

'Possibly the best business self help book ever written'
Robert Middleton, CEO Action Marketing,

interactive book

Facing The Tiger

Unleashing The Human Spirit at Work

Dr. John J. Scherer

with Dorota Nawalaniec



INTRODUCTION

“As a human being, are you a finished product or a work-in-progress?”

Over the years, I have asked this question—a gift from my close friend and colleague, Art McNeil—of thousands of people around the world. As you might guess, most people say, “Oh, I’m not ‘there’ yet; I’m still a work-in-progress.”

The next question I like to ask is, “Well, where do you do your ‘progressing’ or ‘developing’?” People respond with a variety of answers:

- reading a good self-help or leadership book
- going to personal or professional development seminars and workshops
- at my church, synagogue, mosque or spiritual development group
- sitting quietly alone or with close friends

These are all wonderful places to be a work-in-progress. I know from personal experience. But every day you spend your waking hours in a *perfect* ‘classroom’ for profound personal, deep—you might even say spiritual—development. As you will see, the people around you are the *perfect* ‘faculty’ for what you need to learn, and the ‘stuff’ that happens to you every day contains your perfect ‘curriculum’, resulting in what I call your ‘School of Life’. *Seva as sadhana*.

THE SCHOOL OF LIFE

- **This ‘school’ is tuition-free.** There are some ‘costs’ associated with being in the program, but, as you will see, the investment is all internal, involving reflection and self-mastery.
- **Your ‘faculty’ is always around**—the ones you like and the ones you can’t stand. In fact, as you will see, the ones you don’t particularly like are potentially the most important ‘teachers’ in your developmental process.
- **There are no ‘grades’.** There is, however, continuous, real-time feedback. Oh... and your own inner critic. The trick is to figure out what it all means.

- **School is always ‘in session’** and the lessons are always the right ones for you in that moment.
- **There is no final ‘exam’**—only moment-by-moment ‘tests.’ If you don’t do particularly well on a ‘lesson,’ don’t worry, it will keep coming back until you get it!

When you start to see life itself as a ‘classroom’ for becoming fully who you are, then everything that happens to you is a developmental opportunity.

LIFE AS A ‘DOJO’

Years ago Black-Belt, Ellen Stapenhorst, introduced me to Aikido, the relatively young Japanese martial art that emphasizes *flowing with* an attack rather than blocking or striking. The word, Aikido, is broken into its parts like this:

Ai – To blend or harmonize

Ki – Energy or intention

Do – Path or ‘Way’

In Aikido practice, it all begins when someone called the ‘Uke’—“Oo-keh” moves to engage. In that moment, the two of you begin to train not *against* each other but *with* each other. In an interesting and transformative re-frame, your Uke is not *attacking* you, but rather providing you with *an opportunity to practice your craft*.

If you are attempting to become a better tennis player, for instance, it’s rather hard to do it by yourself. You need a partner on the other side of the net whose role is to hit challenging shots at you. The better they are as a player, the more you are called on to ‘raise your game’ in the process of *mastering your craft*, which, in this case, means becoming a better tennis player.

So, in Life, when someone or something ‘comes at you,’ why not frame what is happening as an opportunity to ‘practice your craft’ and ‘raise your game’? It takes a lot of inner work, like embracing The Five Questions, but eventually it is possible to get to the place where you can

actually experience *gratitude* for this opportunity to master your craft, which in this case means becoming a better _____ (fill in your name here).

In this way, that person 'coming at you,' your Uke, becomes a *tiger-to-be-faced*. Learning how to face your tigers is therefore a crucial aspect of self-mastery.

SELF-MASTERY

This kind of learning is not just about mastering a subject or a set of skills, the object of most classrooms. This classroom is more about *self-mastery* which Lao Tzu described in 600 BCE:

Those who understand much may be wise, but those
who understand themselves are even wiser.
Those who are master over many may be powerful, but those
who are mastering themselves are more powerful still.

~ Lao Tzu,

This means learning how to manage *internal* things like success, failure, fear, pride, confusion, frustration, anger, joy, jealousy, competition. In self-mastery there *are* skills to be learned, but they are skills that assist you in *processing what is happening to you*. To go back to the T.S. Eliot quote, it is figuring out the *lessons* in the *experiences*.

HOMework THAT TAKES YOU 'HOME'

If you decide to face your tigers by taking on The Five Questions in the course of self-mastery, *there will be homework*.

Paradoxically, the work you will need to do has nothing to do with changing anything about yourself. It's exactly the opposite. This homework is *work that takes you home*—home to who you truly are, to that Self which is capable of mastering being you, discovering the *person inside your position* or

role. It's hard work to peel back the layers that have covered over this vital center, this core essence of who you are, but it may be one of the reasons you are here.

