

My Journey in Life

A Student
Textbook
for Character
Development



INTERNATIONAL EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION

My Journey in Life

A Student Textbook for Character Education

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**My Journey in Life:
A Student Textbook for Character Education**

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Comments on the Course

My Journey in Life: A Student Textbook for Character Development

(formerly My World & I: The Way of Unification)

“In school we study many subjects—geometric theorems, the laws of physics, literature where we get to know the works of famous writers and poets, foreign languages, and many other things. Of course, they are very important, but there is something more important. It is the ability to determine your place in life, in society; the ability to choose values necessary to reach your goals, to learn to handle your emotions, to overcome temptations, and, most important, to achieve peace and harmony in your heart. This course helped me to deal with these questions more than any other.”

A 10th grade student, Moscow

“I have been teaching *My World & I: The Way of Unification* for 2 years. The children’s attitude towards this course is very positive. After studying this course for a year, students gave such answers to the question ‘What did I gain from this course?’:

‘I have become more tolerant. There are fewer conflicts in my family.’

‘It reconciled me with my father.’

‘I could see that I can change. I thought I was hopeless and deprived of any capability.’”

T. Akhmadulina

St. Petersburg teacher

“There are chapters in the textbook *My World & I: The Way of Unification* dedicated to such important moral issues as forgiveness, respect and tolerance, freedom and responsibility, conscience, honesty, friendship, overcoming temptations, creating a family, the ability to love and to be a good friend, learning to accept others and to be accepted.

“The authors strive to show the way to raise up not only a deeply conscientious person, but a person who is successful in all spheres of life: family, vocation, relationships with both friends and those who wish ill, resisting negative influences from the environment and changing one’s own bad habits.”

I. A. Anosova, Ph.D.

Dean of the Department of Philosophy and Political Science
St. Petersburg University of Culture and Arts, Russia

“The general impression from both a quick and attentive reading of the student textbook is extremely positive. It truly in a very holistic way introduces the reader to the world of fundamental moral and spiritual values. Perhaps this is the first publication of its kind in the Russian language. I haven’t seen the publication of anything like it in our country.

“The first thing that attracts the reader is the manner in which the text is written. There is not a single paragraph where the young reader will be offended by an authoritarian direction. Rather, the book is written in the manner of an interesting and thoughtful conversation. The authors write as if they are conducting a dialogue or at least leave space for potential dialogue.

“The methodology corresponds to this approach. Each chapter is followed either by questions under the heading “Something to Think About”, suggestions to write

something “For Your Journal”, or some additional material connecting to was spoken about in the ‘conversations’ with the students in the main body of the text.

“The authors gradually, step by step, introduce the reader to the world of higher values: merciful love, compassion, nobility, righteousness, courage, etc. The authors try to use common sense as the starting point and experiences that the readers may have had to show that these core values of human existence are natural and essential for life.”

R. G. Aprysian, Ph.D.

*Senior Lecturer, Institute of Philosophy
Russian Academy of Science*

“From the point of view of experienced teachers and scientific workers in general, who have had more than 35 years of practical experience as teachers, the textbook *My World & I: The Way of Unification* is a unique event in the field of teaching theory and school practice. The textbook absolutely deserves the highest commendation. This publication of the International Educational Foundation is an altruistic effort directed at supporting humanitarianism by promoting universal values among youth.”

Olga R. Archegova, Robert M. Ganiev

Assistant Professors of Education, Vladikavkaz State University, Russia

“Unfortunately the modern concept of education does not give proper attention to the idea of personal moral growth. How does one attain personal maturity? How is happiness achieved? What is the meaning of a decent life? How can one distinguish good from evil? What is morality? In posing these questions the authors of the textbook do not hurry to give ready answers. On the contrary, they aim to stimulate thinking on these questions and to encourage the mind to listen to the voice of one’s conscience.”

Pavel S. Gurevich, Ph.D.

*Professor of Philosophy, Moscow Social Pedagogical Institute
Vice-President, Academy of Humanitarian Research*

“The authors suggest that norms and values of different cultures and religions not only do not contradict each other but are either fundamentally alike or in many ways complement each other. The textbook invites children to reflect on such important values as goodness, mercy, honesty and conscience.”

