

RICHARD HILL

HOW THE
'real world'
IS DRIVING US
CRAZY!

Solving the
WINNER/LOSER WORLD
Problem

Hill & Hill p/l
publishers

Visit the website:
www.creativeworldway.com
Send an email, join the forum –
participate and engage!

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This book is the outcome of a long conversation that has continued throughout my life. I dedicate this book to all those people who lent me their ear, those ears that I hijacked and even those who wished they could have gotten away. Also, to the great minds that responded, shared and inspired me.

Most of all to John, who began this conversation with a desktop calendar when I was 8 years old.
He left too soon.

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◆◆◆ PREFACE ◆◆◆

For many years I have wondered why people need so much help to feel good about themselves and their lives. I was in my twenties when motivational seminars and self-help books began to take off. I remember a friend taking me to EST; I was around the people who were introducing Deepak Chopra, Stuart Wilde and Wayne Grady to Australia; and watching the square-jawed, fast-talking Anthony Robbins on late-night television, urging us to 'release the giant within'.

My personal journey has included acting, singing, business adventures, marriage, children and an inspiring participation in the new age movement. This led to a return to university studies where I achieved a BA in linguistics and later a Diploma in Professional Counselling. I saw some people make great breakthroughs in their personal happiness and development. I also saw many who didn't. What was most intriguing was the significant number of people who were searching, found something, and then decided they needed more. What they first thought to be a great revelation or answer didn't last, and their search had to begin again.

Two important factors stood out: firstly, that human beings in our modern society find it difficult to be happy; and secondly, that most of the 'how to be happy' programs were unable to satisfy the need to be happy for a prolonged time. Something was making happiness very difficult to understand and maintain. It has been shown that external things, like being praised, achieving a goal or being amused can help you to feel happy, but it doesn't last. Happiness must come from within. This is not to say that there aren't extremely happy and content people. In fact, because there are, that must mean that whatever gets in the way is not insurmountable or unresolvable.

This book is about that interference, the disruption to our ability to 'feel happy'. It is my contribution to everyone that still

searches for happiness and personal fulfilment. The difference between this book and others before it is that I am not going to show you another way to lift your emotions, although the book may do that as well. I am not even going to show you a way around the barrier. I am going to show you that there is no barrier – we made it up.

Imagine we are living in a world of water. All the courses, seminars and books teach us how to swim or float, or to build boats or even submarines, but they are all skills and techniques that only give us an advantage in the world of water. The trouble is, what drives us crazy is that we can't stand being wet. If you could just get out of the water and onto the shore then your watery problems would be more than solved: they would cease to exist.

That is what you can expect as you work through this book. First, I have to describe to you what the water world is all about and then what it is like to be on the shore. The task for you is to try and accept that these shores exist when all you've ever known is the water. This is even more so for those that have made some success of living in the water, despite any struggle with happiness.

As I said, I believe that there are people who have found the shore and many others who have been there for a period, but then slipped back in the water. They will be our living guides and helpers.

A lot of experiences and people have gone into the development of this book. My mother, Deirdre O'Donnell, an author of some note herself, has supported me, listened to me and strengthened my heart for as long as I can remember. She has shown me how to write, use grammar and get the spelling right. Her influence is on every page.

My children, Jessica and Joel are huge fonts of inspiration and support. Jessica's creative talent and Joel's computer genius have given me more than I imagined possible. Their mother and my partner for 20 years, Lynda, was a great person to begin my journey with. Also with me during the last 20 years has been my good friend Garry Wiseman, who has provided not only friendship, but also audiences for me to speak to. The inspiration for this work belongs to those thousands of people that showed me their lives.

This book is a symbol of my new journey, which has been made into an extraordinary experience by my partner and wife, Sue Davis. She has helped me bring my ideas to life. At 6.05am most mornings I begin sharing what is going through my head, and that might well continue all day. She is a wonder.

I also want to thank her son Peter, who was willing to be a guinea pig, along with Jessica and Joel, for my ideas. My sister-in-law Cheryl has been a patient patient. There are also a number of my children's friends who have lent their youthful ears. Special thanks to Lucy who listened and discussed, and also to Aaron, Isaac, Annie, Loretta, Carly and Kelly. Thanks also to Andy, who devoted his creative time to designing the cover of this book. At Sue's clinic, The Davis Health Centre, I thank my other readers and listeners, Sue and Michael, Roy, Dionne and Roger and all my wonderful clients who have tried and tested the techniques.

