

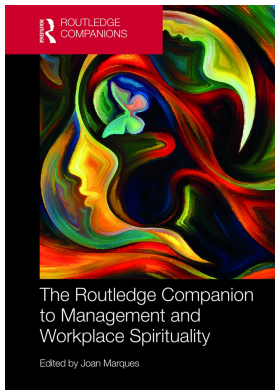
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11

TURNING INWARD TO CONNECT OUTWARD

Paving a Motivational Path in Today's Workplace

Joan Marques

Where Did All the Meaning Go?

One of the most enduring concerns in contemporary workplaces is lack of meaning, closely followed by lack of engagement. This notion has been stated on multiple forums in the past decade or more. Singer (2011) notes, “A large percentage of employees admit to being unhappy with and psychologically disengaged from their jobs” (p. 12). The enduring nature of this problem becomes apparent through the consistency with which it has recurred in various sources over the past decade or more. In 1999, Mitroff and Denton already noted that workforce members no longer want to pigeonhole their emotions and feelings. “The search for meaning, purpose, wholeness, and integration is a constant, never-ending task” (p. xv). Tablan (2015) underscored this stance as follows: “Meaningful work is both an economic and a moral issue. It is closely associated with motivation and is a significant aspect of employee satisfaction” (p. 291). Elaborating on workforce members’ desire to find meaning at work, Mitroff and Denton asserted, “They especially want to be acknowledged as whole persons in the workplace, where they spend the majority of their waking time” (1999, pp. xv–xvi). Sheep (2006) stresses that now, more than in the early 20th century, workforce members feel that they should not be considered a mere set of hands to do the work, but rather whole persons with feelings and emotions like all others, and Lips-Wiersma and Morris (2009) reaffirm that “The interest in meaningful work has significantly increased over the last two decades” (p. 491). Regarding the lack of engagement, Williams (2010) posits that human resource (HR) professionals have detected an increase in grievance reports, filed on grounds of bullying and harassment in the workplace, and warns that this pattern lies at the foundation of a decline in employee engagement.

Three Seasoned Motivation Theories

The above statements support the notion that the two problems mentioned at the beginning of this chapter—lack of meaning and lack of engagement—often go hand in hand. Workforce members frequently link their sense of meaning to the atmosphere in their workplace, which is predominantly determined by the connections they have with supervisors and colleagues. In workplaces where there is a close sense of togetherness and collaboration, there will be less

dissatisfaction, even if the work itself is not very inspiring. Singer (2011) refers to the large number of psychological job studies that keep stressing the importance of employee involvement, as it conveys a sense of caring about their wellbeing, and fulfills their need of ownership. This leads to the notion that part of employees' idea of "meaning" at work is derived from their sense of belonging. The realization that emotions and feelings about work and the work environment are important contributors in the sense of job satisfaction has also been a regular topic of attention. Wärna, Lindholm, and Eriksson (2007), for instance, conducted a study on personal virtues to health and a sense of meaning at work, and listed "the virtues of pride, generosity, love and honesty as important in working life" (p. 191).

Both of the issues discussed here present elements of some seasoned motivational theories, such as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, McGregor's Theory Y, and Herzberg's Motivation–Hygiene Theory.

Maslow's theory, arguably the best known of these three, discusses the aspiration of human beings to attain self-actualized states (Udechukwu, 2009). Udechukwu clarifies that Maslow identified five basic needs that motivate humans. Ranked in the order they surface, the needs are: (1) physiological, (2) safety, (3) love or belongingness, (4) esteem, and (5) self-actualization. Maslow's critical notion in presenting his theory was that an unmet need may create an impetus to seek it, yet, once a need is satisfied, it no longer serves as a motivator, and therefore no longer drives behavior. This, then, is how higher order needs become the next level of motivating forces (Udechukwu, 2009).

