

Naturally Flourishing

Week One

Learning Outcomes

- Understand what is meant by the positive psychology term *flourishing*
- Explore what is meant by the term *flourishing in personal recovery*
- Be aware of the *Dual Continuum Model of Mental Health* (Keyes, 2005)
- Appreciate the concept of *perfection* in a natural context, and how to apply it to your own self-identity

What do you think it means to flourish?

What does flourishing look like?



**Can mental illness and
flourishing co-exist?**

**What does it mean to
flourish in personal
recovery?**



It *is* possible to flourish in personal recovery



Flourishing

- Multi-dimensional, made up of many different parts
- A relatively new area of research
- Moves beyond the confines of simple happiness or well-being
- Encompasses a wide range of positive psychological constructs and offers a more holistic perspective on what it means to be well and happy (Ackerman, 2020)



Flourishing includes...

Diagnosis
free?



Happy all the time?



Medication
free?

Problem free?

“Flourishing is the product of the **pursuit** and engagement of an authentic life that brings inner joy and happiness through meeting goals, being connected with life passions, and relishing in accomplishments **through the peaks and valleys of life.**”

(Soots, 2015)

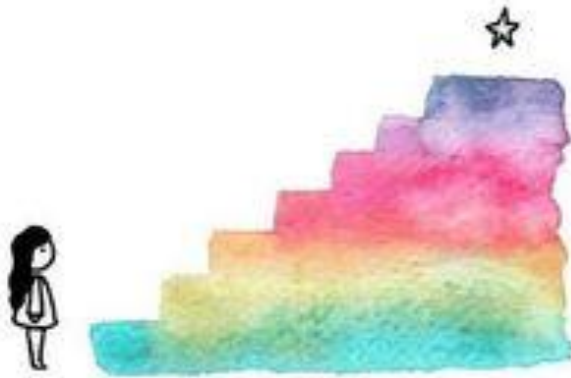
The pursuit of an authentic life...



Flourishing is not a trait or a characteristic; it's not something that you "either have or don't have." flourishing is not a static, immutable piece of who you are, it is a process that requires action. Anyone can flourish, but it will likely require some effort to get there.

- Soots (2015)

