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Editor’s Comments
Larry Litwack

In May 1999, a unique conference was held at the Burlington, Massachusetts campus of Northeastern University, co-sponsored by both Northeastern University and the LABBB Collaborative Programs in Lexington, Massachusetts. The National Conference on Internal Control Psychology brought together four individuals, each of whom had established a national and international reputation as writers, speakers, conceptual thinkers, and/or theorists. The four were Albert Ellis, William Glasser, William Powers, and Alfie Kohn. The Conference provided a rare opportunity for those attending to hear presentations from each speaker, as well as the speakers interacting with each other and the audience.

Perhaps the most important element of the Conference was that it provided the opportunity for individuals to talk to and with each other. Only through such dialogues do ideas flourish. The purpose of the Conference was not to reach consensus or unanimity - but rather to recognize that no one has yet discovered the Holy Grail - the universal truth in which all must believe. The one common element in all presentations was the belief in the inherent strength in the ideas inherent in internal control psychology.

The first two articles in this issue offer an opportunity for readers to critically review the ideas of Albert Ellis and William Powers. They were prepared by the two speakers for presentation by William Glasser and Alfie Kohn, I would draw the readers’ attention to page 48 of this issue. The complete conference was videotaped, and the three-tape set is now available at essentially cost. The tape set includes the presentations by all four speakers, the panel in which the speakers had the opportunity to talk with each other, and the time for audience questions and panel responses.

Based on the success of the Conference, I am now planning the Second National Conference. Readers may find the announcement on page 30. The coming conference features both theorists and practitioners. The format will be somewhat similar, in that each speaker will present the first day. The second day will provide the opportunity to dialogue with at least one speaker in a small group session, as well as time for panelists to interact with each other and with the audience. Again, the common element in the conference will be the attention paid to the theory and practice of Internal Control Psychology.

When individuals from different disciplines exchange ideas with each other, we are less likely to foster factionalism, and more likely to promote the ideas common to many. Through mutual respect, and providing the opportunity for different perspectives to be heard, considered, and either adopted or discarded, we are much more likely to stand the test of time. Ideas that are not heard can not be properly weighed against any standard. Positions that are taken that stifle any disagreement may only lead to the conclusion that an individual or group is unwilling to consider alternatives and is afraid to consider anything new or different.

It would seem that we have a common goal - that is to present a clear alternative to external control psychology. Although we may speak in different voices, and introduce different ideas, our goal is the same. Nothing remains stagnant. If our alternatives are to gain support and withstand the test of time, we must work together, rather than stifle discussion or alternative ways of presenting ideas.

That is why I have insisted over the years that the International Journal of Reality Therapy not be viewed as representing solely the views of the William Glasser Institute or its members, but rather be viewed as a scholarly journal, committed to the examination and presentation of ideas all dealing with internal control psychology. This I will continue to do.

Perhaps most importantly, I will begin to give publication priority to research articles testing the validity of the ideas of internal control psychology that we take for granted. On a regular basis, I receive calls from around the country from individuals seeking data-based research on the efficacy of reality therapy/choice theory. It is no longer enough to say that it works because I say it works, and I can present anecdotal evidence to that effect.

The past eighteen years have passed quickly. I have been pleased with the growth of the Journal and the reactions of readers. I hope to continue improving on the quality of the material presented. I would welcome at any time reactions, suggestions and/or contributions from readers. I can always be reached at llitwack@aol.com. I look forward to hearing from you.
Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy
As An Internal Control Psychology

Albert Ellis
Albert Ellis Institute, New York City

Abstract: This paper was a presentation at the May 1999 National conference on Internal Control Psychology.

This is going to be an experiment in writing as far as my use of language is concerned. A few years ago I read the book *Acceptance and Change* (Hayes, Jacobson, Follette, and Dougher, 1994) and was struck by the chapter by Robert Zettle (1994) “On the base of Acceptable Language.” Zettle points out, following Kantor and Smith (1975), that the study of attention, perception, memory, and cognition are more accurately stated as matters of attending, perceiving, remembering, and thinking. As Zettle notes, word misuse in psychology makes nouns substitute for verbs and thereby makes constructs (which are actually fictions) into events (which are factual).

I quickly saw that Zettle was right about this and decided to use verbs rather than nouns in a paper I am writing on cognizing in therapy. As I was writing this paper, I read William Glasser’s (1998) Choice Theory and found that he, too, deliberately uses verbs, like “I depress” instead of nouns, like “I suffer from depression” and that, in doing so, he nicely promotes the view that negative feelings do not occur or exist in their own right but that we have the active choice of bringing them on or not bringing them on ourselves. We are the actors who actively act. We are not merely flotsam and jetsam upon which external conditions act.

Agreeing with Zettle and Glasser, I decided in this article to talk about human thinking, feeling, and behaving in terms of verbs rather than construct somewhat misleading nouns for them. This is an experiment and since I am trying it for only the second time we shall see how it works. I may, as a novice, go to some extremes in using this choice oriented language. We shall see!

Since this is the First National conference on Internal Control Psychology I shall mainly discuss the theory and practice of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) and its relationship to internal control. I originated REBT in January 1955 after I had practiced different kinds of external control therapies for several years, particularly psychoanalysis which largely holds that people's dysfunctional responding gets attached to influential stimuli; and once their stimulus-responses become persistently conditioned, they control the individual. They supposedly then can extinguish or recondition them, especially with external manipulating by a behavior therapist.

I was also persuaded, in my first decade as a therapist, by the strict behavioral theories of Ivan Pavlov (1927) and John B. Watson (1919), which were somewhat similar to the psychoanalysts in that they believed that what we usually call emotional dysfunctioning results from early behavioral conditioning. That is, people’s dysfunctional responding gets attached to influential stimuli; and once their stimulus-responses become persistently conditioned, they control the individual. They supposedly then can extinguish or recondition them, especially with external manipulating by a behavior therapist.

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As a result of my learning that classical psychoanalytic behavioral methods of therapy were surprisingly ineffective for most people with mild neurotic and serious personal dysfunctioning, I returned to philosophy, which had been my hobby since the age of 16, but which the study of external psychology had encouraged me to put in abeyance for several years. I again found that some of the ancient philosophers - particularly Gautama Buddha, Lao-Tsu, Epicurus, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius - and some of the modern philosophers - particularly Immanuel Kant, George Santayana, John Dewey, Bertrand Russell, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Martin Heidigger, and Alfred Korzybski - had more important things to say about human dysfunctioning than the leading therapists of the 1950's. For they held that people distinctly had the ability to control their own thinking, emoting, and acting rather than to submit themselves to the external control of other people and events.

Stimulus-response (S-R) psychology, several of these philosophers clearly saw, was only partially correct. More importantly, we'd better, especially as therapists and counselors, consider stimulus-organism-response (S-O-R) psychology (Woodworth, 1918). Yes, the organism — the person — was influenced by important stimuli. But this influence was also selected and chosen by him or her. The individual had distinct choices in how to respond to various stimuli. Internal control over external events not only existed - it was often crucial to creating and productive healthy functioning.
After reviewing some relevant philosophers as well as the writings of several eclectic psychologists of the 1940's and 1950's - such as Prescott Lecky (1943) and Frederick Thorne (1950) - I did some tall thinking about my methods of therapy. So in 1953 I abandoned psychoanalysis, revised my views on behavior therapy and experimented with various forms of therapy (Ellis, 1955a, 1955b). As a result of my experimentation, I started to do REBT, the first major cognitive-behavior therapy (CBT), and I began to actively use and promote the now well-known ABC theory of human disturbing and the techniques of Disputing (D) and ameliorating emotional dysfunctioning (Ellis, 1957a, 1957b, 1958). The ABC theory of REBT basically restates the saying of Epictetus (1899), two thousand years ago, "People are disturbed not by events but by their view of them." Stressing internal rather than external control over human feeling and behaving, it states that people choose important goal-seeking (G), particularly to stay alive and be relatively happy in relationships, at work, at pleasures, and other affairs. When their goal-seeking is blocked or thwarted by encountering A (Adversity) they frequently also experience C (Consequences) of disturbing themselves by depressing, worrying, and raging. They also experience behaving problems, such as compulsively withdrawing, inhibiting, and overacting. However, A (Adversity) rarely directly leads to their self-disturbing Consequences (C). B (their Belief System or philosophy) interacts with A to lead to (or "cause") C (disturbing consequences). Thus, A x B = C. Which is similar to what Epictetus and other philosophers said. The ABC's of REBT therefore constitute an internal control theory. Stimuli (S) are selected and/or chosen by the organism (O) to produce human responding (R).

Actually, as I have shown in a number of articles and books (Ellis, 1994, 1996, 1998, 1999a, 1999b; Ellis & Dryden, 1997; Ellis & MacLaren, 1998), people follow the ABC's of REBT with important complexities, which I will barely mention here. Thus, when they disturb themselves at C, they do so within an environmental context, or frame. Their A's importantly interact with and affect their B's and C's. Also, their B's interact with and affect their A's. And their C's interact with and affect their A's and B's. People complicatedly react to their environment and their environment complexly interacts with them. Numerous variations are possible when individuals encounter Adversities, have Beliefs about these Adversities, and also experience emotional and behavioral Consequences of A x B. People are infinitely varied; and so is their choice of self-defeatingly and healthily reacting to A and B.

Internal Control Theory, as used in REBT, does not mean that people only choose to indulge in disturbing themselves by their Beliefs. As I noted in my first paper on REBT in 1956 (Ellis, 1958) people do not experience thoughts, feelings, and behaviors purely or disparately. Instead, their cognizing importantly influences their feeling and behaving, their feeling influences their thinking and behaving, and their behaving influences their thinking and feeling. Human living processes are enormously interacting and cybernetically oriented. Nonetheless, external control theory says that things and events largely control people's behaving. REBT and internal control theory say, instead, that their Beliefs also are largely influenced by what they feel and do- and often more directly and thoroughly than by outside events. More importantly, people rarely change their emoting and acting without first changing their Believing; and by changing their quality Believing, they can significantly change how they feel and act. They can usually do so more effectively than if they try to change how they feel and act without restructuring their Believing. Indeed, sometimes major revising of their Believing is their only way to change their unhealthy emoting and behaving.

This means that cognitive changes are very important in therapy, and therefore are stressed in REBT. Practitioners of REBT emphasize proceeding to D (Disputing of Irrational Believing) which importantly (through not exclusively) leads to human dysfunctioning. People, REBT holds, importantly create their disturbing emotions and actions by unconsciously and consciously elevating their Rational Beliefs (RB's) - which consist of preferences for success, approval, and pleasure - into Irrational Beliefs (IB's) - which mainly consist of absolutistically demanding and insisting that these preferences must be fulfilled (Ellis, 1962, 1994).

In other words, REBT theorizes that when people merely desire that their basic goals and values be fulfilled, they healthily strive for this fulfillment and rarely bring on serious trouble for themselves and others. Their preferences, however strong, include an explicit or implicit but, and this but leads them to healthy or useful feelings of sorrowing, regretting, and frustrating when they do not fulfill them. Preferring rarely leads to unhealthy feeling and behaving - such as depressing, obsessively worrying, or angering - when people's desires are seriously thwarted.

For example: "I greatly prefer to win your approval and have your sincere friendship or love. But I don't have to fulfill my preferring. Therefore if you ignore or dislike me, I will feel sorrowing and disappointing. But I will not destroy or devastate myself. I will not now fulfill my preferring. But I will be open to later win your approval and/or be approved by significant others and/or to please myself in various other ways even if I am never approved by you and/or others. Because I prefer and do not absolutely need your approval, I can choose many other ways to fulfill many of my basic desires."

With this kind of preferential or choice thinking and desiring, people will rarely disturb themselves when their goal-seeking, because of their own shortcomings or because of external Adversities, are thwarted. However, when they raise their preferring to absolutistically demanding and musting - resort in REBT terms to masturbating - they almost always create a radically different set of feeling or acting Consequences. For example: "I strongly believe and feel that I absolutely must win your approval and or love and I have to fulfill my desiring. Therefore, if you ignore or dislike me, I will panic, depress, or enrage myself. I will conclude that I will never gain your approving, will always have disapproving by significant others, and will not be able to experience any real enjoying as I go through life. All my days will be awful and terrible, and I can't stand living under those
Although their approving me is what I strongly desire, what my preferring fulfilled and be approved by significant others? REBT, again, is a complicated and comprehensive theory and practice of human disturbing and of how people can deal with it therapeutically. I cannot cover some of the most important aspects of its theory in this relatively short paper. But, as shown in the last two paragraphs, it is clearly an internal choice therapy. It says that when thwartings and blockings occur to interfere with people’s achieving their desiring, they usually have a clear-cut choice of rationally and functionally preferring that they not be thwarted and that they achieve some reasonable fulfilling of their desiring. Or they have a choice of irrationally and dysfunctionally demanding and commanding that their desiring absolutely must be achieved. If they distinctly select rational preferring rather than irrational demanding, they will most likely experience healthy negative emoting, such as sorrowing and regretting - instead of unhealthy negative emoting, such as panicking, depressing, and raging. Because people are born and reared with constructive and creative tendencies to think, feel, and act, as well as unconstructive and self-defeating ones, they almost always have a choice of using several thinking, feeling, and behaving methods of changing their ineffective feelings and actions to much more effective living. REBT, as noted, teaches people many thinking, feeling, and acting ways of making themselves less self-disturbing and more enjoyable (Ellis & Dryden, 1997; Ellis, Gordon, Neenan, and Palmer, 1998; Ellis & MacLaren, 1998). Among these ways, it especially reveals to people how they both consciously and unconsciously raise their healthy purposing and preferring to unhealthy insisting and demanding, and how they can actively Dispute their self-destructive and relationship-destructive dogmatic insisting and turn it back to effective preferring. REBT particularly educates people to use empirical, logical, and practical forms of Disputing which help them to surrender their arrogant necessitizing. For example, REBT helps people to challenge and Dispute their musturbating empirically or realistically by asking themselves, “Where is the evidence that I absolutely must get my preferring fulfilled and be approved by significant others? Although their approving me is what I strongly desire, what law of the universe says that it is absolutely necessary?”

REBT teaches people to Dispute their musts logically by asking, for example, “If I do not win the approving of significant others, as I believe that I absolutely must, does it follow that I am truly an inadequate person who will never be able to win the approval of anyone I really favor? Is it logical to conclude that without the approving of someone I want, I can’t be happy in any way at all?”

REBT teaches people to Dispute their dogmatic musting practically or pragmatically by asking themselves, for example, “If I devoutly believe that I absolutely must be approved by every significant other for whom I care, what kind of emoting and behaving will I almost surely produce for myself? How will my musturbatory Believing that I absolutely need to be approved help or hinder me in getting my desiring it fulfilled?”

According to REBT, if people strongly and persistently Dispute (D) their musturbating and demanding, they will tend to construct an Effective New Philosophizing (E) which changes their grandiose demanding back to distinct preferring, desiring, and constructive goal-seeking. No more absolute necessitizing! At the same time, self-disturbing people had better use several of REBT’s emotive and activity-oriented methods to arrive at healthy, self-helping and relationship-helping behaving. Their rational thinking is central to their making themselves emotionally and behaviorally healthy. But their feeling and their acting are also integrated with and are an essential part of that thinking. So REBT tries to help people think rationally in order to feel and act well; but it also teaches them how to feel and behave efficiently in order to think well. All three pathways are useful and indispensable. All three can be chosen by people to promote healthy living (Bernard & Wolfe, 1993; Dryden, 1995; Ellis, 1997; Walen, DiGuiseppi, & Dryden, 1992).

To show how REBT is a theory of choice and of internal control, let me compare it to the Choice Theory of William Glasser, as he describes it in his latest book (Glasser, 1998). As noted above, REBT was the first of the major Cognitive-behaviors Therapies (CBT’s). It preceded the Reality Therapy of Glasser (1965) by ten years, the Cognitive therapy of Beck (1967) by twelve years, Cognitive-Behavior Modification of Meichenbaum (1997) by fourteen years, and the Constructivist Cognitive-Behavior therapy of Mahoney (1974) by nineteen years. Actually, Kelly (1955) had a pioneering Constructivist-cognitive theory of therapy, but he only used one behavioral method - fixed role playing - and just about no cognitive methods in his therapy. In fact, he somewhat downplayed the Disputing of Irrational-Believing which is importantly used in REBT and also taken over by most of the other cognitive-behavior therapies.

Although Glasser’s Choice Theory seems to do less Disputing of Irrational Believing than most of the other CBT Systems, I have always felt that it and his Reality Therapy (RT) are somewhat closer to REBT than are most of the other CBT’s. This is because Reality Therapy and Choice Theory emphasize teaching and education; they are active-directive; they focus on changing behavior as well as cognitions; they are constructivist; and they particularly, of course, emphasize people’s choice of letting external happenings crucially affect them or selecting, instead, to deal with their internal control abilities and thus take more charge of their living.

To so more precisely how REBT is an internal control psychology, it may be instructive to compare some of its main aspects to those of the ten axioms of Choice Theory as described in Glasser’s (1998) latest book. William Glasser: “The only person whose behavior we can control is our own” (p. 332).

REBT position: Yes, we cannot help influencing people, since human nature makes us quite influenceable by things
and individuals in our environment. Sometimes, when we are
their parents, intimates, peers, or teachers, people let us
profoundly influence them. But in the final analysis, they
choose to take, to reject, to cooperate with, or fight against our
influence. Glasser and REBT give several techniques, such as
listening closely to people, which may help us influence them
more than other techniques, such as ignoring and
contradicting them. But even when we go to extremes and
coerce and imprison people, they basically react to our
correction in individualistic, personal ways. Moreover, they
largely react to what they tell themselves - what they Believe
(B) about our restricting them (A). They do not just react to
what we coercively do to them.

William Glasser: “All we can give or get from other people
is information. How we deal with that information is our or
their choice” (p. 333).

REBT position: Yes, if under the heading of information
we include other people’s acting. Their acting, like their
verbalizing, tells us how they think, feel, and behave toward
us. How we react to their thinking, feeling, and behaving is to
a large extent our own choice. Even if people tie us up and beat
us, our body has limited reactions (e.g., restraint or movement
and pain of the beatings ). But our thinking and our feeling
about their coercion are idiosyncratic to us.

William Glasser: “All long-lasting psychological problems
are relationship problems. The cause of [our] misery is always
our way of dealing with an important relationship that is not
working out the way we want it to” (pp.333-334).

REBT position: No, not exactly - unless we include under
relationship problems our relationships to (1) ourselves, (2)
others, and (3) the world. We certainly can depress ourselves
when important relationships are not working out well - and
most of our depressing is probably over relationship lacks.
But we can also depress ourselves when we insist that we
absolutely must get what we want at work, at sports, and at
pleasures. These wants may sometimes involve other people
relatively little. Whenever we insist that our desiring must be
fulfilled by ourselves, by others, or by life experiences we will
tend to make ourselves miserable when we are deprived. This
especially goes for our relationships with others, but it also
comes from our needing, rather than merely wanting, success,
power, money athletic prowess, beauty, and innumerable
other goals. Achieving these things we prefer usually involves
some degree of relating to others but sometimes not. For
example: running five miles a day or dieting successfully may
not involve our relating to others. However, most lasting
psychological problems, as Glasser states, involve
relationship problems.

William Glasser: “There is no sense wasting time looking
for all aspects of our lives for why we are choosing misery . . .
The problem is always part of our present lives” (p. 334).

REBT position: Quite so! We originally chose to upset
ourselves for various reasons in the past, such as maltreatment
by our parents or our peers. We demanded that these
Adversities absolutely must not exist and we awfulized about
them. But if we are miserabilizing about these or similar
things today, we are still carrying on our demandingness and
awfulizing in the present. Thus, we are still insisting that our
parents, peers, or others absolutely must not have acted or
now act favorably to us. Our present irrational philosophizing
therefore upsets us today. We may have started to think that
that way many years ago but we still continue to do so currently.
So let us deal largely with our present thinking, feeling, and
acting, and let us currently change them and also modify them
for the future if we are to stop disturbing ourselves. This rarely
involves a detailed consideration of our past, though doing so
may sometimes help us to change our present ways. Glasser
and REBT mainly agree about historical probing and
analyzing - as is obsessively done in psychoanalysis.

William Glasser: “We are driven by five genetic needs:
survival, love, and belonging., power, freedom, and fun” (p.
335).

REBT position: We have strong innate and learned desires
or preferences for survival, love and belonging, power,
freedom, and fun. But when we self-defeatingly insist,
demand, and command that we absolutely must survive, must
be loved by others, must have power over people, must be
free, and must have fun, then we choose to make our desires
and preferences into dire necessities and thereby defeat
ourselves.

This, alas, seems to be the human condition – for us to take
a perfectly natural desire, such as the desire that we live and
get along with significant other people, and then we
frequently – not, of course, always – turn this into a dire need
for their approval.

Obviously, our demand for others’ approval is not really a
necessity, since if we are not approved by someone – say, a
parent or a mate – whose love we greatly want, and even if we
are hated by them, we rarely will die (though we may
neurotically kill ourselves). So being loved and approved is
hardly a necessity for survival. Many people who are little
cared for are consequently very sorrowing and wanting, but
they still manage to enjoy other things (such as work, art, or
science).

When, however, we think that love is a necessity and that
we absolutely need it to be a worthy and happy person, we
frequently fail to get it sufficiently (partly because we are too
needy to be lovable) and we make ourselves exceptionally
panicking and depressing. But it is our Believing about love
that we choose to depress ourselves about – not the mere fact
that we lack it. So, also, without our raising our strong desires
for power, freedom, and fun into dire necessities, our
choosing to necessities about instead of greatly wanting these
goals often makes us less capable of achieving them – and
emotionally destroying, when we fail to do so.

This is really, it seems to me, the essence of choice theory.
We consciously or unconsciously decide to get what we
desire – such as love, power, freedom, and fun, which we are
born and raised with strong tendencies to want. Then, we
often exaggerate those preferences into musts and demands,
convince ourselves that we absolutely need approval at
practically all times and under all conditions, and thereby
depress ourselves when our presumed needs are not fulfilled.
We take our healthy goals and aspirations and make them into
unhealthy insistent. We thereby create emotional trouble for ourselves, with and for other people, and with realistic world conditions which, of course, never provide us with everything we foolishly think we need.

REBT agrees with Glasser and his Choice Theory that we naturally want love, power, freedom, and fun — for they often add to our enjoying of life and help us survive, if you get them. But Glasser often implies that we need — that is absolutely must have — these goals fulfilled. He especially, from his first book, *Reality Therapy* (Glasser, 1965), posits love and approval as a need rather than as a very powerful human desire. Perhaps this is mainly a semantic problem.

Perhaps Glasser uses the term need for love to mean the REBT term strong desire for love. If so, he and REBT are on a similar track. But, if, by using need for love he means that in order to survive and be at all happy, we must love others and be loved by them, then I think he exaggerates and somewhat distorts our healthy preference for love, cooperation, socializing, and getting along with others and makes our healthily preferring them into unhealthy necessitating. If so, I think that he gets into serious contradiction and conflict with his own Choice Theory. He is first saying we choose to love and be loved, but also saying that it is a necessary choice for survival and personal worth. Isn't this contradictory?

William Glasser: "We can satisfy these needs [for love, power, freedom, and fun] only by satisfying a picture or pictures in our quality worlds. Of all we know, what we choose to put into our quality worlds is the most important" (p. 335).

REBT position: Here, again, I disagree with Glasser's calling our strong preferences for love, power, freedom, and fun needs. If we substitute powerful desires for his use of the word needs, however, his position seems to be close to the REBT position. I agree with him that we have weak and moderate desires — e.g., our desires to win a ping pong game — and also have strong and powerful desires — e.g., our urge to win the ping pong championship. Glasser seems to be saying that when we satisfy a weak set of desires we are reasonably happy; but only when we satisfy our quality desires — the goals and ideas that we hold quite strongly and consistently — are we truly happy. If we win a game, or a bet, or someone's temporary favor, we are pleased. But if we consistently win a game we enjoy or win the intense and steady approval of those we favor, then we profoundly affect our lives and can easily weather other difficulties and hassles. Our quality worlds are our main or core desires and, as Glasser says, they are most important. But, REBT holds, it is not necessary that we fulfill them. If we do not foolishly define them as imperatives, we can still be happy, though obviously not as happy, as when we don't achieve them.

William Glasser: "The most freedom we ever experience is when we are able to satisfy a picture or pictures in our quality worlds. If we put pictures into our quality worlds that we cannot satisfy, we are giving up freedom" (p. 335).

REBT position: Not quite! Glasser makes an important point, but also misses some of the point. When we satisfy the goals and aspirations in our quality worlds, we are naturally happier than if we satisfy our weaker goals. But are we freer? Not necessarily. Freedom is the ability to minimally restrict ourselves and to avoid interfering with our main wishes. We feel temporarily free to go after and to try to get things we really want. But if we need what we want, we easily worry about not getting it, about not completely gaining it, and not always getting it in the future.

