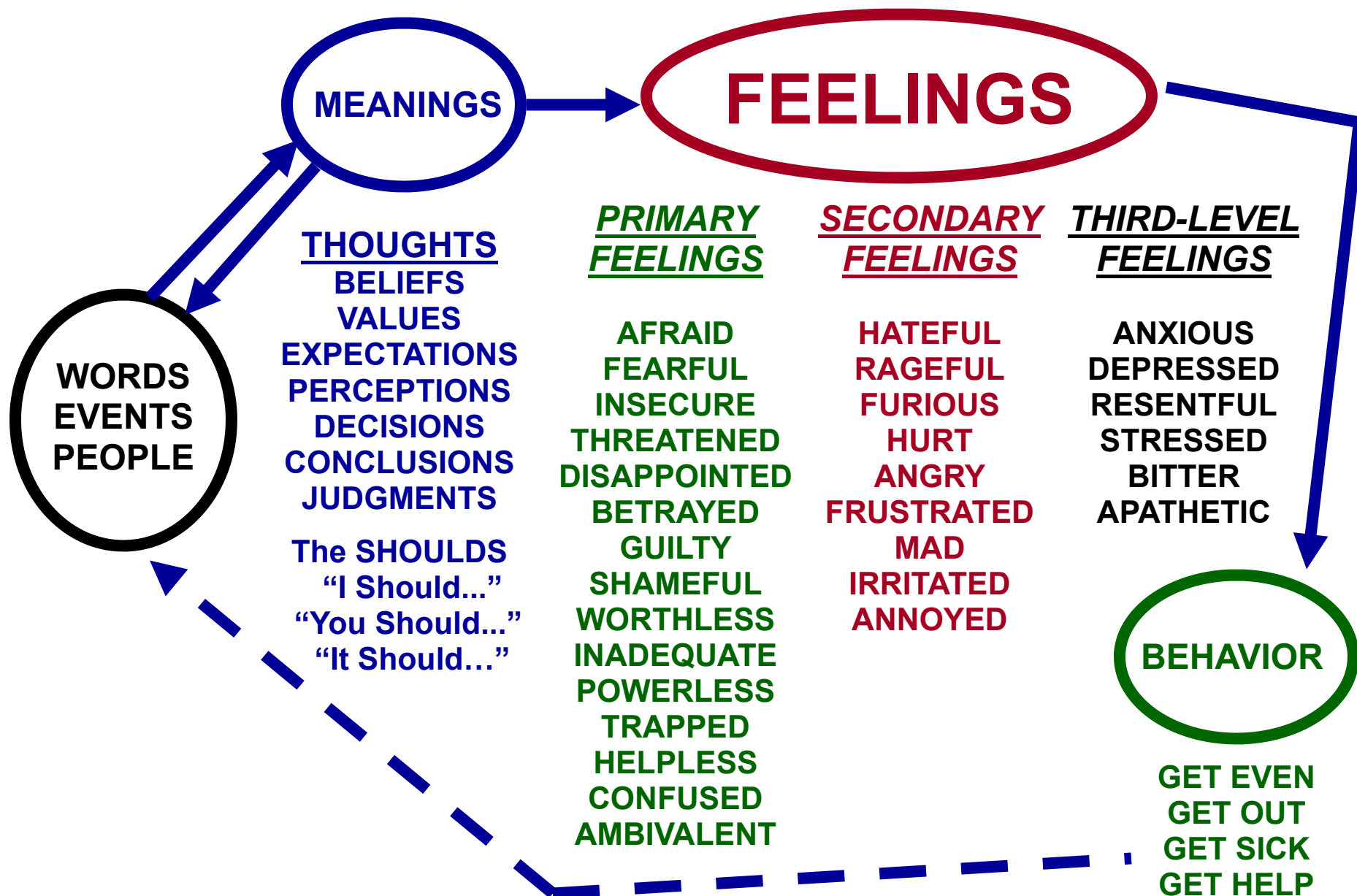


The Event-Meaning-Feeling-Behavior Cycle



WE DO NOT REACT TO WORDS, EVENTS OR PEOPLE, BUT TO THE MEANINGS WE PUT UPON THEM.

In other words, **EVERY** feeling we experience has **NOTHING** to do with what people **SAY** to (or about) us; what they **DO** or **WHO** they **ARE**; but has **ONLY** to do with what **OUR THOUGHTS, BELIEFS, EXPECTATIONS, CONCLUSIONS** and **DECISIONS** are **ABOUT** what they say, do or who they are.

Otherwise, it would be true that people can make us upset. If people can **MAKE** us upset, then who is in control of our anger? (**THEY** would be!) If **THEY** are in control of our anger, then what control do **WE** have? (None! From our perspective, they are in control). The moment we believe that we are not in control of the very core of our being (our feelings), what do we feel? (We feel powerless, from the belief that we are not in control). How did we create that powerlessness? (We believed that someone could make us upset). Where did that idea or belief come from?

Did you ever have your mom or dad say something like this to you when you were a kid? “You make me **SO MAD!**” or “You’ve done it again, you got me upset.” or “It’s all your fault!” These kinds of messages are very common—and, they are **ALL** lies! The truth is, you’ve never upset your folks. Well, you might say, “I did something wrong, and if I didn’t do what I did, then they wouldn’t have gotten upset.” And, I would agree with you. But the question isn’t, “Do parents get mad at their kids when they do something wrong,” it’s “**WHO** is creating their anger?” Why is it important to understand this concept? Not because it will allow us the freedom to rile a whole bunch of people without taking responsibility for it, but because, knowing this will prevent us from becoming entangled in a dysfunctional relationship. It will allow us to increase our willingness to be open and honest about what we are thinking and feeling. It will allow us to listen to what others are saying without taking it personally — it’s called **COMMUNICATION**.

Often, in close relationships, we hesitate (or refuse) to share our thoughts and feelings with our counterparts, because we don’t want to hurt their feelings, or we don’t want them to hurt us when we share our feelings with them. And so, we settle for a dishonest relationship, in the name of preserving the relationship. The problem is that the **PURPOSE** of a relationship is to provide the means by which we increase our sense of bondedness, intimacy, safety & security, worth, satisfaction, empowerment and innocence. Without a communicative relationship all we have is a practical arrangement, not a covenant and not a two-becoming-one. Or worse, what we have is the manufacturing of feelings of fear, disappointment, guilt, shame, powerlessness, and aloneness. Then, we point our fingers at the other person to hold them accountable for how they made us so upset. It’s a vicious cycle that can change when we change our thinking.

My experience tells me that most people do not understand this concept, and worse, we have been taught lies about what a good relationship is. We have been taught how to manipulate, lie, deceive, evade, compensate and blame. Most of us are experts, having born the brunt of our parents’ dysfunction. If you’ve had kind, loving, caring and assertive parents, you have been blessed. They are, unfortunately, the exception to the rule. They refrained from hitting you, did not threaten or condemn you, nor did not molest you. They probably encouraged you, included you, picked you up when you fell down and they probably listened to you when you had something to say or ask. They got mad, but they probably explained to you what they were upset about, and you probably realized, at some point, that they cared. They were angry because they loved you, not because you were so bad.

The Peace-Directed Event-Meaning-Feeling-Behavior Continuum

