

# TAKING CONTROL OF YOUR LIFE

Learn How To Increase  
Your Emotional Quotient (E.Q.)

Myron K. Downing, PhD, MSW, LMFT





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Written by: Myron K. Downing, PhD, MSW, LMFT

Edited by: Margie Downing, Matt Perelstein, Erica Ybarra

Cover Design by: Erica Ybarra

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21st Century Communications  
1039 U Street  
Fresno, California 93721-1478  
[DocD@familycommcenter.org](mailto:DocD@familycommcenter.org)

To order additional copies of *Taking Control of Your Life*, call 1-559-237-8304 or visit our website at [www.familycommcenter.org](http://www.familycommcenter.org)

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“I recommend this book to anyone who wishes to enhance their Emotional Quotient and/or relationships. This book takes you through the necessary steps to developing your right brain.”

*-John Fisher, LCSW-*

“If you interact with children, families or co-workers, this is a must-read book for you! The straight-forward language, clear diagrams and practical exercises give you all the tools you need to making relationships work”

*-Howard Watkins, Attorney*

“ The lessons go beyond the conceptual and teach you the essential tools that will yield the POWER in every area of your life. This book will surely be an asset to the psychotherapist’s library, a fineadjunctive text to therapy courses and most assuredly a brilliant self-help book to anyone.”

*-Loree Little, PhD Clinical Psychologist-*

"This expertly written book explains that we can only change and improve our emotions and behaviors when we completely understand how they operate. Taking Control of Your Life is easy to read, logically organized and can be used for personal growth, classroom instruction or any setting. This book is beneficial for all doctors, therapists and lay people."

*-Wilfred P. Derksen, MD-*

*Fellow American Academy Pediatrics*

The purpose  
of our past is to  
give us an opportunity  
to learn.  
Once that is accomplished it is  
time to move on.

Doc

# *D*edication

First and foremost, I must thank my wife, Margie, who has played an integral part in the editing and proofreading of this book. Without her help, this book would not be a reality. I'd also like to thank her for teaching me not to be afraid of anger, for tolerating me and for allowing me to tease her.

To all of my clients from whom I have learned about the psychology of human behavior. Thank you all for your willingness to be open and to allow me to share your tears and joys.

To Julie Perkins, Ph.D., my first mentor. Thank you for believing in me when I didn't believe in myself.

To Ken Russell, Ph.D., and all the board members of Family Communication Center who have supported me over the years in writing this book. Thank you all for believing in my dream with me.

To Dorothy Winn and Graham Diamond, who guided and supported me in the early stages of preparing this book. To Matt Perelstein, who made time in his busy schedule to help me edit and fine tune the entire book from beginning to end. To Erica Ybarra, who designed the graphics and assisted in the editing, layout and printing preparations. Thank you all for making this book *readable*; I could not have done it without each of you.

To my fellow therapists and friends at the Family Communication Center, thanks for listening and validating my concepts and myself.

To my children, Tracey, David, Darcy, Don, and Darren, thanks for the joys and the heartaches of living and growing together.



# *P*<sub>reface</sub>

The Cognitive-Affective-Behavioral approach to therapy that I use is referred to as Process Therapy. There are two types of processes in human psychology, much like those in human physiology. For example, everybody's heart works the same no matter what country they may be from or what language they speak. This is the heart's universal process. At the same time, each person's heart has differences that make it unique. No two hearts work exactly the same. This is the person's individual process. It is essential to be able to understand the universal process of all hearts before a person can work on an individual's heart.

The same holds true in human psychology. The therapist, as well as the client, needs to know they are designed to operate emotionally, the universal process, before working on the person's personal processes. The result of not understanding your universal process is that change is harder and takes much longer.

How well a person understands their universal process is sometimes called the person's EQ, Emotional Quotient. For those who want to increase their EQ, *TAKING CONTROL OF YOUR LIFE* gives a step by step guide to what they need to know with each chapter providing Lessons To Learn and Exercises To Do.

The goal of this book is to help you understand your universal processes so that you will be able to have power over your personal processes.

Myron K. Downing, PhD, MSW, LMFT





# *F*oreword

This book is my way of repaying my clients for their faith and trust in me. Your willingness to be open with me and share your deepest secrets is one of the most precious gifts that any human could receive. In this book I have tried to respond in kind by being open and vulnerable to you.