Last, but by no means least, I would like to thank Dr Daniel Siegel, Dr Ernest Rossi and Dr William Glasser for their intellectual contribution. When I first listened to Daniel Siegel talk I found myself listening to the intellectual evidence for almost all of my ideas, philosophies and theories. His work has allowed me to proceed directly to the production of this book without having to spend several more years finding the evidence. Daniel Siegel's work on 'mindsight' and Ernest Rossi's work on genomic expression and brain plasticity are intellectual

masterpieces, as well as being creative and inspirational jewels. Dr Glasser's work, which includes Reality Therapy and Choice Therapy, has provided a resonance that has propelled me forward. I urge you to seek out their work.

It won't take you long to realise that there is always more to know, so I want to thank you in advance for all the comments and suggestions, contributions and thoughts you send through the website and other media. Join me at www.creativeworldway.com and let's see what amazing things happen.

SECTION 1

THE WAY OF THE WORLDS

◆◆◆ A VERY PERSONAL ACCOUNT ◆◆◆

Wherever there is a conscious mind, there is a point of view.
Daniel Dennett

I have spent a number of years watching and participating in self-development programs. I always wondered why, for a lot of people, they don't seem to work for very long. After all these years, I find that the number of people searching for something to give them greater happiness has increased, not decreased.

As a professional counsellor much of my work involves helping clients understand why they believe that their lives are a mess. Therapies help, but they don't change the fact that something is amiss with what we believe the world is all about and what the struggle is for. This has been my consuming investigation for the last decade. I was fortunate to have my first book *Choose Hope* (HarperCollins) published in 2000. Those ideas have grown into this book.

I believe my ideas are fresh and add some illumination, but there are many pointers and clues in other work. The foundations were solidly set by the work of Edward De Bono and he continues to broach new territory. Still, no one that I can find has given the problem a simple explanation.

We live in a social system that is based on separate individuals in a competitive environment. The problem with this is that we are an interactive species that prefers relationship and communal co-operation. Many motivational and self-help programs try to show how it is possible to be loving and feel connected. These programs try to show you how to get 'in touch with yourself' or open up your 'sensitive side', but neglect to give you a clear

understanding of why you are not loving and why you feel disconnected. Equally, there are the other programs that show you how to ditch the sensitive caring stuff and just win at all costs.

Maintaining a loving and connected life is constantly compromised by the 'success imperative' to do it on your own. When you do go it alone you are constantly touched by the human need to be close to others. We are torn between the need to succeed - to win - and the desire to connect - to share. The constant struggle between these principles is a conflict that is driving us crazy. I say this because the evidence shows it. We are in an upward spiral of stress and anxiety that is making happiness increasingly difficult and depression increasingly common. Relationships, friendships and families are suffering; more and more people are buckling under the stress of the struggle for success; drugs and alcohol are more available and more frequently used to 'get out of it'; prescription anti-depressants are everywhere; and suicide amongst our youth is increasing as they seek to escape the pressures of what many believe to be a pointless future. We need to figure out how to do the things we want to do without falling apart.

That is what you will achieve if you embrace the ideas and the program in this book. It is not just another book trying to cheer you up, or showing you how to 'beat the system'. This book will show you a different system. In order to achieve this, however, I need to explain and describe some new things. I also need to create a common language so that we are on the same wavelength. That is what the first part of the book will do.

You might well be asking now, "Hey, I just want to know how this book is going to help me. Give me a good reason to take the time to read it."

The best answer to give you, before the book has had an opportunity to explain anything at all, is to tell you how these

ideas and the program have affected me. I have been developing and practicing this program for a number of years, during which time I have worked on the principles with my wife and a number of my clients, to great success. In the end, however, how you feel about something is a very subjective thing. So, this is how it feels for me:

I find it extraordinary.

It is not some dreamlike or ethereal other world. I still experience the same environment, but everything is different in the way it affects me. I have not gone to an oasis or another universe. I can stand up amidst the whole unruly cacophony without that feeling of dread or fear that something terrible will happen. Equally, I'm not full of expectation that wonderful things will happen. Everything is possible, all at once.

I don't fear defeat, or failure; there is no more dissatisfaction, no more discontent, no more feeling not good enough (these things do exist temporarily, but they are passing. It is the lingering of these feelings that breaks you down). There is less confusion about what is important in my life. I am less disturbed when criticised; there are no distressing feelings of loss when things change; no more pain about yesterday or dread about tomorrow; no more dissatisfaction with what is happening now; and no more blind following because I'm too stupid to understand.