McGregor's Theory Y, as McDonald (2010) summarizes its essence, "advocates that employees are ambitious, innovative and capable of self-motivation and self-control, provided managers create the right conditions (environment) and incentives (rewards)" (p. 634). Clem and Mujtaba (2010) expand on McGregor's full theory, which actually consists of two dimensions: X and Y. They first explain Theory X: "Theory X simply states that workers are inherently lazy and need a great amount of oversight to make them productive" (p. 5). Subsequently, Clem and Mujtaba (2010) address theory Y: "Theory Y is just the opposite, stating that employees want to work and will perform their jobs and that managers should make sure workers have the resources necessary to achieve organizational goals" (p. 5). Clem and Mujtaba conclude that Theory Y is more widely accepted as a management theory, due to its constructive nature and its ability to streamline the organization's goals and those of its employees. The author of this chapter frequently explains McGregor's theories X and Y in connection with one another and clarifies that they are actually self-fulfilling prophecies: a manager who approaches his or her subordinates as if they are lazy and unreliable sends out a negative message, and will usually not find his or her employees to be proactive and driven. A manager, who communicates and behaves as if he or she trusts and relies upon subordinates, has a much better chance to receive the encouraged or envisioned attitude.

Herzberg's Motivation–Hygiene theory distinguishes between environmental factors such as the workspace and co-workers—the "hygiene factors"—and internal perceptions such as meaning extracted from the work itself—the "motivators." Herzberg's hypothesis is that the hygiene factors are responsible for the absence of dissatisfaction, while the motivators are responsible for the sense of satisfaction in a worker. Sachau (2007) summarizes Herzberg's motivation hygiene theory as follows: "Herzberg challenged basic assumptions about what satisfies and motivates employees by claiming that pay contributes little to job satisfaction, all employees need to grow psychologically, and interpersonal relations are more likely to lead to dissatisfaction than satisfaction" (p. 378). Sachau also makes the interesting observation that Herzberg's theory has been considered controversial and unsubstantial, and almost declared dead, but that current positive psychology research brings to the surface a number of findings that are highly consistent with Herzberg's disparaged Motivation–Hygiene theory. Sachau therefore suggests to resurrect this theory, not in its

micro-concept, but as a meta-theory that helps to explain, for instance, why more money matters as a motivator to a person in poverty, but not to a person who has his or her basic needs met. Herzberg's general advice to HR managers was to go easy on the hygiene factors, among which salary and other extrinsic rewards, so that workers' minimal needs in that regard are met, but mainly focus on the motivators, which involve intrinsic rewards such as a sense of meaning with the work one does, because these motivators will ensure longitudinal gratification.

As indicated by Sachau, Herzberg has a point there, because today's massive cluster of knowledge workers is looking at a much higher rate for meaning in what they do than ever before. This trend, while not tested through research, could be explained as follows: there is a greater disconnect between contemporary work, especially in countries such as the US, and its end results. Due to the service focus of the majority of jobs in this country, and the shift toward a knowledge based economy, we oftentimes don't see what our daily efforts ultimately lead to, as opposed to those who directly create something that they can see or feel. In other words: our system has progressed to greater service orientation and less manufacturing, and, while our rational mind may understand that, we are still human beings with a desire to witness the fruits of our labor and rejoice in that.

Udechukwu (2009) compares Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory with Herzberg's theory and draws the conclusion that Herzberg's work describes satisfaction horizontally, which resulted in a distinction between satisfaction and no satisfaction.

Herzberg suggested that if an employee experiences a low level of job satisfaction, it does necessarily imply that the employee is dissatisfied.... Equally, if an employee experiences a low level of job dissatisfaction, it does not imply that the employee is satisfied.

(p. 79)

Udechukwu subsequently concludes that Maslow chose to describe the phenomenon of satisfaction vertically, which created a more rigid picture of "met or unmet, strictly satisfied or not satisfied" (p. 79).