take a small step every day



you now



you in the future

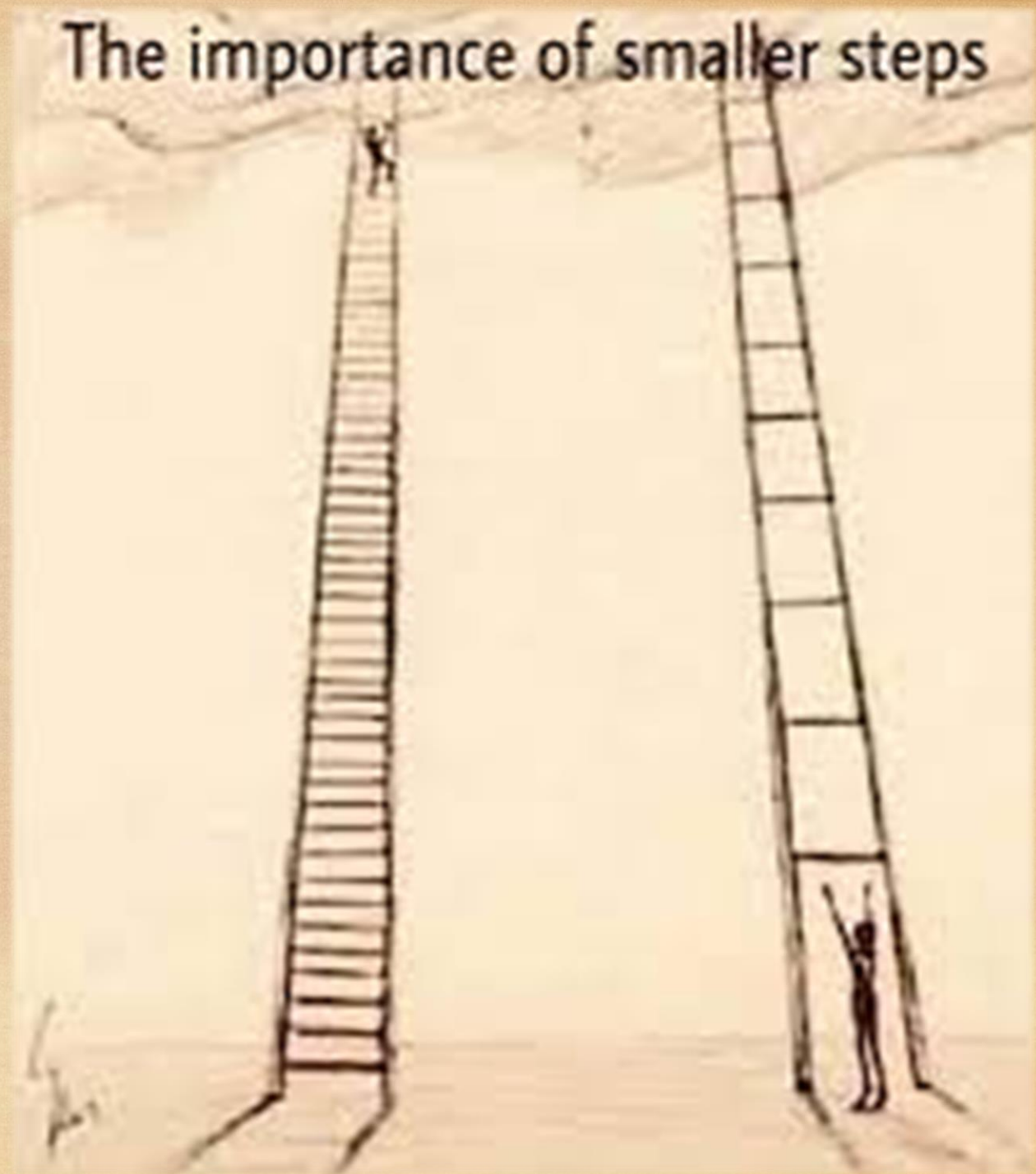


you will grow!

Success doesn't come from what you do occasionally, but what you do consistently.



