Chapter 4 Background

The **Merging Two Worlds** *(M2W)* curriculum, Chapter 4, continues the concept of self-assessment as a means to increase self-awareness, and self-awareness as an important skill for the student's successful reintegration into the community. The emphasis is accessing community resources.

The student's observation and evaluation of himself, requires that he observe and evaluate his circumstances as well. This encourages the student to look with appreciation, beyond himself toward his connections with his world, to look at life through a wide-angle lens, even from other points of view.

AN OVERVIEW OF CHAPTER 4 CONTENTS / Life Planning

1. **Some of the topics and skills include:**
   - All Chapter 4 lessons include the topics: Transition into the community, self-talk, self-awareness, Stop and Think, resiliency, decision making and planning.
   - Topics also included are: Housing, money management, transportation, medical treatment, communication skills, finding, getting, keeping a job, learning needs and opportunities, leisure time choices and decision making.

2. **Building MRG (My Resource Guide).**
   As the student works through the four chapters of the *M2W* curriculum, he builds his own personal transition survival guide **MRG (My Resource Guide)**. The activities in Chapter 4 have more information that students will find helpful as they re-enter the community.
   - The student analyzes, evaluates, and synthesizes information from a variety of sources. He selects that which is personally relevant and saves it in his personal transition portfolio, MRG.
   - The last lesson of each *M2W* chapter, guides the student to think about all past *M2W* lessons. The student is guided as they review, reevaluate, record, reflect and report on their work. These reflections are also saved in MRG.
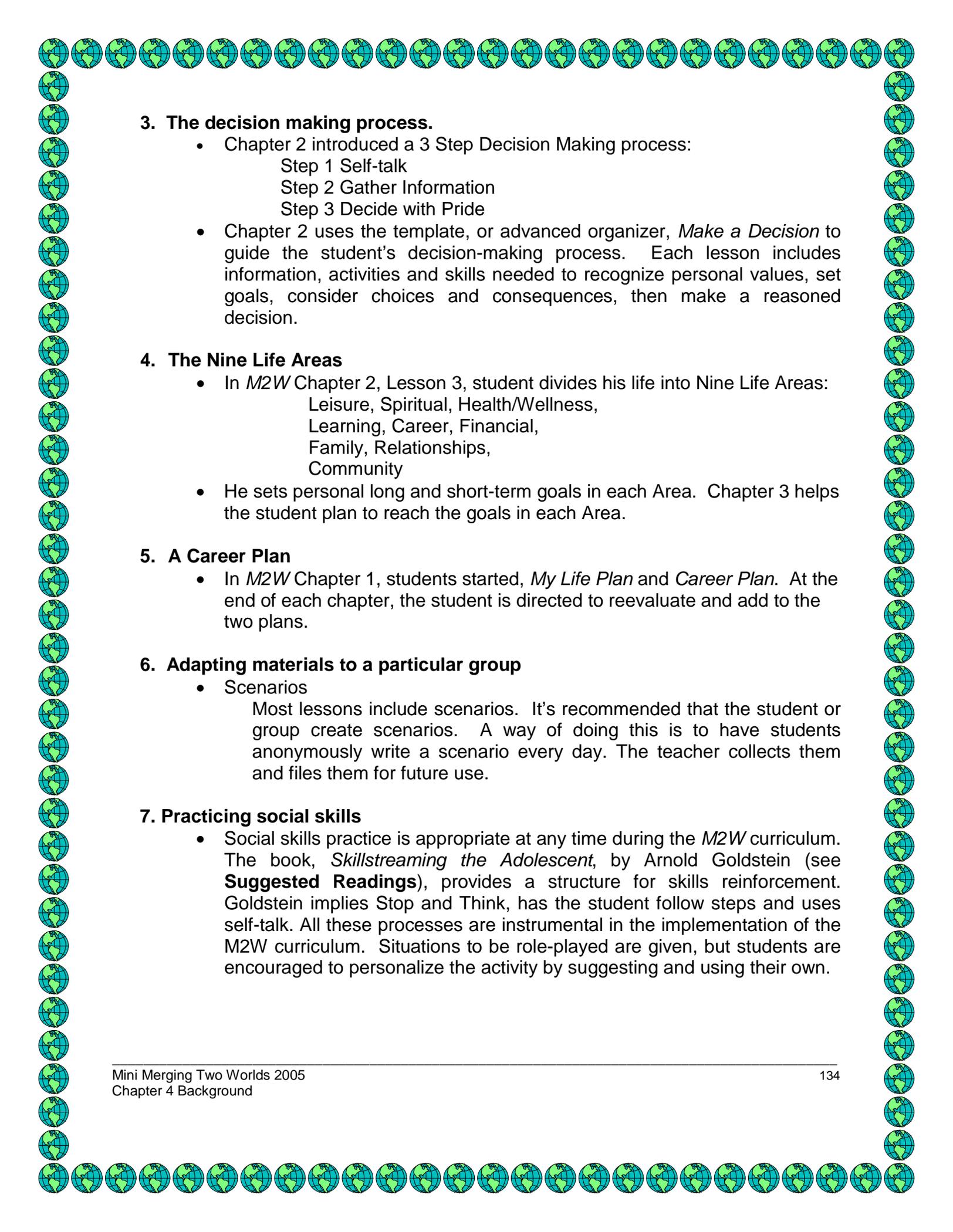
3. **The decision making process.**
   - Chapter 2 introduced a 3 Step Decision Making process:
        Step 1 Self-talk
        Step 2 Gather Information
        Step 3 Decide with Pride
   - Chapter 2 uses the template, or advanced organizer, *Make a Decision* to guide the student's decision-making process. Each lesson includes information, activities and skills needed to recognize personal values, set goals, consider choices and consequences, then make a reasoned decision.