M. Lutfulloev, Ph.D.

*Director of the Scientific Research Institute of Pedagogical Science
Dushanbe, Tajikistan*

“The book, in agreement with Russian pedagogical tradition, puts priority on moral upbringing rather than on intellectual development. However, teaching about the role of the conscience is presented in detail for the first time in a Russian textbook.

“The fight against the influence of alcohol, nicotine and other drugs on children is one of the most acute problems worldwide. The tactfully-presented material on these topics can be considered a triumph of those who are the authors of this textbook.”

T. Molodstova, Ph.D.

*Dean of the Department of Social Pedagogy
Taganrog State Pedagogical University*

A. Fyodorov, Ph.D.

*Professor of Social Pedagogy
Taganrog State Pedagogical University, Russia*

“The main moral questions that every person needs to answer in his life is: ‘What kind of person am I now and what kind of person do I want to become?’ The course *My World and I: The Way of Unification* helps students to answer these most crucial questions.

“The course provides students the opportunity for self-improvement based on the ethical experience of humanity. It helps students to form an image of themselves. While studying this course teenagers develop a desire to understand their unique value and their inner world; what does it mean to be a human being.

‘I am often rough and nasty”, writes one 7th grade student. “I don’t like it in myself, but the course is helping me to change.’

‘Before I never thought about the way I act: whether it’s good or bad, but now I think of how my actions affect others and what others think of me’, writes a 9th grade student in his composition about the course.

‘When I gave my mom flowers, she was laughing out of joy”, writes another 9th grade student. - “This course inspired me to do that.”

Larisa Shmakova

School vice-principal, Ryazan, Russia

“The course is an amazing discovery for everybody: teachers, parents and grandparents. It is as important for our children today as the air itself.”

Svetlana Smirnova

St. Petersburg teacher

“This book includes very interesting material that is not traditional for Russian schools. An analysis shows that the authors have a very noble goal: to support the process of students’ spiritual development. Taking into account the great vacuum that exists in this area of the school curriculum, the material cannot but attract the attention of both academics and practicing teachers.

“(The book) reflects the realization of two concepts. One, realized in its content and structure, supports the development of the students’ personality by means of studying the ethical teachings of the world’s religions. The other, realized as a pedagogical concept, encourages the process of self-analysis and self-understanding.

“Even more so, the content is so rich and embraces so many different areas that even a mere reading of the book cannot but be very useful for a person.”

Y. V. Sokolov, Ph.D.

*Professor of Theory & History of Culture
State Academy of Culture, St. Petersburg*

“I cannot help but support the idea, proposed by the authors, of the oneness of the four concepts of mature personality, strong family, peaceful community, and creative human activity.”

L. Y. Verb, Ph.D.

*Professor of Pedagogy
St. Petersburg University of Culture and Arts, Russia*

Preface

The *My Journey in Life* series represents a unique collaboration of an international team of educators and writers. The original versions, appearing under the title *My World & I*, were published at a time when the Cold War was coming to an end and opportunities for ventures between the democratic and communist worlds were opening up in many different fields. Thus, they are probably the first of their kind covering an area of vital concern to cultures throughout the world—the moral education of children. In the nations in which they are being used, these books offer a refreshing approach to the field and are seen as a valuable resource supporting the character development of the young generation.

The early 1990s was a period of optimism when many people throughout the world harbored the hope that lasting peace and harmony was finally within our grasp. However, as the shadow of the Cold War receded, other problems came to the fore to show us that we were still a long way from this ideal. Both the democratic and former communist worlds were being afflicted by similar social problems, such as ethnic conflicts, youth violence, alcoholism, drug abuse, divorce and family breakdown, and a proliferation of sexually transmitted diseases. These problems were symptomatic of a severe crisis of values born of a century that placed the highest priority on scientific and technological development while neglecting to honor and promote the traditional values that had provided a sense of social cohesion and spiritual well being. Brought up to believe that scientific knowledge could solve all of our problems, young people were cast adrift to find answers for themselves in fundamental areas of human life, such as the maturing of their character, preparing for marriage and raising a successful family.

In many of today's societies there is no longer any consensus about right and wrong or which values should lie at the heart of education. Children often seem to question all values and authority, leaving parents and teachers unsure how to guide them. Ignoring the deeper questions about life, many young people pursue a hedonistic lifestyle of self-gratification, seeking to find happiness in material pursuits.

