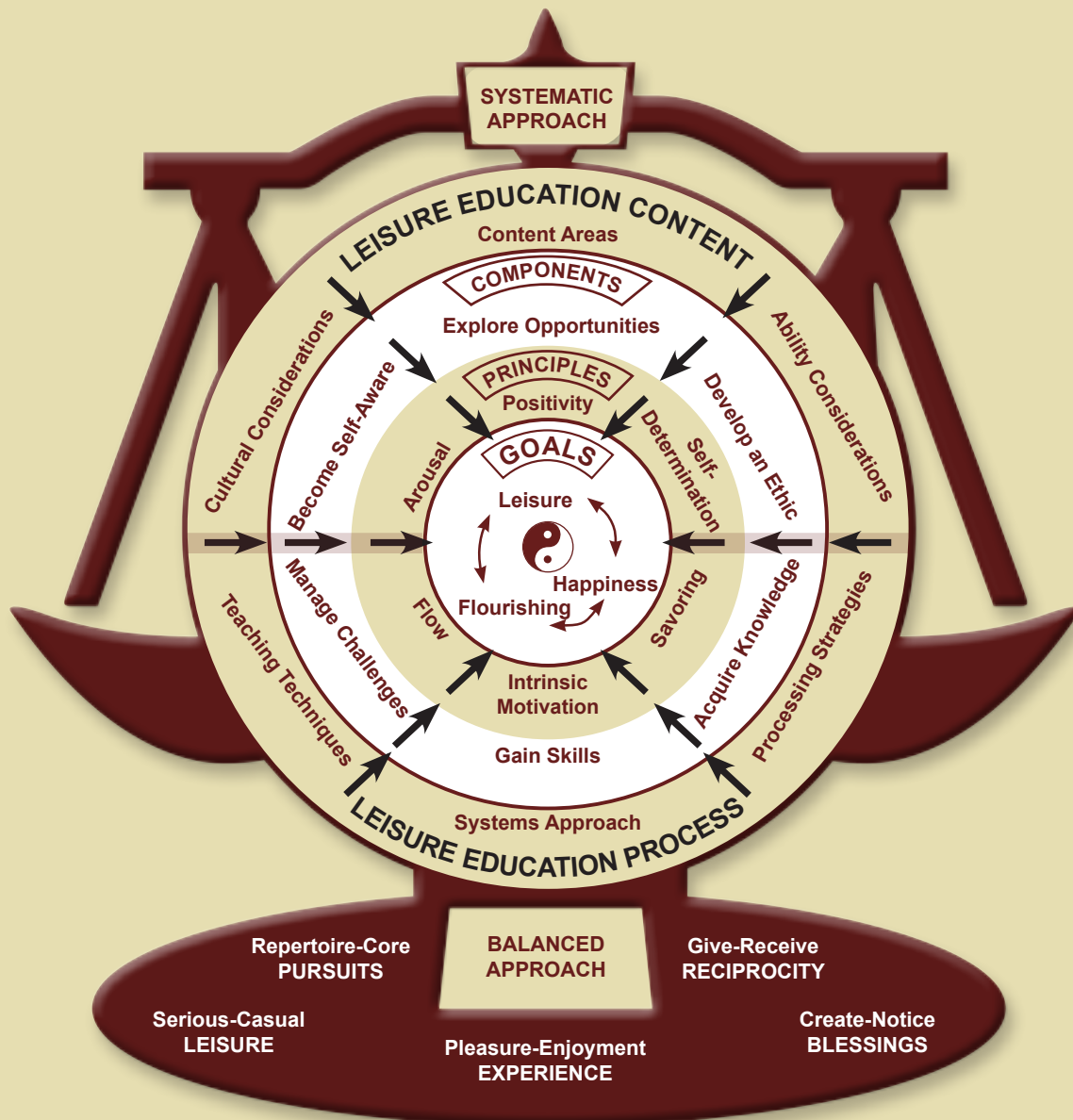


# Leisure Education Program Planning

A Systematic Approach

5th Edition



John Dattilo

# **Leisure Education Program Planning**

Fifth Edition

John Dattilo

SAGAMORE  VENTURE

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*For Amy, David, and Steven*

*Life is wonderful!*



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## Preface

The intention of the book is to share information with readers to develop a sense of competence in providing a **balanced** and **systematic approach** to leisure education that helps people experience wonder and amazement through leisure. To achieve this purpose, the book provides a sequential explanation about how to transform the model (depicted on the book cover) into a guide for planning, implementing, and evaluating leisure education. As you read these three paragraphs, see if you can find the words bolded or italicized in this preface on the book cover as words or objects!