From this 'new world' I can love with unconditional acceptance and uninhibited passion. I don't have to love everyone, but everyone is included and everyone is accepted – even the people I don't like much, because that is all right, too. I can listen and accept without having to agree or disagree and I can be inspired by everything I encounter. I am able to feel sorrow without losing the ability to be happy. I can struggle through difficulty without suffering or fearing failure. I can allow my emotions to speak to me without fear or embarrassment. I can give the lives

of those I love energy and confidence and I can give people I don't even know a sense of connection and communion without doing anything in particular, just being there.

I am happy. My heart is open. I feel no danger. I can participate in my experience, whatever it is. I feel no limitations, only my potential and a future of possibilities. I can release my passions and my mind.

And all this can be done in full awareness and acceptance of everything that exists around me. I am not in a dream, I am crystal clear. I am not ignoring anything in my environment - I embrace it all. I am not pretending to be anything or anyone; I am just being what I am and who I am.

I am not a winner. I am not a loser. I am a creative participant in life.

I am able to love and to be loved. I am irrepressibly happy. And I truly wonder what it will be like for you.



This book is not just another explanation of how to be happy, although I certainly want a great deal of happiness to come out of the process. This book is about the context in which we experience our lives. Perhaps we have focussed too much on what we can be, and given too little attention to what we live in and how that affects what we can be. I know that there are some wonderful books in the marketplace that explain how to be happy and feel fulfilled. I have read many of these books and they tend to make similar conclusions. What I have been trying to understand is why, when these steps to a happy life are in so many publications and seem to be so simple and straightforward, we are still not happy. We are more than just not happy; we are less happy and increasingly more depressed. This

book is about why it is so difficult to take these basic and straightforward steps to happiness.

Having said that, I think that many of these processes are very useful. I am even assuming that you are already aware of these processes. It is, however, unwise to make assumptions so, below is my summary of the 10 Steps to Happiness as presented in the many and varied books on the self-help bookshelf. In the right conditions, these steps can create a genuine pathway to happiness. It is the barriers to and distractions from this pathway that I am concerned about. I'm sure you will recognise many things on this list.

10 things we can do to live a happier and more fulfilling life:

1. believe in yourself
2. slow down – take time to smell the roses
3. have positive emotions
4. be interested in the best things you do and the best things other people do
5. have good friends
6. have a purpose in life – make plans, set goals
7. live in the moment – be mindful, undisturbed by prejudice and fear
8. take time to talk AND listen
9. be kind to others and let others be kind to you
10. know that you have a right to be happy, that you deserve to be happy

There are lots more, of course: have good health; do satisfying work; hold a strong belief; don't carry your negative feelings with you; don't take out your frustrations on other people, especially loved ones; laugh; make changes for the better; free yourself from money worries; plant something and nurture it. With all these ways to be happy we should be living in a world full of happiness. But we don't.

About 2,300 years ago a wise Greek named Epicurus suggested that happiness was simple. All that was required were three things:

1. friends, in whom one saw a reflection of oneself.
2. to contemplate your actions in order to learn from mistakes.
3. to be free of the State. By the state he meant the governing or ruling institution. He recognised that institutions were unable to act in an individual's interests and had powers that enabled it to interfere with an individual's expression and liberty.

Point 1 and 2 are quite obvious and are reflected in a number of the points in our 'top 10'. Point 3, however, is quite unusual and has a lot of deep implications. For a start, how would you define 'the state' today? Whatever your definition, it will be about the institutional context or the social constructs in which we live. This book is my answer to that question and what the implications reveal.

I wish I could explain everything in one sentence, but I need more than that. Read on and I'll see you in the 'new world'.

◆◆◆ HOW TO USE THIS BOOK ◆◆◆

The book is presented in three sections. The first section describes and explains the elements of the idea. It's a how-to and what-does-it-all-mean manual. Most of the information you need to understand and begin to implement this program is found in this first section.

Section 2 is a deeper look at a number of different ideas that explain and example the material in Section 1. I've borrowed the title 'Through the Looking Glass' from Lewis Carroll because it might feel like you are seeing the world from the other side of a mirror. Not that everything is opposite - just different. We will re-examine some of the things we take for granted and some things we never think about at all.

Section 3, For the Geeks, is a short, but enticing burst of imaginative thought about some of the possibilities and thought miracles I have encountered while trying to understand and describe the winner/loser world theory. This is a chapter about possibilities and is designed to act as a springboard to future ideas and knowledge.

Scattered throughout are stories, case examples and parables that highlight the principles and practices described. These will show you how this theory can be implemented on a day-to-day basis, and also to simply provide some entertainment to refresh your thinking processes as you go.

