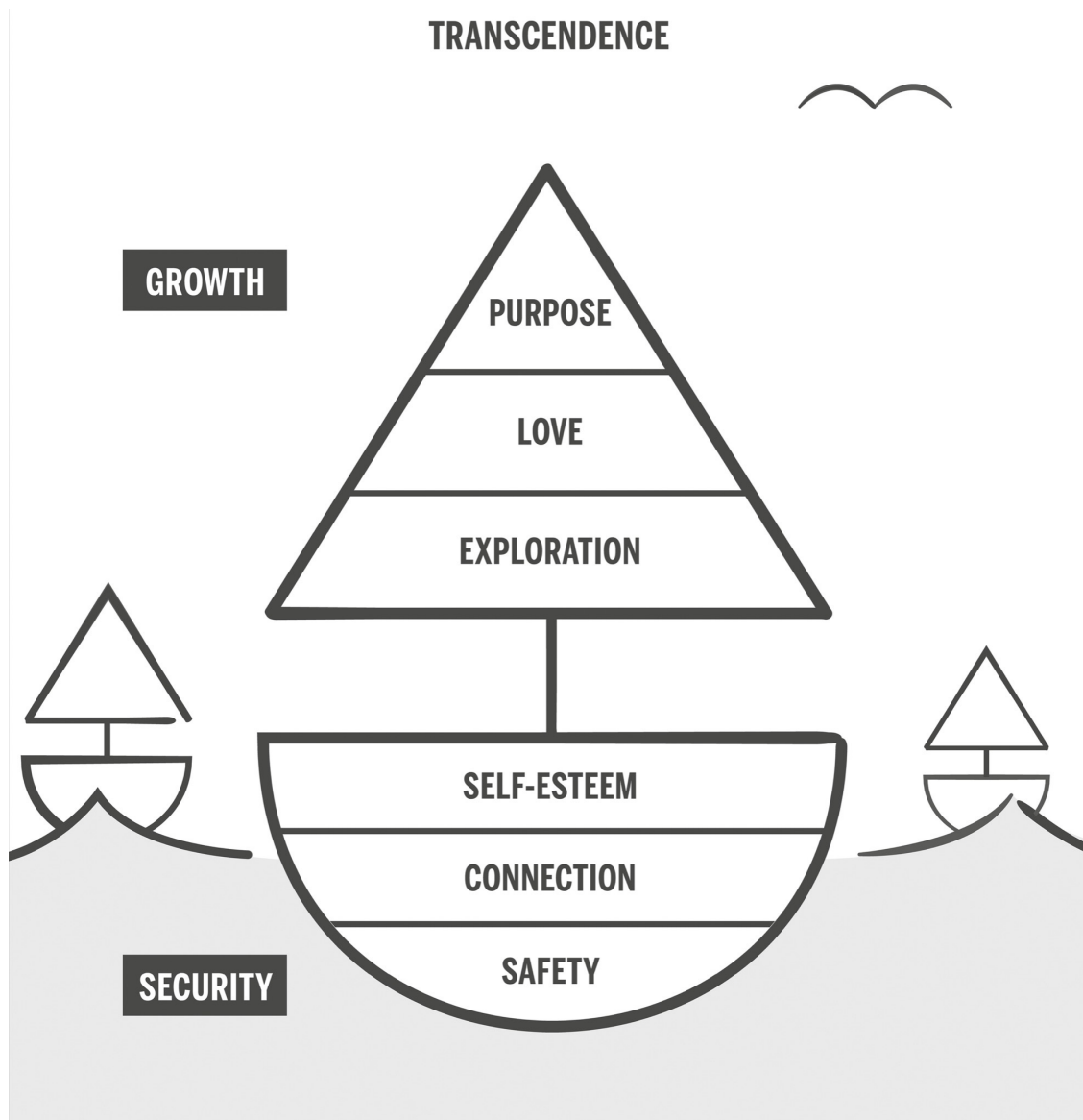


Sure, there are exceptions. Some of us focus more on one of these needs than others, and some of us really aren't interested in some of these things at all. For instance, psychopaths tend to not care as much about intimate connections with others.^[*2] But taken together, I think this is a pretty good list of what it means to be human.^[*3] This perspective allows us to feel a sense of connection with our fellow humans for wanting what we want out of life. And we can call this movement toward growth and development our quest for *self-actualization*.^[14] This book adopts my main framework for self-actualization to help you in your journey of healing and growth.^[15]

In my book *Transcend* I revised Maslow's famous hierarchy of needs.^[16] You know that pyramid displayed in endless psychology textbooks and flashed on slideshows during motivational presentations? Well, it turns out Maslow never actually drew a pyramid—that was created by management textbook illustrators.^[17]

To more appropriately capture what I believe Maslow intended, I created a new metaphor—a sailboat. This metaphor captures our basic, shared yearnings and categorizes them as *security needs* (which stabilize the boat and allow it to move) and *growth needs* (which allow us to open our sail and move in our most valued and purposeful direction).