The book describes synergistic **goals** of leisure education to assist people in experiencing *leisure*, embracing *happiness*, and *flourishing*. The approach described in this text offers guidance for readers to become effective professionals. This text describes principles on which to base service delivery and then application of those principles to situations we encounter. **Principles** identified in this book are *intrinsic motivation*, *self-determination*, *flow*, *optimal arousal*, *savoring*, and *positivity*. As we learn more about ways our communities and countries function, relevance of social justice becomes clearer; therefore, the book describes leisure education and ways it connects to social justice. The book also identifies **components** of leisure education, highlighting the value of *developing an ethic*, *acquiring knowledge*, *gaining skills*, *managing challenges*, *becoming self-aware*, and *exploring opportunities*. Aspects of developing programs include addressing **content** areas and identifying cultural and ability considerations as well as **process** considerations representing a *systems approach* using *teaching techniques* and *processing strategies*.

The model presented on the cover creates balance and is systematic, both globally relevant. To reflect international perspectives, the model contains both Western and Eastern symbols. For example, since the Chinese philosophy of Yin and Yang emphasizes the value of balancing sometimes opposing yet complementary forces to achieve precious experiences, the *yin yang symbol* is at the center of the model. Similarly, given a scale is a symbol in Western cultures reflecting balance; such a scale acts as the support structure for the model. The base of the scale identifies five examples of ways to achieve a balanced approach to life and leisure including *pursuits*, *leisure*, *experiences*, *blessings*, and *reciprocity*. To indicate a systematic approach to leisure education, the model contains *arrows* designating linear directionality and progression in conjunction with *circles* denoting circular integrity and integration. Many Eastern cultures associate circles with interconnections of much that is in the world and the concept of community harmony. Historically, some Native American Indian tribes and Western mapmakers used arrows to represent movement and directionality. The notion of linearity, often identified by a straight line or arrow, frequently connects to Western thinking about desired states of independence and self-fulfillment. Throughout the model, arrows and circles illustrate the cyclical nature of leisure education and that learning involves collaboration between learners, instructors, and communities. The final section of the book contains examples of specific field-tested and researched programs to help readers improve understanding of service delivery. As we grow through leisure education, we tend to manage challenges to leisure and gravitate to positive experiences. These positive encounters transport us toward achieving the ultimate goals of experiencing leisure, being happy, and flourishing. In conclusion, I hope you find this fifth edition of the book to be meaningful and helpful in facilitating leisure through leisure education.



## About the Author

John Dattilo combined his academic studies in leisure studies and special education with his experiences as an educator and clinician to develop a systematic and balanced approach to leisure education. He conducts research to understand perceptions, increase awareness of barriers, and develop interventions that help people experience leisure, encounter happiness, and flourish. Results of his research influenced development of the leisure education model presented in this book. He shares his understanding through this book with students and professionals across the globe in the hope of improving human well-being. Dattilo believes he has learned much about leisure education and feels privileged to have a career that requires him to learn and share information to help people experience leisure as he tries to make the world a better place.



CHAPTER 1

# An Introduction: A Journey

*“And where do we go from here? Which is the way that’s clear?”*

—David Essex, *Rock On*

---

## Introduction

An idea presented in this book is that there is value in contemplation and becoming self-aware. It is helpful to take time to think about our life and the world around us so we might make sense of our journey. As we become mindful and more aware of how we arrived at our current state, what brings us happiness, and how we might experience leisure, we are better able to live our lives to the fullest and to flourish.

One way we make sense of our intellectual travels is by recording them. Sometimes we share details of our journey orally; on various occasions, we journal either privately or more publicly via social media. In different instances, we express them in poetry or other storytelling. Regardless of the method, analyzing our path and sharing our observations bring clarity to our lives and improve our chances of experiencing leisure.