Finally, the Appendix is a set of real-life stories that you can use for discussion, experiment and inspiration.

Enjoy.

◆◆ THE 'REAL WORLD' IS DRIVING ME CRAZY! ◆◆

We are in a time of moral disengagement and it is an epidemic that is growing

Albert Bandura

“What a day. I tell you, this world is driving me crazy!”

How many times have you heard or said that lately? How many times have you heard or said that today? On any given day there are dozens of things that make life more difficult. At least, that's the way it feels.

The car won't start; the bus is late; there's a spot on your new clothes; the coffee isn't hot enough; the cap won't come off the jar; your toast burns; your partner gets angry about something; you don't have enough toll for the bridge; your boss tells you off; your fellow worker criticises you about something; the kids won't get ready for school; you find it hard to do the things you used to do; there's nowhere to park at the shops; the price of fuel has gone up... and that's just the tip of the iceberg.

On their own these things may not be that much of a bother, but pile them up, one on top of the other, and by mid-morning you can become a frustrated, cranky powder keg. And these are just the simple things. There's also the serious stuff: not enough money for the bills; the kids are sick; parents or grandparents need extra care; school exams or assignments are due; your body is changing; your relationship is in trouble; there's a death; a new school; a new job; you're constantly forgetting things... and that is just the tip of that iceberg.

Some days you feel as though you just can't win a trick. With so many things coming at you from so many directions it's a miracle we can find the occasional win at all. It is really no big surprise that we are stressed and anxious and that so many people feel depressed. Certainly something is driving us crazy.

Surely, no one wants to be stressed or anxious or depressed, but simply living in the 'real world' seems to do just that.

So what is distressing about these difficulties? The distress is that we feel as if these troubles are personal attacks and personal failures. Our inability to cope with these troubles interferes with our ability to enjoy life and achieve our goals. We are supposed to cope. Sometimes you feel like a real loser and nothing is going right. This interferes with your efforts to be a success. In the 'real world' you must have success if you want to get anywhere.

We all want to be winners and, definitely, no one wants to be a loser. Our struggle to win in the 'real world' often gets us down, and many feel like failures. We can lose our advantage with little or no warning. Why is this a problem? Because winning, being a success, and getting it right in the 'real world' has become a measure of your worth as a person. Good things come to winners; losers are forced to wait for what they want, or even suffer consequences.

I can imagine you asking me another question: "Surely winning and losing is a reality? If two people are running for the finish line and one gets there first then that person is the winner." Of course that is true, but in our society winning means so much more than just crossing the finish line first. It has become an elemental social measure of your personal worth and value. If you lose, the message you get (and often the one you give yourself) is that there is something wrong with you. It is very personal. You have a problem. You are at a disadvantage. You are not good enough. It is all about you.

This creates a very strong pressure on you to step up and find some way to get back to a winning position. There is actually a lot of learning that can be gained from winning or losing, but more often than not we become overpowered by the importance of winning or losing. Winning brings approval and reward.

Winners make friends and are looked up to. Winners are shown respect and admired. Winners get the money. Winners get the girl or the guy. Winners get the praise. Winners are treated differently. So are losers. They are not good enough, not strong enough, not fast enough, not anything enough. Losing certainly motivates you to do better, but that is largely because winning is a much better place to be. Winners need to make the success linger and losers need to make the failure go away.

I speak with many people who cope with their 'loser' feelings by trying to make some sense of it. Some will say they are just having temporary bad luck; others say they feel some stress, but it's not unbearable; and others protest that winning isn't important to them and the stress they feel is just a normal part of living. Still, almost no one denies that these things bother them, and everyone wishes life wasn't like that. Nobody wants to admit to being a loser, even if they are. In fact, especially if they are. Insisting that you are not a loser is a typical reaction in a winner/loser world.

Here is a brief collection of things people have told me they do to feel like winners again: buy lottery tickets to help solve the problem of debts, only to find that when they lose they feel worse than before; yell at their wife, husband or children because they've been yelled at by their boss all day; go out of their way to be really nice to everyone, which then leads to feelings of disappointment when people don't acknowledge or return their kindness; criticise others to try and boost their own self-esteem, only to find that when that criticism is returned they end up feeling worse and more insecure; some even lie or brag about how successful/wealthy/capable they are.

We all do these things and more to try and regain some advantage or to get back on top. Why do we do these things? Why do we believe that we need to do these things? Why do we not see how unhappy this makes us? To answer this we need a better understanding of this thing called the 'real world'.

