

Know Thyself

Exercises

by

Stan Carnarius

As this culture pressures us to fit in and conform to supposed norms, and consume, it is up to us as persons to clarify our own individuality and pursue it in order to fulfill our own unique potential. This does not mean practice in becoming self-centered, which is the temptation in this twittering age. What it does mean is a filling out of the latent possibilities of emotional flexibility, intellectual comprehension and spiritual depth which is our human birthright.

An opening to this process is possible using your own personal data as the starting point, then studying your data from different perspectives.

The following exercises are offered in this program:

1. **Life Facets** – Finding more meaning through reviewing your life. (p.2)
2. **How grown up are you?** – What it means to be grown up and looking at your place in your own society and culture. (p. 3)
3. **Functioning individuality** – Perspectives on how your conscious sense of self interacts with the rest of your organism - an introduction to subject point of view. (p. 7)

YOUR LIFE HAS MANY FACETS

The general impression you have of your life may not do you justice. It may be more of a “mood” about yourself than any kind of accurate summary. Often we harbor negatives about ourselves from the past that may have little to do with the person we could become. Here is a way to take a look at your life as a whole in terms of the major stages and the people, events and learning that happened in each stage.

TWO STEPS:

1. Put a number in the corner of each box below using the 1 to 10 scale (“1” means unimportant and “10” means extremely important) to indicate how important you now see that part of your life in terms of your overall development.
2. After putting a number in each box, go back and write in a few words to explain why you used that number.

Take your time so that things you may not usually like to think about have a chance to surface and make your analysis more complete.

	Childhood	Youth	Young Adult	Maturity
Family				
Big events				
Education				
Learning from problems				
Hopes				

As you study yourself, you might want to go back and circle anything that felt negative at the time but turned out to be beneficial for you. To add richness to the analysis, talk it over with someone who knows you well, or has known you for a long time.

HOW GROWN UP ARE YOU?

No matter what kind of family you grew up in or what the world has done to you, you have continued to grow in your own particular way. Listed below are a number of issues, described in terms of more or less maturity. Check yourself out by reading each contrasting pair, then circling the number you feel best expresses the way you are now.

The purpose of this exercise is not to give yourself the highest possible score, or to put yourself down by finding your flaws, it is to get a current snapshot of how you are perceiving yourself.

- | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|-------------------------------|
| 1. Inhibited, cautious | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Trusting, spontaneous |
| 2. Bored, passive | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Interested, active |
| 3. Feel disadvantaged | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Feel OK, work in the system |
| 4. Feel blocked | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Express myself freely |
| 5. Loner | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Collaborating |
| 6. Need a lot of help | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Giving a lot of help |
| 7. Supported, free-loading | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Producing social utility |
| 8. Conserving, guarding | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Sharing generously |
| 9. Self-centered | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Cooperating |
| 10. Gullible, superficial | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Understanding, looking deeper |
| 11. Jealous, critical | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Facilitating, encouraging |
| 12. Skeptical, cynical | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Accepting, settled |

If you want an overall score, add up the numbers you have circled and then divide the sum by 12.

Each of us is unique, so there is no such thing as a perfect score. What is important is to see yourself clearly and then look for the meaning in your pattern. Here you are in the middle of things, so where do you want to go from here? Reconstructing the self from day to day is a very personal process, and only you can make the important differences in yourself.

To take a closer look at what you have said about yourself, turn to the next page.

PERSPECTIVE ON YOUR SELF

It can be useful to look at your self in these four different ways: your **inner self**, (or the intuitive ways you “talk” with yourself), your **personality** (or the package you present to others), the ways **you use your self**, (or commit yourself in the world), and the level of your consciousness (or **understanding**). To do this, transfer your scores on each item from the first page to this page, below:

Your Inner Self

- | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|-----------------------------|
| 1. Inhibited, cautious | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Trusting, spontaneous |
| 2. Bored, passive | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Interested, active |
| 3. Feel disadvantaged | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Feel OK, work in the system |

Your Personality

- | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|-----------------------|
| 4. Feel blocked | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Express myself freely |
| 5. Loner | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Collaborating |
| 6. Need a lot of help | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Giving a lot of help |

Your Use of Self

- | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|--------------------------|
| 7. Supported, free-loading | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Producing social utility |
| 8. Conserving, guarding | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Sharing generously |
| 9. Self-centered | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Cooperating |

Your Understanding

- | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|-------------------------------|
| 10. Gullible, superficial | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Understanding, looking deeper |
| 11. Jealous, critical | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Facilitating, encouraging |
| 12. Skeptical, cynical | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Accepting, settled |

To get a score for each category, add up the three circled numbers and divide by 3. This will give you a sense of how you have concentrated more in one area than another, or have grown up in all categories about the same.

The value of such an analysis is that it offers more than the usual overall mood you experience as it fluctuates from day to day, and which tends to cycle through your habitual phases.

