

Author's Foreword

The poet Yeats expressed the thought that through his many corrections of his own work, “it is myself that I remake.” This thought inspired me to question: how can we learn to remake ourselves? And how can we do that without having to rely on the constant instructions and guidance of others? These were the questions I faced, as I began many years ago to look at how we can teach ourselves, navigate our journeys through life. This form of independence and self-reliance goes against the way our world operates, where for the most part all our social and political structures are built along hierarchical lines, the leader and the led, the teacher and the taught.

This form of reliance begins in childhood, where the adult usually, and sometimes out of necessity, constrains the child, often actively training him to follow instructions rather than to act independently. As a result, we tend to seek answers from others, who are not necessarily able to give the answers that are most appropriate for our inner selves. It is time for the individual to step up, for human beings to choose responsibility over dependence. It is time for us to look for a “user’s manual” for our lives, defining our objectives, processes and standard operating procedures in order to attain independent action. But this user’s manual cannot be dictated. Each one of us must find it for ourselves. And each user’s manual will be different.

These ideas led me to develop the Self-Remaking approach, which I have taught over several decades and to thousands of students. The book is set out as follows:

PART I: TRAVEL AND SETTING OUT: Travel and Setting Out offers a universally recognizable template for a set of actions and activities required to achieve a goal. Self-Remaking is essentially a journey, or

more precisely a combination of many journeys, metaphorical, spiritual or physical, that an individual will make in his life. This section includes an article written by Ziva Caspi, my late wife, and poetry gathered from many different sources, intended to draw the reader into the experience, the ambience, of setting out to remake himself.

PART II: ABOUT SELF-REMAKING – THE JOURNEY: This section relates to the unique journey of Self-Remaking, how to approach it and something of what to expect from the process.

PART III: THE SELF-REMAKER – VISION, INSIGHT, EVALUATION AND ACTION: Who is the Self-Remaker? What are his beliefs, his vision, his insight? This section explores the person, his potentials and possibilities.

PART IV: TOOLS AND PROCESS OF SELF-REMAKING: This section works through the descriptions, tools, and some of the applications of Self-Remaking. These tools are intended as suggestions – and the reader is invited to develop self-remaking tools and applications in accordance with his own personality and objectives.

PART V: IMPLEMENTATION: The Self-Remaking approach may be implemented in many different ways. This section deals with the implementation of Self-Remaking in fields as diverse as architecture, music, quantum physics and more.

PART VI: CONCLUSION

PART VII: CHILDREN'S WISDOM: Here you will find revised and edited excerpts of my book "Children's Wisdom,"⁶ adapted for presentation within this work. Its inclusion here is intended to give the reader an opportunity to take a fresh look at the way children express themselves, armed with the insights of the self-remaking process.

6 M.D. Caspi, *Children's Wisdom – Cosmic Starlight: – from the grey world of adults to the magical journey of the child* (Hebrew), Tel Aviv: Mofet 2013.

Linear reading of this work is not essential. The reader is invited to dip into the book at will, making use of the list of terms and glossary as necessary.

There is no examination here, no test. My only suggestion to those whose interest I have piqued is to read and experiment with the ideas offered, to look for the humor that will help deepen your memory of the possibilities which will become apparent to you, and to see how these ideas may be applied in your lives.

M.D. Caspi
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Chapter 16

Building Vital Self-Direction Instructions (VSIIs)

From “Raw Materials” to Formulation

We are trained to follow the directions and instructions of others in so many areas. From a very early age, we cease almost entirely to navigate for ourselves, and inevitably become dependent on others to a lesser or greater degree. Direction by others, where there is only one optimum way to achieve the desired goal, drastically lessens self-confidence and often leads to an atmosphere of fearfulness, increasing the likelihood of failure. However, due to the many options available within the Self-Remaking process and the basic requirement that the Self-Remaker make his own choices from those options, we must learn to navigate for ourselves, to direct ourselves on the path and in the course of action we have chosen. Once we can direct ourselves and navigate our route, we will be able to choose the options more likely to succeed out of many possibilities, and thus reduce significantly the possibility (and results) of failure in our lives.