The International Educational Foundation (IEF), through its activities and publications, is seeking to address this worldwide challenge by offering an approach that combines the best of contemporary and traditional values, spiritual and material values, and Eastern and Western values. We call this a universal values approach. It is an approach that emphasizes what we have in common by stressing timeless values and presenting them in a way that can appeal to the idealistic sensibilities of young people transcending cultures.

IEF works in the fields of character education, youth purity education, marriage and family education, and service education or voluntarism. In the field of character education, we have been emphasizing the need to cultivate the hearts and con-

sciences of children in addition to the education of their intellects, which has been overemphasized during the past century. Based upon the teachings of Dr. Sun Myung Moon, known as the Unification Principle, the *My Journey in Life* two-volume series is an attempt to meet this need.

By teaching universal principles and values, *My Journey in Life: A Student Textbook for Character Development*, seeks to help those in their early teens to develop their heart and character, emphasizing the importance of mind/body unity, the development of the conscience, and sexual purity. As a support, it includes the moral and ethical teachings of the world's great religious traditions, which are at the root of most of the world's cultures.

With lesson themes such as "What Kind of Person Should I Become?," "What to Live For?" and "The Challenge of Life," the text engages pupils in internalizing fundamental values that are at the center of good character. In this way the curriculum seeks to help young people develop the inner strength to resist negative peer pressure and detrimental social influences that are so rampant in today's world.

Fundamentally, this book challenges the student to examine the principles and resultant values that constitute a meaningful life. It offers three basic life goals as a framework for this: becoming persons of mature character, establishing loving relationships and family, and caring for and contributing to the natural and human environment. If young people can be made aware of these life goals and be inspired to strive for them, it will greatly help them to resist the destructive temptations of drugs, crime and promiscuous sex. Ultimately, such socially destructive influences will only be overcome by offering young people an achievable alternative that speaks to their most fundamental hopes and dreams in life.

The second volume, *My Journey in Life: A Student Textbook for Developing Loving Relationships*, written for those in their mid-teens, focuses on human relationships, particularly in preparation for marriage and family. It includes topics on human sexuality, marriage, family, conflict resolution and social responsibility. It also covers problems such as divorce, single parent families, alcoholism and experiencing rejection. The book features marriage and family traditions in the world's religions to demonstrate that there are basic universal norms of human love and its sexual expression. In this way students can develop their vision of a realistic ideal for their relationships and future marriages while being aware of the pitfalls along the way.

If the evaluations by pedagogical experts and the reflections on the part of teachers and students who have used this curriculum are any indication, then it would seem that both *My Journey in Life* books have been a resounding success. Receiving high praise for their content and interactive methodological approach, the curriculum has inspired both teachers and students to strive for higher ideals in their lives. For example, in one study conducted among teachers using the material in the Ivanovo Region of Russia, a high majority of them reported a significant impact on their own personal character development.

Due to circumstances the *My Journey in Life* series appeared first in Russia, followed by many of the former Soviet republics. However, this work was envisioned long before the actual publication in the early 1990s. Although first used in Russia, they were written with the young people of the entire world in mind. Thus, these texts should not be seen as a translation of the Russian, but represent improved editions of the original English texts. In response to numerous requests from around the world, IEF wishes to offer these English editions for your use. I encourage you to translate them into your national language and to contextualize the contents using literary sources and examples from your own culture. You may draw upon IEF's experience to assist you in this process.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the sincere investment of heart and effort by the many people involved in the production of these books. Working under my guidance on the original writing team were Myra Stanecki-Kozlowski, William Haines, Dorothy Kolomeisky, Anna Bzhiska and Prof. Bronislaw Bitinas, a well-known pedagogue from Vilnius University in Lithuania, who served as scientific editor. This team worked long hours with a sense of urgency investing their creative energies to produce the first editions. Others who worked in the creation of the Russian editions were Kevin Convery, as art director, Claude Aubert and Arthur Dagilev, in design and layout, and many others too numerous to mention by name. All of their efforts are deeply appreciated. As well I would like to express my gratitude to those who worked on the present English editions of these books: Robert Beebe—project coordinator, Jack Corley and Thomas Phillips—advisors, Josephine Hauer and Hyun Jin Schuller—copy editors, Gareth Davies—research, and Renee Corley—proofreader. I would like also to give a special word of thanks to Ittetsu Aoki and his team for their valuable support of this project.

My hope is that these books, which have given much inspiration and joy to thousands of school children and their teachers in the former Soviet Union, in their English editions will benefit countless others throughout the world and contribute to the character development of the young generation in many different nations and cultures.

