Jan Tønnesvang & Nanna B. Hedegaard

THE VITALISING MODEL
– what it is and how it can be used in practice

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This booklet is intended as an open access introduction to *the Vitalising Model*, which is one of the cornerstones in the Integrative Vitalising Psychology (IVP), developed by Jan Tønnesvang, who is a professor in Psychology at Aarhus University. Another model in IVP is *the Model of Qualified Self Determination*, which is also available as an open access booklet at Klim.dk. A third model in IVP is *the Quadrant Model*, which is developed by the American philosopher Ken Wilber. The Quadrant Model is essential in making Vitalising Psychology an Integrative approach. A booklet that introduces to *the Quadrant Model* is also available for free download at Klim.dk

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The Vitalising model
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INTRODUCTION

This booklet describes the Vitalising Model, what it is and how it can be used in pedagogical and educational practice. First, the chapter will give a brief theoretical presentation of the model. As will be seen, the model entails four basic psychological needs expressed as four basic forms of motivational directedness towards the relationships and environments that provide these needs with psychological oxygen – and thus vitalise different ways of being motivated and engaged in one's life-processes. Next, the chapter will outline three specific ways of operationalising the Vitalising Model in order that it can be used to promote psychological oxygenation of people's efforts to shape the course of their lives. The first version is a Dialogue Model prototypically used to talk about a person or a group of persons. The next version is the Analytical Model used to analyse vitalising conditions and gauge the level of psychological oxygen in people's environments. The third approach is the Counselling Model. This model is used to establish a structure within which to have a dialogue with a person about his or her current and desired self-views. When applied in professional work with for instance children and young people, the Vitalising Model provides a tool for establishing a meeting structure that invites to dialogue about how various factors and individuals contribute to the vitalisation of the child's or the young person's basic motivation. It also offers an analytical tool for the system to apply a resource-oriented perspective to itself as a system that generates more or less vitalising conditions for its participators. Finally, it offers a counselling tool for structuring dialogues with people about their self-understandings, dreams and life challenges and the best way to address these.

BASIC NEEDS AND THE NEED FOR VITALISATION

As humans, we are motivated to satisfy certain fundamental needs. This involves basic physiological needs, such as the needs for food, drink and shelter, as well as basic psychological needs, such as the needs for autonomy, relatedness, competence (Deci & Ryan, 2000) and meaning (Hansen, 2001). The focus of the Vitalising Model is on the basic psychological needs. It is our basic psychological needs and their relation to our values that drive us to realise our existence. These needs spring from fundamental existential conditions, e.g. that we all will live and die – together with others and alone – and that throughout life we need to learn and develop in order to survive and be appreciated and to appreciate others, and that we need to find meaning and value and to involve ourselves in things that makes a difference to ourselves and to others. Our basic psychological needs are expressed as four forms of motivational directedness. These four forms of motivational directedness are expressed in people's lives as basic (prototypic) strivings towards being vitalised by other people and by other life-nurturing aspects in our environments. From the beginning of life, people make a cry-out to the world to be recognised in optimally responsive ways, so that they can develop and transform into having 'good enough' senses of self-worth, belongingness, meaning and life-competency.

The four basic forms of motivational directedness are shown in figure 1 and will be explained below.
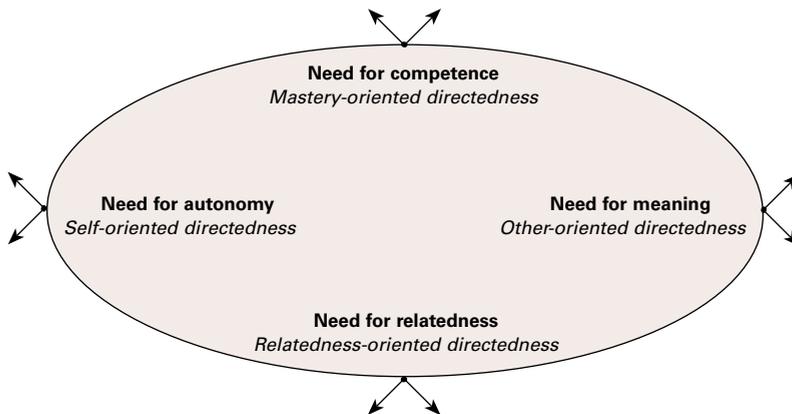

Figure 1. The basic theoretical structure in the vitalising model.

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THE FOUR BASIC FORMS OF MOTIVATIONAL DIRECTEDNESS

Self-oriented directedness refers to one's orientation toward having others 'see me for who I am.' This orientation concerns our fundamental need to 'be who we are' by manifesting our individuality and to be seen, appreciated, understood and mirrored in relation to our self-presentation and self-assertion. It concerns our need to be seen with the special qualities that we bring with us, and which make up our contribution to our surroundings. Hence, being understood and accepted in this domain promotes our development of self-esteem and self-worth. In Self-Determination Theory, this would approximately correspond to the need for Autonomy.

Keywords: 'See me for who I am.' Self-manifestation, self-assertion, self-presentation and related needs for appreciation. 'Being who I am.'
In terms of needs: Need for autonomy.

Relatedness-oriented directedness concerns our need to 'belong' with/among others and can be expressed as 'let me belong, as you do.' Our relatedness-oriented directedness concerns our fundamental need to engage in close social relationships and to be a part of identity communities where we experience a sense of connectedness and tolerance. This means that we are oriented towards engaging in communities and interactions with a sense of trust and engaging in trusting relationships with others with whom we feel a sense of belongingness. This basic form of motivational directedness corresponds to the basic need for relatedness in Self-Determination Theory.

Keywords: 'Let me belong, as you do,' 'belonging,' we-ness and attachment, intimacy.
In terms of needs: Need for relatedness.

Mastering-oriented directedness concerns our fundamental need to develop competence to master our natural, social and personal worlds. We have a positive experience when we achieve this by developing and using our abilities, talents and skills in ways that are (optimally) attuned to our ambitions and ideals. This orientation is thus about 'mastering my tasks' and can be expressed as 'give me appropriate challenges'. The emphasis here is on our need for appropriate challenges within our zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978), that is, challenges that do not exceed or lie outside our potential capabilities, but instead frustrate them just enough to generate growth and development. This basic form of motivational directedness corresponds to the basic need for competence in Self-Determination Theory.

Keywords: 'Give me appropriate challenges,' 'mastering my tasks',
supportive sparring, talents and skills.
In terms of needs: Need for competence.

Value-oriented directedness concerns our fundamental need for orienting ourselves toward aspects and individuals that structure and open our life and provide a meaning horizon for the way in which we (can) express and assert ourselves. This may be expressed as a 'show me who or what I can become'. This form of directedness resembles relatedness-oriented directedness in that both are oriented towards community and participation. But it is at the same time pointing more specifically to our need for a sense of meaning-making direction based on relevant and meaningful structures and organisations, role models and ideals that reflect horizons of meaning that are greater than ourselves and arouse our spirit by being valuable, amusing or interesting, thus structuring or opening our lives. It promotes our sense of 'becoming'. This concept does not have a strict parallel in Self- Determination Theory, but it corresponds to those who work with the need for meaning in their theoretical system – for instance in Viktor Frankl's (1959) need for transcendence, in Irvin Yalom's (1980) need for meaning, in Daniel Pink's (2011) need for purpose, in Charles Taylor's (1991) horizons of meaning, or – in a religious perspective – the 'something more', as it was coined by William James (1902).

