



# SUPER NINJA CREED

## Experiential Lifelong Learning

### **Abstract**

The following is an outline of my personal beliefs about life and the role of experiential education. I have broken it down into categories and tried to express my beliefs in each.

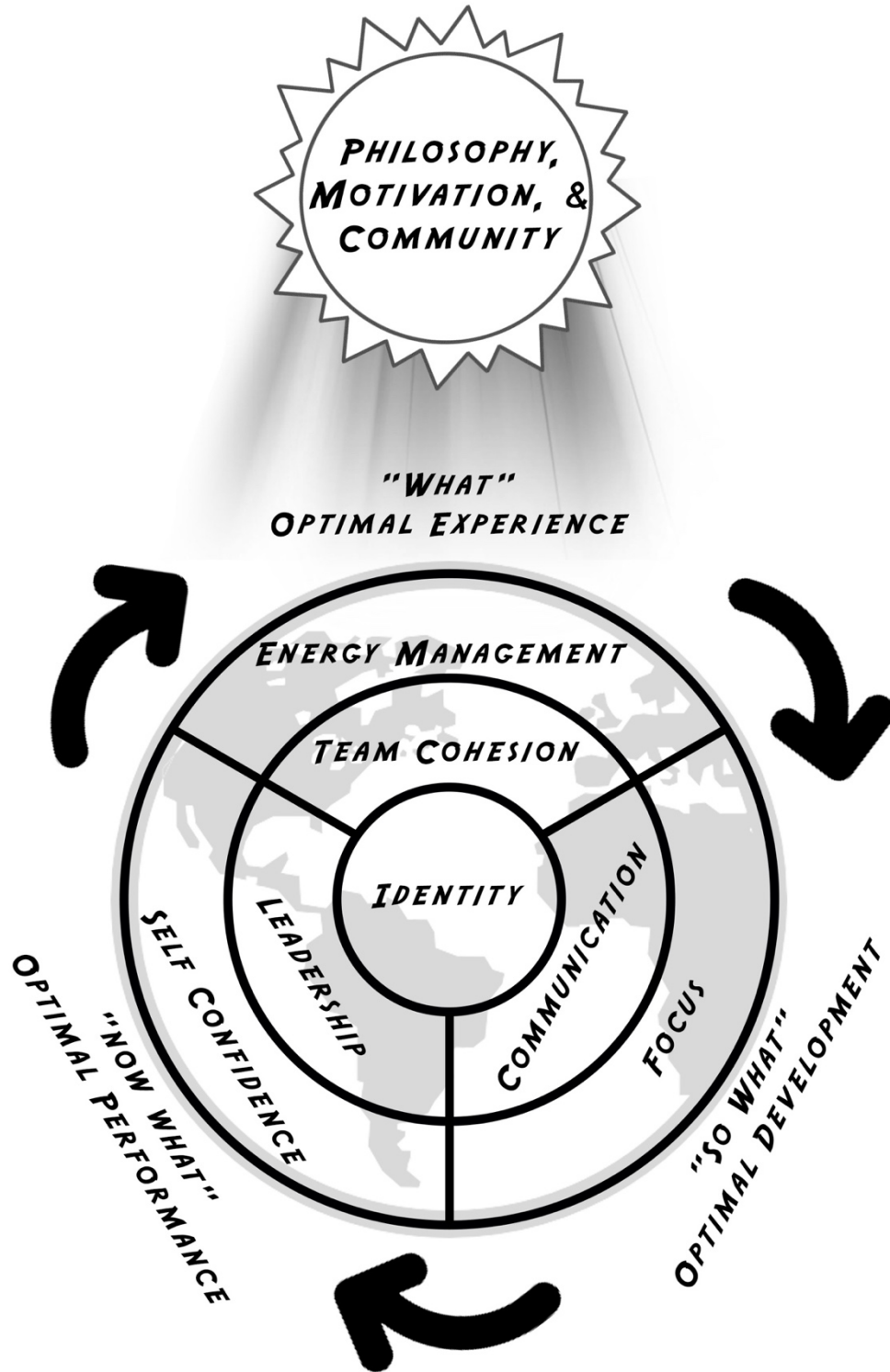
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# The Super Ninja Philosophy

