

Addressing Impediments to Building Self-Growth Capabilities

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Abstract

Over the last four years, there has been an extensive effort to elevate the theory and practice of self-growth during the Self-Growth Institutes, the Self-Growth Community sessions, and the PE Experts Project. Using these three venues, the identification, discussion, and refinement of a list of impediments to self-growth has been developed with the aim of building psychological understanding of possible reasons for why these impediments occur and how to mitigate them. The identified impediments were classifiable within 10 psychological areas. A mentoring system provides a strategy for each of the 62 impediments that highlight the learning skills, growth skills, and mentoring skills with the most potential to strengthen specific capabilities to mitigate each of these impediments. As learning to learn facilitators, performance mentors, self-growth coaches, and self-growers increase their understanding of why these impediments exist and how to recognize them in their clients, they will be in a better position to support their clients to effectively address impediments with effective strategies.

Introduction

Why is self-growth capability so challenging to evolve individually? One possibility is that it requires consciousness of personal potential and external opportunities even when one's way of being, culture and circumstances make it very difficult to see beyond current conventions and assumptions. Consciousness is a personal representation of the present that is limited in some ways but expansive in others—it provides a representation that combines one's preconceptions and perceptions of present experience (Kihlstrom, 2021) as well as the potential in the opportunities embedded in the experience. It has long been evident that conscious processes are underpinned by unconscious processes that influence our responses (Ellenberger, H. E., 1970). Unconscious impediments to learning and growth often arise from psychological reactions and biases that have evolved for species survival to maintain physiological and safety needs (i.e., the lowest levels of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, 1943).

Self-Growth requires conscious attention to the many factors that are influencing each decision and action in real-time experiences. This research is built upon prior research around risk factors (Horton, 2015). This paper is built on increasing psychological awareness of impediments to growth planning, improving quality of life, using assessment effectively, enhancing growth skills (Burke et al., 2024), and applying the Methodology for Performance Development (Van Slyke, 2021). The self-growth impediments in this paper start appearing when we are intentionally trying to develop growth capabilities (Hurd et al., 2021).

Although many publications, websites, and popular media use the term self-growth, upon closer examination these resources describe only the development of growth skills such as persistence, setting clear goals, and having high aspirations (Apple et al., 2015). The aim of this paper is to provide an inventory, organized into categories and descriptions, with potential intervention strategies for the identified impediments to self-growth. This provides potential self-growers with the resources to increase awareness of how to assess and reflect upon issues that are disrupting their efforts to increase their own growth and self-growth capabilities as well as those of others.

The aim of this work is to provide an inventory of identified impediments classified within their psychological rationale. In this way, self-growers can more easily assess, reflect upon, and implement strategies to reduce these impediments as they strive to increase their self-growth capabilities. In what follows, a review of the literature introduces evidence and reasons for general types of psychological impediments to performance and growth. Next, a discussion of the methodology used to identify and classify impediments is presented followed by a discussion of the classified impediments within each of the 10 psychological areas. Then, a mentoring system is proposed that includes suggested strategies to mitigate the identified impediment. In addition, the system includes learning and growth skills for development as well as mentoring skills that a coach or mentor would utilize to help their client with remediating the impediments. Finally, future research is discussed, and conclusions are presented.

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Literature Review: General Reasons for Self-Growth Impediments

While self-growth itself is not typically the direct focus of research in educational, sociological, and psychological disciplines, many research reports and theories nevertheless provide a foundation for the classification of impediments by identifying significant influences that may diminish developmental potential in situations due to a failure to meet challenges. Impediments arise in varied and often unpredictable ways that come to light as individuals work on emotional, social, and problem-solving challenges as these arise in life situations (Verhaeghen & Hertzog, 2014). The impediments identified in our classification model are limited to those commonly experienced or observed in performance, growth, and self-growth situations in which positive self-development is actively prioritized. Awareness of the identified impediments is an important step toward learning to overcome their negative influence on personal performance and growth.

Although some of the listed impediments may overlap with those of concern to medical professionals, counselors, and clinical psychologists who deal with mental health disorders (Ringwald et al., 2023), they have been selected as normal or typical issues in general human development. Learning to overcome the types of impediments we have identified has potential for preventing some mental disorders; Yarrington et al. (2023) found that positive life events and experiences are protective against depression and anxiety effects. Fyness-Clinton and Addis (2023) found that older participants in their research studies were protected from the widespread adverse mental health effects of the COVID-19 pandemic due to their extended future time horizon which helped them prioritize socioemotional wellbeing. The impact of the pandemic on younger individuals illustrates how a more limited life perspective can increase emotional impediments when dealing with life stressors.

Growth, as the foundation for self-growth, is an open field with greatest immediate potential for those whose development has been well-nurtured within family and community—but will be more restricted for those who experience less favorable conditions (Haider & von Stumm, 2022; Whitaker et al., 2023). Differences in developmental maturing can produce impediments that limit readiness to meet life's challenges but also can result in increases in personal character strengths (Peterson & Seligman, 2005). Loevinger's (1993) research of ego maturity development in adults indicates that only some individuals achieve higher levels of ego integration/maturity. Analogously, Ryan and Deci (2017) have found that

only some individuals are intrinsically motivated, but the reasons are difficult to specify. The Big Five personality traits (McCrae & Costa, 1997) of conscientiousness, agreeableness, neuroticism, openness, and extraversion are generally stable across time, but some individuals demonstrate positive change in their trait profiles (Buchinger et al., 2023). Psychological theories and research suggest that adaptation and growth depend upon age, social support, favorable situations, and beneficial opportunities that help or hinder uses of traits, personality style, and skills for meeting life challenges. There are many possible ways for impediments to become significant factors that disrupt performances important for self-development.

Focusing on the educational realm, a review of 25 years of professional development experiences (Apple et al., 2016) indicates that faculty and staff participants consistently push back when challenged to expand their role within the purpose of education. This push back stemmed from being challenged to switch their role and focus from:

- a lecturer to becoming a facilitator of learning,
- knowledge transfer to inclusion of learner development,
- providing feedback as a student-knowledge evaluator to becoming an assessor of learner performance,
- socially engaging with single learners to developing learning communities,
- developing student's disciplinary expertise to including self-growth development,
- enabling students' poor performance to empowering students through challenges, and
- being directive to allowing students to take ownership of their own self-direction.

The question is *why* was there push-back? What was standing in the way, impeding their progress? These impediments to faculty members' own growth became the basis of this inquiry into the barriers of self-growth in all people. There have been many new discoveries about self-growth (Jain et al., 2015; Jain et al., 2020; Apple et al., 2021), self-growth practices (Apple et al., 2013; Apple et al., 2016; Sweeney et al., 2018; Ellis et al., 2019), how self-growth is developed (Apple, Ellis & Leasure, 2018; Leasure, et al., 2020; Apple et al., 2019), and the culture required to support it (Hintze et al., 2011; Apple et al., 2018). However, a major challenge to developing self-growers is the discovery of the expanding number of impediments that hamper an individual from strengthening their self-growth capabilities or an organization's efforts towards creating a growth culture.

Methods

Since 2018, as part of the design and implementation of the experiences in three contexts, Self-Growth Institutes, the Self-Growth Community, and the 2-year PE Experts Project, impediments were observed, solicited, collected, and organized into a mentoring system based on three criteria:

- 1) The impediment was consistently observed or detected among participants in all three contexts
- 2) It has a psychological basis for its existence
- 3) It noticeably stymied individual personal growth in these contexts.

The authors classified and redefined the list ensuring that each impediment aligned with an area of psychological classification. To be significant, an item had to be apparent for a notable number of participants in each context, and the impact on growth development was limiting.

Participants

The identification and refinement of self-growth impediments stems from over four years of exploration by attendees of three Self-Growth Institutes, three annual Self-Growth Communities, and the 2-year PE Experts Project.

Self-Growth Institutes were offered by Pacific Crest, each of which included activities focused on identification of impediments to performance, growth, and self-growth. Self-growth communities were hosted online by leaders from the Academy of Process Educators over a three-year period with annual cohorts meeting twice a month that addressed educational and self-development interests of PE practitioners, including examples of impediments of both faculty and students. Some members of the self-selected participants of the PE Experts Project were active members of a self-growth community, attendees of PE Conferences, or involved in Self-Growth Institutes. They were encouraged by the project facilitator to participate because of their known interests in advancing their own self-growth capabilities (Apple et al., 2021) and the capabilities of their students. The goal of the PE Experts Project for the 20 participants was to develop 20 areas of PE expertise during an intensive self-growth coaching process that involved weekly contacts over a two-year time period. The longitudinal nature of the project provided many opportunities for impediments to appear and to be analyzed in notes and reflections.