So satisfying our quality worlds when we think we absolutely must satisfy them is a pyrrhic victory. Much greater — and lasting — freedom comes from having pictures in our quality worlds and strongly preferring but not demanding that we fulfill them. Then we are free to desire love, power, freedom from restriction, and fun, and we are free to make ourselves only feel frustrated and disappointed when we don't fulfill our desires, but free to not feel panicking, depressing, and raging. Our main freeing is to keep ourselves free from emotionally paining ourselves, instead of frequently choosing to bring it on ourselves. We largely bring on this needless self-paining by choosing our quality worlds and actively working to achieve them — but at the same time not impossibly demanding that we must have good quality and must not have bad quality experiencing.

William Glasser: "All behavior is designated by verbs, usually infinitives and gerunds, and named by the component that is most recognizable. For example, I am choosing to depress or I am depressing instead of I am suffering from depression or I am depressed" (p. 335).

REBT position: Glasser is definitely on a better verbal track here — as was, before him, Alfred Korzybski (1933). Korzybski pointed out in *Science and Sanity*, "I am depressed" is an over generalization, since it implies, "I am totally depressed" or "I am only depressed and have no other feelings or behaviors." But this is very rarely accurate! My whole being, my totality, and my future may include many feelings besides my depressing myself.

Moreover, "I am depressed" implies that since depressng is my essence, my core, I will always depress myself, now and in the future. "I am what I do," Korzybski noted, constitutes the "is of identity," which supposedly makes me totally and always what I do. Obviously this is vastly overgeneralizing and constitutes unverifiable and unfalsifiable hypothesizing.

Again, if you do badly — say, at depressing yourself — and you say that therefore "I am bad" or "My depressing myself makes me a bad person," you think and behave most negatively and pessimistically. Now, how will that pessimizing help you overcome your depressing? It won't. So REBT teaches you that you act unhealthily when you keep using the is of identity or otherwise overgeneralize. It helps you to think and verbalize more precisely and factually — and thereby optimistically tackles your self-disturbing. It endorses Glasser's use of language and opposes disturbing grammar as much as he does.

William Glasser: "People think the miserable feeling [such as depressing] is happening to them or is caused by what someone else does. As soon as we say, I'm choosing to
depress or I am depressing, we are immediately aware it is a choice, and we have gained personal freedom. This is why designating these choices by verbs is important" (p. 336).

REBT position: A good point! Glasser is very helpful here. But he seems to miss something. Suppose you say, "I am choosing to anger myself at you by seeing that you keep lying to me and harming me. Therefore you absolutely must not lie the way you are doing and you are a louse if you do keep lying."

If you note this, you can recognize that your anger stems from your damning me as a person and not merely from my lying, my actions. Therefore, you can choose to stop angering yourself, by changing the demands you are making on me, even though I still continue to lie. You give up my external control over your anger, take internal control over it, and can reduce or eliminate it by giving up your grandiose demands that because you see my lying as wrong and harmful, I absolutely must not resort to it. Obviously, you cannot make me stop lying. But you can change your ideas and feelings about my doing so. Good!

Suppose, however, you not only believe my lying is wrong and harmful and you can get most people to agree with you about this. But you also believe that lying is so harmful that there is absolutely no excusing it, that it absolutely must not exist, and that a liar like me is a thoroughly rotten person.

If you strongly hold these absolutistic musts and you thoroughly damn people like me who do not tell the truth as you say they must, you may want to get rid of your anger – because it rips up your own guts and it may be against your religious or other principles – but you probably won’t be able to do so. You may even know that you produced your own anger, may be very guilty about doing so, but still you will keep angering yourself.

Why? Because of your intense and devout Believing my lying is not only wrong, but that I absolutely should not and must not behave wrongly. This damning judgment of me will almost inevitably enrage you against me. Practically any demand that I refuse to obey will incense you and obsess you – or lead to your panicking, depressing, or angering yourself.

Let me say, again, that if you only wish I (and other people) stop lying (or doing anything else that you displease yourself about) you implicitly tell yourself, “I wish this happens but it doesn’t have to. Too bad if it doesn’t.” Result: You have healthy feelings of sorrow, regret, and frustration. But if you also demand and insist that I stop lying (or doing anything else), you consciously or unconsciously give up your but and tell yourself, "His lying absolutely must stop; and if he doesn’t do as he must, it's awful, I can’t stand it, and he is a rotten person. No buts about it!" Result: You have self-defeating, other-defeating, and world-defeating feelings of horrifiedness, depressing, and raging. Try turning any of your preferring to absolute necessitizing and see for yourself.

So Glasser sees one way – a very important way – to stop your self-upsetting. Take internal responsibility for it. Don’t blame it on external people and events. Then you will most likely see that just because you largely create it, you can also uncreate it. Yes, you can replace your dysfunctional feeling and behaving with much more healthy functioning. Good!

REBT says, yes, good but not quite good enough. First, it says, by all means accept what Glasser and REBT both emphasize: that you control your feeling and behaving. No, not completely, for you have biological and environmental limitations. But you are mainly, if you choose to be, in your own emotional saddle seat. As I have often said to my clients and readers, you largely control your emotional destiny.

Second, REBT says – and Glasser doesn’t deny but also doesn’t emphasize – the way you use internal control is by all means sticking with your quality world – your basic and strong desires and preferences. But – here’s the catch! – you had better stubbornly resist your natural, innate and learned, tendencies to make these preferences into godlike musts, demands, and commands. By all means want – powerfully want what you want. But don’t convince yourself that you utterly need what you want, whether it be love, power, freedom, or fun. These are fine, beautiful strivings. But if and when you don’t achieve them – which frequently happens to all of us – you won’t die, you don’t have to make yourself utterly miserable and devastated, and you can still have many pleasures and enjoyings. Providing that you decide that you can – yes, choose to be reasonably happy even when you are experiencing frustrations and restrictions.

Third, REBT says – and Glasser would appear to agree – once you (unupsettedly) select goals, interests, and desires to follow you can actively work at pursuing them. You educate yourself about the best ways to get what you want, such as success and love, and you work at following these ways. As we say in REBT, you P.Y.A.—push your ass – to try to fulfill your desiring. You do what you’d better do to achieve practically anything – work and practice to get it and work and practice to remove obstacles to getting it. When you fail to get what you want, you then return to the three main philosophizings of REBT that lead to your strongly preferring instead of absolutely needing:

One: You acquire USA, unconditional self-accepting, and never castigate yourself when your own efforts fail to achieve your desires. You accept yourself while disliking your failures. You see yourself as a person who failed, never as a Failure with a capital F. (Ellis, 1998, 1999a, 1999b).

Two: You accept UOA, unconditional other-accepting, and you thereby never damn others who, even unfairly and cruelly, keep you from achieving your desires. You accept them, as persons, while deploring their interfering, and perhaps unjust, behaving (Ellis, 1998, 1999b).

Three: You acquire high frustration tolerance, and stop whining about conditions and events when they block you from achieving your desires. When you try hard but can’t change and improve thwarting circumstances, you accept the world while disliking its frustrating conditions and events. (Ellis, 1998, 1999b).

To summarize: Along with Glasser, REBT first advises you to accept internal control and to consciously choose many of your emotional and behavioral reactings – instead of letting other people and events control you. Once you get yourself
off to that excellent start, REBT more specifically helps you to strongly prefer rather than decide to absolutely need what you want. It helps you to make yourself see that you don't have to win success and approval, don't need others to follow your rules, and do not have to get your desires fulfilled. Once you do this self-helping and misery-destroying philosophizing, you work like hell to get what you want and avoid what you don't want. Undisturbedly! Determinedly but unfrantically!

You then use a number of hard-headed, realistic cognizing, emoting, and behaving methods of REBT to keep working—yes, working for the rest of your life—to think, feel, and act in a more efficient and pleasure-producing manner than you innately do and have learned to often do. You keep fighting against your self-destructing and fighting for your creative and self-helping tendencies. It's quite a fight—well worth it!

William Glasser: "All total behavior is chosen, but we have direct control over only the acting and thinking components. We can, however, control our feelings and physiology indirectly through how we choose to act and think" (p. 336).

REBT position: Usually, but probably not always. Thinking, feeling, and acting are integrally and interactionally united, not disparate. By using our internal control, you usually control your feelings by willfully forcing—yes, forcing—ourselves to look at our thoughts and actions, when we feel upset, and to change them. This is easier and more thoroughgoing than if we directly work on our feelings to change our self-disturbing thinking and acting. Because that's the way the human mechanism usually is designed to work: when we feel badly (say, panicking or depressing) we can reflect on our awfulizing thinking that accompanies our feelings (e.g., "Something terrible may happen and I can't handle it!") and change it to nonawfulizing thinking (e.g., "Something unfortunate may happen, but if it does I can cope with it and still live and experience happiness. Too bad!").

Or we can change our panicking and depressing activities. For example, change our running away from possible failure at a job interview to deliberately facing and risking several "terrible" happens.

So thinking and acting directly can change our feelings, and probably do so more quickly, effectively, and thoroughly than working on these feelings themselves. But not necessarily, REBT says. Thus, if you panic about a job interview, you may be able to deliberately get in touch with your panicking, instead of denying or avoiding it. By working to face and escalate the feeling of panic itself (e.g., feeling it as long and as intensely as you can) you may see (that is, think) that it is not terrible and won't kill you and may act against it (e.g., by going more easily for "dangerous" job interviews). If you do this kind of confronting, experiencing, and imploding your panicking feelings, you may somewhat directly change them and the thoughts and actions that go with (and are an intrinsic part of) them; therefore REBT includes some emotive or feeling techniques which to some extent directly help you change your disturbing feelings themselves.

Nevertheless, REBT largely agrees with Glasser that the main direct way to change your unhealthy negative feelings is to force yourself—yes, actively and directly force yourself, to change your Irrational Believings (IB's) and your dysfunctional acting that almost always accompany them. Push yourself to think and to act less disturbedly and you will thereby best achieve internal control over your panicking and depressing.

From this reviewing of the main points of William Glasser's Choice Theory and the corresponding theories of REBT you can see that the two systems of therapizing overlap in many respects. If Glasser's theory of psychological disturbing is an internal rather than an external control approach, so is REBT. Definitely.

However, Glasser and I had both better watch our human tendencies to illogically jump from generalizing to overgeneralizing. If we say that people disturb themselves only or always by their internal choices to external Adversities that is misleading. How they make themselves happy about events they favor and make themselves miserable about those they disfavor is, modern psychology shows, a very complicated mode of interacting. No man or woman, as John Donne said, is an island. People exist, react to, and interact with an environment. They think, feel, and act in context, as recent psychological observing and experimenting has particularly shown (Hayes, 1987).

They disturb themselves, as REBT has always shown, by encountering Adversities (A) and reacting to them with their Belief-Behaviors (B). So they produce their disturbing Consequences (C) by the formula A x B = C.

If, therefore, people thoroughly wish to change C, their miserabilizing, they'd better ideally change A and B, and not merely, as internal control sometimes implies, change B. Thus, when someone treats them "unfairly" (A) and they make themselves angry at him or her (C), they'd better change what they believe (B) to create their anger—e.g., "People absolutely must not treat me unfairly and they are thoroughly rotten when they do!"

Fine. But instead of angrily trying to get others to treat them fairly—they preferably should unangrily assess the "unfairness" of others and try to induce them to be "fair." In Alfred Korzybski's terms, they can best change their external-internal, either/or philosophizing to both/and viewing. That is, change both their internal controlling (self-control) and their dealing with external "controlling" situations (Adversities that happen in their lives).

Ivey and Goncalves (1988) and Rigazio-DiGilio, Ivey, and Locke (1997) have given this matter of internal and external control some serious thought and have come up with counseling theories and practices called development counseling therapy (DCT) and its extension, systematic cognitive-developmental theory (SCDT). Their theories hold that because the Adversities people experience are frequently antisocial and humanity-destroying—e.g., rape, child abuse, and war—counselors have a moral responsibility to help their clients not only to internally make themselves less panicking
and depressive about these Adversities (A) but also to help their clients, as individuals and as members of their social group, to change and ameliorate A and B (their internal Believing about these A’s). Thus, the clients would be helped to change themselves (internal control) and also change the inhumane environment (external control) in which they and other members of their social group reside.

Urging counselors to try to help clients use this kind of dual internal/external control is perhaps controversial (Ellis, 1999a). But, actually, this is what Glasser’s Choice Theory and REBT both try to do. They first emphasize internal control and encourage people to choose to change their own reacting to others who act badly, so that they do not needlessly upset themselves about these unfortunate happenings. But at the same time they show people how to unupsettedly deal with and cope with others, so as to help these others to some degree act more cooperatively and less adversely.

In the final analysis, then, Choice Theory and REBT both encourage people to change themselves and thereby be able to arrange better relationships and situations with others. They therefore effectively promote internal control but at the same time help people to exert better external influence on other people and events. In these ways, they strive for the best of both possible worlds – but had better not insist that they have the right answers for all the people and all the conditions these people encounter all of the time. Our understanding the causes of human disturbing and how to treat it in different people still has a long way to go.

References


PCT, HPCT, and Internal Control Psychology
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Abstract: This paper was a presentation at the May 1999 National Conference on Internal Control Psychology.

The theme of this talk is simple: people are organized as hierarchies of negative feedback control systems. If we want to understand and help them we would do best to understand how such control systems work. Behind these statements is a subject called "perceptual control theory" or PCT, to distinguish it from engineering control theory.

Engineering control theory is used to design control systems for some customer to use, with the aim of controlling things the customer wants controlled. The engineer can use any available information, like a kind of god who can see both the world in which his control system lives and the workings of the circuits, sensors, and actuators inside the control system. The basic rule of engineering design is that anything goes as long as it does the job within budget and to the customer's satisfaction.

PCT uses the same underlying principles of control theory, but in a way that takes into account the fact that there is no godlike Engineer who can see both inside and outside the organism and understands the physics and chemistry of the body, nor any customer that the organism must satisfy other than itself. The organism has to operate on its own, with no instruction book and nobody to teach it the principles of its own operation. It doesn't even have anyone to tell it what the world really looks like: PCT starts with the idea of an organism that knows its environment only through its own sensory receptors and constructs knowledge about that environment by computations involving the sensory signals available to it. While as theoreticians we allow ourselves to use physiological and neurological knowledge about the body and brain, and physical and chemical knowledge about the environment, we always try to return to the viewpoint of the system being modeled, to try to understand its limitations as well as how the world looks to it. "It", of course, is you and I and everyone else. One point of PCT is to construct a model that's consistent with the way the world looks and feels to us human beings.

There is far too much in PCT to teach from scratch in an hour. I won't even try. Today I'll just hit the highlights, and try to show you some of the implications relating to therapy and counseling. It's up to you to judge how relevant these ideas are to problems in the real world.

We're talking here about a new conception of the behavior of living systems. This conception is over 60 years old, but only now is the world of science beginning to wake up to it. The sciences of life started this century with a firmly incorrect picture of how behavior works, centered on the concepts of behaviorism, and took a long detour starting in mid-century through the digital metaphor and cognitive psychology. Only now are scientists starting to realize what a horrific mistake was made when science rejected the idea that behavior is purposive, and only now are they beginning to ask how purpose, which is internal control, works. Fortunately, not all the lore and knowledge developed about control systems in the 1930s, 40s, and 50s was lost; there are still people, many of them relics like me but many of them much younger, who understand how to simulate control systems and use the principles of control theory to construct working models and test them against real behavior. As the new century begins, we are going to see the sciences of life, at last, begin to develop the body of basic principles that will put them on a par with the so-called hard sciences.

So let's have a quick look at what control is and how human control systems work, before getting into what control theory implies about human problems.

Basic Control Theory

All living control systems require a way to perceive whatever is to be controlled, a way to compare that perception with some reference standard, and some way to correct the difference by acting on the world outside. Perception, comparison, and action are the basic components of control.

When we see other people controlling things, we see only the external aspects of the control process. A person pushes, pulls, twists, and squeezes with muscles; we see the resulting effects on body posture and other objects, or hear the results as sounds, or feel the results as forces acting on us. We observers are also control systems who perceive, compare, and act. When we observe others acting, we are experiencing our own perceptions.

Suppose I see another person take hold of a cup and raise it into the air. Those are effects of what the other person is doing with muscle actuators. But what is the person actually doing? By that I mean to ask what person is actually controlling, as opposed to the effects that person doesn't care about. Picking up the cup shows me the decorations on the side toward me, but is that part of the reason the other person picked up the cup? I could, of course, ask, but it's unlikely that the person's intention is to show me the decorations. In order to know for certain what the person is trying to control, I would have to know what perception the person is intending to produce, not in me but in that person. Perhaps the gesture of raising the cup (as it looks and feels to the person) is the intended result of the action -- the person is proposing a toast. Perhaps the person is trying to get a better look at the design on the side opposite from me. Perhaps the cup really is being held in a way that the person perceives will show me the design on it. Perhaps the position and movement of the cup are being varied as a way of getting the taste of some hot or cold tea into
the person’s mouth. Perhaps the person is lifting the cup in order to pick up a piece of paper it was resting on. Finding out which result of the action is intentional is a matter for investigation and interpretation. It’s certainly not self-evident. That’s because we can’t experience the other person’s perceptions or reference standards.

You can’t tell what a person is doing just by watching what he or she is doing. When you understand what that cryptic slogan means, you are most of the way to understanding control. Because people control the world they perceive, we can’t automatically assume that we understand what they intend to accomplish by their actions. Most of the effects of their actions that we notice are side-effects.

There’s another reason you can’t deduce a person’s intentions just by watching the actions or behavior that the person produces. Control systems can do more than control their own perceptions by acting on the world. The very same organization that gives them this ability gives them the ability to react automatically to disturbances that tend to alter the perceptions they’re controlling. For example, you have a number of control systems that enable you to walk from one place to another in what you perceive as a straight line, if you want to. Those very same control systems will quite automatically vary the muscle forces in the way needed to counteract the effects of such things as tilts and gradients in the pathway or sideward forces generated by the wind.

Clearly, if all you knew about were the forces being generated by the leg muscles, you couldn’t tell which way the person was walking. You have to know how much of those muscle forces is simply counteracting the effects of external disturbances. If you didn’t know about the disturbances, you’d deduce that the person was walking along a randomly wiggling path instead of a straight line, because the muscle forces, while propelling the person along the path, are also varying just enough to counteract the disturbances. While controlling one perception and keeping it steady in one reference condition, a person may be varying the controlling actions all over the place, depending on what disturbances are acting. Any observer who sees only the controlling actions, the visible behavior, is very likely to get a false impression of what the person is doing — that is, what the person is controlling.

There is a systematic way to find out, or at least come close to finding out, what perception another person is controlling. It’s called the Test for the Controlled Quantity, or just “The Test” for short. The basic principle is to make a guess as to what the person is controlling, and then to apply small disturbances appropriately and see whether the person changes his or her actions so as to counteract the effects of all the disturbances. If the person does nothing to resist, so your disturbance has exactly the effects you’d expect if nobody was controlling anything, you’ve guessed wrong. This is an objective experimental way to distinguish between accidental and intended effects of a person’s actions. If you’re acquainted with “philosophy of science”, you may be surprised that we now know of a way to do this. As a therapist or counsellor or teacher, you may see some possibilities in the Test as a way to check your guesses about what’s important to another person. And guesses they are, without the Test. You can’t tell what a person needs or intends just by observing behavior. You can’t judge other people’s wants or needs just by looking at them. Remember the complaint of Henry Higgins: “Why can’t [my client] be just — like — me?” Your client is not like you or anyone else, except in terms of basic principles of organization.

That’s a very cursory look at PCT; let’s push on and have a quick look at HPCT.

Hierarchical Perceptual Control Theory

There’s still another reason you can’t tell what a person is doing just by observing what the person is doing. We might be able to establish that the person with the cup was actually intending to take a sip of tea. But we can ask what the person accomplished by taking a sip of tea. Perhaps the person was thirsty, and a sip of tea banished the thirst. But there are many other possibilities. If the tea is cold, perhaps the person is trying to cool a tongue suffering from a mouthful of too-hot potatoes. Perhaps the person is a judge testing various brands of tea. Perhaps the person hates tea but is being polite to a host. Perhaps the person is fatigued and is looking for a pick-me-up. Perhaps the person is an actor in a commercial for a tea producer, or a cup manufacturer, or a fingernail polish maker, or a maker of clothing (the tea doesn’t have to be relevant).

And we can go on from there, whichever higher-level perception is under control. If the person was testing types of tea, or cup handles, we can ask what perception is affected by doing that. If the person is being paid, this may be a way of making a living. So making a living as a professional is controlled by producing the results perceived as appropriate to that profession, results which are maintained by controlling the physical actions required of people in that profession. And making a living may be simply one means of producing and maintaining a sense of worthiness and duty fulfilled, which in turn may bear on creating and maintaining one’s self-image as a good person. The story is like the poem about the house that Jack built. We can treat each control process by itself, or embed it in a story about controlling one thing in order to control another, and doing that to control yet something else, and so on as far as there’s any evidence to support still another level. This is the cup that held the tea that made the taste that won the prize that make me an expert that earned my pay that supported my family that increased my pride that made me the person that Bill built.

When I was writing my first book, one of my little daughters was asked what her daddy did. She said, “He types.”

The upshot is that people control at many levels at the same time, and what they control at one level is generally just a means of controlling something else at a higher level. This is what hierarchical perceptual control theory, or HPCT, is about. It’s about the way we control higher-level perceptions by varying the goals sent to lower-level control systems. The commands sent to lower systems don’t tell the lower systems what to do: they tell them what to perceive. It’s up to the lower
systems to produce the actions, like typing, that will make actual perceptions match the reference perceptions given to them by higher systems. So we have both a bottom-up hierarchy with perceptions in lower systems leading to perceptions of more general types in higher ones, and a top-down hierarchy in which higher-order goals are achieved by varying the goals or reference signals sent to lower-order systems. The only systems that act by altering muscle tensions are at the very lowest level; all higher systems operate by adjusting the reference settings of lower systems.

So you can see, I hope, that PCT and HPCT embody both the bottom-up concepts of behaviorism and the top-down concepts of cognitive psychology, with the combination producing something entirely new: the idea of a hierarchy of control systems that work together to allow the organism to control what happens to it at many levels.

An Experiment With Control

If we are truly made up of many control systems operating at many levels, and if people are therefore engaged mostly in acting on the environment to make their experience of it match what they want to experience, why do people ever have any psychological problems? There are many reasons, one set of problems stemming from the very complexity of this system, and another from the fact that people are independent autonomous control systems trying to control their worlds in ways that often conflict with each other. The complexity of the system leads to internal conflict, and the fact that we live with others of our own kind leads to external conflict. Conflict of any kind is the enemy of control.

This is an abstract idea, and we need to pause now to make it more concrete. When you came in, you were handed a rubber band. For what we’re going to do now, you need to pick a partner and link your rubber bands together, passing them through each other to make a knot joining them. Please do that now. The half hour that we have left is precious time; let’s try to get organized quickly.

The rubber bands will make visible certain relationships inherent in all control processes. Let’s set up a control task and I’ll point them out. First, one person in each pair is to be the controller, and the other the experimenter. Ten seconds: decide which is which. Later you can swap roles.

The controller has only one job: keep the knot over the mark as accurately as you can. Let’s just practice this for a minute, so you can get reasonably good at it. Notice that I’m telling the controller what to perceive, but not what to do.

[After a minute] Just to keep things even, please swap roles now; the former controller now acts as a disturber, and the former experimenter now keeps the knot exactly over a convenient background mark. Let’s give this another minute.

All right, let’s have some descriptions of what you see going on here. First, what relationships between the hand motions do you see? [audience descriptions]. And second, what does the knot do? [audience descriptions].

I’m sure you can see that there are lots of possibilities in this rubber-band demo for illustrating different control relationships. For example, what do you predict would happen if one rubber band were twice as strong as the other? Would the knot move off the mark accordingly? Of course not, but what do you predict would happen to the two hand positions? It pays to play this rubber band game with as many variations as you can think of – it will teach you more about how control works than any number of words can do.

But we’re going to illustrate only one phenomenon relevant to human problems. For this demonstration, both persons in each pair are going to be controllers. Set up the same initial condition you started with before. This time, each of you is to hold the knot exactly over the same mark you chose before when you were the controller. Remember to hold the knot exactly over your mark.
At this point, the demonstration usually becomes unruly, with lots of laughter and action. After restoring order we go on.

**Problems With Control**

Let’s put the rubber bands away for now. What was the problem with that last demonstration? Did anyone experience some difficulty with controlling their controlled variable? What would have happened if each of the controllers had absolutely insisted on keeping the knot exactly over his mark? Is there, in fact, any way in which both controllers could have succeeded, without some fairly major reorganization?

