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BEYOND SURVIVAL IN THE INFORMATION AGE

(Logotherapy and Resourcefulness:
Preventive Stress Management)

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given by Paul Blythe, Ph.D. with
Dr. Hiroshi Takashima, M.D. at
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As an educator in Adelaide for the past ten years, I have exercised myself with the problem of educating for the future and I have come to have one personal educational objective. This objective is embodied in the word "resourcefulness". The dictionary would say that a resourceful person is one who is skilful at overcoming difficulty.

Anybody that reads the newspapers or sees what's happening in the world these days recognises that we, as a species, are on the edge of a very serious problem of survival. So my topic of resourcefulness stands as the main objective of people who are alive today and moving into the 21st century.

I would like to outline three aspects of resourcefulness. The first would be information management, the second, something of a wholistic identity and finally a sense of coherence. My background in logotherapy has led me to think of these three aspects as the vital underpinning for us to move into our dangerous times ahead. In mentioning logotherapy, as first outlined by Victor Frankl, I would like to refer to a very important member of this audience, Dr Hiroshi Takashima. I believe that Dr Takashima is second only to Dr Frankl himself in his ability to explain logotherapy. Perhaps Dr Takashima will favour us with a few words of explanation of logother-

apy.

Dr. Takashima: when I speak of logotherapy most people imagine that it means "word" therapy or "logical" therapy. However logos means spirit. Long ago, Dr Freud had a concept analysing the human mind as motivated by the will to pleasure. Adler explained the human mind as motivated by the will to power. Frankl added a further motivation, the will to meaning.

What is important is that will to pleasure and will to power can be analysed scientifically. But will to meaning can't be analysed. Frankl's idea is that will to pleasure and will to power belong to the psychological dimension and he added the will to meaning which belongs to the spiritual or noetic dimension. In my point of view, will to pleasure and will to power is brain function while will to meaning is a manifestation not from the brain but a manifestation of the human using his brain. The manifestation of the human or the spirit includes responsibility, freedom, wisdom. So it is impossible to search for this along psychological lines. That is why he introduced philosophy into his psychiatric system.

Nowadays science is almighty. Everybody believes science. Frankl noticed that science is only to analyse, to reduce to single components. Man cannot be analysed. Initially he used the term

Existenzanalyse—but it was misunderstood in the United States so he used the word logotherapy. And then again more trouble, but now more people are starting to understand logotherapy.

To state it another way, emotion and knowledge belong to the psychological world while wisdom, responsibility, freedom, meaning orientation, insight, and faith belong to the spiritual or noetic dimension.

Dr Blythe: Thank you Dr Takeshima.

Now lets come back to the question of survival, the question of going beyond survival and the notion of resourcefulness. Prime Minister Nakasone is among many of the world leaders who have recognised in the press that humanity is on a collision course. Can we think of ourselves, for example, leaving this room and finding there is no train to go home on. For some of us this would be a major crisis. I would ask of our educational system is the accumulation of knowledge, the individualism that is taught and the resultant sense of isolation and separation adequate preparation for this crisis that you might find? My suggestion is that we need to replace that preparation with the three aspects of resourcefulness outlined.

We can find some clues from Victor Frankl's experience in concentration camps. During his incarceration in the concentration camps Frankl discovered that people who were going to survive the situation were people who had, as Dr Takeshima mentioned, a sense of meaning or purpose. Frankl pointed out that you have basically three main sources of meaning: 1) A deed or a task to perform 2) A loving encounter with another person 3) encountering truth and beauty in nature.

I would like to parallel these sources of meaning with the three aspects of resourcefulness mentioned earlier. "A deed to perform" does not depend upon knowledge accumulation but depends on what I call information management. The "loving encounter", for me, is impossible without some kind of wholistic identity. The "encounter with nature" is what brings, for me, a

sense of coherence.