Keywords: 'Show me who/what I can become', a sense of meaning, existential structure
and existential opening. 'Becoming.'
In terms of needs: Need for meaning.

VITALISING RELATIONS PROVIDES PSYCHOLOGICAL OXYGEN

The corresponding relations to the basic forms of directedness are relations that entail *psychological oxygen.* The term psychological oxygen was originally used by Heinz Kohut (1913-1981) in Self-Psychology as a metaphor for the vitalising dimensions of our relationships with people or aspects in our environments, which we perceive as life-promoting, invigorating or otherwise vitalising (Hansen, 2001). Psychological oxygen stems from special and crucial forms of responses from our surroundings. Like organic oxygen, psychological oxygen is not usually something that we think about or pay much attention to, as long as it is present in appropriate ways. We mainly notice the importance of the oxygen when we are under pressure, and the 'flow has been cut off', causing us to lose our sense of direction, our ability

to do things that we are normally capable of, our close relations, or our sense of meaning. In extreme cases, we fall apart due to such circumstances. Another parallel between psychological oxygen and organic oxygen is that the need for psychological oxygen too is a life-long need. Unlike organic oxygen, however, the manner in which we strive to obtain psychological oxygen will differ from person to person, just as it also varies throughout the course of our life.

The responses that contain psychological oxygen are found in so-called *vitalising relationships*. We engage in vitalising relationships with other people and with aspects of our surroundings (where psychological oxygen of an appropriate quality is present in appropriate amounts) in order to promote and vitalise the development of the four basic needs. Vitalising relationships are thus a condition for our ability to establish and maintain a coherent self and to continue to develop as whole persons. Examples of vitalising relationships might be the relationship between a boy and his appreciative teacher (self-oriented directedness), a 12-year-old girl and her orientations towards the pop idol Justin Bieber (other-oriented directedness), a student and a challenging football coach (mastery-oriented directedness) or a 17-year-old girl and her group of friends (relatedness-oriented directedness). Regarding adults, it could likewise be a man and his appreciative boss (self), a woman's commitment to the philosophy of mother Theresa (other), a boxer and his sparring partner (mastery), and a working team with a good sense of community in their relations (relatedness). Figure 2 shows, how the four forms of directedness are vitalised by different types of vitalising relationship.
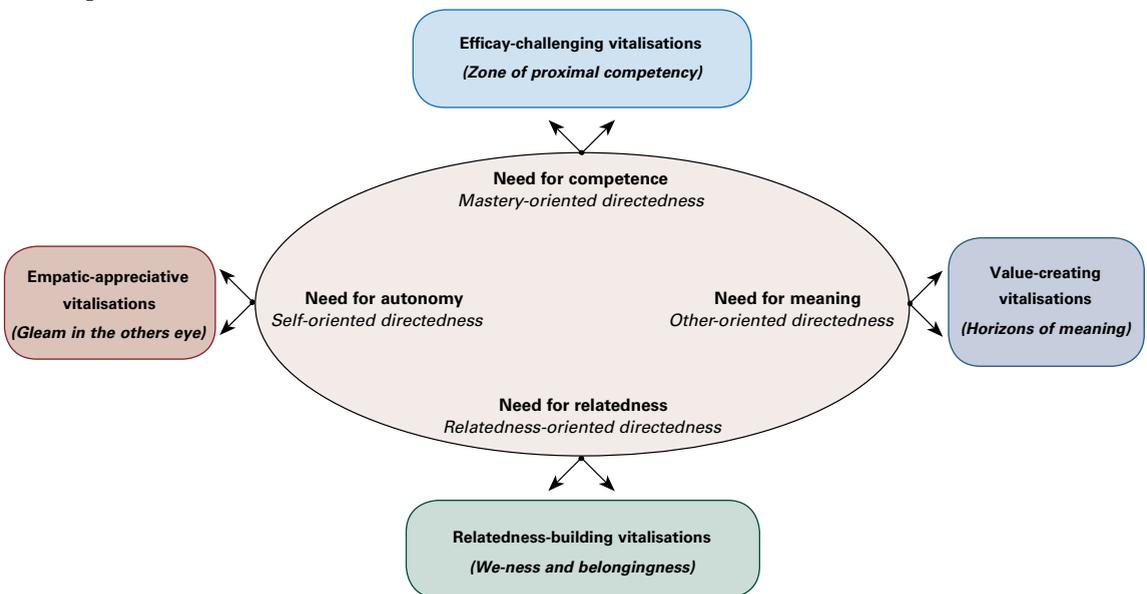

Figure 2: The Vitalising Model.

Appreciative vitalisations generate psychological oxygen for the individual's need for autonomy by responding to the self-oriented directedness ('see me for who I am') in his or her self-assertions and self-expressions. In these vitalising relationships, in other words, we empathically mirror and provide existential appreciation of the other person's autonomy by following, understanding and accepting that other person in relation to what he or she brings into the relationship in terms of the meaning (intentionality) that is implied in the behaviour. Appreciative recognition involves expressing understanding but not necessarily accepting everything. When there are needs for reality corrections, we seek to make these become oxygenating reality corrections. If, for example, an employee is erroneously convinced that her performance is above average and therefore feels entitled to special benefits in the workplace, an appreciative vitalising relationship would not simply mirror her, but instead promote an impression that is more in tune with reality by means of a curiosity that will challenge the employers self-view (Tønnesvang & Nielsen, 2006). Developmentally speaking, it is the vitalisation of this basic form of directedness that drives our development of ambitions, creativity, and sense of self-worth. It is from there that we develop the desire to manifest uniqueness by making something out of ourselves.

Value-creating vitalisations provide psychological oxygen to the need for meaning ('show me who/what I can become') by indicating possible life directions and avenues of greater values to our other-oriented directedness. Value-creating vitalising relationships serve to structure and open life for us. They create pathways for our ambitions (stemming from the self-oriented pole) in relation to the larger societal and cultural context of which they are part. By opening vistas of where to go and creating order against anomie, value-creating vitalisations (provided by idealisable others, by culture and societal values) promote the development of ideals, goals and values in individuals and groups. It is a kind of *existential structuring* of life-directions that plays an organising role by providing structure and frameworks of meaning for both individuals and groups. An example of a meaning-making vitalising relationship that is existentially structuring could be a student's relationship with an experienced and interesting teacher (or a mentor or coach) who structures and organises his or her teaching in a way that makes the student perceive learning as meaningful and worthwhile. On the other hand, it can also be more of an *existential opening* of new life-possibilities, as can be the case when idealisable others (role models, idols or cultural happenings) show new ways of fascinating pathways to go. An example of a meaning-making vitalising relationship that provides an existential opening could be a child or a young person who is fascinated by an interesting, engaging and dedicated assistant teacher, who starts up new projects, and whom the child or young person feels drawn

to. Or it could be a situation similar to when Bjarne Riis won the Tour de France in 1996, when we suddenly saw the roads of Denmark being worn thin by huge quantities of middle aged men in yellow t-shirt on their new bicycles.

