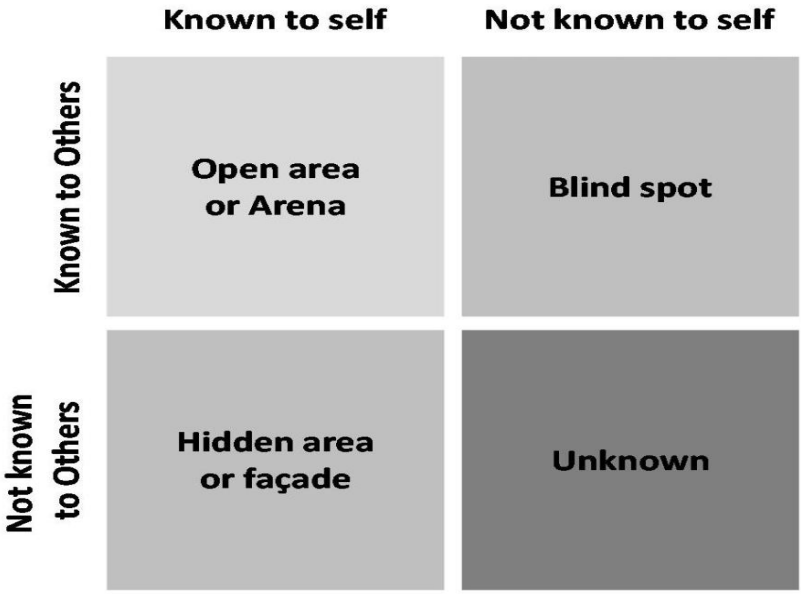


A GUIDE TO KNOWING YOUR NEW SELF

As part of my studies, I have employed a widely accepted concept of self-awareness in psychology known as Johari's window. It is a simple and useful tool for understanding and training self-awareness, personal development, improving communications, interpersonal relationships, group dynamics, team development, and intergroup relationships. It was developed by American psychologists Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham in the 1950s, calling it 'Johari' after combining their first names, Joe and Harry.

JOHARI'S WINDOW

It is also referred to as a 'disclosure/feedback model of self-awareness', an 'information processing tool' that represents information - feelings, experience, views, attitudes, skills, intentions, motivation, etc. - within or about a person - with their team, from four perspectives. It can also be used to represent the same information for a team with another team's answers. It is also a great tool for a family setup whether the children are younger or older as long as they can understand the basic concepts. To get a picture of your true self using this tool, Johari's Window, You should engage engaged with some of your friends, and mentors to get authentic feedback.



The Johari Window Model

Quadrants'

Each contains and represents the information - feelings, attitudes motivation, etc. - in terms of whether the information is known or unknown by the person, and whether the information is known or unknown by others in the team.

The four regions, areas, quadrants, or perspectives are as follows, showing the quadrant numbers.

1. Open area, open self, free area, free self, or 'the arena': what is known by the person about him/herself and is also known by others.
2. Blind area, blind self, or 'blind spot': what is unknown by the person about him/herself but which others know.
3. Hidden area, hidden self, avoided area, and avoided self or 'façade': what the person knows about him/her that others do not know.
4. Unknown area or unknown self: what is unknown by the person about him/herself and is also unknown by others.

The Johari Window

The objective of this exercise is that there should be more known than unknown. To achieve this:

i. One can solicit feedback (ASK) to enrich the blind areas and with this, you get to know more about yourself based on how others give you feedback.

ii. If you have more exposure and more adventure, then you will know more things about yourself that other people do not know. TELL

iii. Self-discovery, Shared discovery, and observations by others will help you know what you didn't know and what others didn't know about you.

Much of what's in the blind area, (blind means others know but you don't), the Hidden (Known by the individual but unknown to others) as well as the unknown (Unknown to you and unknown to others), is the playground of human limitation. This is where the devil resides and this is where all faults and failures live.

You can imagine taking up a challenge you are well-equipped to handle because you didn't know your limitations concerning it. Imagine stepping into an environment that requires you to bring your weakness so as to excel in it.