The point, I think, is clear. Something obviously has to change if both controllers are to control their own experiences of the world successfully. That’s why there are counsellors – it’s not always obvious who or what has to change, or even what the problem really is. Considering the many variables of experience that people control, and the multiple levels of controlled variables from spinal reflexes to system concepts that people control, it may not be clear just where a conflict originates. We see the conflict where it is expressed, where two people try to keep one knot in two different positions at the same time, but we don’t necessarily understand the conflict where it’s *caused* – in this case, by two people innocently trying to carry out another person’s self-contradictory instructions.

So that’s one kind of control problem: conflicts between people who have contradictory goals for what they want to experience. There is, however, another kind of control problem that is even more damaging: conflict within a single person.

We don’t need to act this out with rubber bands. Suppose the two of you do the rubber-band experiment seated across a table from each other. Between you is a piece of paper with two dots on it about an inch apart, taped to the table. You hold the rubber bands just above table level, and each of you tries to keep the knot over a different dot, so there’s a conflict.

Let’s pretend that your two control systems are really little control systems inside the same person. To make this plainer, let’s label the dots. Beside one dot is written “I am a nice person,” and beside the other is written “I have a lot of self-respect.” These are both worthy goals, and a person might reasonably be expected to seek both of them, to want to perceive himself or herself as matching both of those reference perceptions.

Now let’s say the situation is this: your boss asks you every week if you’d mind popping out to the deli to pick up some coffee and a few Danish for the weekly morning meeting. This is getting to be pretty demeaning, especially since the group starts talking about important things while you’re gone and making decisions that affect you. But the boss is pleasant and asks you politely, and no doubt would ask someone else if you really objected. So how come you keep going to the deli every morning and winding up cross and resentful when you get back? And since you feel your self-respect is being lowered, why don’t you just assert yourself and refuse to go?

The reason is precisely the same as the reason you two control systems, sitting across the table from each other, can’t keep the knot over both “I have a lot of self-respect” and “I am a nice person.” A nice person would not refuse this small favor, but a person with self-respect would demand to be a part of the meeting from the start. However, it’s apparently impossible to do both, meaning it’s impossible to do either without failing to achieve the other reference condition.

That’s a conflict. In trying to achieve two contradictory reference conditions, you fail to achieve one of them, and perhaps both. You want to be nice, and by the time you get back from the deli, you’re furious about not being asked what you think about customer relations, or whatever they’re just winding up when you return. You don’t act like a very nice person. You act more like a person who wants more self-respect and isn’t getting it.

Let’s be sure we’re focusing on the right thing here. We might decide that the real problem is getting self-respect, with being nice to others in a secondary position. But that’s not the problem. The problem lies in having the conflict at all, not in what the conflict is about. People are different; they have different goals, and even when they have similar reference conditions, some want more and some want less. Whatever they want from their worlds, they lose the ability to get it when they are in internal conflict. Internal conflict destroys internal control. A counsellor doesn’t know which is more important, niceness or self-respect, in a given person’s ecology. That’s really up to the person to figure out. Maybe the right solution for that person will turn out to be none of the above. But the counsellor can be sure that having a conflict about it is definitely a bad thing for the person, so the conflict needs to be resolved if the person is to be able to function.

The basic task of a counsellor, if PCT and HPCT are to be believed, is not to control the client’s behavior or force it in any particular direction. It’s to enable the client first to discover conflicts, internal or external but mostly internal, and then to resolve them to the client’s (not the counsellor’s) satisfaction. I say mostly internal because it’s mostly internal conflict that keeps people from resolving external conflicts by themselves.

**Conclusions**

That said, there are some other kinds of problems that can be important. As our other speakers will tell you, people can fail to control their own lives because they don’t know the moves – they’re simply unskilled, never having been taught how to get their environments to do what they want. Some are inexperienced and don’t know what there is to want. Some have been misled and perceive things in the world that don’t actually exist and thus can’t really be controlled. Some have positively incorrect ideas about cause and effect, and their ability to control is correspondingly weak or nonexistent in important ways. And some are being systematically victimized, or have become systematic victimizers. So a counsellor may have to play the role of teacher, or exemplar, or mentor, or advisor, or rescuer. Or, when things are really bad, jailor.
I know little about that sort of problem, compared with what others know. I do know, however, that none of those problems is as important as the problem of internal conflict, because internal conflict makes it impossible to act even when the right action is known. Normally, people solve their own problems, using natural built-in mechanisms. They come for help only when they have become unable to act, unable to carry out even the most obvious solutions to their problems. You can give them wise advice all day and they can agree with it, but they can’t carry it out. And what makes them unable to act is almost surely that they are stuck in conflict – to move one way leads only to a strong urge to move the other way. In the modeling community, this is known as the “local minimum” problem. The person is uncomfortable, even desperate, but any move away from the current condition makes the person feel even worse. Without some kind of external jump-start, the person can’t get out of the well to start making progress again.

I think that the job of a counsellor, when the client is stuck, is to keep calling the client’s attention to conflicts, and to the background reasons for conflicts. In the normal course of therapies, therapists try all the time to guess cleverly what the background reasons are, but the only person who can know what they are is the client. All the therapist can really do is point here, and there, and anywhere that may lead the client to a higher-level point of view from which conflicting goals at lower levels can be seen and changed. A systematic sort of HPCT therapy can be developed out of this idea. I’m working on it, with some colleagues, but it’s not ready for public scrutiny yet.

I do appreciate the chance to speak to you, and I hope you will leave with a somewhat better grasp of control theory than you came in with. There is a lot to learn, but no one part of it is really difficult unless you’re aiming to grasp the mathematical modeling that some of us are doing. The hardest part for most people is simply unlearning what they thought they knew about how organisms work. That I can’t help you with; it’s a personal struggle that each person has to go through alone. I can inform you that people who have been through it claim that they would really hate to go back to what they believed before.

NOTE: There are two ways to get deeper into PCT. One is to acquire my latest book, Making sense of behavior: the meaning of control, and the other is to explore the Control Systems Group Web site. My book has an extensive bibliography in the back, compiled by Dag Forsell, and the Web site has leads to papers, excerpts from conversations on the internet, demonstration programs, and more.

Book: Benchmark Publications, P.O. Box 1594; New Canaan, CT 06840-5328
Web: http://www.ed.uiuc.edu/csg/

International Resource Library

An International Resource Library has been established at Northeastern University, the home of the International Journal for Reality Therapy. This library contains an annotated bibliography of all published articles and dissertations.

The 1999 resource library is available upon request at a production/mailing cost:

Hard Copy of Resource Guide (approx. 200 pages)
U.S. and Canada .......... $12.00
International ............. $15.00

Disk Copy (Microsoft Word format)
[Please specify PC or Macintosh compatible]
3.5x5 ..................... $6.00

In addition, individuals are encouraged to send information, materials, etc., to the Library for listing.

The mailing address for the Library is:

Reality Therapy Resource Library
203 Lake Hall
Northeastern University
Boston, MA 02115
Telephone: 617-373-2470
FAX 617-373-8892
The Workplace in the Real World

In the real world, whenever an employee is asked to do anything, competence is the minimum accepted. The obvious reason for demanding competence is to get the job done properly. But there is another important reason: When we do competent work that we believe is useful, we feel good and gain confidence. Therefore, the bargain the real world makes with workers, and almost always keeps, is that the work is useful. If workers can’t immediately see its use, someone is more than willing to explain it to them. For a variety of reasons, while workers may not like to do what they are asked, they always know there is a good reason for doing it.

Finally, in the real world, all successful managers know that the more workers believe management cares about them as human beings and are making an ongoing effort to improve working conditions, the more effort employees will put into what they do. An important part of this care is the pay the workers receive. The more employees believe their pay is fair, and they will share in profits if they are high, the more they will do quality work.

The School Workplace

The school workplace is vastly different from the real world workplace described above. While the students are the workers and the teachers their immediate managers, schools do not demand competence of anyone. C and D grades are acceptable for credit, but neither grade is even close to competence and therefore, fails to prepare students for the real world.

The primary focus in school is on the work, not creating a student-friendly workplace. Teachers who are unfriendly and uncaring are accepted, even esteemed in many schools based on the idea: We teach, and if they don’t want to learn, it’s their problem. Trapped in this incompetence-accepting, often uncaring, workplace, students feel so bad and lack so much confidence they rebel, a rebellion we label as a discipline problem. The more they rebel, the less they are cared about and the more willing the school is to accept incompetent work to get rid of them. This vicious cycle destroys the educational opportunities of over half the students who enter school.

Unfortunately, no one in power has ever suggested that competence be made the minimal standard for getting credit in any course or at any grade level. Caring about students is the only way schools will be able to achieve this standard. Right now, in almost every school in the country, students can graduate without doing one piece of competent schoolwork.

All talk about accountability is meaningless because there is nothing worthwhile to measure in any system that does not demand competence.

Extracurricular Activities

The only place in our schools where competence is required of all students who participate—a requirement always eagerly accepted by the involved students—is in the extracurricular performance activities such as athletics, music, drama, and cheerleading, as well as writing and editing the school newspaper and yearbook. Students who are not willing to strive for competence and beyond seldom participate for very long. Still, there is no shortage of students who want to participate because competence feels good and increases their confidence.

There may be a few teachers or coaches leading these activities who treat participants badly, but traditionally, the extracurricular climate is one of teachers and students caring for each other. Grades are not needed to motivate these participants; they are well aware that what they choose to do is worth doing. If they are graded, the grade assigned is rarely less than a B, and very often an A. These activities are the only place in our present schools that comes close to real world standards. They are popular and successful in the eyes of the students, the school and the community.

Useless Classroom Work

Unlike the real world, where the usefulness of the work is either obvious or explained, the usefulness of half or more of what students are asked to do is neither obvious nor explained. The less affluent the student, the less obvious the usefulness of the school work. In fact, as recent research on the failure of Title One shows, as family income drops, fewer students perform well in class. Over a hundred billion dollars were spent in the last thirty years on Title One. No gain in student performance was achieved.

No matter how much pressure (almost always threats and punishment) is applied by teachers and administrators to motivate students, over half the students will not do competent work. Again, family income and caring, not pressure, are the major reasons that students work hard in school. Pressure to do work they see as useless is not only worthless, it is counterproductive.

Students are not the only ones who fail to see the usefulness of much of what they are asked to do. Many teachers also do not see the sense of teaching what they are asked to teach. If
they don't see it themselves, they cannot explain it to their students in a way that will persuade them it is useful. Students easily see through this futile attempt by teachers who try to do it.

**Usefulness of Learning Skills**

From my forty years of experience working with students, teachers and parents in public schools, I believe that the work most easily seen as useful by students today are five basic skills: reading, writing, calculating, science and computer literacy. As you can see, math is missing because almost all students don’t separate calculation from math. They think it is math because their parents and teachers tell them it is. And they can easily see that calculation is useful in solving simple problems.

But once learned, calculation can be easily and competently done on calculators. Hand calculating is a worthless skill. Still, students continue to be assigned hand calculation by teachers who consider it to be math, instead of students learning what math is in the real world.

Math in or out of school is only one thing, solving story problems. The math is the setting up of the problem for solution and then designating the necessary calculation to get the answer. But setting up the problem for solution requires thinking. Most students will not make this effort unless someone explains the value of math, such as algebra, and then helps them experience this advantage by solving story problems in class.

If students are not from affluent homes, almost none of them have any idea why they are asked to learn math. The way math is taught, with many threats, much failure and little explanation, most students haven’t the foggiest idea what they are doing or why they are asked to do it. High math focuses so much on manipulations and so little on story problems that use these manipulations, even many affluent students fail to see its value.

To the rest of the students and to all nontechnical citizens, math is a mystery. In actual practice, college students who need math for technical careers are taught it here. No college math teacher is so detached from reality that he or she would consider it to be math, instead of students learning what math is in the real world.

Math in or out of school is only one thing, solving story problems. The math is the setting up of the problem for solution and then designating the necessary calculation to get the answer. But setting up the problem for solution requires thinking. Most students will not make this effort unless someone explains the value of math, such as algebra, and then helps them experience this advantage by solving story problems in class.

Almost all students, no matter what the family income, see no usefulness in memorizing facts, formulas and procedures that will be forgotten long before any of this material could be applied in the real world. While most students like the concept of science and think it is worth learning, most of what they do before the eleventh grade, which is called science, is memorize soon-to-be-forgotten science facts from a text. Affluent students accept this useless memorizing as necessary to get a good grade not only in science, but in most other subjects as well.

Students tend to see reading as useful, but many are turned off by being asked to read material they are not interested in. Schools put a premium on learning to read but no premium at all on providing interesting material to read. Our middle schools and high schools are filled with students who have never read a non-assigned book. Most students also see writing as useful. But the way it is taught is so filled with grammar they don’t understand, red marks, low grades and failure that few students learn to write competently in a public school classroom.

Both parents and teachers agree with students that reading, writing, calculation, science and computer literacy are useful. But, to these skills they add memorization. They know that memorization is the surest road to college and, except in technical fields, is very important for success up through the doctoral level. But because it is not on the students’ useful list, many otherwise capable students do not do well in college.

**Useful Skills Required in the Real World Workplace**

In contrast, of the five skills that are useful to students—or six skills, if we add memorization-only three are widely used in the workplace: reading, writing and computer literacy. The real world never asks anyone to memorize anything that is not used daily or that can be easily and accurately looked up. At work, all calculations are done with calculators, and mistakes are not tolerated. Math and science is left to the college-trained experts. Amateurs do not do math or science in the real world. The six additional workplace skills, problem solving, applying knowledge, leading, cooperating, speaking and listening, are not required in school and are rarely taught.

What is demanded above all else in the real world workplace is non-technical problem solving and applying knowledge. Since the success of most real world endeavors depends on how well the workers and managers get along together, significant effort goes into teaching cooperation and leadership. Because communication is so important in the real world, speaking and listening are valuable. But these two skills are rarely taught at work or in school. We depend on people to learn to speak and listen effectively on their own.

**Achieving Competence in the Classroom**

To continue to do as we are doing with every student except the most affluent ones, that is, stressing memorization in any subject that contains factual material with little attempt to apply what is memorized, stressing calculation over math, and not teaching to the level of competence for credit, dooms almost all our public schools to remain at the incompetent level they are now. In our affluence-leads-to-competence educational system, only the upper class students have a chance for a real world, competent education that stresses applying knowledge and solving problems. This is a well-known fact to the very rich, as they seldom send their children to public schools.

When I hear politicians, business leaders and academicians talk about improving education, I never hear them say they want all students to do competent work in order to get credit. They almost never mention problem solving and using knowledge, the most important skills in the real world no matter what task is attempted. They stress grades but they never mention eliminating low grades and failure. And even more glaringly apparent is they never mention how important
it is for schools to provide a caring environment where every student has a chance to learn.

But as difficult as it would seem to be, much of the above could be accomplished by making competence the minimal level for credit and creating warm, friendly classrooms where much effort is spent creating curriculum that is useful not only in school, but also in the real world. Competence is the core of all success and most happiness, no matter what we choose to do with our lives. It should be the core value of our schools.

Unlike most workplaces, where incompetent workers can be discharged or not promoted, students cannot be discharged from school for incompetence. They are kept in school, given low grades or failed, and allowed to drop out well before graduation totally deficient in what they need to know in a world that demands education and the ability to get along well with other people. There is much talk of ending social promotion but no one so far has seriously suggested that we stop giving C and D grades.

In Los Angeles, with the ending of social promotion after the 1998-99 school year, the Superintendent estimates that 150,000 elementary students will need help to move above failure. (Los Angeles Times, Jan 26, 1999) They will spend millions of dollars to go from a failing grade to an incompetent grade, hardly approaching what is needed in what they need to know in a world that demands education and the ability to get along well with other people. There is much talk of ending social promotion but no one so far has seriously suggested that we stop giving C and D grades.

The following is a summary of what would be done in all classes where competence is needed for credit:

1. The required work for the course or grade would be clearly stated. Present guidelines for material to be covered are usually adequate. Only students who do competent work would be given credit. Students could add to these competencies for extra credits or to get a superior grade, but none of the published competencies could be skipped. Everything required would be useful.

2. Each student would keep track of his or her competent work on a duplicate record provided by the school. At all times each student would know exactly where he/she was towards getting credit for completing the course or being promoted to the next grade in elementary school. Promotion would not have to be at the end of the year. Students would move ahead by credits rather than by years. Students would be competing for their own success rather than against other students.

3. There would be no compulsory homework. All homework and all studying would be self-assigned as students make the effort to prove competence in a required area. The teacher would be glad to consult with any student at any time and make suggestions to ensure that each student understands where he or she is and what remains to be accomplished.

4. Tests would be short, usually one or two questions, but frequent. All questions would be problem solving or applying knowledge and would be answered at the competent level. There would be no required memorization. All tests would be open book. Students could talk to each other during the test or help each other. The teacher would be happy to help any student during the test if time permitted. From this frequent checking the teacher would know what had to be taught. But in the end, each student would be responsible for answering every test question competently or correctly by explaining his or her written answer to the teacher or a teacher-designated checker one-on-one. If the teacher decided that some tests could be oral, the procedure would be the same. Cheating would not be possible.

5. A test or assignment could always be taken home. Parents would be encouraged to help their children, but the student would still have to explain the answer to the teacher. Getting help is part of the real world. But being responsible for doing the task competently without ongoing help is also part of the real world.
6. Students would be encouraged to participate in frequent class discussions. It is from these discussions that teachers could get a clearer idea of what students know and where teachers need to focus as they teach.

7. Students would be encouraged to work in cooperative groups but each student would be checked individually by the teacher to see if he or she understands all the group had done. The teacher could do this checking individually or by talking to the students while they were still in the group.

8. If the grade, such as fourth grade, or the course, such as high school social studies were covered by a state proficiency test or standardized test, all the questions on a sample test would be covered in class, usually one question a day. Every student would have to answer each question correctly and know why he or she got that answer. This would enhance the performance of students on the state tests.

9. To help with the ongoing individual student checking, which would be at the core of this effort, student teacher assistants (TA) who knew the material could assist the teacher. No student would be forced to be a TA and no student would have to be checked by a TA if he or she didn’t want this. In practice this method works very well. It is also as beneficial for the TA as for the students he or she checks.

10. Students would be encouraged to submit to the teacher test questions and class assignments that require thinking. These could be offered as voluntary test questions and assignments for extra credit. The student submitting the question or assignment would be responsible to act as TA to any student who wanted to do that assignment.

11. Parents would be invited to submit test questions and assignments, to act as readers and TA’s, and to come to class to participate as tutors.

12. Each student in a middle or high school competency class would be required to create and do one comprehensive assignment of his/her own choosing as a yearly project. The subject would need teacher approval. Students could also work in groups in the school or in the community on a large full-year project. Again, this would be subject to teacher approval.

All of the above practices are totally congruent with what goes on in the real world. Students who participate would get some of the joy of competence that students now get in extra curricular activities. Nothing written here costs any more than the funding that is normally available. This need not be a whole school approach. But the more teachers involved, the more successful it would be.

From some personal experience in an inner city middle school, most of what I’m suggesting here works well. Look for this article on my website and feel free to copy it. I suggest that my four education books published by HarperCollins: Schools Without Failure (1969), Choice Theory in the Classroom, The Quality School and the Quality School Teacher (all revised in 1998), be read by any teacher contemplating this change to competence.
The recent use of reality therapy and choice theory as a psychological foundation for working with special needs populations is a change from other "traditional" methods such as behavioral modification and token economies commonly utilized in schools today. Renna (1990) states that “Special educators are all trained at the university level in stimulus-response theory of behavior in both their basic and advanced classroom behavioral management courses. Special educators trained to work with the severe population have been trained exclusively in stimulus-response theory. In fact, it is a rarity to find any special educator who works with mild to severely developmentally disabled students who have even heard of control theory. Therefore, early in our training, we have placed a picture in our Internal world of our students as people whom we chart "baseline" data on "off task" behaviors and "schedule" "reinforcers" to "shape successive approximating" of "appropriate" behaviors.”

LABBB’S Lexington High School Program services students between the ages of 10 and 22 with a variety of cognitive, physical, and social-emotional disabilities. Because LABBB does not chart baselines, shape behavior, schedule reinforcers, or do successive approximations, we need to look at students’ progress by determining how effectively they are helped to take control of their lives and achieve independence at the least restrictive level. One such measurable outcome is the percentage of students who graduate to competitive employment, which is defined as: employment where an individual is responsible for all aspects of a job. This means the individual works independently with natural supports in the community.

LABBB decided to look at how the reality therapy process has diminished students’ choices of ineffective behaviors that would negatively impact competitive employment and replaced them with pictures of work and useful behaviors as need-fulfilling. It is our assumption that students who see work as need-fulfilling and have chosen positive behaviors will be prepared for competitive employment upon graduation. We believe that this will be achieved through the reality therapy process used in all environments.

Students selected for the study were those whose aptitudes and abilities were commensurate with those needed for competitive employment (moderate to average IQ, 40 to 96, based on the Wechsler scale) yet who had significant behavioral and cognitive issues upon acceptance to the program.

Based on a review of files of 87 graduates from 1992-1998, the students presented with a variety of labels which include Pervasive Developmental Disorder, Asberger’s Syndrome, Attention Deficit Disorder, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, Cerebral Palsy, Traumatic Brain Injury, Down’s Syndrome, Atypical Psychosis, Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome, and Fragile X, among other congenital or DSM-IV “labels”.

However, many of our students also enter with behavioral issues that would affect their ability to attain and maintain competitive employment. The behaviors that students have chosen prior to coming to LABBB include but are not limited to, poor social judgment, impulsivity, and trouble acknowledging and accepting their handicapping condition as well as establishing realistic goals with regard to their special needs. Many students enter the program with low self-esteem and failure identity: they need help developing peer relationships in order to meet their love and belonging needs. Some students try to meet their freedom needs through irresponsible behavior: infrequent attendance, non-compliance, tantrums, poor anger management or stubbornness. Some students have taken these behaviors to the extreme: they have required hospitalizations for suicidal and homicidal ideations and psychotic episodes. Students may try to meet their need for fun by teasing or harassing other students, indulging in self-stimulatory activity and perseverating. Students may also exhibit anxiety associated with the survival needs. A full array of neuropsychological disabilities may also be present.

Many students are referred from school programs where stimulus response and behavioral modification are the primary methods for shaping behavior. Therefore, these individuals enter the program with an external locus of control, and many do not take responsibility for their actions, often blaming others or their specific disability for their behavior.

The LABBB Collaborative Programs’ philosophy is to promote the cognitive, social, and emotional growth of each student to his or her full potential. LABBB offers opportunities not only for intellectual and social development, but also for growth in the areas of vocational, functional life skills, recreational and practical social interactions.
LABBB continues to recognize the profound psychological effect that mainstream work has on the self-esteem and overall independence of our students. The program firmly believes that work is a human right for all people, regardless of the challenges they face. The program also feels that this basic human need to be productive can be met only through total integration within the employment environment. The program believes that all students should be accountable for their conduct in the job setting.

Recognizing the difficulties inherent in the maturation process of its students, LARB BB is nonetheless dedicated to preparing our graduates to live and work in the community. LARB BB believes that they represent a most valuable untapped resource, and someday their potential will be achieved.

The LABBB Collaborative Programs operate under a quality school model using the philosophical, psychological, and biological foundations developed by William Powers, W. Edwards Deming, and William Glasser, and adapted for students with special needs. The LARB BB Collaborative believes that becoming a quality school is attained in part by utilizing and applying the concepts of internal control psychology, choice theory and reality therapy.

Internal control psychology is a biological theory of how we all function as living creatures regardless of our physical, medical, cognitive, and emotional challenges. The main way it differs from stimulus response psychology theory commonly used in both special and regular education is that internal control psychology has as its basic premise the contention that all of our behavior is an attempt to satisfy needs that are built into the genetic structure of the brain (love, power, freedom, fun, and survival). Simply stated, all our motivation is internal. S-R theory claims that we are externally motivated: our entire behavior is our reaction or response to a stimulus that exists outside ourselves. In internal control psychology terms, this stimulus is merely information, and information itself never makes us do anything. This means that no one can make another person do anything that the other person does not want to do. Our entire behavior is our best attempt at the time to choose to do something that will satisfy one or more of our five needs.

The LABBB Collaborative Programs are unique in the fact that it is the only special education program utilizing internal control psychology, choice theory, and reality therapy as its psychological basis. Other special education programs use primarily behavior modification, stimulus response, or psychological approaches other than reality therapy. To this end, the staff at LABBB has been instructed since 1988 through numerous in-service and intensive week training by faculty of the William Glasser Institute. Nearly 90% of the staff have either been certified or are currently in the certification process: some have achieved faculty status through the institute ranging from basic week instructor to practicum supervisor. The LABBB Program is the only special education program to be officially designated as a quality school by the William Glasser Institute.

