

Living the Good Life:

Virtue Ethics, Human Flourishing and Motivation to Change

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Objectives

- Discuss the role of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation as it relates to recidivism and relapse.
- Provide an overview of Virtue Ethics and discuss how concepts such as Human Flourishing, the Purpose of Life, Virtues and Friendship can affect motivation to change.
- Discuss the role of Beauty in internal motivation.
- Suggest ways in which looking at life as a story can help treatment court participants discover purpose in life and instill virtues.

Recidivism and Relapse

- ~ 60% of people arrested test positive for drugs.
- ~ 80% of offenders abuse alcohol or other drugs.
- 1 in 100 U.S. Citizens is now incarcerated.
- 50% of jail and prison inmates clinically addicted.
- Almost 95% of addicts released from prison return to drug use within two years.
- 60-80% of drug abusers will commit a new crime after release from prison.

• *NADCP website

Treatment Courts Work

- Unless regularly supervised by a judge, up to 80% of addicted offenders will drop out of treatment.
- Drug Courts six times more likely to keep offenders in treatment long enough for them to get better.
- Nationwide, 75% of Drug Court graduates remain arrest-free at least two years after leaving prison.
- Reduction in crime for drug court graduates can last anywhere from 3 to 14 years.

- *NADCP website

An Incredibly Brief Overview of Evidence-Based Sentencing

Risk, Needs and Responsivity

- **PROGNOSTIC RISK (Supervision)**

- Static factors which statistically affect the prognosis for success in standard rehabilitation services. Not the same as risk for violence, dangerousness, or re-offending.

- **CRIMINOGENIC NEEDS (Treatment)**

- Dynamic or changeable factors that contribute to the likelihood that someone will commit a crime.

- Anti-social attitudes
- Antisocial associations/peers
- Anti-social personality pattern
- Family/Marital problems
- Substance abuse
- Lack of education
- Poor employment history
- Lack of pro-social leisure activities

RESPONSIVITY ISSUES

- Personal strengths and/or specific individual factors which might influence effectiveness of treatment services.
 - Mental Health Issues
 - Culture
 - Literacy
 - Offender's Learning Style
 - Developmental Stage
 - Cognitive Abilities
 - Physical Withdrawals
 - Motivation

Motivation to Change

- Motivation is the key to treatment success, since it is the basis for participant's willingness to accept new modes of thought and behavior.
- Two Main Types of Motivation
 - Extrinsic
 - Intrinsic
- Extrinsic motivation = to engage in behavior based on reward or punishment
- Intrinsic motivation = to engage in behavior because it is personally rewarding

- *“If pain of punishment or pain of physical suffering are the only reasons that a culture can provide for why anyone should discipline or curb specific desires, that culture lacks the resources for forming people of character...”*

Kent Dunnington

Motivation and Human Flourishing

- **Eudaimonic** living (Human Flourishing) has been linked to the pursuit of intrinsic goals and values for their own sake, including personal growth, relationships, community, and health, rather than to extrinsic goals and values, such as wealth, fame, image, and power.
- Studies indicate that people high in **eudaimonic** living tend to behave in more prosocial ways, thus benefiting society as well as themselves.

(Ryan, Huta and Deci, Living Well)

Normative Ethics

- **Normative Ethics** is the study of ethical action.
- There are three parts of any action:
 - First, the Agent performing the act;
 - Second, there is the Act itself;
 - Third, there are the Consequences of the act.
- There are three types of normative ethical theory, each emphasizing one of these elements.
 - **Virtue Ethics** (the Agent)
 - **Deontology** (the Act)
 - **Consequentialism** (the Consequences of the act)

- **Consequentialism:** A person is morally obligated to act in a way which achieves the most positive outcome. Focuses on the action with emphasis on the consequences.
- **Deontology:** A person is morally obligated to act in accordance with certain principles and rules, regardless of the outcome. Focuses on the action with emphasis on the act itself.
- Can you see elements of these ethical approaches in Treatment Courts?

- **Virtue Ethics:** A person will act in a way consistent with his nature. Ethical behavior is evaluated on the virtues embodied in one's character.
- Focuses on the Actor with an emphasis on who one is rather than on what one does.
- Possessing virtues is what makes one moral; one's actions are a reflection of one's inner morality.
- Can you see elements of Virtue Ethics in Treatment Courts?