## *I*ntroduction

I learned to be a therapist by working as an apprentice to Julie Perkins, a clinical psychologist in Portland, Oregon.

At the time, I was working fulltime as a grocery clerk. One day, a man I had never seen before came through my checkout line. Suddenly he broke down and started crying. He blurted out that he had just learned that his 13-year-old daughter was pregnant. I felt helpless and sad for this man. I wanted to do something, but there wasn't anything I could do in this situation. My solution was to become a foster parent and, in this way, perhaps I could help others.

As foster parents, Multnomah County started placing teenage girls in our home. Within a couple of weeks, I knew I had to know a lot more about myself and about the girls or they and I would not survive. It was at this point that I went to Dr. Perkins for help. Her suggestion to me was to join one of her groups to learn about myself and others.

Not having any better solution, I joined her group with a fair amount of skepticism. For the first four months, I sat back and watched, but saw nothing. I had had two years of college, mostly in math and engineering, but nothing prepared me for what I was observing. The people in this group had problems I could not relate to. One was very anxious, to the point he could not hold down a job. Another was very angry and was going through a divorce. Still, another had been molested and was verbally attacking anyone who got close to her, including members of the group. Week after week, I would listen to their stories, but nothing seemed to change.

I was ready to give up on the group idea when my two weeks vacation came due at the sore. I figured this was also a good excuse to take a four-week break from the group. When I returned to the group, I could hardly believe what I was seeing. The young man, who had been so nervous that he could not hold a job, was working and doing well. The molest victim was not dumping on everyone, but putting her anger where it belonged, at her molester. The divorcee was getting on with her life. Suddenly, the Group had my attention. What had happened while I was gone? Had it been happening all along and I was not seeing it? Maybe groups do work in helping people change.

But how? I worked Julie Perkins for the next seven years. She gave me many opportunities to observe she did, but she never tried to explain what caused change in her clients. For me, this was probably the best thing she could have done, for it forced me to create my own explanations for the change processes.

After several years working in groups, and with Julie's encouragement, I returned to college. I gave up being a foster parent, knowing that I had to get an education if I was ever going to be able to do what I had learned to love.

Initially, I experienced a lot of fear at going back to college, but psychology turned out to be easier than expected. Because of my years of experience in real time therapy, I knew what worked and what did not work. My apprenticeship with Julie had served me well. When I would sit in a class and hear the professor tell about how one theory of psychology was better than another, I was able to pick and choose what parts of the different theorists concepts worked and what didn't. However, I was still faced with a bewildering array of contradictory theories. In Freudian class, the message was that this is the way to do therapy. In another, I would hear, "It took us a long time to debunk the whole Freudian crap....." Frederick Perls, M.D., Ph.D. Then there were the Behaviorists who believed that feelings were a "black box" that could be ignored, the only important part was what went in, the stimulus and what came out, the response.

As an undergraduate in psychology at Portland State University, I set out to make sense of all these confusing and contradictory concepts. I started by trying to explain what I saw happening in the therapeutic process.

First, I attempted to define mental health in operational terms. Here, I made several basic assumptions:

1. All behaviors are learned, except for the autonomic responses, such as sneezing, eye blinking, and stomach growling.
2. All beliefs, values, expectations and conclusion about ourselves, other people and the world we live in, are learned.
3. What is learned can be unlearned.
4. Psychotherapy is the business of learning and unlearning.

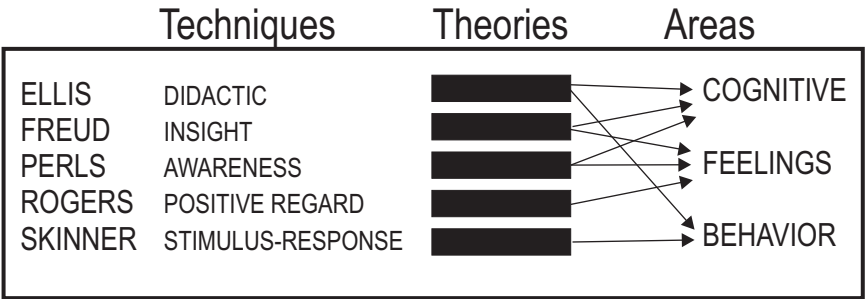
Back then, I was not as sure as I am today what needed to be learned and what needed to be left alone. Most theories of human behavioral