The basic components of the choice theory programs at LABBB according to Renna (1990) include:

1. In-service in choice theory and reality therapy for all staff;
2. In service for parents in using choice theory and reality therapy at home;
3. Using Glasser's Reality Therapy Process in the classroom with all students replacing stimulus-response behavioral plans with reality therapy plans;
4. Developing a "responsibility training classroom" (RTC) for students who need to leave the classroom and work out a better way to follow the rules;
5. Teaching choice theory through classroom groups to students in the mild to moderate range of cognition;
6. Implementing daily and weekly classroom meetings to help give students a sense of power in the decisions of their school;
7. Utilizing the learning team model to teach Life Skill curriculums;
8. Encouraging more staff to enroll in training programs offered by the William Glasser Institute;
9. Inviting instructors from the Institute to provide on-going in-service training to all staff and families;
10. Teaching choice theory as part of classroom behavior management courses to teachers of severe special needs in training at local colleges and universities. (p. 38)


A survey was designed to examine how our graduates (1992-1998), with whom the reality therapy process was used, were helped to choose more positive behavior that would aid them in attaining competitive employment. Utilizing selected graduates' records, we looked at diverse variables such as IQ and negative behavior, with which the students presented upon acceptance to the program. We analyzed how the duration of time the students were in the program and exposed to the reality therapy process correlated with their attainment of competitive employment, post secondary education or involvement in supported programs upon graduation. Our results were compared to the data presented in the National Longitudinal Transitional Study (Blackorby and Wagner, 1996).

The major factors considered in securing competitive employment include the following: acceptance of one's role at work, persistence, tolerance, an adequate level of independence, appropriate social judgment, social communication skills, motivation, flexibility, personal hygiene, the ability to understand and utilize constructive guidance, to seek out and utilize assistance appropriately, to deal appropriately with anxiety and frustration, to work cooperatively with others and to stay on task.
The LABBB Program utilizes a developmental vocational service delivery with movement to least restrictive employment environments through prevocational evaluation and training, an in-school workshop, in-school work stations, community-based supportive workstations, individual on-the-job training slots, and competitive employment placement. Reality therapy and internal control psychology are employed at all levels.

All students should experience the world of work and participate in vocational training in real work environments including learning natural consequences, both positive and negative. In order to help students learn "real world" skills, it is sometimes necessary to "fire" them for a day because of behavior that would be deemed inappropriate for any worker. Every effort is made to work out a plan to change unacceptable work behavior prior to issuing a "firing notice". Students who are fired spend the entire day in high school work areas, learning to "fix" one's mistakes through the reality therapy process and choose more effective and responsible behaviors to meet their needs.

This is different from token economies in which students are not asked to self-evaluate their work and behavior: it is done for them by the trainer. At LABBB, students and supervisors co-evaluate the work and behavior on an ongoing, non-coercive basis, with the emphasis on teaching the student good self-evaluation skills. This helps students take more control in determining the direction they choose to go rather than looking for an external stimulus to do it.

The presenting student profiles of the eighty-seven students entering LABBB from other programs not utilizing the reality therapy approach demonstrated that they would not be ready for competitive employment. As a result of the reality therapy process, it has been shown that the students attained a 68.3% rate of being competitively employed. This is significantly better than 45.7% of students with disabilities being competitively employed based on the National Longitudinal Transition Study (NLTS), which examines post school outcomes of youths with disabilities.

The data also show that students who were involved in the reality therapy process for a longer time were placed in competitive employment at a higher rate than those who were involved for a lesser period of time. However, those who were involved for three years or less still had a higher rate of attainment competitive employment (57.6%) than those reported by the NLTS. (Figure 2)

When comparing data of the LABBB graduates and those presented by the NLTS based on IQ, results followed a similar trend. LABBB graduates who scored in the average to borderline range of functioning (learning disabled) reached competitive employment at the 75.5% level, while students who were classified as mentally retarded (IQ less than 69) attained a 60.4% rate of competitive employment. This is compared to 59.2% for learning disabled students and 25.4% for those who are mentally retarded (Blackorby and Wagner, 1996). The breakdown by gender also gave similar results, with males achieving 75.4% competitive employment and females 53.3%, compared to 52% and 31.5%, respectively in the NLTS. (Figure 1)

Therefore, the data indicate that a higher percentage of competitive employment than that reported by the NLTS across all domains was attained by students involved in a program where reality therapy is the psychological framework instead of traditional stimulus response approaches. (Figure 3)

It is LABBB's belief that providing students with experiences in "real" environments, with natural consequences and supports, and teaching them to self-evaluate and modify their own behavior choices to meet their needs, better prepares them to enter the world of competitive work. Students feel an increased sense of self-worth when the message is clear: rather than being sick and incompetent, they are healthy and able.

Case Study

Perhaps the best way to illustrate how the reality therapy process has worked is by looking at the interventions and outcomes in an actual case study of a student (whose name has been changed for confidentiality) who entered the LABBB Program with difficult, ineffective behaviors.

Susan came to LABBB as an angry 14 year-old adolescent with a history of non-compliance, underachievement, physical and verbal aggression, poor-self image, tantrums, and impulsivity. She was referred to the program from a local middle school where she had been in self-contained classrooms that used strict behavior modification. She was used to the token economy, but it had no real value in her life. Her former teachers did not know how to improve her behavior, and exploring residential options seemed imminent.

Susan came from a large family with issues which affected her negatively: her parents were caring but relatively uninvolved. Susan's aunt was the primary supportive adult in her life, attending meetings and advocating for her regarding school matters. The aunt reported that, behaviorally, Susan was appropriate at home and responsible enough to babysit for her nieces and nephews. Socially however, Susan was isolated, rarely participating in activities outside the family.

Usually, midway through the school year, friendships have been formed, routines established, and a sense of belonging achieved for most students. Susan, entering LABBB at this time, had no friends or "home base" in school. What was familiar and comfortable for her were her "go to behaviors". She began to be non-compliant, refusing to go to class, not following her schedule, "shutting down" and being verbally abusive. These behaviors became Susan's best attempt at the time to meet her apparently hyper need for power and freedom. Her need for fun and love and belonging were not being adequately met at that point.

Susan's self-image was so low that she often lashed out and kicked or hit students who were more disabled than she. Even though she had good writing and reading skills, she was
reluctant to do any school work. Susan's writing was a real strength: the difficulty she had expressing herself verbally was compensated for by her ability to write.

Initially, Susan did not have clear pictures as to what she wanted. School had traditionally been a power struggle for her: teachers were seen as people telling her what to do, making her do meaningless work and punishing her when she didn't do the work or acted out. School, schoolwork, and teachers were definitely not in her quality world, and she chose behaviors to avoid them at all costs. It was imperative, then, for change to occur to help Susan clarify her wants and change her perceptions and pictures of school. As is typical with students at LABBB, pictures in the quality world were limited, with little knowledge of what could be attained. Her behavioral repertoire was also limited, and there were few, if any, self-evaluation skills.

Setting the environment for Susan and building involvement were the initial interventions. Utilizing BLISS, Boundaries were set up that were clear and understandable for Susan. She had to comprehend what the rules were for her and for everyone else. These were concrete and clear: no hitting and get to class on time, for example. If these boundaries weren't clear, she would act out. Limits were also set but, more importantly, Susan participated in establishing the rules. These were non-negotiable, set by program and school policy but, whenever possible, students were able to take part in determining classroom procedures. As with boundaries, these rules needed to be clear and comprehensible. Susan was required to understand what natural consequences would ensue if she broke the rules. She also needed to know what freedoms and wants could be met within these boundaries and limits. The Interventions were already in place, discussed through the team meeting process by staff who were either certified or in the training process to become certified in reality therapy. The key to success was consistency in all areas of her school life to eliminate the concept that her old "go to" behaviors would work.

Because chaos and unforeseen changes brought ineffective behaviors, Structure was important so that both Susan and staff had clear guidelines concerning daily events. Within this structure, there was room for creativity and flexibility. Through encouraging Susan to become a part of the class meetings which begin and end each school day, it was hoped she would develop a sense of community, meeting the need for love and belonging.

Finally, Self-evaluation, which is the cornerstone of reality therapy, is emphasized. Susan was continually asked whether her total behavior was a help or hindrance in meeting her needs. "Why" questions were never asked; this only led to excuses and rationalizations of ineffective behaviors. It was imperative that Susan self-evaluate and be held accountable for her actions. Staff, too, were asked to self-evaluate on an on-going basis to determine whether what they were doing was helpful. Through the process of linking behaviors to wants and needs, plans were formulated to choose to act more responsibly.

Eventually, Susan's self-evaluation skills improved, and she was able to take more control of her actions, choosing more positive behaviors to meet her needs. She developed clearer pictures concerning school and her future.

Susan improved relationships with the adults in her life who, she had begun to realize, were not going to give up on her, but held her accountable for negative behavior and would help her get what she wanted. The home room teacher and the director of the program were especially significant. Susan saw her teacher as someone who assigned meaningful work, and gave her positive regard daily, and who was trustworthy and willing to listen. The director became an advocate rather than an executioner. Utilizing the reality therapy process, these adults helped Susan develop the self-evaluation skills needed to take effective control of her life. She received counselling and became part of a social group based on learning the basic concepts of reality therapy.

When Susan turned 16, she became eligible for vocational training at LABBB. As her first workday approached, Susan reverted back to her old "go to" behaviors. Enough progress had been made behaviorally that she was being considered for supported employment in the community. She had been successful in school-based work experiences and had begun to look forward to time in the school workshop as part of her day. Now she would be going to a new setting with an unfamiliar group of adults, expectations, and rules. Her sense of power and survival was being threatened, and the transition would be difficult.

Once again, as the reality therapy process with BLISS was instituted by the LABBB vocational staff, the consistency of intervention was continuous. Susan tested the limits and boundaries and was "fired" on several occasions. When that happened, she would return to school to "fix" the problem, utilizing the WDEP process to "get back on track."

What became especially difficult for Susan were the times when the structure of her day changed. As school had become a need-fulfilling environment, she began to develop relationships with a few of her classmates and teachers. There were classes and activities in which she enjoyed participating. When asked to "sub" without sufficient warning, however, her pictures changed unexpectedly, and she would act out. Susan still needed to make effective behavioral choices when she became frustrated. Too often, she led with her feelings and, invariably, negative thinking and doing behaviors followed. After an episode, LABBB staff were successful with helping her self-evaluate and plan to negotiate wants and needs and thus change her pictures about school and work. It was still necessary to help Susan recognize her signals and independently make beneficial choices. In essence, she needed to learn to internalize and utilize the process in daily living situations.

Through counseling, modeling of the process and the continual message that she was in control of her behavior and capable of meeting her needs, Susan was able to internalize the concepts, but one more component needed to work. She was still choosing to act out around her feelings of powerlessness concerning her special needs. Even though she had a Borderline IQ, she would still misbehave toward less
able students. As she saw herself working in the community, these pictures of herself began to change. With the clear messages that she was competent and productive, she became more confident in her abilities and able to take control of her life.

As Susan progressed, she became more independent. She advocated for herself, increasing her work schedule in a major corporation to four days a week and by her request, to five days a week during school vacations. On the remaining school day, she still received counselling and maintained contact with classmates. Her peer relationships had improved so much that she frequently attended dances, went on overnight field trips to Florida, and had off-campus privileges in the community.

Two years before Susan graduated, her mother passed away. She was able to deal appropriately with the loss and continue to live her life in a responsible manner. In school, when she saw other students choosing inappropriate behavior similar to what hers had been, she laughed and exclaimed, “Someday they’ll get it!”

Upon graduation, Susan was awarded a major scholarship by LABBB. Currently, she is competitively employed and living independently. She has developed relationships and is actively dating.

This demonstrates that giving students a clear message that they are in control and providing opportunities for them to achieve as well as fail supplies them with the tools to fix problems and meet their needs. Over the past eight years, Susan changed from a scared, angry, lonely and aggressive adolescent, whose behaviors were labeled by some as “out of control” and who was on the verge of residential placement, to a productive independent young lady. She is aware that she is capable of meeting her needs effectively and being in control of her life and the decisions she makes at all times.

References
LABBB Student Handbook (1999), Lexington MA.

Figure 1
COMPARISON OF NATIONAL LONGITUDINAL TRANSITIONAL STUDY WITH LABBB POST SCHOOL GRADUATES (’92 – ’98) WHO ARE COMPETITIVELY EMPLOYED.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHARACTERISTICS</th>
<th>LABBB</th>
<th>NLTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALL STUDENTS</td>
<td>68.3%</td>
<td>45.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LD STUDENTS IQ 80-96</td>
<td>75.5%</td>
<td>59.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MR STUDENTS IQ &lt;69</td>
<td>60.4%</td>
<td>25.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MALE</td>
<td>75.4%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2
PERCENTAGE COMPARISON OF YEARS OF CHOICE THEORY/REALITY THERAPY INTERVENTION PERIOD AT LABBB AND STUDENT GRADUATION PLACEMENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years of Ct/Rt</th>
<th># Students</th>
<th>CE</th>
<th>Work Program</th>
<th>NP</th>
<th>% CE</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8-9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>85.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-7</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Figure 3**

**MATRIX OF LABBB GRADUATES 1992-1998 (PERIOD OF CHOICE THEORY/REALITY THERAPY INTERVENTION) COMPETITIVELY EMPLOYED/OTHER (PROGRAM OR SCHOOL) VERSUS YEARS OF ENROLLMENT AT LABBB-87 STUDENTS**

**LEGEND**  
- **CE** = # students competitive employment  
- **PR** = # students supportive work program  
- **SCH** = # students further schooling

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Disability by IQ</th>
<th>3-9 Years</th>
<th>6-7 Years</th>
<th>4-5 Years</th>
<th>2-3 Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CE</td>
<td>PR</td>
<td>SCH</td>
<td>CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Disabilities 80-96 IQ</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Developmental Disabilities 70-79 IQ</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developmental Disabilities &gt;69 IQ</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
An Examination of Teacher Caring, Underachievement, and At-Risk Behaviors

Joycelyn Gay Parish and Thomas S. Parish

Abstract: Many students today appear to be "disconnecting" from school. Teaching students the three R's (i.e., reading, writing, and 'rithmetic) may not be enough. The importance of teacher caring, how it interacts with students' cumulative grade point averages, days absent from school, and how often students complete their homework and classroom assignments, and how efficiently they interact with their teachers was the focus of the present study. The findings reported here strongly support William Glasser's theories regarding the "quality school," the "quality school teacher," and "choice theory." It is suggested that teachers need to provide in addition to the three R's, the three C's (i.e., care, consideration and communication), as well as the four A's (i.e., attention, acceptance, appreciation and affection).

In 1988, William Glasser proposed that America's schools were in trouble, that over half of its high school students were underachieving, and that many of these students were at-risk of dropping out of school. In 1998(a), Glasser once again said much the same thing, noting that little progress had been made in resolving these problems that are still haunting our nation's high schools. He further noted that students rarely dislike school and school-related activities during their primary grades, but that many students become disinterested and disconnected from them by the time they enter high school. Whether it's boring classes (as suggested by Farrell, Peguero, Lindsey & White, 1988), or undue academic pressure (as noted by Tanner, 1989a,b), the end result appears the same, i.e., alienation from non-need-fulfilling institutions (Hendrix, Sederberg & Miller, 1990).

To turn this all around, schools, and the personnel within them, need to attend to more than just teaching the "3 R's." In addition, they need to provide students with the "3 C's" (i.e., care, consideration and communication), as well as the "4 A's" (i.e., attention, acceptance, appreciation and affection). At least that's what Greene and Uroff (1991) utilized as they successfully sought to fulfill students' needs and get students "reconnected" to their education. Others, too (e.g., Bishop, 1987; Winfield, 1986), have used similar procedures and programs in order to rekindle and renew interest in education among their students. Basically, each of the above mentioned programs have simply provided their students with "quality schools" and "quality school teachers" (see Glasser, 1990, 1993) and having done so, each of these programs have served to bolster students' efforts to excel academically.

Of course, teachers play a key role in creating these need-satisfying school environments. That's why a significant positive relationship has been found between students' perceptions of teacher caring and student reported levels of love and belonging, power, fun and freedom in the classroom (e.g., Parish & Parish, 1991). As discussed by Parish and Parish (1991), teachers who care and are concerned for the welfare of their students are much more likely to be perceived positively, to elicit positive affect, and to be approached more often by students. Classrooms and classroom activities that are associated with such teachers will, through stimulus substitution (classical conditioning), also come to elicit similar affect and will more likely be approached by students. Willingness to participate and cooperate (to achieve) may thus be associated with the foundation of love and belonging (trust, belief in teachers' caring) established through positive interactions with teachers who are perceived as caring and concerned for student welfare and who establish classrooms where student needs for love and belonging, power, fun, and freedom are met.

In an effort to shed further light on the issue of teacher caring, the present study sought to determine whether perception of teacher caring is associated with student-reported achievement and other appropriate behaviors in high school. It was hypothesized that students who report that they believe that their teachers care for them would also report higher cumulative grade point averages, fewer days absent from school, and that they more often completed their homework and classroom assignments than students who report that they believe that their teachers do not care for them and are not concerned for their welfare.

Method

Subjects and Procedure

In the present study, college students enrolled at a large Midwestern university (N=165) were asked to voluntarily and anonymously participate by completing the Personal History Inventory (PHI, Parish & Parish, 1993), the Love/Hate Checklist (L/HC, Parish, 1988), and a personal data sheet. The order of presentation of the instruments used in this study was counterbalanced, the Personal History Inventory and the Personal Data Sheet were always presented after the L/HC was completed.

Instrumentation

The Personal History Inventory (Parish & Parish, 1993) is an instrument which is designed to assess failed childhood/adolescent support systems. It was used in the present study to assess whether or not students believed that during their childhood/adolescence their teachers cared for them and were concerned for their welfare. The Love/Hate Checklist (Parish, 1988) is an instrument composed of 45...
of estimated grade point averages with actual grade point allowing access to their high school transcripts. Correlations students who, at the end of the study, signed a release form Present Study:

Reliability and Validity Issues Addressed in the Present Study:

1. What was your cumulative high school grade point average?
   
   \[ A = 4, B = 3, C = 2, D = 1, F = 0 \]

2. On the average, for how many days of high school were you absent each month?
   
   \[ \text{__} \text{(excused)} + \text{__} \text{(unexcused)} = \text{__} \text{(total)} \]

3. On a scale from 1 to 10, 1 being never and 10 being always, how often during high school did you do your homework assignments?
   
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
   Never Always

4. On a scale from 1 to 10, 1 being never and 10 being always, how often during high school did you complete your classroom assignments?
   
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
   Never Always

Reliability and Validity Issues Addressed in the Present Study:

A number of reliability and validity issues were addressed in the present study. High school transcripts were obtained for students who, at the end of the study, signed a release form allowing access to their high school transcripts. Correlations of estimated grade point averages with actual grade point averages obtained from the transcripts, as well as correlations of estimated absences and “actual” absences (again obtained from the transcripts), were computed. A second survey, “What Students Believe and How They Behave” was administered approximately a week to two weeks after the original data were collected. The information obtained from this second survey was used to help assess the reliability of information provided by students on the first survey. The second survey also provided additional information related to the issue of teacher caring given questions of a more focused nature, i.e., questions relating specifically to their high school experiences. Test-retest reliability of the Personal History Inventory, the Love/Hate Checklists, and the information from the Personal Data Sheet was obtained through the voluntary participation of a similar group of educational psychology students who responded to these instruments on two occasions approximately two weeks apart.

Statistical Analyses

Considering the nature of the variables in the present study and the fact that this study involved looking for differences in those variables related to whether or not students believed that during their childhood/adolescence their teachers were generally concerned about their welfare, analysis of variance procedures were used to analyze the results. Because of unequal variances among the scores of those students who believed, and who did not believe, that their teachers cared for them, further analyses were undertaken to obtain t values using separate variance estimates which, unlike F values, do not assume equal variances.

Results

The analysis of variance procedures used in the present study revealed that college students who believed that their teachers during childhood/adolescence generally were concerned about their welfare: a) reported higher estimated grade point averages (F = 13.3/8, df = 1,182, ms = .24, p < .0005); b) reported that they more consistently did their homework (F = 6.17, df = 1,187, ms = 3.46, p < .01); c) reported that they more consistently did their classwork (F = 5.46, df = 1,185, ms = 1.77, p < .05); d) reported fewer unexcused absences (F = 4.30+, df = 1,182, ms = 1.29, p < .05); and e) reported more efficient and responsible behaviors toward their high school teachers, i.e. checked fewer negative or hateful adverbs on the Love/Hate Checklist when asked to describe how they behaved toward their high school teachers (F = 42.26, df = 1,159, ms = 27.56, p < .0001) than did college students who did not believe that their teachers during childhood/adolescence were generally concerned for their welfare.

Similarly, t values using separate variance estimates revealed that college students who believed that their teachers during childhood/adolescence in general were concerned for their welfare: a) reported higher estimated grade point averages (t = 2.56, df = 28, p < .01); b) reported that they more consistently did their homework (t = 1.78, df = 28.19, p < .05); and c) reported more efficient and responsible behavior toward high school teachers (t = -3.99, df = 28.19, p < .0001). Unlike the original F’s, the t values obtained using separate variance estimates did not demonstrate significant differences between groups in terms of classwork (t = 1.59, df = 27.70, p > .05) or unexcused absences (t = -1.10, df = 23.97, p > .05).

Follow-up survey information (What Students Believe and How They Behave), which took a more focused look at student behaviors and beliefs as they related to high school, also demonstrated significant differences for all of the hypothesized dependent variables. More specifically, it was found that college students who believed that their high
school teachers cared for them and were concerned for their welfare: a) reported significantly higher estimated high school grade points averages (t = 2.06, df 116.79, p < .05; F = 4.62, df = 1,203, p < .05); b) reported more consistent completion of homework (t = -3.39, df = 108.19, p < .001; F = 14.16, df = 1,213, ms = .67 p < .0001); c) reported more consistent completion of classwork (t = 3.03, df = 108.00, p < .005; F = 11.10, df = 1,213, ms = .40, p < .0005); d) reported fewer excused and unexcused absences (t = 1.97, df = 98.96, p < .05; t = 219, df = 75.08, p < .05; F = 4.81, df = 1,205, ms = 2.53, p < .05; F = 8.18, df = 1,205, ms = 2.24, p < .01, respectively); e) reported more efficient and responsible behavior toward their high school teachers (t = 3.43, df = 46.70, p < .0005; F = 18.46, df = 1,127, ms = 24.27, p < .00); and, in addition, f) reported that on a scale of 1-5, 1 being never and 5 being always, that they more often did what their teachers told them to do (t = -2.91, df = 109.55, p < .01; F = 10.29, df = 1,213, ms = .34, p < .001); and g) reported that on a scale of 1-5, 1 being never and 5 being always, that with regard to schoolwork, they more often did the best job they could (t = -3.63, df = 124.86, p < .00 F = 14.49 df = 1,213, ms = .63, p < .0001).

In each of the above analyses run on the follow-up data (What Students Believe and How They Behave), both the F's and t's consistently revealed significant differences between groups. The t's with separate variance estimates were computed, again, because in each case (with the exception of high school grade point estimates) significant differences were found with regard to the variances of the scores reported, the scores of the students who did not believe that their high school teachers cared for them and had been concerned for their welfare being significantly more variable than the scores of those students who did believe that their high school teachers cared for them and had been concerned for their welfare.

Reliability and validity data obtained in the present study revealed the following:

1. In terms of estimated grade point averages and grade point averages obtained from the students' actual high school transcripts, it was found that for grade point averages estimated on the original survey and grade point averages obtained from transcripts, the correlation was .87 (n = 106, p < .001). The correlation between grade point averages obtained on the follow-up survey and grade point averages obtained from transcripts was .88 (n = 96, p < .001).

2. The correlation between grade point averages estimated on the original survey and grade point averages estimated on the follow-up survey was .92 (n = 122, p < .001).

3. In terms of estimated absences and absences obtained from transcripts it was found that for total absences estimated on the original survey and absences obtained from transcripts, the correlation was .35 (n = 93, p < .001). The correlation between estimated total absences obtained on the follow-up survey and absences obtained from transcripts, was .55 (n = 91, p < .001).

4. The correlation between estimated excused absences on the original survey and estimated excused absences on the follow-up survey was .71 (n = 122, p < .001). The correlation between estimated unexcused absences on the original survey and estimated unexcused absences on the follow-up survey was .94 (n = 122, p < .001). The correlation between estimated total absences on the original survey and estimated total absences on the follow-up survey was .79 (n = 122, p < .001).

Discussion

An earlier study by Parish and Parish (1989) found that college students who believed that their elementary and secondary teachers cared for them were more likely to anonymously complete a tedious college assignment than were those who did not share that belief. Along this same line of thought, the present study sought to determine whether or not such college students would also report higher levels of achievement in high school as evidenced by higher cumulative high school grade point averages, more consistent completion of homework and class assignments, fewer absences from school, and more efficient and responsible behavior toward their high school teachers. The results of the present study supported each of these hypotheses. It was found that college students who indicated that they believed that their teachers during childhood and adolescence cared for them and were concerned for their welfare also reported higher levels of achievement in high school as evidenced by reporting higher high school grade point averages, more consistent completion of homework, and more efficient and responsible behavior toward teachers. Furthermore, when focusing specifically on perceptions of high school teachers, an even clearer picture emerged. In addition to reporting significantly higher high school grade point averages, more consistent completion of homework and more efficient and responsible behaviors toward teachers, students who perceived their high school teachers as caring for them and being concerned for their welfare also reported more consistent completion of classwork as well as fewer excused and unexcused absences. They also reported that they more often did what their teachers told them to do and, with regard to schoolwork, they more often did the best job they could.

