

ise For Habitual Domains

the concept of Habitual Domains explained in this book changed my life. I believe it can change others' lives for the better, too. I am certain it can change corporate culture in our country, probably as much as Total Quality Management (TQM) and with considerably more benefit to individuals with corporations."

— Paul H. Henson, Chairman, Kansas City Southern Industries

There are books designed to help you work smarter. There are books designed to help you be happier. Habitual Domains is that rare combination of both."

— Frank S. Wang, Chairman, Taipei Insurance Association
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Lewis B. Cullman Distinguished Professor of Management, Purdue University

Habitual Domains is a brilliant concept produced by a brilliant thinker. The more you use HD, the more you will like it, and you will become more creative, happier and wiser."

— C. Y. Wang, Chairman and CEO, China Steel Corporation, Kaohsiung, Taiwan

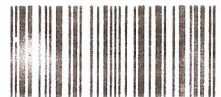


Dr. Po-Lung Yu, a distinguished professor and Kung Fu master, is recognized around the world as a remarkable thinker, scholar, teacher and advisor to business. Part of what distinguishes Habitual Domains from other systems of self-discovery is the wise and caring voice of a man who draws upon the ways of both East and West and whose own life is a wonderful example of the ideas he is explaining.



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Prof. Altamir A. R. Araldi
148

HABITUAL DOMAINS

by Po-Lung Yu, Ph.D.

HABITUAL DOMAINS

Freeing Yourself
From the Limits
on Your Life

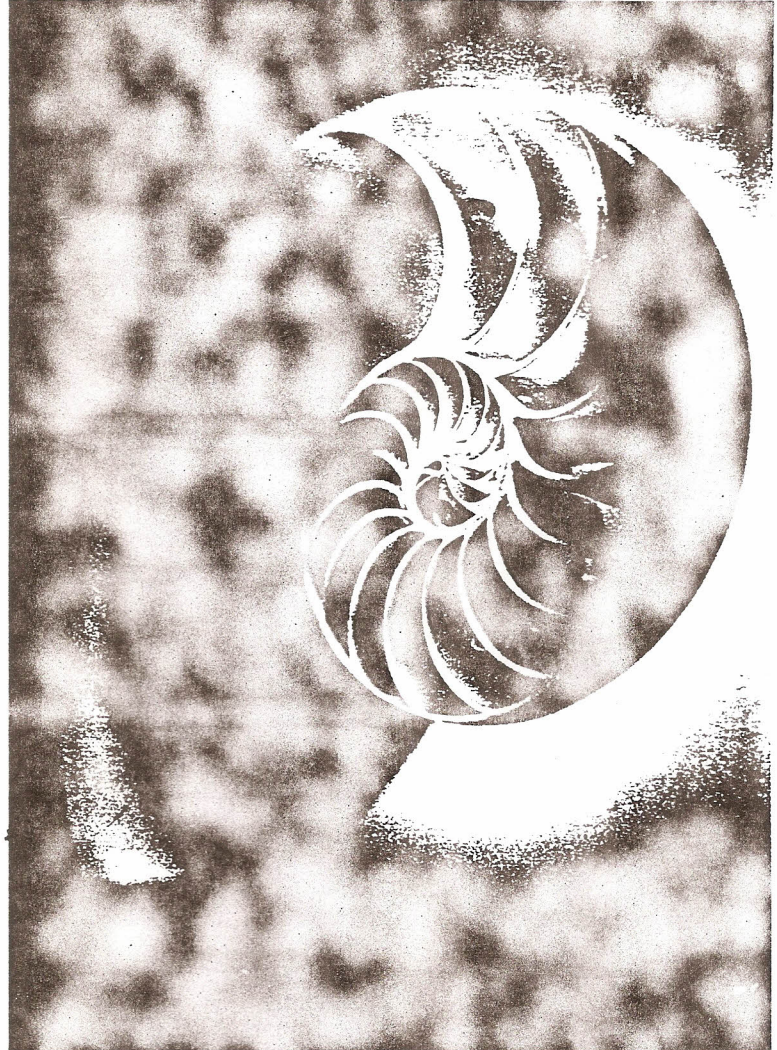


by
Po-Lung Yu, Ph.D.

W. Long

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HABITUAL DOMAINS



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Praise For Habitual Domains

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"The application of the concept of habitual domains gave China Steel its key to success."

— Mou Hui King

Chairman (retired), China Steel Corporation

Kaohsiung, Taiwan

"Habitual Domains is a great concept which has transformed my life and business. I personally practice the concepts of HD and believe it makes me a more effective and wiser person."

— Judy M. L. Chen

President of Tai Tong Battery Company

Taipei, Taiwan

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HABITUAL DOMAINS

*Freeing Yourself
From the Limits
on Your Life*

by

Po-Lung Yu, Ph.D.

With a Foreword by Paul H. Henson



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Dedication

To all the people who made it possible
for you to read this book now,
and to all people who understand
practice and share the concepts
of Habitual Domains,
so as to make themselves happier and wiser
and society better.

Foreword

The concept of Habitual Domains explained in this book changed my life. I believe it can change others' lives for the better, too. I am certain it can change the corporate culture in our country, probably as much as Total Quality Management (TQM) and with considerably more benefit to individuals within corporations.

Although the American business marketplace needs the productivity boost these ideas can bring, I doubt that Habitual Domains will attain the buzzword status of TQM (and many other good ideas). Habitual Domains has far too much common sense for that.

We Americans love a speedy solution to just about everything. We've given the world the concept and reality of "instant" gratification. From instant oatmeal to the instant replay to "Just In Time" inventory, we've learned a lot of ways to get what we want quickly.

Yet even with all these ready responses to many of our needs, most of us still crave something we can't get in a hurry.

We want meaning.

We want to know who we are and why we matter in the greater scheme of things. We want a sense of purpose and value. I think most people believe that a greater truth exists beyond the culture of busyness that we've built. Deep down, we suspect there's more to life than what we are experiencing. Deep down we know we are capable of far more than is asked of us. But we feel powerless to discover that greater truth ourselves.

How do we find out what is really there? For me, Habitual Domains makes a lot of sense.

My interest in Habitual Domains began with a purely business motive. I first turned to Dr. Po Lung Yu for the kind of counsel many businesses around the world have looked to him to find — advice on operations issues, strategy and models for decision-making inside a corporation.

