

#BeUp: A Framework for Life Management

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This paper will discuss a framework for life management. The #BeUp Framework is based on the results of a three-question survey and the research and personal experience presented during a TEDx talk in 2016. The intent of this paper is to answer the following questions: 1) How do people push through hard times? 2) What process(es) do people follow when managing their life? and 3) How can people actively manage their individual lives? A review of related scholarship is presented, highlighting aspects of self-development, and pushing through adversity. Analysis of survey responses produced three thematic areas: Digestion; Balance; and Momentum. Each area is outlined. Reflections and recommendations are presented.

Keywords: life management, psychological endurance, self-management, mentoring, coaching, groups

INTRODUCTION

We are living in times of crises and tumult, where many are experiencing some form of isolation or alienation (Ziller, 2013; Ziller, 1969). In a recent survey by Harris Poll, more than half of U.S. adults (53%) agreed they are struggling with the ups and downs of the coronavirus pandemic (Canady, 2021). The cognitive load theory notes that under high-intensity conditions, the human brain manages by developing a system to tolerate or minimize excessive stress and overrides cognitive sources of energy deemed less of a priority (Plass, Moreno, & Brünken, 2010). Specifically, excessively stressful incidents interrupt executive functioning and self-regulation, making it harder for individuals to plan, remember, and focus (Skinner, Edge, Altman, & Sherwood, 2003; Panlilio, Ferrara, & MacNeill, 2019). As such, finding ways to cope with the world around us while remembering what is most important to us is paramount (Taylor & Stanton, 2007; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). It is very likely that we will all go through hard times, but how we push through those periods of difficulty will define who we are as individuals (Tedx Talks, 2016, July). In this way, the affordance of leading oneself while having the wisdom and courage to think for oneself is of critical importance (Mansharamani, 2020). Psychology is defined as the study of the human mind and behavior (Staff, 2004). This paper will outline a framework for managing life based upon a hashtag used on social media to promote positivity (#BeUp) that emphasizes forming a comprehensive understanding of human behavior.

Humans often engage in a form of self-contemplation that can be of use when in a group setting (Mansharamani, 2020). It is common for humans to organize into groups for various reasons, and groups offer many positive benefits. However, two perils of group dynamics involve groupthink and group shift (Stoicoiu, 2016; Janis, 2008). Groupthink is a psychological phenomenon manifested within a group that transforms the desire for conformity and homogeneity of group results into shifted and deviant individual

decision-making patterns (Stoicoiu, 2016). Group shift is a phenomenon in which the initial positions of members of a group are exaggerated toward a more extreme position (Janis, 2008). Recent examples of how these two aspects of group dynamics can negatively impact the group as a whole are highlighted in the films *Don't Look Up* and *Encanto* (Messick & McKay, 2021; Spencer & Howard, 2021). The growth and development of people is the highest calling of leadership (Maxwell, 2007).

With this in mind, this paper aims to address the following questions: 1) How do people deal with going through hard times? 2) What process(es) do people follow when managing their life? and 3) How can people actively manage their individual lives?

REVIEW OF RELATED SCHOLARSHIP

The central focus of this paper is to examine ways in which individuals manage their respective lives. This section will showcase aspects of the literature that focus on life management and related areas.

Life Management

Life management refers to the skills and practices used toward the optimization of one's life, such as decision-making, planning, and problem-solving (Freund & Baltes, 2002). Currently, there is no unified model of life management in psychology, but there are a number of approaches to life management that can loosely be clustered into three groups: (a) self-regulation models, (b) models focusing on age-related expectations, and (c) models stressing the role of personal goals (Prenda & Lachman, 2001). Despite their differences, these approaches have in common that they stress motivational, goal-related processes of life management across the lifespan (Prenda & Lachman, 2001). Placing emphasis on both self-regulation and on personal goals and systems allows an individual to focus on efforts that are within their control (Neck & Manz, 2010; Adams, 2013).

Concept of Self and Others

Self-leadership posits that even though behavior is often supported by external forces such as a leader, actions are ultimately controlled by internal rather than external forces (Manz, 1986). An individual's sense of Self connotes forces that are internal, while an individual's sense of Others connotes forces that are external. Internal forces (e.g., the internal force of Self), by nature, push outward (i.e., advance), while external forces (e.g., internal forces of Others upon Self) push inward (i.e., contract). The Self refers to a person's essential being that distinguishes them from Others considered as the object of introspection or reflexive action (Staff, 2004). Others, as defined by Staff (2004), refers to that which is distinct from, or opposite to oneself. It has been said throughout history that it is silly to think a person should rule others if they cannot rule themselves (Kruse, 2012). #BeUp focuses primarily on Self, while also including aspects of Others (Staff, 2004).

Perception and Locus of Control

Dijksterhuis and Bargh (2001) define perception as a subjective, active, and creative process through which we assign meaning to sensory information to understand ourselves and others. Further, perception is very important in understanding human behavior because every person perceives the world and approaches life problems differently (Dijksterhuis & Bargh, 2001). Due to these differences of perception and approach, the specific methods by which we manage our individual lives are also likely to be different. Locus of control is a construct that is used to categorize motivational orientations and perceptions of how much control people have over the conditions of their lives (Lefcourt, 2014). Those with an external locus of control tend to behave in response to external circumstances and to perceive their life outcomes as arising from factors out of their control, while those with an internal locus of control tend to behave in response to internal states and intentions and to perceive their life outcomes as arising from the exercise of their own agency and abilities (Lefcourt, 2014). Finkelstein (2007) notes circumstances that can blur the lines of a person's internal or external locus of control, such as more graduated forms of harassment or retaliation intent on causing harm to an individual, but this only

underscores the importance of aspiring to have an internal locus of control to hopefully overcome such circumstances.

Frames of Reference: Framing, and Reframing

Frames of reference are the structures of assumptions through which we understand our experiences, and they selectively shape and delimit expectations, perceptions, cognition, and feelings (Mezirow, 1991). These frames of reference influence the direction of our actions, where once set, move from one specific activity to another (Mezirow, 1997). Fairhurst (2005) defines framing as the ability to shape meaning of a subject and goes on to note that sharing our frames with others helps to manage meaning via prioritization of interpretations. Reframing involves reconceptualizing a problem by seeing it from a different perspective (Jonas, 2005; Hick, Kershner, & Farrell, 2009). The processes of framing and reframing can serve as essential tools for managing one's life.