Perceptions of teacher caring might thus be a powerful factor related to the achievement of all students, even those like the students who participated in the present study who would not be considered underachieving or at-risk. One might note that, in the present study, the significant differences related to academic behaviors, attendance, and behaviors toward teachers were found using a very "truncated" sample, college students, and, specifically, college students who had chosen teaching as a career. One might suggest that if such significant differences are obtained in a sample such as this where its very truncated nature might suggest that significant differences would be difficult to demonstrate, then even greater differences might be expected in the "real world", represented by a very non-truncated sample, where many students drop out or choose not to continue their education precisely for the reasons suggested by this study, the
classroom for them being too non-need satisfying and the basic trusting and caring relationship with teachers not established (see Bishop, 1987, Glasser, 1990).

One might also note when examining the results of the present study that the variability of the scores of students who believed that their teachers did not care for them and were not concerned for their welfare was in most cases much greater than the variability of the scores of those students who did. An explanation for this greater variability might be that perhaps students deal with the frustration of perceived teacher non-caring in a variety of ways. For example, it may be that students who perceive that their teachers do not care for them and are not concerned for their welfare deal with this by withdrawing academically, not doing school assignments (classwork or homework), missing school, and acting inefficiently and irresponsibly toward their teachers. That is, in all areas considered in this study, behaving more ineffectively. In other instances, however, students may continue to attend classes, continue to do homework and classwork and other activities related to academic success, but may manifest frustration through more negative behaviors toward teachers (negative behaviors elevated – other indicants remaining "normal"). Still other students may behave very positively ("politely") toward teachers but may manifest their frustrations by withdrawing from academic participation, less consistently doing homework and classwork and not attending. Ex post facto examination of the data suggests that most students in the present study fell into one of the above three patterns. These patterns, along with others, may have contributed to the larger variability among the scores of those students who perceived that their teachers did not care for them and were not concerned for their welfare.

The results of the present study can be explained from at least three theoretical perspectives including Staat's (1975) ARD Model, Erikson's (1968) theory of the 8 Stages of Man, specifically, that relating to the importance of the establishment of "basic trust", and Glasser's (1998b) Choice Theory. With regard to Staat's theory, simply stated, as teachers are perceived as caring and concerned for the welfare of their students, they become a positive ARD (affective response discriminator), and activities and environments associated with them may come to elicit positive affect. As human beings, we tend to approach those environments with which these teachers are associated, more and more money poured into education. In fact, however, the “cure” may not be more and tougher, but, borrowing from comments made by former President Bush, “kinder and gentler” – more caring and concerned teachers who have learned how to convey that caring and concern so that their students perceive them as such, The foundation of school reform should perhaps be the establishment, or re-establishment of school as a need-fulfilling environment. The significance of the present study is truly great. At a time when much concern is expressed for “a nation at risk”, when many students, perhaps half of our nation’s high school students, are believed to be “leaning on their shovels”, that is attending but not working (Glasser, 1988), the cry has gone up “What can we do?” Some have suggested that the “cure” for falling achievement is “more of the same” - more school, more homework, as well as tougher classes and teachers who know more, as well as more and more money poured into education. In fact, however, the “cure” may not be more and tougher, but, borrowing from comments made by former President Bush, “kinder and gentler” - more caring and concerned teachers who have learned how to convey that caring and concern so that their students perceive them as such. The foundation of school reform should perhaps be the establishment, or re-establishment of school as a need-satisfying environment.

In terms of Choice Theory, Glasser (1998b) suggests that students will approach and participate in school-related activities if that behavior is “need-satisfying”. If teachers and their classrooms are perceived as “need-satisfying” in that they are associated with experiences which have brought the student satisfaction in terms of love and belonging, power, fun, and/or freedom (the 5 psychological needs delineated by Glasser, 1984, 1998) then it is more likely that teachers and classrooms and school in general will become part of the student’s “All I Want World” or “Quality World”, and students will thus seek to associate themselves with these things, approaching that which for them has become surrounded with need-fulfilling experiences.
References

NOTICE
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Yoni was diagnosed as an autistic, sensory system deficit child when he was two years old. I started to work with him when he was 2 ½, using a traditional behavioral approach. In September 1998, Yoni started to go to a regular school, through a unique program in kindergarten that allowed him to participate in some activities in the first grade. Yoni was seven years old, and communicated very well, especially with adults, and was very intelligent. Yoni had some difficulty in areas such as attention and concentration, especially in activities with many people and a lot of noise. He did not initiate contact with other children, and tried to avoid them, especially in free time activities such as on the playground.

I worked with Yoni in two areas. Once a week, I played with Yoni and his brother in their house. Generally, the communication between them is very good, and I try to be a mediator through games, using communication to help Yoni acquire social skills. In addition, every morning I worked in the kindergarten, with the main task of helping Yoni to choose more involvement with the other children. In the first few months during the Fall of 1998, I used RT/CT in both areas with very good results. The following is a description of two examples of direct work with Yoni, using RT/CT principles.

Case Example 1 - At Home

Yoni and his brother chose to play Monopoly. When it came time for his brother and my turn, Yoni played with the nails of his feet (a repeating behavior that he chooses in order to avoid communication). We repeatedly had to draw his attention to the game when it was his turn to play.

I told Yoni that I could see that something was bothering him with his foot, and that he could choose to take care of that first, or continue playing the game and take care of the foot later. I explained that in this way, he could notice when his attention to the game when it was his turn to play.

Yoni chose to continue the game. After that, every time he started to play with his toes, I reminded him that he chose to play Monopoly, and he was able to focus more and concentrate on the game.

Yoni still needed some help in counting the money bills (he liked the challenge in choosing this game). During his turn, when he tried to count his money in order to buy something, he counted 50 shekel bills as if they were 100. His brother tried to help him by saying “Not like that, its 50 and not 100.”

Yoni got angry and hit his brother. His brother went to the corner of the room and sat there with an angry face. I told Yoni that his brother had tried to help him, and that I can see that he didn’t like it. I asked Yoni if he would like his brother’s help, and Yoni answered “Yes.”

His brother said “I don’t give help to someone who hits me.” I asked him “How do you feel?” He said “sad and angry because he always hits me.” Yoni got closer to his brother and said “not angry, no tears”. His brother pushed him away, and said “I am angry.” I explained to Yoni that his brother was hurt and angry because he had hit him, and asked him if he would like his brother not to be angry.

Yoni said “Yes.” Then, I asked him what he could do in order to fix the situation? Yoni did not know what to do. He started to jump in the room, got closer to his brother, tried to lift the corner of his brother’s lip (to make him smile), and offered to change the activity. I explained that we could change the activity later, and asked his brother if he were still angry. He said “Yes.” Yoni couldn’t stay focused on the problem, and couldn’t find any way to solve the problem. I sat on the floor near his brother and invited Yoni to join us. I reminded Yoni about another incident when he hit a girl in his kindergarten and asked him what he chose to do in that situation. Yoni said “I am sorry.” I asked him if he believed that asking his brother to forgive him can help in this incident as well. Yoni said “Yes”, and went to his brother and said “I am sorry.”

I asked his brother if Yoni’s action helped, and he responded that Yoni always hit him. I asked Yoni if he enjoyed playing with his brother, and he answered “Yes.” I asked him if hitting him helped him to gain what he wanted. Yoni tried to change the subject, and said he wanted to move on to the next activity.

At this time. I wanted to finish this incident, because Yoni was starting to lose interest. I wanted him to feel good about having the power to fix the situation with words, so I asked Yoni if he could do something else when he didn’t want his brother’s help. Yoni didn’t answer, so I asked him if telling his brother “don’t help me” could make it better. Yoni said “Yes.” Then I asked him if he could promise this to his brother. Yoni said “Yes, I promise.” We then moved on to the next activity.

After that day, we started to discuss ideas of things we could say and do whenever Yoni got angry, or felt that he didn’t succeed in meeting his needs.

Case Example 2 - At School

At the beginning of the year, I decided to watch Yoni in the kindergarten, and the way the staff work there, in order to see...
how he functioned, and to think about and plan my RT interventions. I noticed that the kindergarten teacher was a leader, using (without knowing it) many principles of RT/CT such as involvement.

Yoni seemed to enjoy and find interest in most activities (especially in small groups), and had some difficulties concentrating in the large group, especially when there wasn’t any specific task. He knew how to read and write, so he found much interest in the first grade activities as well. He needed more assistance and directing when he had to choose new activities (in this kindergarten, children have many opportunities to choose). On the playground, he usually avoided other children, preferring to sit alone on the swing, or play alone in the sandbox. I noticed that when other children were fighting, yelling at each other, or were not being considerate that Yoni distanced himself from them.

My goals were as follows:

- To be an integrated staff member so that the children would not notice that Yoni was different from them.
- In the large group, to sit behind the circle (close to Yoni), touch his back from time to time (physical touch helps him to stay focused), or to share with the group my interest in the subject, and in that way to connect the subject to Yoni’s interests. I also discussed with the kindergarten teacher ways of making some subjects more tangible or concrete for Yoni.
- When I saw that Yoni or any other child was having difficulty choosing his next activity, I intervened to help him to choose another way.
- In the playground, I decided to help all the children to choose more positive behaviors while they played, and also to help Yoni to choose more involvement with the other children.

One thing that helped me on the playground was the framework established by the kindergarten teacher. In the large group, she frequently discussed with the children the belief system and rules of the playground, ways of solving problems, respect for their friends, good and hurtful behaviors, the need to share and to consider other children, etc. She emphasized that if someone chose not to follow these rules, that it would then be his/her decision not to participate in the activities on the playground for that period.

On the playground, there are two swings that the children like the most, they were in their quality world. However, too many children wanted to use them, so they couldn’t always get what they wanted. In those situations, their scales were out of balance, and most of the fighting and arguing occurred in that area. For example:

- X came to me and said, crying, “they swing for a long time now and they don’t let me swing as well, come and tell them to get off”. In this situation, I usually tell the child “I think that you have the power to solve your problem by yourself. Let’s think together about things you can do in order to get what you want.” Then I used questions such as:
- What do you want? (quality world)

- What did you do to get what you want? (total behavior)
- Did what you were doing help you to get what you want? (comparing place)
- Is it important to you? (comparing place)
- Is there anything else you could do? (plan, total behavior, comparing place)
- So what is the plan?
- What might be the response of the other child? (comparing place)
- What will you do if your plan does not work?

After the child used his plan, and either got or didn’t get what he wanted, I used to ask him how he felt, what does he think about the way he chose and, if necessary, help him to continue his efforts to satisfy his needs.

By using self-evaluation methods, I discovered some very important things:

- Most children know many very good solutions to their problems.
- The children on the swings accepted the new attitude; they were willing to share and helped their friends to satisfy their needs without hurting their own.
- Children started to wait for their turn and had more patience.
- Children started to swing together more often, and Yoni joined them as well.
- Yoni seemed to enjoy and find interest in most activities (especially in small groups), and had some difficulties concentrating in the large group, especially when there wasn’t any specific task. He knew how to read and write, so he found much interest in the first grade activities as well. He needed more assistance and directing when he had to choose new activities (in this kindergarten, children have many opportunities to choose). On the playground, he usually avoided other children, preferring to sit alone on the swing, or play alone in the sandbox. I noticed that when other children were fighting, yelling at each other, or were not being considerate that Yoni distanced himself from them.

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- The children on the swings accepted the new attitude; they were willing to share and helped their friends to satisfy their needs without hurting their own.
- Children started to wait for their turn and had more patience.
- Children started to swing together more often, and Yoni joined them as well.
- X came crying, “He hit me.” In this case, I usually called the other child involved, and talked with both of them together. I don’t ask them questions such as “Why did you do it?” or “Why did it happen?”. First, I tried to understand what happened. “Why” questions would make the children look for excuses, and wouldn’t help them look for better ways to solve their problem.

Even though I asked the children to tell me what they did, the most common response was “he/she started it!”. In that case, I repeated my question, and stated that it doesn’t matter who started the fight. After each child told the story from his/her perception, I asked them questions regarding their quality world, perceived world, comparing place, and total behavior.

We discussed the belief system and the rules, and, if they don’t want to or because of their anger can’t, at that time, make a plan or think about the behavior they chose, I asked them to sit inside and think about a plan. The kindergarten teacher is usually there if they feel they need her help. Before they go back to the playground, they had to come to me and tell me about their plan. If the same child repeated the same behavior and didn’t follow his own plan, I asked him if the behavior he chose is according to the rules. Then I explained to him that it was his decision not to play in the playground today, and asked him to find other activities in the kindergarten room.

In the beginning, children used to argue and say “this isn’t my decision”. Then we talked about their plan, the behavior they chose, the responsibility they had in making their
decision and choosing their behavior, etc. Yoni participated in these conversations like every other child. Sometimes, when I encouraged him to choose activities that had involvement with other children, I would help him make a plan before he approached the other child.

Five months later, Yoni chooses more involvement with other children. He has his own priorities and pictures. He has learned new social skills, and he doesn’t run away from situations that involve disagreements, or give up so quickly when another child’s needs or pictures differ from his own.
One of the most frightening problems currently faced by American schools is the fact that many students lack any kind of internalized ethical values. Moreover, they have not even begun to create a sense of goal-oriented purpose or long-term meaning for their lives. To help solve this problem, the United States Military Academy (USMA) at West Point instituted a formal training program in ethical values which is being adopted by the Army in general. As a teacher at the prep school for West Point, I was given the responsibility to create a similar curriculum for our at-risk students who are enlisted men and women, ages 17-21, attempting to improve their academic abilities so that they can gain appointments to USMA. I decided to present the Army values within the framework of Glasser’s needs as they appear on the “Why and How We Behave” Control Theory chart.

In this article, I will first show how I have aligned the Army values with Glasser’s needs, and then I will explain the specific ways that I am involved in teaching the values at the prep school.

**Glasser’s Needs And Army Values**

The list below indicates the parallels that I see between the system of values which the Army advocates and Glasser’s basic needs:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Glasser’s Needs</th>
<th>Army Values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Survival</td>
<td>Duty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belonging</td>
<td>Respect, Selfless Service, Loyalty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power</td>
<td>Integrity, Honor, Courage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom, Fun</td>
<td>Responsibility</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The Need For Survival**

Glasser points out that the Survival need comes from the old, most primitive part of the brain. Survival is the need to preserve one’s own existence as well as that of the human race. Survival is the will to live, the need that Viktor Frankl wrote so eloquently about in his book *Man’s Search for Meaning*. Frankl, a Nazi death camp survivor, discovered from his harrowing experiences that as long as a human being can perceive a sense of purpose or meaning in life, any hardship can be endured. The Army value of Duty is what gives a soldier a sense of purpose. Duty means an obligation to others and to one’s self. Ultimately, Duty involves the obligation to preserve life — the life of others as well as one’s own.

Here is the perspective I use when I view the Army value of Duty from the vantage point of Survival: The meaning of my life is based on the fact that I am alive and see a purpose for my life. If life is threatened – my life or anyone else’s – then I must act in a way that gives purpose to my life even if this means sacrificing my life for the lives of others.

The need for Survival and the parallel value of Duty are intricately bound to each other. Together they form the very foundation of existence because without them, life becomes empty, devoid of direction and purpose.

Dr. Glasser goes on to tell us that from the new brain, the most recently evolved part called the Neo-Cortex, we have four other needs besides Survival – Belonging, Power, Freedom, and Fun.

**The Need For Belonging**

Belonging involves our need to feel that we are cooperating parts of something larger than ourselves, that we are loved, and that we can love. Three Army values are connected to Belonging: Respect, Selfless Service, and Loyalty. Here is my perspective of these Army values viewed from the point of view of Belonging: Respect involves the recognition that existence – all life on earth – is important. If I do not believe that someone else’s life is meaningful, then how can I think mine is? I must understand that I am part of the fabric of the human race. The way I behave towards others is a reflection of the way I regard myself. When I realize that I am a cooperating part of something larger than myself, then I see the paradox – Selfless Service is the highest expression of myself. Only when I connect myself to the larger body of humanity can I claim to be truly a human being. Ironically, I can only be truly myself when I act selflessly. In contrast, selfishness causes me to get lost in the illusion of my self-image which causes me to become egotistic, petty, and disconnected from the life around me.

As a consequence of learning how to be selfless, I develop a feeling of Loyalty which means I have learned to recognize some sort of law that goes beyond selfish appetites and crude desires. I discover the law that exists within me and around me, the law that makes me a cooperating part of the human
race. This law is not an edict written in words on paper. It is a profound yet simple insight which makes me aware that I am an integral, important part of something bigger than myself. I am connected to every other living thing, and I owe my service to preserving the law of life itself.

The Need For Power

The Belonging need forms the basis for the Power need. From the sense of Belonging, we gain a vast sense of Power because we realize we are part of the human family and are making an important difference to this family. This is not tyrannical power like that exercised by Adolph Hitler or other dictators throughout history. Instead, this Power comes from within as it did in people like Martin Luther King, Jr., Gandhi, or Thoreau. It could be called the power of the mind or the soul. It is what makes us truly competent to be human beings. Without this kind of power, we feel like automatons – puppets of forces that seem to be beyond our control. To be fully alive, we must realize that we are not slaves of heartless luck or fate. We come to understand that we are competent to make a constructive difference in the world. Power is connected to the three Army values of Integrity, Honor, and Courage. Here is the perspective I have of these values viewed from the angle of the Power need: Integrity means literally that I am a unified person. My mind is not scattered, and I behave in a consistent fashion. I have a sense of identity which comes from seeking the wisdom of Socrates’ ancient command, “Know Thyself.” In light of this command, it is fitting that the Army’s first principle of leadership is, “Know yourself and seek self improvement.” I can only know myself if I keep a sense of purpose and meaning about who I am, what I am doing, and why I exist.

Once I begin to know myself and develop my Integrity, I discover Honor. Honor is not vain glory. Instead, it is true humility. If I am grounded in reality, I can recognize my worth in the greater pattern of human life. I thus can esteem myself without vanity. I simply realize that I do have a purpose in making the world a better place.

Ultimately, from Integrity and Honor comes Courage which means literally the heart to do what needs to be done. This is the internal power that can withstand any threat and suffering, the kind of inner strength that allowed Frankl to survive the Nazi death camp. This is the power that makes me truly human.

The Need For Fun And Freedom

I join these two needs under one heading because they are so intimately connected. Freedom comes from the sense that each of us is a choosing individual. We are not victims, robots, or slaves. Being able to choose and create the direction and meaning of our lives, we experience Fun in the sense of being able to learn, grow, and look forward to life. Without Freedom and Fun, therefore, we could not be fully alive. Through Freedom and Fun, we learn what it is to be human.

Freedom and Fun must be guided by Responsibility which in turn is the key to all the Army values. Here is my perspective on Army values as seen from the viewpoint of Freedom and Fun: By Responsibility, I mean the ability to respond to whatever is going on in my life. It is the freedom to choose and learn. When I learn how to choose, I can create more and better choices. When I create more and better choices, I am making a constructive difference in the world, and that in turn gives me my sense of purpose and meaning.

This once again brings me back to Frankl’s insight about the internal strength that comes from the will to live, the internal drive to remain alive because I can improve the world around me. Only when I actualize this innate will to be alive can I truly experience Freedom and Fun – the essential joie de vivre, the delight in the very act of being alive.

Teaching The Needs And Values

My purpose in developing a curriculum for Army values was not simply to present abstract moral ideas. Students have heard the words and concepts before. I wanted to design a way for the students to experience the real meaning behind the words and concepts. I employ two methods to teach Army needs in the context of Glasser’s values: a class called the Student Success Course, and a series of classic films followed by discussion groups.

The Student Success Course

In this course, I teach specific college success skills such as reading improvement, note taking, time management, test-taking strategies, and stress reduction. However, I believe that these skills are absolutely worthless if the students do not learn to internalize the greater intent behind these skills – namely, a sense of self-management, the ability to control one’s self in order to make the best use of one’s true potential. During the more than quarter century that I have been teaching, I came to realize that simply training students in skills was worthless if the students did not actively take part in their education by exercising self-control and learning to manage themselves. After all, the Army motto “Be All You Can Be” is meaningless if the students don’t know how to fully actualize their purpose as human beings.

The foundation of the Student Success Course is to get the students to stop seeing themselves as victims. I want the students to change their self-image to that of victors – victors not in the worldly sense of conquest but in the moral and ethical sense. Therefore a significant part of the course involves getting the students to activate and actualize Control Theory by taking control of their own behavior rather than just gathering information or rolling along as if they were machines being constructed on an assembly line. This aspect of the course is summed up in what I call the student’s “Personal Contract” which states the operating principles of the course:

I have all the resources within me to deal with any of my problems.

All of my behavior has a positive goal even though that goal may have become lost in my misdirected negative behavior.
Negative behavior comes from the fact that I have allowed only one aspect of my whole personality to rule my life. By rebalancing my total personality, I regain control of my behavior.

I can do something now to change my behavior regardless of what I have done in the past.

Since helplessness comes from the loss of choices, I can now retake control of my life by creating more and better choices.

I create more and better choices by changing my view of myself from that of a helpless victim to that of a resourceful, empowered person.

By retaking control of my life, I create quality and become a realistic, responsible, self-reliant person no matter what problems I face.

Based on these principles, I show the students that, while everyone has problems in life, the victim focuses only on the problem, feels defeated, and consequently gets stuck in the problem. In contrast, the victor focuses on the solution and sees the problem as an opportunity to learn, grow, and thrive. It is a simple matter of perception – the glass is half empty or it is half full depending on how I view it.

I make extensive use of Glasser’s car. Holding up a detailed model car, I explain the four wheels. I point out that the body and emotion wheels are the back wheels that have the power, but that the doing and thinking wheels are the front directional wheels. By sitting at the steering wheel and controlling my thinking and behavior, I give new direction to my life.

I emphasize that there is no such thing as a “born winner” or “born loser.” There are simply people who behave like winners or losers. Since behavior is something that can be learned, then a person who is engaging in failure behavior can change this behavior into that of a success. This point is the bedrock of success, the psychology that forms the foundation of self-improvement.

To make the change from failure behavior to success behavior, three things are necessary. First, the person must become totally aware that s/he is engaging in failure behavior. Too often this behavior has become so habitual that it seems normal and is affirmed by the belief, “This is the way I am” which simply traps the person in the behavior.

Second, once s/he notices that s/he is engaging in self-defeating behavior, the person must want to change the behavior. If the person doesn’t want to change, there can be no growth. Motivation is key in reversing self-sabotage.

Third, if the person decides to change, then s/he must actively change the direction of Glasser’s car by altering the front two wheels – the thinking and doing wheels. To change the direction of these two wheels, the person needs to follow Glasser’s five step process for solving the inevitable problems that are part of life: set a goal, plan the steps to the goal, notice which steps work, notice which steps don’t work, and readjust the plan accordingly.

In order to have the students practice this five step process, I have them make an oral report on a goal that was set during the course. The goal can be anything and must be something that can be achieved by the day s/he talks to us about the goal. I make students aware that they can even report on goals they failed to achieve as long as they follow the five steps. I point out that failure is actually a valuable piece of information because it tells us what not to do. We know what steps worked and what steps didn’t work. Failure thus teaches us how to readjust the plan and continue toward the goal.

One more important point I make is that most people fail because they live by the old proverb, “If at first you don’t succeed – try, try again.” Trying means repeating the same errors and recreating the same failure. Thus I change the proverb to, “If at first you don’t succeed, do something else.” This doesn’t mean giving up the goal. It does mean eliminating the steps toward the goal that didn’t work and redesigning the procedure. As Edison once pointed out about all the “failures” he had in inventing the light bulb, each “failure” is a step which tells us what not to do. We learn from the steps that failed, continue the steps that did work, and drive on toward the goal.

Classic Film Series

One reason that art appeals to us is that it causes us to alter our perceptions and see the world in a whole new light. Films are especially powerful in their ability to alter perception either for good or ill. When we see an ideal or concept acted out and taken to its ultimate conclusion, we remember the drama as a strong vicarious experience with which we directly engage in our imaginations. Such an experience is far more effective than the abstractions of ideas and words.