In life, we're all just doing our best to captain our own ship amid the windswept seas of life. And the thing is, we all encounter storms. Sure, some of us encounter a minor tropical depression here and there, while others are like George Clooney clinging to the decks in a Junger-esque disaster, but no one encounters entirely smooth sailing. (And as I'll demonstrate in this book, a lack of adversity can actually be counterproductive to growth.)



Given that, let's consider some honest truths about life itself, which can lead us toward the critical step that I call *life-acceptance*:

- You aren't alone in your suffering.
- Life is sometimes unfair.
- Life is ultimately unpredictable.
- You can't completely control your life.
- No one is coming to save you.

- You and only you are ultimately responsible for your reactions to the world.

Viewed together with the givens of human existence, we can see the common humanity of our needs, along with the common humanity of our circumstances.

So while the particulars in all of our lives are decidedly different, there is so much we share. I want to underscore that yet again because so much of today's messaging has focused on creating divisions among us. That sense of separation from others is fertile ground for growing a victim mindset.

LIFE IS WHAT YOU MAKE IT

People are always blaming their circumstances for being what they are. The people who get on in this world are the people who get up and look for the circumstances they want, and if they can't find them, make them.

—George Bernard Shaw

Life is what you make of it, at least to a larger extent than you may realize. You can resist this notion all you want—citing all the real injustices in the world that exist and all of the things in life that are holding you back. And while all that may very well be true, what I said is also true. It's a Both/And situation.

Most people wait for the world to react to them. We expect people to read our minds about we want, or we expect others to assess our emotions. We wait until we get approval before we bring our whole self to the table, or at least a more authentic version of ourselves. When I say life is what you make it, I mean we grossly underestimate the extent to which we can make magic happen. And by *magic* I mean create lives rich with meaning and satisfaction.

We have a lot more power to make magic in the world, instead of waiting for it to poof out of nowhere and conform to our every desire, goal, and dream. To paraphrase Gandhi, *you've got to bring the energy you want to see in the world!*

Yes, you can absolutely sit there and watch other people around you get after it, and you can certainly make a million excuses why they have what it takes and you don't because of what you've been through in your life. But again, while

even some of that may very well be true, they certainly don't have what others have either! More importantly, they don't have what *you* have.

It's easy to disparage ourselves or our circumstances. Everyone can find someone else who is a little bit more talented, more good-looking, or more driven, or who started life with more opportunity. So what are you going to do about that? Are you going to fold your hands, or are you going to get in the game? I, for one, wanna see you get in this thing. Because the truth is we need you. We need your skills and your talents and your energy. After all, life is a shitshow, remember? If we're gonna make something better out of it, it's an all-hands-on-deck moment, and that includes you. It's time to take the wheel and captain your own damn ship!

One of the most world-changing, groundbreaking shifts in consciousness you could possibly make right now is to realize just how much life really is what you make it. I'm not saying that's easy. In fact, nothing in life that's truly worth having is easy. But it's possible, and it's worth it.

This book will use the latest tools of science to help you confront life with healthy vulnerability, bravery, wisdom, self-acceptance, life-acceptance, compassion, creativity, and healing. I assume these are things you want out of your life, and as you're about to see, to a very large extent, you can have them.

Let's find out how.

[SKIP NOTES](#)

[*1](#) The phrase "givens of existence" was coined by the existential psychotherapist Irvin Yalom to describe the existential facts of life. Yalom, I. (1980). *Existential psychotherapy*. Basic Books.

[*2](#) But note that it doesn't follow that all people who don't seek out intimacy are necessarily psychopaths!

[*3](#) On Irvin Yalom's original list of givens are death, freedom, isolation, and meaninglessness. I incorporated his ideas into my own list, which also adds other basic human needs into the mix to round out the list. See Yalom, I. (1980). *Existential psychotherapy*. Basic Books.