Imagine being assigned a role whereby you do not know whether your purpose, passions, talents, and attributes will favor the assignment and your family, friends or teachers are completely unable to help you. The above is the mother of all frustrations and challenges in our human endeavor.

What I know and others know too, (Open area)

There are things you know about yourself and your friends can confirm the same. If you ask them to tell you, they will confirm what you already know. On the other hand, your parents may also

help you to confirm that space of what you know. Your teachers too can confirm the same.it is good to rate what you know with others so that you have a complete representation of truth.
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What I know but others don't know (Hidden)

There are things you know about yourself but have not told anyone else or others didn't know any of it whether your parents, friends or teachers. If you ask them to tell you, they will not say what you already know.
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What others know about me but I do not know (Blind area)

Your friends can know things about you which you don't know. You won't believe this until you take that chance and have the discussion.

Your parents have the moral authority to know certain things about you to your amazement. Your teachers too can realize certain potentials or even weaknesses that you may not be aware. Your mentors or therapist can tell and extract things that are affecting you yet you are probably ignorant about the said issues.

It is a beautiful thing to engage and discuss openly with your parents, friends and teachers or even church leaders to help enrich you with information that you may not have paid attention to before.

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What I don't know and other people also do not know

There is definitely apart of you that is unknown to you and also unknown to your parents, guardians and teachers. Only the future can tell and only God knows. The purpose of doing the Johari exercise is to minimize this area because it should be the smallest box.

EXERCISE

The evaluation includes my values, my strengths, my weaknesses (my known weaknesses as well as those brought to my attention by others), my fears and needs, my potential, my life goals and plans, my purpose, my choices, and how I can get there.

These are what we call self-awareness and so I invite you to pay attention to yourself and evaluate every one of these.

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At the end of this study, you will have the power to influence your outcomes, make better decisions and also understand things from more than one perspective of life. You should be able to build better relationships and decrease your stress but most importantly, you should be able to regulate your emotions.

Where am I in life?

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What are my life plans?

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What are my goals?

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What are my choices?

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What's my life purpose?

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Always pay attention to your life purpose and your life shall be perfect at all times no matter the failures. With a clear understanding of our lives and what we want in life, all things are possible to them that believe. We can now analyze our academic situation and place it where we want now that we are ready for the big match.

FOSTERING FINANCIAL LITERACY, INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP AMONG TEENAGERS

MONEY

An African proverb says that money is the soap of the heart. Money is one tool that makes life possible and as the bible says, in Ecclesiastes 10:19, answereth all things. When we have access to money, we tend to be more peaceful and calm because we can afford what we may wish to get as long as money can buy. Money can also be a distraction without a fair literacy of it. It is the simple habits around money such as knowing how much you have at your disposal, how to budget, save, prioritize and spend that make the difference in a teenagers life.

Most teenagers just spend money and when it is finished, they attempt to get more from their parents' failure to which they may steal from their parents or friends. They should also have a mechanism to understand how money is earned. Whenever teenagers and youth have no access to money which mostly is their parents' money, they feel frustrated. Peer pressure can also set in whenever they are unable to afford their life expectations.

The best way to prevent such is to begin training them to engage with money in a healthy manner so that they can be comfortable around money whether in plenty or little. They also need to know how to save, invest and spend wisely. That way, they can have emotional stability in all financial seasons.

Understanding the dynamics for the young generation who are 18 years and below is crucial in helping them to managing money emotions. Young people are growing up in an era where everything seems to be easily and fast acquired with the internet driving the illusions." According to financial consultant; Rhina Namsia, "Money is a tool that is used to achieve something. It should be the servant with you as the master. However, the young ones seem to be becoming servants of the money they earn. This is because of the values or none of them at all surrounding money, finances and wealth."

Money has 4 major pillars which include Earning, Savings, Investing and Spending. As a young person what they see is a consumerism which is very unsustainable and unhealthy when it comes to building wealth. Parents did not build wealth by consuming of it all the time. The wealthy in our society earned their money, saved, probably borrowed again the savings as evidence of cash flow, invested and spend mostly from the proceeds of their investments.