Coping, Hope, and Psychological Endurance

Coping is defined as action-oriented and intrapsychic efforts to manage the demands created by stressful events, and it is coming to be recognized both for its significant impact on stress-related mental and physical health outcomes and for its intervention potential (Taylor & Stanton, 2007; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Hope is the light that guides us toward a better tomorrow (McKee, 2017). Korner (1970) defines hope as an essentially positive phenomenon necessary for healthy coping, with its key purpose being the avoidance of despair, with the secondary function of permitting the individual psychologically to bypass ongoing unpleasant or stressful situations.

Hope has been correlated with greater pain tolerance and less reported pain severity (Berg & Hamilton, 2008). Psychological endurance is a quality of mind or intellect characterized by, among other things, a refusal to be intimidated, a determination to finish a contest even when things are going badly, and an ability to control emotions and remain highly focused when under the pressure of intense competition (Martin, Meeusen, Thompson, Keegan, & Rattray, 2018).

These three concepts are critical with regard to working through the ups and downs of life management.

Literary Analyses

It has been said that stories appeal to both the heart and the mind in that they help us to define who we are, why we are here, and what we should value (McConkie & Boss, 1994; Driscoll & McKee, 2007). Stories are used to make sense of ambiguity and uncertainty (Fleming, 2001). Keeping in mind the relevant areas of literature, listed below are analyses of selected literary works where many of these concepts play out as the stories unfold.

Man's Search for Meaning (Frankl, 1946)

This story is told amidst the gravest of all human circumstances or conditions, and the story is set during World War II. Yet the protagonist is able to find ways to cope with circumstances well beyond one's control (Taylor & Stanton, 2007; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Given the conditions the Jewish People faced during the Holocaust, the highest forms of psychological endurance were a requirement (Gilbert, 1986; Martin, Meeusen, Thompson, Keegan, & Rattray, 2018). During the story, hope is exemplified as a mechanism of survival, along with constant evolution in frames of reference, framing, and reframing (Korner, 1970; Fairhurst, 2005; Jonas, 2005; Mezirow, 1991; Mezirow, 1997). The following quote is illustrative of the aforementioned: "Those who know how close the connection is between the state of mind of a man – his courage and hope, or lack of them – and the state of immunity of his body will understand that the sudden loss of hope and courage can have a deadly effect" (Frankl, 1985, p. 75). This quote suggests that the protagonist has an internal locus of control, as well as a penchant to manage life as best as possible given the conditions (Prenda & Lachman, 2001; Lefcourt, 2014).

Their Eyes Were Watching God (Hurston, 1937)

Centering on the protagonist, who is on a life-long journey to experience true love first-hand (Hurston, 1937). Along the way, she has to learn to cope with horrible circumstances beyond one's control while having the hope to persist through adversity (Taylor & Stanton, 2007; Berg, Snyder, & Hamilton, 2008). This story is a solid example of managing one's own life while also working to manage others effectively (Prenda & Lachman, 2001). The trials and outcomes seemed to have had an impact on influencing the protagonist's frame of reference; situations where framing and reframing can be beneficial (Mezirow, 1997; Hick, Kershner, & Farrell, 2009). An example of this can be seen in the following quotation:

“You know, honey, us colored folks is branches without roots and that makes things come round in queer ways. You in particular. Ah was born back due in slavery so it wasn't for me to fulfill my dreams of whut a woman oughta be and to do . . . Ah wanted to preach a great sermon about colored women sittin' on high, but they wasn't no pulpit for me.” (Hurston, 1937, p. 15)

The quote and the story as a whole is a testimony to the depth of psychological endurance needed to survive incredibly harsh circumstances (Martin, Meeusen, Thompson, Keegan, & Rattray, 2018). *The Color Purple* offers similar references to the aforementioned (Walker, 1982).

Things Fall Apart (Achebe, 1958)

In this story, the process of the downward spiral, where things in an individual's life get progressively worse, is chronicled in lieu of the trials and tribulations of the protagonist, Okonkwo (Staff, 2004; Achebe, 1958). This can be viewed as the decline of hope (Korner, 1970). Taylor and Stanton (2007) note examples of ineffective coping or doing that which will cause the unintended effect. The protagonist seems to place importance on the omission of any form of fear or weakness, particularly in the eyes of the other characters in the book (Achebe, 1958; Fritzsche & Oz, 2007). In doing so, readers are able to see the significance of the problems created when what a person values stems directly from Others as opposed to the Self (Fritzsche & Oz, 2007; Manz, 1986). As a result, the protagonist can be seen as having an external locus of control (Lefcourt, 2014). The following quote from the book is supportive of this notion: “Perhaps down in his heart Okonkwo was not a cruel man. But his whole life was dominated by fear, the fear of failure and weakness. It was not external but lay deep within himself. It was the fear of himself, lest he should be found to resemble his father” (Achebe, 1958, p. 13). Similar literary examples of the downward spiral process are *Requiem for A Dream* and *The Basketball Diaries* (Selby, 1978; Carroll, 1987).

Great Expectations (Dickens, 1861)

On the converse to the previous literary analysis, *Great Expectations* tells the story of the upward spiral, where a person's life gets progressively better while recognizing the reality that there will be bumps along the way (Dickens, 1861; Korb, 2015; Kruse, Chancellor, Rubertson, & Lyubomirsky, 2014). The protagonist (Pip) shows potential and talent in a way that gains the attention of Others, particularly one character (Abel Magwitch) who decides to assist the protagonist with their aspirations to be successful (Manz, 1986). This quote is demonstrative of this assistance:

“Look'ee here, Pip. I'm your second father. You're my son—more to me nor any son. I've put away money, only for you to spend. When I was a hired-out shepherd in a solitary hut, not seeing no faces but faces of sheep till I half-forgot wot men's and women's faces was like, I see youn. I see you there a many times plain as ever I see you on them misty marshes. ‘Lord strike me dead!’ I says each time—and I goes out in the open air to say it under the open heavens—‘but wot, if I gets liberty and money, I'll make that boy a gentleman!’ And I done it. Why, look at you, dear boy! Look at these here

lodgings of yourn, fit for a lord! A lord? Ah! You shall show money with lords for wagers, and beat 'em!" (Dickens, 1861, pp. 108-109)

This story as a whole is a testimony to better oneself via the ascent of hope (Korner, 1970; Berg, Snyder, & Hamilton, 2008). Focusing on becoming a better person can influence Others to have hope, as we see in the following quote by one of the supporting characters (Estella): "Suffering has been stronger than all other teaching and has taught me to understand what your heart used to be. I have been bent and broken, but—I hope—into a better shape" (Dickens, 1861, p. 542; Manz, 1986).