*Envisioning the Process of Life and Learning*



*Understanding the Vision*

Defining my personal philosophy for experiential education has been very difficult. As I study more about sports psychology, motivation, and other philosophies of experiential education such as John Dewey, I feel as though every great thinker uses similar concepts and ideas to depict the process of learning. As Plato originally attempted to identify the perfect form of many concepts that cannot be easily explained in words, so too are all these different philosophies just different attempts to explain the same thing. Because of this, I feel that two consistent things are that each and every person comes to the table with a different perspective based on their identity, and through time, they are constantly changing and evolving.

In Sports Psychology, Robin Vealey's Inner Edge diagram depicting the different components of a great coach contains elements that are fixed with little room for growth and change. Pillars often depict a building that is stuck in place and cannot grow or improve, and while some buildings can stand through the ages, that doesn't leave much room for changing perspectives. As I delved further into this philosophy, I discovered for my own philosophy that the use of a circle would be better in order to depict my philosophy as a representation of a planet.

Each person represents a planet, like earth, receiving a constant flow of energy from the sun. At the core of each person is their identity; the genes, beliefs, physical identity, mindset, personal history, social history, and all other aspects of a person that makes them unique. As each person receives energy from their own philosophy, their coach's or mentor's philosophy, their community and other external or internal motivations, they begin to grow and learn.

I have included Kolb's experiential learning cycle into my philosophy to depict the passage of time. Every moment is an experience in itself where people strive to achieve an optimal experience. In order to reach this optimal experience, team, community, or group cohesion is essential as these moments are when other people bring their unique perspectives and either clash and create turmoil or they resonate and create cohesion. John Dewey believes "that all education proceeds by the participation of the individual in the social consciousness of the race." In this way, the community is why we attempt to find the common in each of our different perspectives in order to find team or group cohesion. In the "what" portion of my philosophy, energy management is one of the best mental skills for achieving an optimal experience. We must have appropriate amounts of appropriate types of energy in order to participate at our highest capacity in that moment.

After each experience, we reflect on the experience either consciously or subconsciously. In the experiential learning cycle, it is in this "so what" moment that true learning occurs. In the words of John Dewey, "We do not learn from experience... we learn from reflecting on experience." Many people do not have time to reflect or choose not to, but if we wish to pursue optimal development of ourselves, our team/group, or the community, we must make the effort to bring reflection to the conscious realm. Communication is the basis of this development. We communicate with ourselves in the form of electrical currents being sent through our nervous system telling our body what to do, and if there is ever a break in that connection, our bodies cannot function properly. In the same way, the way we speak to ourselves and the people around us can have the same effect; either the people we are communicating with understand us or they don't. If they don't, it becomes more difficult to achieve optimal development. Focus is another key pillar for optimal development as our focus determines the area or topic of growth and development.

The next step after reflection is determining what this means for the future. In other words, it is in the "now what?" moment that we can truly seek optimal performance. When we reflect on

our experience and figure out how to apply it in the future, we are able to master our performance and become the best that we can possibly be. Leadership is the pillar of optimal performance. Leadership comes in many different forms such as the one who leads by example, the dictator, or the motivator. The best leaders also know how to follow, and thus, the more of a leader we can become, the more optimal our performance will also become. The best tool for the now what moment is self efficacy. The more confident we are in ourselves, the more we can truly be our unique self instead of trying to be someone else. When we are fully ourselves, we become the best type of leader we can be and thus our optimal performance will begin to influence our optimal experience and development.

The most important aspect of the experiential learning cycle is that it continues to keep happening as time continues to pass. Having chosen a circle for the concept of my philosophy, it is possible to see that we expand our circle as we grow. I have chosen to use the concept of the challenge circle to explain the growth of our planet when we are in the challenge zone or the shrinking when we enter the panic zone. As such, it is vital that we participate in each portion of the cycle if we are to continue to grow. There may be moments of stagnation, or even times when we panic and cannot move forward, but only when we participate and challenge ourselves can we grow.