4. **The Nine Life Areas**
   - In *M2W* Chapter 2, Lesson 3, student divides his life into Nine Life Areas:
        Leisure, Spiritual, Health/Wellness,
        Learning, Career, Financial,
        Family, Relationships,
        Community
   - He sets personal long and short-term goals in each Area. Chapter 3 helps the student plan to reach the goals in each Area.

5. **A Career Plan**
   - In *M2W* Chapter 1, students started, *My Life Plan* and *Career Plan*. At the end of each chapter, the student is directed to reevaluate and add to the two plans.

6. **Adapting materials to a particular group**
   - Scenarios
     Most lessons include scenarios. It's recommended that the student or group create scenarios. A way of doing this is to have students anonymously write a scenario every day. The teacher collects them and files them for future use.

7. **Practicing social skills**
   - Social skills practice is appropriate at any time during the *M2W* curriculum. The book, *Skillstreaming the Adolescent*, by Arnold Goldstein (see **Suggested Readings**), provides a structure for skills reinforcement. Goldstein implies Stop and Think, has the student follow steps and uses self-talk. All these processes are instrumental in the implementation of the M2W curriculum. Situations to be role-played are given, but students are encouraged to personalize the activity by suggesting and using their own.

IF THE STUDENT HASN'T STUDIED *M2W* CHAPTERS 1, 2, or 3

1. Self-talk Litany

- To stop and think is the most important skill taught in the *M2W* curriculum. Developmentally, adolescent thinking and decision making is impulsive and non-reflective. Impulsive decisions and behavior frequently get our students into trouble.
- Practice of the Self Talk litany is a critical skill. It's an effective opening to any lesson.

The Concept of the Self-talk litany

- Self-talk is what a person says to himself. Research, experience and common sense indicate that self-talk affects behavior.

- The student is taught an auditory prompt, a litany, "Before your choice, hear your voice say, Stop and Think, VGC." V recalls the student's values, G, goals, C, choices and consequences. (See Lesson Backgrounds). This stop sign is used as a visual cue to think, "Stop and think, VGC."
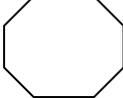
- The litany reminds the student to refrain from acting and gives him a chance to assess what's going on.

- VGC reminds the student of whom he says he is and wants to be. It prompts the questions: What are my values? What are my goals? What are my choices? What consequences do I want to live and want others to live?

- These questions prompt the decision making pattern shown on the worksheet, *Make a Decision.*

The Implementation of the Self-talk litany

- The student should always say the litany aloud. The teacher models the litany, orally. To become an automatic response, it must be "over learned." To accomplish this the litany must be practiced repeatedly over a long period of time. It doesn't happen quickly, although it may seem easy at first. It's not enough to teach the words and procedure only during the lesson. To be successful, the student must be required to say the litany as often as possible, until he's comfortable with it.

- Further, because the teacher plays a critical role as a model in the classroom, it's essential that the teacher use the litany too. It's likely that the teacher uses a variation of the litany or some other self-talk that they've developed that works for them. However, it's important that the teacher models the Stop and Think litany for the students so as to avoid confusion.

- When a student or the group recites the litany without teacher prompts, they've reached the first step in making the litany an automatic part of their self-talk.

2. Resiliency

The success of a person's decision and plan depends not only on the wisdom of the decision and the viability of the plan, but also the persistence with which the plan is implemented. Research from the fields of psychology, psychiatry, and sociology is concluding that each person has an innate capacity for resiliency, which operates best when people have resiliency-building skills and conditions that improve these skills.

Each of the lessons in *M2W* Chapter 3 emphasizes the skills that build resiliency. Resiliency is the ability to come back from and successfully adapt to adversity. A 15-year-old high school student defined it as, "Bouncing back from problems and stuff with more power and smarts."