Relatedness-building vitalisations generate psychological oxygen for our need for belongingness in our relatedness-oriented directedness ('let me belong, as you do'). It happens in 'good enough'-relations to other people in general and to those who we have more close relationships with in particular (friends, partners, and good colleagues, etc.). These relatedness-building vitalisations can be fuelled by two different types of psychological oxygen: intimacy or a sense of we-ness and belonging. Intimacy usually occurs in close relationships characterised by mutual bonding, warm feelings, trust and care. This occurs especially in friendship, romantic relationships, etc. Psychologically oxygenating experiences of we-ness and belonging occur in vitalising relationships within well-functioning groups, characterised by a sense of equal worth despite differences, and by a sense of belonging and shared identity among members with shared characteristics. Like intimacy, this form of we-ness is associated with friendships and family, but it is also a desired quality in workplaces, football teams, schools or other group contexts. Relatedness-building vitalisations oxygenate the develop-ment of the individual's ability to engage in social relationships and the capacity to show understanding and be accepting in relation to personal differences.

Efficacy-challenging vitalisations provide psychological oxygen to our need for competence in our mastery-oriented directedness ('give me appropriate challenges'). The source of psychological oxygen in efficacy-challenging vitalisations is supportive sparring that aims to challenge the growth layer of the individual's capacity (akin to Vygotsky's 'zone of proximal development'). In other words, the psychological oxygen is present where we are confronted with mastery challenges that are optimally adapted to our talents and cognitive style: challenges that are frustrating enough to push our competency development a step further. In relation to the challenge of mastering ourself (through self-discipline) as well as the challenge of mastering our tasks in the world, we need psychological oxygen from efficacy-challenging relationships in order to achieve the optimal use of our talents with an emphasis on learning and activity-oriented approaches to the tasks we encounter in the course of life. Our self-mastery is oxygenated when we are supported in developing self-boundaries and self-reflection in relation to managing our talents, style (cognitive style and learning style) and emotions. Our task mastery is oxygenated when we are challenged specifically on our talents and in supportive sparring.

Oxygenating reality-corrections. A key component in vitalising relations, regardless of the particular need it vitalises, is that they offer *oxygenating reality correction.* Oxygenating reality correction essentially means helping someone develop a self-image that is as realistic as possible. Neither disparagement nor excessive praise promotes a well-functioning and appropriate self-image. A distorted and biased self-image – whether it is unrealistically diminished or inflated – makes it difficult to integrate the actual development and progress of one's action and performance capacity into one's self-concept. What is the point of getting better at something if one's self-concept maintains that one is useless? On the other hand, it can be equally difficult if one's self-concept is based on being better than everyone else and then encountering a challenge one does not master. In summary, the Vitalising Model specifies four basic forms of directedness (or basic needs), which are vital-ised by psychological oxygen, which in turn is found in four main types of vitalis-ing relations. Environments in which vitalising relations are sufficiently 'good' to sustain a healthy development (of the participators' organised directedness) we call vitalising environments.

VITALISING ENVIRONMENTS
– THE CONTEXTS IN WHICH WE ARE VITALISED

Vitalising environments are environments where the psychological oxygen in the various relationships is 'good enough' to vitalise the our four forms of directed-ness. That the environment should be "good enough", not "perfect", reflects a special characteristic of vitalising environments (Hansen, 2001). It means that vitalising environments are *optimally frustrating* environments (not to be confused with maximally frustrating environments). A vitalising environment that offers optimal frustration is one in which relationships provides supportive sparring and oxygenating reality correction. In relation to children and young people, this implies that they have to engage actively in the learning process and put some-thing into it, that they need to be appreciated for their effort and encouraged to move on in order to master qualified self-determination as they shape a good course of life.

To work with vitalising environments one has to understand that all the par-ticipants in the system (the child/young person, teachers/other staff, management and parents) bring (the state of) their own forms of directedness with them into the activities and contexts of which they are part. Neither the child nor the young

person, the teachers, other employees, the boss or the counsellor can leave their orientations behind; we always bring them into the social space, using ourselves as an understanding-oriented tool. For a successful outcome, this understanding has to be embedded in the culture, and the parties have to take the various orientations into consideration. It should be noted here that this requirement cuts both ways. Thus, there should be a certain room and space for one's own as well as others' life-realisation. Examples of vitalising environments might be found in classrooms or in workplaces, but in fact, vitalising environments can (and should) be present everywhere, where we are engaged in living our lives!

Figure 3 shows a collection of the most significant ingredients in vitalising environments.
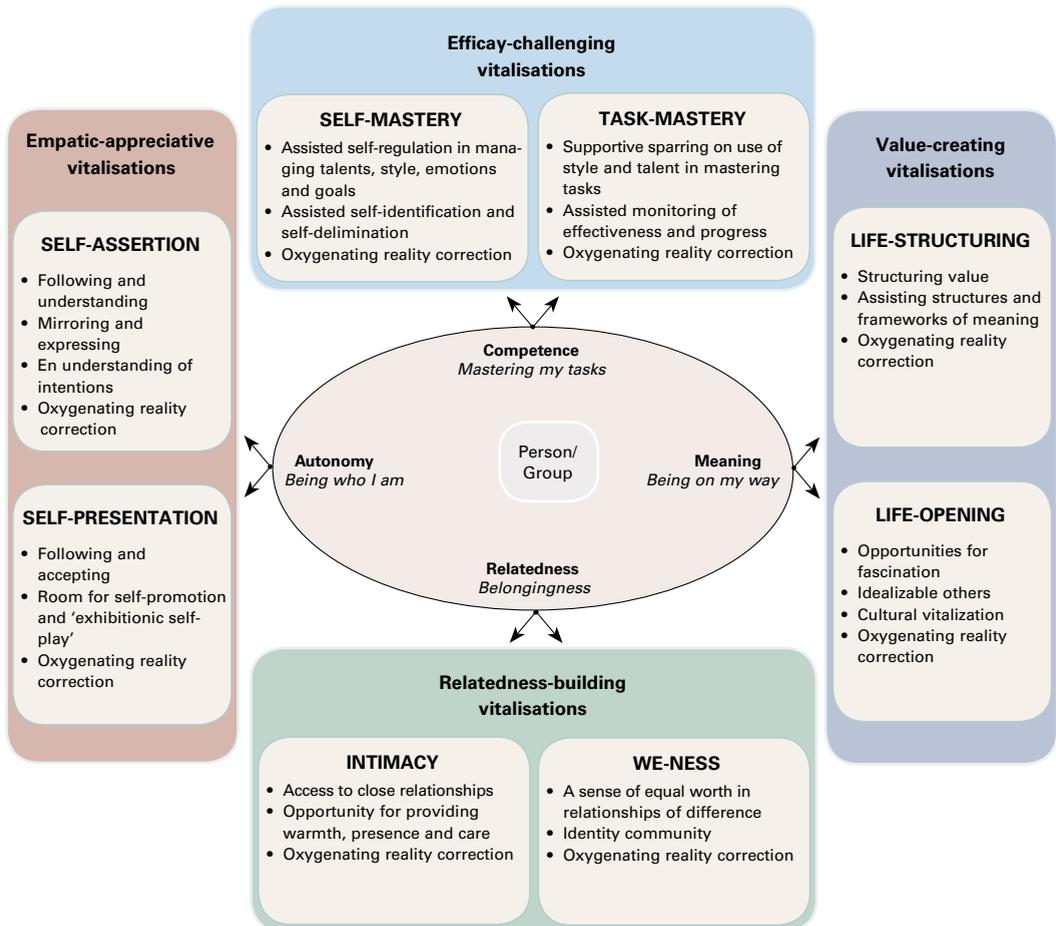

