ɔur ego. Daily, begin to observe your egocentric thinking in action
ıg questions like these: As I reflect upon my behavior today, did
ritable over small things? Did I do or say anything irrational to get
ry to impose my will upon others? Did I ever fail to speak my mind
ıgly about something and then later feel resentment?
lentify egocentric thinking in operation, you can work to replace it
nal thought through systematic reflection. What would a rational
ıis or that situation? What would a rational person do? How does
ith what you did? (Hint: If you find that you continually conclude
person would behave just as you behaved, you probably are en-
leception.) (See Chapter 11 for more ways to identify egocentric

e way you see things. We live in a world, both personal and social,
ituation is defined; it is given a fundamental meaning. How a situ-
determines how we feel about it, how we act in it, and what im-
for us. Virtually every situation, however, can be defined in more
This fact carries with it tremendous opportunities for all of us to
ore of what we want it to be. In principle, it lies within your power
fe much happier and more fulfilling than it is.
ıe negative definitions we apply to situations in our lives could, in
ınsformed into positive definitions. As a result, we can gain when
ould have lost. We can be happy when otherwise we would have
an be fulfilled when otherwise we would have been frustrated. In
we practice redefining the way we see things, turning negatives into
ends into new beginnings, mistakes into opportunities to learn. To
plan practical, we should create some specific guidelines for our-
ıple, we might make ourselves a list of five to ten recurring negative
ıich we feel frustrated, angry, unhappy, or worried. We then could
finition in each case that is at the root of the negative emotion.
choose a plausible alternative definition for each and plan for our
ıs well as our new emotions.
ıu have a roommate who gets on your nerves by continually telling
ıe insignificant events in his or her life. Your present definition of
"What a bore! How am I going to last a whole semester listening to
ɔap opera?" Your response might be: "Since I have to do a required
for my introduction to psychology class, I will focus my project on
of my roommate." Now, instead of passively listening to the daily
escription of your roommate's day, you actively question him or her
nation you can use in your psychology paper. Because you are now
nversation, your roommate is not able to bore you with the details
y, and you transform your interactions into a learning experience.
ɔssibility is to redefine an "impossibly difficult class" into a "chal-
out new fundamental concepts and a new way of thinking." For
edefine your initial approach to a member of the other sex not in
finition, "His/her response will determine whether I am an attractive

person," but, instead, in terms of the definition, "Let me test to see if this person is initially drawn to me, given the way he or she perceives me."

With the first definition in mind, you feel personally put down if the person is not interested in you. With the second definition, you explicitly recognize that people initially respond not to the way a stranger *is* but, rather, to the way the person subjectively *looks* to the other. You therefore do not perceive someone's failure to show interest in you as a defect in you.

9. Get in touch with your emotions. Whenever you feel some negative emotion, systematically ask yourself, "What, exactly, is the thinking that leads to this emotion? How might this thinking be flawed? What am I assuming? Should I be making these assumptions? What information is my thinking based on? Is that information reliable?" and so on. (See Chapters 3 and 16.)

10. Analyze group influences on your life. Closely analyze the behavior that is encouraged and discouraged in the groups to which you belong. For a given group, what are you required or expected to believe? What are you "forbidden" to do? If you conclude that your group does not require you to believe anything or has no taboos, you can conclude that you have not deeply analyzed that group. To gain insight into the process of socialization and group membership, review an introductory text in sociology. (See Chapter 11.)

Integrating Strategies One by One

When designing strategies, the key point is to engage in an experiment. You are testing strategies in your personal life, integrating them, and building on them in light of your actual experience. All strategies have advantages and disadvantages. One plausible way to do this is to work with all the strategies on the following list in any order.

1. Use "wasted" time.
2. Handle a problem a day.
3. Internalize intellectual standards.
4. Keep an intellectual journal.
5. Practice intellectual strategies.
6. Reshape your character.
7. Deal with your ego.
8. Redefine the way you see things.
9. Get in touch with your emotions.
10. Analyze group influences on your life.

As you design strategies to improve the quality of your life, suppose you find the strategy "Redefine the way you see things" to be intuitive to you. Therefore, it's a good strategy to begin with. As you focus intently on this idea and apply it in your life, you begin to notice social definitions within groups. You begin to recognize