Data Collection

Each of the venues in which participants were involved had a recording process that resulted in posted information that was surveyed to identify impediments. For example, the

Self-growth Institutes published the course and recorded performance results for every activity (Pacific Crest, 2019). As part of the Self-Growth Institutes, there was an activity asking the participants to identify impediments to self-growth they discovered during the experience. Individuals in the PE Experts Project were encouraged to post weekly reflection and planning comments; the facilitator posted notes, insights, and tips based on the weekly coaching conversations with the participants. Half-way into the 2-year effort the weekly transition methodology was modified to include a prompt asking participants in the project to identify impediments observed during each week.

The list of impediments evolved sequentially. During the first Self-Growth Institute, participants described what they struggled with during the week and then on the last day, an initial list of impediments was inventoried (Apple et al., 2019). During the first Self-Growth Community and the second Self-Growth Institute this list was further refined and enhanced. This listing of impediments was then utilized by the members of the two-year PE Experts project during their weekly transitions to the upcoming week. The next Self-Growth Institute and the 2nd and 3rd Self-Growth Community cohorts also contributed to additional entries and refinements. Through weekly discussions with the PE experts, the list was refined as new impediments were identified. Additionally, the self-growth coach developed strategies to overcome the impediments which were implemented, reflected upon, and refined as the project continued.

The final list of 62 impediments was analyzed to identify and describe the ten general psychological areas most relevant to each impediment and are delineated in Table 1. These psychological areas are the counterpart to the nine psychology perspectives presented by Leise et al. (2023b). While the perspectives presented in Leise et al. (2023b) guide selection of needs within growth situations/opportunities that are most aligned with planned growth objectives, the psychological areas provided within Table 1 help to highlight the most probable source underlying individual impediments to growth intentions. Directly addressing impediments as close to their developmental cause as possible will increase the potential to influence growth productivity. Although the major strategy within the PE framework is to identify learning skills to mitigate impediments, especially those selected as growth skills for performance enhancement and mentoring skills for self-growth enhancement (Van Slyke et al., 2021; Jain et al., 2020), it often is effective to consciously avoid attending to distracting stimuli (Gollwitzer, 1999).

Psychological Classification of Impediments

Each of the 62 identified impediments is classified within one of the 10 psychological areas delineated in Table 1.

Table 1 Psychological Areas Related to Impediments

Psychological Area	Description
1. Psychosocial Development	Residual effects from partially unmet developmental needs, such as related to attachment, trust, and competence (Dweck, 2017).
2. Past Conditioning	Immediate non-conscious reactions acquired from years of repeated stimulus-response experiences in interpersonal, learning, and performance feedback situations.
3. Emotional Needs	Reluctance to seek out and engage in opportunities to meet one’s own needs; choosing dependency and separateness even when conditions are supportive for actions likely to have positive effects on mental wellness.
4. Negative Thinking	A prominent and persisting attitude resulting from perception of other people and the world as adversarial to one’s needs, plans and dreams.
5. Self-Determination	Stepping aside from life challenges important for developing competence, autonomy, and relatedness (Ryan et al., 2021); lacking positive intentionality for creating one’s life journey through annual and weekly scripting of behavioral strategies for growth goals consequential for quality of life.
6. External Influences	Acceptance of conditions and situations as they are; inability to deal with life’s complexity and randomness by making plans to attain outcomes significant for one’s aspirations.
7. Self-Regulation	Failure to make corrections in behavior due to being inattentive to indicators of quality and missing of significant cues for effective responses in the moment.
8. Cognitive Blind Spots	Feeling confident about assumptions or perceptions despite known reasons to be attentive to sources of bias needing to be considered in a situation.
9. Growth Impediments	Incompleteness or low quality of knowledge of self and others; limited intentions to implement growth plans, metacognitive limitations due to unclear performance criteria, and fixed mindsets that reduce effective self-management in using the 15 components for growth capability development.
10. Self-Growth Impediments	Observant but insights narrow in interpreting full value of experiences; lack of integration of diverse growth areas; limited metacognition <i>in the moment</i> ; restricted intersubjectivity and ethical scope in spiritual and community commitments; strong on 15 growth components but incomplete on 13 self-growth components.

Ten sub-tables, labeled Table 1.1 to 1.10, present labels and descriptions for the impediments associated with each of the 10 psychological areas. A brief overview is provided before each sub-table and more extensive background information is provided after each of these tables to clarify some of the psychological processes known to play a part in creating or sustaining the types of impediments. Ultimately, the experiences of each individual, in combination with environments and inherited characteristics, produces both capabilities and impediments. For growth to occur in a predictable way, capabilities must be developed, and impediments must be overcome.

Impediments from Psychosocial Development

Psychosocial impediments, delineated in Table 1.1, are related to emotional and thought processes that have become stable elements during one’s personality development. Dweck (2017) identifies *basic needs* as *acceptance* by parents, teachers, and peers, *predictability* through experiencing consistency in daily life, and *competence* which is

gaining the life and learning skills needed for maturing. These needs are normally met through nurturing relationships from family and community networks. Social and ethical values are gained from participation in cultural experiences that clarify norms and expectations of what it means to become a functioning member of society.

Personality attributes often are associated with habits built during life from many experiences. Dweck (2017) proposes a succinct model with three *basic* needs that are present from infancy, acceptance, predictability, and competence, and four *emerging* needs. These for needs include *trust* which is a combination of acceptance and predictability, *control* which is a combination of predictability and competence, *self-esteem/status* which is a combination of competence and acceptance, and *self-coherence* which is the hub of all the needs. Without increasing reflective awareness of the personal and social needs, beliefs, and values during psychosocial development, growth will be predictably impeded.

Table 1.1 Psychosocial Development

- 1. Valuing others over self**
Feeling responsible to prioritize the needs of others even when this means conscious neglect of important personal needs.
- 2. Dependency habits**
Getting others to do for you even when conscious that it isn't beneficial to long-term wellbeing; Gaining immediate satisfaction from getting what you want is addicting.
- 3. Behavioral inhibitions**
Struggling to gain control and coherence in meeting more than minimal demands of life and society.
- 4. Social avoidance**
Lacking trust and attachment; limited collaboration with growth-oriented individuals who could provide guidance and modeling of how to enrich the life journey.
- 5. Lack of social models**
Struggling to develop competence in the performance challenges of life; unaware of the role and potential value of a personal mentor.
- 6. Unwillingness to raise expectations**
Demoralized by experiences of the unpredictability of support from others; lagging in significant life skills related to competence and self-efficacy.
- 7. Social expectations**
Wanting to be liked regardless of authenticity of interactions; confused about the difference between superficial relationships and real friends.
- 8. Limited development**
Lack of self-efficacy in an emotional or social area because its development was stymied compared to norms leading to limited trust, control, and self-esteem.

The list of growth impediments related to psychosocial development calls attention to the powerful role of relationships during childhood and adolescence. Having negative experiences along with positive ones is normal for everyone and provides essential life opportunities to become more resilient and self-affirming despite setbacks and failures. Narrative identity theory (McAdams et al., 2006; McLean et al., 2007), for example, proposes that individual stories are based on selection of key life events that include extremely painful or extremely pleasurable peak experiences that stimulate reflection to extract meaning from these unusual personal events. Addressing these impediments means that one needs to reflect on the critical intense moments of highs and lows because these will help to generate insights for mitigating these impediments, such

as by using the mentoring strategies and techniques delineated in Table 2.

Impediments from Past Conditioning

Impediments due to past conditioning are reactions to objects or events, that is *stimuli* that result in persistent learning which is also known as a *conditioning response*. These are immediate, often non-conscious, reactions caused by repeated experiences related to daily interactions, learning, and feedback. The four identified impediments in this area are delineated in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2 Past Conditioning

- 1. Being labeled**
Passively accepting stereotyped opinions about who you are, your role in society, and your potential.
- 2. Family expectations**
Accepting beliefs and social patterns learned and reinforced early in life, conforming rather than creating a separate identity and aspirations.
- 3. Being a negative self-judger**
Internalization of defeatist or cynical attitudes that result in quick rejection of potentially useful ideas, responses from others, and opportunities; views self as incompetent and unworthy of the positives of life.
- 4. Interpreting feedback as evaluation**
Internalization of the assumption that almost all feedback is judgmental; inability to differentiate authentic assessment (feedback for improvement and growth) from judgmental criticism.

