

PERSONAL ECOLOGY **SURVEYING TOOLS (X3)**

– A Research Project by

Michael Maser

For Middle & High School Students and Educators



CONTENTS

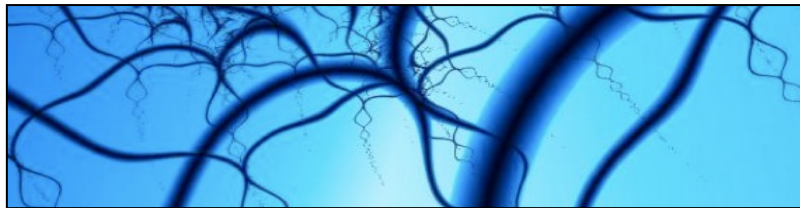
Introduction ... 2

Personal Ecology Survey #1 ... 3

Personal Ecology Survey #2 ... 6

Personal Ecology Survey #3 ... 11

Afterwords ... 29



About Michael Maser

I am an educator currently working towards a PhD in the Faculty of Education, Simon Fraser University (BC Canada) focusing on personalizing learning.

I welcome your feedback on using these tools (surveys).

Email: mmaser@sfu.ca

Michael's website: michaelmaser.net

INTRODUCTION - *PERSONAL ECOLOGRAPHY*

Ecology: derived from **Ecology**, the science of context-based relationships + **Graphia**, to write, draw and represent.

Bringing to conscious awareness the details of one's learning life – in relation to schooling and also beyond it – is the intention of the three *Personal Ecology* surveys you will experience herein. Evaluating these surveys is the focus of this research.

Students: In reviewing these three surveys (and completing the exercises if you wish), you will note that the information you provide, describe and create (as different graphs) are intended for your personal use and, if you wish, to be shared in confidence with others, such as your teacher. Sharing these details with a teacher may help that teacher better know you and better support your learning.

My research hypothesis is two-fold:

For students: When your awareness of the nature of your learning and living - as you are guided to do in *Personal Ecology* surveying - increases, you might better see and understand your overall actions and behaviours. Subsequently, and as a benefit to completing this work, you might choose to adjust how you live and improve your learning achievements as a result.

For Educators: When students share details of their learning lives – including information that accrues to their lives beyond schooling, as they are guided to do in *Personal Ecology* surveying – educators can use this information to adjust their teaching to a more personalized orientation and better help students learn.

Accordingly, in this research, I am seeking feedback, impressions and suggestions from students and educators about this suite of three survey tools.

nb - *Personal Ecology* is a body of original, creative work by Michael Maser, to be used for the purposes described herein. This work is inspired by many colleagues and mentors who have contributed to helping personalize approaches to learning.

– *Thank you for participating.*

PERSONAL ECOLOGOGRAPHY – SURVEY #1

A survey instrument for students so that educators might better know and support their students' learning

Students: What do you most want your teacher to know about you so he/she might better support your learning?

Education is a complex, relational activity between student(s) and educator(s) or mentor(s). The ability of an educator to support a student may be enhanced when the educator better knows some details about a student - their strengths, interests, learning history, etc., so that they might more personally support that student.

This short ***Personal Ecolography*** survey (#1) is designed for students to (voluntarily) share some details of their learning lives with an educator. It is recommended that any information exchanged in this survey between student and educator, or any other adult, be retained **in confidence**.

To Know: Old Eng: 'to be able to distinguish, perceive or understand as fact or truth'; French, *Connaitre*: 'to recognize, have knowledge of'; Latin: *Cognoscere*: 'to get to know'.



PERSONAL ECOLOGRAPHY – SURVEY #1

In this survey students are encouraged to share some details of their learning lives with educators so that educators may better know and support their students.

Guidance: Educators: Distribute this survey to students. Students: Answer the questions below (use next page if necessary), then return the finished survey to your teacher.

Student Name: _____

What personal characteristics about you would you most like your teacher to know, so that he/she can best support your learning?

What Special Interests do you have in your life, or related to our main subject? (Learning Interests are included here because they are often linked to learning strengths)

What are you particularly skilled at or good at doing in your life? (anything goes!)

What would you like your teacher to know about your previous learning experiences?

Please describe what aspects of learning frustrate or challenge you?