It was an easy choice. I knew firsthand of Dr. Yu's brilliance in many fields of endeavor. In 1977, the University of Kansas selected Dr. Yu to hold the chair as the Carl A. Scupin Distinguished Professor of Business. I had helped establish this chair in honor of "Skip" Scupin, my friend and my mentor in the telecommunications business.

Dr. Yu was only 36, the youngest professor ever to hold a distinguished professorship at the university. But what a unique mix of talents he brought to academia and business! He is a Phi Beta Kappa, Ph.D. industrial engineer, operations strategist, Kung Fu master and calligrapher, who wins coveted teaching awards. And he farms, besides.

He is an extraordinary thinker, teacher and business strategist, but he also brings to every encounter a timeless wisdom and generosity of spirit. Part of what distinguishes Habitual Domains from other systems of self-discovery is the wise and caring voice of a man who draws upon the ways of both East and West and whose own life is a wonderful example of the ideas he is explaining.

It was exactly that set of traits I found within Habitual Domains, the system of thought and action he has developed over the years.

Certainly it is a management tool, and a powerful one at that. As you will see, the concept of Habitual Domains in business operates on several levels vital to the health of an organization.

But Habitual Domains may be most fundamentally valuable as a way to realize the full capabilities of the people working in America today.

Every business knows that its business success depends on its people. Yet every company also knows to its frustration that the potential of its people remains largely untapped. How vast would success be if the people of a company were realizing their full potential? The effect on quality, excellence, change for growth and profitability would be enormous.

Habitual Domains can help that happen. Slowly, but surely.

This is not a book about quick fixes. It is a book about personal and organizational growth and a way of thinking that is meant to last a lifetime.

The concept of Habitual Domains has made a positive difference for me. I believe it can do the same for you and for anyone who wants to break through the limits life seems to impose. I recommend it to you with gratitude for your interest and a promise that you will find something here to value.



Paul H. Henson
Chairman, Kansas City Southern Industries



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Author's Preface and Acknowledgments

I have been a very fortunate person to initiate the study of Habitual Domains (HD). The concept began to take form in 1977 and gradually became a system of thought by 1985, including its mathematical development.

Before 1985, I focused on my writing and publication for academicians, who constitute less than one percent of the human population. Then, I began to question, Why should such a good thing as HD concepts only be read and understood by academicians? How about the 99 percent of the population I had neglected?

This thought prompted me to begin to write more easily understandable books so that I could reach more people and possibly touch their lives in positive ways. I have even produced a book about Habitual Domains that is entirely in cartoon form. Busy executives in Taiwan and China have said they like it very much because it makes study and review so easy.

I have been lucky that many people, most of them corporate executives, have subscribed readily to the concepts of HD and have helped me share the ideas. The students who have taken my short courses or lectures have formed HD clubs in Taiwan, China and Malaysia, to help disseminate HD concepts, to help themselves and to help society.

The concept of Habitual Domains is incredibly simple, but the results you can experience from using this concept are complex and transforming, and they range widely across all aspects of life.

The incredibly simple basis for HD is this: Each of you has within you the power to free yourselves from limits on your lives — limits that can keep you from realizing your dreams; limits that hold you apart from other people, even those you

love; limits that bind you to a smaller sphere of success than you deserve. Freeing yourself is a decision you can make, once you understand enough about yourself to see clearly what you really want and to commit to a decision to go for it.

Our Habitual Domains affect virtually every arena of our lives. If we can only expand our Habitual Domains (or HDs), we can improve our performance at work, in social situations and in our interactions with others. By understanding and restructuring our habits, really our human software, we will be better prepared to solve problems, make decisions, resolve conflicts and crises and achieve our goals in relationships, career management and community leadership.

This is not to say your life will be without problems. No life is. But you will bring to the problems a spirit of inquiry that will allow you to see solutions and to enjoy the process of solving the problems.

The process of exploring your habitual domain will create in your life a restoration of balance and a sense of harmony. You will be filled with peaceful determination. *Determination* because you will know that by your own drive, you can succeed. *Peaceful* because you will understand that in expanding your domain, you cannot fail.

This is not a solitary endeavor. Be sure to share what you have learned with others. By teaching others you give yourself the opportunity to learn, to organize systematically what you've imagined and experienced. As a result, you'll retrieve and utilize these concepts more effectively.

And please share your experiences and discovery with me. I want to learn from you.

Please enjoy yourself as you work through this book. It is a joyful process, and you will never be the same after you have begun it. You'll be better.

I am grateful to many people. I am just an observer. All that I have learned, seen and written was initially taught by my parents, teachers, friends, students and a large number of scholars and writers who set down their observations. In this regard, let me first salute all the scholars and writers who have painstakingly recorded their findings and observations,

which have helped me view life and our world better.

Next let me thank a large number of teachers, colleagues, friends, and previous students. They have made my life more meaningful and enjoyable. The experiences with them have greatly enriched my life and helped my work in research and in writing this book. If there are any mistakes in this book, however, I take full responsibility.

Now, let me thank numerous people who helped me complete this book. First, my wholehearted thanks go to Mr. Paul H. Henson, chairman of Kansas City Southern Industries and retired chairman of Sprint. He is my great mentor and friend, who continuously inspires me and helps me reach a higher level of my potential. My thanks also go to Mr. William T. Esrey, chairman, Sprint, for his encouragement and support of my work on Habitual Domains.

Next, I am much obliged to Dr. Jane Mobley. She put her great talents and effort to convert my original draft of HD to the current form, which is much more lively and easier to read than before. She has been like a great general directing her associates on this project, including Robert Butler who brought a bright style to the text, Michael DeMent and Paul Peterson who further refined it, and Vivian Strand who made the beautiful design.

My original draft of the book, which is a bit technical, was based on my publications and public lectures. It was helped and edited by my friends and colleagues at the University of Kansas, especially M.E. Hall, W.W. Hui, U.K. Chong, M. McGinnis and R. League.

In my home base, I owe thanks to many of my colleagues and students, especially to the following professors: J. Charles, K. Cogger, D. Datta, S. Hillmer, D. Karney, K. Mackenzie, L. Sherr and P. Shenoy, for their encouragement and support. I am especially grateful to Dean J. Bauman and Associate Dean V. K. Narayanan for their continued support and encouragement for my research.

