

A philosopher's formula for improving life

By DARRELL SIFFORD

What would it take to improve the quality of your life?

Well, a philosopher says, the answer is in identifying your own "hidden sources," developing them and making them as much a part of yourself as your arms and legs.

The philosopher is Lena Allen-Shore, a published poet, novelist and songwriter who was a member of her native Poland's underground resistance against the Germans in World War II. This spring she was the graduating class of one at Dropsie University, the tiny center in Philadelphia

Since then, she has gone about turning a dream into reality by establishing the Self Dynamics Center, where she hopes to work with individuals, especially those floundering within corporate structures, to improve their lives.

She will do it through a program

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can't be explained only by science — even today."

Man "feels that he is master, but he is not master. He needs to aspire to something higher than he is."

7. Recognition of membership in the community of man. "You don't have to be president to try to shape history. You don't have to be a great warrior. But you have to express your views and, if necessary, fight for them. You have to have in you . . . care for generations that are to follow. You have an opportunity to do something. You are part of the universe and humanity, part of the future . . . If you respect yourself, you want to contribute something in your own way."

8. Recognition of the connection between art and happiness. "Darwin once said that he was sorry he had not read poetry or listened to music since he was 13. He felt that some part of his brain had atrophied. He believed that at the end of his life he had missed something . . . I believe that (art in all forms) is the bridge between souls. In my opinion the link with art is very important. You don't have to know too much, but

that she calls "10 steps in the land of life."

Mrs. Allen-Shore is a heavy thinker. Keep that in mind as you read what follows, including this excerpt from her as-yet-unpublished book on the 10 steps:

"Our whole life is based on acceptance and struggle. We accept and we fight; we face a new day with uncertainty and with the certainty that we can overcome today. We look at the stranger, and we search for understanding. We see the storm and we wait for the rainbow. Somewhere deep in ourselves there is hope, and as long as this hope is not overshadowed by our doubts and our fears, we can expect a ray of sunshine. And we can continue . . . to create."

With that as a framework let's move into Lena Allen-Shore's 10 steps toward fulfillment:

1. Respect for our own lives. "We have existence, but it depends on us; it's our life. It does not hinge on des-

know that it exists . . . Art is at the reach of your hand. I look at art for inspiration.

"There is an old saying: 'Even at night I see clearly.' It depends on us if we can see clearly," and art, including music and literature, can help us gain this vision.

9. Willingness to continue learning. "I came to Paris with my husband, who was a diplomat. I was afraid I would not be able to write in French the way I had written in Pol-

tiny. This does not mean we are masters of our destiny, but we can influence it through struggle, and in struggle there is also meaning. If I am teaching you about the meaning of life, I'm not really teaching you; I'm sharing with you. You have to take it, transform it and only when it becomes yours can you use it."

Life "is the greatest gift given to us, and the moment we take it for granted, we are not able to appreciate it the way we should. There is such a big difference between receiving life as a gift and being blasé about it."

2. Recognition of the features of our own characters. "You have to know who you are. You have to know you are not like your father or your brother. You can have certain features of theirs, but you are you."

A student once asked why she put respect for our own lives and for personal identity at the top of her list. Her answer: "Only after you respect yourself can you recognize fea-

ish. He told me firmly: 'It depends on you; if you want to learn, you will do it.' I owe this to him. English is my fourth language, my continuing education. The only way to cope with today . . . is continuing education. You should be not isolated."

10. Selection of a reason to live. "You can choose your own purpose for living. It's not important what you choose, but you have to have your own purpose. . . . You can never despair in any situation if you have

tures in your own character . . . because sometimes we have features we don't want to accept."

3. Awareness of beauty around us. "What is beauty? Beauty is nature, and nature is part of us, and we are part of nature. How many go through life and feel they don't have time to look at nature? When we live with nature, we can understand the different seasons and storms and rainbows. We can bring the whole concept of the storm and the rainbow into our own way of thinking as a kind of hope."

4. Realization that we are not alone. "I am very brutal here. If you are alone, it is because you don't reach out enough. In our society — especially among the affluent — there are many lonely people. Loneliness is our greatest danger, but it is curable under one condition — that we not give up, that we not want to be lonely. It's up to us; we create the atmosphere. . . . We must remember that

why (a reason) to live. You can be useful and productive to the last moment. . . . A dancer wants to dance, a painter to paint, a writer to write. This is why to live."

(Mrs. Allen-Shore, who recently was awarded a senior research fellowship in the University of Pennsylvania's school of social work, operates the Self Dynamics Center in Philadelphia at 3900 Ford Rd., Suite 4-0.)

somebody on our same street needs us as much as we need him. It takes only one effort . . . to reach out" and end loneliness.

5. Acceptance of responsibility for the joy of fulfillment. "If you take this responsibility as a sacrifice, it is wrong. But if you take responsibility as a means to satisfy yourself, then it can give you the joy of fulfillment. Responsibility, as such, is great. But it must be based on free choice. You must choose this responsibility. Choosing allows us to bring a certain path to our lives."

6. The kindling of aspirations. In other words, aim for the stars. Some people are inspired by God, but "I realize that there are certain people whose inspiration comes from their profession. A scientist sometimes gets so involved in his work that he gets his inspiration from science. I see no conflict in this . . . because science and God meet. Certain events (See HAPPINESS on 7-1)

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