Efficay-challenging vitalisations

SELF-MASTERY
- Assisted self-regulation in managing talents, style, emotions and goals
- Assisted self-identification and self-delimitation
- Oxygenating reality correction

TASK-MASTERY
- Supportive sparring on use of style and talent in mastering tasks
- Assisted monitoring of effectiveness and progress
- Oxygenating reality correction

Empatic-appreciative vitalisations

SELF-ASSERTION
- Following and understanding
- Mirroring and expressing
- En understanding of intentions
- Oxygenating reality correction

SELF-PRESENTATION
- Following and accepting
- Room for self-promotion and 'exhibitionic self-play'
- Oxygenating reality correction

Value-creating vitalisations

LIFE-STRUCTURING
- Structuring value
- Assisting structures and frameworks of meaning
- Oxygenating reality correction

LIFE-OPENING
- Opportunities for fascination
- Idealizable others
- Cultural vitalization
- Oxygenating reality correction

Competence
Mastering my tasks

Person/ Group

Autonomy
Being who I am

Meaning
Being on my way

Relatedness
Belongingness

Relatedness-building vitalisations

INTIMACY
- Access to close relationships
- Opportunity for providing warmth, presence and care
- Oxygenating reality correction

WE-NESS
- A sense of equal worth in relationships of difference
- Identity community
- Oxygenating reality correction

Figure 3 Ingredients in vitalising relationships.

The following pages describe three examples of how to use the Vitalising Model in practice:

➢ **the Dialogue Model for talking together *about* a person or a group of persons**
➢ **the Analytical Model for analysing vitalising conditions *for* participators in specific contexts**
➢ **the Counselling Model for talking *with* a person**

THE DIALOGUE MODEL – TALKING *ABOUT* A PERSON

The Dialogue Model aims to establish a structure for having dialogues about a person's vitalising conditions and challenges in regard to his or her motivational directedness, well-being and development. This Model is prototypically used as a tool in situations where several parties in a child's surroundings need to develop an attuned and productive dialogue, for example to promote cooperation between school/ preschool and parents, in teacher-parent conversations, in conversations between school and after-school facilities or in connection with the involvement of psychological/ special needs services. An earlier version of the Dialogue Model was designed by psychologist H.P. Eriksen (2008) of the Centre for Inclusion and Educational
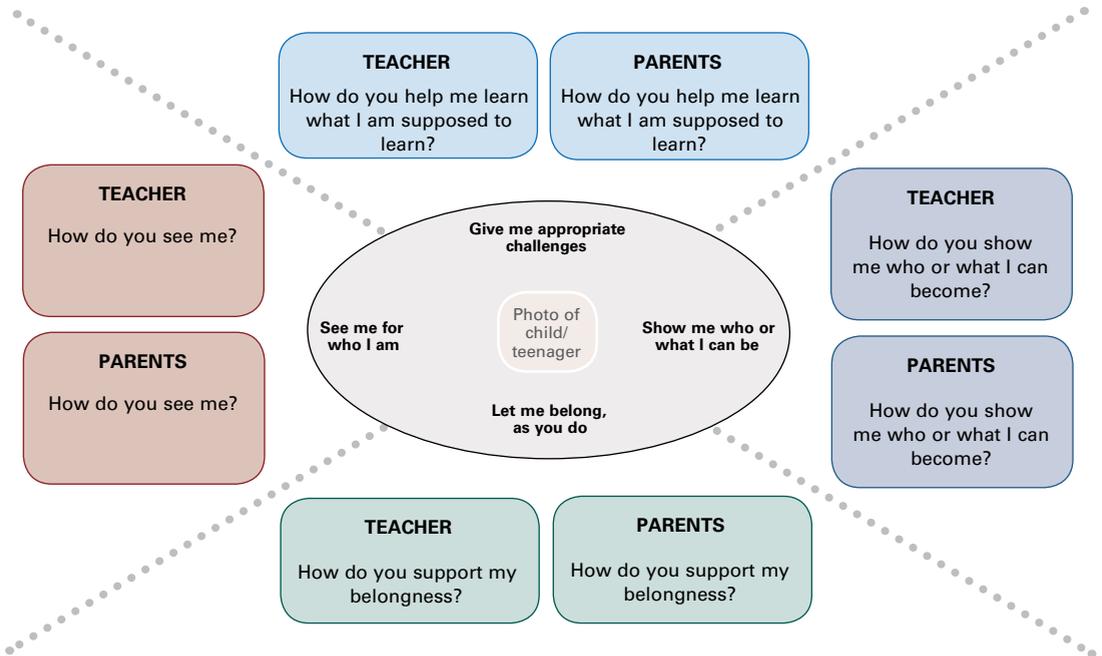
Figur 4: The Dialogue Model

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Psychological Counselling in the Danish city of Odense – in the following referred to as PPR. This earlier version was subsequently developed into its current form by H.P. Eriksen, J.Tønnesvang and M.S. Ovesen as they were using it in an intervention project with the aim of facilitating the meeting between teachers and parents of ethnic minority children (Ovesen, Eriksen & Tønnesvang, 2012). The Dialogue Model in its current form is shown in figure 4.

When used between two dialogue parties (for instance teachers and parents), the Dialogue Model helps to make sure that the parties are getting equal opportunities to express their perspectives on the subject of the dialogue. To promote an equal dialogue, the model asks the same questions of the participating parties. In the Odense project, this ensured that both teachers and parents got opportunities to express their perspectives on the child and to be heard for what they had to say. The model also provides a clear and natural agenda and structure for the meeting between the parties, which helps promote an atmosphere that lets nuanced stories about the child emerge and makes it possible to clarify and balance expectations of the child and discuss how parents and teachers can best support the child in achieving these goals at home, in day care, in school, in the after-school setting, etc.