Ethical Theories

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graph TD; A[Ethical Theories] --> B[Ethics of Conduct  
(What sort of actions should we perform?)]; A --> C[Ethics of Character  
(What sort of people should we be?)]; B --> D[Consequentialism  
(The right actions is the one which produces the most intrinsic good)]; B --> E[Deontology  
(The right action is the one which follows the right rules)]; C --> F[Virtue Ethics  
(A virtuous person will act in a way consistent with his character)];
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Ethics of Conduct
(What sort of actions should we perform?)

Consequentialism
(The right actions is the one which produces the most intrinsic good)

Deontology
(The right action is the one which follows the right rules)

Ethics of Character
(What sort of people should we be?)

Virtue Ethics
(A virtuous person will act in a way consistent with his character)

Virtue Ethics

- Virtue Ethics originated in ancient Greek philosophy, especially the writings of Plato and Aristotle.
- It was incorporated into Christian moral theology by St. Thomas Aquinas.
- It declined during the Renaissance but has experienced a revival over the last 50 years.
- Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues at the University of Birmingham (England) has conducted a great deal of research on character education as it relates to children and young adults.

Virtue Ethics only makes sense if there
actually is a purpose for human life.

- Ultimate purpose (*telos*) of human existence is ***Eudaimonia***.
- ***Eudaimonia*** = Happiness “**human flourishing**”
- Human Flourishing = spiritual, rational, emotional, physical and social well-being; wholeness and harmony.
- Human Flourishing requires:
 - **Contemplation of the divine** and
 - **Cultivation of intellectual and moral virtues** in
 - **in the social context** of family, friends and *polis*.

Contemplating the Divine

- In ancient Greece, philosophical thought was characterized by **Cosmic Piety**, the sense that the universe was alive with divine presence.
- **Truth Goodness and Beauty** were considered to be three distinct yet interrelated manifestations of the divine reality of the cosmos.
- Cosmic Piety obligated all people to live a particular kind of life, a life of participation in the divine, in which one lived in a harmonious relationship with the world and others.

- Greek citizens could participate in the divine through contemplation of the True, the Good and the Beautiful (**transcendence**) and mirror or reflect Truth, Goodness and Beauty into their families, friendships and into the life of the Greek *polis* (**immanence**).
- In ancient Greek philosophy, the *polis* was the idealized city-state and served as the civic center for communion between men and the gods.
- Truth, Goodness and Beauty were divine concepts which ordered and integrated life, allowing a citizen to live in harmony with the divine and with the community.

The Call of Beauty

- The Greek word for “Beauty” comes from the verb “to call”.
- Beauty wakens desire to pursue the True and the Good and, by definition, must draw one to the True and the Good.
- This awakening of desire for the Good and True always involves the awakening of virtues.
- By desiring Truth, Goodness, and Beauty and cultivating the right habits (virtues), a person would experience the transcendent and flourish.

Cultivation of Virtues

- A virtue is a habit that empowers a person to pursue the Good Life.
- A habit is a relatively permanent, acquired modification of a person that enables the person, when provoked by the relevant stimulus, to act consistently, successfully, and with ease with respect to some objective.
- A vice differs from a virtue in light of whether or not it enables a person to flourish. (e.g. “courage” in robbing a bank or “patience” in making meth.)

- Aristotle categorized virtues as either:
 - **Intellectual virtues** such as *sophia* (theoretical wisdom) and *phronesis* (practical wisdom), or
 - **Moral virtues** (including justice, courage and self-control).
- Cultivating moral virtues involves finding the balance or “mean” between excess and deficiency through the exercise of the intellectual virtue of phronesis (practical wisdom).
- The **Cardinal Virtues** were Practical Wisdom, Justice, Courage and Self-Control.

Social Context (Friendship)

- Aristotle considered friendship an indispensable virtue in achieving the goal of human flourishing.
- Three types of friendship. Those based on:
 - mutual pleasure (affection);
 - mutual utility (networking; what's in it for me?)
 - a shared pursuit of virtue and the common good.
- The latter was true friendship and provided the paradigm for the relationship between husband and wife and between citizens of the *polis*.

A Working Definition of the Good Life

- The Good Life is Human Flourishing and is accomplished through the pursuit of transcendent Excellence (Truth, Goodness and Beauty) and immanent Excellence (virtues) in the context of Community (family, friends and society).