◆◆◆ THE REAL WORLD ◆◆◆

The pleasures of the world are deceitful; they promise more than they give. They trouble us in seeking them, they do not satisfy us when possessing them and they make us despair in losing them.

Madame de Lambert

Have you ever said or heard someone say, “Well, that was fun, but now we have to get back to the real world”, or when someone talks about their dreams and desires they are told, “That sounds great, but it will never work in the real world”? It seems reasonable to assume from these common colloquial statements that the ‘real world’ is somewhere you are supposed to be and, even though you may be able to enjoy brief escapes when you are on holiday, having fun, or entertaining exciting or innovative ideas, at some point it is necessary to get back to the ‘real world’.

So that means, except for brief excursions into some sort of ‘unreal world’, we have no option other than to live in the ‘real world’, regardless of what happens or how it makes us feel. Most people believe it is the only world we’ve got. In fact, it is generally believed that if you can’t make it in the ‘real world’ then you have a serious problem. It is your responsibility to make the most of your opportunities and if you fail, that is your misfortune. We believe that the ‘real world’ presents us with plenty of opportunity to make a success and be a winner. It is up to each individual to make it happen for themselves. Or so we are told.

Yet, there are people who work hard, try hard, give their best and are still told by bosses, friends, family or partners they are not good enough. Far too many people look at their reflection in the mirror and find it unacceptable. How can so many people feel lonely when there are so many of us? I have clients who seek help because they find it easier to be angry about

something than happy. Why is the struggle for success so often at the expense of family, relationships and friendships? Too often we find ourselves too busy for others, especially the ones we love. These are just some of the symptoms of an increasingly overpowering winner/loser world. These problems of the 'real world' may begin as a personal issue, but they affect us all and the results are disturbing and dramatic.

At this time we are suffering an unparalleled epidemic of unhappiness that is manifesting as depression, fear, loneliness and other emotional distress. This may not be the case for everyone all the time. You may be coping well in your own situation, but overall, it is affecting our personal lives, our relationships, the enjoyment of our workplace and even our very survival. More and more we hear, talk and read about separation, disconnection and isolation in our communities, our families and our countries. Drug use is becoming more commonplace and the hustle for money is unrelenting. It is, surely, driving us crazy.

In a world built on progress we are progressing toward some very undesirable places. Between 1950 and 1995, Australian suicide rates rose sharply, with a clear increase in the proportion of suicides in the under-45 age group. Suicide rates among 15-24-year-olds tripled. Suicide rose from comprising 6% of premature deaths in 1983 to 9.2% in 1995. In 1995 there were 2,366 suicide deaths in Australia: 1,871 were male (79%), 355 of which were under 25 years of age (19%).

It is not just at this extreme end of the profile that we find an increase in destructive symptoms. Relationships are suffering. Many find it increasingly difficult, and some find it near impossible, to just 'get on' with people around them. Fewer people know their neighbours. Competition at primary school level causes anxiety and stress. Magazines impose the right look or the right weight or the right job or the right way to have sex. Companies are spending big dollars on boosting employee

morale to maintain productivity, an expense that is not always effective. Advertisers constantly remind us of how much better our lives would be - if. This is all costing us dollars, but, more importantly, it is costing us our health and happiness - and surely that's costing us dollars, too. Yet, all this is happening in a time of boom. Boom times should be happy times, shouldn't they?

Something is wrong with the things we believe are worth living and working for. Hundreds of therapies and practices are available to help people, both in themselves and their relationships with others. Despite this, stress and anxiety are getting worse. We must seriously look at some 'sacred cows'. There is a lot of discussion about how things should be better, how things should change or even that we should just get away from it all. But what is this 'all' that we need to get away from and where can we go?

It seems clear that the 'real world', this world where winning and losing is the dominant objective, is what we seek to get away from. If we want more of an 'unreal world' where there is less pressure, where it's easier and more friendly, then we have to work out how that is possible. The dilemma is this: when winning is the goal it is necessary to act, at some stage or other, separately and independently in order to come out 'on top'. Bottom line is that to win, to be first, you have to be on your own, you have to 'look out for No 1'. Paradoxically, there's a mile of literature (and common sense) that tells us human beings need to connect with each other, care for each other and help each other. We suffer when we feel separated or disconnected from people in our community, at work or home. We desire, yearn and search for connection, but the 'winner/loser world' demands, requires and rewards us when we don't. It doesn't seem possible to do both at the same time. This is the winner/loser world problem: winning benefits from separation whereas happiness benefits from connection. It seems you can have one or the other. Any struggle to have both

creates conflict. The result is that we feel separated and disconnected. Eventually we feel depressed, afraid and lonely.