Regardless of how the theories of Maslow and Herzberg are perceived, however, the message ultimately coincides: more money only serves as a motivator when that need has not yet sufficiently been met, but stops being a driving force once it is satisfied. Perceived this way, both Maslow and Herzberg basically draw the same conclusion. Where Maslow refers to the basic needs (physiological and safety), Herzberg refers to hygiene factors (income, environment, the work itself); and both stress that when these needs are fulfilled, it is no use to multiply them indefinitely, as they will not increase the level of satisfaction. Providing these factors will only ensure no dissatisfaction, according to Herzberg's theory. However, the higher level needs in Maslow's hierarchy (sense of belonging, esteem, and self-actualization needs) are very compatible with Herzberg's motivators, which, according to his theory, are the real sources of satisfaction (intrinsic rewards, such as achievement, recognition, the work itself, responsibility, advancement, and growth). This, then, proves the coherence in both theories, even though one theorist reviewed the sequence vertically (Maslow), while the other (Herzberg) reviewed them horizontally.

Dealing with Loss of Meaning and a Sense of Disengagement

Based on the above discussion of the established motivational theories, it becomes apparent that the problem of today's workforce, lack of meaning and a sense of disengagement, lies in the higher level needs section of Maslow's hierarchy, which equals the motivators in Herzberg's

theory: the absence of intrinsic rewards. There are numerous ways to approach this problem. In a review of Daniel Pink's 2006 book *A Whole New Mind*, Camplin (2011) praises Pink's ideas about the transition humanity seems to be going through, from excessive left hemisphere (of the brain) thinking, to a more balanced approach in which right hemisphere finally obtains a more prominent function. Further citing Pink's work, Camplin (2011) explains, "The left hemisphere of the brain is sequential, literal, functional, textual and analytic.... Left-brain thinking dominated education, feeding workers to the 'hardheaded organizations' during the Information Age (e.g., computer programmers)" (p. 43). The right hemisphere of the brain is the part that focuses on aesthetic, metaphorical, contextual, simultaneous, and synthetic issues. It is where the artistic and creative elements get encouraged, and it is also the side that has been grossly undervalued all through the 20th century when the industrial era was at its height. It is Pink's conviction that we are now shifting from the Information to the Conceptual Age, where creativity, empathy, and the ability to see the big picture, increasingly matter. Intrinsic motivation will finally be recognized as an honorable driving motive, and the erroneous notion of ever more money and other factors that have been saturated as needs, will finally fade (Camplin, 2011).

When therefore the sense of meaning is still suffering from a change in general working conditions in contemporary workplaces, as became apparent in recent decades, and we additionally have to deal with excessive and enduring aggression from co-workers, a negative cycle emerges. Seeing this cycle increases our understanding as to why we face such high percentages of unhappy workforce members who don't have a solid notion about ways to improve their circumstances. Considering, on top of everything, the strong individualistic environment in which we perform, where everyone has been programmed to fight for his or her own progress, where things change continuously, and where there is no real job security, the picture becomes painfully clear: we start feeling disconnected from our work, our colleagues, and even our own sense of gratification.

Moving Toward a Solution

Our current generation of workforce members is not only suffering from the disadvantages of a volatile workplace. There are many advantages that have emerged in the past decades as well. One of these advantages is the increased access to other cultures and, therefore, alternative ways to solve problems. With the abundance of information that can be accessed through the Internet, either through formal channels such as news, educational, and governmental sources, or through informal channels such as self-promotional and social networks, a multitude of strategies are being presented to those who are seeking for gratification, and the average human awareness level is on the rise. This was already clear near the end of the previous century, when Alexander (1998) delineated that the dynamic shifts in information availability and networking options, along with workforce challenges, demanded new problem solving skills, a sharper focus on core competencies, and increased cross-cultural awareness and interpersonal skills.

In the next section, two possible ways in which workforce members can recapture their sense of meaning will be discussed: (1) exploring the entrepreneurial route, and (2) adjusting the attitude toward the current workplace.

Exploring the Entrepreneurial Route

The entrepreneurial experience should not be limited to those who start their own business. Baines, Bull, and Woolrych (2010) point out that this is the narrow definition. Entrepreneurial behavior can also be exerted by workforce members who want to take more ownership over

their daily experiences. It is known that entrepreneurs have a greater internal locus of control. That means that they take more responsibility for their actions, and first seek fault within themselves for everything that goes wrong. Entrepreneurship today is seen as the act of recognizing and pursuing opportunities, creating value, and bringing innovative change. People who think entrepreneurially engage in constructive networking, take responsible risks, and are proactive (Baines et al., 2010).