Film Analysis

In *Good Will Hunting* (Bender & Van Sant, 1997) the protagonist, Will Hunting, is struggling to manage their life arrives at two important and life-changing decisions (Bender & Van Sant, 1997). These decisions are represented by two characters from the movie who assume mentor roles (Rohrich & Durand, 2021). One mentor (Professor Lambeau) feels compelled to push the protagonist toward obtaining a successful job and a well-traveled path, while the other mentor (Professor Maguire) sees the importance of guiding the protagonist to discover their own path (Bender & Van Sant, 1997). The interplay of the two mentors and the protagonist points out the difficulties involved in forcing someone to frame and reframe aspects of their life, as there may be unintended consequences (Fairhurst, 2005). The mentors are representative of Others being in position to assist someone (e.g., Self) with managing their life (Manz, 1986; Prenda & Lachman, 2001). Professor Lambeau does not really work to help the protagonist, but rather to benefit in some form from their genius. The result is a clash of egos that highlights the kind of ineffective communication when there are differences in power dynamics such as a mismatch in expectations. The following quote from Professor Lambeau to the protagonist is illustrative of this idea: "Most days I wish I never met you. Because then I could sleep at night, and I wouldn't...and I wouldn't have to walk around with the knowledge that there's someone like you out there. And I didn't have to watch you throw it all away" (Bender & Van Sant, 1997). Professor Maguire extends massive effort to help the protagonist cope and to find hope, at times reaching deep within his personal life to do so (Korner, 1970; Berg & Hamilton, 2008). Also, he helps the main character reframe their experiences in ways that aid in them taking steps in the right direction (Mezirow, 1991; Mezirow, 1997). The following quote by Professor Maguire is representative of this: "You think I know the first thing about how hard your life has been, how you feel, who you are, because I read *Oliver Twist*" (Bender & Van Sant, 1997). Another quote from Professor Maguire to the protagonist further illustrates the ways mentors can find effective ways to inspire someone without crushing their individual spirit:

"I just have a little question here. You could be a janitor anywhere...And why did you sneak around at night and finish other people's formulas that only one or two people in the world could do and then lie about it? 'Cause I don't see a lot of honor in that, Will. So what do you really want to do" (Bender & Van Sant, 1997)?

Those who assume the role of a mentor are likely to call out their mentee in order to help them expand their frame of reference (Rohrich & Durand, 2021). One of the supporting characters is the protagonist's best friend, and the following quote exemplifies the 'cruel to be kind' influence that friends can have on each other's lives by making an effort to inspire change:

"You don't owe it to yourself. You owe it to me. 'Cause tomorrow I'm gonna wake up and I'll be fifty. And I'll still be doing this *****. And that's all right, that's fine. I mean, you're sittin' on a winning lottery ticket and you're too much of a ***** to cash it in. And that's bull****. `Cause I'd do anything to ****in' have what you got. So would any of these ****in' guys. It'd be an insult to us if you're still here in twenty years. Hanging around here is a ****in' waste of your time." (Bender & Van Sant, 1997)

Throughout the movie, the protagonist moves from having an external to internal locus of control through the assistance of Others, though it could be argued that accountability was taken to seek out ways to feed his thirst for intelligence (Lefcourt, 2014; Manz, 1986). Several of the characters seem to exhibit varied forms of psychological endurance (Martin, Meeusen, Thompson, Keegan, & Rattray, 2018). The end of the movie highlights the progress of the protagonist while also shedding light Professor Maguire's efforts to help the protagonist find their own way in life: "[in a note] Sean [Professor Maguire], if the Professor [Lambeau] calls about that job, just tell him, sorry, I have to go see about a girl" (Bender & Van Sant, 1997).

This film offers a variety of insights into finding one's own way in life with help from Others. *Into the Spider Verse* is an animated film with similar insights (Arad, Pascal, Persichetti, Ramsey, & Rothman, 2018).

From the analysis of the aforementioned literature, literary works and film, the following four major take-aways are offered: 1) Coping, hope, an internal locus of control, evolution in frames of reference, psychological endurance, framing, and reframing can serve as powerful tools for life management (Korner, 1970; Fairhurst, 2005; Lefcourt, 2014; Jonas, 2005; Hick, Kershner, & Farrell, 2009; Martin, Meeusen, Thompson, Keegan, & Rattray, 2018; Mezirow, 1991; Mezirow, 1997); 2) With regard to people's lives, there appears to be a downward spiral, where things get worse, and an upward spiral, where things get better (Staff, 2004; Korb, 2015); 3) The selected literary analyses offer insight into life management practices (Mezirow, 1997; Frankl, 1946; Hurston, 1937; Achebe, 1958; Dickens, 1861); and 4) Mentors have a responsibility by virtue of agreeing to help someone reach their potential to seek understanding and take into account their respective mentee's aspirations prior to guiding them toward a specific path (Rohrich & Durand, 2021; Bender & Van Sant, 1997). The review of literature highlights the importance for humans to find ways to lead oneself through times of adversity.