The young people in our generation are living in an era where they are being raised by my generation that has had to learn, and relearn the aspects surrounding the pillars of money. This generation has been raised by one that had no idea what financial literacy is and therefore it is still a toll on how to raise a generation that sees money differently from us, how to earn it and to how to spend it. Miss Namsia says in her published articles that "Money does not change how it works and therefore need certain principles maintained around it."

A young person in high school, say 13-18 years old is bound to meet all manner of things that they would wish to spend money on. From clothes, shoes, vacations, etc.

On the other hand they do not understand and most even unwilling to learn how to make money the proper way because of the difference in approach towards the money itself compared to the older generation.

UNRAVELLING TEENAGE SPENDING HABITS, MOTIVES AND FINANCIAL PERSPECTIVES

Here are the tools that would Unravel teenage spending habits and get insights on their financial behaviors, influences, and challenges and tailor educational strategies, marketing and family dynamics.

1. How old are you?.....

2. Which of the following do you spend most of your money on?

1) Clothes
2) Shoes
3) Food and Dining Out
4) Technology and Gadgets
5) Entertainment
6) Giving To the Poor and Needy
7) Helping a Friend
8) Giving To Church
9) Beauty and Personal Care
10) Sports and Hobbies
11) Transportation
12) Paying Debts
13) Gifts to Friends
14) Drugs and Alcohol
15) Gaming
16) Movies
17) Gambling
18) Savings
19) Other

3. How do you finance your expenses?

a) Allowance from parents
b) Part-time job
c) Gifts from family or friends
d) Savings
e) Credit card/Mobile loans
f) Other.....(name them)

4. Do you prioritize saving money?

a) Yes
b) No

5. What influences your spending habits the most?

a) Friends
b) Family
c) Advertisements
d) Social media
e) Peer pressure
f) Personal preferences
g) Compassion

6. Do you track your expenses?

a) Yes
b) No

7. Do you budget?

a) Yes
b) No

8. Do you save money for specific goals?

a) Yes
b) No

What goals do you save for?

a) Snacks and food
b) Hosting parties
c) Travel
d) Starting a business
e) Emergency fund
f) Other

9. Do you think you have good financial literacy?

a) Yes
b) No

10. What are your biggest financial challenges as a teenager?

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11. Do you discuss money and finances with your parents?

a) Yes
b) No

12. Where do you usually shop for clothes?

a) Physical retail stores
b) Online stores

c) Thrift shops
d) Designer brands
e) Second-hand platforms
f) Other, name them!

13. Do you impulse buy? Do you buy things just because you met a nice thing without prior planning?

a) Yes
b) No

14. What do you primarily use your smartphone for?

a) Social media
b) Messaging and calling
c) Browsing the internet
d) Playing games
e) Listening to music
f) Watching videos
g) Online shopping
h) Studying and research
i) Other

15. Do you prefer to shop online or in physical stores?

a) Online
b) In stores
c) Both

16. How much money do you receive as an allowance (per week, month or per term)?

    a) Less than Ksh.1,000
    b) Ksh.1,000 - 2,000
    c) Ksh.2,000- Ksh.5,000
    d) Ksh.5,000 - 10,000
    e) Ksh.10,000 - Ksh.20,000
    f) More than Ksh.20,000

17. Do you keep a wish-list of things you want to buy?

    a) Yes
    b) No

18. What social media platforms do you use frequently?
    a) Instagram
    b) TikTok
    c) Snapchat
    d) Facebook
    e) Twitter
    f) YouTube
    g) Pinterest
    h) Others

19. Have you ever taken on a part-time job to earn money?
    a) Yes
    b) No

20. What are your favorite ways to save money?
    a) Piggy bank
    b) Mpesa
    c) Home bank
    d) Give to parent to keep

e) Bank account
f) A friend
g) Other

In the last 12 months, have you done the following (to answer yes or no to all)

1. Checked that I have been given correct balance after a purchase……..
2. Talked to someone about the job you would do after finishing your education …….
3. complained that you didn't have enough money for something you wanted to buy……
4. Bought something online alone or with someone ……..
5. Did voluntary work ……
6. Made a payment via a phone……
7. Bought something for more money than you intended to……
8. Checked how much money you have……..