When referring to the entrepreneurial route, as done here, there are two interpretations possible. One can fulfill the most basic implementation of entrepreneurial thinking by actually deciding to exit the corporate workplace and starting a business or nonprofit in which he or she sets his or her own rules and creates his or her own performance environment. The advantage of doing this is that one can decide how he or she wants to develop the business, what size to maintain, what direction to get into, and the like. In doing so, one eliminates having to deal with difficult co-workers, because one becomes the owner of the business, and therefore hires whomever he or she prefers.

The other option is to implement the broader, contemporary interpretation of entrepreneurship, by remaining in the corporate work environment, but shifting one's paradigm toward entrepreneurial thinking. In this case one can swiftly and without any outward changes adopt the mindset of being a supplier of services to one's employer. By taking this stance, one elevates his or her perspective of the workplace to one of equality. Suddenly there is no self-pitying employee anymore, but an equal partner who can decide whether he or she wants to maintain this work relationship or not. In his book *The Brand You 50*, Peters (1999) encourages his audience to shift their mindset into seeing themselves as CEOs of "Me, Inc." and transform themselves into a brand. It is this very personal paradigm shift that can help workforce members to start seeing problems as opportunities for growth and learning, and convert their victimized mindset into an equal one. By adopting this mindset, one might find him- or herself acquiring a greater sense of responsibility over his or her performance, and a decreased concern with what "difficult" co-workers have to say.

Attitudinal Adjustment at Work

While the adoption of the entrepreneurial mindset within the corporate environment also entails an attitude adjustment, it touches on a different, more aggressive plane than the one to be discussed next. The attitude adjustment discussed in this section is one that grows from a devoted effort toward adopting a wisdom mentality, where one engages in deep reasoning, and then realizes the impermanence of everything. Thus far, the awareness of impermanence has mostly been interpreted in light of insecurity at work as Pfeffer (2003, p. 29), for instance, asserts:

The loss during the past 10 years of security in employment, as both business and government downsize, merge, use temporary employees, subcontract, and outsource their services and production overseas, has left behind workplaces characterized by fear, pressure, and *impermanence*, with employees who are less loyal, less committed, angrier, and more disaffected.

The view of impermanence that emerges in this particular attitudinal adjustment is from a much greater magnitude. A more expansive picture of life and its capriciousness becomes manifest and the small things no longer instigate enduring negativity. All of this ties in with the awareness of impermanence that Thich (2007, pp. 8–9) refers to when he states:

Impermanence ... refers to the transient nature of all things. From moment to moment, all things in this world, including human life, mountains, rivers, political systems, are in constant transformation. This is called impermanence in each moment. Everything passes through a period of birth, maturity, transformation, and destruction.

Through this expanded awareness, one develops a sense of empathy for all co-workers, as one now also understands the greater connection that exists with his or her co-workers. This expanded awareness also leads to the understanding that it is no use to take things personally, because one can never understand fully what other people's motives are behind their actions. In workplaces particularly, we often deal with behavior that is difficult to digest. As Vasconcelos (2010) states it: "It is not uncommon for workers to face unfriendly relationships, new and further assignments, poor organizational climate, and aggressive bosses, in their workplaces. This contributes to an unhealthy organizational frame in the 21st century" (p. 369). Schein (1992) presents the analogy of an iceberg when reviewing organizational cultures: about 90% of it is invisible beneath the surface, so it can be easily misinterpreted. It is, however, not only the organization's culture that could be compared to an iceberg: its members could too. Co-workers also have histories of experiences and perceptions that are invisible to their environment, yet very influential in the ways they behave and perceive matters. People often act in response to the fears and preconceived notions they are dealing with, which may affect their behavior toward certain co-workers who may remind them of these past troubles. By realizing that people usually have problems with their own mental baggage rather than with others, and that they just substitute their issues in the person or group that most resembles them, one can develop a greater level of willingness to collaborate, even with the most difficult co-worker.