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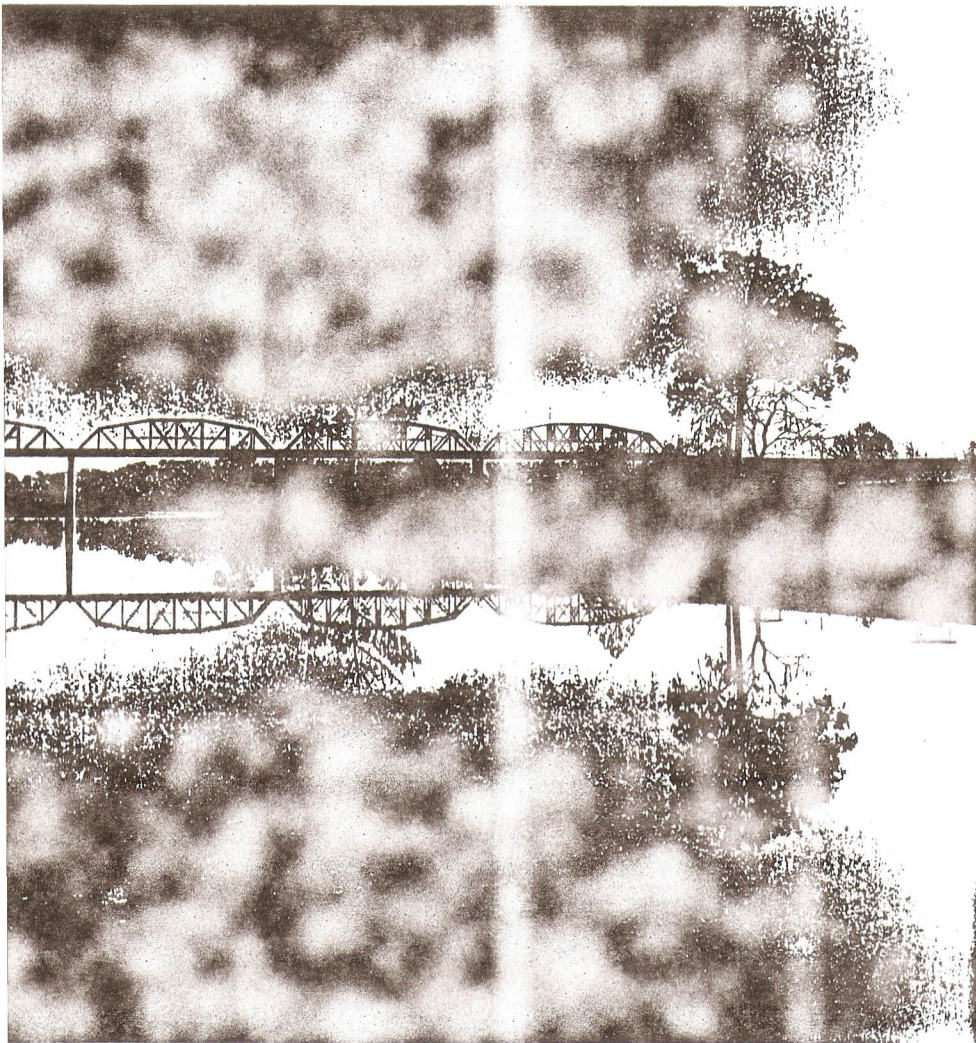
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Finally, I am very grateful to my wife Chao-Tzu and my daughters Lily and Lita. They provide me with cheerful support to my work spiritually and physically. I am so lucky to have them. They give me help willingly and allow me ample time to focus on my work.

In this book, I have used a number of well-known stories, of which the authors are unknown to me. To them, I would like to send my sincere thanks and my apology because I cannot give them proper credit here.



P.L. Yu



Introduction

Expanding and understanding your habitual domain is a lifelong process of self-discovery and personal growth that will make you a happier, wiser and more effective person. What is your habitual domain? It is the human software that directs the function of the most marvelous computer — your brain.

Not even the most sophisticated supercomputer can operate without the right software. The same is true for the human brain. Our “software,” though, is written and rewritten daily, beginning with the memories and thinking patterns we were born with and modified by the experiences and learning we acquire in life.

I imagine this human software as a kind of bounded domain, and I call it the “habitual domain.” Just as a computer’s software periodically needs to be upgraded if a computer is to be used effectively, so our human software must be expanded if we are to realize our potential.

Our habitual domains affect virtually every aspect of our lives. If we can only expand our habitual domains (or HDs) we can improve our performance at work, in social situations and in our interactions with others. By understanding and restructuring our habitual domain, really our human software, we will be better prepared to solve problems, make decisions, resolve conflicts and crises, and achieve our goals in relationships, career management and community leadership.

Nor are habitual domains a matter only of personal concern. Corporations have their own habitual domains. So do entire industries and even nations. And the same principles that apply to an individual HD can be used to enlarge the HDs — and thus the potential achievements — of large groups of people.

What keeps us from expanding our domains? Habits. We are bound by the habits we choose or allow to develop during our learning experiences. Paradoxically, we select these habits because they make our learning more efficient. Like computers, our brains will find the most efficient way to use information.

Without our even being aware of it, however, our thoughts, behaviors and perceptions grow increasingly limited by these habits. These habits create a particular program in our mental computer, a program that can prevent us from using our full capabilities.

Our capabilities are truly unlimited. The human brain has 100 billion neurons. These neural cell bodies can encode and store information in virtually endless combinations, even more combinations than the most powerful computer. All that limits the combinations any one of us can create is the extent to which we have the experience, learning and will to develop our brain power. Once we can believe how true this is, we can begin to realize our fullest capabilities.

To make an enormous difference in our lives, we don't need to make much change. A very small increment can represent huge success. Remember a football team needs only to be better by one point to win a Superbowl!

Think what a difference only one percent of additional brain power could make. Studies show only about 10 percent of human neural cells are actively working at any time. What if you could add one percent? That would be one billion neurons! Can you imagine what this much more brain power could do for you? The rewards would be enormous in every area of your life.

Breaking Out of Habitual Thinking

Most of us are so fenced in to our habitual domains that we can't tap much of our potential brain power. But it is clearly possible to expand that domain to take in new possibilities. In every age, in every field of endeavor, some individuals break through their habitual behavior and ways of thinking to turn new pages in human history.