How does this work? With surprising ease. When under stress or in difficulty it is only natural to enlist support or help. If we do enlist support it just doesn't seem 'right' to be given help for too long. We eventually feel the pressure to disengage and refocus on our individual struggle, which, of course, causes us stress. To alleviate this stress we again seek to engage with others, until we succumb to the pressure of having to 'do it yourself' so we disengage, which affects our feelings of security and sense of love, so we seek to engage to revitalise those lost feelings, but we are then open to the criticism of being emotionally weak and a loser so we disengage to show everyone how tough we are, but this is very emotionally painful and so we seek to engage, but we have already alienated or distanced ourselves from those in our closer circle and we have to look elsewhere. We try to engage with anyone, maybe a stranger or some professional whom tries to help us engage again, but by now we don't even know what being engaged is anymore. When we get to this stage we start to feel like we are going a little crazy. And that is partly true, but not because you are truly crazy. You are torn. You are tired. You are confused. You are in the winner/loser world, and that is what it does to you.

There must be a way of living, some 'other world' that is based on connection and interaction where we can feel good about what we do, who we are, and still be able to achieve something. The trouble with most of the alternative lifestyles is that they don't actually address the central problem. Some involve dropping out or teaching a different definition of success. Some make success synonymous with happiness (remember Gordon Gecko and "greed is good"), whereas others suggest making a sacrifice of success for the reward of personal connection and inner peace. Many people who have tried these alternatives found that when they got an answer they were soon confronted

by a new question. Self-esteem has been found and lost over and over again.

No amount of trying to make the 'real world' less of a winner/loser experience or finding ways to help us feel any less of a loser has had any lasting effect, other than to make things worse. You can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear. The winner/loser world problem is unresolvable from within the winner/loser world: you cannot get dry when you are still in the water. This is not something that can be fixed. It is something that must be changed.

We spend so much time and energy feeling frustrated by things that don't seem to make sense or seem hard to understand. "I can't understand why this is happening to me", "I don't know why he isn't affectionate", "I don't understand how they can be so selfish", "It doesn't make any sense for her to feel ugly when she is so special". These are the sorts of things we all hear and shake our heads with puzzlement. But in the context of the winner/loser world, it is easy to understand. This is exactly what we should expect to happen. Just as you can't solve being wet while you stay in the water, the only true solution to the winner/loser world problem is to leave the world where we are so easily disappointed, where men feel uncomfortable to share their emotions, where selfishness is often the preferred option and where we can not only feel ugly, but also have to compensate by being told we are 'special'.

We need a complete shift, one that breaks the ever worsening spiral of stress and anxiety, without having to reject or escape or hide from the so-called 'real world' – just put it in its proper place. It is not possible for everyone to turn their backs on our social structures and systems. It is possible, however, to shift the way we measure our personal worth and the way we look at this 'real world' we live in.

The following analogy may help you understand what I mean. An excellent dramatisation of how we can become consumed by a 'world' that we believe to be the only 'real world' is the basis of the film, *The Matrix*. A 'world' was created by the machines to make people feel they were living a 'real life', but they weren't. They just believed they were. It was an invention. Some people, like the lead character Neo, sensed that something was wrong, but 'the matrix' was all anybody could know – unless they took the red pill. When Neo took the pill he found there was a whole existence that he was unaware of and had been unable to access. When he left 'the matrix' and understood the truth, he was then able to exist in both worlds, entering and leaving 'the matrix' at will.

This book is a 'red pill'.

◆◆◆ SO, WHAT IS THE 'OTHER WORLD'? ◆◆◆

There is no victory in the stuff of life. There is only victory in the love of life, for without the love of life, the stuff of life is not worth fighting for.

Richard Hill

The 'other world' seems obvious: a world of relationships and caring for others; a world of love, kindness and sharing; a world of happiness. If only it were that simple. Being happy in the winner/loser world has proved to be surprisingly and depressingly difficult. It is hard to understand why people will choose conflict over happiness, but that seems to be the case. I no longer believe that that conflict is just a poor choice. I am beginning to see that it is an inevitable and largely unavoidable result of the winner/loser world problem.

The more I look at the 'world' we live in and the way people try to cope with it, the more obvious it seems that the things we do

to either win, avoid losing or recover from losing are incompatible with relationship, interaction and connection. The more we try to fix it, the more we amplify the problem. There are many wonderful ideas and programmes and how-to systems that try to help us feel better, but most end up trying to make you feel like a winner of some sort or other.