**And
Remember...**



“

You don't have to see
the whole staircase,
just take the first
step.

MARTIN LUTHER
KING JR

”



ONE DAY AT A TIME.

ONE STEP AT A TIME.

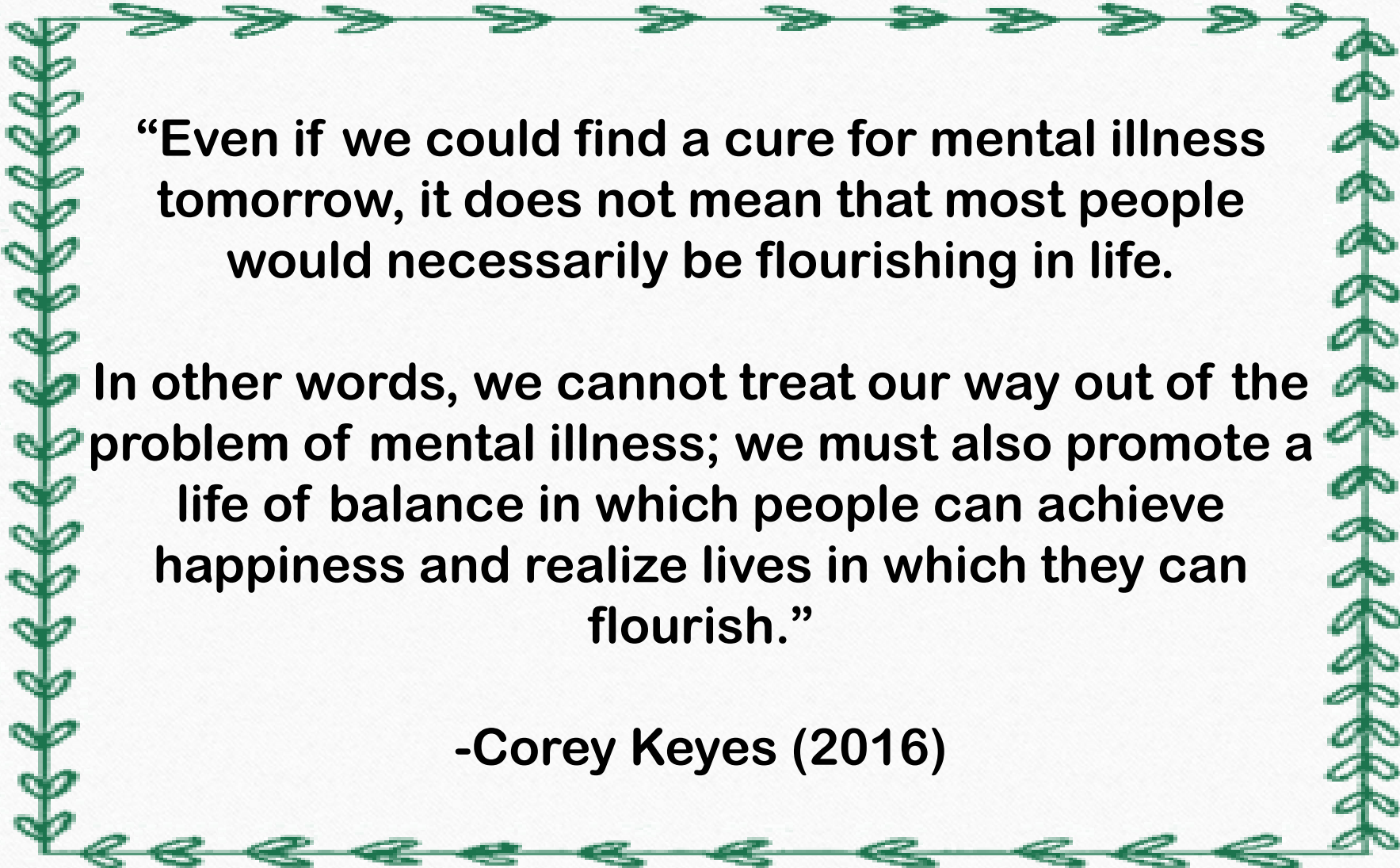
ONE HOUR AT A TIME.