In other words, there is more to you than meets the eye. You are the way you are for good reasons, which you know better than anyone else.

Not only are you part of a family, but that family is part of a larger tribe which fits into society in a particular way, which operates within a political structure, which is itself rooted in long-lasting cultural patterns. The strengths and advantages of all these connections are offset by the pressures for conformity they also bring, as well as the distractions and competitions for your attention. The following page provides a quick overview of these many overlapping realities.



Our individuality creates the unique fabric of feelings and activities that serve as our personal reality. It is often possible to think of this as our “own little world.”

Culture

But everyone else is doing the same thing, of course, and that sets up the necessity for a larger framing or fabric which is called “culture.” Over the long slow centuries of human development, methods have emerged by common acceptance that smooth out the inherent conflicts which could arise from all this individual uniqueness. Acceptance of law and the value of order, as in our concept of “ownership” and the primary value of “family”, are practical, positive aspects of culture. On the other hand, racial values, the priorities of elites, and the intolerance of difference have often led to armed conflict and extended wars. Methods have been evolved to provide a wider social involvement for individuals in service to community in voluntary associations and various forms of altruism and in the attention to the aging process (so obvious in our times) of gerontology.

Society

Within the general tendencies of culture, a further differentiation is apparent in what we call “society.” These are large patterns formed by race, religion, or even geographical differences. With the increasing mobility of modern populations it is possible to find several kinds of society at work in a single city or even community. For instance, the emergency room in a large city hospital will be serving a high percentage of the poor while its private rooms are filled with the sick who can pay for help. The development of society in the U.S. has seen successive waves of learning how to integrate the first colonists, then Irish, Germans, Italians, Greeks, Asians, and still in process, Hispanics, African Americans and Muslims.

Where you fit

Mark your personal scores on each of the twelve questions arrayed around the circle. It is quite possible that where your answers are more toward the outside ring, you are to some extent involved in the wider activities of your society. In other words, immature people tend to be focused primarily on themselves or defensive toward others, whereas the more mature are available for wider social service.

In terms of Your Inner Self, society emphasizes the importance of self-image. If you have problems with that, there is the opportunity for therapy or many kinds of self-help. If you have trouble functioning, whether with illness or impulse-control, society provides help in terms of hospitals and prisons.

In terms of Your Personality, there are many media in which to express yourself or to use for vicarious self-expression. The U.S. is famous for the variety of voluntary associations which channel individuals’ community interests while also providing a wide range of needed services. The most practical form of altruism, of course, is serving in the helping professions or the armed services.

In terms of Your Use of Self, the division of labor (which fluctuates with levels of employment) provides many ways to add value and perhaps become part of the elite. Skill in working with resources and manipulating the leverage of ownership are especially stressed now in American society. In the personal sense, relationships are the most direct use of self, conventionally expressed by marital status.

In terms of Your Understanding, religions and schools are in place to provide orientation and education. Ethnic values are like the eye glasses you look through until you learn to see without them. Your assumptions, formed in your earliest stages in the tribe, shape your thinking until you discover them at work in yourself and integrate them in your own way.

Functioning Individuality

In effect, your life is your school. So what are you learning?

Both society and the culture treat you as an object, pressured to conform and prompted to consume, while manipulating your feelings by means of politically motivated media, which pass for entertainment. The toxicity of this civilization is becoming more apparent.

While hoping for big solutions for such massive problems, what can the individual do? The answer advanced by the Sabian Assembly is that the individual can take charge of his or her own life. The model for that is readily available in the idea of adulthood. We have all been through the phase of childhood and its need for useful modeling and guidance by the “grownups.” The lucky ones have been guided by people who were truly adult.

Adult reality involves operating out of a well integrated understanding of self in its relations to others that begins with subject point of view. This means being responsible for your own values and acting on them consistently as you grow in balance and personal effectiveness within your social setting, rather than thinking of yourself as an object that possesses lots of things, has to look good to others, and is always risking disapproval. It is the difference between living with firmness of purpose in a complex world and feeling like an unworthy object always fearing some catastrophe will catch up with you.

It may be helpful to take a closer look at what is meant by “Self.” You probably think of yourself as a whole, taking yourself pretty much for granted. But here are four *perspectives*, or ways to think about interesting aspects of your self. There is your Inner Self that has hunches and somehow “knows things” that guides you – your intuition. Then there is the way you present yourself to others, usually called your Personality. There is How you Use Yourself, the person you are in relationships and on the job and with your kids, in all the ways you are expressing your commitments. Finally there is the way you put it all together in your Understanding, your mind set. If you ask those closest to you, for whom you are a beloved object, they can probably put words to each of these categories as they see you operating in the various ways.