The last decade or so has focussed heavily on 'personal power'. This has become an important new measure of being a winner, but in many of the people I come across, this has just created more losers. We are no closer to better relationships, happier communities or positive connection by using these methods. They just alter the distribution of power or redefine who is winning.

We are titillated by being told that we can have anything we want; do anything we want; heal anything we want; be anything we want; and find great relationships. We are shown how to create success and fortune by copying the successful and the fortunate. Alternatively we are shown how to connect to greater, mysterious powers that will give us special protection. We are given promises that we can be loved and wanted, and have the freedom to follow our passions and desires. We can discover how to never feel bad about ourselves again. Everyone is searching for some way to be that little bit better and more acceptable, a way to tap into some special advantage. In short – to be winners. I'm not saying that we shouldn't try to improve ourselves and that these programs haven't been helpful in keeping many of us afloat in difficult times, but the statistics show that they haven't worked well enough. They may keep us afloat, but they still leave us trapped in the winner/loser world. Our ability to enjoy a genuine connection with others continues to degenerate.

So, what must we do? Certainly, we must re-examine what we believe, because our beliefs are the foundation of who we are. If the 'real world' is based on separation, which has resulted in a

system of winning and losing, then the 'other world' must be based on connection, interaction and relationship. What type of world could come from connection and interaction? What do we look for?

Firstly, it must be something that is founded on a basic element of human behaviour. This behaviour needs to be well developed and natural. Secondly, it must be something that is not restricted to 'special' people or limited by any individual quirk of birth. Thirdly, it has to be something that can take us forward as an individual without forcing us to be separate from others. Lastly, it needs to be something that can produce a helpful and beneficial outcome even in difficult circumstances - and it must do all these things at the same time.

There is one quality of being human that satisfies all these things. This quality is at the centre of the way humans function. It is the spontaneous process that occurs when things come together and interact. It is elemental to everyone, favours no one and is always able to produce a beneficial outcome. This quality is our inner creativity.

Straight away I can imagine some readers are questioning again, 'Isn't creativity about talent, some ability to paint or sing or write?' No - and I emphasise - absolutely not. That is outward creative expression, which is very different from our inner creative capacity. It may be difficult at first to grasp the nature and importance of our innate creative capacity, but that is because we have been dominated for such a long time by a world where you are measured by what you do and how you do it in a disconnected and separate environment. In the new world, just like Neo in *The Matrix*, we will have to retrain ourselves, learn new systems, understand how the winner/loser world came about and discover the wonders of the new world. I'd like to call this new place the 'Creative World'.

◆◆◆ THE CREATIVE WORLD ◆◆◆

Trying to find the 'right' answer is the problem – there isn't one. However, to respond to life with inspired, creative vigour is the great miracle of being human.

Richard Hill

Our natural creativity is one of the main reasons why human beings have survived as a species. We have evolved on a planet that has gone through a lot of changes. Our advantage has been our capacity to adapt and adapting comes from our ability to create. After the dinosaurs died out mammals continued to evolve, eventually leading to the appearance of man. In the 60 million years since the demise of the dinosaurs, modern human beings (*Homo sapiens*) have only been around for about 150,000 years. We have become the dominant species on the planet incredibly quickly because of our extraordinary capacity to take what is available to us in the present moment and create something more in the next moment. More often than not we will create an improvement that increases our chances of survival and benefits our current well being. This is how a species survives and succeeds.

This tendency to create beneficial improvements is not always done with conscious intervention or intention. In fact, mostly our interactions with the environment are non-conscious. Tending toward a beneficial outcome is the nature of creativity. I will discuss this in more detail in the chapter on harmony (see Section 2).

Without ever consciously knowing it, our body and mind are constantly at work receiving information from our environment. From that information we firstly create awareness that we exist, then where we are in our environment and what is changing as we interact. For example, we see movement in the hallway that attracts our attention. Our eyes receive photons of light that are picked up by receptors in the eye, which send signals to the

visual cortex in the brain. This interacts with information from our memory and our emotions, which trigger a host of other mental processes. Our other senses in the form of smell, sound, taste and touch are all involved. Our musculo-skeletal system and nervous system tell us how we are standing or moving; and our emotional centres are monitoring our safety as well as other feelings, like pleasure or satisfaction. We gather all the information that is available, and these interact to create responses that seek to produce the best outcome. This integrated creative process is happening continuously, and often in the time-space of milliseconds. We recognise the family cat, smile and pick it up for a comforting tummy rub.