Psychological conditioning occurs in two general types. Pavlovian conditioning (Pavlov, 1927) involves learned associations between some initially neutral, unconditioned, environmental stimulus, (e.g., the bell Pavlov used in his famous experiments) and a physiologically significant, unconditioned stimulus like food or pain. Repetition of Pavlovian conditioning is often the basis of unconscious physiological and emotional reactions for both the positive approach response and the negative escape or avoidance responses controlled by the second type of conditioning, operant, made famous by B.F. Skinner (Smith, 1992). By applying variations of reward, extinction, and punishment, observable behaviors can be predictably increased or decreased. Although Pavlovian conditioning is typically unconsciously acquired, the learning from both types of conditioning infiltrates all areas of behavior and explains why one person may feel optimistic about an upcoming opportunity and another may feel anxious. Feeling concern that an evaluated experience went worse than expected, for example, may set the stage for a pattern of performance

anxiety that keeps conscious focus on personal feelings rather than on assessment of how to perform better, which needs to be the focus if positive reinforcement is to be experienced. Gaining insight into Pavlovian conditioning expands self-regulatory control beyond the innate, unconditioned survival and safety responses (Maslow, 1971) to self-determined creation of operantly-based opportunities to increase reinforcements for positive performance and growth. An example is planning positive nutrition habits by shopping from a meal plan to obtain items for tasty, satisfying, and healthy meals and avoiding *quick* industrial food products that are tasty but unsatisfying and unhealthy. Everyone acquires many conditioned responses, mostly unconscious, from earlier stages of life that tend to continue as positive or negative reactions, especially in evaluative situations, toward self as well as those perceived as judgmental.

Individuals who are negatively evaluated or judged by family, peers, or educators about their performances begin to believe they cannot be successful and feel trapped by their expectations of failure (Apple et al., 2018). Individuals often do not know how to change this narrative or the criteria they unconsciously use and develop a fixed mindset (Dweck, 2017) that is accompanied by worry and rumination when confronted with certain challenges, for example math or public speaking. Complicating this pattern, Vanderlind et al. (2021), found that individuals with a high level of trait anxiety often preferred the consistency associated with feeling anxious rather than selecting a more positive emotional state. In other words, it is common to prefer the emotion previously associated with a context even if it is counter to growth.

Impediments Related to Emotional Needs

Discovering or creating opportunities to reduce, avoid, or eliminate impediments related to emotional needs adds significantly to life satisfaction by leaving the individual with feelings of happiness, contentment, and a sense of control over life. When unsatisfied, emotional needs leaves the individual with a feeling of unhappiness and frustration—often accompanied by confusion about the source or cause. Table 1.3 provides a listing of the eight impediments that are related to emotional needs.

Emotions have survival benefits by signaling when events and experiences are important. Barrett (2017) has put forward a theory, contrary to a traditional assumption that the main emotions are distinctive, that emotions arise from experiences that unconsciously trigger *core affect* reactions. She proposes, based on extensive research, that these rapid initial reactions are much less specific than suggested by traditional emotion theories that center on a set of emotional types such as joy and fear (Ekman, 1993). In Barrett's model, core affect reactions are quickly followed by good/

bad evaluation of situations and then a sense of action readiness. Developmental emotional needs occur in patterns related to success/failure with important issues such as feelings of trust, control, self-esteem, and self-coherence (Dweck, 2017). Emotional needs therefore arise not only from biological needs but from emotional learning over one's lifetime from experiences of all types. Self-affirmation theories (Steele, 1988), for example, explain how emotional self-perceptions can impede learning and growth as well as emotional capabilities such as resilience. Perfectionism (Levine et al., 2020) also can be a significant impediment to growth because it is characterized by a strong tendency to invest time and resources for an idealized version of quality that reduces ability to use practical strategies such as satisficing—using good-enough options (Simon, 1955).

Table 1.3 Emotional Needs

- 1. Lack of self-affirmation**
Lacking awareness about progress with life's journey; dependent on confirmation by others, especially authority figures, for identity and direction in life.
- 2. Lack of trust**
Being hesitant to fully engage cooperatively and collaboratively because of being let down more than being supported by others.
- 3. Resources insecurity**
Feeling a free-floating sense of anxiety about the threshold amount of financial resources needed before putting additional resources at risk for important goals.
- 4. Avoidance of discomfort**
Feeling the need to hold back due to physical, emotional, social, or mental pain; experiencing relief by avoiding challenges expected to trigger discomfort.
- 5. Obsessed with total control**
Desiring to minimize or eliminate variability and uncertainty—including in choices by others; inability to facilitate ownership by others.
- 6. Perfectionism**
Disproportionately focused on seeking a perfect resolution; willing to dedicate 100% effort and time to eliminating perceived imperfections even when the outcome value clearly will be relatively low.
- 7. Self-doubt**
Constantly having a sense of mental and emotional insecurity; a fixed mindset defined by low self-esteem and indecision about one's future life.

Burnout is a common emotional experience of people in all walks of life in our time-pressured society. Bianchi et al. (2021), in a meta-analytic study, found that exhaustion is the core factor in burnout and is highly correlated with

measured depression. The other burnout factors, including detachment and lack of efficacy, correlate moderately with depression. Burnout is so strongly correlated with depression that it may need to be dealt with before work on growth is possible, even with growth experiences that are effective for most people. Overcoming lack of emotional involvement and remediating feelings of cynicism about the value of work are significant challenges because a *darkening* of appraisal of one's competence as lacking makes it likely that feedback from assessment will not be accepted as intended.

Barlow et al. (2021), based on their cognitive-behavioral therapy research, have developed a unified treatment protocol that targets emotional avoidance. Among the experiential features of emotion-avoidance coping are anxiety sensitivity, intolerance of uncertainty, perfectionism, and experiential avoidance, all of which interfere with performance and growth. Barlow et al. note that avoidance of emotions and emotion-laden situations can narrow one's behavioral repertoire and interfere with disconfirming and diminishing the effects from negative emotions and associated beliefs.

Impediments Associated with Negative Thinking

Negative thinking impediments include negative thought patterns, often labelled as *maladaptive schemas*, (Mercer, 2023) that emerge from frequently reinforced negative emotions. The five impediments associated with negative thinking are listed in Table 1.4.

Negative thinking learned during childhood and adolescence can persist, especially for earlier experiences that produced feelings of vulnerability, anger, and anxiety (Gitta et al., 2015). These patterns tend to persist and to be accompanied by continued strong emotions, rumination, and reactivity to triggers in anxiety-arousing situations (Weiss et al., 2020). Barg et al. (2020) found that high-anxiety participants had a familiarity bias that tended to result in recognizing negative stimuli but without considering the differences of contexts from the past that could have helped them to distinguish which stimuli fit a current situation.

Jamil and Llera (2021) propose that contrast-avoidance is often a factor for individuals with generalized anxiety or depression, but also occurs in performance situations for people in general. Contrast avoidance is a strategy by anxious individuals to reduce the highs and lows of the affective reactions they expect by worrying ahead of time about potential negative outcomes. Rumination about past experiences of failure is the analogous strategy of depressive individuals and others who expect disappointment.

The contrast-avoidance model explains why performance development can be challenging when individuals stay focused on premonitions of failure to keep their emotions in check. Shenhav et al. (2021) describe an expected-value-of-control model of how people weigh the costs and benefits of exerting mental effort.

Table 1.4 Negative Thinking

- 1. Fear of failure**
Persistent concern that your contributions will not be valued or effective; accepting the status quo or the assertions of others even if what they propose is lower in quality than your own intention.
- 2. Philosophical skepticism**
Feeling that your life and work have no clear meaning; a sense that it is fanciful to envision growth toward an ideal self because this perspective is abstract and unconnected to the reality of daily life.
- 3. Emotional baggage**
Allowing significant issues from the past to continue unresolved; limiting growth opportunities by avoiding uncomfortable feelings and the situations that trigger them.
- 4. Accepting victimhood**
Using victimization as a ploy for avoiding life challenges that could lead to change and growth; openly blaming failure on others and on how you have been treated.
- 5. Stuck in current practices**
Having the conviction that in most situations replacing the current, seemingly adequate practice with a new untested practice, will actually decrease the quality of the situation.

The *Big Five* (McCrae & Costa, 1997) personality model provides a higher-order description of the five major traits conscientiousness, agreeableness, neuroticism, openness, and extraversion which apply across people and even cultures. A person can be described in terms of variations among these five, including neuroticism, the one negative trait, which has long been associated with mental disorders but has a wide range independent of disorders. Being emotionally defensive and being prone to strong negative emotions are significant impediments to growth and self-growth.

Impediments to Self-Determination

Self-determination impediments, delineated in Table 1.5, occur when individuals assume that they can't take actions to attain personal goals and values that they would prefer, even when an opportunity is present.

A major hurdle in growth and self-growth development is often a lack of ownership, including not only of learning but of extending to life itself (Horton, 2015). Higgins et al. (1994) distinguish between *ideal* including hopes, wishes, and aspirations versus *ought* end states including duties, obligations, and responsibilities. To gain control of impositions associated with the ought goals, it is necessary to question or doubt the feelings of need for external influence and, instead, put the focus on personal decisions and actions. It is difficult to activate positive motives when there has been long-term dependency that makes it hard to question what others expect.