Let me give you an example. It is obvious to all of us that an apple loosened from a tree branch will fall to the ground. That fact was as apparent to prehistoric man as it is to 20th-century students in a physics class.

Still, it wasn't until nearly the 18th century that Sir Isaac

Newton asked, "What keeps the apple from flying up into the sky instead?" Contemplating that question, he formulated his law of gravitational pull.

Newton was able to "discover" gravity because he broke the boundary of habitual thinking that had dominated human thought about apples and other falling objects up to that point. His idea changed the way the world was regarded.

Let's look at an example of this kind of thinking in the business world. As we entered the 20th century it was a widely held belief — a habitual belief — that products of higher quality must always carry a higher price tag.

Henry Ford took a different approach, when he asked: "Why can't we produce automobiles that are not only of high quality but also inexpensive, so that everyone can enjoy one?"

Pondering that question led Ford to invent techniques of mass production and standardization that spawned the automobile revolution. He broke through the boundary of habitual thinking, not only enriching himself, but benefiting society in the process.

Here is another story, one I like especially, because it shows that expanding our own habitual domain can help expand others' domains and improve the potential of a group. This has immediate and important application to business and to other areas of endeavor where we interact with people.

In 1929, because of an economic depression in Japan, the successful Matsushita Company faced the prospect of laying off employees or going bankrupt. Like other companies, Matsushita's orders from sales required only 50 percent of production time to fill. The usual way to solve the problem Matsushita was facing would have been to make fewer products — requiring fewer jobs. The staff suggested cutting half the employees to save the company.

Mr. Konosuke Matsushita, owner of the company, called his staff members together and asked them this: Why not structure a working situation that would create 100 percent survivability of the company without laying off employees or cutting benefits?

He suggested an approach completely outside the habitual domain of most companies: He offered the possibility that people who were usually producers also become salespeople.

The retiring chief executive officer of a large corporation narrowed the search for his successor down to two candidates. Both individuals — candidate A and candidate B — were invited to the CEO's ranch. When he met them, he held two horses by the reins.

"Candidate A, I'm giving you this brown horse," the CEO announced. "Candidate B, you get the spotted horse. I now want you to race to the far end of the meadow and back. The person whose horse is slowest will be the next CEO of the company."

The two candidates stood there for a moment in stunned silence. They could understand a race in which the object was to be the fastest — but the slowest? How could one be sure that his horse came in last?

Suddenly Candidate A jumped onto the back of the spotted horse, which was to be his competitor's mount. He galloped to the end of the meadow and back on the spotted horse, thus ensuring that the animal he had been assigned, the brown horse, would finish last.

"Congratulations," the CEO said to him upon his return. "By illustrating innovative thinking, you have proven your worthiness to take over after I leave."

Candidate A succeeded by breaking through his habitual domain to think about winning in a completely different way.

The production department would produce only half a day, the other half they would work in sales.

The employees were excited to think that they might not have to lose their jobs and leave the company, but instead they could redesign the jobs they had to meet the challenge. They set to work with energy and will, and in three months, the company was again in the black, healthier even than before. And with improved morale.

Are people like Newton, Ford and Matsushita who see circumstances in different and productive ways extraordinarily talented or blessed? Or are they especially lucky? Not really.

Every person has unlimited potential. What we call talent (or blessings or luck) is usually some combination of determination and courage that helps a person stretch beyond even what he or she thinks is possible, into the realm of previously unimagined potential. Everyone can do this because everyone has a habitual domain and that domain can be expanded at will, with the right skills.

Using This Book

When we talk about your habitual domain we're talking about virtually everything you are. It's a vast, complex system of beliefs, information and practices, and it defies easy summation. When you first begin to envision your habitual domain, it may seem overwhelming. But improvement in your brain power is amazingly easy to achieve. And you don't need to do it all at once — you just need to approach it steadily.

Many studies in behavior show that a habit can be made or broken in two to three weeks of steady repetition. Learning to expand beyond habits can too.

Consider the work of Dr. Maxwell Maltz, a highly respected plastic surgeon who specializes in reconstructive surgery, especially in people who have been disfigured in fires or accidents. His ability to restore the original appearance of these victims is remarkable.

However, Maltz discovered that while the success of reconstructive surgery was often obvious as soon as the

bandages were removed, the patient's self-image was slow to change. They had been living for some time inside scarred bodies and during that time, the burden of how they looked had created a whole set of attitudes and behaviors, from looking at the ground when talking to others to wearing only certain clothing to cover their deformities. After surgery, these patients retained the "I'm ugly" messages in their brains, despite assurances from everyone around them that their appearance had changed.

On the average Maltz found that it took about 21 days for his patients to feel better about themselves. It took three weeks to internalize the changes in their appearance and build new thought patterns.

To build new thought patterns about your own life, you could make a three-week plan to change your habitual domain. This book has 10 chapters. You could read a chapter a day for 10 days. Take the 11th day to map out your goals, based on your first reading. Then read the whole book again, more reflectively this time, a chapter a day. At the end of three weeks of reading and reflection you will find your thought patterns about yourself and your potential have changed. You will be well on your way to unleashing your unlimited potential.

You can approach the process more slowly. This is a way that has proven to be effective for many people who have studied habitual domains from my lecture notes and from texts and articles I have prepared previously.

Here's my advice:

First, read this book in its entirety. If you don't understand something the first time you encounter it, don't worry. Just move ahead. Don't let yourself bog down at a particular point, like "assessing your habitual domain." Soon, all the pieces will come together like a jigsaw puzzle.

In fact, you may want to read the book several times. Repetition and practice are vital to one's understanding of these concepts. The idea is to be so familiar with the ideas in this book that they become part of your mental software, where they can be effortlessly retrieved.

After you've read the book through at least once, you may find it works well for you to look at small pieces or concepts for

Any habit can be made or broken in about three weeks of steady effort. A simple exercise proves this. Choose a new place to keep your watch (or other item you usually wear every day). Every time you take it off for any reason, put it in that place. Within three weeks you will find yourself walking toward that place without thinking as soon as you reach to unfasten the watch.

more detailed consideration. Once a day, or more often, take a few minutes to open the book almost anywhere and absorb a few paragraphs. Read one of the illustrative anecdotes that explain the real-world application of these principles. Break the book down into the key concepts in an order that works best for you.