DESCRIPTION OF PRACTICE

#BeUp was originally used on social media as a way to promote positivity. To be is to exist, and to be up implies that which is actualized being in favor of that which is positive (Staff, 2004). The hashtag was intended to remind people to see the positive in life to be prepared to manage all that may come as best as possible. Rubin and Rubin (2011) discuss an approach to research where the reality of what is being studied only exists through the perceptions of those who experience it, and this process demonstrates that reality is interpreted subjectively. Through preparing for a TEDx talk on life management (2016, July), a three-question survey intending to examine life management processes was created and distributed: 1) Compared to where you would like to be, how would you describe the current state of your life; 2) From your perspective, describe what has led to the current state of your life; and 3) How did you deal with what you described in # 2? The survey received responses from eighty-two individuals. The results of the survey and further interpretation will be explained in the next section.

DISCUSSION OF OUTCOMES

There were eighty-two respondents to the three-question, qualitative survey, with the average age of respondents being thirty-one (Bachiochi & Weiner, 2002). Regarding gender of respondents, forty-nine (59.7%) identified as Female, and thirty-three (40.3%) identified as Male. It should be noted that a limited amount of demographic information was collected to ensure anonymity and to safeguard confidentiality of participants (Morse, 1998). Responses were analyzed by question to search for emergent themes (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The responses are listed below.

- 1) ***Compared to where you would like to be, how would you describe the current state of your life?*** Responses to this question were grouped into four categories: Worse, Bad, Good, and Better. Each is described below.

Worse. Thirteen respondents (16% of total respondents for question 1) had answers that can be defined as describing the current state of their life as worse, or not the worst, but worse

than bad. Survey responses in this category were largely related to out-of-control circumstances, an overload of stress, and/or through experiencing traumatic events. The following quote is representative of this category: "I feel like I don't have any control over my life. It's hard to not obsess when going through my day to day business" (Personal communication, 23 March, 2016). Another quote suggests what Lefcourt (2014) referred to as possessing an external locus of control: "My boss is causing me a lot of stress which makes me have less patience when dealing with my personal life." (Personal communication, 26 March, 2016). This quote also is demonstrative of the impact of excessive stress on executive functioning and self-regulation, as well as the kind of circumstances intended to cause harm to an individual (Skinner, Edge, Altman, & Sherwood, 2003; Panlilio, Ferrara, & MacNeill, 2019; Finkleman, 2007).

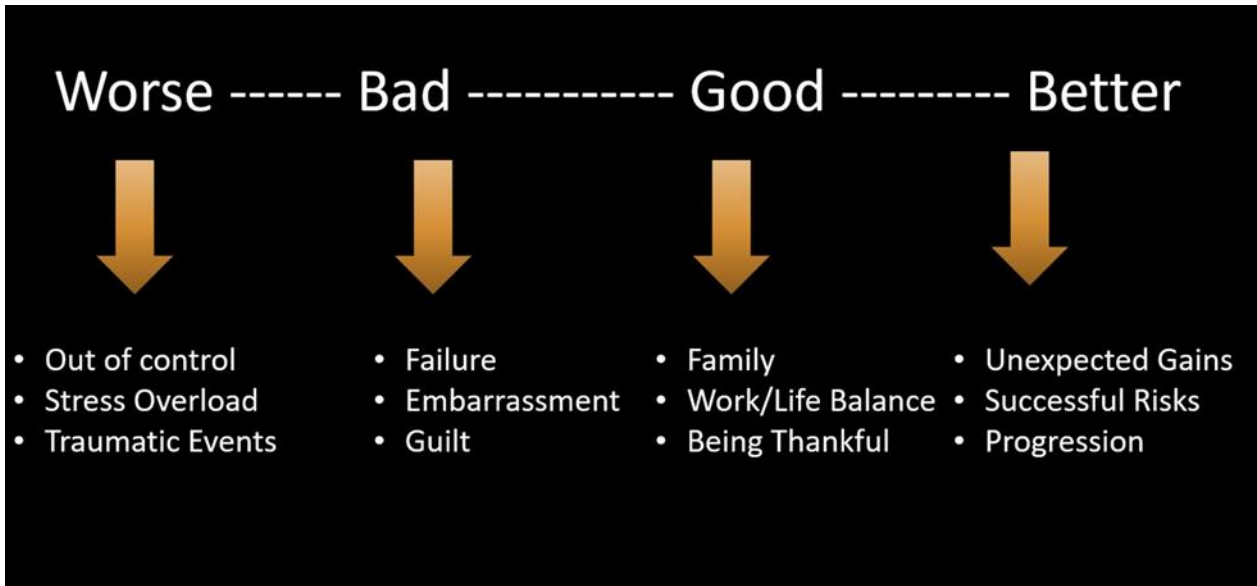
Bad. Responses in this category can be defined as not good, but not getting worse. Seventeen responses (21% of total respondents for question 1) related to experiencing some form of failure, embarrassment, and/or guilt. This quote is reflective of such experiences: "I recently found out that a close friend committed suicide. I wasn't always nice to the person since most of my other friends would mock them for our own enjoyment. I never realized the pain they had until it was too late" (Personal communication, 26 March, 2016). This response also connotes the guilt associated with causing trauma (Kubany & Manke, 1995). Experiencing failure can necessitate guilt in letting other people down (Ucbasaran, Shepherd, Lockett, & Lyon, 2013). The following quote is representative of this kind of guilt: "I was laid off at my work without warning. I put a lot of time into the position and cared about the company so it's been real tough to not feel like I have let down everyone who supported me throughout my career" (Personal communication, 26 March, 2016).

Good. The largest portion of responses to question 1 fell into this category which can be defined as not bad with no emphasis on getting better. In other words, this category might be best represented as an individual being in a state of balance or harmony (Ong & Jeyaraj, 2014). Forty-three responses (52% of total respondents for question 1) relating to positive reflection and gratitude. The following quotation relates to family and to being thankful: "Things are good. My kids and spouse are healthy. We have been making extra effort to spend time together. It's going well so far" (Personal communication, 23 March, 2016). When things are in a healthy state of balance, such as work and life, it is more likely for individuals to experience mutual compatibility, satisfaction, and well-being (Greenhaus & Brummelhuis, 2013). This quote reflects this sentiment: "My life is in a good place. There aren't any specific reasons and I am sure I could complain about something if I tried but I'm a lot closer to where I want to be" (Personal communication, 25 March, 2016).