Learning to build Vital Self-Direction Instructions is crucial for increasing our personal and social independence of thought and action, as we gradually reduce our dependence on biological and social factors which we have somehow allowed to moderate our lives in ways we do not want. This process is in itself life changing, as it stimulates us both as individuals and as members of a group, honing our senses, sensitivities and awareness of our needs and objectives. Through this process we learn to direct ourselves in unique ways, guiding ourselves with our own words, gestures and hints.

In this section you will find the following:

- A definition and clarification of what a Vital Self-Direction Instruction is and how the framework operates
- The resources – “raw materials” for setting up a VSI:
 - ★ Mapping questions
 - ★ Functions
 - ★ ABCs
 - ★ Motifs and motivations
 - ★ Fundamental areas of competence / life skills
 - ★ Tags
- Putting it all together

As you move through the resources, drawn from different approaches, on different levels and with differing objectives – you can choose according to your direction, level and objectives in order to connect and blend the components to form the VSI that you need for your purposes.

The process of putting together VSIs is a synthesis of all the approaches and models involved in Self-Remaking. It is complex as many components are involved – but as we move through the actions and choices required, you will get an idea of how best to undertake this task.

1. So what is a VSI?

The following are examples of the comprehensive process of setting up a VSI (from the general and the abstract to the concrete, and vice versa), following the stages from vision to action set out in a previous chapter: The arrows show how each part of the process feeds into the next, and how the entire process can feed backwards towards its original starting point.

8. Putting it all together: How to formulate a Vital Self-Direction Instruction

- a. We can start with a **function**, for example: **survival**, focusing on **social survival** (there are many options for focus here, whether social, physical, emotional, artistic, practical-technical and more). In this example, a possible process for formulating the VSI may look something like this:
- ★ Sub-function: Increase your degree of involvement and cooperation with others, perhaps in politics, or through an organization working with issues that interest you, even though you may not know much about the subject.
 - ★ Move on to the mapping questions (section 2 above), and try to build a VSI that will provide a response to several of the questions in that section. You should find yourself working with questions such as: What can I do in this organization? How? When? For how long?
 - ★ Make use of the examples from the tagging list (no. 7), and develop your own personalized tagging lists.
 - ★ Make use of the Fundamental areas of Competence (6). For example, based on how you see your new activity and occupation (“perception”), set up a VSI to plan your actions.

In this way you can use a number of sources (1-7 above) as “raw materials” and continue to add more detail as you build clear, precise and stimulating VSIs – until you’re happy with the end product and feel it will help you achieve your goals.

- b. You can also start with a “motif” (section 5 above), for example “demolish the walls of your illusions!,” in the sense of weakening a negative aspect. Use the “questions” or the “functions” to keep you focused, and choose tags from the tagging list (7). This will lead you to many more questions to help you investigate the best possible format and content for your new VSI. Here are some examples: Are “analytical” methods best for my purposes? Can I analyze my illusions and delusions in specific areas of thought and activity? Perhaps I’ll

take a look at legends to see how “heroes” handled this task? Maybe it’s worthwhile for me to anticipate and predict how things will look with my new VSI? How will I feel once this negative aspect becomes weaker in me? It is possible to use several components from the resources in the previous sections, and to see what interests you, and what order works best to achieve the results you seek.

It’s important to note that when working on weakening something negative in ourselves, it’s best to choose a minor weakness, which will be somewhat easier to change than something more major. Once we succeed in changing a minor weakness, we greatly increase our chances of gradually weakening more severe negative issues in ourselves.

- c. With the help of the “tagging list” (7) and other details above, try to explain and demonstrate the VSI, looking at the elements it encompasses and how it functions in the following arenas:
 - ★ Intellectually:
 - ★ Socially:
 - ★ Emotionally
 - ★ Artistically
 - ★ Politically

In the case of a double VSI (political and intellectual, for example) is it composed of two or more parts? Is there a VSI which is specifically formulated in order to combine two aspects? If necessary don’t hesitate to use professional literature in the relevant field order to understand the various concepts more clearly.