Turning Inward to Understand Interbeing

An attitude change is not implemented easily. Attitudes usually change when a change of perspectives occurs. However, it usually requires a transfixing experience, either on the extreme high end or the extreme low end, in a person's life to change his or her perspectives. In their review of four possible paths toward creating a spiritual workplace, Kinjerski and Skrypnek (2008) refer to this phenomenon as "The path of transformative events" (p. 324), which they explain as "a process that had occurred in response to a crisis or a spiritual awakening" (p. 324). In their book *True North*, George and Sims (2007) refer to these transformative events as crucibles, just as Bennis and Thomas (2002) labeled them earlier. A crucible is an experience that tests an individual to his or her limits. "It can be triggered by events such as confronting a difficult situation at work, receiving critical feedback, or losing your job" (George & Sims, 2007, p. 46). The difficult situation can also be instigated from outside the work realm, such as loss of a dear one, divorce, or illness. In a 2004 study on workplace spirituality by the author of this chapter, a number of business executives also considered the positive end of life changing events, and mentioned new responsibilities such as marriage, the birth of one's child, or other memorable developments such as recovery from a distressing illness, or the realization of a long awaited dream, for instance.

Many great leaders of today have experienced their share of crucibles before becoming the empathetic leaders they now are.

There are, however, less dramatic ways to acquire a change of attitude, leading to reduction or elimination of the problem with co-workers: through turning inward and getting in touch with the source of wisdom inside. Leonard and Biberman (2007) support the notion that the process of getting in touch with our spiritual side or exploring other dimensions of reality could

be referred to as a shift to a different state of consciousness. This process is initiated and maintained in different ways by different people. Fry (2003) suggests practices such as spending time in nature, prayer, meditation, reading inspirational literature, yoga, shamanistic practices, and writing journals. Marques, Biberman, and Dhiman (2010, p. 23) postulate that specifically meditation is making prominent inroads as a vehicle toward greater awareness. They affirm,

As the exposure to alternative ways of performing increases, receptiveness to alternative ways expands, and practices that were previously considered pure Eastern or Western become global. Meditation is one of those expanding practices. Though applied by selected groups in the Western world for centuries, meditation is increasingly accepted in Western environments, particularly now that the realization sinks in that meditation does not necessarily have anything to do with renouncing one's faith for another.

Leonard and Biberman (2007) mention several other Eastern energy practices such as tai chi, chi gong and martial arts, and yoga, and confirm that the intention of all these exercises is to increase one's "self-awareness, emotional self-awareness, positive self-assessment, and self-esteem" (p. 943). The methods used to realize the process of turning inward are multiple but, if conducted properly, they can all lead to one overarching change: the awareness that troubled co-workers should not be a source of irritation and fear, but of compassion. Ross (1997) shared the advantage of being in touch with one's spiritual dimension through an example of nurses, who become better able to relate and respond to spiritual needs of their clients. Marques et al. (2010) conducted a workshop in which they applied the concept of individual meditation, followed by group meditation, to find out whether synergy could be attained in problem solving, and found that most participants to this workshop made significant headway in finding solutions to the issues they were struggling with. All of the above mentioned strategies are intended to achieve personal and professional improvement through the attainment of a new insight. Once this new insight has nestled itself into one's system, the hold of irritation and dissatisfaction is ready to be lifted.

Turning inward can bring a number of critical insights to the surface, such as: (1) general awareness: the impermanence of everything; (2) specific awareness: the fickleness of positions; (3) holistic view: the ability to focus on the whole, and see past small irritations while recognizing the blessing of being where one is; (4) learning stance: the skill to understand that every seemingly negative occurrence serves a useful future purpose; (5) interconnectedness: the connection with others, even if they refuse to see it; (6) void: the awareness of one's non-self.

While there are other mental modes that could emerge, the six above qualities could be considered a good foundational package for anyone who wants to outgrow the agony of dissatisfaction at work. A brief elaboration of these six contemplation points is presented next.