Taking time to be thoughtful and consider the road we are on has positive results. As an example, I am sharing a part of my journey here. Specifically, I am writing about what has led me to be concerned about people encountering challenges with their leisure as I focus on one possible solution, leisure education, to address those challenges. I concentrate on various principles that guide practice and have compiled them into this book. Perhaps when reading this book, you may be motivated to describe your journey, which might help you in developing leisure education practices and services.

## To Begin

At any given time, I probably am reading multiple books. I often have a book in my backpack or briefcase, perhaps in the car, and at home. I try to have a book at the ready so when I am waiting for things such as a meeting or an appointment, I am actively discovering.

When completing the first section of a previous edition of this book, I was reading a couple books that began with introductions about the respective authors. One book contained a

description of the author's credentials and various professional accomplishments. It is an introduction that someone might read about me when I speak at a conference. This type of acknowledgment has consistently resulted in me feeling uncomfortable and awkward. Consequently, when someone gives me the option of introducing myself or having another person introduce me, I choose the former.

Similarly, when I have an opportunity to introduce a respected friend or colleague, I now seize the moment. Rather than providing a litany of accomplishments that the person has completed, I try to tell a story about who this person is relative to the situation. When I introduce myself, I provide a similar description, trying to share a bit about who I am relative to the topic at hand as opposed to describing my professional accomplishments.

This brings me to another book, *The Art of Flourishing*; Jeffrey Rubin (2011) wrote an introduction describing how he came to write the book. The introduction contains a presentation of the author that flows smoothly into the content of the book and helped me to see the connections between the author and the information. Because I found this to be interesting and revealing, I now humbly present my story relative to leisure education and this book. I have organized the description of my journey into the following sections:

- Moving Beyond Helplessness
- Discovering Self-Determination
- Finding Balance
- My Journey With Leisure Education
- Generating a Personal Mission Statement

## **Moving Beyond Helplessness**

While in college, I earned two bachelor degrees at Penn State—one from the College of Education and one from the College of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation. I liked how my unique education gave me a background in both leisure and education. After graduation, I taught for several years in Chesapeake, Virginia. During my time as a teacher, I came to believe that the students with whom I worked were much more capable and intelligent than they acted. I was not satisfied with implementing the educational strategies I learned as an undergraduate. As a result, I enrolled at the University of Arizona, where I obtained my master's and went on to the University of Illinois for my doctorate. I wanted to investigate strategies that support and expand people's capability and intellect.

During my doctoral studies, I read the book *Helplessness* by Martin Seligman (1975), who many now consider one of the founders of positive psychology. The book, along with other related readings, provided me with insights into why the individuals with whom I worked were not reaching their potential. As described in detail later in the book, the theory of learned helplessness reminded me that living creatures could learn a great deal, including those things that help them to flourish, such as the ability to read, or those things that contribute to them languishing, such as believing they are helpless. This theory was consistent with my observations and stories individuals were telling me.

Years ago a group of professionals invited me to Spain to talk about the inclusion of all people in leisure services at a conference conceived and organized by Domingo García-Villamizar. Throughout the conference, Domingo, the presenters, and various dignitaries discussed issues influencing policies and practices related to education and leisure. It became clear to Domingo and me that even though he is a Spaniard and I an American, we spoke the same language. Among other connections, Seligman's theory of helplessness was the primary theory on which both of us based our dissertation and we received our PhD degrees within months of each other. The collegiality and friendship we forged resulted in meaningful career-long collaborations.

## Discovering Self-Determination

From Seligman's work on helplessness, I discovered that as people learn to be helpless, their motivation to do a variety of things decreases tremendously. This theory helped me to understand why people around me were not achieving their potential. However, it was Edward Deci's (1975) book *Intrinsic Motivation*, and subsequently a book he coauthored with Richard Ryan (1985), *Intrinsic Motivation and Self-Determination in Human Behavior*, that improved my understanding of how I might work together with people to facilitate their growth, development, happiness, and leisure and, ultimately, help them to flourish. Again, these writings supported my observations of and conversations with individuals struggling to pursue leisure.