change are derived from the experiences of their author. Sigmond Freud found that when he did certain things his patients seemed to get better. What he did was to integrate the techniques that worked into his personality theory as a way of explaining why his method “worked.” Throughout his life, Freud was constantly modifying and changing his theory depending upon the success or failure of the techniques that he tried. The same can be said for all other theorists such as Ellis, Rogers, Perls, or Skinner.

As I sat in class and listened to all these theories, I was left with the impression that each of these men must be working on different species of human beings. Each man claimed success, claimed that they could prove that people have been helped to change their behavior through the application of their theory.

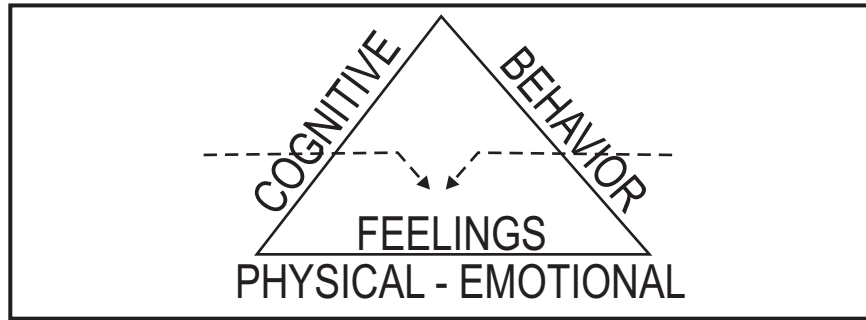
Back then, and still believe, that there had to be a universal process because I could no accept the concept that there are different species of humans. As a result, I took a closer look at the areas that each of these theorists were working with and where they were successful in getting change in their patients.

Freud and Ellis, for the most part, dealt with the areas of cognition, and insight therapy. They presented the patient with new educational material and ways of thinking about their problems. Ellis also believed in giving the patient “home work” as a way of changing their behaviors. Rogers and Perls concentrated more with the patient’s emotions and feelings and the patient’s awareness of feelings. Rogers viewed man as self-actualizing when placed in an environment where they felt safe. Skinner dealt with the person’s behaviors. He was not concerned with feelings or cognition, which he believed he had no control over. For him, destructive behaviors were acquired though havit and poor conditioning and all that was needed was proper conditioning. The following diagrams helped me to clarify the concepts upon which I have based this book.



As I studied the diagram, what emerged for me was that there are three basic areas from which man can be therapeutically reached:

1. Cognitive, (thinking both in words and in pictures)
2. Behavior, and
3. Feelings, both physical and emotional.



This now suggested to me an operational definition of Good Mental Health:

1. The ability to know what I feel when I feel it, (you cannot make decisions about things you are not aware of).
2. The ability to accept what I feel when I feel it, (without judging it).
3. The communication skills to express what I feel in acceptable ways.

With this definition, I can choose any number of therapeutic approaches or theoretical biases that will aid my client in achieving one or all of their goals. I will aid my client in becoming more aware of what he feels, help him in accepting what he feels and teach him acceptable means of expressing his feelings. (Excerpts and diagrams are from my 1974 masters thesis, California State University, Fresno)

*Doc Downing*

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# Chapter One

## KNOWING YOURSELF AND OTHERS

### Nobody Has Ever Made You Angry

"My wife can make me so angry," John complained to me during our counseling session. "She's always doing or saying something just to get to me. She knows exactly which buttons to push. Then, when I finally blow up, she comes back with 'What's the matter, Dear? *You're* the one who always gets so upset. I never get angry.'"

"Two pieces of great news that I can give you," I replied, "are:

1. your wife has *never* made you angry or upset; and
  2. you do not have a single feeling that you did not create.
- Isn't that wonderful?"

*You are in total control of your emotional life!*

A couple brought their two teenagers in for counseling. "They are constantly fighting!" Mom said.

"Is that right?" I asked Jane.

