

Assets: Capacity for Taking Care

Are you richer than you think?

Your assets are the capacity you have accumulated to take care of what matters to you. When you tally your assets, it looks like you are making lists of *things*. The power of your assets, however, lives here: you are *assessing* or evaluating your capacity to bring and take relevant action. I help my clients make four assessments of capacities they have accumulated or need to grow:

- **Your *financial assets*** (“money”) are your capacity to bring action in a marketplace. The “possessor” of financial assets gets things done by making requests and offering compensation in exchange for the fulfillment of the requests. Typical financial assets include money, deferred compensation, stocks, bonds, and credit standing.
- **Your *pragmatic or cognitive assets*** (“competence”) are your capacity to fulfill offers that make a difference to others – to take care of the concerns of others. You build that capacity through education, intelligence, experience, the development of skills and offers, your ability to gather and use information, your ability to take action, and your sensitivity to the concerns of others.
- **Your *symbolic assets*** (“identity”) are your capacity to bring forth action in your network of relationships and reputation. You build that capacity through impeccability, integrity, trustworthiness, connectedness, loyalty, allegiances, leadership, and your “track record.” We make assessments of a person’s standing in various relationships, social networks, and communities.
- **Your *spiritual assets*** (“disposition”) are your accumulated capacity to find and articulate meaning and value in your life. You build that capacity by learning from life’s experiences, grounding yourself in faith traditions, developing knowledge and trust of yourself, others, and the universe, as well as by cultivating particular positive moods, recognizing important unities (“a bigger whole”), and building the practice of inventing meaning in life.

You can develop each type of asset by *investing* money, time, and commitment, as well as other types of assets. We pay schools and mentors to help us build pragmatic assets; we employ our pragmatic and symbolic assets to produce financial and spiritual assets. One may have significant financial assets but lack basic practices for coordinating among people (pragmatic assets), and as a result may encounter career difficulties which cannot be fixed with money alone. In contrast, one may have insignificant financial assets, but excellent social skills, and from there build a thriving career. We become wealthy when we invest our assets wisely in our lives, building satisfaction and well-being. The right investments will be different at different stages of our lives and for different areas of concerns.