Ancient Greece

- *Telos*/Purpose of Life: Human Flourishing (*Eudaimonia*)
- Transcendent Excellence: Contemplating Truth, Goodness & Beauty
- Immanent Excellence: Cultivating Intellectual & Moral Virtues through Education & Practice
- Ordering Habit: *Phronesis* (Practical Wisdom)
- Social Setting: Family, Friends, Polis

St. Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274)

- Aquinas synthesized Christian theology with Greek philosophy by added the category of theological virtues to Aristotle's intellectual and moral virtues.
- The **Theological Virtues** were Faith, Hope and Charity.
- Charity ordered and integrated all other virtues and actions toward the end of God's love in that every activity and every relationship was reinterpreted and invested with meaning only as it related to the love of God and others.
- Charity transfigured even the most ordinary activities into meaningful transactions.

Christianity (Thomas Aquinas)

- *Telos*/Purpose of Life: Human Flourishing
(Loving Relationship with God and Others)
- Transcendent Excellence: Loving God (Union with God) through Word, Worship and Prayer
- Immanent Excellence: Loving others (through infused virtues and the practice of good works)
- Ordering Habit: Charity (*agape* Love)
- Social Setting: Church, Family, Neighbor

Modernity, Addiction and the Bad Life

- Modern society is premised on the priority of the individual good because there no longer is a common understanding of what constitutes the Good Life.
- The Aristotelian view of virtue-friendship has disappeared along with the disappearance of a common good.
- Life is fragmented into “either/or” segments such as work/leisure, private/public, religious/secular.
- Life can seem to be nothing more than a series of unconnected episodes with no discernable purpose.

- The German term *Sehnsucht* describes this intense longing, yearning or craving for meaning.
- C.S. Lewis described it as an “*inconsolable longing*” in the human heart.
- *Sehnsucht* is a bittersweet, almost nostalgic longing for the transcendent, and it is the proverbial whole in the heart which can either be filled with the transcendent or filled with “stuff.”
- Filled with the transcendent, it can lead to freedom. Filled with “stuff,” it can lead to addiction.

- Some people deal with this crisis in meaning, this intense longing, with distractions such as consumerism, technology and substance abuse. However, distraction does not provide the ordering and integration or the quest for the transcendent which modern man craves.
- The connection between addiction and man's quest for the transcendent was noted by Swiss psychologist, Carl Jung who believed *Addiction is a function of "the spiritual thirst of our being for wholeness; expressed in medieval language: the union with God."*
- Kent Dunnington, in Addiction and Virtue, makes the argument that addiction is best understood as an imitation of the theological virtue Charity.

Addiction and Virtue

- Like Charity, addiction orders and integrates all of an addict's actions toward the end of addiction.
- Like Charity, every activity and every relationship is reinterpreted and invested with meaning only as it relates to the end of the practice of the addiction.
- Addiction is habituated in what the addict perceives, feels, imagines. Addiction becomes a worldview, a philosophy of life.

- Addiction comes with its own imitation of Beauty and its own liturgy for sensing that false beauty. Through the liturgy of the bar or the liturgy of shooting up, the addict achieves a sense of wholeness, a sense of the divine.
- It is precisely because addiction offers order and integration and its own interpretation of Beauty that recovery is such a challenge and why relapse can occur long after physical and psychological cravings have faded or disappeared.

Addiction

- *Telos*/Purpose of Life Human Flourishing
(to feel like life matters)
- Transcendent Excellence The “Beauty” and
perceived wholeness
of addiction
- Immanent Excellence The habituated liturgy
of alcohol or drug use
- Ordering Habit Addiction
- Social Setting Other Addicts/Users

Treatment Courts and Virtue Ethics

- Treatment Courts incorporate concepts of virtue ethics by fostering ethical development and giving participants the knowledge and tools necessary to pursue Aristotle's conception of a eudaimonic life.
- The long-term goal of treatment courts is to create an “ethical citizen” who is employed, a suitable caregiver for dependents, submits to various forms of social authority, and contributes to social life.
 - Health, Discipline, and Virtue: Drug Treatment Court and the path to Ethical Self-Formation By Michael Shaw © 2008 Michael Shaw

- **Treatment Courts dispense practical wisdom (phronesis)** through substance abuse counseling, cognitive behavioral programs such as MRT and motivational interviewing.
- **Habit formation lies at the core of Treatment Courts.** Anti-social habits are replaced with habits necessary for human flourishing and to be a good citizen.
- Examples: habits of responsibility are reinforced through regular court/treatment/urine screen meetings; honesty is reinforced through discussions with the judge and treatment providers; self-control is exercised by avoiding drugs, alcohol, and "high-risk" situations.
- **Treatment Courts reflect the Aristotelian view of friendship** by encouraging pro-social development through building healthy social relationships centered around a common concept of the Good Life.