Table 1.5 Self-Determination

- 1. Lack of direction in life**
Lacking a life plan to guide growth development; unaware of significant milestones that highlight meaningful changes in personal capabilities for success with life's journey.
- 2. Lack of ownership**
Failing to take control of opportunities for which there is the potential to succeed; deferring to others rather than leading efforts using a better approach that you are realistically confident about.
- 3. Limited self-coherence**
Failing to realize that everyone experiences diverse, and often competing, life roles that create a developmental integration challenge for achieving a holistic self and a meaningful growth-oriented life journey.
- 4. Lack of autonomy**
Feeling a lack of choice and control in making decisions about the what, why, how, when, and with whom of your numerous weekly activities.

Ryan and Deci's (2000) self-determination theory (SDT) aligns with the tenets of positive psychology (Seligman, 2018). SDT emphasizes competence, relatedness, and autonomy as essential to optimal functioning and well-being. Many people become apathetic, alienated, and irresponsible when they live passively and bypass opportunities to more actively engage with opportunities to expand their human potential. Supportive social environments and positive role models play important roles in the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, autonomy, and competency; environments with threats, forced tasks, external rewards, and negative evaluations lead to a diminished sense of ownership of learning and other life choices. To further complicate matters, these types of experiences become part of the sense of self and result in disinterest and avoidance that can become associated with guilt and shame which undermine the self-esteem important for capability development. Self-determination is critical to growth, which is strongest when based

upon intrinsic motivation that becomes more frequent as the individual takes increasing ownership of valued performances that increase quality of life (Assor et al., 2009).

Impediments from External Influences

Impediments from external influences result from beliefs that significant factors in life, for good or for bad, are controlled by forces and circumstances beyond the individual's control. The six external influence impediments are listed in Table 1.6.

Table 1.6 External Influences

- 1. Materialism**
Using time and energy disproportionately for acquiring possessions; having a mindset of valuing belongings as the main measure of life success and needs.
- 2. Constrained by perceived standards**
Being concerned about following and meeting conventional standards; using perception of what others value as your own standard for relationships, family life, career, home, and entertainment choices.
- 3. Reactions to complexity of life**
Struggling with discomfort caused by the fast pace of contemporary society; feeling of being left behind and not able to sustain a satisfactory quality of life.
- 4. Organizational expectations**
Investing significant effort in meeting perceptions about institutional requirements, including being a proper representative to the public for your organization.
- 5. Major life and professional disruptions**
Experiencing frequent and significant disruptions to daily plans that displace or add difficulty to the execution of growth and self-growth plans.
- 6. Doubting of evidence for self-growth practices**
Feeling unconvinced that adequate scholarship and research exists to support commitment to self-growth development.

External influences can distort perceptions and expectations about task priorities and uses of time. The daily stresses of balancing work with other responsibilities can lead to rationalization of choices, such as overworking, that are counter to one's deeper values, such as being a good parent. The individual's family and culture provide deep and long-lasting influences on developmental patterns (e.g., of personality traits and mindsets). However, as the complexity of life increases, individuals must be creative even in how they apply their valued family and cultural inheritance to balance personal needs, values, and

expectations with those of diverse others (e.g., in culture-specific entertainments or events).

In a meta-analysis of the relationship of extrinsic and intrinsic goal seeking with wellbeing, Bradshaw et al. (2023) found a significant positive effect on wellbeing for intrinsically motivated goal seeking but an overall negative effect for extrinsic goal seeking. As they note, there are conditions in which extrinsic goal-seeking has beneficial effects, but positive life aspirations, including one's own happiness, can better be shaped through goals framed around growth and community good.

External influences are often thought of immediately as the worthiest of consideration. Kalkstein et al. (2023) found that participants in experimental studies were much more likely to think of normative options than of counter normative ones when choosing goals. In one of the studies, those striving to eat healthier were less likely to be tempted in a context in which it was counter normative to ingest tasty but unhealthy food items that they might eat elsewhere. However, normative influences do not always carry the day. Athanassoulis (2023) uses a little-known variation of the famous Milgram obedience studies to argue that even this high-pressure experimental paradigm doesn't always lead to obedience to an authority figure. When participants were family members or friends, they disobeyed the orders to apply the fake punishment. Although external influences are often quite powerful, some personal characteristics, daily habits, and relationships are protective against making regrettable choices.

Impediments of Self-Regulation

Self-regulation impediments, listed in Table 1.7, include both behavioral and emotional components. Behaviorally, self-regulation is the ability to adjust actions as needed to attain performance goals. Emotions often play a role in self-regulatory efforts through strategies such as maintaining calm when evaluated on negative results and cheering oneself up when feeling down. Pursuit of valued aspirations such as growth is sustained by intrinsic motivation to discover insights and strategies for change that will lead toward one's ideals.

Self-regulation depends upon accurate awareness of the appropriateness of responses considering the conditions and requirements for performance success. Lack of focus and forethought are cognitive habits that can lead to ineffectual self-regulatory efforts such as avoidance and spending excessive time on low priority activities. Unregulated emotional reactions can easily disrupt intentions to do better at monitoring how you is approaching learning and growth opportunities.

Self-regulation impediments can occur when circumstances trigger unconscious habits that may be based on biased beliefs. Muradoglu et al. (2023), for example, found that selecting a best fit applicant for a position can lead to restricted diversity if it is believed that *brilliance* is required, and a stereotype is held that white men are intellectually stronger. Wu et al. (2023) found that gender stereotypes about math performance are communicated by peer beliefs which strengthen the impeding emotional influence on individual girls and women. Awareness of biased beliefs can be improved from reading and coaching feedback but does not prevent their continued influence on decisions and actions. Consistency in setting clear criteria ahead of time is an important strategy for improving conscious management of self-regulation impediments.

Table 1.7 Self-Regulation

- 1. Distractibility**
Tending to lose focus despite conscious effort to attend to present tasks and goals.
- 2. Lack of forethought**
Having difficulty forming clear intentions and in imagining how to implement them; frequently unprepared even for important opportunities.
- 3. Feeling time pressure**
Feeling frustration at the difficulty of mastering control over your time; failing to prioritize time for growth objectives that you realize can lead to valued change that will improve the quality of life.
- 4. Being impetuous**
Making choices and decisions too quickly to allow in-the-moment reflection on implications; accepting opportunities without careful thought about potential effects on time and quality.
- 5. Lacking a personalized assessment system**
Failing to realize the significance of a personalized assessment system that includes preset performance criteria; unaware of why assessment is essential to increasing the effectiveness of self-regulation of short and long-term growth plans.

Ryan et al. (2021) have found that mindfulness is used by intrinsically motivated individuals to organize reflection as a support to self-congruent insights and actions. Despite efforts to stay task-oriented, when distractions occur, such as concerns about how you're performing, a division in attention often leads to your mind wandering which reduces your efficiency. Mind wandering can be useful if purposely engaged to free up attention to allow creative incubation of insights for resolving incongruent assumptions in problem-solving.

Problems such as burnout, depression, and anxiety intrude on and bias self-monitoring by causing an *ironic* characteristic of self-control of mental processes that is related to cognitive load. Wegner (1994) demonstrated this counterintuitive irony from experiments that induce people to say or do exactly what they most fear they will say or do. Individuals, for example, can't always control unwanted thoughts and conscious intent while paying close attention to a particular stimulus or focus; when concentration falters, attention tends to return to what one was trying to keep out of mind, such as not thinking of a white bear for a minute (Wegner, 1989). Wegner (1994) proposed that two processes, operating and monitoring, must be synchronized for optimal self-control of mental states. When a person's attention is focused on monitoring an emotional reaction, for instance feeling shame or embarrassment at a failure, conscious operational control for the task is reduced and the likelihood increases of making inappropriate responses that would normally be avoided. When operational attention takes much energy the monitoring process can easily shift to distracting background factors, (e.g., noticing ineffective reactions of other team members during an activity), which ironically may trigger the internal frustration or aggressive comments the individual intended to avoid. Wegner's research on ironic reactions during efforts at mental control illustrates how an intentional avoidance strategy can raise the probability of unconscious responses that are the opposite of what is intended.

Impediments from Cognitive Blind Spots

Cognitive blind spots are unconscious sources of bias that influence perceptions and assessments of self, others, and situations which include learning and performing responses. After the individual becomes more conscious about their blind spots, it becomes possible to counteract their influence by changing reactions based on assessment, reflection, and support from a performance mentor or self-growth coach. The six cognitive blind-spot impediments are listed in Table 1.8.

