

# Proactive Health Strategies<sup>©</sup>

A SSLD Application

健行新方略<sup>©</sup>



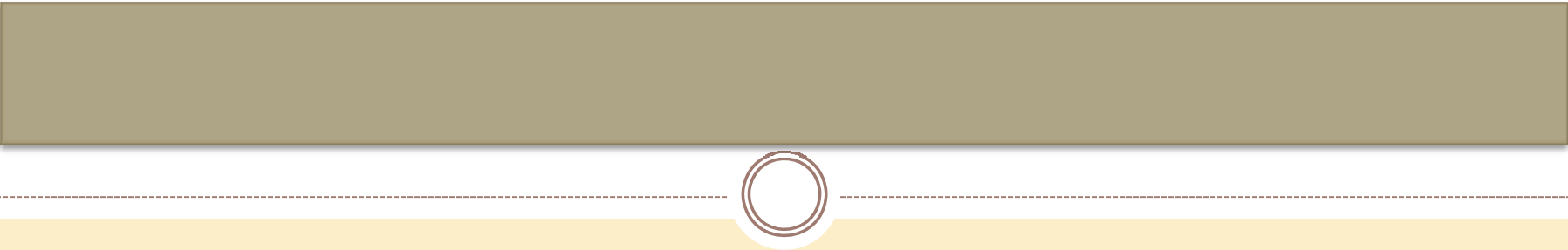
**SSLD: STRATEGIES & SKILLS  
LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT**

*An Intervention System Developed by*



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天行健，君子自強不息

<易經>

Nature goes well.

The noble character self-strengthens incessantly.

*I-Ching*



# Definition of Health

(What people know but do not practice)



Health is a state of complete **physical, mental and social well-being** and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

It is the extent to which an individual or group is able to **realize aspirations and satisfy needs**, on the other hand to **change or cope with the environment**.

World Health Organization (WHO)

# Experiential Learning



- This workshop targets change in actual behavior, not just conceptual understanding
- What is learned experientially has a better chance of being applied and retained
- YOU (the participants) not me (instructor) are the most valuable resource
- Interaction, connection, and social facilitation will help to maximize and consolidate learning gains
- Follow-up, continual learning is necessary (不進則退)
- Incremental learning that is in synch with your current needs, circumstances, and characteristics

# Today's Program



- **Active participation (speak up, sharing, activities)**
- **Blitz groups (4-5members each)**
- **Grounded in direct experience, what we do**
- **Learning from each other, making the most out of the situation**

# Health & Well-Being: Your Own View



- The World Health Organization (WHO) definition
  - Not only absence of physical illness
  - Both state and action: aspiration, needs, and changing the environment
- What is your own understanding of health?
- What is your own understanding of well-being, being-well, or living well?
- How are these related to what you consider to be desirable, happy, or valuable in life? (Your own aspirations, needs, and what you want your world to be)

