

*The Path of Least Resistance:
Learning to Become the Creative Force in Your Own Life*

By Robert Fritz



If you limit your choices only to what seems possible or reasonable, you disconnect yourself from what you truly want, and all that is left is a compromise.

— *Robert Fritz* —

AZ QUOTES

Summary

1. This book is about how to create what you want in life. Once a person makes a conscious choice to be the predominant creative force in their own life, that life is changed forever: possibilities open up, projects are born from other projects, and the practice of being true to yourself, your project, your vision of life, becomes more and more effortless. Creativity is not something you are born with, it is a skill that can be learned, practiced, and mastered. In this book, Fritz covers
 - a. The steps of creating – from conceiving the result to taking action to building momentum
 - b. The importance of creating what you truly love
 - c. The creative cycle – germination, assimilation, and completion – and how to make the most of each stage as you travel through it
 - d. Why manipulating willpower, affirmations, positive thinking, and other human potential programs don't work
 - e. The difference between making fundamental, primary, and secondary choices in your life, and how making each kind of choice will affect your ability to create what you want
 - f. The importance of having a firm grip on both current reality and future vision – and how to focus the creative process to move from where you are to where you want to be

Key Takeaways

1. Overview
 - a. This book is about a new understanding of *structure* as a dominant factor in the life of the individual and how the laws of the natural order always move according to structural principles. We all recognize the major structural principles that governs the laws of movement in nature, yet only a few apply it consciously. **This principle is that energy always moves along the path of least resistance and that any change you attempt to make in your life will not work if the path of least resistance does not lead in that direction.** Throughout this book you will learn to form new structures in your life that will enable you to direct the path of least resistance to where you truly want to go
 - b. In exploring creativity, I was drawn toward two distinct but related fields: metaphysics and nature. Much of what I found was alloyed with rigid dogma and superstition, both of which I find extremely unattractive to this day. But I also found some principles which, when applied, release the human spirit in powerful ways. One of the fundamental principles is the relationship between your direct actions and circumstances. One way or another, the proponents of metaphysics try to understand the laws governing the universe, so that individuals can become more of the creators of the circumstances in their own lives. **The general metaphysical idea is this: find out how the universe is, then act accordingly.**

The hope is that these actions will lead to more of what you want, be it spiritual, material, or psychological. **Creating, I have concluded, is the best window to the universe I know**

- i. *“What the pupil must learn, if he learns anything at all, is that the world will do most of the work for you, provided you cooperate with it by identifying how it really works and aligning with those realities. If we do not let the world teach us, it teaches us a lesson.” – Joseph Tussman*

2. The Path of Least Resistance

- a. Once a structure exists, energy moves through that structure by the path of least resistance, in other words, energy moves where it is easiest for it to go. This is not true just for cows, but for all of nature. The water in a river flows along the path of least resistance. The wind blowing through the concrete canyons of Manhattan takes the path of least resistance. Electrical currents, whether in simple devices, such as light bulbs, or in the complex circuitry found in today’s sophisticated computers, flow along paths of least resistance. You got to where you are in your life right now by moving along the path of least resistance
- b. This book is built along three central insights:
 - i. You are like a river. You go through life taking the path of least resistance. We all do – human beings and all of nature. It is important to know that. You may try to change the direction of your own flow in certain areas of your life – your eating habits, the way you work, the way you relate to others, the way you treat yourself, the attitudes you have about life. Ad you may even succeed for a time. But eventually you will find you return to your original behavior and attitudes. This is because your life is determined, insofar as it is a low of nature for you to take the path of least resistance
 1. *If you can buy into this, you can’t help but be humble. Your “structure” allows you to accomplish what you have. Sure, it takes hard work and perseverance, but, many just don’t have the structure around them to accomplish what you have no matter how hard they try. Like luck, it is hard to take credit for the structure you’re given and get a big head*
 - ii. The second insight is just as fundamental: **the underlying structure of your life determines the path of least resistance.** Just as the terrain around Boston determined the path of least resistance for the cows to flow and just as a riverbed determines the path of the water flowing through it, so the structures in your life determine your path of least resistance. Whether you are aware of these structures or not, they are there. The structure of the river remains the same whether there is water flowing through it or not. If a riverbed remains the unchanged, the water will continue to flow along the path it always has, since that is the most natural route for it to take. **If the underlying structures in your life remain**

unchanged, the greatest tendency is for you to follow the same direction your life has always taken

iii. **You can change the fundamental underlying structures in your life.**

Just as engineers can change the path of a river by changing the structure of the terrain so that the river flows where they want it to go, you can change the very basic structure of your life so that you can create the life you want. Furthermore, once a new basic structure is in place, the overall thrust of your life – like the power of the river’s current – surges to form the results you truly want. And the direct path to those results becomes the path of least resistance. **In fact, with an appropriate change in the underlying structure of your life, the path of least resistance cannot lead anywhere except in the direction you really want to go.**

c. **The guiding principle that emanates from these three insights is this: you can learn to recognize the structures at play in your life and change them so that you can create what you really want to create.**

3. Creating vs. Problem Solving

- a. When you are solving a problem, you are taking action to have something go away: *the problem*. When you are creating you are taking action to have something come into being: *the creation*. Notice that the intentions of these actions are opposite. When you think structurally, you ask better and more useful questions. *Rather than asking, “How do I get this unwanted situation to go away?” you might ask, “what structures should I adopt to create the results I want to create?”*
- b. Many people’s lives are inextricably tied to their problems. The majority of the actions they take are designed to eliminate the problems so that they can be problem-free. But with all this action they still have problems. Some of these people have the same old problems, some develop new problems. *What drives the action is the intensity of the problems*. Once the intensity of the problem is lessened, people have less motivation to act. Thus problem solving as a way of life becomes self-defeating. Problem solving mostly leads to less and less action as the actions work to solve the problem! No matter what your problems are, for the most part, solving them won’t solve them. You will always have a new problem if you do not know how to create what you want. And creating is no problem.
- c. Within this context there is a *focus of critical judgement*, not a suspension of it. As creators master their own creative processes, less and less is left to alternatives. The creator develops an economy of means. The more the mastery, the more direct the path from original concept to final creation. *Freeing the mind is different than focusing the mind*. Focus needs an object of attention. To a creator, the object of focus is the final result that he or she wants to create. There is always an unknown quality in the creative process, as there is in fishing, but when you are aware of the final result you want to create, you are able to focus the process, rather than making the process a random one.