Dr. Joon Ho Seuk
President, IEF International
Director, My Journey in Life Project

Historical Background

Founded in 1990 by Dr. and Mrs. Sun Myung Moon to promote moral and ethical values in education, the International Educational Foundation began its work in Moscow just as the Soviet Union was collapsing. Soon after Dr. Moon's meeting with Mikhail Gorbachev in the Kremlin in April 1990, in cooperation with the Soviet Ministry of Higher Education, IEF sponsored a series of International Leadership Seminars in America for more than 3500 students and professors. On this foundation, in November 1992, with the support of the Russian Ministry of Education, which invited delegations from each of the 88 regions of the Russian Federation, IEF held conferences in the Crimea under the theme "Spiritual Renewal and School Education in Russia". In addition, more than 300 school directors from the Ukraine attended. In all, more than 1,600 participants took part in the conferences, whose theme was the necessity of moral and ethical education. The lectures were based on the fundamental values and concepts of the Unification Principle, emphasizing their use as a foundation for moral education.

Participants found the theme of the program timely. With the collapse of communism the ideological framework for the teaching of morals and ethics had been suddenly discarded. At the same time young people struggled to understand how to employ their newly found freedoms. Many chose to pursue with abandon the material benefits long denied them. In reaction to the collectivism of the past the post-Soviet period saw the rise of extreme individualism.

As a result of their experience in the program the participants were inspired by the challenge of developing a curriculum to promote moral and ethical values to young people in an engaging and contemporary manner. The next step was organizing a group to undertake this task.

In January 1993, an international writing team working under the guidance of IEF president, Dr. Joon Ho Seuk, was assembled in Moscow and set about preparing a curriculum in time for the new school year beginning in September. Thus began the first project of the International Educational Foundation in the former Soviet Union.

Working at a rapid pace, the first edition of *My World & I: The Way of Unification* (original title of *My Journey in Life: A Student Textbook for Character Development*), intended for 13-15 year olds, was published together with an accompanying teacher's manual. In the summer of 1993, IEF held its first Teacher Training Workshops in order to train teachers how to use the new curriculum. In these workshops lectures explaining the philosophical foundation of the curriculum were presented as well as lectures suggesting innovative methodological approaches appropriate to the teaching of the material. In 1994 IEF produced a second volume of *My World & I*, subtitled *The Way of Love* (now *My Journey in Life: A Student Textbook for Developing Loving Relationships*), written for 15-17 year olds. In subsequent years IEF went on to publish

other student textbooks, teacher's manuals, and handbooks for parents, designed to be use for various age levels. Many of these have been translated into different languages with the support of various ministries of education. Each year IEF conducts hundreds of training seminars involving thousands of teachers throughout the CIS, Baltic States and Mongolia to instruct them on the use of the materials. At these seminars and in other ways, hundreds of thousands of books have been distributed in these countries. Currently more than ten thousand schools are using IEF course materials.

On the Way to Self-Realization

My *Journey in Life: A Student Textbook for Character Development* is unusual in many respects. Its appearance is the fruit of the cooperation among an international team of educators, both theoreticians and practitioners. Such cooperation in science is common, but in the sphere of education and the upbringing of children, it is one of the first efforts of its kind.

What was most wonderful in the preparation of this book was the energy and enthusiasm of the people who were creating it. Between the time when the first outline was made and the publication of the first edition of the book, less than a year elapsed. The writers were not simply enthusiasts, but they did something that seemed impossible. This second edition represents a substantial revision and improvement following the helpful suggestions of many scholars, teachers and students.

This publication developed from essential insights of Dr. Sun Myung Moon on human nature and family development. Therefore, the content reflects the idea of love in all its breadth and fullness, while absolutely denying hatred in all its manifestations, between peoples, religions, classes, as well as individuals. The content is based on the premise that, by observing the harmony of the natural world, we can recognize the value of practicing unselfish, mature love in human relationships. Love that seeks the benefit of others brings the experience of deep joy and satisfaction that serves as the best justification for living an ethical life. This is the fundamental premise of this book.