This is why I use films to illustrate teaching points. Dramatizing values by showing appropriate films is a far more effective way to demonstrate the lessons than by simply lecturing about values. I open the film series with two of the greatest classics of American cinema, Casablanca and Citizen Kane. In Casablanca, Rick feels that he is a world-class victim. He has lost his integrity. He feels sorry for himself because he believes the woman he loved walked out on him, and therefore he becomes very selfish. His motto is, “I stick my neck out for nobody.” He is basically living only to satisfy his survival need as well as a reckless or irresponsible need for fun. As he puts it, “I’m the only one I’m looking out for now.” But when he realizes that Victor Laszlo and Ilsa Lund are both willing to sacrifice themselves for each other because of their sense of duty to something larger than themselves, Rick too makes a selfless choice, and in so doing, regains his integrity. He rediscovers himself and his responsibility both as an individual and as a member of the human race. Thus, he activates his need for belonging and a responsible sense of power and freedom – the power and freedom to make a positive difference in the world. In turn, Rick’s selfless choice influences Captain Renault to make another selfless choice. No one acts in isolation. The actions of each character have subtle effects on the network of all
human behavior. Thus the viewer learns that no matter how hopeless a situation may seem, each person can make a difference, either positive or negative.

In the follow-up discussion of this film, the students are asked to address the following questions:

- Why is Rick the way he is?
- What does he value?
- Why does Rick spend so much time thinking about the past?
- What causes Rick to change?
- Have you ever faced the kind of dilemma he faces?
- How would you behave if you were Rick?

In *Citizen Kane*, Charles Foster Kane searches for the meaning of his life and for happiness. Whether he ever discovers it depends on the viewer’s interpretation of the significance of “Rosebud.” Nevertheless, the film dramatizes how Kane’s desire for selfless service degenerates as he gains more and more worldly power. He began as a crusading champion of the people’s rights which would be an expression of a responsible sense of his need for power and freedom. But as he becomes top-heavy with ego, his needs for power and freedom take a decidedly irresponsible turn, and he transforms into an isolated tyrant. An example of his grandiose sense of power is his statement that people think “What I tell them to think.” He is really looking for some way to satisfy his need for belonging but never seems to find it, and on his deathbed he can only whisper “Rosebud.” One way to interpret the story is by starting with the Biblical question, “What does it profit a man to gain the whole world at the loss of his soul?” By following the intricacies of the jig-saw-puzzle plot in the film, the viewer is taken through the spectrum of human needs and values.

The follow-up discussion of this film includes debate on these questions:

- What does Kane think he wants?
- What does he really want?
- When and how does he lose his way?
- How and why does his integrity degenerate?
- How does the film help you to become a better leader?

One question that is included in the discussion of all the films in the series is, “What did you learn about yourself from the film?” As a work of art, a film holds a mirror up in front of us. We can choose to look in the mirror or not. Of course, if we refuse to see ourselves in the art, then we doom ourselves to remain as we are with no hope of growth or improvement. But to the degree that we are willing to allow ourselves to see what is in the mirror, to that degree can we learn and become more of who we are. The Army motto “Be All You Can Be” certainly applies here. In order to actualize who we are, we must first be willing to look at who we are now and who we can potentially become. It is only in facing our reality that we can take full responsibility. Other films in the series are *Twelve Angry Men, Schindler’s List, Amistad, Becket, and A Man For All Seasons*. All of these films are powerful illustrations of ethical and moral dilemmas in which the characters must reach inside themselves to deal with their needs, their values, and the ultimate meaning of their lives. Some of the characters fail to rise to the occasion, but other characters find the strength within themselves to achieve a fuller sense of their own humanity. It is, after all, in becoming fully human that we learn the real purpose and meaning of life. Striving to attain a sense of the meaning of one’s own existence causes each of us to at last deal with the profound riddle implicit in Socrates’ command, “Know Thyself.”

Ultimately, self-knowledge means achieving Glasser’s definition of Quality: the fulfillment of one’s needs. To achieve quality, one must stretch beyond perceived limits to fully realize the values that make each of us human. This is the essence of ethical and moral behavior. When a person is true to his or her ethics and morals, then this person is living a quality life.

**Conclusion**

If we as educators ignore the teaching of ethics and morals, students will be cut loose to roam about in a world that seems confusing and overwhelming. Young people have needs, and if we neglect to teach the young about meaning and values in some sort of positive fashion, they will find their own ways to fulfill their needs, ways that are all too familiar on the evening news—survival through violence, belonging through gang or cult membership, power through guns, freedom and fun through drugs, alcohol, and sex. While these “solutions” seem to fulfill the needs, they are obviously destructive and self-defeating. We can creatively demonstrate far more effective ways for our young people to satisfy needs and give a sense of meaning to life. If we do not, we are, as a people, rejecting Socrates’ command, “Know Thyself.” Once we do that, we will have guaranteed our downfall as a culture. As long as the crisis in ethics continues in American schools, I see the necessity of values training. I believe that Glasser’s system of needs within the context of Control Theory is an effective way that this kind of training can be presented in all school settings.

**References**

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Citizen Kane (1941). RKO Radio Pictures, Inc.

Teaching And Learning Without Schooling
Elijah Mickel and Cameron S. Mickel

From Schooling To Quality

Schooling

Schooling is defined by Glasser (1998), as "the first practice is trying to make students acquire knowledge or memorize facts in school that have no value for anyone, including students, in the real world. The second practice is forcing students to acquire knowledge that may have value in the real world but nowhere near enough value to try to force every student to learn it (p. 237). The move from schooling to learning requires a paradigm shift. According to Berr (1998), "One has not made the shift to the new Learning Paradigm unless one thinks within the it rather than about it. In other words the paradigm must be put into use (p. 19)." The learning paradigm is concerned with quality in the classroom. Within this paradigm, teaching is seen as a part of the learning process. Learning which includes teaching contains the elements of quality.

Quality

Quality is the best you can do, it takes time and lots of effort, it's what we want when we spend our money, and its usually expensive (Glasser, 1998). Quality is present when students have both the teacher (facilitator) and the learning (teaching) in their quality world. The quality world is where we place the pictures that will satisfy our basic needs. According to Glasser (1998, p. 45), "What these pictures portray falls into three categories: (1) the people we most want to be with, (2) the things we most want to own or experience, and (3) the ideas or systems of belief that govern much of our behavior." The quality classroom is a need fulfilling environment. It is herein that the learner can obtain a sense of wholeness. Wholeness is a systems concept.

The School As A System

The classroom is a subsystem within the wider school system. As a system, a class is comprised of two or more students who relate to each other in such a way that if there is a change in one it affects the other. The reaction of the second in turn affects the first. A change in the subsystem effects and changes the system. The class viewed holistically transacts school events among its members under the influence of related forces. According to Parson and Shils (1962):

Concrete systems of action — that is, personalities and social systems — have psychological, social, and cultural aspects. For one thing, the state of the system must be characterized in terms of certain of the motivational properties of the individual actors. The description of a system of action must employ the categories of motivational orientation: cognition, cathexis, and evaluation. Likewise, the description of an action system must deal with the properties of the system of interaction of two or more individuals or collective actors — this is the social aspect — and it must note the conditions which interaction imposes on the participating actors. (p. 7).

The school is a dynamic, living, open, need-focused system. Each class can be unique in the way it manages to meet its needs. This uniqueness sets the parameters of responsible classroom behaviors. Students may join within these parameters to form subgroups. A member of the subgroup must adhere to its boundaries or face ostracism. The school guides the quality of life through establishing permissible choices and the concomitant consequences. Relationships in the school system are expressed through its subgroups, classrooms, sports and other extracurricular activities. These subgroups express themselves through exchanges and communication. They transmit between and among themselves the requirements necessary to behave as a quality school. They form and maintain boundaries within the school system that can overcome individual differences. The individual's needs are addressed by the school and specific wants are met in their subgroup.

Case Study

I am a young college student and a graduate of the Saturday Academy Program. The Saturday Academy is a pre-engineering program designed to teach students in grades 4 - 8, college level math, computers skills, and electrical engineering (robotics). I teach electrical engineering in the Saturday Academy Program. The students, in the Program, are usually grouped according to grade in school. In the electrical engineering class, the students first learn basic electronics and alternative mathematics and after accomplishing these skills, begin to assemble projects (robotics).

I discovered that teaching young students is exciting and rewarding. I am currently teaching 4th through 8th grade students. The 4th and 5th grade students are young. Many people, including other teachers, believe that all the 4th and 5th graders want to do is talk and play and have their space. I have not found this to be true in my class. Of course, there are
students that want to run around and play all class period, but there are also students whose behavior is mature beyond their years. For example, there is a young lady in one of my classes who is in 5th grade and approximately ten years old, who is very mature. She appears to be just as calm and poised as any adult. She can hold a conversation on a level that someone twice her age can relate to. In this same class I have a young man, who is approximately 11 years of age. I believe he is "old" far beyond his age. He appears to be gifted in his understanding of human behavior. He is also very mechanical. He recently pointed out a problem on his project that I had overlooked. I was impressed because this was his first experience dealing with electronics. Working with 4th and 5th graders taught me many things about children. I understand that even though I am the teacher, I can learn from my students. I am willing to learn from my students, and they know it, so they are able to approach me without fear.

Students are allowed to have as much freedom as possible, as long as they use it responsibly. I permit my students to have discussions (talk), as long as they are doing the work assigned to them. With this privilege some of the students may become sidetracked and need to be reminded that they can talk, as long as they are doing their work. This technique tends to result in a classroom that seems to be noisy, but my students are also working. However, I am frequently asked by other teachers to keep my students quiet. I remind my students to talk quietly, but they are not robots. They are individuals with thoughts and ambitions and ideas that they want to share with the class, their friends.

The different age groups exhibit different levels of what they call "respect." I introduce myself to my students using my first name. The older students tend to appreciate being able to address me by my given name. The younger students don't appear to be as comfortable. They want to call me Mr. C, but I remind them that it is "C" without the Mr. I believe that this is difficult for the young students because it is more difficult for the younger students to see someone older as accepting. The older students view me as their peer.

In my classes, I am as involved as my students. At times, I am able to blend into the learning environment. This blending, at times, leads to the students forgetting that a teacher is present, and then they have to be reminded of my role in the classroom. I am responsible for the classroom where they behave, and learning environment.

As in many classes, there are students who seem to not do their work and are constantly playing or talking. I believe this behavior indicates that the student is bored and I attempt to circumvent this boredom. I attempt to find out what interests the young person and then work from there. There are also students who have not learned to focus for long periods of time and have short attention spans. These students' interests are constantly changing.

I believe that when students are old enough to read and translate what they read to action, the teacher should be able to give them a project to do, along with some written instructions (reinforced orally by the teacher), and expect them to be able to work from there. Sometimes they don't want to read the instructions. For example, a younger student was constructing a project, and was having difficulty placing the battery snap into the circuit board. The student came to me for assistance, at which point I told her to take her time because she could do it herself. It took a little bit more time to do but she was able to do it herself. I feel that this teaches the student to be independent.

One thing that I do not tolerate in any of my classes is name calling and disrespect of each other. This behavior lowers students' self-esteem, and causes them to feel bad. I do not want any of my students being sad.

I am rewarded at the end of each class period when students show me that they have been able to make their projects work. They are enthusiastic about what they are to do next.

The Learning Environment

This article integrates systems theory, and choice theory as the theoretical foundation for understanding the learning environment. The learning environment is where teaching and learning occurs. The teaching model begins with learning behaviors. The process of learning includes both the teacher as well as the student. Each provides perceptions that result in a socially constructed whole. According to Cross (1998), "First and foremost, social construction conceives of knowledge not as something that is transferred in an authoritarian structure from teacher to student but rather as something that teachers and students work interdependently to develop (p. 5)." The environment, socially constructed, results from involvement. Involvement requires the establishment or reestablishment of a warm, intimate, emotional, nurturing environment. Involvement between the teacher and the learner leads to the development of an effective relationship. According to Perlman (1979), "Past those essential physical survival and safety needs that must be assured for every one of us is the need for love, and just past that, perhaps intermingling with it, is our continuous lifelong need for social connectedness, for belonging to and with and for other human beings. Whatever its original ancient adaptive purposes, we seem now to carry in our very genes the need for others (p. 178)." All constructive efforts toward building relationships are based upon involvement. These efforts provide parameters for the psychological environment necessary for change. This is an environment where students must meet their basic needs. In a need fulfilling environment this drive to meet their needs can be productive or destructive. According to Glasser (1990, p. 16), "The teacher who understands this will focus a great deal of effort on managing in a way that students can satisfy their needs by doing schoolwork."

Basic Needs in the Case:

Power is described as gaining and maintaining the belief that we are recognized by some others some of the time as having something to do or say that they believe and we agree is important. Power in the classroom is reflected in the student who gains a sense of importance. This sense allows the student to take risks and maintain his or her importance. An example of power is the students' security in correcting the facilitator. "He appears to be gifted in his understanding of
human behavior. He is also very mechanical. He recently pointed out a problem on his project that I had overlooked. I was impressed because this was his first experience dealing with electronics."

To belong and to love is reflected in the belief that others whom we care for are concerned enough about us so that they will both give us and accept from us the affection, care and friendship we desire. Love and belonging in the classroom is reflected in the relationship between facilitator and students as well as student to student relationships. An example of belonging in this classroom is “In my classes, I am as involved as my students. At times, I am able to blend into the learning environment. This blending, at times, leads to the students forgetting that a teacher is present.” Freedom in the classroom is reflected in the belief that students can act and think without restriction by teachers as long as they do not significantly interfere with other students access to the same freedom. Students need to feel that creativity is acceptable. In this quality classroom, one example of freedom is “Students are allowed to have as much freedom as possible, as long as they use it responsibly. I permit my students to have discussions, as long as they are doing the work assigned to them.” To have fun in the classroom means that students engage in some behavior that has (for its main purpose), enjoyment and in which there is laughter and good feeling on the part of all involved. If something new is learned it is usually satisfying.

An example of the outcome of fun is my reward. “I am rewarded at the end of each class period when students show me that they have been able to make their projects work. They are enthusiastic about what they are to do next.”

Conclusion

The intent of this article was to provide an example of quality in the classroom. Quality learning can begin in a single classroom at a single point in time. If the individual facilitator makes a commitment to bring change, (s)he can begin the process of developing a quality school. The classroom is a subsystem within the school system. According to Glasser (1993, p. 9), “The only way education is going to change is if the classroom teacher makes it happen.” A change in the class results in changes in the school. A quality classroom moves the school towards quality. The quality learning environment must focus upon the use of knowledge and values in the educational process. Our knowledge and values are critical factors in the formation of need fulfilling pictures and the subsequent behaviors. These are two critical components of the perceptual system. Our perceptions determine our behaviors (Powers, 1973). The role of the teacher is to provide an environment where the learner perceives that (s)he can fulfill needs through the learning process. In this environment learning is task and problem centered and is internally (as opposed to externally) motivated. The learning system is comprised of processes which provide the foundation upon which facilitators develop a quality learning environment. One of the lasting contributions of the quality classroom is that learning can be applied to making quality life choices.

Quality is never an accident; it is the result of high intention, sincere effort, intelligent direction and skillful execution; it represents the wise choice of many alternatives

- Anonymous

References


Choice Theory Applications To Creating Assessment Instruments For Schools

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Abstract: Teachers, school counselors, school psychologists and other professionals who are involved with assessing students can create some of their own instruments that are useful in gaining understanding of the student from a Choice Theory perspective. Moreover, these instruments can be learning instruments for students for clarifying their own quality world pictures and viewing their own choices from the perspective of their perceived world.

School personnel who are trying to incorporate Choice Theory ideas, as developed by Glasser, in their daily work are quite challenged by the prospect of evaluating students. With the most useful evaluation being self-evaluation, the student can be a learner in the process. The person conducting the assessment can gain a Choice Theory perspective on the student. For example, a school psychologist can ask clarifying questions that will help the student better understand his or her basic needs, quality world pictures and behavioral choices for meeting those needs.

The Student Self-Rating Scale (SSRS) is one example of an instrument that was developed by a Choice Theory minded school psychologist. The SSRS is still and may always be a “work-in-progress”. It evolves with continuous evaluation of its utility combined with the author’s increasing understanding of Choice Theory and feedback from students and colleagues. The SSRS is an example of what the reader can do in developing an assessment instrument with Choice Theory in mind that is useful in the educational setting. Selected portions of the SSRS are appended to this article.

In my role as a school psychologist, I usually begin any educational assessment of a student referred to me by a school special needs team for assessment with the SSRS. It usually enhances rapport that has already been established, putting me a little bit deeper into the student’s quality world as a need satisfying person. I am asking the student to evaluate him/herself. I inform the student that the SSRS is not a test. This process demonstrates my interest in what the student is saying about his/her own quality world pictures and related needs, behavioral choices to meet those needs, values and knowledge. The information and ratings are useful for counseling or problem solving with the student.

Selection of the SSRS items used was based on the school classes and activities that are usually part of the student’s typical school day. The items when answered draw upon the student’s self-observations based in the student’s Perceived World, as processed through the student’s total Knowledge Filter and the Valuing Filter.

In creating the SSRS, I used an ascending 9 point scale, such as is often seen in tables reporting a student’s educational achievement scores in stanines. This scale reflects the valuing filter in the student’s perceived world. Younger children or students below grade 3 and others may prefer ascending scales with 3, 5 or 10 points. Moreover, students who have taken the SSRS and provided me feedback have had no difficulty understanding the 9 point scale after it is briefly explained and one or two unrelated examples are provided by the examiner.

This SSRS is used generally for grades 3 and beyond. It is not a reading test so the person administering the SSRS can explain vocabulary used on the scale, help in reading the items, and give examples of how s/he would answer an item set on a scale similar to the SSRS. For example, the person administering the SSRS might offer: “How much do I like eating liver ... I (very low).” “How much do I like watching TV ... 5 (average).” “How much do I enjoy skiing ... 4 (lower end of average).” “How much I want to learn about fly fishing ... 9 (very high).”

The items in the SSRS contained in this article reflect my choices of looking at Academic Areas, Study Skills and Attitudes about school and learning. I chose them because they provided me ample useful information in an efficient manner about the student’s perceptions of what he was doing and thinking about in school, as well as how he felt about his effectiveness as a student. Most of the information came from self-ratings; However, the Attitude section does contain some fill-in the blank sentence completions that could be done in writing or orally. These were added to the SSRS because they provide specific useful information about the student’s perceptions of his/her own past successes in school, as well as specific people and activities that are or have been need-satisfying in school. This information may be drawn upon in helping students develop their plans to meet their needs in the present or future.
On the Academic Areas portion, some of the ratings are established to help the student self-rate how important a particular subject is in life (survival value). Then students rate how much they enjoy the subject or activity (meeting the need for fun in learning). How well he/she does it (perceived success so far) and how well he/she wants to do in the subject (quality world picture that drives behavior). Comparisons of the student’s own ratings within each academic area provides students with information of what they may want to change; their quality world picture, chosen behaviors to get what they really want or both. Comparisons are not a mathematical exercise, such as saying two or more points is a significant difference. Instead, differences are useful if followed with a discussion of what the differences mean to the student.

Art, music, physical education and sports were included under academic areas because that is often where students actually do “quality work” as opposed to “just good enough work.” These ratings can be compared with those of the more “academic” subjects like mathematics for instance, to lead to a discussion of what really is “quality work.”

Under STUDY SKILLS, SSRS ratings were designed to have students self-rate their learning behaviors that contribute to their overall school performance. These questions also reflect how the student chooses to learn within the existing educational system. It may provide suggestions of how the system may need to change in order to better meet the student’s basic needs (survival, love and belongingness, power, freedom and fun) within the school setting. Moreover, the ratings deal with group or cooperative learning, striving for “quality work” or “just good enough work” and the student’s effort and general performance. These ratings may provide some information about how much of what Glasser refers to as “schooling” (learn what I tell you to learn or you will be punished in some way) as opposed to real quality education (doing competent and useful work in school) is happening in the student’s life.

ATTITUDES are self-ratings that reflect the student’s perceptions regarding relationships and the impact on the student’s own learning in school. We can realistically assume that poor relationships with peers, staff or parents are not conducive to effective learning in school or academic success. This may highlight an area where the school psychologist can work with the student.

The sentence completion portion of the SSRS following the scaled Attitude items was designed to look at the past, only in regard to examining the student’s perceived successes. Some questions are designed to get a sense of what types of staff members have been need-satisfying to the student. What type of class (what happens in it?) has been need-satisfying. What do students see as choices that contribute to or diminish their success in school? Other questions were set to have the student view books chosen to read, hobbies, interests or anything else that is in the quality world of the student that relates to school and learning.

Reference

Choice Theory and Vocabulary Selection with Non-Verbal Students

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Vocabulary selection is the foundation to the success of a communication system. Many speech therapists select vocabularies based on the therapist perception of non-verbal students’ wants and needs. Choice Theory proposes that behaviors, such as communication, are based on an internal source of control. Non-verbal, physically disabled students have to rely on caregivers to deliver what they perceive the student wants. Many caregivers base the student wants and needs on the caregivers’ perceived world. Utilizing Choice Theory five basic needs as a foundation to gain information about students increases the speech therapist’s ability to represent students’ quality world pictures.

It is the task of the speech therapist to design a means of communication for a non-verbal person. Communication or language is one behavior that we use to get what we want. Historically, the field of speech pathology has looked to the behavioral scientist for answers to the development of language and training techniques to understand and promote language acquisition and development. The field has based its core of training with the utilization of behavior modification techniques to understand and foster language acquisition and development.

Many researchers over the years have debated several theories of language acquisition and development. They have pointed to language being innate to a learned behavior from modeling by more proficient speakers. The latter premise loses its exclusive explanation because it does not explain that children will create sentences that have never been heard or modeled. Physically disabled students have a need for the external world to help them attain their wants and needs due to their physical limitations. Common spoken languages are very powerful and universal methods to express what we want and need.

McLean and Snyder-McLean (1978) and many other investigators state that comprehension (reception) of a language precedes production (expressive) in language development. They believe that the development of reception develops from semantics, the meaning of words in sentences, to syntax, and the system of rules, which govern how words are combined.

In addition to these linguistic skills, there is the development of pragmatic aspects of language, which are socially based. The pragmatic skills are those which are most important to this paper because these are the language performance skills. This is the area of language development that needs to improve in order for speakers to be successful in using language behavior to get what they want. Bruner (1978) defines pragmatics as the “directive function of speech through which speakers affect the behavior of others in trying to carry out their intentions.”

Halliday (1975) proposed three phases of pragmatic development. Phase I is what he calls the child’s initial functional language system which extends from 9-16.5 months. In this stage, the child makes sounds that serve various functions, such as expressing needs or desires. Phase II extends from 16.5-24 months and is the transition from Phase I to adult language. In this phase, the child develops the ability to participate in a dialogue. In Phase III, the child engages in learning adult-like language at about 24 months.

The language delayed and physically challenged students at middle to high school level are between the ages 9-22 years. The student that is evaluated for speech and language disorders, whose results indicate the student to be from 0-24 months receptive language age and 0 to 24 month expressive age in comparison to a chronological age of 9 to 22 years, is considered to be severe to profoundly delayed in language skills. These students’ receptive skills exceed their expressive language skill predominately due to the physical handicap that prohibits oral/vocal speech.

As stated above, most skills that are needed to express needs and desires at a basic problem-solving level are acquired within the first 24 months of life. The movement from Phase I to Phase II is delayed due to the student’s inability to behave/speak spoken language which provides a more consistent and accurate representation of our needs from one language speaking listener to the next listener.

For the past 18 years, I have used many of the proposed methods and reinforcement schedules to promote language development. I began working in Ohio where a Rehabilitation Specialist explained his method of counseling to help the adult students we worked with for four years. He did allow me to listen to tapes of his sessions and told me this was called “Reality Therapy”. I found it very interesting and noted the progress and success he had with our student’s development of independence and increased self-advocacy skills. I started to consider what I thought to be “common sense” counseling procedures with the verbal students that received communication-training services.

Several years later, I began to work at my current place of employment. The entire staff was encouraged to listen to presentations concerning the principles of Choice Theory and Reality Therapy. We were encouraged to use these principles and ideas in our daily teaching situations and behavior management. I found it very applicable to the services I was trying to provide.
The field of speech pathology was moving within the same thread; however, it was termed “Client-centered therapy” vs. “Clinician-centered therapy”. This movement was subject to much resistance from parents and therapists who thought that individual training within an enclosed sterile room where the speech therapists could magically reproduce natural communications situations was the only way to teach speech and language. It was especially frustrating to bring a non-verbal student in this room and try to keep a conversation going for one half-hour. I constantly looked for something to solve the problem I was having in delivering services to these particular types of students. I found that Choice Theory and Quality World (picture albums) had a clear resemblance to the task of selecting vocabulary for a communication board.

A communication board is an augmentative or alternate communication (AAC) device constructed to provide individuals a visual representation in order to make their wants and needs known to a caretaker. For years, I had used behavior modification methods of examining the real world as I saw the real world, and vocabulary selection to depict my perceptions of each student’s wants and needs. I would go into the rooms that the students were involved in every day, and look around and listen and write down everything I saw and heard that seemed to indicate the student’s preferences. From that vocabulary selection, I would cut and paste pictures on a board and the student would now be able to express him or herself. This was a method recommended to speech therapists in the literature for AAC training. These boards could be constructed from paper or placed on an electronic communication device which ranged from $200 to $8,000. The common theme, which you would read in the literature, hear at professional conferences, from insurance companies and school systems, was that the students did not use these devices (Calculator, 1984, 1988; Calculator & Dollaghan, 1982; Harris, 1982; Light, Collier & Parnes, 1985).