My first faculty position was at the University of Nebraska, where I met William Murphy, with whom I coauthored the first edition of this book. I learned much about educational principles and ethics from Murph. Although he towers above me wearing his cowboy boots and blue jeans, he is a gentle giant and an amazing colleague and friend. Because I was a junior faculty member trying to balance teaching, service, and research, in my first year Murph unselfishly assigned himself to teach one of my courses each semester. When people ask me to make decisions about supporting others who may be experiencing challenges, I use Murph's humble and positive ways to guide me.

Throughout my first years at Nebraska and, then as a faculty member at Penn State, I continued to be guided by the self-determination theory; however, it was not until I joined the University of Georgia faculty that I began to more systematically integrate into my work this theory and the theory of flow, developed by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi. Although I learned a great deal from reading *Beyond Boredom and Anxiety* (1975), it was reading *Finding Flow* (1997) and then critically dialoguing about it with Douglas Kleiber that helped me to understand important connections of these theories to leisure education.

Not coincidentally, Doug taught the course in which I read *Beyond Boredom and Anxiety*. An important reason for me going to the University of Georgia was the chance to work with Doug. Of all my colleagues, Doug has by far contributed most to my scholarly thinking. Given our friendship that began at Illinois, our mutual respect, and our confidence in ourselves as a basis of our personal and professional relationship, we critically yet comfortably examined our thinking and the scholarly work of Csikszentmihalyi and others.

The synergy between Doug and me, and the important work of our doctoral students, resulted in development, implementation, and evaluation of various leisure education programs. It was such a tremendous experience at the University of Georgia to have so many terrific graduate students with whom to work; they are not only amazing thinkers but also wonderful hu-



man beings. The collaboration with Doug, the incredible cadre of doctoral students, and the experience of implementing multiple leisure education programs accelerated my understanding of leisure education and influenced content of this book.

One of my favorite teaching experiences was when Judy Voelkl, a faculty member from Clemson, and I developed a graduate course on the connection between positive psychology and leisure that we taught to Clemson and the University of Georgia students with the help of Doug and Fran McGuire. At the time—we taught the course in the late 1990s—positive psychology was just getting traction and it was an exciting course. The course readings and subsequent class discussions helped to plant the seeds for many ideas contained in this book.

## Finding Balance

The service model on leisure education presented in this book is both systematic and balanced. I describe the programming approach as systematic because the model and each associated program has a clearly stated purpose, goals, and objectives, as well as detailed content and process. This is only one of many ways to develop a leisure education program.

In addition, keeping a balanced approach to life is part of the model. Although several examples of maintaining a balanced approach are provided later in this book, I highlight here a balance I try to maintain that substantially influences the way I view the world. Although the word balance may bring to mind even treatment, a balanced approach here is associated with the following concepts:

- Make Sense Out of Negative Experiences
- Embrace Positivity

### Make Sense Out of Negative Experiences

As much as we would like to avoid pain and suffering and to protect our loved ones from such experiences, life happens, and with it comes negative experiences. I have found it valuable though, especially as an educator, to try to make sense of these negative occurrences and learn from them. To make this point, I identify five situations that were negative experiences for me, yet all resulted in a positive refocusing of my life. The lessons I learned, perhaps the hard way, are ones that leisure educators might find useful.

#### *Dad's Dependability*

I am fortunate that two loving parents raised me. They devoted their lives to each other and their children. They raised my siblings and me in a household filled with love, opportunities, and support. My father was a rock, someone who could be counted on to be there and do the right thing in difficult times. Through his example, I learned so much. I remember when I was a young child watching in amazement when he returned money to a clerk who had given him change for \$10 instead of the \$5 he actually used. I felt his resolve when I cracked my head on an end table and, though blood spurted from the wound, he calmly applied direct pressure and bandaged me. I experienced his compassion in high school when I was trying to find a graduation party. I not only got lost but also got the car stuck in the mud. Dad not only came to my

rescue, using a large metal chain and boards to pull me out, but then also told me to go have fun at the party.