And don't just read passively. Get involved. For example, one chapter talks about the eight common behavior tendencies that you've unconsciously practiced all your life. Every morning pick a different tendency and be aware of how you use it during your day. You might want to keep a journal or use the worksheets in the back of the book.

When you find a practice or principle in this book that sounds right for you, put it to work immediately. Using it again and again will make it part of you. Before long it will do its work without your even consciously thinking about it.

The principles and ideas vital to the study of habitual domains are all interrelated. Like the many springs and gears of a wristwatch, they work in unison. You'll find that the same concept raised by one aspect of our study also pops up in several others. They form an interwoven tapestry. You will see some basic threads winding through the entire fabric of this book.

Here's another suggestion. When you discover something about yourself or others through the study of HDs, don't keep it to yourself. Share it with others — family members, friends, colleagues.

There's a very pragmatic reason for this. Just as the practice of any belief is strengthened and expanded by interaction with other believers, so your ideas and discoveries about habitual domains will be organized and strengthened by discussing them with others. The group is a powerful tool for learning and disciplining ourselves.

Indeed, HD clubs are popular among business professionals in Malaysia, China and my native Taiwan. By studying and discussing together the concepts of HD, the club members are able to expand their own habitual domains to include some of the knowledge and variations of behavior that are part of the habitual domains of others.

Most important to remember is this. Welcome challenges.

In your study of HD, I am confident that you will discover quickly how challenge stimulates growth. If we think in computer terms, handling a challenge requires updating or upgrading our software.

Welcome to the Journey

Gaining an understanding of your habitual domain and the habitual domain of others isn't an overnight effort. This book is only the beginning of a journey that will continue your entire life. Just as every journey starts with a single step, this book can be the guide you need to get started changing your life for the better, becoming the person you most want to be.

I can truthfully promise that understanding your habitual domain and learning to expand it will bring you riches. Not all of these riches will be monetary, although most people who work seriously at using the principles of habitual domain in their lives and careers will realize greater economic success. Indeed, the riches you reap will be the wealth of wisdom, for through your study of habitual domain you will understand some of the greatest mysteries of human life — the mysteries of the Self and the Self-With-Others.

Understanding of this kind is the wealth without which we face the worst kind of poverty, the poverty of ignorance and failure to fulfill ourselves. I sometimes say that by knowing HD you will never be poor, and without knowing HD you can never be rich.

As we begin, let me welcome you to this journey. And let me thank you for joining me. Through this book, we shall form a tie of friendship and shared goals.

P.L. Yu





Chapter 1

In the Realm of Your Habitual Domain

A simple exercise quickly illustrates the concept of habitual domain and the central theme of this book, which is the truth that you can change your capabilities by changing your mind. This exercise only takes a few seconds, but it will start you thinking about just how much you really can accomplish if you put your mind to it

- Stand up and relax. Make a fist with your right hand and place it on top of your nose.
- Turn your body to the right without moving your legs. Memorize the farthest position to the right that your eyes can see.
- Return to your original standing position.
- In your mind, imagine returning to the starting position and turning again, only this time you will turn *two* times as far as you first did.
- Repeat the mental exercise, this time imagining that you've turned *three* times as far as you did initially.
- Now open your eyes, replace your fist to your nose, and actually turn to the right as far as possible.

You'll find that you've turned much farther than you did the first time.

This illustrates your mental power. It shows how easily you can increase the range of what you can accomplish if you put your mind to work.

This exercise is a metaphor for the expansion of your habitual domain. Although increasing your range of motion like this takes place in the physical world, it applies as well to our mental and spiritual selves.

The range of movement you exhibited in the first part of the exercise represents your **actual domain**, the parameters within which your body operates.

After visualizing a much larger range of movement — a **potential domain** — you found that your actual domain had enlarged, perhaps by as much as 15 to 25 percent.

In effect, you imagined a new domain for your body and it mobilized the physiological resources to create the flexibility needed to reach its new boundaries.

Why Our Habitual Domains Are Bounded

A similar thing happens with every human being and what might be described as the mind's range of movement. Each person has a unique set of behaviors resulting from his or her ways of thinking, judging, responding and handling problems. As we grow up, these factors gradually stabilize within a certain boundary. This collection of ways of thinking, coupled with its formation, interaction and dynamics, is called the **habitual domain**. On the simplest level, you could say that our habitual domain is where we "live," where we have our being, where our Self resides.

Our domains are formed for several reasons:

- The more we learn, the less the likelihood that an arriving event or piece of information is new to us.
- To interpret arriving events, we tend to relate them to past experiences.

- We tend to look for rhythms in our lives and force arriving events to conform to those rhythms.

As we gain experience, more of what happens to us seems familiar. We see this when we admire the wonder and innocent appreciation of children, who find so much that is new in every day. As we become adults, wonder is replaced with habit.

When we do encounter something new, we try to find a relationship between the new event and our stored memory. We use past experience to explain the new event. This is a basic brain response function, called **analogy and association**.

Since we feel uncomfortable when we perceive an inconsistency between the event and our attitude or our behavior, we tend to explain a new event in a way that is consistent with attitudes and behaviors already in place. If they match up, we are comfortable again. In doing so, however, we actually may be distorting information, unwittingly seeing things as similar when in fact they are quite different.