- d. **What motivates a creator? The desire for the creation to exist.** That is enough. However, do not confuse your creation with your identity. You are not what you create. Even though your creations come from and through you, your creations are separate from you. When you separate yourself from your creations, you can experience one of the most profound understandings of creativity – love. **The reason you would create anything is because you love it enough to see it exist.**
 - i. *All the great things are done for their own sake. – Robert Frost*
 - e. In the orientation of the creative, you have no obligation to create what you love enough to create. You do not need the creations you create. Artists truly understand this point, because there is no real need for art.
 - f. One of the most important lessons I have learned in the past 15 years of teaching the creative process concerns the true nature of people. **When people are united with their real power – the power to create what they want to create – they always choose what is highest in humanity. They choose good health, exceptional relationships, and love, and relevant life purpose, and peace, and challenges worthy of the human spirit. People, I have come to discover, are profoundly good.** But, you might well think, what about our destructive tendencies? What about all the examples of wars, inhumanity and needless cruelty? Those who spend their lives destructively are not in touch with their power to create. Instead, the manifestation of evil through history has come in reaction to the *inability*, not the ability, to create. Power-wielding, manipulation, terrorism, militarism, and lust for power do not come from having power, but from not having power
 - g. After the direct experience of creating what they have chosen, these people know that what they want is not arbitrary. It is one of the most important factors in their lives as creators
 - h. Beethoven wrote a lot of music that his contemporaries didn't understand. That was fine, he said. **"I write this music for a future time."** Today, most string quartets include the *Gross Fugue* in their standard repertoires.
 - i. If not by revelation or discovery, then how do you derive the *what* in the question, "What do I want?" The answer to this question is known, either rationally or intuitively, by those who are actively involved in creating! You create the "what" in "What do I want?" by making it up! Creative people know they make up what they create but often rationalize or describe it rationally after the act of reaction. However, the more precise way of asking this question is, **"What result do I want to create?"** You have to know what you want to get. But when you know that, let it take you. And if it seems to take you off the track, don't hold back, because perhaps that is instinctively where you want to be. And if you hold back and try to be always where you have been before, you will go dry.
 - j. To repeat is to go against the laws of the spirit, its forward motion
 - i. *Reminds of Disney and how he never wanted to create sequels because he wanted to get the most creativity out of his one life*
4. Planned vs. Organic Process

- a. **A system doesn't guarantee anything but once a vision is clear, processes organically form that lead to the accomplishment of that vision. This means that, in the creative orientation, process is invented along the way. The reactive-responsive tendency seeks a formula to follow. This gives them a feeling of control but this only allows them to prepare for the predictable and familiar. Your mastery of those situations would be similar to that of a well-trained mouse in a maze. From the orientation of the creative, on the other hand, the only rule of thumb about process is not to have a rule of thumb. *The process itself should always serve the result.*** And because a new result might require a completely original process, limiting yourself to preconceived notions of what processes are available can be fatal to spontaneity.
 - b. **A planned process is totally foreign to a creator. When you create, process is functional. There is no dogma to adopt, no romance to maintain, no philosophy to uphold. Process is invented and designed to serve the result you desire. This is its only purpose. It is best to allow processes to form organically from within the vision of the result. It is unwise to limit the way a result can happen by any given process. At the time you conceive the result you want, the actual way you will bring it about is always unknown to you, even if you have a hunch about it.**
5. Structure
- a. **What is structure? The structure of anything refers to its fundamental parts and how those individual elements function in relation to each other and in relation to the whole.** A human body's structure refers to its parts – the brain, heart, lungs, blood cells, nerves, muscles, and so on – and how these individual parts function in relation to each other and to the body as a whole organism
 - b. **Thinking isolates events: “understanding” then interconnects them.** ““Understanding” is structure,” for it means establishing the relationship between events.
 - c. Everything has an underlying structure. Some structures are physical, such as bridges, buildings, tunnels, stadiums. Some are nonphysical, such as the plot of a novel, the form of a symphony, the dramatic movement of a film, or the structure of a sonnet. **Whether physical or nonphysical, any structure is made up of parts that relate to one another. When these parts interact, they set up tendencies – *inclinations towards movement.*** Every structure contains within it the inclination toward movement, that is, a tendency to change from one state into another state. But some structures tend to move, whereas others tend to remain stationary
 - d. **One of the most important insights of this book is in this principle: *structure determines behavior!*** The way anything is structured determines the behavior within that structure. There are fundamental structures in your life which determine the path of least resistance. **The structures that have the most influence on your life are composed of your desires, beliefs, assumptions, aspirations, and objective reality itself. *Humans act in accordance with the***

underlying structures in their lives. Because humanity is part of nature, it should be no surprise that people act consistently with natural law. But for most of us, this is a new idea. In our culture we have been taught to ignore our relationship to nature, to treat nature simply as the stage or background that we use, adopt, tolerate, or oppose, as the case may be

- e. ***Some structures are more useful than others in leading to desired results. Structure is “nothing personal”. Someone in a structure that leads to pain, frustration, and hopelessness is not being designed by the universe as a victim of life. Put anyone else in that same structure and that person will have similar experiences.***
6. Reactive-Responsive Tendency
 - a. These types of people are “circumstance-driven” – they think there is a “right way” to do things and they only react to external circumstances. This leads to a feeling of powerlessness. If you habitually react or respond to circumstances, where does the power lie in these situations? It clearly lies outside you, in the circumstances. Therefore, because the power does not reside in you, you are powerless and the circumstances are all-powerful.
 - b. Some people who enjoy better than ordinary life situations base their lives on an avoidance strategy that permeates many of their actions and attitudes. They manage to reach a certain plateau of insulation, keeping themselves “safe” and “certain”. **There is nothing inherently wrong with this but this is motivation by avoidance, and all energy is focused on what you don’t want. Such people continually compromise whatever they may truly want in their lives for the sake of safety, security, and a sense of peace. However, they never experience true safety, security, or peace.** Through this defensive strategy, the most they can hope to attain in their lives is complacency and mediocrity. Beneath all their pseudo security is an undercurrent of dissatisfaction and vulnerability to circumstances beyond their direct control.
 - c. **Creating is not a product of our circumstances. There is a dramatic difference between organizing your life around your circumstances and around what you want to create. In the first, you are always the subject to the whims of circumstances. In the other, you are the predominant creative force in your own life, and circumstances are one of the forces you use in the creative process.**
 - d. A person in the reactive-responsive orientation is in a kind of maze. The circumstances are the walls. The person’s life consists of negotiating through the maze. When you are in the orientation of the creative, life is often interesting, exciting, special, and full of possibility
 7. Tensions Seeks Resolution – Oscillation vs. Resolution
 - a. One basic principle found throughout nature is this: *tension seeks resolution*. From the spider web to the human body, from the formation of galaxies to the shifts of continents, from the swing of pendulums to the movement of wind-up toys, tension resolution systems are in play. We can observe in nature and in our

lives both simple and complex tension-resolution systems that influence not only the changes that occur but *how* those changes will occur. The simplest tension-resolution system is a structure that contains a single tension. The tendency of the structure is to resolve the tension. If you stretch a rubber band, the tendency of the rubber band is to pull back to resolve the tension in the structure. A compressed coiled spring has a tendency to release the tension by springing back toward its original state.

- b. **The path of least resistances oscillates in some structures and resolves in others.** If you are in an oscillating structure, you will experience a recurring pattern. This is a pattern that moves toward what you want, and then away from what you want, and then toward what you want, and then away from what you want, and so on. If you are in a structure that resolves, the path of least resistances moves toward final resolution of the structure. **One major skill of the creative process is forming structures that resolve in favor of the creation. These structures are the most useful because they support movement in the direction of your final result**

c. Oscillation

- i. The structure in some people's lives lead to oscillation. These people have a general experience of moving forward and then backward, and then forward and then backward again. This pattern may repeat endlessly. Because of the structure in play, their attempt to change their life may work at first, and then not work, and then work again. This is the experience of coming full circle. The feeling of being in a rut. Of winding up back at square one.