The field researchers began looking at answering the question why these students weren’t using the devices. Some speech therapists even began to make the assumptions that students of such low cognitive level were incapable of expressing their needs in any effective/conventional manner. The only pictures that were successful were “eat”, “drink”, “toilet” and photographs of their family and students in the classroom.

Given the principles of Choice Theory, I began to consider something other than the students’ deficits, and assumptions about this group of students. The success of the above vocabulary may not be because of our perception that all mentally retarded students loved to eat and if I taught “eat” and gave them a tangible they would learn the symbol. These training procedures were constructed on the premise that language behavior was learned, given reinforcement of the behavior. It became more difficult however, to teach other words such as “hungry” and “want” within my little therapy room.

Many researchers have proposed teaching new behaviors in the same setting in which they will ultimately be used. (Brown, Nietupski & Hamre-Nietupski, 1976; Falvey, Bishop, Grenot-Scheyer, & Coots, 1988; Guess & Helmstetter, 1986). In addition, many researchers state that communication behaviors taught are those predicted to evoke natural reinforcing contingencies from prospective conversational partners outside the therapy setting. (Sailor, Goetz, Schuler, Utley, & Baldwin, 1980). However, many researchers continue to focus instruction on environmental demands rather than the specific individual wants and needs of the students.

A classic scenario is going out to eat in the natural setting with several severe to profoundly developmentally and physically handicapped students. These students are also physically handicapped so their non-conventional methods or ineffective behaviors of expressing their wants are whining, banging on the table, grabbing food, and hitting. These students have had to sit and wait until they could somehow gain attention, and relied on the listener/observer to bring them something to eat. These students may or may not have been given the exact food they preferred because of the restaurant selection or staff selection of food. Some students would again increase their non-conversational or ineffective methods by throwing food at the caretaker, head banging, spitting out food. Depending on each caretaker’s day, tasks, and responsibilities, some may perceive this as the child demonstrating non-purposeful behavior. They may think that the student doesn’t really want to eat. The caretakers may be doing something, and may not realize that they missed a subtle message from non-verbal students that this particular food was not what they wanted. This student is removed from the table for throwing food; the food and the opportunity is taken away. The student’s rear wheels of the behavior car begin to spin out of control. There, we have mealtime with a nonverbal physically disabled student.

There are other investigators who have cited the need to teach conversational partners to more effectively recognize and respond to individuals’ communicative attempts. There is a need to help caretakers to promote the student’s language development by increasing opportunities to communicate by not anticipating the student’s wants and needs.

Glennen and Calculator (1985) trained two children to use vocabulary depicted on their communication boards to request what they called highly reinforcing objects that were available to them but out of their reach. These students used these new vocabulary words to label the items, however, they were not noted to use these words to convey alternate communicative functions (requests, comment). The theory of this article is that you need to teach children to request and comment in the natural setting, and they will then learn how to request and comment.

Observing some of these scenarios and increasing my knowledge of Choice Theory and Reality Therapy, I began to realize that the first step to AAC training is the vocabulary selection process. The vocabulary has to be valued by the individual. What is needed is information from the caregivers about the student’s Quality World pictures including the red, yellow and green pictures. Speech therapists spend a short period of time with the students they service in comparison to the time of parents, relatives, classroom aides and classroom teachers.
The student needs to be observed in many situations (home, school, etc.) by the speech therapist and caregivers with language development instruction. The best service delivery for the therapists to effectively gain the information necessary is that of a consultation model. The initial step to vocabulary selection is to observe behaviors, both effective and ineffective, that students use to express their wants and needs.

The therapist needs to assess which language functions of Bruner's (1978) pragmatic development phases have been acquired and which semantic (meanings) relations these behaviors indicate. The therapist can obtain this information from observation and the caregivers (Appendix A). Once the information is gathered, the therapist should summarize this information in report form and attach this information to the AAC device for further reference and information exchange among all caregivers.

Using the structure of the 5 basic needs, the therapist can provide photographs or pictures that replicate the Quality World of each individual student. For example, Joe Doe likes magazines; however, he prefers magazines with lots of pictures of women and the way he expresses this is to grab your hand and pull you over to the corner where the magazines are kept. He will then need you to turn the pages and he indicates this by looking up, laughing, and hitting your arm. The therapist can select a vocabulary of magazine, specific kinds of magazines, the corner of the room where they are kept, and a symbol for turning the page. This will give the students more success in getting what they want from several people and the “freedom” to make choices.

Halle (1987) recommends that one solution to generalization problems that speech therapists have with augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) systems is to transfer environmental control of individuals’ responding to progressively more natural cues. Halle recommends six levels of intervention which include physical and socially appropriate methods of expressing oneself are substituted and “reinforced” and are effective in meeting the student’s needs (Carr & Durand, 1985). The caregivers are the primary source of information about the Quality World of the non-verbal student.

The speech therapist role is to gather this information and construct an AAC device for the student, train the staff to observe behavior, and communicative intentions of each student. The speech therapist must train the caregiver concerning the development of language, and provide instruction to demonstrate more effective behaviors (use of symbol system) to get the students’ wants and needs understood.

Bibliography


Appendix A

Student’s Name:
Staff Involved:
Date sent home/phone contact:

Augmentative Communication

Parents & Staff

This survey is intended to help in selecting vocabulary for communication board training. Communication board training and vocabulary selection has historically been designed and selected by the speech therapist by doing an environmental survey with little or no success. An environmental survey involves only the speech therapist that will look around the room and put pictures to represent everything and all staff/students names that are in the classroom.

Your child/student is in the process of training for a communication board and needs your help to choose the vocabulary that best suits him/her. However, since this person is nonverbal I need vital input from you about this student. I need a vocabulary that is tailored made for this student.

I'm using something called “Choice Theory” which suggests that our behavior is driven by 5 basic needs. Choice theory also suggests that we have something called a “Quality World” where we keep a “Picture album” of people, things, and activities that meet our 5 basic needs. The 5 basic needs are Survival, Fun, Freedom, Power, Love and Belonging.

I would like to get information from you that will tell me about your child’s student’s Quality World and how I can represent those needs with pictures. Talking or communicating is one behavior, which especially non-verbal children do not have the luxury of using to its full potential. I’m using Choice Theory along with input from the significant people in the child’s environment to choose the most useful vocabulary. This vocabulary selection process is intended to supply your child/student with one tool they need to communicate their needs effectively.

Please take care to fill in the questions below with the exact vocabulary that this person would use if he/she were verbal. Please take into account THEIR personality and needs only. Try to see the world through their senses only. When completing this survey, try to imagine that you are leaving for two weeks and there will be a new caregiver. You must tell this caregiver everything in detail so that this student/child will be comfortable and get what they need. The survey includes two sections; one for home and one for school and work. Parents please fill out both sections if you are familiar with your child’s schedule and place of work.

Thank you very much for your time.

HOME

Think of all the non-verbal ways your child expresses him/herself to you and write them down below:

Intent Form (describe behavior observed)

Fun

Affirmation (likes something)
Request (wants something)

Freedom

Negation (doesn’t want/like something)
Refusal (protest/anger)
Recurrence (wants more of something)

Power

Reply (when asked a question)
Demand (impatiently wants something)

Love & Belonging

Greetings (says hello)
Notice (says goodbye/accidents)

Survival

Hunger
Thirst
Toileting

FUN/FREEDOM

1. What are his/her favorite foods? (Please list)
   Breakfast  Lunch  Supper  Snack/Dessert

2. Please write the exact brands and way your child likes his/her food prepared.

3. If your child were verbal what activities would he/she tell you he/she wanted, what would the ideal day look like? (I.e., favorite TV shows music, hobbies, chores, and restaurants) (Please list at least 5 activities/things in which your child has fun and laughed/enjoyed).
Favorite TV shows:
Favorite music:
Favorite restaurants:
Favorite activities:
During these activities are there things that your child nonverbally expresses to you by the way he/she acts? Please describe the behavior and what the behavior says to you.

4. Favorite time of the day for physical activity? For quiet activities?

During these activities are there things that your child non-verbally expresses to you by the way he/she acts? Please describe the behavior and what the behavior says to you.

FUN/LOVE & BELONGING

5. If your child was verbal who are the people he/she would spend time with and what would they do together? (Please list at least 3 people and activities).

POWER/FREEDOM

6. If your child were verbal what would he/she have to say about his/her schedule that he does or does not like? (i.e., things he/she may not want to do or wish he/she could do).

Likes to do:

Does not like to do:

POWER/FUN

7. What are past or recent accomplishments or something in which he/she is successful and proud of? Please describe in detail.

8. Please give an account of this student’s schedule in the morning, after school, bedtime routines, and weekend routines. Please give as much detail as possible so that their schedule can be represented in pictures.

Please give a rating on a scale of 1-5 in order of importance to this student (#1=most important, #5=least important) of the following needs:

POWER (achievement, acknowledgment)
FUN (laugh, learning)
FREEDOM (choices to and choices from)
LOVE AND BELONGING (people, relationships)
SURVIVAL (food, shelter)

Additional Comments: Is there any information you feel would be important to vocabulary selection. (i.e., other significant people and places where he/she may need to communicate or make choices).

SCHOOL/WORK

Think of all the non-verbal ways your child expresses him/herself to you and write them down below:

Intent

Form (describe behavior observed)

Fun

Affirmation (likes something)
Request (wants something)

Freedom

Negation (doesn’t want/like something)
Refusal (protest/anger)
Recurrence (wants more of something)

Power

Reply (when asked a question)
Demand (impatiently wants something)

Love & Belonging

Greetings (says hello)
Notice (says goodbye/accidents)

Survival

Hunger
Thirst
Toileting.

SCHOOL/WORK

The following information is needed for picture training for this student. This information can be obtained by the teacher/staff filling in this form or by interview by the speech therapist during consultation time.

1. Please attach a copy of the student’s schedule (classroom teacher)

2. During the activities of each scheduled curriculum area, please include what materials are being addressed. Math - coin identification, Reading - survival signs. (Classroom teacher).

3. What are his/her favorite foods? (Please list) What do they order from the cafeteria?

Lunch  Snack  Dessert

Please give detail about what you have observed about this student’s likes and dislikes. How does the student like his/her food prepared? Do they always want a particular drink or do they only eat hot dogs with ketchup? Do they eat their dessert before their main dish?
4. If this student was verbal what activities would he/she tell you he/she wanted, what would the ideal day look like? (SPOT group, Gym, POT group, watering plants, computer/specific games) (Please list at least 5 activities/things they have fun and laugh/enjoy). Describe your observations of the student's behavior during this activity.

5. If this student was verbal who are the people he/she would have to say about his/her schedule that he/she does or does not like? (i.e., things he/she may not want to do or wish he/she could do?)

7. What activities is he/she successful and proud of (past or recent accomplishments)? Please describe in detail.

Please give a rating on a scale of 1-5 in order of importance to this student (#1=most important, #5=least important) of the following needs:

- POWER (achievement, acknowledgment)
- FUN (laugh, learning)
- FREEDOM (choices to and choices from)
- LOVE AND BELONGING (people, relationships)
- SURVIVAL (food, shelter)

Additional Comments: Please give me any information regarding what should be on the communication board that you may not have listed above.

Are there any other staff members that are not listed above who you feel would be important to gain some input? Please list.

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Relationships are so important!

Maureen Craig McIntosh

The author is a Sexual Health Nurse with the department of Health and Community Services, Moncton, NB, Canada.

Abstract: This article is written to share how self-evaluation and non-judgmental approach, illustrated through a case study, are crucial in assisting young teens to consider changing their “Quality World Picture of having a baby”.

Very often as counselors, we are confronted with the teenager who wants to be pregnant. In my fifteen years working with teenage girls, I have been asked over and over, but what do you do about the teenager who wants to be pregnant. First, realize that this is the quality world picture of the teen and that it will satisfy one or more of her basic needs. Most often, it is because of the need for love, but sometimes it is a freedom need (she will be kicked out of home) or a power need (this is one area of my life that no one else can control). As counselors, and certainly in the following case, this situation becomes more of a management issue. How do I manage this client so that she decides to delay having a child?

Recently, I had a 15-year-old teenager come into my office for a pregnancy test. A support worker, from one of the local group homes accompanied her. We often don’t know why the youth is there so I started my conversation by asking her the reason she had come to see me. She informed me that she wanted a pregnancy test. I asked her if she had had sexual intercourse with someone and if she was late for her period. She stated that “yes, this was the case”. I asked her if she had a boyfriend and she said no, that he had dumped her the week before. I asked her how she felt about this and she said it was OK because he was a jerk anyway! We made arrangements to do the pregnancy test, and as I was doing the test, I asked her what she would do about being pregnant. Would she keep the baby, have an abortion or give it up for adoption. She stated that she would keep the baby. I explained that part of my job was to help her in her decision making around this issue and she was pleased to know that I would help her.

We did the test and it was negative. I will call the girl, Julie. When I told Julie that the test was negative she began to cry. She sobbed and sobbed. I said to her “I am so sorry the test was negative!” She looked at me wide eyed and said, “you are? All the other adults think I am crazy wanting to be pregnant”. I asked her what she would do about being pregnant. Would she keep the baby, have an abortion or give it up for adoption. She stated that she would keep the baby. I explained that part of my job was to help her in her decision making around this issue and she was pleased to know that I would help her.

Julie: I am just there until they find me a foster home
Counselor: Where is your mother?
Julie: At home.
Counselor: Is there a reason why you cannot live with your mother?
Julie: We don’t get along.
Counselor: How old was your mother when she had you?
Julie: I don’t know. I am her fifth child but I know she had her first one when she was 15 years old.
Counselor: Gee, she was the same age as you and you and she are having trouble getting along fifteen years later.
Julie: Yeah, that’s right.
Counselor: Let me ask you this. Do you think your mother was ready to have babies at fifteen years of age?
Julie: No, I never looked at it that way before!
Counselor: Is the way you are living now the way you want it to be for your children?
Julie: No, I really haven’t thought about this, this way before!
Counselor: I’d like to offer you some information. Would you like to come and spend some time with me on a regular basis - maybe once a week for 4 or 5 weeks. We can talk further about these things and if you are pregnant I can help you work that out as well.
Julie: OK. I really need to think about this.

We made an appointment for Julie and she returned one week later. I asked her if she had her period and she said she had not but that she wanted to wait till the end of the month to have the test. I asked if she was sure she did not want to check now. She said “no” and she added, “I hope I am not pregnant”. I asked her what had changed and she said she decided she wasn’t ready to have a baby and if she did she would give it up for adoption. We talked for a while and she told me that she did not have any sex education in school, that she are having trouble getting along fifteen years later.

Julie: We don’t get along.
Counselor: How old was your mother when she had you?
Julie: I don’t know. I am her fifth child but I know she had her first one when she was 15 years old.
Counselor: Gee, she was the same age as you and you and she are having trouble getting along fifteen years later.
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Julie: If I had a baby I would have someone to love.
Counselor: I am so glad you said that you would have someone to love because babies usually spend the first few years expecting a lot from you. Can you share with me the reason you want someone to love?
Julie: It is because I am alone.
Counselor: You are here with Susan, would you tell me why you are in the group home.
This is a tool I have developed for working with teens to help them in sexual decision making. In this I have created a series of questions for teens to ask themselves about their perceptions about sex. I have also included a section on what is a “destructive sexual relationship” and what is a “quality sexual relationship”. We also have a discussion about “What is Love”.

When I finished this with Julie, she looked at me and said: “my friend Suzanne is coming next week, you have to do everything with her exactly like you did with me because she still wants to be pregnant.” I asked: “and you don’t?”

Julie: No way! I really hope I am not!
Counselor: Why not?
Julie: I am not ready! And further more, I am not going to be like my mother. I am going to get an education and be a good mother when I am ready! When can I come back to see you?

Julie will return in another week. We are going to discuss birth control and sexually transmitted diseases. She wants to take precautions now and she is not so sure she will rush into another sexual relationship very soon. She told me she wants to take her time and really get to know her partner.
Moral Education and Choice Theory/Reality Therapy: An Initial Examination

Daniel M. Linneberg

The author is a priest of the Episcopal church and lives in Rochester, New York.

Abstract: This paper proposes the integration of Choice Theory/Reality Therapy with a synthesis of the Kantian and Aristotelian perspectives of moral thought. The discussion includes a review of morality from both a deontological and an aretological view, an explication of Glasser’s work on morality and moral behavior, and an analysis of the synthesis of deontic and aretestic morality. Based on these discussions, moral education from a Choice Theory/Reality Therapy perspective is proposed for further empirical research.

Our counseling clients deal with their daily life issues the best they can; however when these issues become overwhelming for them or cause them too much disequilibrium, they come to us for assistance. In many cases, these problems are based on, or at least perceived as being, moral issues by our clients. They range from infidelity to the negative consequences of telling a little white lie. Some would say that a white lie is not a moral issue; yet our clients can/may perceive it as a major moral issue. For that matter they can look at anything as a moral issue. As counselors we are called upon to assist our clients in dealing with their issues so that they can return to or continue to live fulfilling lives. In many cases our assistance to our clients may just mean educating them on how to think and act morally.

Finding the best way of educating our clients in morality may definitely appear to be a daunting task. Especially since we all have a moral perspective, we generally know that it developed through our relationships with our families, friends and communities, yet we do not always know how to articulate the construct of morality to our clients. I propose that the synthesized perspectives of the schools of moral thought have a natural linkage with the teachings of Choice Theory/Reality Therapy. For the purposes of this project, I will review morality and its relationship to Choice Theory/Reality Therapy as a means to enhance moral educational opportunities for our clients. Further, I will review the major schools of moral thought, explain the tenets of Choice Theory (a non-traditional internal control applied psychology) and attempt to analyze the compatibility between the two. This addresses a major question: Does Choice Theory/Reality Therapy have a precise and succinct perspective on moral education?

Morality

Though the question of moral behavior is perceived by many as a religious issue, this is not necessarily so. Granted, it is from the preeminent hermeneutical perspective of our society – that of the white western male culture – which the preponderance of our moral understanding comes. This cultural norm developed from the philosophical teachings of Thomas Aquinas (1265-1272/trans. 1927). It is based on the principle that divine law is natural law, espousing that what is in nature or God’s creation is also a natural part of human reason. From a less esoteric perspective this predominant Christian view is best summarized thus: the “ultimate standard of morality is the will of God” (Mortimer, 1961, p. 60). However, since most counselors and, for that matter most people, can only speculate about what the true will of God is and, since we also deal with individuals who do not come from this hermeneutical perspective, it might be useful if we examine morality from a secular point of view. We may have clients who choose not to accept or even reject the Judeo-Christian perspective due to a religious/spiritual block (such as religious anger/frustration/hurt towards the church or a religious leader).

Therefore, we are called upon to have an understanding of non-religious based philosophical views. This is not done to appease those individuals who do not accept the will of God because they are atheists or agnostics, nor does it discount those who do accept the will of God as the basis of their moral understanding. We do this in order to include the many who have disdain for the unquestioned acceptance that our standards of behavior must be based upon the culture in which we live and for those times that a theological hermeneutic is not appropriate.

Moral behavior can be interpreted from a non-religious individual morality view such as Aristotle’s (trans. 1962) principle of eudaiomenia, Kant’s (1785/1959, 1788/1997) principle of fairness or even Mill’s (1861/1957) Utilitarianism or principle of greatest happiness. As Franken (1973) points out, we think about morality from a variety of perspectives ranging from the common perception that one should not lie, cheat, steal or do harm (taken from the deontic theories, i.e., Kant) to the aretetic theories dealing with moral character and values (i.e. Aristotle). For the purposes of this paper, I will address only the deontological and aretological theories for two reasons: first, they are not theologically based; second, they are generally accepted social norms no matter what one’s hermeneutical outlook would be.

Langford (1995) relates that deontological or Kantian theories consist of “first order” and "second order" moral norms. He describes first order rules as directives against lying, cheating, stealing and murder, and second order rules as directives which indicate a more altruistic view, such as having a duty to assist those in need (p. 2). Further, he claims that these theories are used as the basic definitions by the major originators of the theories of moral development: On the other hand, aretological or Aristotelian theories promote
the concept of virtuous behavior. These virtues include such concepts as honesty, courage and loyalty.

Both these theories – deontological and aretalogical – attempt to define moral understanding. They have distinctive differences, yet through their synthesis, we may come to a basic guide for moral behavior.

A Synthesis of Perspectives

In Keat’s (1992) article proposing a synthesis of Kantian and Aristotelian perspectives, she expresses her understanding of the differences in the two (See figure 1 for an illustration). The Kantian view advances the principle of duty and justice, that in a sense one’s moral perspective is based on how one reasons morally. From this perspective there is an emphasis on moral reasoning without necessarily having concern for one’s own actual conduct. For instance, a person will not steal because it would break the rules of his/her society (i.e. directives or laws against perjury, theft and murder). In contrast, the Aristotelian view promotes a perspective that one is to engage in virtuous behavior or to act according to the accepted precepts of society (i.e. acclaimed concepts of honesty, loyalty, courage). Here we have a view in which one engages in appropriate moral behavior without necessarily having an emphasis or concern for the moral reasoning behind the act. For example, a person will not steal because it is not honest. In other words, we have the Kantian perspective that emphasizes moral reason possibly without moral behavior and the Aristotelian view that emphasizes moral behavior possibly without moral reasoning.

Figure 1. An illustration of a synthesis perspective.

Choice Theory/Reality Therapy

Choice Theory as developed and refined by William Glasser (1965/1984/1998) explains the psychological and physiological behavior of human beings. Reality Therapy is the methodological approach by which we educate clients within the therapeutic relationship to understand that they have a choice in all aspects of their behavior. Choice Theory/Reality Therapy accepts the concept that behavior is chosen and is internally motivated; by contrast, traditional forms of psychology acquiesce that behavior is externally motivated by stimulus-response theory. In Choice Theory/Reality Therapy, all behavior is done to satisfy the individual’s own needs. Glasser prioritizes the absolute needs of a person: survival, fun, freedom, belonging and power (emphasis mine). Internal conflict arises when we see that our behavior interferes with how we want things to be. This behavior, what Glasser calls “total behavior,” includes thinking, feeling, acting and the body’s physiological reaction to that behavior (1984, p. 46). Glasser places significant emphasis on the concept of responsibility. In that individuals are always responsible for their choices and for their behavior. It is the acceptance of this personal responsibility by the client that promotes the concept of good mental health. In the therapeutic relationship emphasis is placed on the present, assisting the client to look at his/her current behavior; minimal time is spent on the past or in dealing with the individual’s feelings and attitudes. The client is assisted in viewing the present situation; here the clients can obtain an understanding of how their behavior or a change in their actions will enable them to satisfy their needs. Simultaneously, in the best case scenario, the client will satisfy his/her “needs” without interfering with others in their “needs” meeting behavior. As Glasser expresses it, responsibility is “the ability to fulfill one’s needs, and to do so in a way that does not deprive others of the ability to fulfill their needs” (1965, p. 13).

Glasser’s View of Morality

Moral education does not appear to be a concern in the writings of Glasser. However, moral behavior and value judgments are considered a significant point in Glasser’s work. The direct subject of moral behavior is minimally mentioned (1969, pp. 186-192). However, there is a strong emphasis throughout his work on moral behavior because clients are encouraged to evaluate the appropriateness of their own behavior. The client looks at the destructiveness or constructiveness of his/her behavior in the totality of his/her present life. What is interesting is the emphasis on present behavior in contrast to past behavior. It is accepted in Choice Theory/Reality Therapy that the clients can do nothing about what they did in the past; they are to accept that what they did is the best they could have done at that moment. Nevertheless, they are still to review for themselves the appropriateness of their behavior, to judge for themselves how they got what they wanted and whether it was done without having inflicted any harm on themselves or others. Glasser’s position on moral behavior is expressed as the implementation of “matching our actions to our words” (1969, p. 186). Glasser
has written that societal standards are based on morality and therefore the client must deal with the issue of rightness and wrongness of his/her behavior. If these values are not dealt with then the client will not be able to perceive the reality of his/her current behavior and how ineffective it is compared to appropriate behavior. According to Glasser, counselors are to assist their clients by confronting them concerning "their total behavior, and get them to judge the quality of what they are doing" (1976, p.99). At this level, it appears that Glasser's work deals primarily with Kantian (deontological) theories of the first order in that much of his published work on morality has been done with students dealing with "lying, cheating, stealing and blackmail" (1969, p. 189). It is apparent that Glasser's perception of morality is as an integrated part of life. The clients' "moral behavior can be presented as a part of life rather than as dogma" (p. 186). As human beings we endure conflict in aspects of our own and others' behavior. Because of this we have established systems of ethics to resolve conflict and regulate our moral behavior. In this we find ways to fulfill our own needs without negating others' attempts to fulfill their own needs. The problem arises when our needs interfere with others in their pursuit to engage in appropriate moral behavior. It is at this point, as Glasser states, 'that we really live in two worlds, the world of pretense, where we spout the moral values, and the world of reality, where we pay as little attention to them as possible" (p. 190). He has expressed that no moral position will work for the individual who is in a true moral dilemma. As Glasser states, "the test of a true conflict is that we can make a good moral argument for either side" (1984, p. 155). What makes us human is that we have the ability to deal with moral issues, to make value judgments, and take responsibility for our behavior. Because of this, we have an understanding of how to relate to others and be a part of society.