Resiliency-building skills:
Sense of Purpose
- Inner direction
  - Bases choices on internal evaluation
  - Internal locus of control
- View of future
  - Optimistic
- Spirituality
  - Personal faith in something greater
- Perseverance
  - Doesn't give up despite obstacles

Social Competence
- Relationships
  - Able to build and maintain
  - Able to be a friend, form and keep close
- Humor
  - Can see the "funny"
- Perceptive
  - Insightful understanding of people and situations
- Assertive
  - Clearly expresses opinions, feelings, ideas
  - Understands how attitude influences others
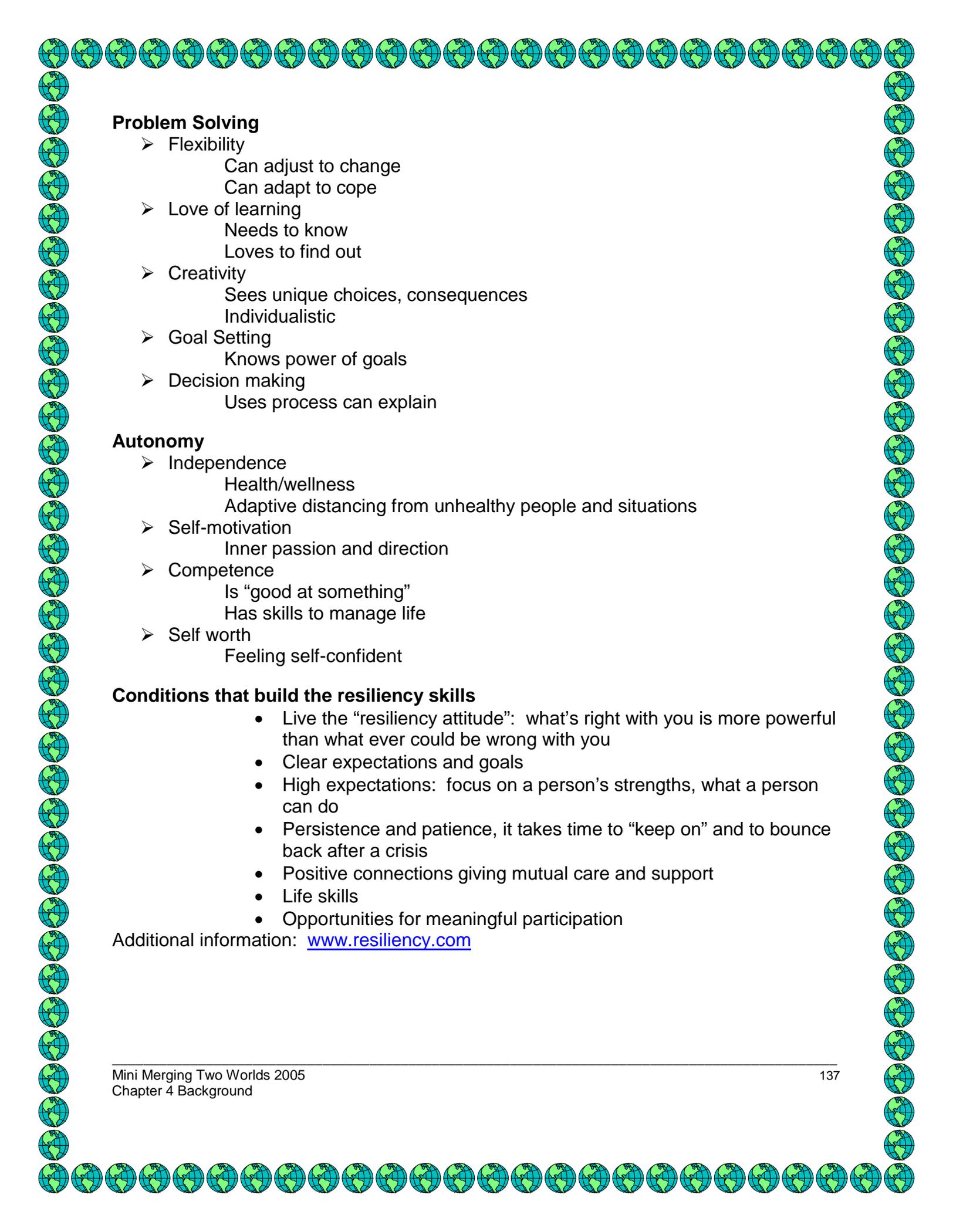
Problem Solving
- ➢ Flexibility
    - Can adjust to change
    - Can adapt to cope
- ➢ Love of learning
    - Needs to know
    - Loves to find out
- ➢ Creativity
    - Sees unique choices, consequences
    - Individualistic
- ➢ Goal Setting
    - Knows power of goals
- ➢ Decision making
    - Uses process can explain

Autonomy
- ➢ Independence
    - Health/wellness
    - Adaptive distancing from unhealthy people and situations
- ➢ Self-motivation
    - Inner passion and direction
- ➢ Competence
    - Is "good at something"
    - Has skills to manage life
- ➢ Self worth
    - Feeling self-confident

Conditions that build the resiliency skills
- Live the "resiliency attitude": what's right with you is more powerful than what ever could be wrong with you
- Clear expectations and goals
- High expectations: focus on a person's strengths, what a person can do
- Persistence and patience, it takes time to "keep on" and to bounce back after a crisis
- Positive connections giving mutual care and support
- Life skills
- Opportunities for meaningful participation

Additional information: www.resiliency.com