- ii. **If you are in a structure that leads to oscillation, no solution will help. This is because these psychological solutions do not address the structure, but rather the behavior that comes from the structure. To attempt a psychological solution to what is really a structural phenomenon does nothing to change the underlying structure.**

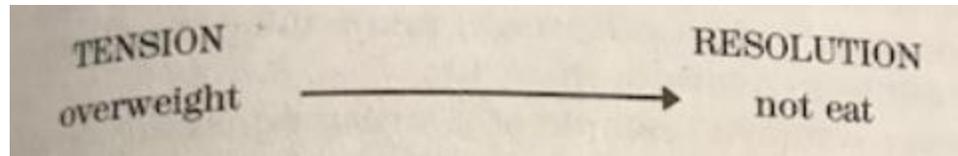
1. *The structure is upstream of behavior, psychology, habits, impacting everything. Change the structure and change comes naturally, effortlessly*

d. Structural Conflict

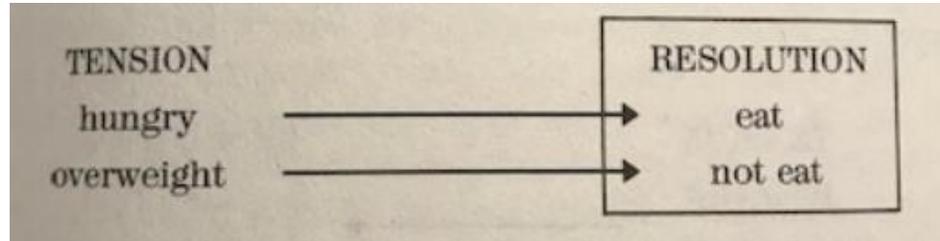
- i. Structural conflict comes from two simple tension-resolution systems that compete. If you were hungry (tension), you would naturally tend to resolve this tension by eating (resolution).



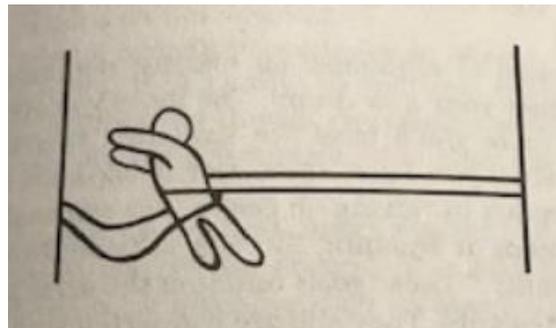
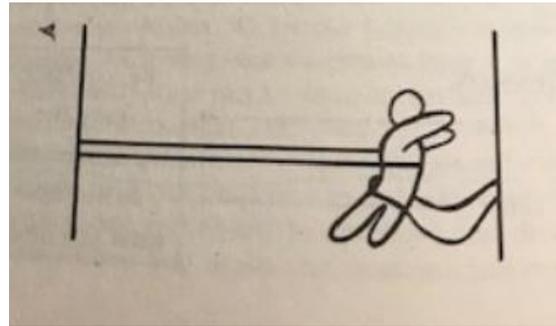
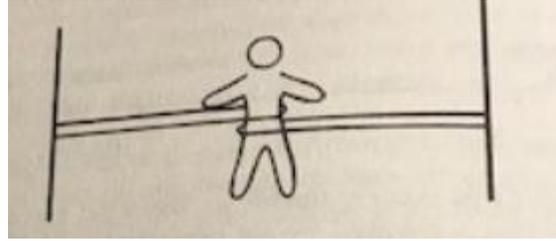
- ii. However, if you are sufficiently overweight, you may choose to go on a diet designed to bring you to a desirable weight. This sets up a separate system of tension resolution.



- iii. The simple tension-resolution system of “hungry-eat” and “overweight-not eat” are tied together, but they are in conflict. You cannot simultaneously resolve both tensions; that is, you cannot eat and not eat at the same time



- iv. **On the level of *appearance*, many dieters seem to be taking action to achieve what they ultimately want – to lose weight. On the level of *structure*, however, their actions are designed to resolve a structural conflict.** Because of the structure in play, while they may temporarily lose weight, the path of least resistance will eventually lead them to regain the weight they lose. But once they become overweight again, the path of least resistance will be to return to their diet
- v. This shift from one tension-resolution system dictating the action to the other tension-resolution system dictating the action. This may be called a shift of dominance. These shifts of dominance form the behavior of oscillation. The force in play may not be obvious. In fact, **the dieter may wonder why it is sometimes easier to diet than other times. The structure itself leads to oscillation. This is all it can do. As you put pressure on one part of a structure, the rest of the structure pushes back. In system dynamics this is called *compensating feedback*. You will fail *not* because you have some deep seated self-destructive urge or because you actually want to fail, but because you are moving along the path of least resistance formed by the structure in play.** Obviously the path of least resistance now leads back *toward* the front wall, toward the result you desire. Over time you will tend to continue to move back and forth, back forth, toward one wall and then toward the other as the path of least resistance changes. These shifts may take minutes or years



- vi. When we do get what we want sometimes, we may not see it as a direct result of our efforts. We let our failure to achieve something reinforce our feeling that we cannot have it or don't deserve it. This assumption can be an invisible policy that goes examined throughout our lives. ***Within inevitability there are events that are not inevitable. Part of the creative process is learning how to make choices that lead to consequences you favor. When you create, you are taking action in a realm that is nonevitable, nonfixed, open, and subject to your actions.*** People both want to create what most deeply matters to them and simultaneously believe deep down that they cannot have what they want. This very human dilemma is actually a structural conflict
- e. Structural Conflict is Not Resolvable
 - i. *Structural conflict may be defined as two or more tension-resolution systems in which the points of resolution are mutually exclusive.* Mutually exclusive points of resolution are not resolvable, either simultaneously or sequentially. Structural conflict operates at a completely different level from that which is colloquially thought of as emotional conflict. Emotional conflict operates primarily at the level of feelings and is

experienced in such forms as anxiety, confusion, frustration, or contradictory emotions, such as love and hate for the same person. Structural conflict operates at the deeper, life-orientation level; it may give rise to these emotions or to a wide range of other emotions, from inner peace, lightness, and overwhelming joy, to apathy, heaviness and depression. **Your emotions are often generated by the structure you are in.** The actions you take to avoid unwanted emotions or to foster wanted emotions do nothing to change the structure causing the emotions. Therefore, these actions do not succeed. You also have a structural tendency to attempt to resolve a structural conflict. It is natural to continue trying to resolve a structural conflict even though the conflict is not resolvable. Designs do not always accomplish what they are intended to accomplish.