As Glasser states, "morality is an attempt to tell all people that ... they should believe certain standard things for their own good and the good of everyone" (1981, p. 108). According to Glasser, traditional forms of therapy do not hold the individual responsible for his/her behavior, that it is mental illness that is the cause of the behavior. Since Choice Theory/Reality Therapy rejects the concept of mental illness, the client is always responsible for the behavior. In this context, Choice Theory/Reality Therapy emphasizes the morality of behavior. When the client is held responsible for the behavior, the issue of morality can not be avoided; as Glasser states, this "solidifies the involvement" of the client into dealing with the behavior (1976, p. 94). The role of the counselor is to get the client to acknowledge the moral perspective, to deal with the issue of right and wrong, and then to assist the client in making the choices that reflect living by those standards. That is, Glasser believes that it is easier for a person to change his/her behavior than to change his/her thinking. Therefore, if a person changes behavior, then the thinking will follow. This appears to be an Aristotelian (aretalogical) emphasis of behavior over thought. It appears that there is both a Kantian and Aristotelian perspective already synthesized into Choice Theory/Reality Therapy. I speculate that Glasser would agree that the action (moral behavior), thought (moral reasoning), the feelings that accompany them and the physiological response are all a part of the one total behavior.

Discussion

A relationship between Choice Theory/Reality Therapy and Keat's synthesis of Kantian and Aristotelian perspectives is evident. Such a relationship can be utilized for the development of a pedagogy for moral education. The prime example is that both promote the concept that one's moral behavior must match one's moral reasoning. Another connection is that both promote or accept the human needs or ontological assumptions of freedom, belonging and power (understanding or mastery of knowledge). All that is missing in Keat's work in relation to Glasser's work is the concept of fun. I speculate that further investigation into this relationship might prove to be beneficial to the body of work in Choice Theory/Reality Therapy and moral education. There has been a minimal amount of empirical work concerning moral behavior and Choice Theory/Reality Therapy. In the last ten years there has been only one article in the Journal of Reality Therapy directly related to morality or moral behavior (Saviola, 1997). Of the ninety-seven dissertations produced between 1970 to 1995 concerning Choice Theory/Reality Therapy, only one addressed the issue of moral responsibility (Franklin, 1993, and Barry, 1996). The doctoral dissertation by Caraher was completed in 1974 and was a comparison of determinism and moral responsibility in the work of Glasser, Calvin and Freud (as cited in Franklin). The amount and level of empirical research in the area of Choice Theory/Reality Therapy has been a concern to those who practice this psychotherapeutic approach (Sansone, 1998). A continuation of this investigation could be a useful (and even fun) place to begin extensive empirical research.

References


Choice Theory and Human Happiness

James W. Skeen

Abstract: Human Happiness is the epistemic first principle of William Glasser’s Choice Theory. The advice and teachings found in Choice Theory are helpful, as far as they go, but they give an incomplete picture of all that is needed for full human happiness.

When Glasser’s view of human nature is placed alongside Aristotle’s, it is Aristotle’s who is more accurate and complete. Although there seems to be much in common between the two views, Aristotle’s is the more liberating and reasoned. It is hoped that through exposure to the Aristotelian way of thinking about human nature, Choice Theory proponents can expand their view of human nature to include the intellectual-spiritual dimension held in high esteem by Aristotle but mentioned not at all by Glasser in Choice Theory.

When William Glasser teaches that human behavior is internally motivated by impulses that are rooted in human genetic structure and that human happiness is largely dependent on how well the impulses are managed, he is making a metaphysical statement about human reality. Briefly, to make a metaphysical statement about something is to say something about what something is, about what it means to be a representative of some thing. It is, in essence, to make a statement about the reality of something. Glasser teaches that humankind has a determinate structure that constitutes its metaphysical reality. Successful living, therefore, requires both a knowledge of what this structure is and an understanding of how to best manage the expression of this structure. The knowledge of what this structure is represents human need for theoretical and scientific contribution. An understanding of how to best manage the expression of this structure represents human need for ethical and political contribution.

Glasser calls his view of human metaphysical structure Choice Theory. Choice Theory states that human behavior is motivated by five genetic impulses. These genetic impulses are called: survival, love-belonging, power, freedom, and fun. These impulses are internally generated by humankind’s genetic makeup. They push from within for outward expression. And, also importantly, all of humankind’s cognitive and perceptual capacities are geared to the successful expression of these impulses. Because humans need to express these impulses in order to live and feel “good”, Glasser calls them needs. We are essentially, then, natural substances whose essential nature it is to think, act, and feel in order that these impulses, or “needs,” find expression.

The nature of these impulses require human social interaction. Humans are by nature social. This fact rules out private worlds of value. Even in the most self-centered of lives others must be considered. No one is capable of doing whatever he or she wants to do. Other creatures (human and non human) and the natural law of cause-and-effect will not allow total disregard for the impulses of others. There must be some cooperation. Choice Theory, therefore, calls for responsible, balanced, and effective impulse expression (or as Glasser calls it—“need fulfillment”). Basic impulse expression is behavior. Behavior that is responsible allows for the expression of one or more of an individual’s basic impulses without hindering anyone else from meeting his or her basic impulses, or hindering the individual’s own future attempts at meeting his or her own basic impulses, or hindering the individual’s own future attempts at meeting his or her own basic impulses. Behavior is balanced if all five impulses are given enough attention, planning, and impulse-directed behavior that the individual is basically satisfied, contributing member of the society in which he or she lives. And finally, behavior is effective if it encourages balanced present and future impulse-filling behaviors.

The kind of cooperation called for by Choice Theory is the responsible, balanced, effective impulse-managing kind. When this kind of impulse management is directed toward individual action it is call ethics. When it is directed toward social environment it is called politics. The main focus of ethics is to discover, teach, and implement how individuals can be most responsible, balanced, and effective in their impulse management. The main focus of politics is to discover, teach, and implement how those in the decision-making role can best encourage responsible, balanced, and effective impulse management on the part of those in the social environment they have influence toward. Politics of this sort is found in a family household as well as in the halls of national government.

My short summary of the metaphysics of Glasser’s Choice Theory requires attention to one more area of thought. Glasser stated in his book Choice Theory (p. 22) that the entire book was ultimately about happiness. Happiness is his epistemic first principle. His intellectual starting point for further thought. For Glasser, human happiness is found in human relationships. Human relationships that are characterized by cooperatively responsible, cooperatively balanced, and cooperatively effective management of the survival, love-belonging, power, freedom, and fun impulses. And when this type of impulse management exists, individuals feel satisfied, they feel good, pleasant – they feel happy. Happiness for Glasser appears to be a breed of psychological contentment. It is not a crass, low-minded want-satisfaction schema, where saint and criminal can be equally satisfied, but a schema in which one’s individual
wants are judged by a responsible, balanced, and effective impulse-management standard. This standard functions both as a limiter on irresponsible, unbalanced, and ineffective behaviors as well as an objective target for the formation of responsible, balanced, and effective impulse managing desires.

I think Glasser’s metaphysical account of human nature is incomplete. Glasser sees humans as basically animals, quite like all other animals in world. All animals seem to have the same five genetic impulses as humans. What sets humans apart is their cognitive capacity and the seeming strength of these basic psychological impulses. The sole function of human cognitive capacity is to manage the more complicated strength configuration of the five genetic impulses (Glasser, 1984).

I will now use Aristotelian psychology and metaphysics to improve Choice Theory’s view of human nature. Robinson (1989) says this about Aristotle’s psychology: “Aristotle’s psychology is in the main voluntaristic, which is compatible with his ethical and political theories. It is a self-actualizing psychology, though more rigorous and reasoned than the latter day ‘humanistic’ versions. (p. 109)” It is this rigorousness and reasoning that I want to bring to Choice Theory. Aristotle’s language is about fulfilling human potentialities and capacities. Glasser’s language is about need fulfillment. Glasser’s language tends to limit human thinking to calculating ways of satisfying the basic animalistic (needs that are shared in kind with other animals) impulses, how-be-it responsible ways. It seems to be quite confining. Aristotle’s language, in my opinion, is more liberating and enlightening. To Aristotle, happiness is much more about fulfilling human potentialities in an excellent way than it is about psychological want or need satisfaction.

When Aristotle talks about happiness he is not talking about the mere psychological satisfaction that comes when we get what we want. He is talking about human flourishing, a thriving that is based on moral and intellectual excellence. This flourishing is first an objective target based on understanding. As our desires are trained and habituated toward the excellent by voluntary action, they tend to generate happy lives. Lives that involve “activity that is intelligent, fair, sober, enterprising action in and upon a material and toward the excellent by voluntary action, they tend to generate happy lives. Lives that involve “activity that is intelligent, fair, sober, enterprising action in and upon a material and social environment” (Brodie, 1991, p. 51). Aristotle teaches that we need four things to be truly and fully happy: 1) the moral virtues related to social relations, 2) the intellectual-spiritual virtue of contemplation, 3) sufficient wealth that allows us to meet the needs related to food, clothing, and housing, and 4) good fortune that frees us from disease and debilitating accidents (Reeve, 1995). Choice Theory acknowledges the need for #1, #3, and #4, but not #2. For Aristotle, to leave #2 out of one’s reasoning is to make a grave mistake. “A life untouched by contemplation is defective in a way that matters, however good in other ways” (Brodie, 1991, p. 377).

To the modern student of psychology, the high value that Aristotle places on contemplation must seem shocking. Isn’t Aristotle the one who insisted against his teacher, Plato, that human reasoning about human happiness (flourishing) must be grounded in concrete human experience (Tracy, 1969). If he was, then what is he doing with this contemplation stuff? As I said before, Aristotle believed that human flourishing or happiness is accomplished as one develops human potentialities or capacities into their excellent expressions. Through his studies and observations he saw something in humans that defied natural explanation, something “divine”. By Aristotle’s reasoning, true and complete happiness comes as humans honor and live as much as possible according to what is highest and best in them. This is the capacity to know higher and greater things than themselves. “We...must, so far as we can, make ourselves immortal, and strain every nerve to live in accordance with the best thing in us, for even if it be small in bulk, much more does it in power and worth surpass everything.”

Aristotle says some pretty incredible things, things that might just be called religious in nature. Brodie (1991) concludes this after studying Aristotle: “Aristotle, however, has emerged as surprisingly unhumanistic...his ethics has, unquestionably, a religious dimension, though it lacks the characteristics which humanism most likely finds objectionable (p. 408).” Space does not allow me to quote and explain all the passages that relate to this “divine” metaphysical element in human makeup, but one particular passage is really quite incredible, if not inspiring. A passage that one might expect to come from the pen of St. Augustine or St. Thomas Aquinas, or some other great theologian. The passage is in Eudemian Ethics, Book 8, 1249 b6-b25: “So it is needful, as in other cases, to live by reference to the governing thing, and by reference to the state and activity of what governs, as a slave to the rule of the master and each thing to its appropriate governing principle. But since a human being, also, is by nature composed of a thing that governs and a thing that is governed, each too should live by reference to its own governing principle in one way, and health in another; for the first is for the sake of the second. Thus it is with the speculative {part}. For the god is a governor not in a prescriptive fashion, but it is that for which practical wisdom prescribes (but that for which is or two sorts—they have been distinguished elsewhere—since the god is in need of nothing). So if some choice and possession of natural goods—either goods of the body or money or of friends or of other goods—will most produce the speculation of the god, that is the best, and that is the finest limit; but whatever, whether through deficiency or excess, hinders the service and speculation of the god, is bad. Thus it is for the soul, and this is the best limit for the soul to be aware as little as possible of the non-rational part of the soul as such. But let what has been said be enough on the limit of nobility, and what the goal is of things good without qualification.”

Humans have the intellectual and spiritual capacity to think about things beyond themselves. While these contemplative subjects include god, they also include “the eternal patterns of the universe, abstract mathematics, and nonmathematisable forms of order and beauty found in plants and animals (Brodie, 1991, p. 400).” And maybe even political matters which are designed to increase the ability and opportunities for contemplation by the people within a decision-makers sphere of influence (Tuozzo, 1995). Aristotle said this Parts
of Animals 645a15-25 (Yack, 1993, p 108): “Every realm of nature is marvelous...we should venture on the study of every kind of animal without distaste; for each and all will reveal to us something natural and something beautiful.” Aristotle clearly thinks that a life that focuses only on social interaction is devoid of true blessedness, and can be happy only in secondary sense. Aristide Tessitore (1996) points out that much of Aristotle’s Nicomachian Ethics is designed to show that even the social, moral virtues at their best are deficient in their ability to give us a pure and lasting happiness. We need something beyond human relationships. We need to exercise our intellectual-spiritual capacities toward god and the universe around us that our happiness might be perfected (although still fragile, see Nussbaum, 1986). Unlike other philosophers, Plato included (Tessitore, 1996), Aristotle does not look down on the social, moral virtues, but raises them to a place of importance in the overall picture of human well-being. Without the moral virtues, the capacity for full contemplation is diminished. Without the calming and quieting effect that the virtues have on our passions and actions, there can be no real, soul inspiring, soul purifying contemplation (Tuozzo, 1995). For true contemplation has a reciprocal relationship with the social virtues. “Our love of [contemplation] refers to a rational activity which ‘rules’ only by being loved and sought, whereas the other virtues of character refer to practical wisdom, which most noticeably rules by prescription (Brodie, 1991, p. 415).”

Socrates taught that the best life is that which desires the least. The best man is aloof to the world around him, self-sufficient in his own righteousness (Adler, 1991; Traheren, 1960, p. 19). Aristotle did not believe this. As long as the highest and best things were valued most, each object receiving its appropriate praise and attention, pleasure was a good. An excellent expression of this philosophy does not come from Aristotle but one of my favorite philosophical-inspirations writers, Thomas Traherne (1637-1647 AD). “Felicity is a thing coveted of all. The whole world is taken with the beauty of it: and he is not man, but a stock or stone that does not desire it. Nevertheless great offence hath been done by the philosophers and scandal given, through their blindness, many of them, in making Felicity to consist in negatives. They tell us it doth not consist in riches, it doth not consist in honors, it doth not consist in pleasures. Wherein then, saith a miserable man, doth it consist? Why in contentment, in self-sufficiency, in virtues, in the right government of our passions etc. Were it not better to show the amiableness of virtue consisteth in this, that by it all happiness is either attained or enjoyed. Contentment and rest ariseth from a full perception of infinite treasures. So that whosoever will profit in the mystery of Felicity, must see the objects of his happiness, and the manner how they are to be enjoyed, and discern also the powers of his soul by which he is to enjoy them, and perhaps, the rules that shall guide him in the way of enjoyment. All which you have here, God, the world, yourself, all things in time and eternity being the objects of your Felicity, God the Giver, and you the receiver (1960, p. 105-106).”

Traherne captures the spirit of the kind of contemplation that increases well-being. This is what Aristotle is talking about. Such a contemplative attitude is fed by knowledge. A knowledge gained through observation and study. “Knowledge is that which does illuminate the soul, kindle love, excite our care, inspire the mind with joy, inform the will, enlarge the heart, regulate the passions, unite all the powers of the soul to their objects, see their beauty, understand their goodness, discern our interest in them, form our apprehensions of them, consider and enjoy their excellences (Traheren, 1968, p. 39).” This is no far out theoretical speculation detached from the concrete. Aristotle was in large part a realist. “The good life must at least be in accord with the nature of things (Bosley, 1991, p.252).” He saw that to remove oneself from the constraints of the human world was hubris. But despite the call for an empirical basis to theorizing he still calls us to a sort of “holy” contemplation. A contemplation that is willing to let nature and god be as they are and to appreciate the functional purpose found in all things. Aristotle wants us to appreciate and value the world we have been given. To focus only on human relationships (Choice Theory psychological needs) and the concerns of the body (Choice Theory survival needs) is to miss out on all the good that god wants us to experience. Aristotle deems such a life inferior, and that is why he calls us to “holy” contemplation.

If Aristotle were to read Choice Theory, I think that he would find it helpful as far as it goes, but in the end deficient in some very important ways. One, he would find the moral account inadequate. Second, he would find the intellectual-spiritual dimension of human nature totally missing. The result of these deficiencies, in his opinion, would be a flawed type of happiness, a flawed type of human life. “So if the intellect is divine compared with man, the life of the intellect must be divine compared with the life of a human being. And we ought not to listen to those who warn us that ‘man should think the thoughts of man’, or ‘mortal thoughts fit mortal minds’; but we ought, so far as in us lies, to put on immortality, and do all that we can do to live in conformity with the highest that is in us; for even if it is small in bulk, in power and preciousness it far excels all the rest. Indeed it would seem that this is the true self of the individual, since it is the authoritative and better part of him; so it would
be an odd thing if a man chose to live someone else’s life instead of his own. Moreover, what we said above will apply here too: that what is best and most pleasant for any given creature is that which is proper to it. Therefore, for man, too, the best and most pleasant life is the life of the intellect, since the intellect is the fullest sense the man. So this life will also be the happiest.”

Granted, one could import philosophy or theology from elsewhere and tie it in with Choice Theory and come up with the missing two elements, like others have done, but that shows that Choice Theory itself, as presently formulated, is deficient. To complete the theory, it needs to expand its vision of the moral dimension of human nature and add a vision of the intellectual-spiritual dimension of human nature. It is my contention that Aristotelian moral philosophy can fit quite nicely with what Choice Theory has already said about moral issues and that Aristotelian psychology and metaphysics can supply an intellectual-spiritual dimension that is general enough to allow for individual choice in religious-spiritual matters. I agree that Choice Theory should not endorse any one religion or spiritual way of expressing this particular human capacity, that is a private matter, but it is both inadequate and misleading to not include some statement about this dimension of human nature. A faithful Aristotelian would point out that a book whose ultimate goal is human happiness falls short of its ability to guide people to human flourishing if it fails to give a complete metaphysical description of human nature. Choice Theory falls short in this respect. Therefore, its advice concerning happiness is flawed.

References
Our Thoughts, Attitudes and Actions: Are they Positive Choices or Poor Ones?

Thomas S. Parish

Abstract: Are our choices bringing us closer to others, or are they actually causing us to move further apart? This paper seeks to show how the use of anti locutions, avoidance, exclusion, and even violence all serve only to separate ourselves from others, even friends and loved ones, and must be stopped if we are ever going to harmoniously exist together. Furthermore, besides ending the negative and hostile things that we do, we must also make a commitment to ourselves that we replace these types of thoughts, attitudes and actions with more positive choices.

In Glasser’s (1998) book, Choice Theory, one thing becomes quite clear, i.e., that life is the search for alternatives, but the ones that are chosen aren’t always the right ones. Yes, life is one long series of choices, and humans probably make more choices because they actually choose their actions, attitudes, and thoughts more so than any other creature on earth. That appears to be where we get into trouble. More specifically, if individuals choose positive thoughts, attitudes, and actions they will more likely “connect” or “bond” with others, which is particularly desirable if we need or want such ties. Unfortunately, however, sometimes we choose to engage in negative thoughts, attitudes, and actions that only manage to “disconnect” us from others.

According to Allport (1985), such disconnections may actually occur in stages...

Stage 1 begins when individuals engage in anti locutions, where we use negative words to describe someone or some group, and in so doing, effectively alienate him/her/them. An old saying taught to most of us when we were younger was that “Sticks and stones might break our bones, but names would never hurt us.” Well, in actuality, nothing could be further from the truth. What should be said instead, and taught to everyone—including our children, is that “Sticks and stones may break our bones, but names will always hurt us”...and their effects may be longer lasting than any hurt ever experienced from a stick or a stone. These effects are not limited to children either. In fact, many adults have been deeply affected by a mere slip of the tongue, and consequently that individual who uttered that remark was never forgiven for that verbal indiscretion, even if it was said by a family member or a friend. Such a capacity to endure over time is often due to bad choices on our part in our thinking, emoting, and/or our behaving. Unfortunately, however, our problems can escalate even further. Enter Stage 2.

Stage 2. In this stage we resort to active avoidance of the individual(s) in question. Of course, as we do so we give up any positive interaction with this individual or group, and in so doing, block any chance for the words to heal. Instead, they are generally allowed to fester, and thus foster greater tension between all involved parties.

Stage 3. In this stage we move from just avoiding him/her/them, to actively excluding him/her/them from activities with us, and in so doing, demonstrating our great contempt for him/her/them. If there was any doubt regarding our desire to disconnect from him/her/them, such actions should convey that message clearly, well beyond any reasonable doubt.

Stage 4. Of course, if anti locution, avoidance and active exclusion have not provided the individuals in question with the idea that they have been thoroughly disconnected, then violence could result. This type of violence ranges from assault all the way to murder. Notably, a classic example of this ultimate form of disconnection recently occurred at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado. How could things like this happen? What can we do to stop them? Are these strategies currently being implemented in our nation’s schools? The balance of this paper will be spent trying to answer each of these very important questions!

How could these things happen?

Perhaps it could begin with the utterance of a few hateful words, or possibly the belief or perception that these words (or gestures) were made, even if they weren’t. Any teenager can tell you that fights begin this way all the time. Add alcohol or drugs or unstable minds/personalities to this mix and almost anything is possible.

What can we do to stop them?

Any anti locutions, or negative words, simply cannot be tolerated. As the old saying goes, “If you can’t find something positive to say about someone, then don’t say anything at all.” Said somewhat differently, everyone should be made aware that anti locution pollution will simply not be tolerated. Besides seeking to stop negativeness in all of its forms from the very start, we can also encourage others to replace any negative words or deeds with positive ones. Alfred Wilson, a fellow professor at Kansas State University, has a basic rule that he loves to share with others. Specifically, that whenever we say or do something negative about or toward someone, we must immediately follow it up by describing six different positive traits or things that he/she/they does/do that pleases us. Another strategy that can be used to effectively stop anti locutions is to ALWAYS say something positive about somebody as you hear others
saying disparaging things about him/her. Truly, what the world needs now, more than ever, is love for one another, but this will not happen until we share with others efficient ways to correctly convey it, and/or say it.

Of course, there are many other ways that we can effectively turn things around if we really wish to connect (or reconnect) with others. Forgiveness, for example, is an excellent tool that we can use in order to break negative cycles between us and others. After all, if we can’t find it in our hearts to forgive others, then how can we expect others to forgive us?

Are Strategies Like These Currently Being Implemented in Our Nation’s Schools?

Connecting with others is essential, and it may be most essential that such connectedness occurs in our schools. After all, if students find their subjects interesting, their teachers knowledgeable and caring, and their classmates warm and supportive, it is unlikely that major problems like the Littleton, Colorado massacre will occur because so many strong connections already exist. Unfortunately, however, this is rarely the case in our nation’s schools. For instance, a nearby school district recently adopted a policy that if any child—at any age—strikes a teacher, that child or student would be expelled for one year. Wow! A five year old child could actually have a temper tantrum, or go to hit another student—and hit the teacher instead—and be expelled for a year as a result of this new board-approved school district policy. With little doubt, this particular school district moved into Stages 2 and 3, as described above, and in so doing, cut off all connections with this student, or any other student who would be similarly shunned and excluded from school, and all the good things that should go on there, for an entire year.

Furthermore, this school district in question is currently surveying its graduates in order to determine how well connected the teachers and the schools were with their past students. Ironically, though, the school district is not seeking similar input from the 44% of their students that failed to matriculate. How unfortunate, for their input could reveal some glaring problems that could be addressed by the school district, but does anyone want to know? After all, these students have been disconnected already, and excluded too, so the sentiment seems to be, who needs their input? Until we tell ourselves that we, as teachers, counselors, and/or administrators need that information, and we want our past excluded students to realize that too, only then will everyone beginning to reconnect and the healing process will actually begin in earnest. Perhaps this paper might awaken in some the need for this to occur, and that those who are so moved, will subsequently take appropriate action. Otherwise, the disconnectedness will only further escalate in the future as students find themselves even further removed from a “good education”, which is something that nearly all students who enter school as kindergartners hope to achieve, but many find that by their high school years that this is only an impossible dream.

Closing Thoughts

Kindly remember that only as we help others to realize their dreams will they, in turn, help us to fulfill our dreams too. This thought applies to classroom situations, the home, and beyond. In the words of Theodore Roosevelt, we must all “Do what we can, with what we have, with where we are” (In McWilliams & John-Roger, 1988). For as we do so, everyone should benefit, both now and for years and years to come.

References

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