“The entire object of true education is to make people not merely do the right things, but enjoy the right things— not merely industrious, but to love industry—not merely learned, but to love knowledge—not merely pure, but to love purity—not merely just, but to hunger and thirst after justice.”

John Ruskin, *The Crown of Wild Olive: Three Lectures on Work, Traffic, and War*

Increasing Intrinsic Motivation

- I. The Motivational Power of Story
- II. The Motivational Power of Beauty
- III. The Motivational Power of Virtues

The Motivational Power of Story

*“Sow a thought, reap an action;
sow an action, reap a habit; sow
a habit, reap a character; sow a
character, reap a destiny.”*

Life is a Story

- **Man is a story-telling animal** living in an enacted dramatic narrative in which he is both a character and an author. – After Virtue, Alasdair MacIntyre
- **Stories are teleological**, guided by a vision of the future. The telos must be sufficient to tell a good story. We make sense of our lives only through the stories of which we find ourselves a part.
- **Each life-story is a narrative attempt to find *Eudaimonia*** (telos and virtues) and cannot be separated from the social setting (milieu).

- Telling ourselves stories helps us navigate life by providing structure and direction
- Just like attitudes determine actions, our story helps create and determine our destiny.
- Stories shape our unconscious and conscious mind and “help us practice key skills of human social life. They also provide a basis to run fictional simulations in our head and hearts. See a movie, read a story, participate in an action; in all of these events we activate bodily representations of what it feels like.” (Gottschall, Jonathan. The storytelling animal)

Story is a Teacher

- Throughout history, the chief means of moral education is the telling of stories. From heroic society to medieval society, the telling of stories played a key part in educating about morality and virtues.
- The medieval conception of human life was that of a quest or journey with a clear task in mind. Virtues were those qualities which enabled evil to be overcome, the task to be accomplished, the journey to be completed.

Narrative Psychology and the Life-Story Model of Human Identity

- **Narrative psychology** is the study of how human beings deal with life experiences by constructing stories and listening to the stories of others.
- Assumption = human activity and experience are filled with meaning and stories, rather than with logical arguments or lawful formulations.
- Every individual is both the narrator and main character in his or her story. (Adler)
- Adults provide their lives with a sense of unity and purpose by constructing and internalizing self-defining life stories or “personal myths.” (McAdams)

- Our life-stories are not set or predetermined. However, it takes an intentional effort to break old storylines of identity and live into our new story.
- We make and revise our life-stories not so much to create an accurate record of the past but to create a coherent self.
- Life-stories may be analyzed in terms of plots, settings, scenes, characters, and themes.
- One's life story does not exist in a vacuum; it exists in a community and a culture. One's story mirrors the culture and the community where the story is birthed and told.