So even as an adult when I learned my father was diagnosed with a rapidly growing, destructive brain tumor on Thanksgiving almost three decades ago, and then when we lost him that following March, I felt as if the protective cocoon in which I had been raised had been stripped away. I believed that I could rely on him for anything and now he was gone; my safety net had disappeared. I did not realize until his death how much I leaned on him. With that understanding, I resolved to be dependable so that I would keep his spirit alive. I try to be true to my word, as my father was, and to not commit to something unless I am confident I can do what I agree to do and I can do it on time. I share with my boys, David and Steven, that one of the most important things we have control over is being honest and being true to our word.

### *Steven's Fortitude*

Our first son, David, was born healthy and he thrived. However, when our second son, Steven, at 6 months of age, received a diagnosis of neuroblastoma, an aggressive form of cancer, my world tumbled down. Over the next 6 months, I watched this little one deal with pain from the cancer and the chemotherapy that resulted in him becoming malnourished, needing blood transfusions and surgeries, and having such a depressed immune system that the smallest fever resulted in an ambulance ride. Happily, when we celebrated his first birthday, though it was too early to confirm, the recently successful surgery resulted in him being cancer free! Now he is a graduate of Regis University in Denver, enjoys his work in customer service in a cyber security firm, and loves snow skiing. I am in wonder at the man he is becoming and feel fortunate that the nightmare ended and a dream came true.

During Steven's illness, whenever possible, we treated him at home with support of daily home nurse visits and our willingness to perform medical procedures associated with chemotherapy and other care. Even so, for several months I slept more in the hospital than at home. I remember during this time when I would awaken from a brief sleep or nap and feel fine and then, in an instant, reality streamed into my consciousness and darkness of the living nightmare descended upon me once again. I recall this experience often and it helps me to count my blessings and put my life and events happening around me into perspective. Since that time, I have not taken for granted my good health and vigor of those around me; I think of the fortitude expressed by such an innocent child. For years, I wore a Livestrong bracelet to remind me of the challenges experienced by my son and my father, and I joined the 4-gallon mark for blood donations as a small way of expressing my appreciation to those who supported us in our time of need.

### *Mom's Appreciation*

Several years ago, my mother received a diagnosis of polymyalgia rheumatica, a chronic debilitating condition characterized by a continuous decline in voluntary muscle movements accompanied by severe fatigue. Because of her steady reduction in movement and extensive exhaustion, she moved from her townhouse to an apartment at a retirement village and finally to a more skilled nursing care facility. To the credit of my sister, Michele, and my two brothers, Larry and Jerry, once my mother moved out of her townhouse, one of her children shared a good portion of each day and at least a couple meals with her. At less than 3 hours away by car, I drove to be with her at least a few days each month.

Given her weakness, she took many brief and long naps. As I helped her with meals, she often dozed and I waited until she awoke to continue assisting her. During these times, I practiced being mindful as I attended to her breathing, noticed the tender way she folded her hands,

or simply appreciated the blue sky I could see from her window. Nevertheless, what made the biggest impression on me was how, through her physical challenges, she continually expressed gratitude as best she could to everyone she encountered and maintained her gentle ways. Throughout my mother's life, until her illness, I admired her commitment to helping others; later, I grew to respect her ability to graciously accept help from others. When some people compliment my siblings or me about our dedication to our mother, we all respond truthfully—it was an honor to assist our mother, who gave us so much. Whenever possible, I think about my kindhearted mother and try to express my gratitude to others.

### *Move to the Back*

I grew up in Thornburg, Pennsylvania, population: not many. I attended an elementary school with four classrooms where each grade cohort shared the classroom with one, sometimes two, other grades. The teacher taught one class and gave us learning activities to complete or pages to read while she taught the other class. Because we completed independent readings and assignments in school, we never had much homework. The only time I struggled was when we needed to memorize facts. Then, in seventh grade, I was bused to a new, large junior high. It was there that my small-town mentality, my lack of experience with homework, and my difficulty with memorization collided with my history teacher. I soon learned that he liked to arrange each row of students in order of our performance on the most recent exam. This required a bit of shifting of seats after each exam—well, some shifting—I consistently sat in the last seat in the back of my row throughout the year.