Because the Dialogue Model in Odense was used in cooperation with parents and teachers who were not familiar with the Vitalising Model, it was deliberately presented in a very simple layout. The oval section in the centre illustrates the child's four forms of directedness, described in simplified terms. Thus, the selforiented directedness becomes 'see me for who I am'; the other-oriented directedness becomes 'show me who or what I can become'; the relatedness-oriented directedness becomes 'let me belong, as you do'; and the mastery-oriented directedness becomes 'give me appropriate challenges'. In the middle of the oval field, one places a picture of the child or writes the child's name. The boxes around the oval relate to the parents and the teacher(s) as significant adults in the child's life who have knowledge about and an impact on the expression of the four forms of directedness and on the challenges that the child has in relation to these. For each of the four needs entailed in the directedness, a question is asked of the parents and of the teacher(s). In relation to the self-oriented directedness, the question is, 'How do you see me?' In relation to the other-oriented directedness, the question is, 'How do you show me who or what I can become?' In relation to the relatednessoriented directedness, the question is, 'What do you think I should do to belong?' And in relation to mastery-oriented directedness, the question is, 'How do you help me learn what I am supposed to learn?'

When using the Dialogue Model for conversations that contain potential resistance and conflicts among the parties, it can be helpful to appoint a mediator (or a moderator) who remains impartial and allocates speaking time. At the start of the conversation, place a laminated A3-version of the Dialogue Model in the middle of the table where everyone can see it. The mediator then briefly introduces the parents and the teacher(s) to the model. For example, the introduction may go as follows:

> *The section in the middle concerns what X needs in order to learn what he/she needs for an optimum development. As you can see, there are also eight boxes around the middle area. Half of these boxes are marked PARENTS, and the other half of these boxes are marked TEACHER(S). As you can see, the same questions apply to you as parents and to us as teachers. That is because all children – including X – do better in school, if you as parents and you as teachers work together to support their learning. As adults, we are also the most important persons in X's life, and we have to listen to each other to discover what it is that X needs.*
>
> Adapted from Ovesen, Eriksen & Tønnesvang, 2012, p. 117

In the Odense-project, the Dialogue Model was used in processes that included a series of four dialogues. In principle, however, it can be used in processes that are both longer and shorter as well as in individual conversations that aim to clarify different perspectives on the child's general situation in order to develop a resource-oriented action plan in relation to the child. It is a central feature in the implementation of the Dialogue Model that it initially invites an understanding-oriented approach. Only once a sufficient degree of mutual under-standing has been reached, does the process move in a more solutionoriented direction. Remaining in the understanding orientation long enough to develop a real understanding of the problem situation may be a bit of a challenge if one's daily work calls for a more solution-oriented approach.

The dialogue revolves around a strategy that does not prescribe a specific starting point or sequence of topics. Ideally, the dialogue partners should move around the model in accordance with the themes in the child's situation as they come up. Thus, the structure unfolds in accordance with the content of the conversation. For example, if a talk about how the teacher(s) and the parents perceive the child leads into a talk about the child's peer relationships, the attention shifts to the relatedness dimension of the model, which is then used to examine what the teacher(s) and the parents, respectively, think the child should do to belong. The art (and challenges) in this dialogue format is to sense when the parties have developed suf-

ficient understanding of a particular area of the model, so that it is appropriate for the conversation to move into a new area.

ANALYSING VITALISING CONDITIONS *FOR* PEOPLE

In the general effort to develop vitalising environments, *the model can be used to analyse vitalising conditions* (cf. Figure 5). In this capacity, the model is used to give the context that surrounds people an opportunity to examine their own role and explore the vitalising conditions that are being created in relation to the four basic forms of directedness as a basis for an adequate supply of psychological oxygen. Examples of contexts could be: A family, a staff group, a class, a school, a youth counselling system, a group of friends, etc.
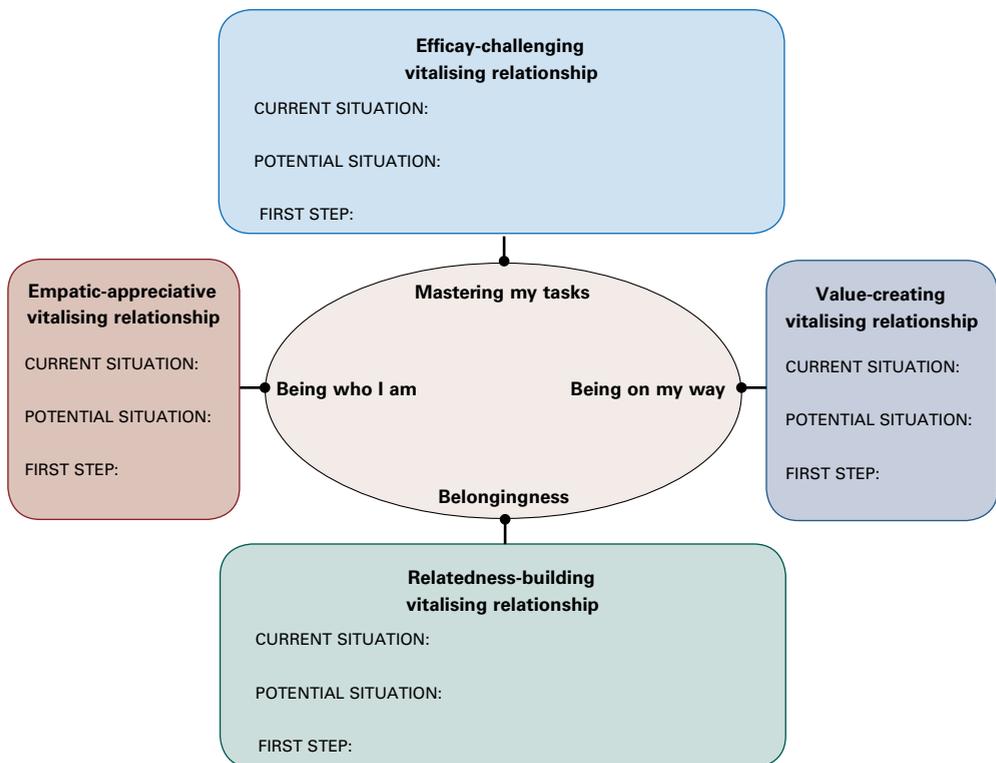
Figur 5: Analysing vitalising conditions.

When the model is used as a means of analysing and talking about vitalising conditions, it provides a structure and a conceptual framework that contribute to a shared language. Having a shared language facilitates dialogue, prevents misunderstandings and helps maintain a shared focus in the conversation. This common framework and shared language create a forum where disagreements that emerge can be seen as *meaningful disagreements.* Meaningful disagreements are disagreements that are framed by a basic common understanding and a shared field of attention that keep the conversation on track. This is particularly relevant when people from different professions need to communicate about children and young people, and the goal is to cooperate in order to achieve changes within a given context.

In the vitalising analysis, the parties can choose what they wish to place in the centre of the model as the focus of the discussion, for example a child or a group of children. This framework can also be used to analyse, how a context (a class, a school, an after-school facility, a distribution of work-related tasks, etc.) establishes relationships as conditions for vitalising the individual child or the group. Here, it is important to note that a vitalising relationship is any type of relationship that contains psychological oxygen. These relationships exist as vitalising dimensions of connections with *other non-human* factors (things, ideas, places, animals, etc.) and *other humans* who are *perceived* as vitalising.