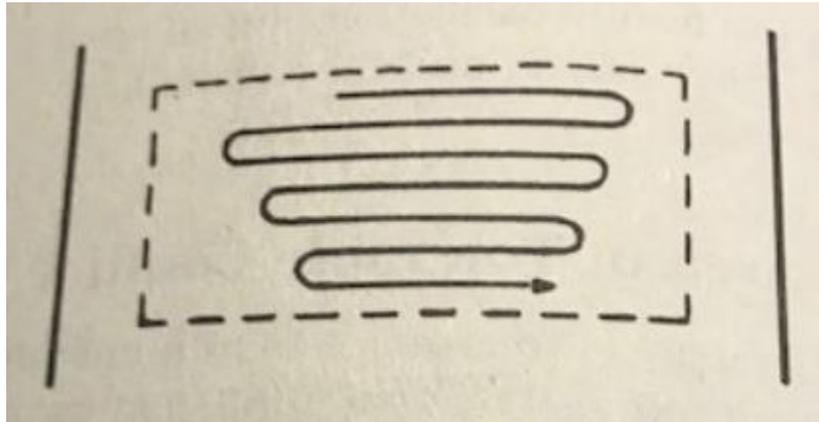
- ii. **People often try to circumvent the effects of structural conflict with great hope and optimism, which is usually followed by great disillusionment. It is inherent in this structure that any actions you take to solve structural conflict only reinforce the experience of limitation and hence the structure itself. Since the nature of this conflict is structural, it is only by changing the underlying structure of your life that you can make any real and lasting change.** However, any attempt you make to change the structure from within this structure will not work. Because of the structure in play, the path of least resistance will lead you to futile actions, actions designed to relieve the conflict, but that ironically will only entrench the conflict further. In fact, if you are in a structural conflict, you will develop strategies to compensate for the inability of the structure to support final resolution. **The nature of creating generates a completely different structure. But creating is *not* a solution to structural conflict. It is independent and unrelated to structural conflict. *It does not oscillate.***

8. Change in Structure → Change in Behavior

- a. **If you try to change your behavior without first changing the underlying structure causing that behavior, you will not succeed. This is because structure determines behavior, not the other way around. Creating is altogether different from solving or elimination. Creating is an entirely separate structure from structural conflict. This new structure is not a solution to the phenomenon of oscillation. Rather, it is independent of it – this is called *structural tension*. One of the great secrets in the art of creating is mastering the force of structural tension. If you attempt to resolve the tension you have established prematurely, you weaken your ability to create the results you want.**
- b. There are 3 major strategies designed to compensate for the fundamental unresolvability of structural conflict. They are: *staying within an area of tolerable conflict, conflict manipulation, and willpower manipulation*

i. Area of Tolerable Conflict

1. A common strategy is to attempt to minimize the amplitude of the oscillation produced by structural conflict. The structure in structural conflict has a goal. **This is not the goal of defeating you, the goal of the structure *has nothing to do with you*. The goal is purely one that arises out of the makeup of the structure itself. The goal is equilibrium.** Using our analogy of the rubber bands and walls, the goal of the structure is to have both rubber bands contain the *same amount of tension*. Oscillation occurs because there is a difference in the amount of tension in each part of the structure.



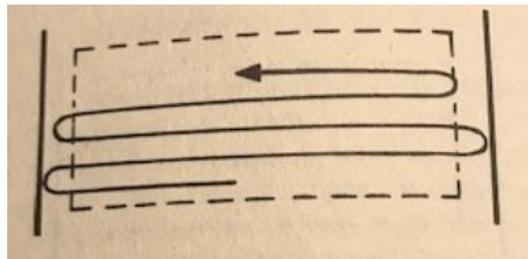
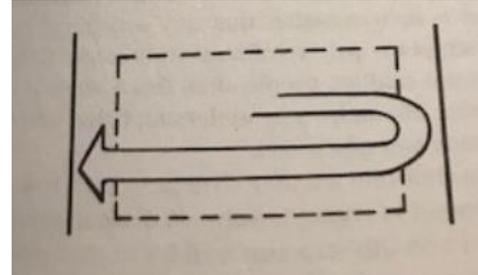
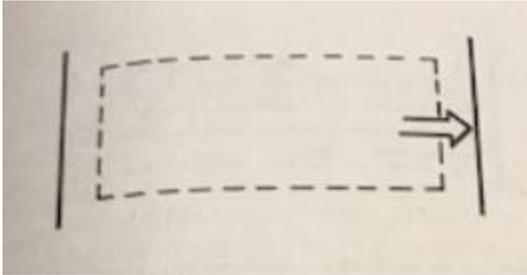
2. The behaviors found in this strategy are designed to limit aspiration and to minimize loss. This is the strategy encouraged by most institutions and organizations, public education and government. The larger the organization, the greater the likelihood of this strategy becoming the norm. These organizations are not maliciously or consciously designed to thwart creativity and aspiration, they just do. The structural conflict begets the strategy of maintaining an area of tolerable conflict, which begets the behavior of reaching for only that which is “realistic” and minimizes risk. Predictability and certainty are highly valued, to the detriment of creativity and greater accomplishment

ii. Conflict Manipulation

1. Given the fundamental unresolvability of structural conflict, people often gravitate toward taking less and less action in favor of what they actually want. A common result is that people find they *only* take action when there is pressure on them. They then develop a strategy of mobilizing themselves into action by building up pressure, presenting a vision of the negative consequences that will ensure if action is not taken

2. There are always two steps
 - a. Identify the conflict – usually by presenting a negative vision or unwanted consequence if action is not taken
 - b. Take the action designed to reduce the pressure – usually by preventing the unwanted consequence from happening
 3. A person adopting this strategy does not take action to create what they want. They take action only to reduce the pressure that is synthetically manufactured by visions of negative consequences.
 4. **The long-term effect of this strategy reinforces the general experience of powerlessness – power resides in circumstances you want to avoid and despite your “best efforts” you achieved nothing lasting.** If you worry chronically, are driven by your concerns, or react to your negative emotions, you use conflict manipulation
 5. The structure of conflict manipulation does not support change
- iii. Willpower Manipulation
1. **Self-sufficiency is not based on willpower, but on strategic choice**
 2. What is wrong with positive thinking? In a word – *truth*. **One of the skills of the creative process is to assess the current state of the creation in progress. This is difficult if you have a bias. If you try to impose a positive view on reality, you will not easily be able to adjust your actions in the creative process**
 3. Willpower and the orientation of the creative are starkly different. As a creative, there are no inner forces you must overcome, only inner forces that must be aligned organically as part of the creative process. **This is not programming yourself, but rather working with all of the forces in play – including the forces you may not especially like. In addition, in the orientation of the creative, it is essential to report to yourself what reality truly is, no matter what the conditions and circumstances may be. A clear description of reality is necessary input in the creative process. If you were to impose any “rose-colored” or otherwise synthetic views on your reality, you would obscure it**
 4. In the short run, you may achieve a successful breakthrough. Willpower manipulation, often does work in the short run, but it has detrimental long-term consequences. Once again, if you reach the front wall, the structure compensates for the exaggeration in the oscillation and you move backward. The structure does not support your willful determination. “Holding it together” and “getting yourself back up” becomes exhausting. Eventually the compensation leads you away from what you want. This “failure” is not a sign of weakness of your “intention,” nor is it some kind of