Cognitive blind spots are self-limiting beliefs that impede learning and growth. Individuals can fall into errors by unconsciously misjudging the nature of questions, problems, and situations. Leise (2013) provides an overview and examples of common cognitive biases. An important use of PE methodologies is to support systematic ways of using assessment and planning to identify impediments likely to occur in complex tasks and processes. Effectiveness with unfamiliar cognitive challenges can be improved by learning to use methodologies that help to identify the kind of task, what preparation is needed, and awareness of responses that could be successful.

Pronin and Hazel (2023) examine the pervasive belief that others are more biased than oneself. This egocentric bias is seen across many domains such as investing, medicine, human resources, and law. The cognitive, social, and self-esteem motives that influence this general tendency cannot be easily overcome simply by increasing awareness. Useful strategies recommended by Pronin and Hazel for reducing the effects of this blind spot about one's biases are to consider how someone else might make the same judgment and to establish clear criteria *before* a performance such as conducting a job interview. Setting clear and realistic performance criteria has been a long-standing emphasis within PE (Apple et al., 2016; Van Slyke, 2021).

Table 1.8 Cognitive Blind Spots

- 1. Lacking knowledge of growth as a process**
Being unaware of the elements and processes that produce growth; lacking understanding of the need for intentional growth objectives, criteria, and reflection to make life-transforming changes.
- 2. Poor quality of life decisions**
Allowing nonconscious assumptions to influence judgments and decisions about important life choices; lacking any systematic approach or criteria to define what matters.
- 3. Non-enhanced learner**
Failing to appreciate the importance of consciously validating how growth in learning and performing has occurred; being non-reflective in general.
- 4. Fixed mindsets**
Assuming that first impressions should be relied upon to define how to make judgments about your ability to handle learning and situational challenges; strong tendency to consider only the limits of personal efficacy (Dweck, 2017).
- 5. Unwarranted beliefs**
Firmly holding untested assumptions or convictions that are acted upon even when known to be contrary to growth principles.
- 6. Low expectations with inferior criteria**
Failing to discern the differential value of required or conventional tasks versus opportunities with potential to advance and strengthen growth by increasing and clarifying expectations.

Cognitive load (Ungvarsky, 2020) refers to tasks or stimuli that consume attention in a goal-oriented situation. Many life situations cause increases in cognitive load because they involve multitasking, which creates risks of errors until all the elements of effective responding become automatic. Lui and Wong (2020) experimentally studied how individual differences in cognitive capacities, speed, memory, and intelligence are related to requirements of a

range of multitasking situations, (e.g., rapidly switching between tasks). They found no strong correlations between the type of task and individual cognitive abilities, but three main task characteristics were important. These are situations that often require responses in the moment, retrieval and use of specific information, and a specific *task-set* reconfiguration, i.e., reorienting one's cognitive approach to match the situational challenge.

Greenwald et al. (2022), in a review of evidence for interventions intended to remediate implicit bias, such as unconscious racism, found little evidence of more than short-term effectiveness with the typical interventions. Everyone shows subtle stereotype differences in micro-second responses to juxtapositions of contrast words or visuals but these reactions, as impediments, can be put to the side while choosing value-congruent behaviors. Greenwald et al. found promising methods for changing negative influences of implicit bias from public health, (e.g., taking action to prevent the social and psychological pathways that produce discrimination and disparity in treatment of others). They conclude that implicit bias occurs, for the most part, outside of individual consciousness, and are therefore cognitive blind spots. To increase assurance that implicit bias conditioning does not have unwarranted influence, the most important methods are collaborative and institutional efforts that are monitored for consistency. There are many kinds of implicit bias that unconsciously influence choices of individuals, but they need not be problematic, especially if initiative is taken to discover one's unconscious tendencies and, even if remaining unaware, to monitor responses in situations in which one should be sensitive to another's feelings and sense of identity.

In an analysis of common flaws in decision making, Heath and Heath (2013) discovered that poor decisions are very common. They summarize four main sources that lead to flawed decisions: staying with a narrow or first-impression frame-of-reference; gathering only self-serving information, i.e., being captured by confirmation bias; making a choice based on an emotional preference without checking other available information; and being overconfident that things will work out.

Impediments to Growth

Impediments to growth include underdeveloped components of the growth capabilities model (Hurd et al., 2021). Several components within the model address each of the following broader categories: self and social knowledge, growth planning, metacognitive capability, and mindset flexibility. For growth, the components emphasize the development of capabilities through effective planning to meet growth criteria. Growth development is a focus on current opportunities for strengthening performances to increase

impact while strengthening quality of life for self and others. The nine impediments that limit growth capability are described in Table 1.9.

Table 1.9 Growth

- 1. Overwhelmed by Growth**
Having a desire to engage in a growth journey but being anxious about how to get started; experiencing a struggle to get past feelings of resistance about the commitment it will take.
- 2. Being satisfied with the status quo**
Feeling good about accomplishments and believing that past and current strategies will work for the future; limited imagination about what could be possible because potential risks seem to outweigh benefits of a new path.
- 3. Limited control of opportunities**
Failing to make effective use of the many growth opportunities of each week; not considering the greater control that comes from generating opportunities rather than passively waiting for them to occur.
- 4. Inability to create action plans**
Lacking self-efficacy for creating and implementing effective action plans; not realizing the value of opportunities because intentions without implementation details fail to stimulate action.
- 5. Low growth productivity**
Intensively focusing on using time for getting everything done as expected; believing that growth goals will be attainable once time and resources become available—but not anticipating that happening anytime soon.
- 6. Lack of performance criteria**
Motivated to strengthen performances but lacking clear expectations and criteria for identifying performance growth; failing to create a self-regulatory strategy to make it possible to identify next improvements.
- 7. Minimal self-assessment**
Struggling with consistency and quality of self-assessments of performances; reflecting adds few useful insights to support growth.
- 8. Unaware of growth opportunities**
Familiar with learning and performance opportunities but lacking clarity in how selection of opportunities is essential for conscious growth development.
- 9. Lacking measures**
Overlooking need for measurement of progress in any significant endeavor; failing to identify key variables within your growth process that can be measured reliably.

Having a growth mindset is defined as being open and positive about future possibilities for greater quality of life through one's performance strategies and choices. Assessing and reflecting on how to improve significant performances assures that the individual stays in control of life's opportunities and increases satisfaction with their choices. Intentions must be clarified through planning and use of methodologies to improve performance processes and outcomes. Growth impediments include avoidance or lack of attention to opportunities to strengthen capabilities and personal characteristics that make increased quality of life possible.

Buckingham and Goodall (2019) found that evaluation based on weaknesses can backfire because employees seek affirmation more than accurate evaluation. Self-affirmation theory and research (Steele, 1988; Howell, 2017) contends that the capability to maintain and even boost self-worth under conditions of threat, such as after a negative evaluation of a performance, is valuable for securing one's self-image and increasing the likelihood of personal growth and psychological flexibility. Steele argues that if positive images of the self are at least as strong as negative images associated with threat it becomes likely that individuals can maintain and even improve their optimism and resilience. Growth can be impeded to the extent that self-affirmation is limited or inaccurate for challenges such as negative evaluations.

Growth choices can be influenced by the unconscious role of relative power in situations involving valued goals. For example, du Plessis et al. (2022) examined how relative power or control in relationships affects trust. They concluded that interdependence fluctuates by situation when changing conditions affect the power factor (e.g., a team member may usually be equal in interdependence but assert strong control in situations or tasks that trigger strong interest). Trust is lower within unequal relationships because the relative difference triggers a sense of conflicting interests. If there is a perception that a goal will have equal benefits, trust is more likely than if social comparison leads to the inference that outcomes will be better for the more powerful person. However, if groups are in competition, members of each group tend to trust each other more than members of other groups, thus overcoming power differences while competing. Some theories emphasize that feelings of being lower or higher in power matters a good deal, but du Plessis et al. (2022) argue from their evidence that the actual situation matters more than personal feelings. Trusting others is based mostly on individuals' awareness of relative social standing which is assessed in each situation.

Self-Growth Impediments

Impediments due to self-growth capabilities, listed in Table 1.10, relate to the components of the Self-Growth Capabilities Model (Jain et al., 2021). If these capabilities are un-

derdeveloped, it limits one's effectiveness with progress in a self-growth journey. The distinctive difference between growth and self-growth is the autonomy of self-growers as they self-determine, based on their deepest values, which potential growth areas will produce transformative change. Zone of development is a familiar concept from Vygotsky's (1978) developmental theory. The ideal self-growth journey is constructed through weekly and annual plans that make tangible how opportunities can be created to produce life's work within an ideal zone of development (Apple et al., 2021).