Better. There were nine responses (11% of total respondents for question 1) collected in this area, defined as progressing beyond being good. The following quote is illustrative of the recognition of one's progress: "Everything is so much better than it was a year ago. I had some difficulties but with the help of friends and family I was able to overcome the negativity to achieve goals that were important to me. My life is in a better place now" (Personal communication, 23 March, 2016). Research indicates that people are more likely to benefit from unexpected gains and successful risk-taking if they have high confidence in their abilities as well as high competence (Krueger Jr & Dickson, 1994). This quote highlights the satisfaction that comes after taking a successful risk: "I quit my job to start a business with some friends from college. It was a risky effort with room for things to go south quickly. We ended up finding ways to make it happen and now things are better than ever" (Personal communication, 22 March, 2016).

Question 1 offered some rich perspectives on assessing one's current state of life. Please see Figure 1 for a breakdown of the four categories.

FIGURE 1
SURVEY RESULTS, #BeUp QUESTION 1



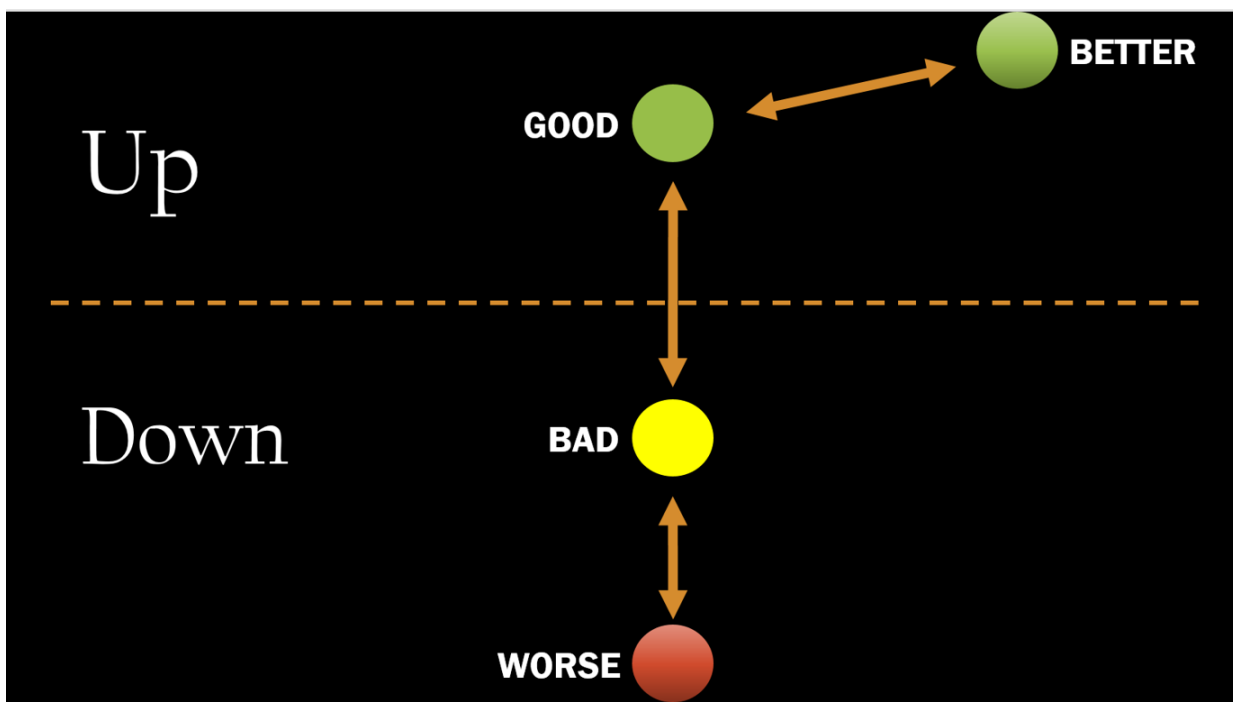
- 2) ***From your perspective, describe what has led to the current state of your life?*** Answers to this question yielded two main categories: *Setbacks* (30, 36.6% of total respondents for question and *Advancements* (52, 63.4% of total respondents for question 2). Setbacks are defined as a reversal in some form, while Advancements refer to a promotion in some form (Staff, 2004). Both Setbacks and Advancements can be both positive or negative, and the interpretation resides within the perceiver (Dijksterhuis & Bargh, 2001). An example of a Setback is offered in the following quote: “The death of my father changed everything” (Personal communication, 26 March, 2016). The following is a prime example of an Advancement: “I was recently promoted to the leadership team where I work. It is something I always wanted since I first started at the company” (Personal communication, 22 March, 2016). Advancements seem to be described in a similar way to what was covered in question 1, specifically under the *Better* category (e.g., unexpected gains, risks that work out, some form of progress). In all, the survey responses from question 2 suggest a way to code the things that come into our existence (i.e., *Setbacks* and *Advancements*), therefore setting up what we can target in order to #BeUp.
- 3) ***How did you deal with what you described in number 2?*** Thematic analysis for question 3 brought about three categories: *Things got worse*; *Things stayed the same*; and *Things got better*.
- Things got worse*. Twenty-one respondents (26% of total respondents for question 3) gave responses that indicated to some degree that their circumstances have gotten worse. Remaining positive can be difficult when coping with harsh circumstances, regardless of having the tools in place to be successful or not (Taylor & Stanton, 2007; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). This quote is representative of this outlook: “I keep making the same mistakes. I know that I’m doing what I need to do it just gets hard sometimes to stay positive” (Personal communication, 25 March, 2016). Another quote with the same ideas in mind: “Bad stuff keeps happening around me. I am not going through it personally but people around me are and its only making it worse” (Personal communication, 23 March, 2016). Both quotations imply a difference of locus of control, with the former suggested as internal, while the latter suggests external (Lefcourt, 2014).

Things stayed the same. A large number of respondents (37, 45% of total respondents for question 3) indicated that there was no change to their circumstances. “Not much is changing but being aware of the issues is helping me to see the light at the end of the tunnel” (Personal communication, 23 March, 2016). This quote suggests the affordance of what Korner (1970) notes as having hope. The following is also illustrative of the same perspective: “It will take a while to see any progress but I am working on it every day” (Personal communication, 24 March, 2016).