The processes above could be a description of any number of things that might happen in your life. It could be when you are playing tennis. Without any particular thought or intervention you are able to hit the ball back over the net and feel good about it at the same time. It could be when you are meeting someone new or being served a meal. These processes are happening right now as you read this text. Whether you choose to or not, and whether you are aware of it or not, you are in the middle of an entrancing creative interaction that is, moment by moment, changing your life. From your experience in this moment you are preparing yourself for your next experience. This is achieved through the process of taking what you have learnt and applying this to your next moment to create a better experience. This is happening inside you and around you, to some degree, a dozen times each second. We are only consciously aware of the bigger and slower events, but even these are processed faster than we think. How often have you played a game of tennis and the more you tried to win the worse you played?

So, how do we step out of the winner/loser world, like Neo in The Matrix, and enter a creative world? It is a very different place of mind and heart. Instead of being in a world that pulls things apart into winners and losers, in the creative world you

are connected and engaged. To understand this we had best start by looking at the differences between the way we respond in the winner/loser world and the way we respond in the creative world. This will help you understand and be aware of which world you are in. Shortly I will introduce you to the 8 Differences between the winner/loser world and the creative world. These begin the process of defining the two worlds, but before we examine the 8 Differences, I just want to clarify what stress does to us from the biological view. It is important at this point for you to be absolutely clear what prolonged stress is doing to us and why I believe that the winner/loser world can no longer be tolerated.

◆◆◆ WHY BOTHER CHANGING? ◆◆◆
WE'VE DONE OKAY SO FAR, HAVEN'T WE?

Bliss will not be found by pretending that the winner/loser world does not exist or does not concern you – of course it does. When you career down the rapids of a river you cannot pretend that the rocks are not there. All that will happen is that your lack of acceptance will get you hurt. It is necessary to stare the winner/loser world in the face and live with it, but not be ruled by it; to be able to live in it, but know that you are not of it.

Richard Hill

People might well say we have done okay so far. I don't know how, but this is probably because the winner/loser world allows us to have opinions based only on our isolated experience. We know that things are not getting better - they are getting worse. Things may seem to be alright for some. The point is, however, that we have not been alright for quite some time and we have become used to it. The stress and 'craziness' we are noticing today is not new, it just can't be ignored any more. Perhaps there is a similarity in the way we have dealt with global warming. The first cautions were given in the mid 1950s, but

now our melting polar icecaps, climate changes and increased species extinction is just too much to ignore. We need to recognise the winner/loser world and the damage it is doing to the human race.

Surprisingly, it is important to remember that stress is a natural process and is very healthy in the right conditions. It is the prolonged state of stress that damages you. We are designed to cope with acute stress. Before modern civilisation, acute stress may have been caused by physical challenges like chasing down another animal for food or running away from a predator. When stress becomes chronic we are soon in deep trouble. Below is a comparison in relation to various body parts and systems.

Chronic Stress	Acute Stress
	Brain
* increased alertness	* impaired memory
* reduced pain perception	* increased risk of depression
* reduced emotional reaction	* limitation on new learning
* limited planning and rationalisation	* reduction of empathy
	Thymus Gland Immune Tissues
* immune system readies for injury	* immune system deteriorates
	* increased illness
	* reduced wellness
	Circulatory System
* heart beats faster	* increased blood pressure
* blood vessels constrict to bring more blood to muscles	* increased cortisol in blood
	* disturbance of insulin balance
	Adrenal Glands
* secretion of hormones to mobilize energy supplies	* these hormones act to slow the recovery from stress

Reproductive Organs

* reproductive functions are temporarily suppressed

* higher risk of infertility and miscarriage

In addition to the problems for the reproductive system, it has been found that the stressful nature of the workplace increases the amount of testosterone in women which not only affects their sexual fertility, but also their sexuality and aggressiveness. Men are also affected by these changes.

Prolonged stress is not something that you can put up with. Quite the opposite. We are no more capable of living a life under persistent stress than is an elephant capable of climbing Mount Everest. This is a clear and pressing reason why the winner/loser world is not only driving us crazy, but also doing us a lot of damage. Our heads are full of crazy beliefs that push us to accept behaviour that is downright dangerous. We may believe we are 'soldiering on', but we are not designed to ignore our warning mechanisms. Stress is literally killing some of us through premature illness and suicide. For others it is symbolically killing us with the depressing effect of persistent unhappiness and lack of fulfilment. We don't need to do either.

This information is not meant to scare, although it certainly made me stop and think. I hope it has done that for you too. Now, let's get right down to it and find out how to do something about all this. The 8 Differences will begin a practical understanding of the two worlds and lead us into the shift that comes from taking the 'red pill'.