I had plenty of time to reflect on the back-of-the-room experience over the summer while I cut lawns and delivered newspapers. When I returned for eighth grade, I was embarrassed when the administration assigned me to the cohort from which not much was expected. It was then that I resolved to make things different. Each night, I read the assigned readings and took notes. I then rewrote my notes from that day's lectures. I woke up early for school every morning and reviewed each notebook, working to commit the information to memory. Given my success that year, the study habits I practiced stayed with me throughout my educational career and the work ethic I developed has remained with me to this day. I learned the first half of an important lesson—if I work diligently, I receive the reward of success. However, it was not until over 30 years later that I learned the second half of this valuable lesson.

### *This Too Shall Pass*

Over a decade ago, we moved from being a University of Georgia Bulldog to a Penn State Nittany Lion after I became the new department head. Although returning to my alma mater was a dream come true, I soon felt both personally and professionally that things were not quite right. As many people shared with me after the fact, forces solidly entrenched in the university were working against me. Although for years I worked to achieve fairness and transparency, the negative forces continued unbeknownst to me. Finally, without warning, I was relieved of my administrative post. During this same time, the mother of my boys chose to leave our home, filed for divorce, and attempted to gain sole custody of our sons so that she could return to Georgia with them; fortunately, the judge did not grant her request.

In both situations, no matter how hard I worked, regardless of how committed I was to doing the right thing, I was unable to change others' decisions that influenced me and people dear to me. Taking initiative and avoiding procrastination benefited me in my professional life and I thought these approaches would help me overcome any obstacle. Living the life of a family man and consistently putting the needs of my loved ones before mine, I thought would result in a happy family. Yes, we influence our destiny, but what I did not realize is many factors, including

the way people think about me, are not within my control. These experiences humbled me and I am now more aware of the fragility of life's situations. At times, when things are going really well or, conversely, when I am wondering if things could get any worse, I think of the engraving on King Solomon's ring, "This too shall pass," and it helps me to gain perspective on my experiences and my life. This lesson has helped me to embrace the moment and focus on positivity, the topic I describe next.

### **Embrace Positivity**

It has taken me considerable time to learn some life lessons. The etching of a tortoise on a seashell that once hung around my neck reminds me that patience is a virtue and for me to try to be at peace with learning some lessons slowly. One lesson I am learning, and that this book reflects often, is the importance of positivity. I find value in identifying the optimistic slant on my circumstances. As often as possible, when I encounter people who are complaining, I try to identify the upside to the issue that seems to be causing them distress. I work to generate as much positive energy as I can. Although it is a trite analogy, I confess that I think about the glass being half full. Much to my delight, some of the people associated with my work with the *National Inclusion Project* in Raleigh, North Carolina, bestowed on me the nickname John *Silver-Lining* Dattilo.

The other aspect of positivity that I strive to achieve is putting myself in upbeat situations. To attain this goal, I try to release feelings of obligation that result in negativity. I also surround myself with people who demonstrate positivity on a regular basis. I do this because when I am around positive people I become more positive and then I am likely to act with compassion and respect. As a result, I tend to avoid spending much time with people who chronically complain or gossip as I seek out those who, for the most part, identify the good things in the world and in their lives.

A few years after my divorce, I was at a conference visiting with friends. While we walked to a social, one friend mentioned she wanted to introduce me to a colleague. I welcomed the introduction and found my first meeting with Amy to be refreshing. I noticed she was quick to laugh, smile, and put a positive spin on topics we discussed. Although we did not see each other after our first meeting, we began communicating via email, then by telephone, and later I visited her. Recently, we celebrated our 11-year wedding anniversary. She is such a constructive force in my life, and her cheerful demeanor continuously reminds me of the power of us being together and of how her positivity gratefully affects me.

As a Penn State professor, I have had teaching and research opportunities that have contributed to my sense of positivity. Expanding the undergraduate course on inclusive leisure services to embrace all people into our programs, especially those who chronically and deeply experience oppression and marginalization, has allowed me to combine my personal passion and professional commitment to promoting and supporting human rights.