Things got better. Twenty-four respondents (29% of total respondents for question 3) indicated that, to some extent, there was some improvement to their circumstances, reflected in this simple quote: “Things continue to improve” (Personal communication, 23 March, 2016). Dealing with loss is difficult and complex, and it is healthy to reframe circumstances toward the positive whenever possible while maintaining a high level of psychological endurance (Wanganeeen, 2010; Hick, Kershner, & Farrell, 2009; Martin, Meeusen, Thompson, Keegan, & Rattray, 2018). This is evident in the following quotation: “I miss my father but I know he would want me to power forward” (Personal communication, 26 March, 2016).

Building from question 1 to further explain the significance of question 3 responses, it would presumably be easy to for an individual to go from *Good* to *Better*, but to go from *Worse* to *Bad* or from *Bad* to *Good* could prove to be an arduous effort. Overall, these responses suggest that when things in life are *Worse*, it is easy to see the impossibilities, whereas when things are *Good* or *Better*, it is easier to see the possibilities (Harten & Rabold, 2010). This appears to be in line with the downward spiral, where things in an individual’s life get progressively worse, and the upward spiral, where things get progressively better (Korb, 2015; Kruse, Chancellor, Rubertson, & Lyubomirsky, 2014). Thus, it can be said that, when faced with being ‘up’ or being ‘down,’ it would be preferred to #BeUp (Tedx Talks, 2016, July). Please see Figure 2 for a graphical representation of the aforementioned survey results and analysis.

FIGURE 2
#BeUp SURVEY RESULTS AND ANALYSIS



The results of the survey highlight the importance of working to rise above the Setbacks faced in life. We all go through hard times, but how we push through hard times defines who we are (Tedx Talks, 2016, July). To #BeUp is to choose to see the possibilities in life (Harten & Rabold, 2010). The survey responses informed the three main areas of the talk via thematic analysis: Digestion, Balance, and Momentum (Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Tedx Talks, 2016, July). Each of the three areas will be described below.

Digestion

Foods contain components that can have either beneficial or adverse effects on human health; Different foods contain different levels of nutrition, and as such, all foods must be broken down into smaller pieces by way of the digestion process (Sensoy, 2021). Digestion represents the internal process of dealing with things; a conscious effort to keep that which is nutritious, and to discard that which is of no use (Tedx Talks, 2016, July). For example, losing a loved one is never an easy process, as we are often paralyzed by grief and sadness. The more we love someone, the more we miss them when they are gone, but it can be more important at times to acknowledge that we can love and miss someone while doing so in a way that encourages acceptance and ultimately fosters the opposite of paralysis (i.e., momentum). The loss itself, though difficult, can reach a point where an individual is faced with the reality of accepting that the loved one is no longer here (Wanganeen, 2010). Grief, on the other hand, refers to an individual's response to loss, and much like anything worthy of reframing, it could go on ad infinitum (Averill, 1968). Cochran (2019) notes the work of the End-of-Life Doula -- hospice workers skilled in helping patients, their families, and friends navigate the end-of-life process -- and other healthcare advocates, where the sadness of the impending loss of a loved one is never ignored while other avenues of processing are explored. It can be helpful to make use of the skills built in dealing with loss and grieving to help others during periods of experiencing loss and grieving (Byers, Fitzpatrick, McDonald, & Nelson, 2021; Rawlings, Tieman, Miller-Lewis, & Swetenham, 2019; Averill, 1968).

Digestion is reliant upon deep self-reflection (Lord & Hall, 2005). We all perceive things differently, be it something better, good, bad, or worse (Dijksterhuis & Bargh, 2001). Each individual's perception of a Setback or an Advancement may differ a great deal, including the recognition of something as a problem or a benefit. One factor involved in perception of a Setback or an Advancement is dependent upon possessing an internal or external locus of control (Lefcourt, 2014). The survey comments in this area point toward the importance of trying to identify what we see as the problems in our life, but the more important task is to understand how the problem is impacting our ability to deal with things in effective ways that allow us to manage our respective lives in the best way possible (Prenda & Lachman, 2001).

The following are tools which may prove to be useful when engaged in the Digestion process. Proactive coping is a multidimensional, forward-thinking strategy integrative of personal quality of life management processes aimed at self-regulatory practices and goal attainment (Greenglass, 2002; Freund & Baltes, 2002). As previously mentioned, framing and reframing techniques are useful when coping with given demands (Fairhurst, 2005; Jonas, 2005; Hick, Kershner, & Farrell, 2009). Cognitive reframing is intent on changing behavior and improving well-being and involves the following: Instilling a sense of personal control; Altering or self-altering perceptions of negative, distorted, or self-defeating beliefs; and Converting a negative, self-destructive idea into a positive, supportive idea (Robson Jr & Troutman-Jordan, 2014). The #BeUp Framework looks at reframing as an opportunity to *take two steps back* from a situation to gain the best perspective possible (Payne, 2019, June). For example, a person could have a disagreement with a co-worker on a Friday and spend the entire weekend arguing with the co-worker in their head. The person can then arrive back to work on Monday with the co-worker knowing absolutely nothing about what happened over the weekend. Situations such as this example can benefit from *taking two steps back* to gain a new perspective. Self-distancing is another tool used for dealing with things and involves small shifts in the language people use to refer to the self during introspection and how this language can influence their ability to regulate their thoughts, feelings, and behavior under social stress (Fujita, Trope, Liberman, & Levin-Sagi, 2006). Research on children and adults indicates that

psychological distancing strategies enhance people's capacity to exert self-control when faced with tempting options in the short term (White & Carlson, 2016; Kross, Bruehlman-Senecal, Burson, Dougherty, Shablack, & Ayduk, 2014). Digestion works with the Balance area to ultimately determine the *Keep, Check, Go* process which will be discussed in the next section.