William James (1890) recognized that sense of self is a fluctuating process which means that a rigid sense of self is among the impediments to self-growth. A more expansive self-concept can be realized by strengthening mentoring learning skills (Apple et al., 2021), which, in turn, supports increased self-exploration and reflection. Broad life criteria (Jain et al., 2020) provide a frame of reference for intentional self-growth that increases intrinsically motivated productivity for greater quality of life. Lonergan (1957/1992) argues that greater objectivity results from inquiry into subjective perceptions to affirm judgments about the perceptions. By sharing observations, conceptualizations, and judgments with others it becomes possible to greatly expand one's insights in ways that add enrichment and meaning to one's own as well as other's life journeys.

Individuals who are exemplars of self-growth can be wonderful sources of enlightenment about how they used both opportunities and impediments to advance their self-growth. Albert Bandura (1925-2021) tells the story of his own self-growth journey in a 2018 paper entitled *Toward a Psychology of Human Agency: Pathways and Reflections*. He grew up in a farming area of Alberta, Canada, with so few teachers that he had to become a self-directed learner to succeed with correspondence courses. Early on, Bandura realized that perceived self-efficacy, the belief that one can set and achieve goals, is integral to motivation. Individuals must consider external environmental determinants and behavioral possibilities or competencies as well as individual goals and preferences. The vast changes in television and internet technology over the past decades have shown the power of models to influence attitudes, skills, expectations, and new ways of thinking. He bases his human agency theory on social cognitive principles that emphasize forethought, i.e., preparation of thoughtful action plans, self-reactiveness, i.e., self-regulation of behavior to meet expected outcomes, and self-reflectiveness, i.e., consideration of the meaning and ethical value of conflicting choices. Later in his career, Bandura moved his focus to large-scale social changes after an opportunity arose to work with Miguel Sabido, who was producing dramatic stories broadcast on television to reduce negative choic-

es and to provide preventive problem-solving options in personal and family situations. Lastly, in his book *Moral Disengagement*, Bandura addressed issues related to moral self-regulation at the societal level.

Table 1.10 Self-Growth	
1. Lack of self-growth consciousness	Unaware of when growth happens, why it happens, how it happened, and to the degree it happened.
2. Limited energy for self-growth	Inexperienced with the intensive creative energy that emerges for those on a self-growth journey.
3. Unaware of an ideal zone of development	Unperceptive of the motivation potential of intentional growth action planning within an ideal zone of development; believing that future reality can only be a continuation of the present <i>real</i> course of development.
4. Fixation on expectations of significant others	Perceiving commitment to another as separate from commitment to yourself; unable to imagine how every response to the expectations of another last beyond the moment and can lead to new insights for growth together.
5. Limited awareness of growth and mentoring skills	Unaware of the self-development potential of <i>growth</i> (Van Slyke et al., 2021) and <i>mentoring</i> (Batchelor et al., 2023) skills from the CLS; assuming that extrinsic influences are more powerful than personal ones.
6. Minimal reflection capability	Using reflection in restricted or ineffectual ways; unaware of the need to gain meaning from past experiences by initiating reflection during action, about action, and after action.
7. Limited use of self-mentoring	Having awareness of, but not implementing self-mentoring of growth and self-growth; intentions to self-develop have no effective counterpart in actual growth action plans that could produce desired life changes.
8. Not quality driven	Failing to recognize the power—and necessity—of tools including intentions, objectives, criteria, and measures as well as the accountability of yourself and others for motivating the raising of standards when sub-standard performance occurs.

Although Bandura admirably illustrates self-growing, the lessons from his autobiography are important for understanding why and how impediments to learning, perfor-

mance, and growth could have blocked his career and life journey at any stage if he hadn't pressed ahead by following up on insights gleaned from his observations, reflections, and sharing with others. His keen observations about how children learn from others led to his famous *Bobo doll* studies (Bandura, et al., 1961)—which played a role in changing the direction of psychology in the 1960s. He gave sustained attention and careful reflection to his observations until insights arose. Taking too little time to fully absorb the meaning of current observations, including those about self, is a major impediment to self-growth that can lead to impulsive or misdirected behavior and effort. Keeping in mind that self-growth is built on capabilities from less complex areas of learning and performance, it is important not to discount observations related to any of the other PE function levels. Self-Growth requires starting where one is and moving forward based on insights.

Mentoring System for Mitigating Impediments

As mentioned previously, the two-year PE Experts Project was utilized to refine and update the list of 62 impediments. Additionally, when resistance with recommended practices was encountered by the PE Experts project participants, the situation was analyzed by the individuals and their coach to identify and label the impediment impeding growth. Development of helpful learning and growth skills, as well as strategies and best practices, were suggested to mitigate the identified impediment (Apple, Ellis & Leasure, 2018). The coach further identified the mentoring skills that were utilized while assisting the PE Experts.

A suggested mitigation strategy for each impediment, the corresponding learning and growth skills on which the individual should focus, and the mentoring skills for the coach/mentor to utilize to assist their client have been compiled into a mentoring system presented in Table 2. This organization will help mentors and coaches quickly identify and retrieve tools to help mitigate the impediments that are currently limiting their client's growth.

(Table 2 begins on the following page.)

Table 2 Mentoring System for Addressing Impediments

NOTE: The **impediment** and *strategy/strategies for overcoming it* are shown, followed by pertinent learning skills **LS**, growth skills **GS**, and mentoring skills **MS**.

IMPEDIMENT TYPE		Psychosocial	
Valuing others over self	<i>Identify within growth plans how strengthening your own capability will lead to providing greater help for all others</i>	LS Listen to self	GS Being true to self; Trusting self
			MS Being Independent
Dependency habits	<i>Why do you defer to others? Identify three examples of dependency behaviors and ask why you continue to conform to others' needs and wishes over your own.</i>	LS Putting family first; Nurturing	GS Strengthening role identities; Prioritizing
			MS Being compassionate
Behavioral inhibitions	<i>Why are you hesitant about accepting a challenge? In situations that trigger this reluctance, what can you learn from personal history where aspirations were not realized because of this reluctance and figure out in hindsight why you did not grab the opportunity.</i>	LS Identifying personal values; Emulating others	GS Strengthening role identities; Committing to self
			MS Raising Expectations
Social avoidance	<i>Inventory the people who care about what you care about and seek out or organize a group to work with like interests</i>	LS Networking; Gaining acceptance	GS Exposing vulnerability; Seeking feedback
			MS Providing growth feedback
Lack of social models	<i>By seeking out individuals you can help, you will be motivated from these experiences to seek out individuals who can help you in helping them more effectively.</i>	LS Seeking mentoring	GS Seeking feedback; Interpreting feedback
			MS Seeking feedback; Interpreting feedback
Unwillingness to raise expectations	<i>Develop a stronger vision of one's ideal self thus creating a larger gap from real self to ideal self</i>	LS Being passionate	GS Updating life vision; Setting growth goals
			MS Raising expectations
Social Expectations	<i>By doing personal historical research, focusing on the more significant events, and analyzing the impact of social influences on who you are, you can be more proactive in changing who you want to be by moderating these influences.</i>	LS Identifying personal values; Challenging group think	GS Being true to self; Committing to self
			MS Being Independent
Limited Development	<i>Interact with a self-growth coach to gain insight about the long-term effects of early socio-emotional blocks to development and to become less subjective about personal potential, e.g. using a Learning and Moving on Form (see Appendix)</i>	LS Controlling judgmental self-talk; Accepting love	GS Believing in your potential, Trusting self
			MS Being courageous, Determining unmet needs
IMPEDIMENT TYPE		Past Conditioning	
Being labeled	<i>In reflective writing, consider who has labeled you and the meaning of their labels. Consider what power you may be giving them and set growth plans to refute these labels.</i>	LS Clarifying external identity; Challenging assumptions	GS Strengthening role identities; Being Self-aware
			MS Being Independent; Encouraging ownership

IMPEDIMENT TYPE **Past Conditioning**

Family expectations *Create a life plan that evolves from the needs, demands, and culture of one's family so you can create a personal life journey you wish to lead.*

LS Accepting ownership; Clarifying interests

GS Updating life vision; Being true to self

MS Encouraging Ownership; Being Independent

Being a negative self-judger *Gather examples of significant negative self-judgments and reformulate these self-judgments into assessments and predict what the future would look like.*

LS Controlling judgmental self-talk; Focusing on self-improvement

GS Having assessment mindset; Valuing growth

MS Being non-judgmental

Interpreting feedback as evaluation *Strengthen the interpretation of feedback by putting it into a performance and growth perspective based on aspirations rather than dwelling on past situations.*

LS Identifying the key ideas; Gaining perspectives; Being positive

GS Interpreting feedback; Having assessment mindset

MS Maintaining objectivity; Being non-judgmental

IMPEDIMENT TYPE **Emotional Needs**

Lack of self-affirmation *Reflect on examples of emotionally unhealthy need for external affirmation. Once this need is analyzed, self-assess to know that the future will be brighter than the past because you will be better.*