Is there anything else you'd like your teacher to know about your learning or learning goals so he/she might better support you?

PERSONAL ECOLOGOGRAPHY – SURVEY #2

-LEARNING STRENGTHS (COMPETENCIES) & CHALLENGES

A survey instrument for students to help self-assess areas of learning strengths (competencies) and challenges

Each of us has some genius to bring to life.

- Michael Meade, 'The Genius Myth'

Each person, no matter their age, possesses enormous learning potential.

Students can amplify this potential by better understanding their learning strengths and 'competencies', and areas where they perceive they experience challenges. Coming to higher awareness of these interacting strengths and challenges is the purpose of this ***Personal Ecolography*** survey. Completing the exercises herein - and possibly sharing the results with others - will, potentially, enable you to increase your learning strengths and address your self-identified challenges. It is recommended that any information exchanged in this survey between student and educator, or any other adult, be retained **in confidence**.



SURVEY GUIDEPOSTS

Introduction ... 6

Guidance for Completing *Personal Ecolography* Survey #2 ... 7

Personal Ecolography II Survey - Self-Assessing Your Learning Strengths ... 8

Graphing the Results of your Survey ... 9

Assessment Reflections for Your Survey ... 10

GUIDANCE FOR COMPLETING PERSONAL ECOLOGOGRAPHY SURVEY #2

The following *Personal Ecolography* activity is comprised of a survey, a graphing activity for this survey, and an assessment reflection for your survey. The 'Deeper Reflection' activity (p 10) may be completed in whole or in part following the suggested guidance.

Personal Ecolography Survey #2: Self-Assessing Learning Strengths & Competencies

- i. Self-assess (rank) your learning strengths and competencies with a number (1-5) on the indicated line (Quite Weak –Weak – Average – Strong - Very Strong)
- ii. Transfer your ranked numbers to the bar graph survey on p 9 and colour this in per the number indicated.

A deeper, written reflection survey on Learning Strengths and Competencies and Areas of Learning Challenge is found on p 10

Before beginning this activity consider if you would value the insights and reflections on the questions below by someone close to you - a parent* or good friend.

If yes, ask them to review this exercise with you either as you go through it or when you're finished. What's most important is that you be as honest as possible in your answers and reflections.



nb - Just as 'a map is not a territory', the *Personal Ecolographic surveying data you collect herein and display on bar graphs does not define who you are. It does reflect information, however, that hopefully will inspire you to consider how it does reflect important aspects of your learning life and health and plan your optimal future.*



• ***Personal Ecography Survey #2: A Survey to Self-Assess Learning Strengths or Competencies and Areas of Challenge***

Self-assess and rank your learning strengths and competencies listed below as:

Very Strong = 5; Strong = 4; Average = 3; Weak = 2; Quite Weak = 1. When finished, transfer the ranking #s to the Bar Graph on p 9. Complete the Reflection Survey on page 10 after you fill in the Bar Graph.

Why focus on these Strengths and Competencies? the strengths and competencies listed below are commonly recognized and linked to differing kinds of ‘intelligence’. You may also wish to list other strengths and competencies in the space provided, if you wish.

- **Numeracy skills** = skills at working with numbers, fractions, ratios, money, etc. ____

- **Communication skills** = skills at talking, listening, writing, expressing your ideas and opinions, questioning, guiding others ____

- **Relationship skills** = skills at relating with others, getting along, collaborating, resolving challenges and conflicts, creating new relationships ____

- **Logical reasoning skills** = skills at following ideas and plans, creating plans and strategies for problems solving and achieving goals, understanding consequences, computer gaming ____

- **Creativity - Artistic skills** = skills at creating art, poetry, new designs, personal expression, combining existing ideas in new ways ____

- **Physical Ability skills** = skills at sports and athletics, recreational activities and games, activities requiring coordination (yoga, climbing, parkour, etc.) ____