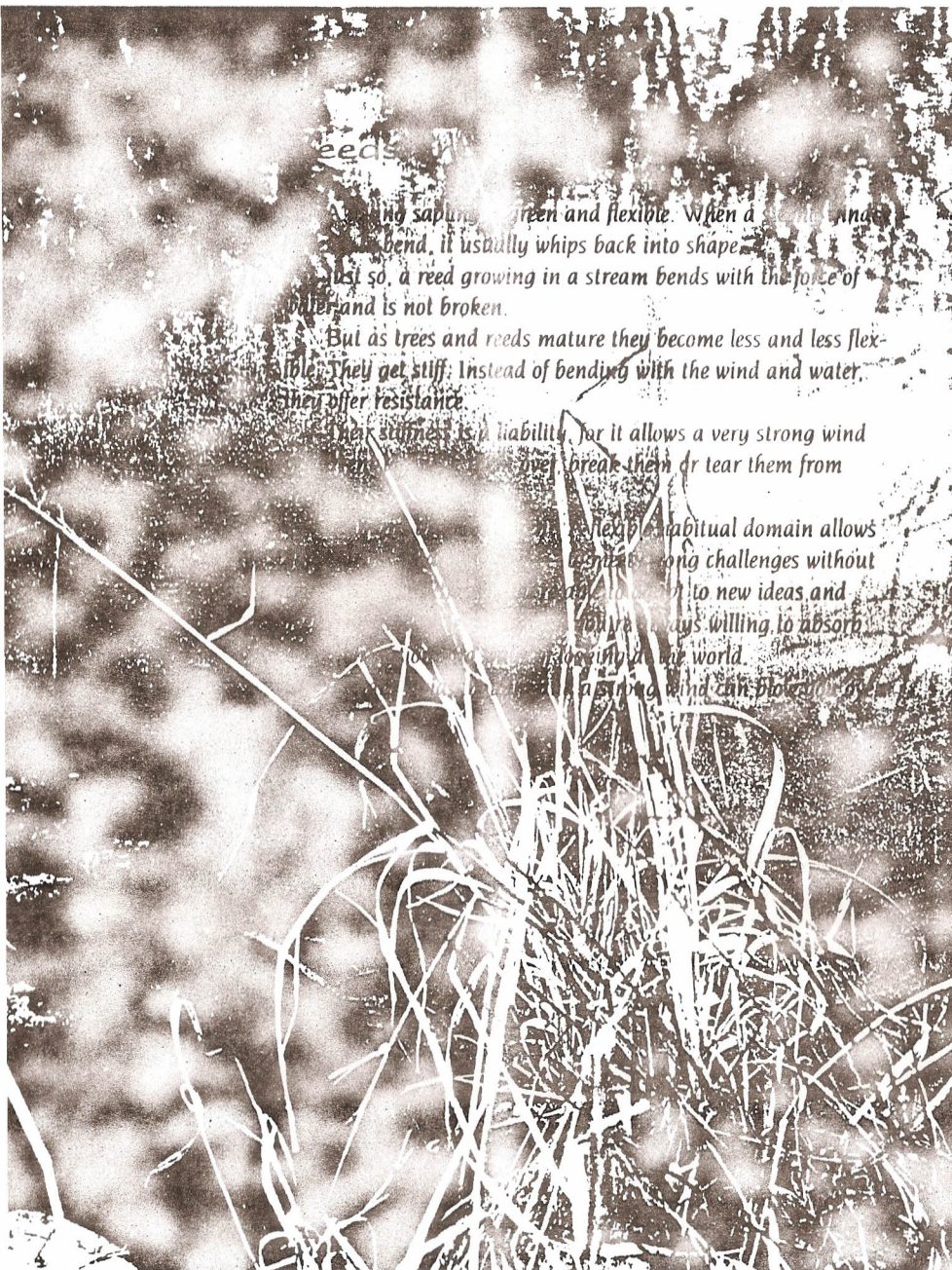
As inhabitants of the natural world, we are most comfortable in a state of balance and harmony. When a new event comes our way, we try to fit it in to the rhythms in our lives that provide patterns or harmony.

This is only natural. The external world has natural rhythms, such as the changing of the seasons. Humans become aware of the rhythms of their environment and, becoming accustomed to them, tend to interpret new situations through familiar rhythms. For example, you might have observed that your relationships have a rhythm of infatuation, followed by boredom. Therefore, when you meet a new person, you may counsel yourself not to get too interested because you believe boredom will be close behind.

Because of the way our brains will normally handle arriving events, the new information that we learn diminishes daily. Unless extraordinary events occur, the knowledge we accumulate will be gradually bounded in a domain. We will proceed to learn less and less.

When you first go to work for a new company you will learn many things on your first day. On Day Two you will also be exposed to new ideas, but far fewer than on Day One. Before long, much of your job will be a routine and will become habitual.

Remember when you first began in a position you now hold. Were there tasks that were especially challenging then that you handle routinely and confidently now? How can you share this insight with people to make transitions in work or at home easier?



reeds.

A young sapling is green and flexible. When a severe wind bends it, it usually whips back into shape. Just so, a reed growing in a stream bends with the force of water and is not broken.

But as trees and reeds mature they become less and less flexible. They get stiff. Instead of bending with the wind and water, they offer resistance.

Their stiffness is a liability, for it allows a very strong wind to break them or tear them from their roots.

People's habitual domain allows them to meet long challenges without strain. It keeps them open to new ideas and new ways. They are willing to absorb new information from the world.

They are strong and can plow through

Another way to think about this is to remember that living things are flexible in their growth phases but become stiffer as they near the end of life. Once stiffness sets in, they cannot withstand the pressures of weather and may break. Our brains are no different. If we remain open to experience, our brain is flexible and our knowledge can grow. If we let our set experiences become rigid, we will not be so able to withstand the pressures of life. The amount of new information you are exposed to will diminish every day. Soon, you will know all you think you need to know about your job. Your knowledge about the company soon will be bounded.

Who We Are, Not Who We Can Be

Forming a habitual domain is useful. It makes us more mature, skillful and efficient in dealing with routine problems. It gives us a base from which to operate in the world. In many ways, it is who we are.

But it has drawbacks. Though we may not be aware of it, our habitual domains limit our thoughts and make us predictable and uninventive. Our habitual domain is who we are, not who we can be.

Every habitual domain — whether it belongs to an individual, a small group of people, a company, a mass movement or even an entire nation — is unique. While different habitual domains may have many points in common, they will differ in specific details. For example, virtually every corporation has as part of its habitual domain a faith in the free enterprise system, but the ways in which companies pursue profits vary hugely.

Because of their different habitual domains, individuals will interpret situations and come up with solutions in very different ways. This marvelous capacity illustrates the uniqueness of each person and the unlimited potential each of us has to become what we want to be.

Because the habitual domains of individuals are so varied and so potentially powerful, a successful leader must have a habitual domain large enough to understand and judge the different thinking and reactions coming from the

habitual domains of the people he or she encounters. In effect, their habitual domains must be made part of the leader's habitual domain if the group (an organization of any size or kind, even a country) is to be genuinely productive.