Balance

Balance occurs when different elements are of equal proportion (Tedx Talks, 2016, July). Achieving balance in life can be a constant trial where understanding how to approach becoming balanced is of the utmost importance (Dijksterhuis & Bargh, 2001). Constructive developmental theory takes as its subject the growth and elaboration of a person's ways of understanding oneself and the world, resulting in an exploration of just how much can be understood about a person by understanding their meaning system (Kegan, 1994; Piaget, 1954). A person's meaning system includes their values, which are the things that are important to us that motivate and guide our decisions (Fritzsche & Oz, 2007). Values are part of what influences our behavior. Homer & Kahle (1988) purport that values provide the basis for the development of individual attitudes that lead to specific decision-making behavior. Values matter because you're likely to feel better if you're living according to your values, and you're likely to feel worse if you are not doing so (Fritzsche & Oz, 2007). Integrity represents the degree to which a person's behavior is consistent with their values (Tedx Talks, 2016, July). It is an individual's unimpaired condition; the code by which they live their lives (Staff, 2004). What a person values should be represented by how they behave. Therefore, if a person's behavior is not in line with their values, it is likely that they are out of Balance in some form. Assessing one's own Balance can serve as a *Checkpoint* for deciding if what's most important matches up with how time is spent engaged in various behaviors. This can create what can be referred to as a *Keep, Check, Go* process, where generally speaking, positive things such as lessons learned, acceptance, forgiveness, empathy, and compassion are placed in the *Keep* category while negative things such as feelings of apathy, hate, resentment, failures to communicate, and other forms of unresolvable issues are placed in the *Go* category. The *Check* category would fall in between the previous two and is an opportunity to deeply reflect and assess values and behaviors. Framing and reframing can be useful ways to work on achieving balance in one's life (Fairhurst, 2005; Jonas, 2005).

The purpose of a scarecrow is to ward off that which is unwanted or presents a threat (e.g., undesirable values and behaviors), so that what is wanted (e.g., desirable values and behaviors) can grow and develop. Setting reminders works in the same way. The scarecrow can make you think, "I should never do that," or "I have to make sure that I do that." So, it can remind you of what is not wanted, and can help you to focus on what is wanted, so that it might grow and develop. Not doing the things that bring you down will help you to focus on ways you can #BeUp (Tedx Talks, 2016, July). Please see Figure 3 for a rendering of the #BeUp Scarecrow. By working toward acceptance of one's current circumstances, an individual can analyze and prioritize accordingly, and doing so can greatly shift an individual's perspective. The following quote from *Jacob's Ladder* (1990) reflects this notion: "If you're afraid of dying, and you're holdin' on, you'll see devils tearin' your life away. But if you've made your peace, then the devils are really angels, freein' you from the world. It all depends on how you look at it" (Marshall & Lyne, 1990). Balance is the checkpoint between Digestion and Momentum and plays a significant role toward effectively dealing with things.

FIGURE 3
THE #BeUp SCARECROW



Note. By A. Aptaker, 2016, image created on computer, Orlando, FL, United States.

Momentum

Momentum is the force that allows something to continue to grow stronger as time passes (Staff, 2004). The earth rotates anywhere from twenty to forty thousand kilometers a day; the momentum it sustains enables our very existence (Stephenson, Morrison, & Hohenkerk, 2016). What would happen if the earth were to stop moving? Like the earth, we as individuals need to build and sustain momentum in to best explore what is possible. Momentum is only possible if Digestion and Balance are functioning effectively. In other words: “When I am dealing with things, I can maintain balance; When I maintain balance, I can gain momentum; When I gain momentum, I can keep going” (Tedx Talks, 2016, July). Momentum represents the outcome of dealing with Setbacks and/or Advancements (i.e., Things are better; Things are the same; or Things are worse). When things are getting better, there is *forward* Momentum (e.g., progress), and on the converse, when things are getting worse, there is *backward* Momentum (e.g., lack of progress). When things stay the same, this is a state of *neutral* Momentum (e.g., idle progress), and might be reflective of the internal process for determining courses of action via deep contemplative practice. Sometimes it might require regression or idleness in order to accomplish momentum that is authentic and in line with a person’s wants and desires of themselves.

Significant research has supported the role of setting and accepting specific, challenging, but achievable goals for facilitating motivation to increase individual performance (Locke & Latham, 1990). Self-awareness guides other self-leadership behaviors such as self-goal setting (Neck & Manz, 2010; Manz & Sims Jr, 1990). Adams (2013) notes that systems do well to accompany goals, and they serve as more immediate actions aimed at making attainment of the goal possible. Additionally, systems can help a person move forward in a broad direction that is valued and respected; So, rather than saying you will jog every day, you might commit to being physically active every day which provides more flexibility and is more achievable (Adams, 2013). #BeUp ultimately aims to help increase an individual’s Momentum in life, and goal- setting and systems are valuable tools to utilize in order to keep going in a positive direction.

Overall, dealing with things (Digestion) while checking in with oneself (Balance) as it relates to moving forward (Momentum) suggests a process for helping an individual to manage their life. A concept refers to an abstract idea, integrative of theoretical and application perspectives, while a framework provides the basic structure supportive of the concept (Jackendoff, 1992). #BeUp is a concept that incorporates various forms of life management theories and applications (Freund & Baltes, 2002). #BeUp is a framework that can be useful for those looking to manage their lives as individuals and as members of groups. Therefore, the #BeUp Framework provides a form of structure that makes use of the concept of #BeUp to support the efforts of those who are looking to manage their lives effectively.

REFLECTIONS

Based on the take-aways from the review of literature, analysis of the survey response data, and the TEDx presentation, three key learnings are listed below.