To what extent do you agree with the following statements (use strongly disagree, agree, and strongly agree)

1. I enjoy talking about money matters…….
2. I would like to own and run my own business in future ……
3. Young people should be allowed to make their own decisions a On how to spend their own money ……
4. Money matters are no so relevant to me right now……..

How confident would you feel about doing the following (use confident, not confident at all, very confident, and not very confident)
1. Making money transfer e.g. paying a bill……
2. Filling in forms at the bank……
3. Understanding bank statements ……..

4. Understanding a sakes contract …….
5. Keeping track of my account balance ……..
6. Planning my spending in consideration with my current financial situation …….

How often do you discuss the following with your parents (guardians of relatives) use never, once or twice a month, once or twice a week, almost everyday?

1. Your spending decisions …….
2. Your savings decisions ……
3. Family budget……
4. Money for things you want to buy……
5. News on finances and economics

How much do you agree about how you spend your money on the following (use the agree range in responses too)

1. I can decide independently what to spend money on ……
2. I can decide on small amounts alone but on large amounts I have to ask my parents for permission ……..
3. I need to ask for permission before I spend my own money on my own……..
4. I am responsible for my own money matters…….

When you think about buying a new product with your allowance, which of the following do you do? (Tick several)

1. Compare prices in different stores ……
2. Compare prices on physical and online stores…….
3. Buy without checking prices ……
4. Wait until its cheaper then buy ……

The response to the above questions will give you awareness on how you relate with money and as a result evaluate whether that is how you want to live and still accomplish your life purpose, vision and career goals.

What do you think are your money habits and money character?

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EARNING

As young fellows, it's prudent to understand how money is made; only this way can they appreciate preserving and growing it. There are two major ways of earning money passively and actively.
An active income is that which is worked for or one goes to work, makes sales or offer services performing some duties and given their wages or money. More common way is also through content creation for the young people. It can also be a task given by a parent, an errand to run and getting paid for it. It is also part of the pocket money given when in school. The point is to understand that money is earned and not just given.

The ways of earning money have to be aligned with ones values. Values **are the beliefs and principles that you believe are important in the way that you live and work**. When you value something, you consider it important and worthwhile. For example, if you value someone's opinion, you will ask that person's advice before making a big decision. The known basic values are such as love, peace, truth and honesty, generosity, freedom, creativity, gratitude, integrity, compassion, dependability, loyalty, awareness, humility and adaptability. However money also has its set of values.

What are Money Values?

Money values are an extension of your personal values. They are a set of core beliefs and principles that can shape your relationship with money and drive money decisions regarding how you spend, save, or invest.

What are some of your values as a young person? What money values do you think you have attempted to uphold?

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Values help in maintaining discipline in the activities one is involved in order to earn money. If you have no values at all in your life you're most likely to make money in any way that comes by and many young people end up doing illegal or wrong activities to earn money.

Social media has also misled many young people in how money is made. Many look upon celebrities and rogue content creators as their mentors and all they show is flashy lifestyles that are unsustainable but catchy to the young generation. After earning the money then ask yourself what next. Is it just about spending it or how else can that money be made to be more without seeking to invest or even save.

Exercise

Be very honest with yourself. How do you handle your money?

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SAVING

Adults struggle with the aspect of putting any money aside, and this is because saving in itself is a culture that needs to be practiced overtime. Our brains are wired to subconsciously know when and if a habit has been curated. Curation is the action or process of selecting, organizing, and prioritizing an item. For example is you always go to a certain section in the shopping mall over and over, this habit and pattern always registers and becomes a priority every time you go shopping. It is easier to adopt the saving culture if incorporated early in life than later in life.

Question

How is your saving habit? How frequently do you save if at all and how much do you save?