Likewise, to relate successfully to other people, an individual must be able to take the habitual domains of others into account. Sometimes we hear the phrase "make room for" when people are talking about each other. A woman might say, "My neighbor was cranky this morning because our dog had torn open her garbage bags, but I made room for her being mad. I know her mother is coming to visit today and she is especially anxious for her home to look clean."

This act of "making room for" another's feelings or ideas is really a good visual description of expanding your own habitual domain to take in someone else's habits of thinking, to understand them better.

When we know why we have habitual domains and what they mean to our behaviors, we can see more clearly what drives our own actions as well as what causes others to behave as they do. Napoleon's rise and fall illustrates how others' habitual domains can work for or against us depending on our awareness of them.

Napoleon's Rise and Fall

Napoleon Bonaparte's success in establishing an empire can largely be attributed to his brilliant military strategies, with which he was familiar and comfortable but which were outside the comprehension of his enemies' habitual domains.

A prime example was Napoleon's march over the Alps to attack Austria. Conventional wisdom at the time was that the Alps posed an insurmountable natural obstacle that no army could overcome. Napoleon, however, anticipated the problems his army would encounter and was ready when they surfaced. His French troops did march across the mountains and caught the Austrian troops out of position.

The Austrians finally realized what was going on and tried to adjust by getting ready for attack — in other words, they tried to expand and adjust their HDs to deal with this threat — but it was too late. Napoleon crushed their armies.

Napoleon's habitual domain was bigger than that of his enemies. He developed strategies that were unknown and unpredictable to them.

Ironically, Napoleon eventually was defeated because in time his own HD became static and predictable while those of opposing generals became more flexible and expansive. Napoleon then found himself in the position of the Austrians — confronted with an enemy whose strategies he could not predict or understand.

The Duke of Wellington employed a brilliant strategy for waging guerrilla war against the French occupation forces in Spain. His army of English and Spanish troops vanished when the French arrived and emerged when the French retreated. Direct confrontations with the French were limited, but Wellington's hit-and-run tactics weakened the French army and even eroded the French economy.

On the Russian front, Marshal Kutuzov dealt with Napoleon's invading army by retreating, destroying all shelter and supplies that might fall into French hands. This destruction of Russian property by Russians flabbergasted the French; it was unprecedented in "civilized" warfare. But it was a highly effective strategy. The advancing Napoleonic army was denied food and shelter. Supply lines back to France were long and slow-moving.

When the French finally took Moscow they found much of it burning. National churches had been torched by the Russians lest they be desecrated or occupied by the French. The invaders simply could not believe this behavior.

With the arrival of winter, Kutuzov's strategy became clear. The French army had been drawn deep into enemy territory with brutal weather on the way. Its supply lines were vulnerable and unreliable.

Napoleon ordered a retreat, but it was too late.

His freezing, starving men stumbled back to France, all the while being harassed by Kutuzov's army, which now was on the offensive.





Napoleon's fall was, in large part, the result of his pride. Because of his early innovations and repeated victories, he came to think of himself as unbeatable. He felt so secure with the superiority of his own habitual domain that he saw no reason to study the habitual domains of his opponents. This was a fatal mistake.

Individual behavior and strategy is tremendously influenced by our habitual domains. The rise and fall of an entire country or empire can be determined by the growth or stabilization of a leader's habitual domain.

Charting the Boundaries of Your Habitual Domain

Habitual domains are created by the interaction of four elements within our minds: goals, state evaluation, charges and attention allocation. Once we begin to understand the basics of how our minds — and these four elements — work, it's easy to alter or expand our habitual domains.

Goals and State Evaluation

Goal setting is one of the major tools we use in expanding our habitual domains. **Goals** are a fundamental part of our behavior function. Even the most unambitious person has goals, though he or she may not consciously be aware of them. Using the human urge to reach goals is natural and easy, once we begin to see the basics of how our brains work.

Some of our goals have been pre-programmed into our brains by millennia of evolution: individual survival, for instance, or perpetuation of the species.

Other goals have been acquired through our life experiences: the accumulation of wealth, the desire for prestige or fame, even the compulsion to perform good deeds.

As a parallel to goal setting, we also continuously evaluate where we are relative to the goals. This function is called **state evaluation**.

Simply by beginning a study of habitual domains, you are improving your competitive abilities.

Consider how many basketball games are won by just a point or two. Those two points may not seem like much, but they provided the margin of victory. Sometimes just a little bit of effort can make all the difference.

Every day that you spend some time working on your habitual domain sharpens your competitive edge. An understanding of habitual domains gives you an advantage. This is the margin of excellence that puts you ahead.

When all of these goals — and there can be thousands within an individual — are reached or held in equilibrium, we feel content. But when we fall short of those goals, when our perceived situations don't live up to our ideals, we become frustrated or uneasy.

This is easy to explain at a physical level. If, for example, your heart or kidneys are healthy you will pay little attention to them. Their goal of functioning effectively is being realized. But if you find yourself continuously paying attention to these organs, whether because of pain or simply because something "just doesn't feel right," there's a good chance you have a physical problem.

Similarly, if a company's sales are in good shape, its employees probably aren't going to spend much time worrying about sales. If, on the other hand, much time is devoted daily to thinking of ways to improve sales, it's a sign that the sales department is ineffective.

A person who is in a challenging position may be working hard but may find his skills are in equilibrium with the challenges the job presents. If the job is way too easy, he will likely feel unfulfilled, even bored.

Charges and Attention Allocation

This feeling of a goal being unmet, of a lack of equilibrium within an individual (or an organization), leads to an emotional jolt. I refer to it as a **charge** because this heightened feeling is actually caused by neurons in your brain "lighting up," or becoming activated by a stimulating event.

Charges can be created within us by many different things. A failure in business, your children performing poorly in school, financial problems, attacks on your reputation, illness, overwork — these are just a few of the obvious situations in which charges may be created. Charges can also be more elementary: Hunger, fatigue and fear all result in charges.

A charge can be dramatic — you hear a train whistle and see an oncoming beam of light as you are crossing the railroad track. A charge can also be very subtle.

For example, how much attention do you pay each day to

your heart? An hour? Twenty minutes? Ten minutes? Even five?

Chances are you pay absolutely no attention to your heart, other than providing the routine maintenance of exercise and a healthy diet. And that's as it should be. A healthy, properly maintained heart will go about its job effectively and unobtrusively. When your heart is operating well, your cardiovascular system is usually in equilibrium.