- d. It is possible to combine mapping questions with functions – as in the following example for planning a program for studying history. The study of history often centers around questions such as “who is doing what, where and when?” If this information is connected with the function of “survival,” the questions will morph into “How did King (*blank*) survive during the (*blank*) era in (*country name*)?” If the information is connected with the function “begin,” the questions that may emerge could look something like this: “Was King (*blank*) daring when he decided to (*action*) or did he know he would succeed?”

When did he plan the details of his initiative? Did he respond spontaneously?” and more.

- e. It is also possible to begin a complex VSI using various approaches, for example:
 - i. Start with “social” – who are the people, what is my relationship with them, what motivates them?
 - ii. Continue with “social-intellectual” – how do I connect with them? What might interest them? For what purpose?
 - iii. Elaborate on the “social-political” – how will I increase their understanding? What form will cooperation with these people take? How will we advance towards our goals?

- f. Try to build a **personal** VSI to work on a fairly straightforward issue you may be dealing with (it’s better to start with simple issues at this stage and move on to more complex issues as you become more familiar with the process). Use tagging lists to help in your choice of what to work on.

- g. Not all VSIs are verbal. Sometimes a physical gesture or movement may be more effective as a VSI (for example – clenching the teeth to signify “hold back, don’t get involved now!”). Sometimes a sound may be used as a VSI, to represent a desired state of mind. A VSI can be intuitive, involving a rapid “mental shift,” with a meaning that is clear to you even though it is difficult to explain to others. The individual may have had a specific sign chosen for him to represent an attitude, an expertise, a relationship, a particular emotion, or a characterization or metaphor that he knows. For example, Lorca’s reference to the lizard in his poem, “The Old Lizard,” as “one drop of crocodile,”² demonstrates the element of transition from whole to part, from large to small or vice versa, and can be used as a VSI for seeing the object as an organic part of something much larger, or turning a drop into an ocean. In general we have avoided standard expressions

2 Federico García Lorca and Lysander Kemp. From *The Selected Poems*.

such as “see the forest for the trees,” but in certain circumstances you may find that something routine best serves your purposes.

- h. The many techniques and creative approaches to guided imagery may provide a rich source for formulating a VSI. Choose a technique which will help you visualize how this VSI could change your life and what problems it could help you overcome. Explore the ways in which games, humor, dramatization and similar activities and thoughts may help here in addition to other more familiar techniques.
- i. Work on formulating an “auxiliary” VSI, in order to deepen your understanding of the central VSI you are working on. This is a form of reflexive VSI, formulated in order to clarify itself.
- j. Is it possible to use VSIs in order to achieve deeper spirituality? This may be an indirect result of one or more VSIs, by means of motifs such as “don’t be dragged towards your so-called destiny! Determine and strengthen your purpose,” “Strengthen the promise of the future and weaken the causality of the past!” and others. Intuitive, “soft” qualities will contribute greatly to this process, which often achieves other unintended goals alongside the intended results.
- k. Ask yourself – does every VSI promote Self-Remaking? Are there VSIs which do not contribute to Self-Remaking but may be useful for you? Which ones? In what way?
- l. What VSI can you formulate right now in order to start your process of Self-Remaking?

9. Notes and Recommendations

Make use of the sections in this article to ensure that your VSI will do what you want it to do. For example, use the section on Fundamental Areas of Competence (6) to ensure that the complex VSI will help you to motivate yourself, to perceive the objectives of this book accurately and sensitively, and to plan how to work with the material and implement the techniques and methods you have learned.

Children's Wisdom

Children as a source for ideas and hypotheses

Many children tend to complicate the lives of adults by constantly asking “why.” However, there are also some very bright, intelligent children who ask fewer, rather different questions. The careful listener will observe that these children are processing thought as if they were young scientists, building hypotheses. Instead of merely asking “why,” their questions will often take the form of something reminiscent of a logical-deductive structure, for example:

“When there’s more rain, that’s when the flowers grow, isn’t that right?” or “the sand stops the sea from going into the houses, doesn’t it?”

The children documented in this book are among those who usually do not ask for detailed explanations. Instead of raising questions, they themselves presented hypotheses to explain the reason for the matter, on the lines of “and it’s because... right?” “You know that...” The way these children put forward hypotheses, rather than limiting themselves to the “why” questions, is what drew me to expand on the words of children and to seek ways in which their words could be transformed into raw materials for adults, who sadly do not usually draw on or benefit from this particular source of wisdom.