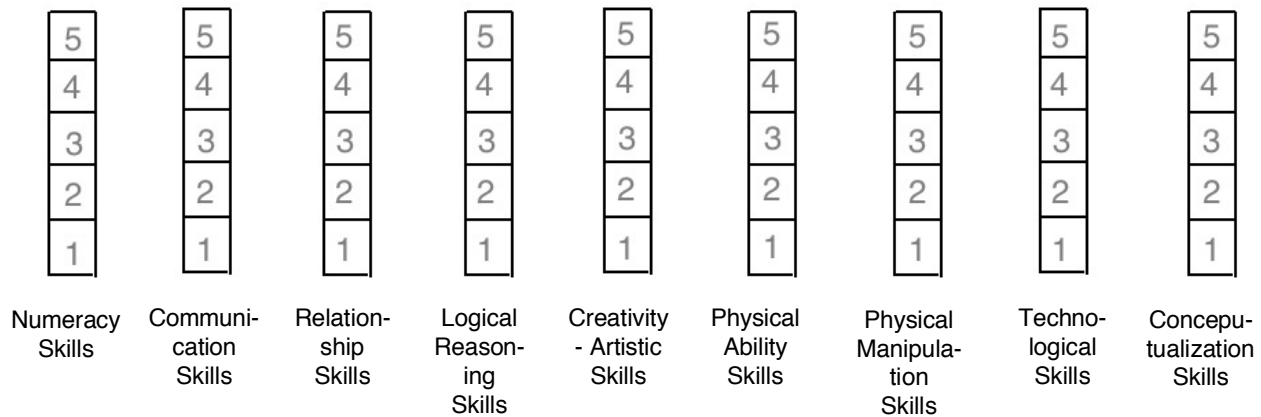
- **Physical Manipulation skills** = skills at manipulating objects, fixing or repairing things, making things with the help of tools, sewing, construction, gardening ____

- **Technological skills** = skills at working with computers and computer circuitry, wiring, audio and video production, coding and game design ____

- **Conceptualization skills** = skills at imagining and visualizing paths, designs, plans or solutions ____

Bar Graph of your Survey #2: Learning Strengths and Competencies

Survey #2 Graph: Fill in the bars, below, to the number you indicated for each matched competency. Colour in the block to your self-assessed level. (5 = Very Strong; 1 = Weak)



The Purpose of completing Personal Ecological surveying is not to test or compare yourself with others but to deepen personal awareness!

Assessment Reflections - answer the questions in the spaces provided

Survey #2 Assessment Reflection - Learning Strengths and Competencies and Areas of Challenge

1. Describe how you are successful in the strengths / competencies you scored highest

2. Describe how you experience challenge(s) in the competencies you scored lowest

3. Describe how you might improve your strengths and competencies in areas where you are experiencing challenge(s)

4. Describe why it is important to you (or not) to strengthen or improve your competency in an area now; if yes, what plan can you suggest (steps, timeline) to do this

5. What new skill or interest areas would you like to explore and bring into your life, and why

PERSONAL ECOLOGOGRAPHY – SURVEY #3

- ELEMENTS INFLUENCING LEARNING & HEALTH

An instrument to help students self-assess and reflect on
'Elements' influencing their learning and health

I am large. I contain multitudes.

- Walt Whitman, poet

We humans are complex organisms with many '*Elements*' influencing our lives and our learning potential. Coming to higher awareness of these interacting *Elements* and activities of your lives - the purpose of ***Personal Ecolography survey #3*** - may enable you to better see and understand their influence on your actions, learning, and health. As a result, you can address challenges and refine the choices you make in your life. It is recommended that any information exchanged in this survey between student and educator, or any other adult, be retained **in confidence**.



SURVEY GUIDEPOSTS

Introduction ...	11
Guidance for Completing <i>Personal Ecolography Survey #3</i> ...	12
Self-Assessment Survey of the <i>Elements</i> Influencing Your Learning and Health ...	13 - 14
Bar graphing your Self-Assessment Survey ...	15
Self-Assessment Reflections Survey ...	16
' <i>Elements Backgrounder</i> ' ...	17- 18
Deeper Reflection Survey on <i>Elements</i> Influencing Learning and Health ...	19-27
Extra Page ...	28

GUIDANCE FOR COMPLETING *PERSONAL ECOLOGRAPHY SURVEY #3*

The following *Personal Ecolography* activity is comprised of a self-assessment survey, a graphing activity for this survey, an assessment reflection and a deeper reflection. The deeper reflection activity (pp 19-27) may be completed in whole or in part following the suggested guidance.