My teaching responsibilities with our graduate program associated with the philosophy of leisure stretched me and expanded my thinking about leisure and leisure education. This responsibility led me to collaborate with several graduate students to write philosophical papers about various aspects of leisure and work with a young Penn State kinesiology philosopher, Francisco Javier Lopez Frias. It is such a joy to collaborate with Javi. He positively and optimistically approaches our scholarly inquiry with enthusiasm, insight, and sensitivity, and we

share common interests of Spain and Spanish cooking. Further related to research, I have been fortunate to work steadily over the past decade with researchers from the Penn State Center for Healthy Aging. Not surprisingly, the colleague from the center with whom I have the most enjoyable and positive working relationship is my wife, Amy Lorek. With both Javi and Amy, there is a shared respect and admiration for the gifts each of us brings to our collaborative efforts, resulting in a type of scholarly celebration.

The wonderful thing about positivity is that it is within our control. When we encounter negative experiences, we can make sense of those encounters by using positivity. We can be the active force in our lives and other people's lives to help us move together toward happiness, leisure, and flourishing. I believe leisure education can be an effective vehicle to deliver this message.

## **My Journey With Leisure Education**

During my work as a full-time teacher and clinician more than 40 years ago, I observed that many people appear to be happy and perceive the situation positively when they have some degree of choice, regardless of the context or activity. Therefore, after a few years, I began to describe the value of empowering people to make choices that help facilitate their leisure (Dattilo, 1984) and, together with University of Illinois researchers Lynn Barnett and Frank Rusch, examined effects of choice connected to leisure (Dattilo & Barnett, 1985; Dattilo & Rusch, 1985). Later at Penn State, Maureen Wall and I tested a model designed to create option-rich environments (Wall & Dattilo, 1995); then, with researchers from the University of Georgia, I worked to understand constraints to leisure choices (Verpillot & Dattilo, 1996) and examined effects of leisure education programs on promoting self-initiated leisure participation (Devine et al., 1997).

Soon after conducting research supporting the value of providing choice that stimulates leisure engagement, we determined that, if making choices is valuable, then there is merit in trying to assess preferences of individuals who encounter challenges making choices and verbally expressing preferences. Therefore, with the help of Pat Mirenda at the University of Nebraska, we examined effects of using a computerized assessment to determine leisure preferences (Dattilo, 1986a, 1987, 1988) and an associated protocol (Dattilo & Mirenda, 1987) and advocated for such a process (Dattilo, 1986b). On the basis of the initial success of conducting research with experts in the area of augmentative and alternative communication (Mirenda & Dattilo, 1987), I worked with several Penn State researchers in speech pathology. These scholars included Steven Camarata (Dattilo & Camarata, 1988, 1991), Bernard O'Keefe (Dattilo & O'Keefe, 1992; O'Keefe & Dattilo, 1992), and Janice Light (Dattilo & Light, 1993; Dattilo et al., 1995). Together, we worked to foster self-determination within leisure by those encountering communication challenges (Dattilo, 1993).

Given my teaching and clinical experience facilitating leisure for individuals with intellectual disabilities, I initially teamed with Danielle Lanagan at Penn State to examine effects of a leisure education program (Lanagan & Dattilo, 1989); our findings contributed a preliminary model of leisure education developed with Susan St. Peter (Dattilo & St. Peter, 1991). After moving to the University of Georgia we acquired several research and training grants from the U.S. Department of Education, facilitating my work with Gail Hoge, Richard Williams, and Lynne Cory. We examined effects of leisure education on participant self-determination (Williams & Dattilo, 1997), social skills (Cory et al., 2006), and perceived freedom (Dattilo & Hoge, 1999; Hoge et al., 1999), as well as perceptions of leisure education (Dattilo, 2002). Adding Lexi McKenney to the team, we examined effects of computerized leisure education programs on

self-determination (Dattilo et al., 2001) and social skills (Dattilo et al., 2003; McKenney et al., 2004).