One should not expect to be able to vitalise all four needs simultaneously in every situation. However, the Analytical Model enables a good understanding of how and when a context generates 'good enough' vitalising conditions for the person or the group of persons one works with.

In analysing vitalising conditions, it is not important which field is addressed first. It is, however, essential to linger in each field until it has been explored fairly exhaustively, and until the process has uncovered as many nuances and as much information as possible. First, the communication about vitalisi ng conditions aims to uncover the current presence of more or less vitalising relationships. Next, this knowledge about the current state of the context is used as a basis for discussing what might be desirable or potential conditions for the person or persons in question. In closing, this discussion will be used to consider a *first step*: Who is supposed to do what now, why, with whom, how, and when. This to make sure that something actually happens after the meeting is over.

Below, we offer some suggestions for questions in relation to the current situation, the potential situation and the first step. We should emphasise that these are merely *suggestions.* In relation to the Analytical Model and the other practice models that we are presenting here, our suggestions for specific questions are *not*

intended as formulas or manuals prescribing the practical application of the models. It is a fundamental feature of the integrative vitalising psychology that it should also be vitalising for the people using the approach. In order for that to happen, it is essential that the user can take ownership of the models and methods that he or she is applying. In our opinion, that is best done by using one's professional experience and independent judgment to personalise the approach and select questions that seem meaningful in the actual practice situation. Though there is nothing wrong with using the questions that we suggest, one should not feel that they have to do that unless they feel that it makes sense for them. With this reminder, here is our suggested procedure:

Current vitalising conditions: After deciding what life-contexts to analyse and writing this in the middle of the model to ensure a shared focus for the conversation, the process of examining the current vitalising conditions can begin. This will include taking a look on the appreciative, the value-creating, the relatedness-building and the efficacy-challenging vitalising condition that are currently present in the context. Here are some examples of possible questions about the current situation:

> ➢ **How is the context actually providing vitalising conditions for X in regard to each of his or her basic needs (the four forms of motivational directedness)?**
> ➢ **What do we know about how X is vitalised in other contexts in his/her life (family, friends, other systems)?**
> ➢ **How do we take our knowledge about X's vitalising conditions in other contexts into account in our understanding of X's need for psychological oxygen in our context?**
> ➢ **What are the limitations in our way of providing vitalising conditions for X?**
> ➢ **How do we make vitalising relationships available to X?**
> ➢ **Why do we make vitalising relationships available to X in this way/these ways?**

Potential vitalising conditions: Once the existing vitalising conditions in the context have been uncovered, this knowledge can be used as a basis for reflecting on and openly discussing a more desirable situation. In this discussion of what is desirable, there is room for wishes, ideas and dreams on every scale. However, for different reasons some wishes may be impossible to develop into actual possibilities. Wishes can be a source of inspiration, and perhaps in the long run some of these wishes will be viable – even if they are not viable right now. We call the conditions that relates to future directedness for *potential* vitalising conditions to underscore that it is not

everything that is desirable that will be possible. Here are some examples of possible questions about the potential conditions:

➢ **What do we think would be good vitalising conditions for X in the future?**
➢ **What possibilities do we have for creating these desirable conditions for X?**
➢ **What are the limitations in our possibilities for creating good conditions for X, and are we able and willing to address these limitations??**

First step: This is about translating the discussion into action, which may be achieved by agreeing on a specific first step. A specific first step might be to introduce something new in practice, but it may also be to agree to reflect further on a particular issue. Apart from the requirement that it should be specific, the first step has a very wide scope. Reflecting on something can also be considered a first step, if the parties agree that this is the way to proceed. The key is to commit to move forward based on the awareness that has been generated and to agree on a strategy for following up on this first step. (There is little point in everybody going home to reflect unless they also define how and when they are going to follow up on these reflections.) Here are some examples of possible questions about the first step:

➢ **Who does what in relation to what; when and how do they do it – and together with whom?**
➢ **What do we do if this first step fails?**
➢ **When do we meet again to follow up on the movement in the first step?**

The goal of the vitalising analysis is to develop a shared understanding of how the system develops and maintains vitalising conditions and relationships – formal as well as informal – that contribute to or possibly limit the person's ability to shape his or her course of life. In relation to young people (and older children), this can be followed up by – or unfolded in parallel with – conversations *with* the child/young person within the framework of the Counselling Model. That approach is explained in the following.

THE COUNSELLING MODEL – TALKING *WITH* PERSONS
Conversations with young people about their course of life

In vitalising psychological conversations with for instance young people the Counselling Model is used to address the need-dynamics that are at play when a

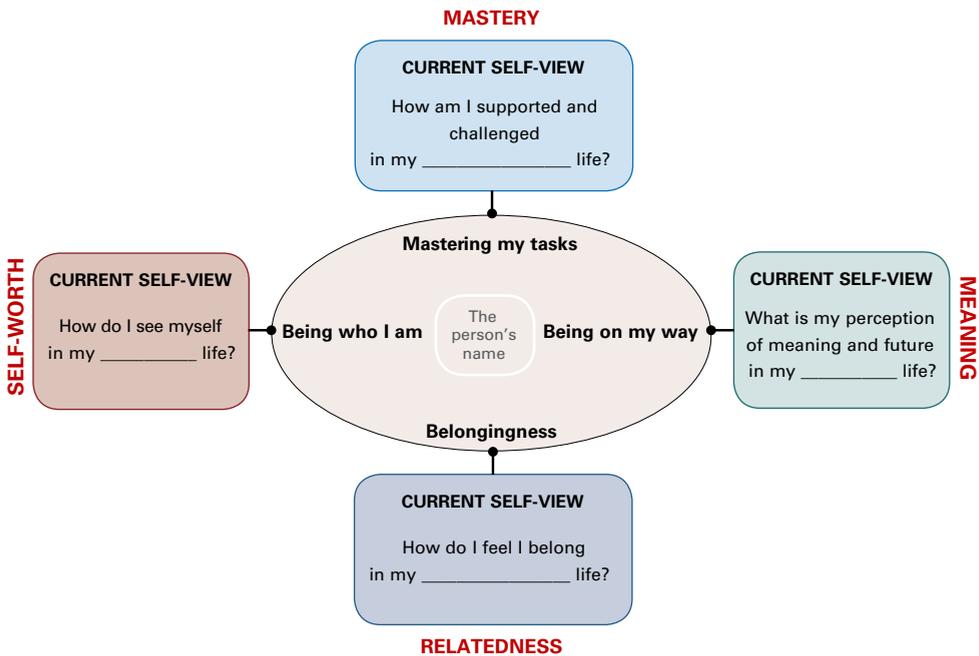© Jan Tønnesvang & Nanna B. Hedegaard

person shape his or her course of life, and which are expressed as motivations, desires, possibilities, challenges and vulnerabilities. As they shape their course of life, young people encounter existential challenges that concern one or more of their basic forms of directedness (related to their self-esteem, experience of meaning, their relatedness and experience of having adequate or in-adequate competencies). As humans, we all face existential challenges, but not everybody experiences these challenges as problematic. A life challenge may take on a positive character, but it may also pose problems. The Counselling Model offers the young person a framework for working together with a youth-counsellor to discover *whether* there are "good enough" vitalising conditions for relating to and finding support for his or her existential challenges in the process of shaping his or her course of life – and if so, where these vitalising conditions are found.