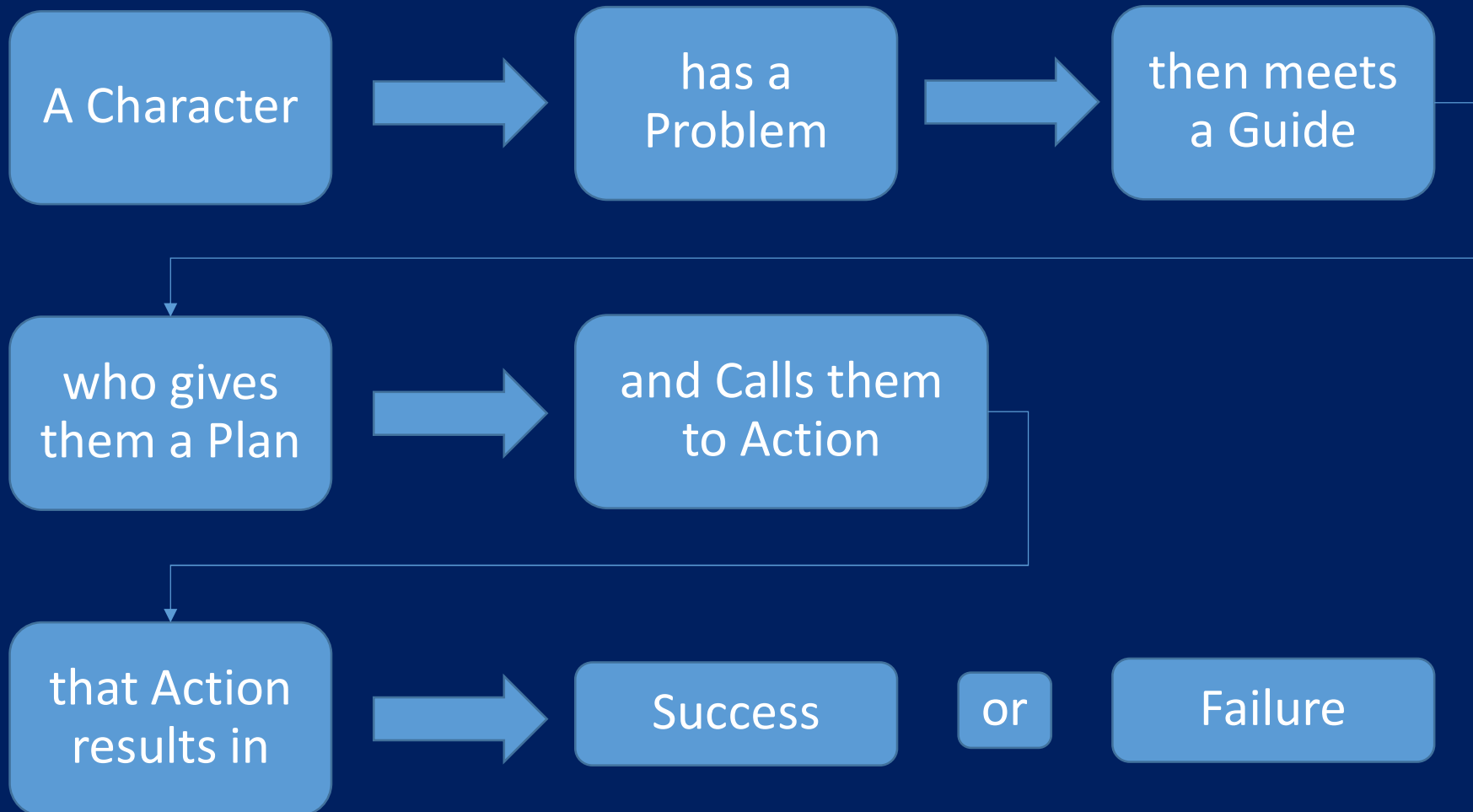
Redemptive Themes

- A **redemptive theme** is defined as where a negative experience is described as leading to a positive outcome. (McAdams 2006)
- *“Every cloud has its silver lining”, or “All things work together for the good to those who love God”*
- Narrated redemption is positively related to life satisfaction, self-esteem, and happiness negatively related to depression. (McAdams 2001)
- Reformed criminals are much more likely to produce redemptive sequences in their life stories compared to practicing criminals. (Maruna, 2001)