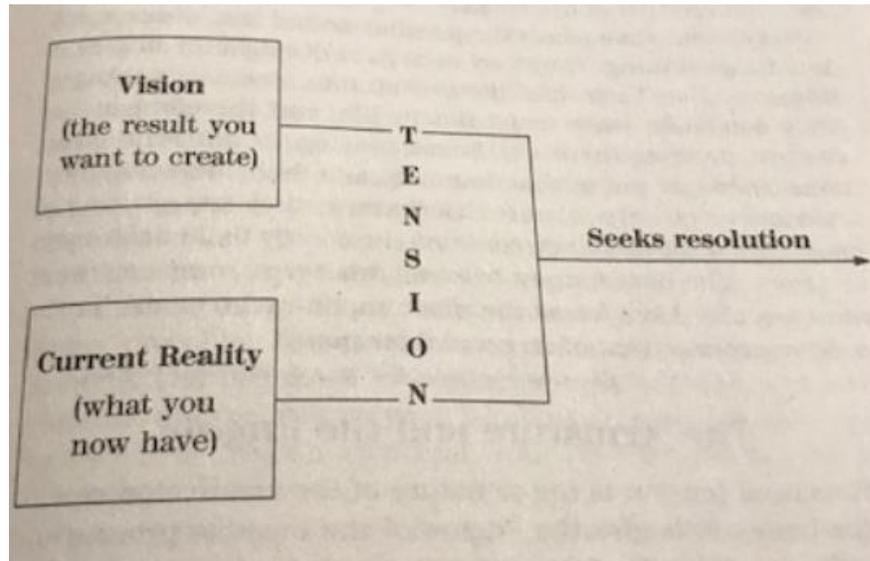
inner resistance, but simply the natural movement of this structure. The path of least resistance, determined by this structure, cannot lead in any other direction than away from your desired result, no matter how hard you try to “keep the faith.” Overtime, as the structure continues to compensate, the oscillation will continue. You will eventually gravitate back to the area of tolerable conflict.



9. Structural Tension

- a. To change this structure, there must be another structure in play, and this structure must take precedence over the old structure, so that the path of least resistance will change and energy may move easily along the new path. The structure that is senior to structural conflict has the following properties
 - i. It incorporates structural conflict into itself
 - ii. It transposes a complex structure into a simple structure
- b. This senior structure can become more important and more dominant only if structural conflict is *part* of the new structure. Oscillation may still occur in some of the movement, but that oscillation is imply a characteristic of normal fluctuations while the senior structure *moves toward resolution*. This senior structure must be a simple tension-resolution system, one that resolves. **The structure that is best will contain one major tension whose tendency is to resolve completely. Creators know how to form this kind of structure in the creative process and orchestrate the structural tendencies so that resolution is in favor of the results they are creating. Within a structure such as this, the forces in play work together to enhance the processes used to create the result, focus energy toward that result, and create momentum as tension moves toward resolution. This senior structure is called *structural tension*.**

- c. Structural tension is formed by two major components: a vision of the result you want and a clear view of the reality you now have.



- d. The discrepancy between what you want and what you have increases or decreases during the creative process. **Creators have a higher ability to tolerate discrepancy than most others. This is because discrepancy is the stock in trade of the creator. When you create, you become a player of forces such as contrasts, opposites, similarities, differences, time, balance, and so on. When you create, one of the important forces you can use is discrepancy. Those who do not understand discrepancy often feel discouraged when there is more discrepancy between what they want and what they have encouraged when there is less. But to the creator, all of the forces in play are useful. If there is more discrepancy, there is more force to work with. If there is less, there is more momentum as you move toward the final creation of the result.**
- e. **Creators not only tolerate discrepancy, they appreciate and encourage it. Discrepancy contains the energy that enables you to create. The discrepancy between what you want and what you currently have forms the most important structure in the creative process: *structural tension***
- f. Structural tension is the armature of the creative process. It is the bones. It is also the engine of the creative process and the energy source for that engine. Tension strives for resolution. The structural tendency of a stretched rubber band is to relax, or resolve the tension. **You, as a creator, establish tension, use tension, play with tension, orchestrate tension, and resolve tension in the direction you choose. The way you form structural tension is first by conceiving of a result you want to create and then by observing the relevant current state of the reality you have in relation to that result**
- g. **You weaken structural tension when you lower your vision. If you compromise what you want, you do not create the true discrepancy that forms the**

tension. It is all too common in our society to misrepresent what we really want. We have been encouraged to be “realistic,” “practical,” and “want only what you can have.” The irony is that you want what you want, whether or not you misrepresent that to yourself. The only time you know for sure whether creating a result is possible or not is when you have done it. All other thoughts on the matter are simply speculation. **If you cannot have it all, the relevant question is, what matters enough to you to create? Creators create hierarchies. Creators assign relative importance to what they create. It is not relevant to “Have it all.” It is relevant to have what most matters to you**

- h. **Another way to weaken structural tension is to misrepresent current reality.** This strategy is often employed by people who “hold the vision” while ignoring what is going on around them. These are the idle dreamers who give real visionaries a bad name. Do not confuse a creator for a dreamer. Dreamers only dream, but creators bring their dreams to reality. Only an accurate awareness of reality and an accurate awareness of your vision will enable you to form structural tension as an important part of the creative process. When you form and hold structural tension, resolution moves toward the vision you want to create. Holding structural tension is not the same as evoking a magical incantation, but rather organizing forces in play. The energy generated by the discrepancy you establish is directly useful in the actions you take on behalf of the vision. Movement leads to more movement. The more experience you have with the creative process, the more you will be able to master structural tension
 - i. **One way to heighten the tension is to decrease the amount of time between the vision and current reality. It’s like raising the stakes in a poker game**
10. Creativity is a Skill
- a. Creativity is a skill which can be learned and mastered just like anything else. It is not innate, something someone is born with. It takes practice and hard work to gain mastery
 - b. See the following as an overview of the creative process rather than a formula to adopt:
 - i. Conceive of the result you want to create
 - 1. I don’t start until I’m almost entirely clear. It is a waste of time and paint if I don’t. I’ve wasted a lot of canvasses, so I like to be pretty clear. – Georgia O’Keeffe
 - 2. Knowing what you want is itself a skill
 - ii. Know what currently exists
 - 1. Must develop the skill of viewing reality objectively. Good, bad, or indifferent, you will still want to know accurately what is going on
 - iii. Take action
 - 1. Creating is a matter of invention rather than of convention. The more you create, the more chance you have to develop your own instincts