As a vitalising conversation partner one remains curious about what the young person's life-world looks like, seen from this or her own perspective. During the conversation, one strives to put oneself in the person's place in order to discover what the world might look like when seen 'from within', so to speak. In this effort one may find it a challenge to suspend one's knowledge about and experiences with the person (one's prejudices) and adopt an open stance, mirroring and acknowledging what he or she expresses. Another challenge is to avoid taking a solution-oriented approach in the sense of wanting the person to proceed directly to action – before he or she has developed a proper understanding of how to perceive him/herself in regard to the four forms of directedness (e.g. the basic needs). In vitalising conversations, it is essential to remain aware of the positive importance of *understanding* in order to enable the young person to have *the experience of being understood* by another person (an adult) who takes him or her seriously. Although the conversation should result in a joint effort to determine a possible first step in follow-up to the conversation, this focus on action (the first step) should not be allowed to dominate the conversation.

During the conversation it may be helpful to place a laminated A3-version of the Counselling Model on the table (see Figure 6.1) and begin by explaining that the joint focus of attention in the conversation should be on the unfolding of the person's life (in part as a result of the person's own actions and in part as a result of the way in which the surroundings relate to the person). It may also be helpful to explain that the conversation will address issues that are important now or will be important later as the person shapes his or her course of life. Whether one begins the process by explaining the model in full or chooses to explain the individual aspects along the way is not important. In relation to the Dialogue Model, where the wording of the four forms of directedness ('see me for who I am', 'show me who/

what I can become', etc.) is adapted to a child's mind, the corresponding wording for the Counselling Model is more appropriately adapted to a young or adult persons mind in terms of: 'being who I am', 'being on my way', 'belongingness' and 'mastering my tasks'.

In the conversation, one moves through the three versions of the model, beginning with model 6.1 (current self-view). After thoroughly addressing the aspects covered by this model, the conversation proceeds to model 6.2 (current and desirable self-view). Next, the process moves to model 6.3 (which combines current and desirable self-view and the first step). This progression is explained in more detail below.

MASTERY

CURRENT SELF-VIEW

How am I supported and challenged
in my _____ life?

Mastering my tasks

SELF-WORTH

CURRENT SELF-VIEW

How do I see myself
in my _____ life?

Being who I am

The person's name

Being on my way

CURRENT SELF-VIEW

What is my perception of meaning and future
in my _____ life?

MEANING

Belongingness

CURRENT SELF-VIEW

How do I feel I belong
in my _____ life?

RELATEDNESS

Figur 6.1: The Counselling model: Current self-view.

Current self-view: During the conversation, one will initially be curious about the person's current self-view in relation to each of the four needs. Covering all four needs is particularly important when talking about the current self-view, because this involves gathering information and establishing a basic, broad understanding. This full covering of the needs might be less crucial when talking about the desirable selfview or the first step, if for instance, the conversation uncovers a particular life challenge in relation to the directedness in one of the needs (although a life

challenge in fact often concerns more than one orientation). That makes it natural to focus on this challenge and to allow the conversation to revolve around it. Ideally, however, the conversation should progress from the broad perspective, where information about all four needs is brought into play, to a gradually narrowing perspective that eventually focuses on one form of directedness. Here are some examples of possible questions about the current self-view:

Self-oriented directedness (Being who I am):
  ➢ **How do I see myself?**
  ➢ **Is there something that characterises me in particular? How is that expressed?**
  ➢ **What do I do to keep my special characteristic(s) from being expressed?**
  ➢ **How do I feel about that?**

Other-oriented directedness (Being on my way):
  ➢ **What is my perception of meaning and direction in my life?**
  ➢ **Is there anything/anyone that fascinates me in particular – or a particular person that I look up to?**
  ➢ **How do I see myself in (2, 5 or 10) years?**
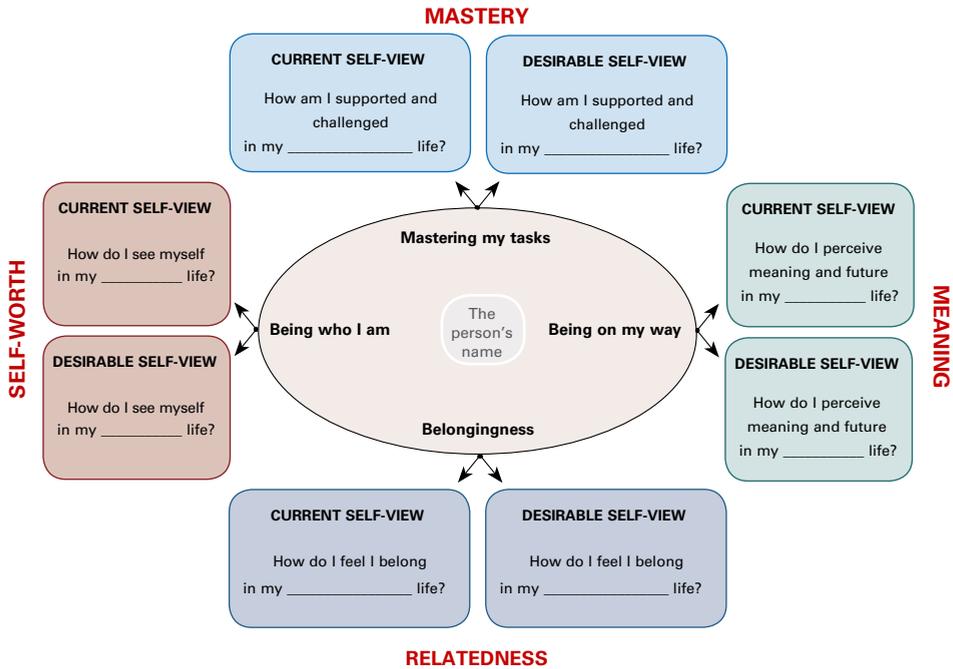 ➢ **How do I feel about that?**

Relatedness-oriented directedness (Belongingness):
  ➢ **How do I feel that I belong?**
  ➢ **Is there something/someone that I feel particularly attached to?**
  ➢ **To what extent do I feel at home in various contexts?**
  ➢ **How do I feel about that?**

Mastery-oriented directedness (Mastering my tasks):
  ➢ **What sort of support do I have, and what challenges am I facing?**
  ➢ **Is there an area where I excel?**
  ➢ **How are my skills and abilities appreciated – in various contexts?**
  ➢ **How do I feel about that?**