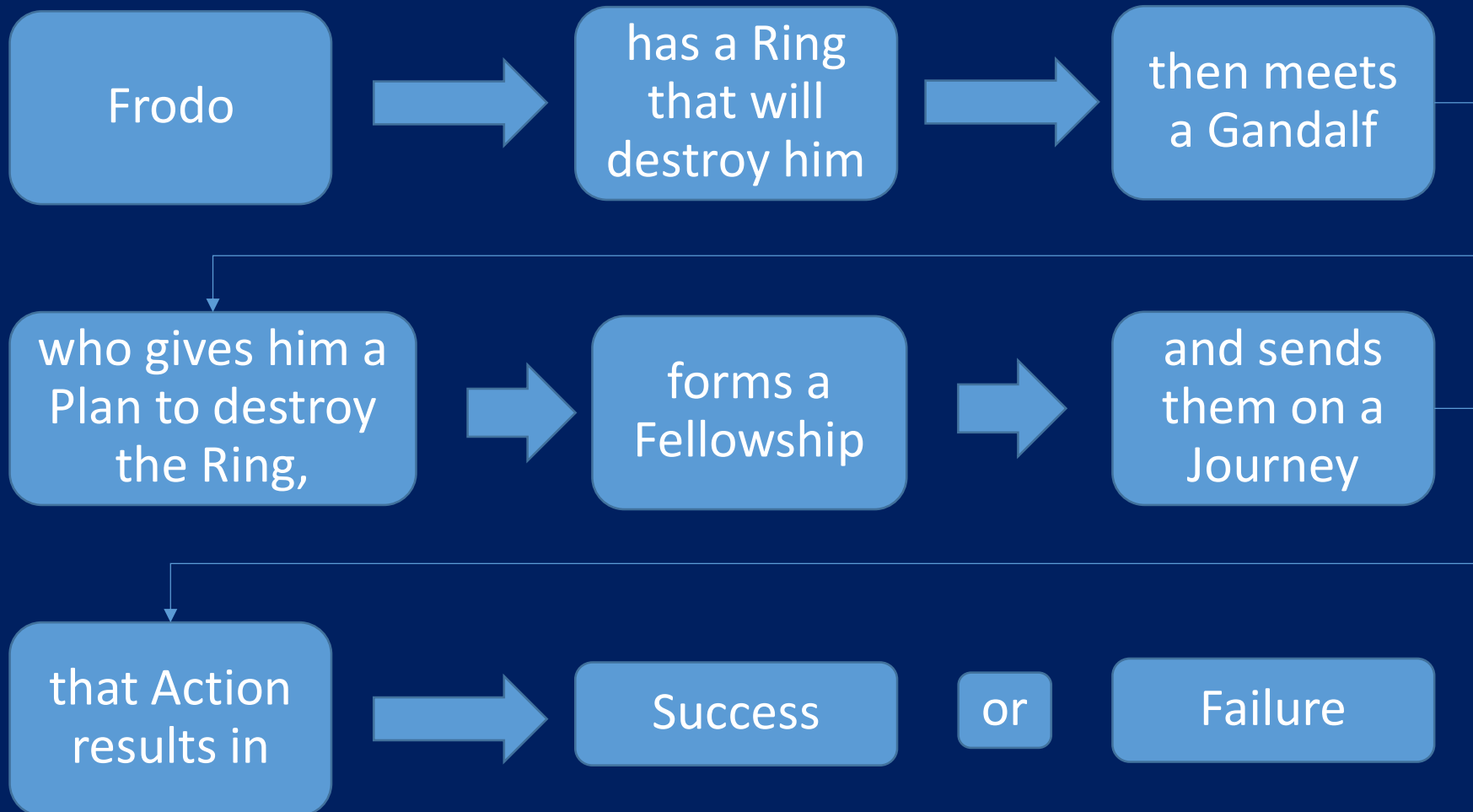
Redemptive Narrative & Recovery

- In a study to determine whether the behavior of alcoholics would align with the narrative plot of new personal stories they created, a strong association was found between the tendency to perceive past traumatic life events as resulting in positive personality change and corresponding behavioral change.
- The results suggested that the construction of a narrative containing self-redemption precedes long-term behavioral change.
 - Sobering Stories, Dunlop & Tracy (2013)