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To be able to prudently save one needs a purpose in life. A goal you would wish to achieve. This could be anything that is in the bracket of your wants or even needs in the near or further future. Once you have in mind what you want to save for, then it is a target that you have to remind yourself whenever you earn some money from any of the means mentioned earlier. You would then start to build on it until you achieve it. Overtime, the act of putting money aside for something becomes a habit.

A parent needs to help their sons and daughters in saving by helping them realize and reward their little milestones towards achieving the goals so that they do not give up if it takes longer than the expected time.
Let you and him or her remember that good goals have timelines and should be things that are realistic to achieve at their age.
Don't decide their goals for them but have the conversation and just guide them. They will be free and able to speak them out.
Many times goals have been set for children and when they achieve them they throw them back to the parents and tell them it was theirs which is sad given the resources put into achieving one.

Exercise
Identify a goal for which you want to begin saving!
What is the Goal?
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How much is required?
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What is the frequency of savings?
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How long will it take to save the desired amount?
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Why do you need this goal achieved? Your motivation?
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SPENDING
To spend prudently as a young person is not easy. This needs a good understanding of needs as a young boy or girl. What's the

difference between wants and needs and also an understanding of having savings as part of an expense as that helps in prioritizing it. When you prioritize saving as the expenditure you need to incur, you will accumulate enough money to invest. As a parent it is important to listen to them split between their wants and needs. Guide them on what some of their wants are as they are most likely to see them as needs instead. Teach them what it means to prioritize needs over wants.

Exercise 1

List your wants and list your needs……
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Exercise 2

Engage with your parent to firm up whether there are some needs and wants that are mixed up then redo the list again
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Exercise 3

How do you intend to prioritize your needs you're your wants? What exactly will you do to achieve this?
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INVESTING

When a young person wants to understand money, they need to know the cycle of money. That money is earned before it is spent, and that, to grow that money one will need to learn and understand the basics of investing. Investing is an act of purchasing Assets with a hope of it giving you back some returns. Miss Namsia that “But this may sound so unpractical to the young ones who may see or think investing differently. This is due to the kind of new entrants or asset classes. Things like crypto currency, Forex and even betting which is not really an investment activity.”

One of the key aspects of investing is patience, controlling emotions and time in the market. These are hard to come by for the young investor as they are accustomed to the so called “microwave” solutions.

They want quick and high returns. But fundamentally that is not how Investments work. This has made many young people land into unscrupulous pyramid schemes, betting, and wastage of money. The promises of good quick returns bait them. From a psychological point of view, that promise of quick rewards is exciting but needs to be managed.

If you ask a young boy to choose between earning 30% p.m. returns vs. 15% p.a which one would you expect to pick? Most likely the former, but without understanding the fundamentals there's no way to convince them otherwise.

Time in the market calls for patience and no investment gives returns without first having to work and produce more money which is the returns. Patience is a virtue that is practiced as well. With the young generation, very few know what it means to be patient and what it takes to be one. It takes facing challenges in life and waiting to resolve them. That is how you build patience and resilience. It is good to Practice patience as a parent by letting your kids wait on something. It does not have to be about money.

It can be eating bread and not biscuits in the house because biscuits can stay longer than bread even though they are sweeter.

Exercise
Let patience be cultivated through acts that do not involve money first. As a young person in high school what's that one thing that you really want, it's in your proximity but you also know you have to wait a little bit longer to have it in your possession? It can be in school or at home. See the worth in the waiting! Once you successfully wait for the period you desired, kindly record that event and celebrate your win.
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Investing is also about risk. High risks have high returns and the alternative/new kind of assets or investments promise high returns. As a young investor you need to ask yourself a simple question like " how are these people making their money in order to be able to give me back my principle + returns especially in a very short time. If returns are very high with very minimal or no risk, run, There's always a cost or a reward for taking up an investment.

Assignment
Seek out a group of five trusted friends, pool your savings and explore your investment options. Discuss with your parents and get varied advices then make your independent decisions to invest your money, strictly from your pocket money for long term returns. Invest for a timeframe within which you are still in merishaw as a student. Record all your discussions and decisions with how you reasoned out to arrive at your decisions.
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CONCLUSION

Conversations surrounding money, finances and wealth should start early, practiced from onset and maintained. Financial Literacy is part of daily healthy living and given the rising of mental health awareness, money plays a big role even in the lives of young people when it comes to that.