- I - Self-Assesment survey of the Elements Influencing Your Learning and Health** (pp 13-14) - Self-assess (rank) the influence of each **Element** listed on the indicated line.
- II.** When you're finished, complete the bar graph survey on page 15.
- III.** Review the '**Elements Backgrounder**' is found on pp 17-18,
- IV.** Complete 'deeper reflection' survey is found from pp 19-27.

Before beginning this activity, consider if you would value the insights and reflections on the questions below by someone close to you - a parent* or good friend.

If yes, ask them to review this exercise with you either as you go through it or when you're finished. What's important is that you be as honest as possible in your answers and reflections.



nb - Just as 'a map is not a territory', the *Personal Ecolographic surveying data you collect herein and display on bar graphs does not define who you are. It does reflect information, however, that hopefully will inspire you to consider how it does reflect important aspects of your learning life and health, and plan your optimal future.*



I. Personal Ecography Survey #3 - Self-Assessing the 'Elements' Influencing Your Learning and Health

Self-assess and rank the influence of the **Elements** listed below on your learning and personal health. When finished, transfer your ranked numbers to the bar graph survey on p 6 and colour this in to the number indicated.

Complete the **Assessment Reflections** survey on page 16 after you fill in the Bar Graph.

Why focus on these Elements? these **Elements** are recognized as important influences on health and learning. Of course, your learning and health may be influenced by other factors, too, and you can consider them if you wish. *It's your survey*, after all!

After completing this survey review the '**Elements Backgrounder**' on pp 17-18. A deeper survey on **Elements** is found on pp 12-20.

(SURVEY START) Nutritional habits

* refers to the quality and quantity of food and snacks you eat and your consumption patterns

Ranking: my nutritional habits contribute to an improvement in my overall personal health and learning potential 1. strongly disagree 2. disagree 3. maybe yes, maybe no 4. agree 5. strongly agree ____

Physical Health

* refers to the general health of your body, considering your sense of vitality and response to illness and injury, but also any lingering or chronic physical issues

Ranking: my physical health contributes to an improvement in my overall personal health and learning potential 1. strongly disagree 2. disagree 3. maybe yes, maybe no 4. agree 5. strongly agree ____

Sleep

* refers to the role of sleep in your life, considering whether you feel your sleep is generally and consistently adequate (you awaken feeling refreshed), if you have trouble falling asleep, or if your sleep is inconsistent

Ranking: my sleep habits contribute to an improvement in my overall personal health and learning potential 1. strongly disagree 2. disagree 3. maybe yes, maybe no 4. agree 5. strongly agree ____

Socialization

* refers to the nature of the social life you experience face-to-face and online through various social media applications (e.g. Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, email, etc.)

Ranking: my socialization habits contribute to an improvement in my overall personal health and learning potential 1. strongly disagree 2. disagree 3. maybe yes, maybe no 4. agree 5. strongly agree ____

Emotional Life

* refers to the kinds of emotions you commonly hold (e.g. happy, anxious, relaxed, fearful, content, sad, etc.)

Ranking: my emotional life contributes to an improvement in my overall personal health and learning potential 1. strongly disagree 2. disagree 3. maybe yes, maybe no 4. agree 5. strongly agree _____

Mindset

* refers to the thoughts and attitudes you generally hold about yourself that influence your actions and behaviours (e.g., "I can do it" [attitude], "I don't like to try new things" [attitude], "I'm going to keep trying until I'm successful" [attitude], "I can't do math" [attitude], etc.)

Ranking: my mindset contributes to an improvement in my overall personal health and learning potential 1. strongly disagree 2. disagree 3. maybe yes, maybe no 4. agree 5. strongly agree _____

Lifestyle Activities

* refers to activities you pursue that wouldn't be considered as part of schooling or having a job (e.g. gaming, recreational activities, reading, creating [making, tinkering, etc.]