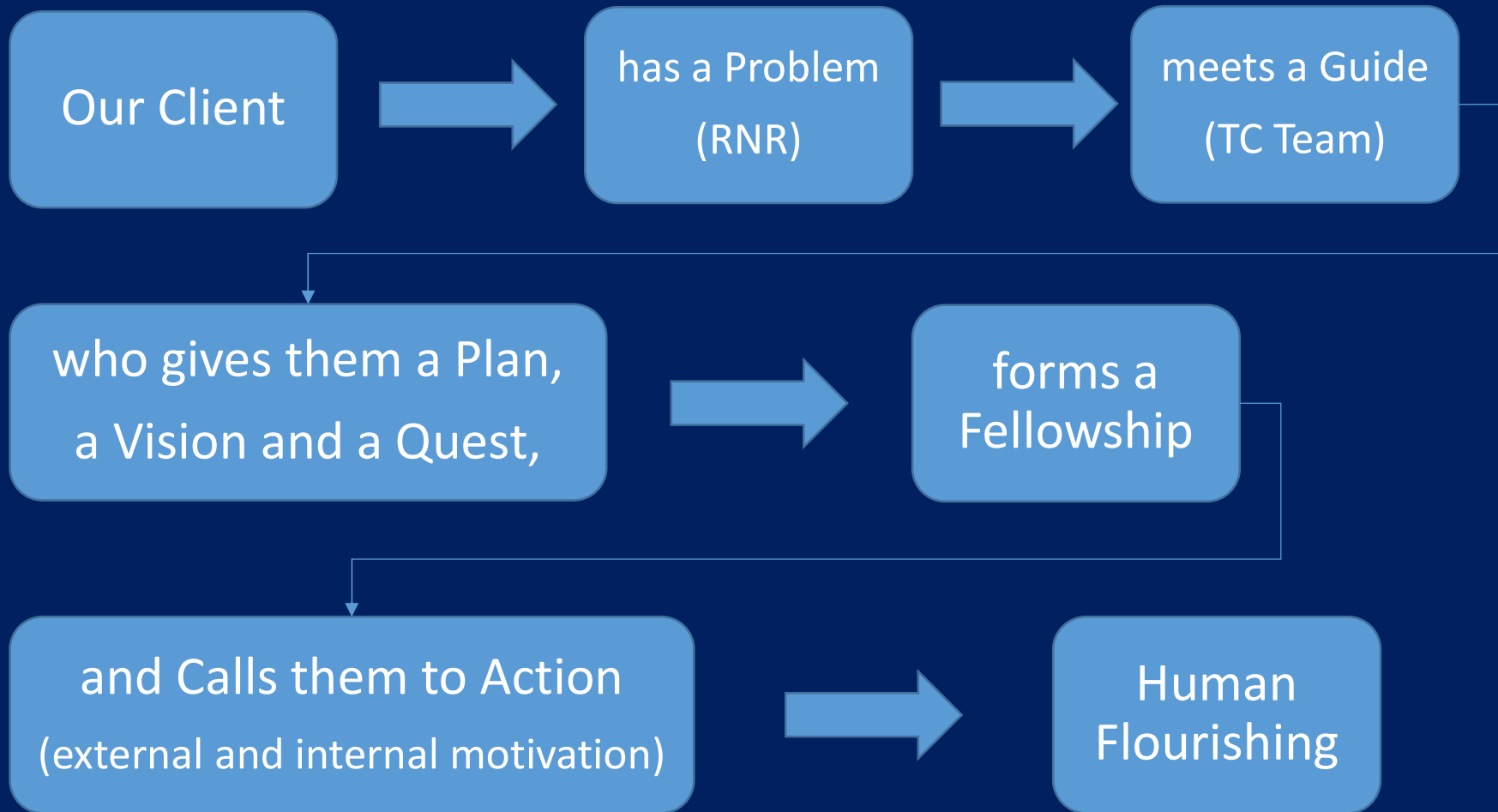
StoryBrand – Donald Miller



Tolkien – Lord of the Rings



Client's Story



Plan, Vision and Quest

- Risks, Needs and Responsivity Issues
 - Prognostic Risks: Level of Supervision
 - Criminogenic Needs: Level of Treatment
 - Responsivity: Mental Health, Cultural Sensitivity, etc.
- Pursuit of Transcendent Excellence (Truth, Goodness and Beauty)
- Pursuit of Immanent Excellence (virtues)

“If the too obvious, so straight branches of Truth and Good are crushed or amputated and cannot reach the light—yet perhaps the whimsical, unpredictable, unexpected branches of Beauty will make their way through and soar up to that very place and in this way perform the work of all three.”

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, “Beauty Will Save the World: The Nobel Lecture on Literature

The Motivational Power of Beauty

- *“Beauty awakens the soul to act.”* Dante Alighieri
- The desire for Beauty serves the indispensable role of internal motivation or momentum in intellectual, moral, and spiritual pursuits.
- The addict must discover a different world than he saw as an addict, a world more beautiful and compelling than the “beauty” offered by addiction.
- Contemplating Beauty: Painting, Drawing, Photography, Music. Use Socratic Questioning/Motivational Interviewing techniques

Music and Art Therapy

- Art Therapy and Music Therapy are complementary and alternative medical (CAM) rather than being evidence-based and have been used in connection with Motivational Enhancement Therapy (MET).
- MET is based on principles of motivational psychology and is designed to produce rapid intrinsic motivation to change. This treatment strategy does not attempt to guide and train the client, step by step, through recovery, but instead employs motivational strategies to mobilize the client's own change resources.

Music

- *“The culture of addiction is a way of life: a way of talking, thinking, behaving and relating to others, that separates substance abusers from those who are not. The culture encompasses values, places, rituals, symbols and music – all of which reinforce one's involvement in excessive drug consumption.”*

(Tsvia Horesh, Dangerous Music)

- In making transition from a culture of addiction to a culture of recovery, a recovering addict must avoid certain People, Places and Things which cue cravings. The music he or she listens to can cue the start of a process leading to relapse.

Suggestions regarding Music

- Ask clients about the music they listen to and have them discuss or write down the feelings, memories and thoughts which come up when they listen to music.
- Do this for the movies and television shows they watch.
- I am not saying we should police the music participants listen to (although it's a thought ...). However, music can trigger relapse.
- What about “positive music styles?”

