

By Jeff Anderson  
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## A Key to Lifelong Learning

At the end of his life, Sir Winston Churchill said, "When I look back on all these worries, I remember the story of the old man who said on his deathbed that he had had a lot of trouble in his life, most of which had never happened!" Churchill was speaking about the burden of worries that never materialize and suggesting we should be unlearning assumptions about the value of worry.

Unlearning Assumptions is a key to success in Learning and hopefully this discussion will stimulate your interest in Lifelong Learning. Why, because our health, happiness and well being are enhanced the more we intentionally engage ourselves in the process of learning.

Let's begin with the end-in-mind by establishing a common meaning to the term Lifelong Learning.

*Lifelong Learning is ...ongoing, voluntary and self-motivated.*

*Lifelong Learning involves ...our personal pursuit of knowledge.*

*Lifelong Learning is motivated by desires... like self-sustainability, social inclusion, active citizenship and personal development.*

Likely, you already have a strong vested interest in one or more of the listed desires that motivate us towards Lifelong Learning. The other desires may be lying dormant waiting to be unleashed by your engagement in new learning experiences.

### **Unlearning Assumptions**

Today, let's focus on the role unlearning assumptions may play in learning. Four years ago, my wife Barbara and I were searching for compelling community needs where we might engage the resources of nonprofit programs, SERV Kerrville and Read 2 Win,

to help bring needed solutions to the Hill Country.

Local news made us aware that the impasse in Library funding between the City and County created an urgent community concern that could use an outsiders solution. So, we asked City of Kerrville Librarian Laura Bechtel and the City Manager for statistics to better understand the factual circumstances.

This research produced compelling reasons for action including the insight that 95% of County youth had dropped their library memberships. Armed with factual knowledge, we sought the cooperation of the City to allow Read 2 Win to offer free Library Memberships to families living outside the City.

However, one of our first internal hurdles was to unlearn personal assumptions about the value of a public library in today's emerging digital age. You might say, we adopted this cause and began seeking beneficiaries without fully appreciating the value of the solution we offered.

We assumed without real facts that the value of public libraries was declining as a portal to access learning resources in the age of the internet. Thankfully, donors and local families had a better understanding of the true reality and their convictions led us toward the ah-ha moment of learning the valuable role a free public library plays in a community like Kerrville. Our desire to be active citizens led us to the important role a public library plays in today's digital age.

We soon learned that half of County households lacked some combination of

home internet access, computer or printer. When we announced free library card sign-up days we experienced long-lines of seniors who wanted a safe place to go and learn outside of their homes. When we hoisted Street Banners, dozens of families a week texted for Library Memberships. In no time at all, we learned a score of insights that led to unlearning assumptions about the current value of our public library.

The point is that our desire to be active citizens opened a doorway to challenging our assumptions about libraries that in turn led to additional learning discoveries. When we launched Read 2 Win's Library Scholarship program, we had no idea that we were forging a pathway towards becoming champions of Lifelong Learning. Nor did we truly grasp the vital importance of purposed on-going pursuits of knowledge.

Each year hence, our minds have been opened with increased clarity to how vital Lifelong Learning is to our well-being. Looking back, each actionable incidence of unlearning of assumptions has opened new doorways of learning; which in turn led to enhancing our self-sustainability, social inclusion, active citizenship and personal development.

What assumptions do you have about the ongoing, voluntary, and self-motivated personal pursuit of knowledge that may be inhibiting your progress from being a lifelong learner? The chances are your motivations to breakout in new pursuits of knowledge already exist. However, your purpose may be lying dormant waiting for activities and actions to bring your purpose to mind.

### **Find an emotional desire**

Albert E.N. Gray penned the 'Common Denominator of Success', where he encouraged readers to find a purpose of the sentimental or emotional type. Gray said, "Remember, needs are logical while wants and desires are sentimental and emotional. Your needs will push you just so far, but when your needs are satisfied, they will stop pushing you. If, however, your purpose is in

terms of wants and desires, then your wants and desires will keep pushing you long after your needs are satisfied."

That's why emotional desires like self-sustainability, social inclusion, active citizenship and personal development are vital to sustaining lifelong learning. Logic may get us started on New Years resolutions like a new diet. Yet, logic often gives way to the realities of our busy lives. That's were social inclusion and active citizenship become key catalysts to progress.

Involvement with other people in learning pursuits is often vital to sustain our purpose. Additionally the power of giving back to your community through active citizenship will empower and encourage you to engage in activities that open new vaults of learning opportunities and unlock new vistas of knowledge. Paraphrasing the words of Churchill don't worry just take action around a desire that motivates you!

Until our next column...remember "Learning is a treasure which accompanies its owner everywhere!"

**About Anderson** - DLI Chairman Jeff Anderson is servant pastor of SERV Kerrville, a nonprofit collaborating with community partners to empower lifelong learning.

**Dynamic Learning Institute** - The Fall Semester of DLI will return after Labor Day with an exciting roster of Classes featuring Hill Country neighbors with interesting lifetime experiences to share with you.