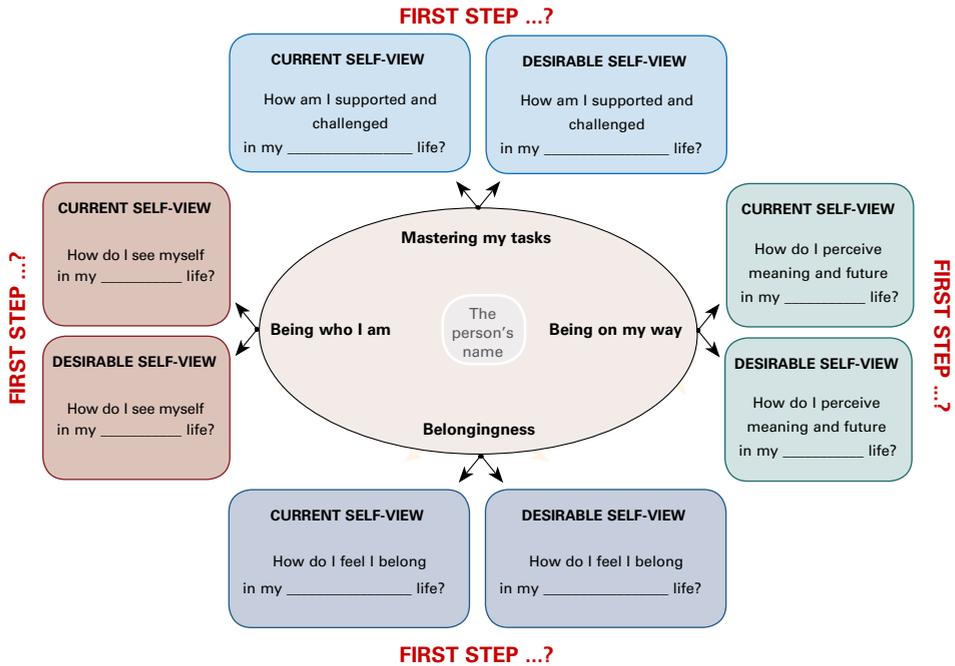*Desirable self-view:* After uncovering the current self-view, the conversation moves on to focus on the desirable self-view. This is a key part of the conversation, as it can help the young person realise whether his or her current course matches his or her life goals and desired life content. Again, oxygenating reality correction is a good tool for uncovering any vulnerable positions, unhelpful binds or positive illusions.

MASTERY

CURRENT SELF-VIEW	DESIRABLE SELF-VIEW
How am I supported and challenged in my _____ life?	How am I supported and challenged in my _____ life?

SELF-WORTH

CURRENT SELF-VIEW

How do I see myself in my _____ life?

DESIRABLE SELF-VIEW

How do I see myself in my _____ life?

Mastering my tasks

Being who I am

The person's name

Being on my way

Belongingness

MEANING

CURRENT SELF-VIEW

How do I perceive meaning and future in my _____ life?

DESIRABLE SELF-VIEW

How do I perceive meaning and future in my _____ life?

CURRENT SELF-VIEW	DESIRABLE SELF-VIEW
How do I feel I belong in my _____ life?	How do I feel I belong in my _____ life?

RELATEDNESS

Figur 6.2: Current and desirable self-views.

An example might be Jean who hangs out in a gang environment; hence that is where he has his social relations. He sees himself as a tough guy, shirks school and looks up to the older gang members. Jean's current self-view might well be balanced in relation to his basic directedness, but how does it match his desirable self-view? If he eventually wants to train for a banking job and have a family, how does that relate to his current world?

First step: After reviewing the current and the desirable self-views, the conversation shifts to an action-oriented mode. What should Jean do to balance the person he is now with the person he wants to be? Deciding on a first step involves considering whether the first step is something the person is *capable* of, whether he in fact wants to. It also involves considering whether it is something he *dares* to do. For example, it may take a good deal of courage to move into new relationships (and abandon existing ones) if that is what the first step requires. In relation to the first step, it may also be important to consider what form of support the person might need from his environments (including, possibly, support from the conversation partner) to take his first step towards renewed vitalisation in his efforts to shape the course of his life. Discussing specific steps and subsequent follow-up helps generate a development-oriented process.

FIRST STEP ...?

CURRENT SELF-VIEW

How am I supported and challenged

in my _____ life?

DESIRABLE SELF-VIEW

How am I supported and challenged

in my _____ life?

CURRENT SELF-VIEW

How do I see myself

in my _____ life?

FIRST STEP ...?

DESIRABLE SELF-VIEW

How do I see myself

in my _____ life?

Mastering my tasks

Being who I am   The person's name   Being on my way

Belongingness

CURRENT SELF-VIEW

How do I perceive meaning and future

in my _____ life?

FIRST STEP ...?

DESIRABLE SELF-VIEW

How do I perceive meaning and future

in my _____ life?

CURRENT SELF-VIEW

How do I feel I belong

in my _____ life?

DESIRABLE SELF-VIEW

How do I feel I belong

in my _____ life?

FIRST STEP ...?

Figur 6.3: Current self-view, desirable self-view and first step.

VULNERABILITIES AND FOCUSING ON THE CONVERSATION TOPIC

It is important to be aware that conversations based on the vitalising model may bring vulnerabilities to the surface – when this happens it must be taken seriously. But it is also important to remember that feelings that are expressed as emotionality or sudden silence are feelings that are already present in the person's life. These feelings are not *created* as a result of the conversation but *shared* during the conversation. The person gets in touch with what exists and hence has an emotional reaction. In a conversation or series of conversations with a young person, one will often need to focus more specifically on a particular aspect of the person's life. Instead of dealing with the very open question, 'how do I see myself', it may be preferable to address a particular context more specifically, for example, 'how do I see myself … in my school life, in my life outside school, in my family life, etc.?' That may be relevant, for example, if the conversation concerns the young person's thoughts about studying and maintaining his or her focus on studying. This is a factor in cognitive life counselling (Tønnesvang & Schøler, 2012), for example, where we employ a combination of the vitalising model and cognitive methods (tables of pros and cons, whiteboard and homework exercises, etc.) in encouraging students at risk of dropping out to pro-act

with more qualified self-determination in actively shaping the course of their life and helping them stay committed to their studies.

Similarly, the model can also be used as a framework for resource-oriented conversations with employees in different contexts (for instance with professionals working with children and young people). In staff development conversations, the conversation model is applied with the same strategy and logic as in conversations with children and young people, except that the focus shifts to the person's working life: 'How do I see myself – in my working life?', etc. Using vitalising psychology as a framework for a staff development conversation is not done with the purpose of giving employees the expectation that all their requests for personal development and new challenges can be met. Instead, the purpose in this context – as in any conversation in the framework of vitalising psychology – is to enable the employee to oxygenate his or her overall self-view (in relation to the workplace situation) in order to allow the person to discuss the issues that matter most to him or her in relation to his or her future working life. The model makes it possible to move the staff development conversation toward a psychological perspective without turning it into a psychotherapy session. The structure of the model ensures a broad perspec-tive, and the explicit focus on 'my working life' makes it possible to focus on the job-related situation that provides the context of the conversation.

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