Your homework may involve some of the most challenging self-development you have ever attempted. If you take it on, however, it could allow you to relax and enjoy your life, regardless of the circumstances. Whether or not you are aware of it, this could be something you have been searching for, striving for, saving for, maybe even fighting for. But the first step is accepting that where you are right now is *exactly* where you need to be to start the journey. If you are in Paris and want to go to New York, you have to start in Paris!

WHY FIVE QUESTIONS? WHY NOT FIVE ANSWERS?

Some might wonder how an approach based on *questions* could be of any value when what the world is seeking is *answers*.

First of all, questions are much more powerful than answers. As long as you are asking a question, you are open to input and discovery. The instant you find the answer, you stop looking; you shut down to new input. Answers eventually lead to rigidity. Rigidity leads to certainty. Certainty leads to stagnation. Stagnation leads to the need for fresh thinking, and that requires asking new questions. The questions asked here are universal, aimed at everyone. But what 'comes up' in *you* while you engage in these questions will be completely unique. And very personal.

What you need is an approach that creates *transformation*, a very different outcome from mere *change*. Change happens on the outside. Transformation on the inside. *Change* can be accomplished by applying answers; *transformation* requires living into the right questions, and these five are a great place to start.

YOU CAN'T REALLY *CHANGE* YOURSELF!

Most personal change efforts are based on the core belief that there is something wrong with who you are now. Consider this: you couldn't have any other kind of attitude, relationships, health, management style, or success, *given who you have been up to now*.

If you want to create any kind of fundamental *difference* in your life, the secret is not to try to become someone or something else (*change*), but to become more fully who you are (*transformation*).

NEW WATER FROM THE OLD WELL

Perhaps you can now see that changing something implies *replacing* or *negating* what is there. Transformation, on the other hand, implies reaching deep within what is there now to find the 'seeds' for a new and larger reality. It is more like the true meaning of *education*: from its Latin root *e-ducare*, 'to draw out,' as in drawing water out of a well. *You can think of the kind of transformation described here as drawing new water out of your old well—by going deeper than you dipped before*. The way to get your bucket deeper into your well is by taking on these powerful questions, instead of jumping at attractive-looking answers. When you courageously engage with these five questions, everything has a chance to shift inside and around you. It starts with fully understanding who you are, down deep, and then being *that* person.

If you are ready for this possibility, let's begin. The approach is actually very simple. Not easy, but simple.

Picture your Self as a 'core' or an 'essence' that lives at the center of a Mandala:

THE MANDALA

Most of us live from day to day on the surface, out on the perimeter, of our lives. This is where ‘stuff’ happens to us: the good, the bad, the hard, the easy, the joyful and the painful. By staying out there we avoid feeling the ‘negative’ things very deeply. However, this strategy means we also don’t often deeply experience the ‘positive’ things either.

When we interact with other people, it is often the outer layer of who *we* are (the lovely blue ring of the Mandala) interacting with the outer layer of who *they* are. Then we wonder why we do not have more influence or respect or connection...

The next (red) layer or ring of the mandala represents ‘negative’ aspects of who we are, hidden from our awareness—and, if possible, from other people. As you will see, this red layer plays a major role in our transformation.

As we become the deeper aspects of who *we* are, we become more present—and more capable of interacting with—the deeper aspects of who *other* people are. As we move toward that ‘golden center’, everything on the surface changes and we become more real!

In the Golden Center is your own fingerprint. It’s who you are beneath all the roles you play and the expectations of others. It’s where everything right and good about you lives.



GETTING STARTED

Let's explore these Five Questions together and discover—or maybe *re-discover*—that path of turning work and life itself into deep development. When you were born, you were a master of that way of learning. In fact, it was all you knew how to do at first. You were a *learning being*, designed to grow and develop and discover yourself and the world in every moment of every day.

Born to be learners, we turn into 'knowers'.

Let me show you how to turn anything and everything that happens to you at work—and at home—into a *developmental 'lesson'*, a flash of awareness that deepens and expands you more fully into your real Self at the center of The Mandala, and maximizes your contribution to others and even to Life itself.

I'll say it again: To become wiser-at-work and more of what you are capable of being, you don't need to *change* yourself. You need to *come home* to your Self. This changes everything...

Now I hope you can see why 'This book is for you...'



This icon represents a chance to apply a particular concept to yourself. This is one way to turn your experience into more than just 'reading a book'. Doing the interactive exercises will deepen your self-understanding and help you apply it to your life.



Throughout the book, *this* icon (except here!) will take you to a video about an important personal development model or concept. (These videos can also be excellent ways to share the concepts with friends or colleagues.)