LS Measuring

GS Applying criteria; Toughening self-esteem

MS Designing an assessment; Self-evaluating

Lack of trust *Reflect on life situations where trust led to positive outcomes, and what allowed one to trust that person in the first place. Now look at 5 times where trust was violated and what happened and why? How much of the hurt led to positive things, and how did you respond to the hurt?*

LS Trusting

GS Trusting self; Feeling empowered

MS Being courageous; Being independent

Resources insecurity *Describe levels of resources, and correlated feelings, for basic survival, current lifestyle expectations, and desired future endeavors. Self-assess validity of personal risk standards for each level and set new standards for one's life journey.*

LS Analyzing risks

GS Accepting consequences Trusting self

MS Forecasting needs

Avoidance of Discomfort *Analyze situations you try to avoid because of their discomfort, image the worst outcome, and determine if under these conditions you can handle the consequences. Almost always the answer will be yes.*

LS Being stoic; Recognizing triggers

GS Toughening self-esteem; Believing in your potential

MS Being courageous

Perfectionism *Experiment with learning to pilot and iterate work products so that external review can strengthen the quality quicker and more effectively and the value use can be in place sooner.*

LS Risking disapproval; Identifying consequences

GS Accepting consequences; Seeking feedback

MS Being courageous

Self-doubt *Instead of focusing on the road not taken, put full energy in supporting the road selected.*

LS Coping

GS Strengthening role identities; Toughening self-esteem

MS Being compassionate; Being fair

IMPEDIMENT TYPE **Negative Thinking**

Fear of Failure *When engaged in decision making about one's quality of life, imagine a great outcome, a status-quo outcome, and a poor outcome to clarify why accomplishing something greater is worth the risk of a poor outcome.*

LS Analyzing risks

GS Self-challenging; Being proactive

MS Being courageous Writing measurable outcomes

IMPEDIMENT TYPE **Negative Thinking**

Philosophical skepticism *Use what-if modeling to illustrate how your life would change if you were living life as your ideal self.*

LS Being positive

GS Being passionate; Valuing growth

MS Identifying new qualities; Raising expectations

Emotional Baggage *Free yourself emotionally by using the reflection tool Learning and Moving On (see Appendix) to understand how your past still influences you and decide what you want to do to make present reactions different from past ones.*

LS Using failures

GS Making meaning; Being true to self

MS Maintaining objectivity Self-evaluating

Accepting Victimhood *Use the Learning and Moving On prompts in the Appendix to process experiences of being victimized to explore what went on and what you can learn that will empower you to respond in self-efficacious ways rather than emotionally destructive ways.*

LS Uses failures

GS Committing to success; Toughening self-esteem

MS Encouraging ownership

Stuck in current practices *Observe others' practices you admire to see the value they get from practices you haven't embraced.*

LS Adapting; Evolving innovative mindset

GS Changing behaviors ; Being proactive

MS Getting unstuck Transforming strategies

IMPEDIMENT TYPE **Self-Determination**

Lack of direction in life *Use reflection in developing your Life Vision Plan (Mettauer, 2002) to create a stronger sense of direction in life.*

LS Forecasting; Setting goals

GS Updating life vision; Setting growth goals

MS Writing measurable outcomes; Encouraging ownership

Lack of ownership *Reflect on recent activities to determine which were have to do rather than want to do and explore the role that ownership played in your motivation for doing these activities.*

LS Owning performance; Accepting ownership

GS Being true to self; Updating life vision

MS Encouraging ownership; Determining unmet needs

Limited self-coherence *Integrate growth objectives in weekly scripting of align growth efforts with your life plan, annual plan, growth plan, and self-growth plan.*

LS Being open; Adapting

GS Changing behaviors; Changing reactions

MS Transforming strategies

Lack of autonomy *Distinguish experiences under your control from those that aren't. Expand the sense of independence by continually adding new areas of skill and capability where choice becomes more intentional.*

LS Accepting ownership; Deciding

GS Feeling empowered; Trusting self

MS Being independent; Encouraging ownership

IMPEDIMENT TYPE **Due to External influences**

Materialism *Reflective writing – if a fire consumed your estate, what is worth saving if you only have 30 minutes and why.*

LS Identifying personal values

GS Being true to self; Listening to self

MS Being philosophical Being self-honest

Constrained by perceived standards *At the beginning of a situation, work through a set of standards and lay out consequences when initial standards are met.*

LS Clarifying expectations; Identifying personal values

GS Maintaining standards; Strengthening role identities

MS Establishing standards; Encouraging ownership

IMPEDIMENT TYPE **Due to External influences**

Reactions to complexity of life *Develop an annual growth plan to strengthen required capabilities to process life effectively to increase quality of life.*

LS Accepting uncertainty Embracing change

GS Toughening self-esteem; Self-challenging

MS Defining characteristics; Forecasting needs

Organizational expectations *Articulate one's performance criteria to organizational leaders to create a dynamic feedback loop ensuring alignment of personal performance expectations with organizational goals.*

LS Being professional; Being principled

GS Strengthening role identities; Analyzing performance

MS Writing performance criteria

Major life and professional disruptions *Gain perspective by reflecting on the causes and implications of disruptions by classifying them in terms of importance and which might be mitigated by better planning.*

LS Gaining perspective; Recognizing a pattern

GS Maintaining balance; Being proactive

MS Being patient Encouraging ownership

Doubting of evidence for self-growth practices *Review the 30 topics in the IJPE Special Edition (2016) to see that each topic is widely based in Higher Education and recent scholarship in Process Education discussing self-growth (Apple et al., 2018; Apple et al., 2019; Apple et al., 2021; Batchelor et al., 2023; Jain et al., 2019; Leise et al. 2019; Leise et al. 2023).*

LS Managing dissonance; Inquiry

GS Making Meaning; Feeling empowered

MS Encouraging ownership ; Being metacognitive

IMPEDIMENT TYPE **Self-Regulation**

Distractibility *Build a strong enough weekly script (Apple, 2024) so you are prepared to take advantage of important, but unplanned, special moments will not divert one from producing the weekly expected outcomes.*

LS Being focused; Accepting ownership

GS Committing to self; Self-challenging

MS Self-monitoring

Lack of forethought *Increase attention to the alignment of growth objectives with planned activities when producing one's weekly script.*

LS Planning; Goal setting

GS Prioritizing; Setting growth goals

MS Forecasting needs

Feeling time pressure *Determine what you should not be doing, who else can do it, and what is the relative importance of everything to determine what things should not be done.*

LS Managing time; Recognizing strong performance

GS Prioritizing ; Analyzing performance

MS Writing measurable outcomes; Recognizing unmet needs

Being impetuous *Develop quality of life criteria and use them to make daily decisions; reflect on your criteria at the end of day to see where decision making increased/decreased quality of life.*

LS Inhibiting impulses; Deciding

GS Accepting consequences; Being self-aware

MS Being patient; Determining future match

Lacking a personalized assessment system *Build a systems model of growth goals, criteria, and measures. Record what matters by rating monthly the relative value of life roles, related monthly outcomes, and what one considers most valuable for quality of life.*

LS Defining function; Clarifying expectations

GS Having an assessment mindset; Applying criteria

MS Designing an Assessment; Setting criteria

IMPEDIMENT TYPE **Due to Cognitive Blind Spots**

Lacking knowledge of growth as a process Use the 15 components of growth capability (Hurd et al., 2021) as a starting point to reflect on life decisions so they become growth oriented.

- LS Valuing knowledge; Identifying schema GS Focusing on self-improvement; Valuing growth MS Forecasting needs; Being patient

Poor quality of life decisions Assess quality of life decisions weekly, monthly, and annually using one's quality of life index and quality of life criteria (King-Berry et al., 2022).

- LS Identifying consequences; Analyzing risks GS Applying criteria; Being true to yourself MS Defining characteristics; Being self-honest

Non-enhanced learner Use the Learning Process Methodology (Leise, Beyerlein, and Apple, 2007) and Reading Methodology (Hurd et al., 2018) as a basis for self-assessing and improving one's key learning skills.

- LS Inquiring; Making connections GS Making meaning; Self-challenging MS Analyzing needs

Fixed Mindset Monitor the attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors used in responding to unknown or novel challenge, especially when you are not fully confident.

- LS Accepting ownership; Exhibiting self-confidence GS Believing in your potential; Trusting self MS Being courageous Validating personal impact

Obsessed with total control Obtain shared commitment to the outcomes that all stakeholders desire and then have a system for others to self-monitor their performance and report publicly at milestones.