Ranking: my lifestyle activities contribute to an improvement in my overall personal health and learning potential 1. strongly disagree 2. disagree 3. maybe yes, maybe no 4. agree 5. strongly agree _____

Substance Use / Abuse

* refers to medications, recreational drugs, and mood or physiology-altering products (e.g. coffee, energy drinks, marijuana, etc.) you consume

Ranking: the substances I consume in my life contribute to an improvement in my overall personal health and learning potential 1. strongly disagree 2. disagree 3. maybe yes, maybe no 4. agree 5. strongly agree _____

'Learnscape'

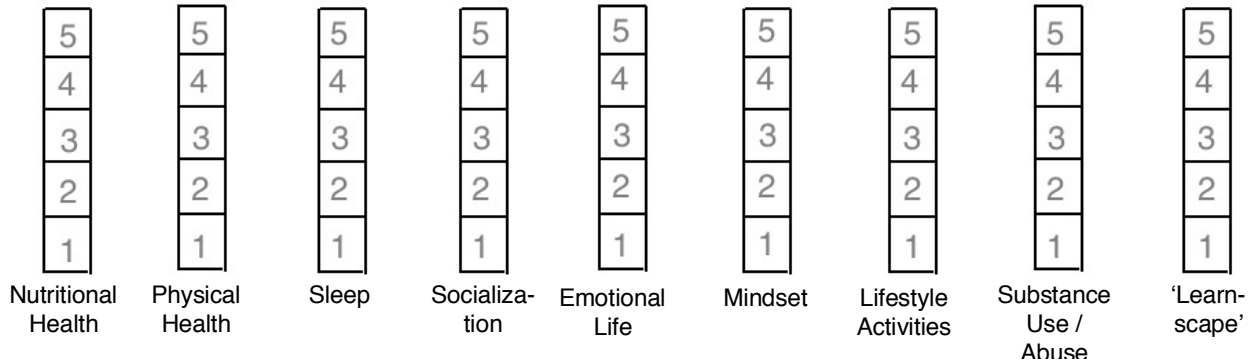
* refers to factors influencing your learning environment (noise-sounds, distractions, light, etc.)

Ranking: my 'learnscape' contributes to an improvement in my overall personal health and learning potential 1. strongly disagree 2. disagree 3. maybe yes, maybe no 4. agree 5. strongly agree _____

*** When finished this survey, transfer your ranking #s to the Bar Graph on page 15**

II. Bar Graph of Survey #3: 'Elements' influencing learning and health

Survey I Graph: Fill in the bars, below, to the number (rank) you indicated for each matched Element, and colour in the block to your self-assessed level. (5 = Strong contribution to learning potential and personal health, 1 = very low contribution).



The Purpose of completing Personal Ecological surveying is not to test or compare yourself with others but to gather Your Data for Yourself!

III. Assessment Reflection About the Elements influencing your learning potential and health

1. Based on your survey results, list or describe the most significant Elements influencing your health and learning potential (positive and negative):

2. For the two Elements you scored highest, describe how you are strong in these areas

3. For the two Elements you scored lowest, describe how you are challenged in these areas

4. For the two Elements you scored lowest, describe any kind of help you would appreciate in these areas, to help you address these challenges

5. Reflecting on this survey, describe new goals for your health and learning, and identify the resources and people that might help you accomplish these goals

• 'Elements' Backgrounder for Survey #3

Nutritional Health: "You are what you eat" is a cliché but it reflects the truth and modifying your diet might be a key to enjoying a higher level of personal wellness and learning potential. If you often feel achey or sluggish you should consult a dietary specialist to check for food sensitivities or allergies and then try an elimination diet to determine the appropriate foods for you. Reducing highly processed or 'fast' foods will also lead to health and learning gains for you. If you doubt this, watch the documentary, 'Supersize Me'!

Physical Health: A higher level of physical health can make you feel energized just as poor physical health can cause you to depress. Engaging in an activity that makes you feel good can help bolster your immune system, your creativity, sense of self-esteem and learning ability. Setting physical health goals for yourself, including regularly-scheduled physical activity - either alone or with others - is part of a healthy lifestyle.

Sleep: Sleep is an activity that many people overlook when considering their overall health but science is increasingly revealing how important sleep is for our physical and mental health. It's easier than ever before in human history to watch more TV, listen to more music, play another video game or send another text message, and it takes personal will-power to put our devices away and turn out the light. Experiment for yourself to determine how your health and learning is impacted with more sleep.