- 1) The #BeUp Framework may be an effective life management tool, primarily for the individual or group member. It is also suggested that the #BeUp Framework, integrative of the life management tools discussed in the review of literature, might be useful for addressing issues related to the upward and downward spirals (Korner, 1970; Fairhurst, 2005; Lefcourt, 2014; Hick, Kershner, & Farrell, 2009; Martin, Meeusen, Thompson, Keegan, & Rattray, 2018; Mezirow, 1991; Mezirow, 1997). However, further research is needed on both accounts.
- 2) The #BeUp Framework may be useful for mentors as a tool for life management that is considerate of the mentee's aspirations by focusing on the three areas: Digestion, Balance, and Momentum (Rohrich & Durand, 2021; Bender & Van Sant, 1997). In addition to mentoring, the #BeUp Framework might also be of use in executive and/or life coaching, particularly through its emphasis on both self-regulation and on personal goals and systems (Western, 2012; Neck & Manz, 2010; Adams, 2013). Further research is needed.
- 3) As previously stated, the selected literary analyses offer insight into life management through masterful storytelling and character development (Mezirow, 1997; Frankl, 1946; Hurston, 1937; Achebe, 1958; Dickens, 1861; Fleming, 2001). The stories inspire further investigation, so it is suggested that future research should be conducted on the #BeUp Framework, specifically by including interviews. The limitations of qualitative research and analysis should be noted as applicable to this study (Queirós, Faria, & Almeida, 2017; Affleck, Glass, & Macdonald, 2013). It should also be noted that #BeUp does not purport to act as a substitute for professional services related to mental health. Rather, #BeUp focuses on life management practices and navigating through difficult times shared by many, such as the COVID pandemic (Canady, 2021). Please see *Appendix* for a graphical representation of the #BeUp Framework.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

The key learnings delineate three potential uses for the #BeUp Framework. In lieu of what was mentioned in the previous section, the following three recommendations are presented.

First, it is recommended that the #BeUp Framework be used as a tool for life management, with emphasis on the Self. For example, focusing on Setbacks and Advancements by use of the following way may prove to be helpful: 1) Identify/Reframe (Digestion) - What are the Setbacks/Advancements and keeping in mind that some Setbacks can be positive, and some Advancements can be negative; 2) Prioritize (Balance) – Determining what should be kept/checked/let go of; and 3) Evaluate (Momentum) – How was the Setback/Advancement dealt with and what goals and systems can be put in place to make improvements? Another example involves taking a reversed approach to the three areas of #BeUp Framework by exploring what might be enabling ineffective functioning of some kind. An individual

would ask themselves the following: What is causing me *Indigestion*? What is causing me *Imbalance*? What is causing me *non-Momentum*?

Second, the #BeUp Framework may be useful as a life management tool employed by a mentor or coach to aid in helping Others. It may be helpful to utilize aspects of the #BeUp Framework to help define general rules of engagement for mentors (Rohrich & Durand, 2021). For example, a mentor could use the #BeUp area of Momentum to generally encourage the mentee to keep what is getting better, to check what is staying the same, and to let go of what is getting worse. It should be noted that mentoring is not by any means a service of professional mental health and is more closely related to executive and life coaching (Western, 2012). Another example of this consists of the mentor/coach using the concept of Digestion to help guide the mentee toward effective life management practices while having the opportunity to recommend additional support as needed. The mentor/coach might ask questions like *What's in your 'stomach'?* *How did it get there?* These questions might help the mentee to think about what they are currently dealing with and the nature of its cause to identify potential Setbacks and/or Advancements.

Focusing on a mentee's values and behaviors and helping them to analyze their life circumstances can yield positive results related to life management, as illustrated by the following questions: *What's important to you* (i.e., values)? *How do you spend your time* (behaviors)? There are many times in a mentor/mentee relationship where what is uncovered might go beyond the level of expertise of the mentor, such as instances of inherited family trauma (Wolynn, 2017; Spencer & Howard, 2021). If this is the case, the mentor should recommend resources that would be better able to assist the mentee such as any professional mental health services (Rhodes, Liang, & Spencer, 2009). As a follow-up, the mentor can check in with the mentee by asking *What happened to what was in your 'stomach'?* The mentee might respond with something to the effect of *It's gone and I feel better or worse* which might warrant reflection, or *It's still in there* which might suggest that the mentee is still processing, and the mentor might follow up at a later time. Whether making use of the #BeUp Framework or not, it should be noted that the role of a mentor or coach from an ethical perspective is to cause no harm to the mentee (Rhodes, Liang, & Spencer, 2009).

Third and finally, research indicates that storytelling is an effective form of authentic leadership and for conveying lessons learned to interested parties (McConkie & Boss, 1994; Driscoll & McKee, 2007). As such, stories can provide context around the methods used to push through difficult times (Fleming, 2001; Messick & McKay, 2021; Spencer & Howard, 2021). With this in mind, it is recommended that future research be conducted using the #BeUp Framework that includes semi-structured interviews (Longhurst, 2003; Rubin & Rubin, 2011). Semi-structured interview questions are open-ended, with room for the interviewer to be flexible and adaptive (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). The same questions should be used for each individual interview to ensure for consistency, while also allowing some room for flexibility based upon each individual interviewee (Longhurst, 2003).

Research underscores the importance for individuals to be mindful of their sense of self (Ziller, 2013). Doing so has implications for leaders, managers, and those who aspire to become leaders and managers. A leader needs have the capacity to solve problems and provide guidance during difficult times (Cangemi, Lazarus, McQuade, Fitzgerald, Conner, Miller, & Murphree, 2011). Self-development represents activities centered on skill acquisition and the expansion of conceptual frames of meaning to make possible the opportunities to understand more complex forms of leadership (Lord & Hall, 2005). The #BeUp Framework ultimately centers on self- reflection, which has been shown to be good for leadership self-development (Lord & Hall, 2005). Through identifying Setbacks and Advancements in the #BeUp Framework, it is hoped that individuals are able to determine the best course of action that will ensure forward momentum for themselves, and by doing so, perhaps there is more room for Others with whom the individual interacts to do the same. Since the TEDx presentation in 2016, #BeUp has been presented to various audiences, including First Responders, Social Workers, and has also been integrated into undergraduate academic psychology courses (Payne, 2019, July; Payne, 2019, June). The #BeUp Framework can help while pushing through harsh times and circumstances, such as living during the COVID pandemic (Wirkner, Christiansen, Knaevelsrud, Lüken, Wurm, Schneider, & Brakemeier, 2022).

It is hoped that additional research and investigation provided through preparing this paper will help to bolster the overall concept and framework going forward.

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APPENDIX: #BeUp FRAMEWORK (2022)



Note. By A. Aptaker, 2022, image created on computer, Orlando, FL, United States.