The Motivational Power of Virtues

12 Key Virtues

- Love
- Gratitude
- Honesty
- Humility
- Friendship
- Service
- Practical Wisdom
- Justice
- Courage
- Self-Control
- Creativity
- Perseverance

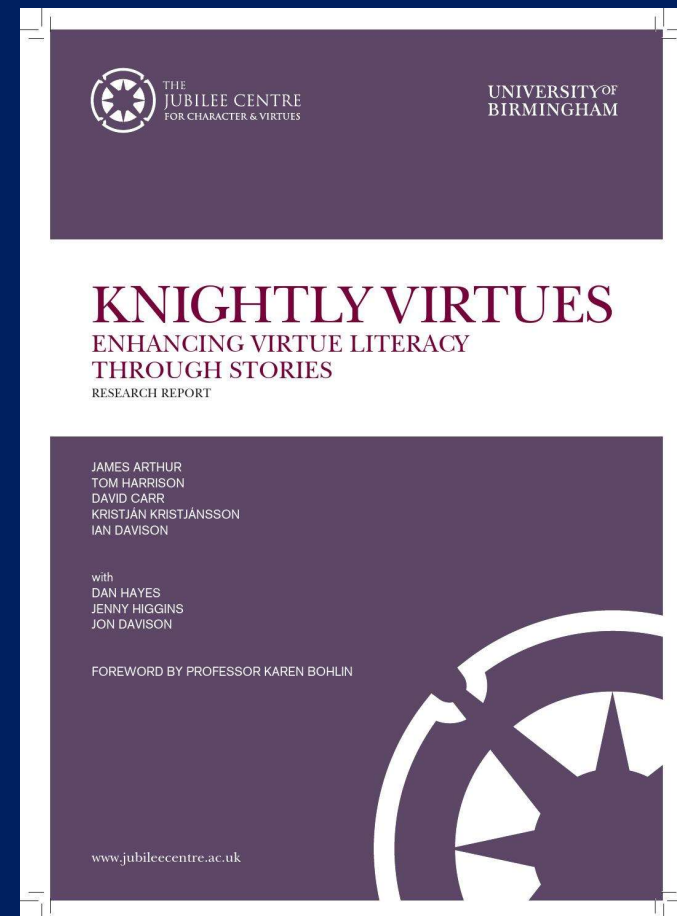
Cognitive Benefits of Reading Fiction

- Reading literary fiction improves social perception and emotional intelligence (Theory of Mind). (Kidd, Comer, Castano (2013));
- Comprehending characters in a narrative fiction parallels the comprehension of peers in the actual world. Frequent fiction readers may thus bolster or maintain their social abilities unlike frequent readers of non-fiction. The tendency to become absorbed in a story also predicted empathy scores. (Mar, Raymond A., et al. (2006));
- Reading fiction affects parts of brain associated with understanding language and visualization and can improve empathy. (Berns, et al (2013) and Bal, Matthijs, Veltkamp 2013)).

Knightly Virtues

The Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues

- Over the past two years the Knightly Virtues has been run in more than 65 primary schools across Britain, involving over 3250 students.
- Designed for boys and girls ages 9 – 11;
- Covers Eight core virtues:
- Humility, Honesty, Love, Service, Courage, Justice, Self-Discipline, Gratitude



Knighly Virtues

- Hypothesis is that “traditional chivalric ideals of knighthood provided a particularly noble and exalted distillation of moral ideals that are no less educationally and otherwise relevant to today than they were at the time of their conception.”
- Organized around the King Arthur legends, Don Quixote, El Cid and the Merchant of Venice with both male and female heroes
- Uses workbook, journal and class discussion.
- New Study: An Attitude for Gratitude
- For more information: <http://www.jubileecentre.ac.uk/>

Gratitude

- Participants randomly assigned to 1 of 3 experimental conditions (hassles, gratitude listing, and either neutral life events or social comparison);
- Kept weekly (Study 1) or daily (Study 2) records of their moods, coping behaviors, health behaviors, physical symptoms, and overall life appraisals.
- The gratitude-outlook groups exhibited heightened well-being across several, though not all, of the outcome measures, relative to the comparison groups.
- Results suggest that a conscious focus on blessings may have emotional and interpersonal benefits.
- Emmons, Robert A., and Michael E. McCullough, (2003)

Here's How I Do It

• Ten Questions

- What do you believe is the purpose of your life?
- Looking back over your life, describe any common theme you see.
- Is this common theme consistent with what you believe to be the purpose of your life?
- What are you most passionate about? What is most important to you?
- What are you most grateful for?

- Now take some time to imagine your future. Write down the Best Possible Life you can imagine.
- Where are you right now in relation to that Best Possible Life?
- What kind of person do you need to be in order to reach your Best Possible Life? How do you want to be remembered?
- Write down a major goal which will get you closer to your Best Possible Life. Then break it down into sub-goals and write down the very first thing you need to do to reach the first sub-goal.

Citizenship,
Pro-Social Leisure Activities and
Community Service

Resources

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