Socialization: Social 'intelligence' is considered as an ability to perceive social patterns around you and act to optimize your social skills in various situations. The nature of your social life and relationships with others can help to inspire or impede you. You should strive to experience control over your relationships and also the technologies that are so influential on socializing today. If your social life isn't satisfying, what might you switch up?

Emotional Life: All the issues identified in *Personal Ecography* influence emotional health, and maintaining one's emotional balance can be really challenging when living the complex lives we lead. What can be most helpful is to have your own ways to recognize when you are straying from feeling balanced, to identify why and how your emotions are fluctuating, and to have strategies for addressing serious emotional swings. Do consider or seek out professional counselling help when you are feeling stuck.

'Elements' Backgrounder, continued

Mindset: 'Mindset' is considered the general ways you think and feel about yourself and your abilities to ... do things - like learn new skills, address challenges in your life, help yourself and others, etc. Your life's journeying is linked to your sense of self-determination, that is whether you think or feel you can or can't do something; therefore, Mindset also reflects the values and beliefs you hold most dearly; if you find yourself stuck on an issue, consider how changing your values or beliefs might lead to a different result.

LifeStyle Activities: Some events arise in our lives as accidental or unexpected, but most of the time we choose the habits and lifestyle activities that reflect how we spend our life energy. These activities can serve to drain our physical and emotional energy just as they can 'fill us up' with new energy. Getting the most satisfaction out of the activity choices we make requires us to be highly aware of the activities we are choosing and then being willing to address challenges and make changes to create different results.

Substance Use / Abuse: Modern society provides us with many substances today that can alter our physical and emotional health. Some are prescription medications to address specific medical or personal issues, some are marketed to us for recreational consumption, some are illegal or known to be potentially harmful. If or when you choose one or more such substances be aware of your own response and seek to ensure that your health, and the health of others around you, is not being harmed through your substance use.

Learnscape Health: Your 'Learnscape' should ideally be an environment where you can control elements like noise and comfort to minimize distractions and optimize your ability to focus on learning activities. If that's not the case your learning will be interrupted or distracted. Take the time to recognize the elements that influence your learnscape and assess how they make you feel and whether they contribute positively or negatively to your learning. This includes your cellphone and social media habits!

IV. Deeper Reflection of the Elements Influencing Your Learning Potential & Personal Health

Guidance: From the preceding Element Survey, above, choose two Elements listed in the following pages corresponding to one area of strength and one of weakness, and complete the reflection for that Element. Questions are posed to help you deepen your awareness of how each Element influences your learning potential and personal health. If you wish, you can complete the reflection for other or all Elements.



1. Nutritional Health

a. Describe your nutritional health based on regular consumption habits

b. Do you describe yourself with a particular nutritional or consumption habit (e.g. vegetarian, 'sweet tooth') if yes, which one?

c. Describe any nutritional habits that you believe improve your health?

d. Describe any nutritional habits that you believe have a negative influence on your health?

e. How do you believe your physical health and condition is related to your nutritional habits?

f. How do you perceive your nutritional health influence your learning activities?



2. Physical Health

a. Describe your personal physical health

b. Do you describe yourself with a particular physical characteristic? if yes, which one?

c. Describe any nagging or chronic ailments that cause you discomfort?

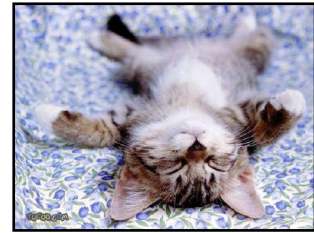
d. Do you visit a special health care provider for special treatment? if yes, describe

e. Do you do anything special to improve your physical health? if yes, describe

f. How do you perceive your physical health to influence your learning activities? describe

g. Is there anything you'd like to change/improve with respect to your physical health? describe

h. Would you like some help making changes to improve your physical health, and how



3. Sleep Health

a. Describe your sleeping habits

b. Describe how you wake up

c. Describe how you fall asleep

d. Do you think you get enough sleep? too much sleep? Why?

e. Do you dream? if yes, briefly describe your dreams

f. Under what conditions do you sleep well and poorly

g. Do you perceive your sleep pattern(s) to influence your learning activities? describe

h. Would you like some additional help making changes to improve your sleep health, and how



4. Socialization

a. Describe the main elements of your social life

b. Do you have particular issues with someone whom with you socialize? describe

c. What, if anything, would you like to change in your social relationship(s) and activities?

d. How do you perceive your social life with others influences your learning activities?

e How do you perceive your social life with others influences your personal health?

f. Do you feel empowered to adequately manage your social life and relationships with others and address challenges that arise?