2. Some of the actions you take will help you move directly to the result you want, *but most will not*. The art of creating is often found in your ability to adjust or correct what you have done so far
 3. **It is not fortitude, willpower, or determination that enables you to continue the creative process, but learning as you go**
- iv. Learn the rhythms of the creative process
1. There are 3 major stages in the growth and life-building process: germination, assimilation, completion. Every complete creative process moves through this cycle and always in the same sequence. The cycles are as natural and organic as the human birth cycle and have the same stages.
 - a. Germination occurs at conception. This is the prime initiating act from which the entire process emanates. Germination begins with excitement and newness. Partly this germinational energy comes from the unusualness of the new activity. You activate the seeds of your creation by making choices about results you want to create. When you make a choice, you mobilize vast energies and resources that otherwise often go untapped. All too often people fail to focus their choices upon results, and therefore their choices are ineffective. Choice takes practice and the more you choose, the better you'll choose. Make small, quick choices whose outcomes have a low risk factor to practice. Making choices is vital as art is improvisational. You make it up as you go along, with your instinct for making choices improving along the way
 - b. Assimilation is akin to gestation, during which the fetus develops and grows. Completion occurs when the birth of this new human being takes place. Assimilation is often the least obvious phase of the process. In this phase the initial thrill is gone. This phase moves from a focus on internal action to a focus on external action. In this phase you live with your concept of what you want to create and internalize it. You begin to have insights, ideas, connections, and added momentum. Your creation begins to take shape. It becomes more and more tangible. It generates momentum so that as you move through the creative cycle the path of least resistance, emanating from structural tension, is toward the result taking shape, forming itself, becoming an entity. Assimilation is a step beyond mere learning, for in assimilation you incorporate the learning into yourself. You gain specific skills: that you can learn and you can assimilate whatever you need to

know in any creative process. **Whenever you assimilate a learning, you deepen your base of experience of assimilation. You can internalize future learnings.**

Professional actors become quicker and quicker at memorizing their parts. Musicians become more facile at performing difficult passages. Cab drivers learn new routes more quickly. **One powerful way to assimilate your present step is to move onto your next step, often before you think you are ready.** What you embody tends to be created. This principle provides the key to assimilation. Embodiment is distinct from behavior. To embody love is not the same as behaving in loving style. What you embody speaks louder than your behavior, to the same degree that your actions speak louder than your words. Furthermore, you assimilate what you embody. As you internalize what you embody, inner development occurs that is consistent with what you embody. **All aspects of your consciousness realign themselves in accordance with what you embody.** Assimilation, like embodiment, has two phases – an internalizing phase and an externalizing phase. What you create grows within you and eventually expresses itself outwardly as you give birth to that which you are creating. During the assimilation process, you mobilize inner and outer actions. This energy builds on itself, so that the path of least resistance leads from internal to external expression. **What you assimilate internally tends to be manifested externally. Internal changes often tend to be manifested outwardly.**

- c. Completion has a similar energy to germination, but now it is applied to a creation that is more and more tangible. You bring your creation to completion but also positioning yourself for your next creation. **This stage leads to the germination of your next creation.** Few people have mastered this stage. One experience is of fulfillment and satisfaction. The other common experience is of depression and loss. In the creative cycle, completion is a unique and separate stage and has its own requirements to be mastered. One of the major abilities of creating is the ability to receive the full fruits of your labor. When you are creating, you are the only one who is able to declare a result complete, for it is you alone who can determine when reality satisfies your vision. When you bestow an acknowledgement of completion, you enable the very

special energy of completion to be released. One function of this energy is to propel you toward the germination of a new creative cycle. Each time you complete an act of creation, you focus a life force. And since life begets life, this energy seeks to enlarge and expand its expression through new creation. In the stage of completion, your soul is ready for another act of creation

c. Creating momentum

- i. **Many of the theories describing creativity these days have a tone of “beginners luck”. For professional creators there is a different tone, that of ever-increasing momentum. Not only is the creative process a reliable method for producing the results you want, it also contains seeds of its own development.** For example, the more music Mozart wrote, the more he was able to write. His increasing experience gave him the momentum typical of the creative process. If you begin to create the results you want today, you are more prepared to create the results you want ten years from now. **Each new creation gives you added experience and knowledge of your own creative process. You will naturally increase your ability to envision what you want to create**

1. *Why learning is exponential, compounding on itself – the more you learn/create, the more you can learn and create*

11. Vision

- a. **The best place to being the creative processes at the end. What is the final result you want?** This way of thinking helps you conceive the result you want to create independently from how you will create it. This is probably the opposite of what you learned in school. Our education system teaches us how to enact procedures. Students are taught the *how* long before they are taught to consider the *what* they want. Learning how to do anything before you have any notion of what you will use this knowledge for can give you a false sense of purposelessness. Some of the best education relates what the student is learning with what can result from its mastery.¹



¹ Maze picture: <https://creativemornings.com/blog/why-you-should-draw-backwards>

- b. **The marvelous ability to form a picture of your final creation enables you to work from knowledge rather than from speculation. This is the reason many professional creators are often so sure of themselves.** Even the most insecure artist can have tremendous confidence in his or her vision. Look at your result from many angles in your imagination. Try taking out elements. Try adding new elements. Look at the image from inside, outside, above, below, close, and distant. As you practice changing frames of reference, you will get to know more and more about what you want to create. Sometimes you will be surprised. Often you will not. But you will always learn more about your concept
- i. *Masters have a “hologram” in their heads. They see their vision/business/creation so clearly and thoroughly that they can manipulate every angle, every degree, and see how the system is impacted. This is the level of mastery it takes to truly excel*
- c. **How clear do you need to be about the result you want? Clear enough that you would recognize the result if you had it.**
- d. **As you begin your process, realize that there is no “right” way of doing it.** There is no “right” way of painting a painting, no “right” way of composing music, and no “right” way of creating your life. Much of what you will do will be based on personal style, preference, values, and desires. **As you experiment with your own path, you will become an expert on your own creative process, and that is the only one that is directly relevant in your life**
- e. **There is a difference between concept and vision. Concept comes before vision. Concept is general, vision is specific.** Once you have formed the concept, the next step is to crystallize it. This is an act of focusing. *Given the various ways in which the concept might manifest itself, how do you want to see it manifested?* The same principle of the conceptual stage applies to the vision stage. The vision need only be clear enough that you would recognize it if you created it. ***The essential difference lies in focus, and focus is made possible by limitation. When you focus a concept into a vision, you are limiting many ways into a single way.*** All vision is concept, but not all concepts are vision. While in the conceptual stage you are trying out many possibilities, in the vision stage you have decided on one and only one.
- f. **Your life can be a creation. Most people don’t think like this but it’s true. What a difference that is from reacting or responding to the circumstances. Your own life can become a separate entity, and when it does, you can form it, mold it, and change it the way you want. When you are able to do this, you are free to develop your life as independent of your identity. You can succeed or fail without the added burden of an identity crisis.**
- g. **Must separate between what you want from what you think is possible. All is speculation before you try**