Let us look at what I mean by information management. I'm talking about a style that says "It's OK not to know. I'm waiting for the information to come out of the future when the time is right. I know it's going to come because I appreciate that life is a flow, a creative process. I don't need a PhD to find an alternative way home to the broken subway". Information management is being able to use whatever information is coming into my mind. It comes from two places: firstly, what I sense around me, things that are in my world and secondly, from intuition. This is something that Dr Takashima was referring to when he referred to the noetic dimension. The main point, however, is that in this style, I am contented not to know. As a matter of fact as I stand here I don't know what I am going to say next. But when it's time to say something I'll look to my notes perhaps or maybe I will think something needs to be stated because because I feel something in the audience—there's a rapport there. And indeed the answer comes—the next thing to consider is this wholistic identity.

What is this person like, who is stuck with no subway on which to go home? He is in a crisis situation. Maybe he doesn't speak any Japanese. How is he going to manage? He needs identity. He needs a sense of himself that is larger than this bag of skin. This person is aware that he has a body; he has a mind; and he has some emotions but he also has something that he truly is. There is something of a unifying and intergrating factor that brings the whole person together, holds it together as a person. Last evening a gentleman told me a word for this in Japanese, Bussho. Something of this Bussho, the essence of the Buddhism, emerges in this person. It kind of takes the worry out of being stuck without a train—I don't think Buddha ever worried about that. Yet we do have something to do—we don't just get stopped by this crisis and sit under a tree. What I am hinting at here is that there is a certain quality of inclusiveness—that not only can I include my

own "bag of skin" with its Bussho but I can include other people as part of the wholistic perspective. With this in mind I think we can be just a little bit more optimistic than our educational system led us to believe when we were asked to accumulate all that knowledge about how Marco Polo went to India and Cathay and so on.

The last point, the "encounter with nature" as a source of meaning, leads me to a sense of coherence. It is not an easy thing to think about even in English, but this term was coined by a man called Aaron Antonovsky, author of Health, Stress and Coping. He stated that the most important thing in managing the stresses and strains of our day to day experience is a sense of coherence, a sense that things fit together. This is in direct opposition to the logical positivists who teach you seeing is believing and the reductionists who think you find things out by pulling it all apart and looking at little pieces. We begin to have a sense that we can only find out about something as we find out how it relates to everything else. We have a sense of coherence, that all parts of our world, and solar system are part of a collection of energies that fit together. This is most important because we now have the notion that everything is lawful. There are no accidents!

Another author, Seligman, has written a book titled Helplessness. He stated the most impactful aspect of helplessness was uncertainty. If you live in a world that is full of random events that do not connect to each other and everything is accident and chance, you find that there is plenty of reason for uncertainty, but if you live in a world which you sense is cohesive and interactive you start to feel that it is not so uncertain. You just have to find out how the laws work in order to operate in this world. It takes away the helplessness. If, while walking along the street, a car comes along and splashes mud on your clothes, in Australia we say "Bad luck chum." but its not bad luck it's bad management! We know that when the wheel of the car hits the mud its going to splash. This is a

law. This is the way our world works. With this sense of coherence, when we see the car coming, we step back. This puts the power where it needs to be, right with the individual.

When we see nature we discover a lawful, dependable environment in which to operate—a safe environment. This doesn't mean I would leave my camera out in the streets and say "It's safe. Nobody is going to take it". By a safe environment I mean one that is lawful and predictable. I trust that given the sort of upbringing and training some people have had, they are going to take the camera and put it in their pocket.

This brings us to the idea that the resourceful person has a sense of his own identity in the center of a very orderly universe that is working lawfully. He is able to find out how to operate moment by moment as he is alert to what is happening now, and now, and now.

We have a new idea about the word responsibility. We now can see that this is the person's ability to respond. No responsibility—no freedom! Are you free to play the piano—only if you have taken the ability to respond to the piano. This puts the control of the individual's experience right in the hands of the individual.