As responsive adults who claim to pay attention to our children, how has it taken us so long to comprehend, identify, absorb and accumulate the wisdom in their words, the fresh ideas sparkling through their laughter, their activities and inventions, whether verbal or otherwise? Unfortunately, to date nothing has been done. Furthermore, we repeatedly block and repress their ideas. Even from my own schooldays, I remember one teacher’s constant refrain on sending me out of the classroom: (inadvertently quoting Proverbs 1:20) “the saying goes that *outside* is

where wisdom is doing the shouting – so Moshe, take yourself and your wisdom outside, right now!”

There are many academic and popular works offering children's quotes and descriptions of their actions. However, they rarely offer directions on how to search through the world of children for practical ideas or new advanced hypotheses. In general, the world of science relies mainly on the findings of previous research. It is the rare scientist who will seek inspiration in the refreshing wisdom of children. The physicist Robert Oppenheimer was such a scientist. When he was looking for new ideas, he would go out into the street and listen to children and young people, paying close attention to their use of analogies which he found very helpful in his work.

The objective of this abridged version of my full work is to offer the interested reader the opportunity to take a fresh look at the words of children, their activities, their jokes and wordplay, within the context of Self-Remaking. We are all too accustomed to relating to children's stories and comments as “quaint,” “amusing,” or even “precocious.” I advocate removing that filter, and actually reading the examples with the awareness that the reader is entering a different world, where different rules apply. When read in this way, the words of children can serve as a rich source and a “launch pad” for developing ideas and hypotheses in new ways and directions that would not usually occur to the adult.



At the age of two years and two months, the child's aunt asks: “give me your hand,” and he answers: “**I can't, it's stuck on**” [to my body].

Why is it that we cannot access in ourselves something of the wonder, curiosity and inquisitiveness of the child, together with his vibrant joy of life? (Wonder, Curiosity and Inquisitiveness are the three central components of what I have termed the Leonardo Approach, discussed in previous chapters of this work.)³ Or even make use of the “raw materials”

3 The Leonardo Approach holds the key to the very beginnings of thought and thinking. It is a prerequisite for all true innovative thought, as emotion acting as a stimulus for creation is at the root of the ability to approach a subject in a fresh,

of our own imaginations in order to progress a little faster, in directions that are practical and productive? The following simple example shows how this can be done, also demonstrating the beginnings of the child's ability to integrate at an early stage in his development.



Age: One year and one month. The child draws her mother's attention to a beautiful flower-bed and says: "**fla-wa!**" Points at the next one and says "**fla-wa!**" at the third and repeats "**fla-wa!**" When she gets to the fourth flower she says "**na-da** (another)!"

Or in the following example, from one of the children quoted in this book when he was four years old:



Daniel asked his parents: "**Can I have some spices?**" In continuation of his question, he explained and gave his reasons: "**spices have different colors, more than my colors. I paint more things with them! Nicer pictures!!**"

About a year later, he asked again: "**Can I have some spices?**" "Yes of course!" his mother answered. "You asked for them once, a long time ago... what would you like them for now?" Daniel smiled: "**Spices have a smell, right? Why don't my pictures have interesting smells?**"

Raw material for a hypothesis on the subject of: "enrichment of color through scent."⁴

This book covers a large variety of quotations from the lives of children, from a very young age (less than a year) up to the age of eight and a half. The children have been given arbitrary names for the purpose of this work – Emma, Daniel, Sarah and Nathan. The words of these children relate

non-routine way.

- 4 The pictures and works of the children described in this book are varied and enhanced not only through color, but also through addition of other elements such as different shining stones, stickers (mainly of animals), little accessories (including parts of keys and parts of candles) and also, as in the example before us, spices (cinnamon). The resulting drawings are not only aesthetic – they also smell good. The grains of spice in themselves add a special illustrative dimension to the picture.



**This giraffe has morphed into a new, much larger animal,
an example of the new invention based on the existing creature
(drawn by Netanela Caspi, 6 years old)**