- h. Many creators are unaware of the exact processes until they are through. Very often the completed work is incomprehensible until after it is finished. It is as if the result is led by the inner eye of vision.
 - i. Questions to get to know what you want
 - i. Ask yourself the question, “What do I want?”
 - 1. You are able to focus your attention quickly and are accurately describing the truth to yourself. If you try to find a way to get there before you know where you want to go, naturally you can expect confusion to accompany your quest
 - ii. Consider what you want independently of considering the process
 - 1. A final result is something that exists by itself. Its purpose is not to lead you to other results, even though it may
 - iii. Separate what you want from questions of possibility
 - 1. Lying to yourself always breaks down your relationship with yourself, creates stress, and represents the truth as potentially dangerous and threatening
12. Facing Reality
- a. Avoiding describing reality accurately is often a strategy to overcome the negative consequences of your actions. Our society puts a high premium on reasons and excuses. Most people learn that if they have a good reason for not succeeding, they can sometimes avoid negative consequences. Many people misrepresent reality through a smoke screen of plausible-sounding reasons that are designed to distract themselves and others from the truth
 - b. Sometimes knowing the reasons for failure can help you adjust the actions you take to shape your final creation. But this is quite different from using reasons to justify failure. Discovering the effect of the actions you take is designed to be a learning experience, rather than a justification for not succeeding.
 - c. **Those who learn to know reality, without holding on to the past, are in the best position to truly live their lives. This is anything but amnesia. This is not forgetting the past, but remembering that the past is over. The past is not the present. Whether the past has been filled with loss and failure or filled with success and victory, the past is not the present. And the present is not the past**
 - d. **There is a difference between passively learning reality because life forces you to and actively teaching yourself reality.** When you seek to know reality and learn what there is to learn, you can best create what really matters to you. Like art for art’s sake, this is truth for truth’s sake – the desire to know reality because it is real, and for no other reason. **The foundation of reality is the only place you can start the creative process. There are no tricks to this. Learning reality is an ability that is important to master and yet human to avoid. It is a matter of values whether to avoid negative feelings or accurately represent reality to enable yourself to create your vision and feel whatever there is to feel. That which you hold to be more valuable will guide your actions.** If the

avoidance of pain is a higher value than the creation of what you want, your actions will be to avoid the parts of reality that seem problematic. If your creation is a higher value, you will pursue an accurate representation of reality and let your emotional chips fall where they may

- e. **When it comes to observing reality, people often do not see what is before their eyes. Instead, people see their concept of what reality should be. They are not seeing what is before their eyes, but what they expect to see**
 - f. **When you begin to observe reality, begin freshly with the notion that you know nothing.** Separate the ideas you have from your observations. You might find this hard to do. But if you truly want to know how reality is, your observations must not be burdened by your own biases. It takes practice to put preconceived concepts aside and observe what is truly going on. When you master this practice, you will have a powerful tool you can use to create what matters most to you in life.
13. Choice
- a. **The way people choose reveals where they see the power in a situation residing and how that power is activated and used. Nothing forces you to make the choice to create what you want to create, and nothing can take this power from you.**
 - b. Those in a reactive-responsive orientation use 8 methods to avoid or undermine effective choice
 - i. Choice by limitation – choosing only what seems possible or reasonable
 - ii. Choice by indirectness – choosing the process instead of the result
 - iii. Choice by elimination – eliminating all other possibilities so that only one choice remains
 - iv. Choice by default – the “choice” not to make a choice, so that whatever results happen seem to occur without choice – all that is left is reaction
 - v. Conditional choice – imposing preconditions on choices
 - vi. Choice by reaction – choices designed to overcome a conflict
 - vii. Choice by consensus – choosing by finding out what everyone else is willing to recommend and following the results of that poll
 - viii. Choice by adverse possession – choice based on a hazy metaphysical notion about the nature of the universe
 - c. ***In the creative orientation, you consciously choose results you want to see manifested. Through a direct choice, you focus and release energy and you then tend to gravitate toward those processes that will be most helpful to you.*** When an organization chooses a result, the members can more easily mobilize the resources of the organization. The processes that will aid in the direct creation of that result are more easily found or invented and executed. **When you merely choose a process, you do not establish structural tension, and you do not make energy available to complete the creative process**
 - d. **Instead of choosing to create what they want, some people choose to avoid what they don't want.** Instead of choosing health, some people choose the

absence of sickness. When you choose merely to avoid what you do not want, you do not establish structural tension. Instead, what you set up is a conflict structure

- e. **When you choose, take two steps**
 - i. **First, conceive of the results you want, that is, have a clear vision of what you want to create**
 - ii. **Second, formalize the choice by actually saying the words, “I choose to have...”**
 - f. When you make a formal choice, you activate the seeds of germination. You align all the energies at your disposal and set them in motion toward your choice. You initiate the first stage of the creative cycle.
 - g. **There are times when things come together and times when things come apart. This is an organic process. If you attempt synthetic manipulation of organic process, not only will you fail, but you will develop an insensitivity to the organic nature of life. You will not know the movement of the cycle. You will not know what the times are**
14. Primary, Secondary, and Fundamental Choice
- a. Three distinct kinds of choices operate as strategic elements in the creative process: primary, secondary, and fundamental
 - i. Primary
 - 1. **Primary choices are about major results, something you want in itself and for itself. There is tremendous power in knowing what results you designate as primary.** Once you make primary choices to create those results, you may effectively and naturally rearrange and reorganize your life in ways that help bring those primary choices into reality. Once you know what your primary choice is, you will easily know what to do
 - 2. You as a creator determine the hierarchy of importance among results. Then you choose what is primary. This enables you always to be in the powerful position of inventing along the way the course of action that most effectively supports the result you value more. **There is a lesson here for all of us. We decide what values in our lives will be more prominent or less prominent. We create the hierarchy. We determine how we will and will not direct our life energy.**
 - 3. Make a list of everything you want, from now through the rest of your life – personal and professional. Do not consider what is probably or possible. Include the qualities you want in your relationship with others. List only the things you *do* want, nothing you don’t want
 - 4. Re-read your list to make sure it includes all of the major components you want in your life. Add anything you may have forgotten or cross anything off you don’t really want

5. Test each item with the question: “If I could have that, would I take it?”
 6. Continue this process until you have chosen every item you truly want on your list
- ii. Secondary
1. **Secondary choices support a primary choice. Whatever you need to make or do in order to achieve the primary choice.** They become clearer as and easier to make as you progress. They become the most obvious course of action to take
 2. **In making secondary choices, it never seems as though you are giving up anything. When you make secondary choices – when you actually make the choice supporting what is primary – the experience you have is doing what you truly want. Making strategic secondary choices is very empowering**
- iii. Fundamental
1. **A fundamental choice is a choice that has to do with a state of being, or basic life orientation, whereas a primary choice concerns itself with specific results and a secondary choice supports those results. *A fundamental choice is a choice in which you commit yourself to a basic life orientation or a basic state of being. A fundamental choice is a foundation upon which primary and secondary choices rest – to act with “direction”.***
 2. **They are not subject to changes in internal or external circumstances.** Once you have made any fundamental choice, you create a new structure in your life, and the path of least resistance in that structure leads toward the fulfillment of your fundamental choice. **In this new structure you might find yourself suddenly easily able to give up unwanted compromises**
 3. **Once you make the fundamental choice to be the predominant creative force in your life, any approach you choose to take for your own growth and development can work, and you will be especially attracted to those approaches that will work particularly well for you. You change the very structure of your being which determines your ability to manifest on the planet that which is highest in you.**
 4. The fundamental choices for most people are the choices to be free, healthy, and true to oneself.