QUESTION

In light of the above world view on money, kindly explain your money attitude, habits and tendencies.

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Are you proud of your choices and habits? Why?

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Is there something you can do about it to be more financially disciplined capable of earning, saving, spending and investing?

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Fostering Innovation and Entrepreneurship in High Schoolers:

Program Outline

This program aims to ignite creativity, problem-solving skills, and entrepreneurial spirit in high schoolers. It provides a framework for them to explore ideas, develop them into solutions, and gain the confidence to bring them to life and make them an actual and practical concept. The CBC curriculum seeks to achieve this in part and we as parents should assist our children to become innovators and entrepreneurs.

Target Audience:

As much as this programme is for High School Students, it can be adapted to various age groups within high school. It is also possible to customize it to the prevailing circumstances of the high school. Rural schools and urban schools might have a few environmental differences but the principles and concepts are the same making different working tools to give the same outcome.

Program Duration:

This is a flexible outline; consider running it as a weekend workshop, month long course, term-long course, after-school program, or yearlong annual programme. No matter the duration used to execute a project, each project will go through standard phases, each phase meeting and satisfying specific objectives. Each phase will have a time frame within which they should actualize the phase.

Program Phases:

Phase 1: Exploration and Inspiration

Time frame (2- 3weeks)-

Activities:-

Guest Speakers

Invite parent entrepreneurs, innovators, and problem-solvers to share their life journeys. You may also have a guest speaker to help the students to frame their thoughts with the intention of exploring options.

Design Thinking Workshops: Introduce design thinking as a framework for tackling challenges and creating innovative solutions to those challenges. Use experts in various fields to motivate groups and evaluate how the innovators are processing their thinking without interfering with their thoughts.

Ideation Challenges: Present real-world problems or spark creative prompts to encourage brainstorming and idea generation on how those world problems could be solved.

Parents who are in business and cooperate need to share their stories of how they have been innovative at their work places, with their careers and with business market situations.

Market Research: Teach basic market research techniques to understand customer needs and potential markets for their ideas. Teach the art of identifying a gap, need or demand and exploring how it can be solved by your ideas. Let parents share examples of how they ever met a market need and any other innovation that has turned out meeting a major need in their choice niche.

Phase 2: Development and Refinement (3-4 weeks)

Activities:

Team Formation: Facilitate team building exercises to create collaborative teams around promising ideas. It is important to engage within a team and realize how your values align, how your habits and ideas align and how your energies complement each other. It is important to learn whether your interests point to similar or related end goals.

Business Model Canvas: Introduce the Business Model Canvas as a tool to visualize and refine their business concepts. Allow the students to use only your guidance

Mentorship: Connect students with mentors who can provide guidance and feedback on their ideas and business models.

Prototyping: Encourage students to create low-fidelity prototypes to test and refine their solutions.

Phase 3: Pitching and Action planning (2-3 weeks)

Activities:

Pitching Workshops: Develop presentation skills and practice pitching their ideas to a panel or audience (could involve classmates, teachers, parents or local investors).

Action Planning: Guide students in creating a roadmap to launch their ventures, including marketing strategies, resource allocation, and potential funding sources.

Showcase Event: Organize a culminating event where students can present their final pitches and action plans to a wider audience.

Motivation: establish motivation for the best business ideas.

Additional Considerations:

Technology Integration: Utilize online collaboration tools, prototyping platforms, and innovation resources to enhance the program.

Community Engagement: Partner with local businesses, organizations, and incubators to provide real-world experiences and potential funding opportunities.

Assessment: Continuously assess progress through presentations, team discussions, and reflections to provide constructive feedback and measure learning outcomes.

Fun and Engagement: Maintain an engaging and interactive environment through games, simulations, and opportunities for creativity and self-expression.