Following an initial Penn State study examining effects of a leisure education program on older adults (Lovell et al., 1996), I returned to Penn State to continue studying ways leisure education contributes to healthy aging (Farhney et al., 2010). Working with researchers from the *Center for Healthy Aging*, we developed a leisure education program (B-Active) focused on increasing engagement in enjoyable physical activity (Dattilo et al., 2012) and examined effects of the program (Dattilo et al., 2013). With interest from Domingo García-Villamizar, and on the basis of what we learned from our previous research of adults with autism spectrum disorders (e.g., García-Villamizar & Dattilo, 2010; García-Villamizar et al., 2017b), we modified the program for adults with autism spectrum disorders (B-Active2) and studied its effects (García-Villamizar et al., 2017a). Most recently, colleagues from the *Center for Healthy Aging* and I examined effects of a video-assisted leisure education program designed to enhance participant leisure satisfaction, initially via an exploratory study (Dattilo et al., 2020) and later using an experimental study (Dattilo et al., 2020).

After decades of study of leisure education resulting in various observations (Dattilo & Williams, 2012) and recommendations (Dattilo & Rusch, 2012), I was encouraged to build on our research and model development to present a more comprehensive model grounded in positive psychology (Dattilo, 2015b). This model represents one way to conceptualize leisure education and acts as the structure for this book (Dattilo, 2015a).

On several occasions, I traveled to Asia to share this model with and obtain feedback from researchers from many universities in Taiwan and China. Their feedback helped me to broaden my perspective of leisure education to include Eastern and Western perspectives (Dattilo, 2016a) and to more strongly connect the model to Eastern principles (Dattilo, 2016b).

I continue to learn from various individuals and literature, such as researchers, practitioners, and philosophers from Europe. These scholars and associated scholarship influence the way I think about leisure education; I try to incorporate and communicate this evolution of ideas in each subsequent edition of this book. I have learned a great deal about leisure education and feel privileged to have a career requiring me to learn and share information designed specifically to help people experience leisure and generally to make the world a better place.

## Generating a Personal Mission Statement

For any agency, organization, company, or group, it is helpful to develop a mission statement. A **mission statement** is a formal document that specifies the overall purpose of an entity. It also guides decisions and communicates the rationale for existence. Mission statements evolve and, over time, change depending on the focus of the entity and variations in circumstances. In addition to being helpful for complex units, a mission statement is useful for individuals.

Individual mission statements can clarify what we want to do with our lives and what we want to have guiding our decisions. In addition to providing clarification to the person composing the mission statement, it communicates to others the thinking, beliefs, and attitudes that direct the person's choices and behaviors. Given the ability of a mission statement to articulate concisely a person's intentions, I present my current mission statement:

To take responsibility for demonstrating respect for other living things by being persistent in my actions and beliefs, staying true to my values, and pursuing positivity in others and me.

A mission statement directs us and communicates the path we wish to take. Another benefit of a mission statement is that the more frequently we review it, the more likely we are to think about it, and the better our chance is to live it. Although most of us want to do the right thing and live the best life possible, often we become engrossed in day-to-day demands or respond to social pressures and lose sight of our purpose, of the path we wish to follow. A mission statement helps us to remain self-aware and to keep what we value in the forefront of our minds with the hope that we will more consistently behave in a manner in keeping with our values and good intentions.

## Conclusion

Because there is value in contemplation and in becoming self-aware and mindful, we may wish to reflect on our lives and the world around us to make sense of our life path. In this introduction, I share a part of my journey that led me to include material in this book. I describe my intellectual and emotional travels to illustrate benefits that come from self-analysis. I hope that my doing so motivates you to describe your journey so that you might develop thoughtful leisure education services.

In my journey, I have moved beyond relying on the theory of helplessness to discovering the importance of self-determination. I heed the advice of ancient sages from across the globe to find a balance in my life and to support myself in providing leisure education. I attempt to achieve equilibrium between making sense of negative experiences and embracing positivity. I do this so I listen and attend to people I encounter and so together we experience as much happiness as possible, create contexts conducive to leisure, and flourish.

A strategy that might be fitting for exploring and making sense of our lives as well as for educating people about leisure is to develop a personal mission statement. My statement involves an acknowledgment of my responsibility to demonstrating respect for other living things. To be conscientious, I commit to being unrelenting in my actions and beliefs to pursue positivity in others and in myself. To end this chapter, and to help set the stage for this book, I use a phrase from a Rusted Root song:

*Send me on my way, on my way . . .*