15. Momentum

- a. **Assimilation is a graduated process. Its steps build upon one another. As they build organically, the process generates energy. This energy builds on itself, and the process gains momentum.** The more you assimilate the early steps of a growth or learning process – as in learning mathematics, management, sports, cooking, sewing, accounting, computer science, or a foreign language – the more

you are able to assimilate the next steps. And once those steps are assimilated, momentum builds and you will be able to assimilate steps that are even more advanced. In fact, assimilation will become easier and easier. **Assimilation may yield exponential growth: assimilating one thing makes it easier to assimilate more and more things. In fact, in the orientation of the creative process, once you have assimilated your own creative process, your life mastery in general increases so that you are enabled more naturally and easily to create what most matters to you.**

- b. **Creators hardly ever retire for they are doing what they most love, their highest purpose, what they most highly value. There is in the creator a deep longing to create – not out of ego, but out of purpose, a higher sense. For a creator there is always a next step, always anew place to go, never just marking time, writing for it all to end. Creators seem to be intuitively aligned with what life is at its roots: a creation. How can there be an end to purpose in a world in which there is so much to create?**
 - c. Not only is assimilation an organic process itself, but it tends to generate other organic processes. **The steps by which you move from where you are in your life to where you want to be cannot be put into a formula. Trying to control the process limits the possibilities of what can happen in your life.** As a reactive-responsive, your actions do not generate further actions; each step you take toward your goal will be taken by itself, without benefit of the momentum that comes from learning and assimilating what you have learned. In addition, each new step you take will remain at the same level of potential difficulty as previous steps, since the previous steps do not add to you learning, experience, and increasing capacity. With each step you may feel like you're starting over again from the beginning. All the steps you take will be driven by the prevailing circumstances and are therefore subject to the circumstances. Third, many of the steps that would be crucial to creating the result you want will not even occur to you if they represent a departure from preconceived processes
 - d. **The organic process of assimilation may include unusual “coincidences” that lead you directly to where you want to be.**
 - e. **In the creative orientation, when you are able to assimilate the steps along the way, the underlying structure reorganizes itself, so that the path of least resistance leads directly toward what you want to create. And the increasing momentum helps move you along that path more and more effectively**
16. Strategic Moments
- a. **In the creative process there are certain strategic moments in which it seems as if you are either standing still or even going backward. These moments of apparent lack of progress are strategic because the actions you take at such moments will largely determine whether or not you are ultimately successful.**
 - b. Because of time delay, people often give up taking actions that are, in fact, effective, but the result of those actions has not yet had a chance to appear. **The meaning you give to the actions you take can contribute either to building or**

to reducing momentum. Considering the factor of time delay can help you describe current reality more accurately. If you inaccurately assess the effectiveness of the actions that might ultimately work, you will tend to stop taking that action. Action produces a result; a result gives rise to a definition or meaning. How you define the relation between the action you take and the result you observe affects your future action. It also affects your momentum.

- c. Developing this ability may take some practice. **In the creative process, as you become more proficient in immediately recognizing the shifts in current reality, you become better able to reorganize your approach spontaneously in ways consistent with the change in circumstances. You come to recognize even sudden and unexpected changes not as detrimental but rather as valuable and necessary feedback in the creative process. Current reality is always your new starting point**
 - i. [Effortless Mastery](#), [Finite and Infinite Games](#), [Zen in the Art of Archery](#)
- d. When you habitually misrepresent reality, the truth can seem dangerous to you. The truth is that almost everyone is much stronger, more resilient, and more powerful than they are usually given credit for. **The truth is *not* dangerous, it sets you free to create. It is only through your recognition of the facts of reality that you can engage the senior force of structural tension and move toward creating what really matters to you.**
- e. Those moments when circumstances are not the way you would like them to be are actually very powerful and pivotal moments in the creative process. *However wanted or unwanted your present circumstances may be, they function as needed feedback so that you can know the current status of the result you are craving*
- f. The pivotal technique may help you use unwanted circumstances as a catalyst to help you toward where you want to be
 - i. Describe where you are
 - ii. Describe where you want to be
 - iii. Once again, formally choose the result you want
 - iv. Move on
- g. Alchemists of old sought to turn lead into gold. Many people have a talent for reverse alchemy: *turning gold into lead*. Turning a wonderful relationship into a difficult one, turning a pleasant dinner party into a cold war, turning success into failure. Some people can't take *yes* for an answer
 - i. *Never be one to use reverse alchemy. Make the most out of every situation, go positive and go first, aim for win-win relationships with mutual trust and reciprocation*
- h. **For artists to reach the heights of artistic expression, they cannot hedge their bets.** In the tradition of the arts, not only do judgements need to be made, they must also be honestly expressed. Artists learn to be uncompromising with their vision and their view of reality. If they didn't they would not be able to create real art.

- i. *Leaping emergent effects, unpredictable positive outcomes, appear when you and/or your team goes all in*
 - i. In the creative orientation, what matters is not how you are doing but rather how close your vision – *what you want to create* – is to its final completion
 - j. **The instinct to create does not go away. It seeks expression. When you create, you align yourself with your most natural state of being. As a consequence, many of the difficulties of your life will either disappear or will no longer be important issues for you. This alignment with yourself will not come from attempting to “solve your problems” but from creating what most matters to you. In the orientation of the creative, the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of your being realign themselves and work in harmony. Based on their realignment, the path of least resistance in your life will lead you toward fulfilling your deepest and most profound individual life purpose on this planet.**
17. Transcendence
- a. There is another force inherent in the orientation of the creative that is senior even to mastering causality. This senior force I call transcendence. Transcendence is the power to be born anew, to make a fresh start, to turn over a new leaf, to begin with a clean slate, you enter into a state of grace, to have a second chance. Transcendence makes no reference of the past, whether your past has been overflowing with victories or filled with defeats. When you enter a state of transcendence, you are able to create a new life, unburdened by the victories and the defeats of the past. **Transcendence is more than just the accurate realization that the past is over. It is also a realignment of all dimensions of yourself with the very source of your life.**
 - i. *The story of Dickens’ character Scrooge in A Christmas Carol epitomizes the power of transcendence. Guided by the Christmas Spirits, Scrooge was able to see his past, his present, and his probable future, and he was then given a second chance at life*
 - b. When you reestablish your relationship to your natural goodness, you give a new life to what is highest in you.
 - c. **Through the creative act you reach beyond yourself, beyond your identity, and beyond your own life, because you are working with two kinds of laws: *the law of cause and effect and the law of transcendence.*** First, when you create, you increase your ability to use causes to produce effects – sometimes called the law of karma. But this law is not the senior force in the creative process. Second, beyond the time-space continuum and beyond its causal aspects, when you create, you are experiencing the law of transcendence. In this realm, past causal factors are not in play. When you turn to a new canvas or initiate any act of creation, at that moment, the past is literally over. As you stand poised before the blank sheet of music paper, the new moment yields new possibilities beyond anything you might have imagined before. As a creator, past cause and effect are no longer dominant factors. You are in a state of transcendence, for in that moment,

anything can happen. You are not trapped by previous actions you have taken. You are not forced to extricate yourself from unwanted situations

- d. When you come home to yourself without expectations, demands, ulterior motives, or one-way bargains, a fundamental change in the underlying structure of your life takes places. Its path of least resistance now leads you into a state of transcendence, in which total integration of your life cannot but occur**

What I got out of it

1. This is what I call a “meta” book – one which impacts how I see the world on a structural level and gives me a more complete, detailed view on how I think about life and creativity. Worth reading for yourself in its entirety and then re-reading immediately.