We begin to see the basis of resourcefulness in the face of very drastic situations is in the hands of the individual because he has practiced a momentary responsibility to the situation. How is this going to work? A person is travelling along through time and meets a pressure situation. At this point we would say the person is experiencing a crisis. He comes out of the room here. He goes down to the subway and he finds no subway. I say a crisis, coming from the Greek meaning decision. The Japanese characters for crisis are *abunai* and *kikai*. As you know this translates to danger and opportunity. It doesn't work out as well with Japanese as with Chinese characters in that in Chinese, the opportunity character is at the top.

We know that pressure works equally in all directions. When I come to my crisis point, if I take the dangerous course, I am under pressure.

If I take the opportunity path, I feel on top of the pressure. The pressure actually lifts me up. This is why Frankl spoke on doing a task as being meaningful. I'm driving along. My car suddenly breaks down. If I take the dangerous course—"Oh its terridble, I'm going to miss my appointment. Oh how terrible" -then I'm in a hopeless mess and there is no resourcefulness there. But if I take the opportunity—" This is a new situation. I've never had this happen to my car before. I wonder what I am going to do. I can't consult with my teachers back in Canada or anything. I just have to be right here and live effectively. I have to take responsibility." I will feel a sense of meaning and fulfillment in doing this and when I go home to sleep at night, it feels good? it feels terrific. I think you can see what the suggestion is.

There is a process in logotherapy that was articulated by an American psychologist, James Crumbaugh. He says that we start with a process of catharsis. This simply means that you let the feelings come out. I use the example of a young man who smokes and he keeps blowing smoke in the young ladies faces and they keep walking away. He comes for counselling and he says "Oh it's terrible, all the women in my life keep rejecting me." There is a certain getting rid of the feelings and so on. The next step in logotherapy is a search for values and here we find out, for this young gentleman, that he needs to change his habits of smoking to non-smoking. This is where most counselling and therapy will stop because we think "ah, the persons problem has been solved". Well maybe, but most people have not solved their problem until they have made one more step, what Crumbaugh calls commitment. Commitment is a promise to yourself. Unless we have the commitment, the determination to stop smoking or whatever it's not going to happen.

So tonight, it will not be enough for you to think "Paul has told me how to be resourceful". It will require you to make a promise to yourself to become more resourceful. In this way you can start to see your own life as a series of crises. For

example you start in the morning "What will it be brown socks or blue, One egg or two?" Very small crises, but enough to make the difference as to whether you are going to be on top of the world at the end of the day or in the words of a former prime minister of Australia "Life wasn't meant to be easy".

We must make the commitment to ourselves to not compromise our integrity. Some people may ask what do I mean by integrity. The short answer in Japanese is Busho. The longer answer for this is to think of somebody we admire, and I have done this many times with groups such as this. Adjectives that people use to describe this person always include things like warm, kind, strong—all these characteristics that we know we admire. This is actually a description of the wholistic identity that each of us rightly carries. This wholistically identified person walks in a coherent world and is capable of managing ideas, insights, information coming to him in the creative process.

In closing I would like to read a little from a book by Lord Burghley entitled My World, My Responsibility: "There will always be problems to solve. It is not that they don't need to be dealt with, but the crux of the matter always is: WHO is dealing with them? What is the caliber of the person? How able are we to see what is really going on and to take appropriate measures relative to the things that are seen. We must accept a different identification, so that we are no longer trying to maintain our personal goals, opinions and ambitions. Innocence of heart and mind in the essential ingredient.

". . . Our individual potency and authority come from the manner in which we conduct our daily affairs. How will we express those authentic qualities of being, moment by moment? If we have the quietness within ourselves to ask that question, then we will begin to see what the answer is. For the most part, we don't have to make any great decisions. In the deliberate maintenance of an intelligent openness to life's crea-

tive process, the right direction inevitably shows itself. Then, and only then can we act with wisdom and strength in all our ways. Then, and only then, can the world of our own making be transformed."

I believe the future of our planet lies in the hands of people like yourselves who are willing to take a step toward that personal integrity I spoke of and therefore I thank you from the depth of my heart for your presence here to consider these matters.

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