5. Emotional Life

a. Describe your mental or emotional health

b. Do you ever describe yourself with a particular mental/emotional characteristic or state (e.g. happy, depressed)? if yes, which one(s) and why

c. How does your mental/emotional state generally influence your behaviour and learning?

d. Describe any particular 'triggers' or factors that contribute to an improvement or depression in your mental or emotional state?

e. Do you now, or have you previously, done anything special to influence your mental or emotional state (e.g. exercise, or take anti-depression drugs) if yes, describe what you have done

f. Are there any particular emotional states that you would like to enhance in your life? if yes, identify these states and how you might enhance them

6. Mindset



a. List some descriptive words or phrases to describe your 'self' (e.g. cheerful, bad-at-math, caring, jock, etc.)

b. When are you most self-confident?

c. When are you the least self-confident?

d. Describe how you respond when you encounter a major challenge in your life

e. What values and beliefs guide your actions, and do they contribute positively to your life?

f. What habits guide your actions? Do these contribute positively to your life and learning?

h. Would you like some additional help making changes to attitudes you hold about yourself?

7. Lifestyle Activities



a. What activities do you choose to participate in most commonly in your life?

b. Describe how these activities are satisfying to you

c. Do these activities reflect goals you hold - describe how

d. Describe the effects of these activities on your learning

e. Describe what changes, if any, you would like to make in your choice of activities

f. Describe the effects of your lifestyle activities on others around you, and if this is important to consider

g. Would you like some additional help making changes to your lifestyle activities, and how



8. Substance Use / Abuse

a. What substances do you commonly consume? (meds, drinks, street drugs, junk food, etc)

b. Describe the effects of these substances on your physical and emotional health and learning

c. Do you consider your consumption of substances to be appropriate and support your health?

d. Do you feel fully knowledgeable about the substances you are consuming?

d. What would you like to change, if anything, about your consumption of substances?

e. Would you like some additional help in addressing substance use / abuse issues in your life?



9. Learnscape* Health

[* refers to the environmental elements impacting your learning]

a. Describe the common features of the location(s) where you often apply yourself in learning activities (physical features, soundscape, comfort-ability)

b. What are the main distractions that interrupt your learning in your learnscape? explain

c. Describe the interaction of your common media habits with your learning activities (i.e. playing background music of TV, interact on Social Media [Facebook etc.], play computer games, etc.)

d. How do you perceive your interaction with or consumption of media influences your learning?

e. How do you perceive your learnscape influences your mental or emotional state?

f. Describe what, if anything, you would like to change about your learnscape

- end -

Extra Page

Other Elements Influencing my Life:

Notes:

AFTERWORDS

Neuroplasticity meets Neurodiversity: We live in an exciting time, when leading scientific research has verified the existence of '**Neuroplasticity**', that is, a natural potential for our neurological or mental lives to change over time and enable lifelong learning. And it is now known we can intentionally direct these changes. This is a breakthrough because until recently it was believed that our neurology - our brains - were 'hard-wired' by the time we were young adults, and that potential for 'brain change' after that time was very limited. We now know our brains are, in fact, 'soft-wired' and we can intentionally nurture change, lifelong, which is good news!

Along with this news, there is increasing recognition for the concept of '**Neurodiversity**', or variety in the ways in which our brains and neurology are different. This is leading to wider acceptance that even people with recognized and diagnosed conditions such as autism have learning potential, and *innate* intelligence, that just needs to be considered a little differently than people considered as 'neurotypical'.

It's time to embrace our real learning potential and better overall health

If it is true that our learning potential is much more available to us than previously thought - and neuroplasticity is confirming this - then bringing to higher consciousness key Elements of our lives (as circumscribed through *Personal Ecology*) will better enable all of us to selectively and intentionally focus on the changes we seek for living richer, healthier lives. Educators and learners take note!



The expression above has been adopted among scientists studying Neuroplasticity. To me, it represents an unconditional opportunity for igniting new learning and potential.

- Michael Maser