1. *General awareness*: the impermanence of everything. This is usually a very strong beginning and ending point of every deep contemplation, in which one reviews his or her life and all the things that came and went through time: the losses and victories that were part of one's history, the friends, family members, positions, places, and experiences one encountered, which either changed over time, or disappeared from radar. The Dalai Lama (2005) suggests mindfulness meditation in which we become increasingly aware of the subtle but continuous changes that occur in our body and mind. Alternatively, the Dalai Lama suggests contemplation on "the complex web of circumstances that keep us alive, which leads to a deeper appreciation of the fragility of our continued existence" (p. 155). The awareness of impermanence spans over every area of our lives, and is usually the easiest one to communicate with those who struggle with senses of meaninglessness and isolation.

2. *Specific awareness*: the fickleness of positions. It is an easy transition to shift attention from the general scope to the workplace, and realize, as a result of the awareness generated in point (1) above, that the impermanence of matters does not exclude the workplace. Co-workers and their attitudes, problems, job losses, titles, influential positions, or powerlessness: they all arise and pass as everything else. Aside from the suggestions from the Dalai Lama in point (1) above, Thich (1998) recommends us to contemplate on the “Five Remembrances,” which are embedded in Buddhist teaching, but make sense for every human being, regardless of his or her religious convictions:

1. We all grow old;
2. We all are prone to getting ill health;
3. We will all die;
4. Everything and everyone we cherish is prone to change; and
5. The only thing we own are our actions.

This quintet of realizations could be highly effective to us in understanding that it is not rewarding to become excessively upset about the things that don't seem right at work, because they, too, will once pass. Those who have adopted this understanding also know that releasing problems from their problem status by shifting one's paradigm is the quickest way to disarm them.

3. *Holistic view*: the ability to focus on the whole, and see past small irritations while recognizing the blessing of being where one is. Point (2) above is a good foundation for this contemplation point. Once there is solid understanding that everything passes, it also starts to become clear that those who obsess about their position, and engage in negative politics in the workplace are trapped in a superficial mindset, in which they cannot see beyond a single dimension. They got lost in details and became unable to enlarge their horizon. If, however, they decide to acquire a holistic perspective, a sense of gratitude can be obtained for all that is, without stressing too much on unpleasant but small details. According to Miller and Timothy (2010), the holistic view is on the rise and the narrow-minded, obsessively protective approach, is fortunately decreasing among workforce members.

Many employees of all levels, in all industries, and in all parts of the country (and increasingly the world) wish to live a holistic life and bring their whole self to work, including their faith. This is often called the Faith at Work movement or Spirituality and Work movement. . . . The global economic crisis triggered in 2008 has, if anything, further strengthened this movement.

(Miller & Timothy, 2010, p. 53)

4. *Learning stance*: the skill to understand that every seemingly negative occurrence serves a useful future purpose. With the previous thought of seeing the whole picture and refraining from becoming trapped in details, one can consider the expansiveness of life in all its facets and the magnitude of all there is to learn. In extension to that awareness, one can start appreciating all the lessons that are captured in those we meet: the pleasant and not-so pleasant teachers, who appear to provide us with what we need to know for our future. The realization that even the less pleasant occurrences of today will turn out to be useful tomorrow is a strong one that can make a world of difference in the way one deals with workplace circumstances. In addition, learning also entails the act of trying to understand others in order to help them and increase the sense of wellbeing for all. Thich (2003) particularly underscores the importance of right

understanding, which is one of the elements of the Noble Eightfold Path in Buddhist teaching. He asserts (p. 88):

Deep listening and loving speech are wonderful instruments to help us arrive at the kind of understanding we all need as a basis for appropriate action. You listen deeply for only one purpose—to allow the other person to empty his or her heart. This is already an act of relieving suffering. To stop any suffering, no matter how small, is a great action of peace.

5. *Interconnectedness*: the connection with others, even if they refuse to see it. The thought expressed above that everything that happens today is a needed lesson for tomorrow is an important dimension of interconnectedness. Richmond (2000) suggests trying to keep track for a few days how many times we say “thank you” at work.