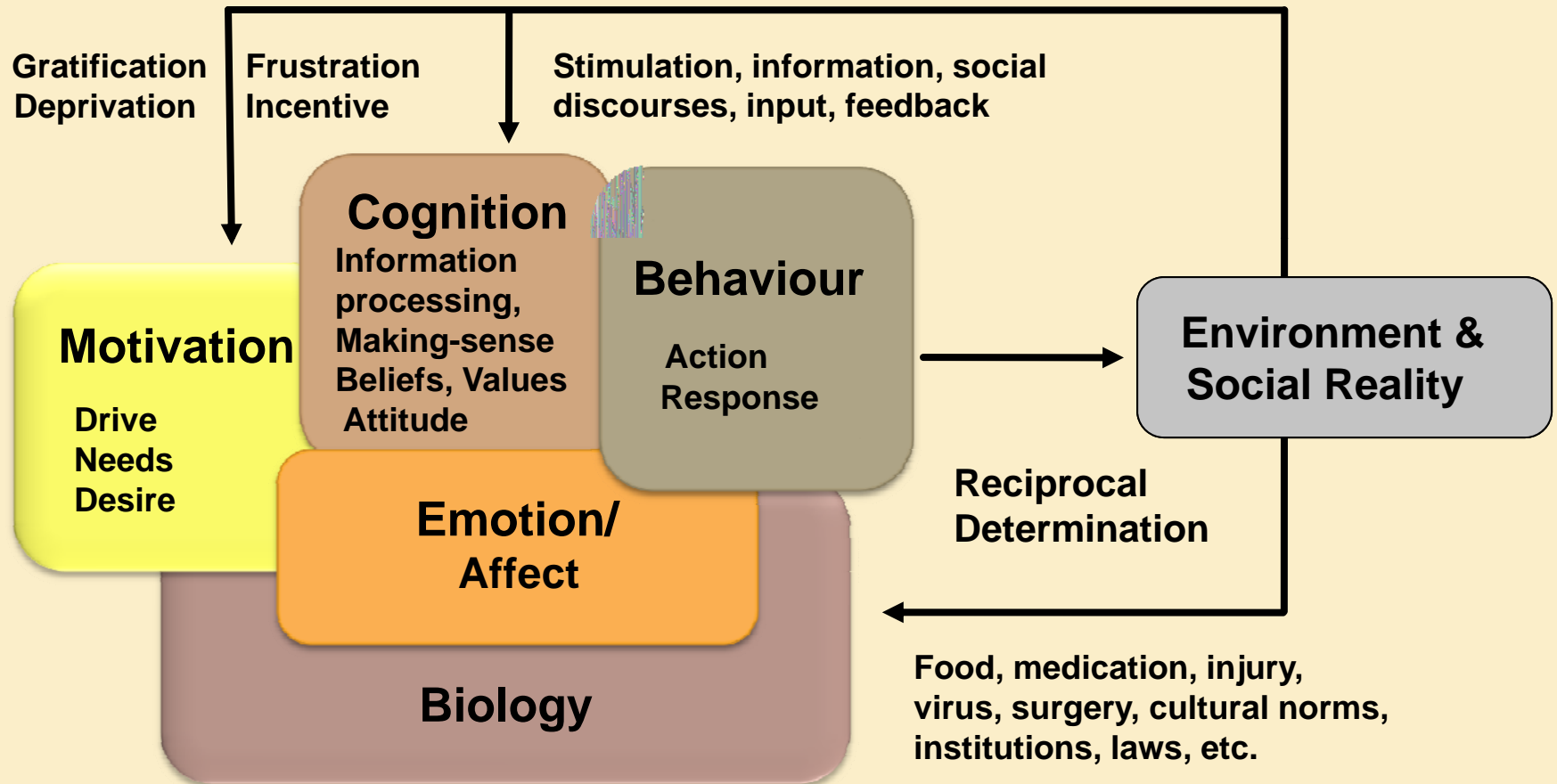
# Do I Want to Be Healthy?



- Judging from the way people live their lives, we have to recognize that not everyone really wants to be healthy
- Health is often not perceived as a priority in people's lives
- Health and well-being, therefore, have to be understood with regard to the kind of life people desire to live
- The first question we need to ask is what is the kind of life you want to live, and what is the kind of person you want to be
- An objectively defined health has to be integrated with your subjective imagination of what is a good life, and the person you want to be

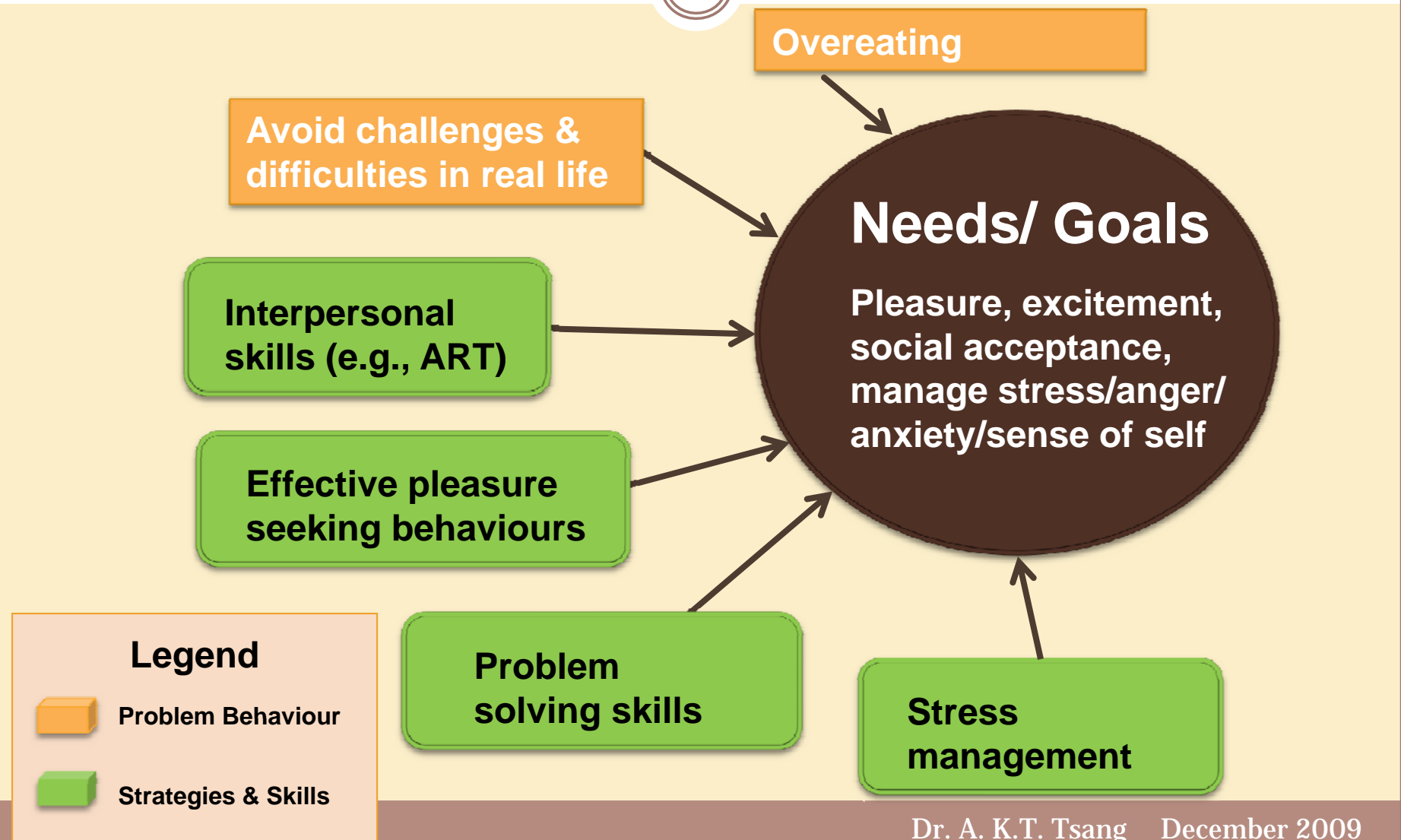


# The Human Agent and the Life-World



## Case Illustration 1: Overeating

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# SSLD Perspective



- Health practice is not solely determined by knowledge and thinking, but interacts with psychological and environmental factors
- Current health practices reflect motivational, cognitive, emotional, and biological patterns, conditioned by environmental factors
- Effective change in health practice involves all these domains
- To minimize resistance and maximize chance of success, intervention strategies should
  - address people's needs (and become intrinsically rewarding)
  - engage with current health knowledge, beliefs, and values
  - be compatible with environmental, social, and cultural realities
  - correspond to people's needs, circumstances, and characteristics capacity for learning and change

# Life Review



- **Cartography of your life-world: Mapping it out**
  - Self (body, mind, identity, self-image, soul, spirit)
  - Work, occupation, career, calling, life-task
  - Relationships
  - Social location: includes social space, mobility, transitioning
  - Resources: Wealth, social capital, personal strengths/capacities
- **What are the areas of life that you wish to improve on?**
- **What will make you feel better?**
- **What can you do differently to achieve the desired changes?**
- **What are you prepared to do (can include learning what to do)?**

## Total Health Manifesto - Your Health in Your Own Hands



- You are ultimately in charge of your own health: You make the decisions and are responsible for them
- Each one of us has a set of health strategies and practices, which are of varying effectiveness
- Medical technology is a key component of your health, but it is not everything
- Your health is too important to be totally left to a healthcare professional
- There are always things you can do to achieve better health and well-being
- The best thing you can ever do to yourself is to learn the strategies and skills that will enable you to realize a better life



## Why Do We Keep Doing Things That Are Damaging Our Own Health?

- Some of us do not know what is healthy, or we are misinformed
- Knowledge-Action Gap: The multi-billion dollar assumption. We do not do what we know to be good. Most people knowingly do things that damage their health (e.g., unhealthy eating, not exercising, smoking, excessive drinking, not dealing with stress)
- Unhealthy practices are motivated: They are maintained because they meet certain psychological or emotional needs (e.g., security, control and mastery, anger, resentment) or because they are simply pleasurable

# Self-Destruction

## Why Do We Keep Doing Things That Are Damaging Our Own Health?

- Unhealthy practices are often socially facilitated or reinforced (friends, family, culture)
- Unhealthy practice is supported by market forces (e.g., junk food, ineffective/harmful health products)
- Healthy practices and competing needs and goals
  - externally prescribed procedures compromise our pleasure seeking, sense of autonomy, independence, and freedom
  - Healthy practices may be costly, inconvenient, or simply not cool
- Some of us are actually motivated to be self-destructive (e.g. reckless driving, unprotected sex, indulgent diet)