But if you find yourself continuously paying attention to your heart because in some way it attracts your attention — perhaps it races, or beats heavily, or seems to skip in its rhythm — there's a good chance that something is out of balance. It may be time to see a doctor.

Your feelings of uneasiness regarding your heart are a charge, a charge that has been created because something isn't right. Your body is telling you something important. When all is in harmony, no charge is created and your attention is not drawn to your heart, or any other singular part of your body.

But do not think that charges are necessarily negative in meaning. The gap between a goal and reality can as easily be an opportunity as a shortcoming. For example, you may attend a seminar in which the speaker deeply impresses and moves you, filling you with hope, energy and determination. This, too, is a charge.

Charges don't come one at a time. They arrive from many directions and change rapidly. The brain pays attention to whichever situation seems to have the most significance within the overall **charge structure** — that is, the totality of the charges that individuals carry and the effects created by the charges.

For example, you may have worried all morning that you are performing poorly at your job. This worry creates an overwhelming charge that will hardly let you think about anything else.⁴

If over the lunch hour, though, you find yourself facing an armed mugger on the street, your charge structure will abruptly shift. Suddenly job problems seem insignificant, far more important is the need to survive this dangerous situation. Your mind instantly practices **attention allocation**. It decides what is most worthy of your attention — in this case, survival.

Steadily throughout your waking hours, your mind

Think about the most successful people you know. How do you describe their success? Is there a difference in the way they allocate their attention and the way not so successful people do?



assesses the charges created by everything that affects you, from the scratchy label on your shirt collar to your religious beliefs. Attention allocation can be a reaction to something that presents itself — like the mugger mentioned earlier — or it can be directed. Purposefully allocating attention is the way we make changes.

Overwork and exhaustion can create charges as well. When our energy is significantly depleted, the charge level can be very high. At that point the brain tells the body to rest. After sleeping (or, perhaps, spending a few moments in meditation or relaxation exercises), you will find that the charge level will be lowered significantly. At that point your attention can be focused on whatever are the most important remaining influences on your charge structure.

Releasing Charges

How do you get rid of or reduce a charge that is making you uncomfortable, leaving you feeling unfulfilled or provoking you to action? Basically we have two ways of **releasing charges**.

The first is **active problem solving**. A goal is not being reached; therefore you start looking for ways to reach the goal. If your goal is to earn more money, you begin examining the possibilities for additional income: overtime, freelance work, part-time jobs, a new investment strategy, earning a promotion.

With this method, the charge can be transformed into **drive** to help us achieve our goals.

The second option is **avoidance justification**. This means we readjust our ideal goals. We may try to rationalize situations to lower the need for high goals, making our current state more acceptable.

You may tell yourself that the accumulation of wealth brings with it problems of its own, problems you are not prepared to deal with. You lower your goal of earning more.

To release charges we tend to select the action which leads to the lowest remaining charge. The remaining charge is the resistance to total discharge. This is called the **least resistance** principle.

Active problem solving can transform a charge into drive to get the job or goal achieved, while avoidance justification lets the charge leak out, without finishing the job, in order to restore a peaceful state of mind. In what situations have you used avoidance justification instead of active problem solving? How can you reverse your desire to do this?

A charge can lead to drive and to achieving goals.

Perhaps you realize that your desire for more money cannot be reached without a tremendous sacrifice of your family life. You decide the need to spend time with your loved ones is greater than your need for more money. According to the least resistance principle, you will opt for the course of action that will result in the least overall charge or frustration. (On the other hand, your family members may complain so loudly about lack of money that you decide taking a second job is the course of least resistance.)

Avoidance justification can be very valuable because frequently we establish inappropriate or unrealistic goals for ourselves. For example, we may be strongly motivated by a desire for revenge against someone we believe has wronged us. This is an unworthy goal, one that needs to be readjusted for our own good. When a goal is shown to be unworthy or unwise, we can shift our attention to another goal and initiate a more productive process in our brains and behavior.

Goals, state evaluation, charges and attention allocation determine, to a large extent, our habitual domains. In upcoming chapters, you will learn how to define and evaluate your goals so you will increase your awareness of the circumstances that create a charge in you and gain a better understanding of your personal charge structure. And you will be able to alter your own ways of thinking so that you enlarge your habitual domain and meet your goals for prosperity, well-being and other elements of your own special definition of happiness.

The Delusional Messiah

Our thoughts and behaviors are closely linked to the activities of our neural cells, the activated circuit patterns. Our thoughts and behaviors — even attitudes and feelings — change as the circuit patterns change.

Indeed, we are happy because happy circuit patterns occupy our attention. The same is true for feelings of anger or sadness. As circuit patterns, just like computer programs, can be changed or controlled, so can our emotions and states of mind.

The story of the "delusional messiah" illustrates this dramatically. Once a man believed himself to be Jesus Christ,

and conventional psychotherapy and drugs seemed to make no difference. He clung to his delusion and continued proclaiming himself the Messiah.

Finally, one psychiatrist came up with a daring method of treatment.

The physician approached the patient with a measuring tape and said, "Jesus, I need to find out how tall you are." He then measured the man's height.

"Now spread out your arms. I want to measure from hand to hand," the doctor said.

Later the doctor had two large pieces of lumber brought in and proceeded to have them cut to his specifications.

The patient asked about the wood.

"Well," said the psychiatrist, "if you're going to convince people that you're Jesus, you're going to have to be crucified. I'm having your cross built right now."

The patient turned pale and announced that he really wasn't Jesus at all. From that moment on, his delusions vanished. The doctor's presentation changed dramatically the patient's goal, state evaluation and attention allocation.



In habitual domain terms, what happened there was that the announcement that he was going to be crucified created a tremendous surge of charge in the patient's mind. With such a high level of charge, the brain quickly tries to find a way to release it.

Usually the release comes in the form of a decision, an action or a change in behavior. In the case of the delusional patient, his mind quickly recognized that the easiest way to avoid crucifixion was to drop his claims of divinity.

Consider some of the problems you have experienced lately. How was the situation at the time of the problem different from an ideal situation? In your effort to bring your situation to equilibrium, did you use active problem solving or avoidance justification? How would the outcome have been different if you had used the opposite method to reduce your charge?