And whenever you yourself say the words “thank you,” see if you can step back from the habitual cadence of talking and say them with a little more depth and feeling. Yes, I automatically say thank you to you when you hand me the phone at work, but I can also be thankful for your presence, for all the people here, for this job, for the freedoms that I have, for my health, for this world, for everything.

(Richmond, 2000, p. 225)

However, the notion of interconnectedness transcends mere occurrences. It manifests itself in things and in people. The notion can be further approached in numerous other ways, such as the thought that everyone appears to teach us something, and is therefore connected to us, but also, that everything we use (our food, clothes, cars, homes, etc.) was produced by millions of others in an immense web of interbeing, consisting of all humans, flora, and fauna, and that existence is only possible in relationship with those so-called “others.”

6. *Void*: the awareness of one’s non-self. As the contemplation point above sinks in, the realization starts dawning that we are part of something much greater than ourselves. Ashforth and Pratt (2003) refer to this awareness as, “a connection to something greater than oneself” (p. 93) and clarify that this “something” can be different things, such as other people, one or more causes, the environment, or believing in a higher power. This notion could also be described as being a dissolvable part of an evolving existential wheel, which keeps spinning through time, and which changes in substance from micro-moment to micro-moment. Kabat-Zinn (1994) points out the limiting context of the self, and the process of “selfing” that we engage in all day long by continuously referring to “I,” “me,” and “my.” Kabat-Zinn (p. 237) notes:

If you observe this process of selfing with sustained attention and inquiry, you will see that what we call “the self” is really a construct of our own mind, and hardly a permanent one, either. If you look deeply for a stable, indivisible self, for the core “you” that underlies “your” experience, you are not likely to find it other than in more thinking. You might say you are your name, but that is not quite accurate. Your name is just a label. The same is true of your age, your gender, your opinions, and so on. None are fundamental to who you are.

Our current notion of existence is a passing stage, and will be continued by another element of the whole that is the ultimate Self of which we are part.

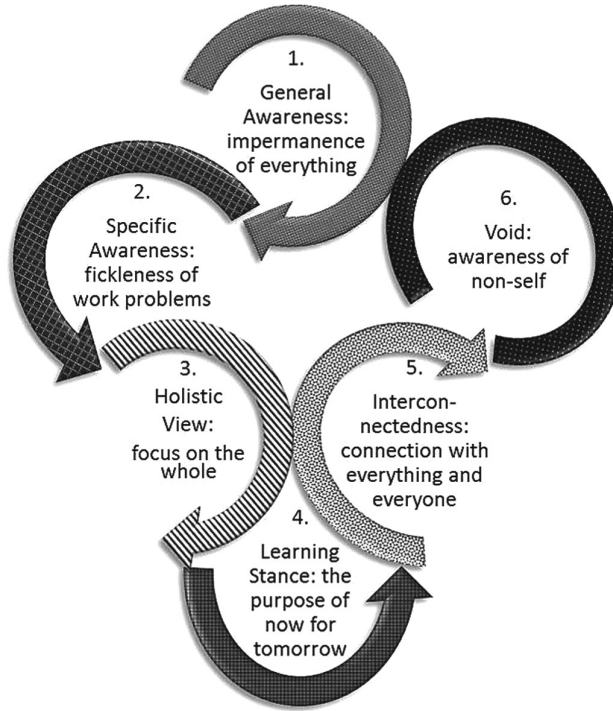


Figure 11.1 Turning Inward to Understand Interbeing at Work

Conclusion

The six contemplation points presented in this chapter form a synergistic mental approach toward personal and professional wellbeing in the workplace and any other environment. The points are closely interlinked, which makes them easy mental steps to follow on the path to less friction and greater tolerance, less ostracism and more togetherness, less antagonism and more peace. If these six contemplation points are nurtured, possibly one by one until they dissolve into one understandable whole, it becomes possible to elevate the mind beyond senses of meaninglessness or disengagement, as the understanding emerges that meaning and connection are part of an awareness that can only be gained by turning inward, and contemplating on essential existential points such as the six above.

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