Remember: This is a flexible outline. Adapt the program duration, activities, and resources to fit your specific needs and timeframe. The goal is to create a program that sparks innovation, builds entrepreneurial skills, and empowers teenagers to bring their ideas to life.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROJECT

“Merishaw School Innovators"

Objective:

To foster innovation and entrepreneurship among teenagers in high schools across Kenya, empowering them with the skills, mindset, and resources needed to succeed in the business world.

Duration:

6 months

Structure:

The program will be structured around workshops, mentorship sessions, practical projects, competitions, and networking events. It will run parallel to the regular school curriculum to ensure accessibility and engagement.

Month 1: Introduction to Entrepreneurship

Week 1-2: Awareness Campaign

School Assemblies: Introduce the program during school assemblies.

Posters and Flyers: Distribute posters and flyers with success stories of young entrepreneurs.

Parent-Teacher Meetings: Educate parents on the benefits of entrepreneurship for their children.

Week 3-4: Basic Workshops

Introduction to Entrepreneurship: What it is, why it's important, and examples of successful teenage entrepreneurs.

Idea Generation: Brainstorming techniques and identifying opportunities within their communities.

Month 2: Skill Building

Week 1-2: Practical Skills Workshops

Business Planning: Basics of creating a business plan.

Financial Literacy: Understanding money, savings, and basic accounting.

Week 3-4: Technology and Innovation

Digital Tools: Introduction to essential digital tools and platforms for business.

Innovation Techniques: Creative problem-solving and thinking outside the box.

Month 3: Mentorship and Real-World Exposure

Week 1-2: Mentorship Pairing

- **Mentorship Program:** Pair students with local entrepreneurs and business leaders especially parents.

- **Mentorship Sessions:** Weekly or bi-weekly meetings with mentors for guidance and support especially parents.

Week 3-4: Business Visits

- **Company Tours:** Organize visits to local businesses and startups.
- **Guest Speakers:** Invite entrepreneurs to share their journey and experiences.

Month 4: Hands-On Experience

Week 1-2: School-Based Projects

Mini-Enterprises: Form student groups to start small, school-based businesses (e.g., a school shop, event planning).

Project Proposals: Each group writes and submits a business plan for their mini-enterprise.

Week 3-4: Implementation

Launch Projects: Students start running their mini-enterprises with guidance from teachers and mentors.

Weekly Check-Ins: Regular progress meetings to provide feedback and support.

Month 5: Innovation Challenge

Week 1-2: Preparation for Competition

Pitch Training: Workshops on how to present and pitch business ideas effectively.

Product Development: Focus on refining the business ideas and prototypes.

Week 3-4: Innovation Competition

Pitch Day: Students present their business ideas and projects to a panel of judges.

Awards: Recognize the most innovative and viable ideas with prizes and certificates. The parents should be willing to invest into some of the winning pitches and viable business ideas.

Month 6: <u>Reflection and Scaling Up</u>

Week 1-2: Evaluation and Feedback

Reflection Sessions: Students reflect on their experiences and what they've learned.

Feedback Surveys: Collect feedback from students, teachers, mentors, and parents.

Week 3-4: Next Steps

Scale-Up Plans: Help students develop plans to scale their projects beyond the school setting.

Alumni Network: Establish a network for program graduates to stay connected, share opportunities, and continue learning.

Ongoing Support

Online Community: Create an online platform for continuous learning, idea sharing, and mentorship.

Resource Library: Provide access to resources like books, online courses, and toolkits on entrepreneurship.

Key Elements for Success

Active Involvement: Engage students, teachers, parents, and the local community throughout the program.

Practical Focus: Emphasize hands-on activities and real-world applications of entrepreneurial concepts.

Flexibility and Improvisation: Adapt the program based on feedback and changing circumstances to meet the needs of the students.

Continuous Motivation: Regularly celebrate small successes to keep students motivated and committed.

This simple, flexible, and resourceful program aims to inspire and equip Kenyan teenagers with the entrepreneurial mindset and skills necessary for innovation and business success.

The Alumni network needs to be established this early so that it becomes the custodian of the culture of entrepreneurship and innovation.

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