ONE MINUTE AT A TIME.

ONE SECOND AT A TIME.








“Even if we could find a cure for mental illness tomorrow, it does not mean that most people would necessarily be flourishing in life.

In other words, we cannot treat our way out of the problem of mental illness; we must also promote a life of balance in which people can achieve happiness and realize lives in which they can flourish.”

-Corey Keyes (2016)



**You can have a
can be diagnosed
with mental illness
but still flourish,
and you can be
diagnosis-free but
still languish...**

Languishing

“Emptiness and stagnation, constituting a life of quiet despair ... individuals who describe themselves and life as hollow, empty, a shell, and a void.”
(Corey Keyes)

Languishing has been associated with:

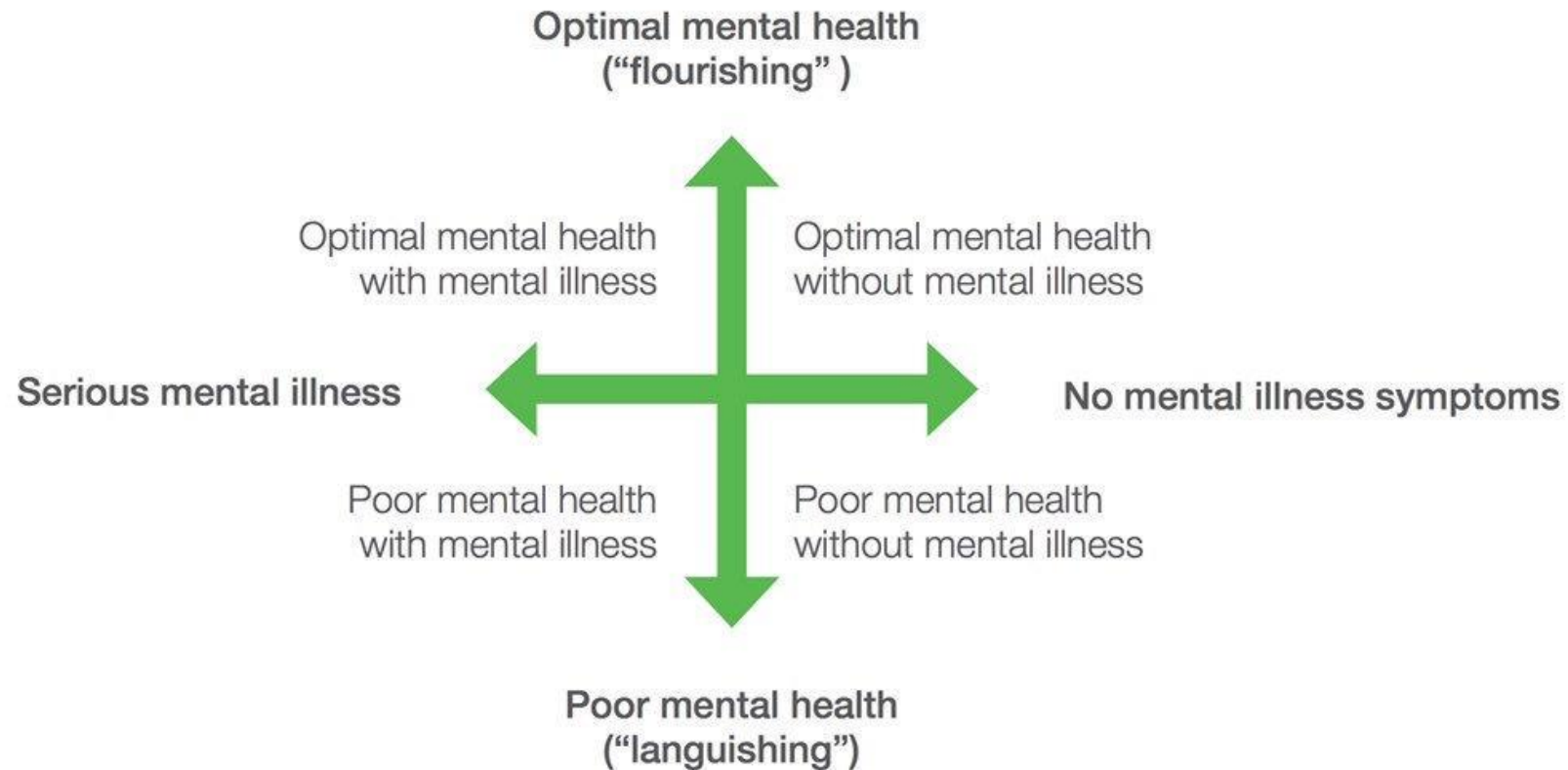
- Poorer functioning
- Time off from work
- Being unable to manage life's daily activities
- Risk factor for mental illness