- LS Managing frustrations; Managing anxiety GS Being self-aware; Feeling empowered MS Encouraging ownership; Writing measurable outcomes

Unwarranted beliefs Explore the mindsets described in PE and IJPE publications so that you challenge actions that you currently don't question to determine if those mindsets align with growth and self-growth mindsets

- LS Identifying assumptions; Recognizing contradictions GS Introspecting; Being self-aware MS Being self-honest

Low quality of goals Use weekly scripting (Apple, 2024) so each activity becomes part of a greater whole; assess how well these efforts contribute to producing better outcomes and quality of life

- LS Planning; Setting goals GS Defining performance; Valuing performance MS Establishing standards

IMPEDIMENT TYPE **Growth**

Overwhelmed by Growth Measure weekly progress on valuable changes made; measure quality of life progress monthly

- LS Coping ; Being open GS Valuing growth; Believing in your potential MS Raising expectations Being Courageous

Being satisfied with the status quo Create a personal quality of life framework (King-Berry et al., 2022) to discover areas to improve and propose practical ways you can impact these areas

- LS Embracing change; Setting goals GS Setting growth goals; Self-challenging MS Raising expectations

Limited control of opportunities Use the weekly transition (Apple, 2023) to identify and align this week's opportunities with action plans for the upcoming week.

- LS Thinking opportunistically GS Self-challenging; Setting growth goals MS Creating an action plan Raising expectations

Inability to create action plans Collaborate with a mentor or coach to use the methodology for creating action plans to improve reflection and assessment of the effectiveness of weekly plans.

- LS Controlling overreactions GS Motivating self; Changing behaviors MS Developing action plans

IMPEDIMENT TYPE Growth

Low growth productivity *When reflecting at the end of the week, determine the most productive times and least productive times and create insights to build stronger action plans to increase productivity.*

- LS Managing time; Increasing productivity
 GS Prioritizing; Motivating self
 MS Self-monitoring

Lack of performance criteria *With a mentor, come up with consensus performance criteria which meet the expectations of the performer, the mentor, and all other stakeholders of the performance.*

- LS Clarifying expectations
 GS Identifying SII opportunities; Applying criteria
 MS Writing performance criteria

Minimal self-assessment *Perform self-assessment and reflection daily on important things that matter and then have these efforts assessed by a mentor/coach*

- LS Writing to reflect; Practicing deliberately
 GS Having assessment mindset ; Applying criteria
 MS Designing an assessment system; Setting criteria

Unaware of growth opportunities *In using weekly scripting (Apple, 2024), look for the match of opportunities to growth plan so the action plans being developed are consistent with intentions.*

- LS Being open
 GS Identifying SII opportunities; Valuing growth
 MS Defining characteristics

Lacking measures *Identify what matters from the quality of life framework (King-Berry et al., 2022) and create a monthly quality of life measurement spreadsheet as a starting resource for continued self-measurement of growth's impact on quality of life.*

- LS Measuring
 GS Focusing on self-improvement; Defining performance characteristics
 MS Selecting measures; Ensuring reliability

IMPEDIMENT TYPE Due to Missing Self-Growth Capabilities

Lack of Self-growth consciousness *Pose questions each day to prepare one's subconscious to process one's thoughts and concerns, especially related to intentional growth. Use this strategy when one's efforts become inefficient since these insights often arise overnight and clarifies one's thoughts and concerns.*

- LS Incubating; Reducing self-bias
 GS Being self-aware; Making meaning
 MS Self-monitoring Being metacognitive

Limited energy for self-growth *Reflect on the following: 1) As you get stronger in capabilities, can you do more with less? 2) Do you get energy when you help others? 3) As quality of life improves, does your energy increase?*

- LS Being active; Being positive
 GS Maintaining balance; Prioritizing
 MS Analyzing needs; Being patient

Unaware of an Ideal zone of development *Each week, identify the top 3 life situations where you grew the most, describe the unique characteristics of those times, and then analyze what produced these characteristics.*

- LS Sensing wrongness; Embracing change
 GS Valuing growth; Focusing on self-improvement
 MS Defining characteristics; Getting unstuck

Fixation on expectations of significant others *Create a shared way of updating shared expectations, e.g., on day-to-day interactions, to improve cooperation with household maintenance or with a major readjustment, e.g., renew marriage vows.*

- LS Compromising; Loving
 GS Trusting self ; Being true to self
 MS Being self-honest; Analyzing needs

Limited awareness of growth and mentoring skills *Use highest priority mentoring skills to develop growth skills and to mitigate impediments.*

- LS Categorizing; Thinking opportunistically
 GS Analyzing performance; Feeling empowered
 MS Getting unstuck; Self-mentoring

Minimal reflection capability *With a coach, use the Weekly Reflection Methodology (Apple, 2022) and the Insight Methodology (Leise, Dombi, & Apple, 2023) to deepen reflections.*

- LS Practicing reflection; Seeing prompts
 GS Introspecting Being self-aware
 MS Being metacognitive; Self-evaluating

Limited use of self-mentoring *Design a better assessment system that puts emphasis on increased self-monitoring to enrich reflection and growth planning.*

- LS Being responsible; Being disciplined
 GS Changing behaviors; Changing reactions
 MS Self-mentoring

Not quality driven *Write performance criteria for everything that matters as a basis for continuous quality improvement.*

- LS Owning performance
 GS Seeking feedback; Accepting feedback
 MS Raising Expectations; Setting criteria

Future Research

As these strategies are brought to scale, researchers need to continue to search for what inhibits self-growth development from the perspectives of the performance mentor, the self-growth coach, and the self-grower. As with all grounded theory scholarship, these strategies must continuously be measured and tested for improvements and refinements that demonstrate increased effectiveness across different contexts, performance mentors, and self-growth coaches.

The roles of the performance mentor and the self-growth coach must be studied to exemplify how they can be used to enhance synergy between self-growth aims and development of individual capabilities for growth that also address impediments to that desired growth (Batchelor et al., 2023). The six PE function of knowing, learning, and learning to learn; performing, growing, and self-growing (Leise et al., 2023a) must be mindfully held in the consciousness of performance mentors, self-growth coaches, and clients for their interventions to create an integrated sense of growth and self-growth. This approach needs to be more fully explored to understand the role of consciousness in the mitigation of impediments that stand in the way of the development of self-growth capabilities. The performance mentor will often use the knowledge gap and the learning required to close this gap to enhance the performer's learning capabilities during performance development that leads to additional transferable growth capability. The self-growth coach must help clients to use their consciousness of self-knowledge and current performance capabilities to improve their consciousness around performing, growing, and self-growing based on their growth and self-growth plans. The interfaces among the different levels of consciousness, tools, methodologies, and relationships with the clients gives rise to a multitude of research opportunities.

While measurement has been a long-term research area of Process Education, there needs to be more creation,

testing, and validation of measures for growth and self-growth capabilities to better support research into the effectiveness of these methods as mitigation strategies. These include measures for growth and mentoring skills; assessment and reflection effectiveness; strength of life, growth, and self-growth plans; and use of the Methodology for Developing Performance and of the Self-Growth Methodology.

New research determining the effectiveness of professional development events and the role they play in accelerating the development of learners, performers, growers, self-growers, performance mentors, and self-growth coaches will be critical for advancing development of capabilities across all six PE functions.

Conclusion

These 10 psychological areas that provide the why behind the 62 impediments help all self-growth stakeholders to better strategize how to mitigate these impediments during performance development and self-growth coaching. The improvement of specific learning and growth skills helps to empower the performer to reduce the impact of the impediment and with strong action plans that support the provided strategy, the hold that the impediment has had is strongly mitigated. As movement in this area of development occurs, learning and growth skills become stronger, and the stranglehold of the impediment is reduced. Performance mentors and self-growth coaches can use the mentoring skill(s) to attenuate the impact of the impediment, strengthen the growth skills of clients, and expedite the development of pivotal learning skills.

With continual use of these strategies in weekly reflection, action planning, and weekly scripting, these impediments will continue to be identified, addressed, and reflected upon so that one's self-growth capabilities and practices are enhanced.

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What is the Problem? (Describe the experience, current issue, or relationship in at least one full sentence, explaining how this problem is holding you back.)

1. What are the five characteristics of the problem?
2. What are three strengths that you have that will help you to address the problem?
3. What barriers have you created that keep you from addressing the problem effectively?
4. Who can you use as a sounding board or to help you think through the problem?
5. What are the real barriers to addressing the issue? (For each barrier, explain exactly how it keeps you from addressing the problem.)
6. What are you going to do to address these barriers? (Sketch a plan, identifying short-term action you will take and then medium-term action and the long-term goal.)
7. Has the way you feel about the future changed since you identified a way to begin addressing the problem? Explain your answer.
8. What this problem has to do with my identity:
9. What this problem has to do with my sense of self-efficacy: