

AUGUST 2019

Thinking on Things Letter

An indispensable letter that's better than a bagel with lox, onions, capers, cream cheese and an expensive latte. Yup !!!!

Hello Loyal Readers

Hello friends of The Levy Launch. It's August, 2019 and it's time for an installment of this mighty letter to nourish your intellectual appetite.

It's 2019 and there's lots to report about Founders House of Hope and the newest facility I've spent time at in Los Angeles called Windsor Hall which is a sister facility of Founders. I've been facilitating a poetry writing group at Windsor Hall since May of 2018 and we've collected enough poetry to be self-publishing our own anthology of poetry. The residents want to title the book "Unfinished Lives: Poetry by Gifted, Misunderstood Minds" We hope to have the anthology available by November.

In February of this year, I was invited to guest speak at Virginia University of Integrative Medicine in Fairfax, Virginia. I spent four days lecturing about Western Approaches to Diagnosing and Treating Mental Health Disorders to students earning doctorate degrees in Oriental Medicine. It was a truly meaningful experience teaching these students and being introduced to complementary treatment methods for mental health disorders. I hope to be invited next year – what you think? I received great end of course evaluations – so that means something. Right?



The Founders Report

We're all good at Founders House of Hope. A few residents are working at Founders Hut (the on-site store) and they're working on their recovery program. We purchased a few laptops, bikes and a few other things for residents working hard on achieving their recovery goals. In the last six months, we've been making a profit at Founders Hut because I've got Los Alamitos Donuts and Java Connection donating their donuts, bagels and pastries not sold at the end of the day. So – on average, we're making \$30.00 a day and this money goes directly to my nonprofit called Founders Outreach. The revenue we generate is dedicated to providing the supports and services to residents pursuing their rehabilitation and recovery goals. For example, we'll buy laptops, bikes and books to residents enrolling at Cerritos College. So – it's all good folks.

We began operating an innovative program at Founders a few months ago. There are about 4,000 mentally ill individuals at the Los Angeles Central Jail and Twin Towers. These folks are there for shoplifting and other minor offenses or misdemeanors. Well -- these individuals were labeled MIST which stands for Mentally Incompetent to Stand Trial and we began admitting them to Founders months ago. I'm happy to report that these folks are adjusting very well to our psychiatric rehab. program and they're being case managed by a couple of community mental health programs. The objective is to obviously discharge the mentally ill from jail and into community residential programs like Founders. So – we're good and trying to accommodate more of these referrals by freeing up some beds.

Otherwise – all is good at Founders. I've been there about 21 years which means I can establish job stability. It's part time and being at Founders is my true work – my fitting work that fills my heart and soul with lots of lox, capers and cream cheese. I'm there every day for about three hours and it's a great partnership.

Finally-- I need to express my gratitude for having all of my senior center students from Norwalk Senior Center, Cerritos Senior Center and La Mirada Activity Center for eternally supporting my work at Founders. The material and financial donations you give me enriches the quality of life for our residents. All of you are sweet, loving souls making a remarkable difference in the lives of our residents. You know who you are and your friendship means lots to me and the residents.

Where I'm teaching these days:

University of Redlands

Southern California Univ of
Health Sciences

Cerritos College

Pasadena City College

Long Beach City College

Cerritos Senior Center on Monday from 3:00 – 5:00

Norwalk Senior Center on Friday from 9:00 - 11:00
and Thursday from 3:00 – 5:00

La Mirada Activity Center on Friday from 2:00 – 4:00

Recently I negotiated a contract with Biola University to have their RN students spend time with us fulfilling part of their mental health clinical rotations. So – we have between 2-3 students visiting us for a couple of hours once a week during the Fall and Spring semesters. The residents enjoy having the nursing students there visiting and learning about psychiatric rehabilitation and the mental health conditions our residents experience.

In addition to this program, we’re having Physician Assistant students also completing part of their behavioral medicine rotation at Founders. The students are enrolled in the PA program at the school I teach at in Whittier called Southern California University of Health Sciences (SCUHS). We also had about 50 PA students spend time at Founders learning about our program. These students are enrolled in my Mental Health class at SCUHS. Again – it’s nice for our residents to befriend these students given that they sometimes feel socially isolated being at Founders.

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Quotes by my favorite Ernest Becker.

- 1) The real world is simply too terrible to admit, it tells man that he is a small trembling animal who will someday decay and die. Culture changes all of this, makes man seem important, vital to the universe, immortal in some ways
- 2) People create the reality they need in order to discover themselves.

A Walk

by Maria Rainer Rilke

My eyes already touch the sunny hill,
Going far ahead of the road I have begun.
So we are grasped by what we cannot grasp; it has inner light, even from a distance--- and changes us, even if we do not reach it, into something else, which hardly sensing it, we already are; a gesture waves us on answering our own wave... but what we feel is the wind in our faces.



This piece was created by Dayne who is a new resident at Founders. He’s very talented and is already enrolled in a free hand drawing class at Cerritos College. You can view his art on my website: www.elijahlevy.com

The art will be on the page titled:

Art by Residents at Founders

This Thing Called Work by Elijah Levy, Ph.D.

I'm going to try to write briefly about this activity called work which is a verb and a noun. Work is an inescapable activity people pursue to earn money to buy a pint of Ben & Jerry's when it's on sale – and you've got that Ralph's club card to get that deal. It inextricably involves mental and physical effort toward a meaningful and purposeful end. Right? Meaningful is open to interpretation though and it has to be because it's culturally and socially defined. Although we could explore this concept called meaningful much more, I need to limit this piece to one page. Let's agree that meaningful is a relative concept anchored in culture and society. Let's start by asking should our work mean more to us than just a pay check? I'll answer for you and say yes. But --what's wrong if work is just a pay check to us? Work is an indispensable activity for defining our self-concept. However, work alone does not pull for or engage our total self. It represents one dimension of our multiple identities from which we draw self-esteem; feeling worthwhile and valued. You know work influences how others see and think of you. We can say work is instrumental; a traditional American view, a consumerist perspective of work which may or may not fulfill our yearning for meaning and purpose in life. If we define work as an activity performed for financial security and sustenance, it is instrumental and a means to an end. In contrast, work that has its origins in a calling is an activity carrying deeper, inherent value for the individual. Here the individual sees clearly how their true work contributes to enhancing the lives of others or connecting to the larger community. There's also sacred work which, for example includes individuals in the clergy. Most of us we want to work and we have a peculiar curiosity about what each of us does. Some people work, even if they don't need the money. The individual who works benefits by gaining self-worth.

How About Work Alienation: Work alienation is likely to occur when one experiences less control over the process and content of their job. Their job seems overly routinized and the individual doesn't feel they are being utilized effectively at their job. The job denies this individual opportunities to be imaginative and alter how their work is performed and modifying the content of their duties. The job is simply rote procedures – habitual and unvarying in nature. The individual experiences a disconnect between their values and the organization's norms, rituals and values. Now this individual experiences futility. It's the same synchronized dance – day to day, week to week and month to month. This individual will likely describe their job as meaningless. Also – a natural extension of this idea leads to this individual not connecting what they do to the successful performance of the organization. Studs Terkel (1974, p. 557-558) describes the following blue collar worker's expression of his dissatisfying job:

After forty years of workin' at the steel mill, I am just a number. I think I've been a pretty good worker. That job was just right for me. I had a minimum amount of education and a job using a micrometer and just a steel tape and your eyes—that's a job that was just made for me... Bob (his son) worked in the mill a few months during a school vacation. He said, "I don't know how you done it all these years. I could never do it." I said, "I been tellin' you all your life never get into that mill."

Now we need to discuss connectedness. We need connectedness; where work provides deeper meaning and one sees how their job brings value significance to their organization. Ideally – they see how their work makes a difference. It can be tough trying to determine how what one does makes a difference in some types of work. Obviously – it depends on the work. Know what I mean? But if you think about it enough you'll discover this connection. It's a complex abstract activity. We need to see this critical connection because it has the potential to express our deepest yearnings for validation – and it suppresses the psychic angst about how one fits into the world. How we fit into the world is partly settled by knowing how the work we do brings value to the world.

The Search for Our Meaningful Work. So -- what should drive our search for meaningful work? Should it be charged by spirit; by a need that enriches our lives; that allows us to connect the work we do to ends outside of ourselves? Meaningful work is experienced when one finds a genuine connection between their work and how it adds to their purpose driven life. We have needs for validation; to know that our work brings significance and purpose to the world; that it enables you to discover additional meaning in your life. If you have it then you will experience clarity, direction and genuine and enduring happiness. William James said "I will act as if what I do makes a difference." Remember, you want to make meaningful contributions to the world—and you do this by clarifying the values that drive your life and aligning them to the work you do. I think true and fitting work is something you truly inherently value—it's work that pulls for the best in you; something that is intrinsically motivating and it's work that is valued for itself. If one feels that his/her work captures their knowledge and creativity then they will be passionate about their work. Passion comes from deep inside of us—it's charged by spirit and it intrinsically drives us to perform at our highest levels.

Since childhood, our socialization process taught us we needed to be something; to become a nurse, plumber, lawyer, bus driver, firefighter, pilot, mechanic. The cultural problem though is that we're also reminded and reinforced to define our success in life by what we have which is called conspicuous consumption. There are individuals in America obsessed with flamboyantly expressing their possessions of status because of the competitive nature of society. In addition, people's shaky self-concept and insecurities drives the relentless pursuit of material possessions. There are individuals who need to present a public self that impresses others – and some embrace the idea that displaying their objects of status will enhance their public image and demand adulation. The individual who understands how they fit into the world through their work, family and private and public self resists the temptation for unrelenting recognition, attention and an enhanced social status revealed by what they possess.

THINKING ON THINGS LETTER: AUGUST 2019

Founders House of Hope

Founders House of Hope is a 97 bed, community based residential care program providing psychosocial/psychiatric rehabilitation for consumers living with Schizophrenia Spectrum Disorders and Mood Disorders.

The services provided by Founders Outreach, a nonprofit center include:

Supported Employment	Social Problem Solving	Self-esteem Building
Vocational Rehabilitation	Community Reintegration	Creative Expression
Relapse Prevention	Symptom Management	Capacity Building

The psychosocial rehabilitation groups are skill building and designed to improve our resident's level of functioning and quality of life. The program goals include improving quality of life, building self-empowerment, self-determination and self-sustenance. Our consumers are often neglected and socially isolated. The focus of the program is identifying capabilities and interests, developing vocational skills, consumer strength and instilling optimism they can create positive outcomes in their future. The services represent reservoirs of hope. All elements of the program contribute to creating a therapeutic milieu and environment of social caring. A unique model of self-empowerment and reinforcement for effective decision making leading to increased life satisfaction is promoted in daily programming.

Program Objectives

- Focusing on the consumer's aspirations and on the consumer's preferred level of intervention.
- Instilling hope and vision that consumers can grow with and in their community.
- Dedication to consumer empowerment and involvement of consumers in aspects of service delivery.
- A strong commitment to improve the programs at Founders; developing innovative skills based

New York Skyline by Jay Derifield



The Meaning of Life

I've collected what some of the greatest thinkers have to say about the meaning of life. Enjoy.

Abraham Maslow – Meaning is experienced by the self-actualized, growth motivated person who delights in using his creative powers for their own sake, and who can affirm himself and simultaneously transcend himself through peak experiences.

Paul Tillich – Man can choose to make his life meaningful by surrendering in faith and love to Jesus. By opening to Jesus and experiencing His acceptance and forgiveness, one experiences the joy and freedom of new being and the courage to be oneself.

Abraham Joshua Heschel – Man experiences his life as meaningful when he lives in G-d's presence—not simply by encountering G-d in the world, but primarily by serving G-d in everyday life, infusing every moment with the spirit of G-d and by dedicating himself to ends outside himself.

Rollo May – Meaning is experienced by a person centered in himself, who is able to live by his highest values, who knows his own intentionality, feels the power of his will to choose, and is able to love.