Love is described in the form of universal human values, such as responsibility for oneself and others. Love is also realized on many levels simultaneously, on the level of individual, family, society, humanity and in relationship with a higher being. Respect and tolerance toward others holding different belief systems and cultural mores are also integral to an ethical practice of love. This text also recognizes that religion has been a primary vehicle for conveying universal values within cultures. Thus, included are some ethical teachings of traditional religions of the C.I.S. as well as neighboring countries. Also incorporated are ideas supporting a universal human morality and the psycho-pedagogical basis for personal growth and improvement of human relations.

A most important inquiry of any high school student is the question: "Who would you like to model your life after?" The text recognizes the importance of role models for young people. The authors considered it of no educational value to directly expound on philosophical ideas of ethics. Instead they chose to express ideas through artistic images and the living experiences of real people. In light of this approach, one of the book's strongest features is the way the content is connected with the ethnic culture of Russia. Russia and her people provide rich and varied resources for discussing moral and ethical content. The authors have also integrated

perspectives from other cultures, such as Asia and America, so that students may expand their cultural base of ethical knowledge.

The book is not a textbook in the strict sense. It is written as an active dialogue with the reader, offering counsel to young people who are already thinking about their lives and views of the surrounding world. Thus, a great number of alternative views expose the reader to a plurality of opinions. This is one of the distinctive and important features of the book.

While calling individuals to spiritual self-realization, the authors nevertheless express their own understanding of an ideal personality in an ideal society. In speaking of the basic life goals of human beings, the book promotes the development of mature individuals, healthy families, the peaceful association of people, and constructive human activity. Eminent thinkers of the past have proclaimed similar ideas, which remain of great value to the modern world community. It is hoped that the present book offers a similar contribution to the realization of the universal human dream.

B.P. Bitinas
Doctor of Pedagogical Sciences
Pedagogical University of Vilnius, Lithuania
Scientific Editor of My Journey in Life

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Introduction

An artist, before attempting to create a masterpiece of supreme beauty and harmony, first tries to fix in his mind the perfect image of the end result. The final creation reflects and develops this image in a unique manner.

Likewise, we are all artists of our future. If as artists of life we want to make our lives a masterpiece, then it is also important to discover the best image or pathway for life

itself. We need a clear vision and understanding of a most worthy purpose for human life. We need to understand how to create sincere and fulfilling relationships in our family, among friends, within society, with our nation and the world. These skills and deep understanding can help us capture the supreme beauty and harmony of a life striving for peace, love and goodness.

This course, *My Journey in Life: A Student Textbook for Character Development*, introduces you to a moral vision of life that will help you to find the path and destiny for creating the best "you." Accepting that vision, of course, is your choice. We are confident that if you take this course seriously, it can point you on a path toward authentic happiness. In this journey we will explore many fundamental questions that are critical for success. We will examine the way we see

ourselves and our world and the values that influence our perspective. Most importantly, we will look at the principles necessary for achieving worthwhile goals.

With insightful education and deeper understanding of moral and ethical principles, we can cultivate a mature and refined self. We can learn how to deal with intense passions and pressures from within. We can have a sense that we are in control of our lives, that we are not victims of our environment, of manipulative people or of our own confusing emotions. We can learn to respect, value and love others, as well as ourselves, discovering fully that our life is valuable and meaningful.

The creation of ourselves is a lifelong project and is the most important task of anyone's life. So let's get started. Let's begin our journey together.



Educators' comments on

"My Journey in Life: A Student Textbook for Character Development":

"The general impression from both a quick and attentive reading of the student textbook is extremely positive. It truly in a very holistic way introduces the reader to the world of fundamental moral and spiritual values. Perhaps this is the first publication of its kind in the Russian language. I haven't seen the publication of anything like it in our country."

R.G. Aprysian, Ph.D.

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"...the content is so rich and embraces so many different areas that even a mere reading of the book cannot but be useful for a person."

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Svetlana Smirnova

St. Petersburg teacher

What students say...

"...the ability to determine your place in life, in society; the ability to choose values necessary to reach your goals, to learn to handle your emotions, to overcome temptations, and, most important, to achieve peace and harmony in your heart. This course helped me to deal with these questions more than any other."

Moscow

"I have become more tolerant. There are fewer conflicts in my family."

"It reconciled me with my father."

"I could see that I can change. I thought I was hopeless and deprived of any capability."

St. Petersburg

"I am often rough and nasty. I don't like it in myself, but the course is helping me to change."

"Before I never thought about the way I act: whether it's good or bad, but now I think of how my actions affect others and what others think of me."

Ryazan, Russia

See inside the front cover for further comments