People who are languishing often “fall through the cracks” as their symptoms aren’t “clinically significant” enough to access services.

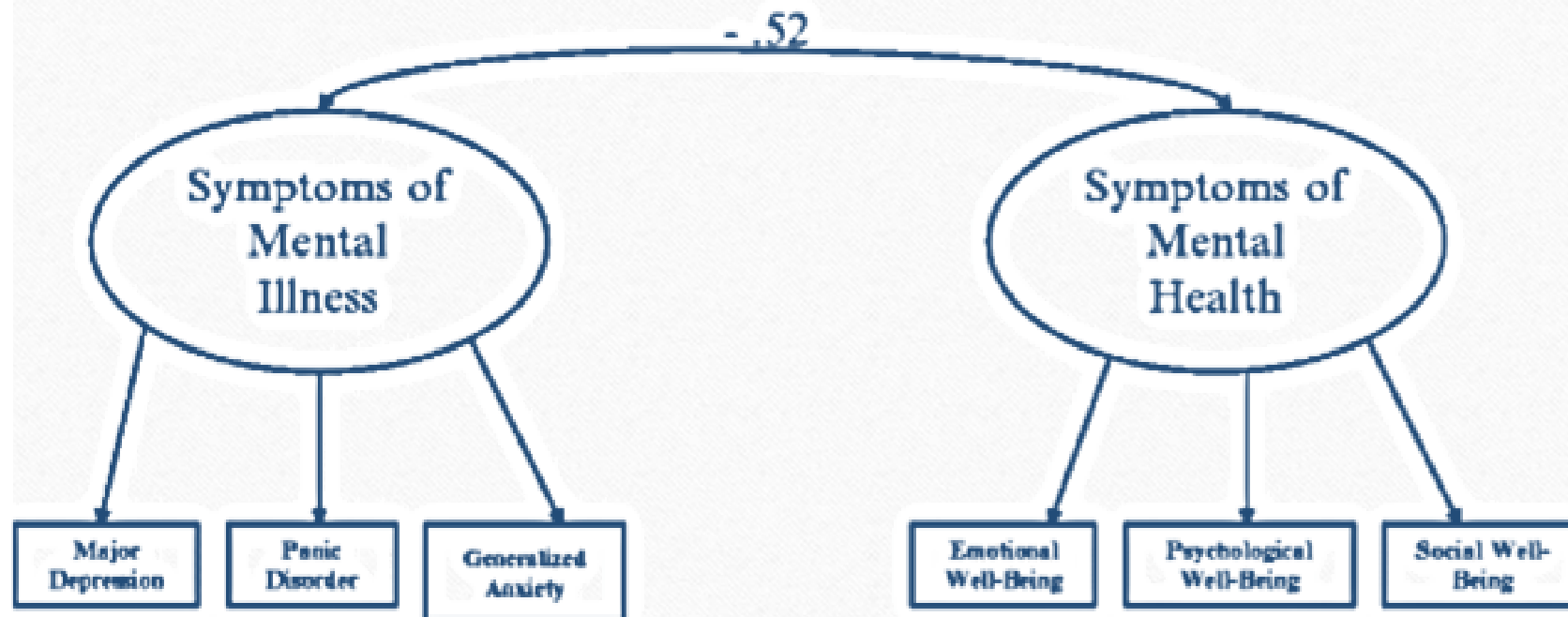


Figure 1: Dual Continuum Model of Mental Health and Mental Illness



MacKean, 2011. Adapted from: The Health Communication Unit at the Dalla Lana School of Public Health at the University of Toronto and Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario; based on the conceptual work of Corey Keyes

Mental Health as two Continua Keyes (2005)



Dr. Corey Keyes:

“A Positive Approach to Healthcare”

TEDx Atlanta

www.youtube.com/watch?v=TYHOI3T32VA

Reflect again on what it means to flourish...



**“In nature, nothing is perfect
and everything is perfect.
Trees can be contorted, bent
in weird ways, and they're still
beautiful.”**

(Alice Walker)



What Nature Teaches Us About Perfect Imperfection

Dr. Kathleen Allen (2019)

- “I used to consider perfection the pinnacle of professional competency. It was not only desirable but I believed it to be achievable as well. In all the years I spent chasing perfection I never stopped to question the *legitimacy* of this lofty goal...”
- “My burden began to lift with the epiphany that I was no longer living in a **closed system**.”
- In a **closed system control is easy** – the number of variables is **finite**. Even if it takes time to understand all the elements that make up the system once they are known, **mastery is possible**. We can develop a *perfect* response to each set of variables.”
- Open systems are **dynamic** by nature. The variables we need to understand, unlike the limited number in closed systems, are **infinite** and **always expanding**. Wild cards are thrown in the mix and obstacles grow by leaps and bounds, mutating problems and clashing systems that make existing in an open system very **unpredictable**.

- **“Suddenly I realized that when everything’s in flux, perfection has a short shelf life.”**
- **Open systems dislike perfection**
- **In a closed system practice made perfect. However, in an open system perfection isn’t possible.**
- **Because they are dynamic and continually expanding, open systems are constantly changing. We can still try to achieve perfection but even if we get it, the definition of perfection could change in ten seconds.**
- **Nature teaches us to embrace our perfect imperfection.... nature teaches us to value experimentation over perfection.**



- **Nature experiments constantly but only continues with what works.** Experimentation is wildly different from perfection. In experimentation you try different things, expanding possibilities and relying on learning to figure out what works and what doesn't. Over time pursuing perfection makes us rigid thinkers – and severely limits the innovation and risk-taking that help expand our skills and help us grow.
- **Nature molds form to fit function.** Nature is a dynamic, open system. It constantly changes form when that transformation benefits the purpose of the system. Investment in a specific form isn't a good reason for nature to force it to continue "as-is."
- **Imagine a stream that starts from melting snow and changes as it makes its way toward the pull of the sea. That stream changes form when needed. It doesn't conform to any one form specifically.**



- When we pursue a specific form relentlessly, we're really pursuing perfection. When the context changes, a form may no longer fit the function and needs to be let go.
- Nature is adaptive, constantly learning and evolving. In the 3.8 billion years nature has inhabited and formed this planet, it has let go of billions of forms that no longer serve its larger purpose of creating conditions conducive to sustaining life for generations.
- The fact that we still have life on earth proves nature's ability to adapt and learn is a success.

Perfection is not nature's goal.

- Nature focuses on evolution. Therefore, nature experiments and adapts according to results.

“Let go of perfection and embrace experimentation and adaptation, learning and enjoyment of the dynamic nature (of imperfection).”



**Flourishing
looks different
in each
season.**



Our flourishing can look different too!

**“Every flower blooms in its own
time.”
- Ken Petti**



wildflowers
adapt and bloom
wherever they want,
be a wildflower.

Aly Aubrey



References and Further Reading

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