# Aspects of Living and Being Well

- **Body**
  - Medically defined
  - Fitness
  - Feel good
- **Financial**
  - What you need?
  - Income and security
- **Psychological/emotional**
  - Pleasure and positive experience
  - Subjective well-being
  - Managing pain and suffering
- **Social**
  - Identity and location
  - Social inclusion, connection
  - Interpersonal relationships
- **Work/Occupational**
  - Career, not just your job
  - Actualizing self while completing the social
- **Spiritual**
  - Purpose, meaning
  - Transcendence
- **Sexual**
  - Liberation, development, and self actualization
  - Connection, depth, transcendence



## Engaging with the Dark Side



- We have all done things that are detrimental to our own health and well-being (e.g., overeating, overworking, not dealing with stress, denial /avoidance of emotional and relationship problems, not exercising, overspending, abusing our partner, gambling, etc.).
- Passing judgment, denying, and/or avoiding them do not help. We just need to deal with them directly.
- Actually, we often do them for a reason, and the reason may actually be based on a very valid or natural need (e.g., I need to be accepted by my peers, and do not want to be socially isolated).
- We can start by looking at what we do, and the needs that drive them (even when the needs are not obvious to you).

# Engaging with the Dark Side



List the things you do that are likely to be detrimental to your health and well-being:

## Examples

- I have a habit of over-spending and I am now in heavy debt
- I have high blood-pressure and cholesterol but I consume large quantity of high-fat food
- I need my spouse badly, but I always say and do mean things to her/him
- I want to be emotionally and sexually close to someone, but I often avoid opportunities to develop intimate relationships
- I do not exercise regularly
- I allow myself to stay in stressful or unhealthy situations (e.g., dysfunctional relationship), without either a strategy for change or an exit plan

# Pleasure Scan



1. What are the things that you find pleasurable in your life?
2. What are some of the pleasurable things that you want to add to your life?
  - List the things that come to mind, do not censor
  - You can keep some of the items to yourself, you do not have to share all of them
  - If you cannot name, label, or describe, you can draw a picture, or use a symbol or a code
  - Rank them according to the level of pleasure/satisfaction

# Living with Illness and Suffering



- Everyone of us faces an increasing chance of having to deal with a chronic health condition, either as the patient, a caregiver, or just a concerned family and friend.
- Living with illness, pain, dysfunction, disability, deterioration, or the reality of death can be difficult and scary. Avoidance, fear, and/or resentment are normal.
- Society and the healthcare system are still trying to figure out ways to deal with aspects of the issue (e.g., healthcare economics, treatment technology) and the full impact on our lives is often not recognized and understood.
- We need to take charge of our bodies, our health and well-being, our own lives by learning and developing proactive strategies and skills.

# The Multiple Roles We Play



- Society and the healthcare system often slot us into a single position: patient, caregiver, transmitter or recipient of health information, etc.
- In reality, we play multiple roles, and we have probably played all of these roles at different times of our life.
- We sometimes enjoy playing certain roles (e.g., information provider, passive patient), and we sometimes resent them. We move in and out of these roles a lot.
- These socially constructed roles often do not match our needs and desires. There are times when we are uninformed, confused, scared, resentful, or sad.
- We can learn strategies and skills to manage these roles.

## Collaborative Generation of New Strategies and Skills

- **Work with your small group members to develop a strategy for bringing about change in a particular health practice. Target specific, concrete, observable (and preferably measurable) outcomes.**
  1. **Identity issue to be deal with, and goal to be achieved (e.g., lose weight, start regular exercise)**
  2. **Brainstorming for possible strategies**
  3. **Review proposed strategies to extract criteria**
  4. **Designing and proposing a strategy**
  5. **Think of ways to make the strategy sustainable**

# Keeping Your Learning Gains



On a piece of paper, write down (intelligibly) the following:

1. What are the key things you have learned today (key words, bullet points are OK)
2. List 3 things that you will do differently in either your professional work or personal health practice

# More About SSLD

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- SSLD Website: <http://ssld.kttsang.com>
- Email: [k.tsang@utoronto.ca](mailto:k.tsang@utoronto.ca)

**Watch out for the new book !!!**

Tsang, A.K.T. (forthcoming). Social Skills Training and Beyond: Learning to Change Lives through the SSLD Approach.