Then there is the rest of your “self” that can also be summarized, but is much less apparent, even though each of these *functions* is quite obvious. The first of these is your Soul, your interactions with the intangible world of spirit, often taking the shape of your religious awareness. This is your existential orientation, your intuition of the value of life, your hard-to-express understanding of the meaning of your life. Next is your Will, which is your energetic focus. You may have felt this when something really turned you on, perhaps to your own surprise or the surprise of others around you. This is your inner guidance, pointing you in your own unique direction, although it may conflict with the ideas others have about your life purpose. Then there are all your Organic Processes, from cellular metabolism through your circulatory and digestive systems, to respiration and the operations of all your sensory equipment, and the skeletal, muscular system that holds it all together in the largest organ of all, your skin. You live in it and it mostly runs itself, but there are ways for you to interfere with it. Finally, there is your Mind which uses all those inputs from your nervous system to the brain to keep track of your perceptions and reactions and try to put it all together so life makes sense to you as you go along.

Looking at the way your *perspectives* correlate with your *functions* can help to spell out more tangibly what is meant by “subject point of view.”

A perspective is a particular kind of awareness, a special focus. Looking at your life in different perspectives provides differences in what is experienced. Going to your church or synagogue or mosque for a religious service is quite different from looking at the building as a type of architecture. Here is an exercise to help you look at your own functions in different perspectives.

The form of this exercise is a square with 16 boxes in which the vertical columns represent the Perspectives and the horizontal rows represent the Functions, which can also be understood as aspects of your Being. Thus each box has two things going on at once, which, of course, produces a third meaning – their joint operation, or your experience of the two together. This is what is meant by “correlation.” A physical example would be when a watercolorist mixes blue pigment with yellow pigment in order to get just the right shade of green (while the blue and yellow are still in there).

To start at the beginning, look at the top level at the left of the illustration on the next page. This is the level of Soul or your life’s orientation, and that first box is your Inner Self. The suggestion here is that your intuition, or perhaps your deeper meditations, may have given you a sense of that great mystery, the Source of life. Or you may not have had that experience. For you, each box could feel full to overflowing, or relatively empty – it is your life and your experience, and no two people are exactly alike. Looking across that top row, the second box is concerned with whether you feel enthusiastic about your life, especially as you present yourself as a person. The third box deals with the way you commit yourself and feel real belonging, or not. The last box on the top row deals with your grasp of the meaning of life, especially as it is shown in character.

The second level deals with Will, or your life’s direction, and the first box asks about your intuition of your life’s purpose. The second box suggests the way you may have felt yourself to be the “agent” of something important, or not. The third box deals with the steadiness or “loyalty” of your self-commitments. The fourth box suggests that understanding brings more competence in living, or not.

The third level is that of Body, or the instrumentation that keeps your life going. The first box questions the level of comfort you have in your body. The second box acknowledges that as you look out at your world, your body is your immediate context, your most intimate environment. The third box acknowledges that life often punishes the body and you need to persist in it to manage your commitments. The fourth box deals with the way understanding can lead to cooperating with the body, resulting in wellness.

The bottom level, Mind (which is the last function to be fully developed in each person) deals with the way you use your awareness to notice and appreciate the complexities of your life. The first box asks about the quality of your inner focus. The second box deals with the ways you find your personality manipulating situations and people. The third box asks about the level of responsibility you feel in your life commitments. The fourth box suggests that understanding can bring the experience of integrity into the life.

The words in these boxes are meant to be suggestive, and to help you get started. If they do not feel “right” to you, look at the Perspective involved and “feel” your way into what that means to you in sensing that aspect of your Functioning. This exercise should be as uniquely personal as possible.

The use of such squares is characteristic of the Sabian method in the use of correlation to aid in the development of consciously functioning individuality.

With this explanation in mind, proceed to working with the boxes.

STEPS

You may want to work on this exercise in several steps. As you look at these boxes, one at a time, your first step could be putting a number in the corner to express your initial sense of what it means to you. Use the 1 to 10 scale, with 1 meaning not important or non-functioning for you, and 10 meaning very important or richly functioning. This will provide that first, most objective quick overview of your sense of yourself in terms of this model.

The second step is writing in some words to explain the number you put down. This is a kind of shorthand message to yourself. These are flags to help you attend to aspects of yourself you are beginning to understand could benefit from more attention, since by now you must have noticed that you also are a “Work in progress.”

The third step could be a comparison with what you said about yourself in the Life Facets exercise. Can you begin to see the patterns in your life more clearly?

Aspects of Individuality

		Inner Self	Personality	Use of Self	Understanding
A S P E C T S O f B E I N G	SOUL Life Orientation	Source	Enthusiasm	Belonging	Character
	WILL Life Direction	Purpose	Self as “agency”	Loyalty	Competence
	BODY Life Instrumentation	Comfort	Body as “context”	Persistence	Wellness
	MIND Life Appreciation	Focus	Self as “manipulator”	Responsibility	Integrity