"Yes. My brother can make me angry any time he wants, and I get so mad."

"Is that true that your brother can make you angry any time he wants?" I asked.

"Yes." she responded.

"If he can make you angry any time he wants, then who's got the power? Who is in charge of how you feel?"

Jane looked at me with a frown. She didn't want to hear that. I continued, "If your brother can *make* you angry, then he will always have the power. He can make you mad whenever he wants to. If he can do it to you; then no matter how old you get, there will always be other people

## TAKING CONTROL OF YOUR LIFE

'doing it to you.' In fact, if others are 'doing it to you,' you will be the victim of these people all of your life. The fact is, nobody has ever made you angry or upset. Nobody has ever made you feel irritated, lose your temper, or feel any other feeling as long as you have lived."

*You are in charge of your emotions!*

Feelings or emotions are a result of the beliefs, values, conclusions and expectations you have placed on people or events that happen around you. You do not react to the people, events or words themselves; you react to what they *mean* to you.

If someone leaves you, what does that mean or say about you? What conclusion do you make about yourself, about your world?

Suppose someone says, "You have never done anything worthwhile in your whole life!" Now, no one is so perfect that they can always be wrong. So, what does this statement say about you? What meaning do you put to these words? From what was said, you may conclude "They are right; that means I'm no good." If you decide that you are no good, then you feel sad, depressed and angry at that person and at the world. You feel upset about your predicament, as well as guilty for being on earth with all these "good" people.

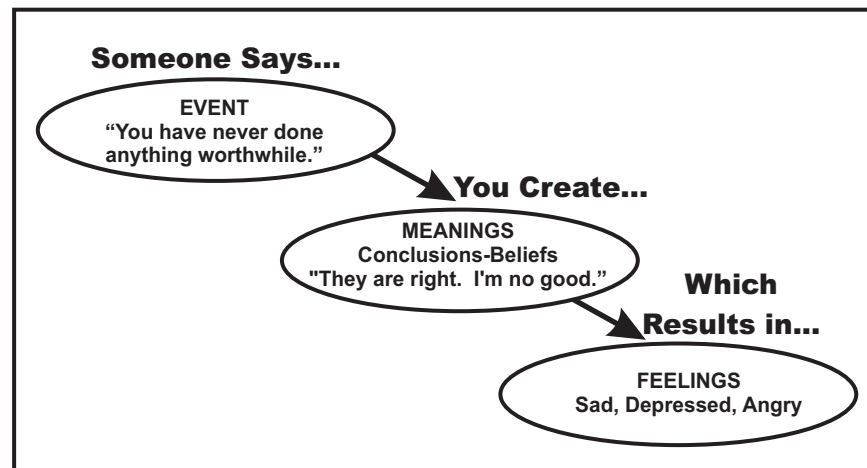


Figure 1.1

It really doesn't matter what the other person does or says. Have you ever heard something like: "You look good today," and then the other person responds with, "What was the matter with me yesterday?" If

both positive and negative statements can be misinterpreted, IMAGINE what you could do to the vast majority of the neutral statements that are said to you daily.

In taking control of your life, you will realize that you are the one who puts meaning to words or events that create your feelings, not anyone else. The best news of all is that once you realize you are the one who creates the meanings, which results in your feelings, then you have the power to *change your feelings*.

### You Need A Good Counselor

If you and I met in a social setting, and sometime during the first few minutes I said to you, "You need a good counselor," what would you hear me saying? That something is wrong with you and that you have some kind of a problem or need help?

Look up these words in the dictionary:  
"you" "need" "a" "good" "counselor"

Did you see anything there about you having a problem or needing some kind of help? So, where did you get that idea? Those meanings are not in the dictionary, and I didn't say anything about you having a problem or needing help. "You need a good counselor," was all I said.

If I didn't say you needed help and it is not in the dictionary, where did those thoughts or ideas come from? It must have come from your thoughts, the meanings that *you* put on those words.

Instead of you putting meanings on those words that say something is wrong with you, couldn't you think that I want to be your friend and that I'm a very good counselor; and that I am asking you a question? You need a good counselor? Or, perhaps I am saying that I am a terrible counselor and don't know what I'm doing. You need a *good* counselor!

*YOU DO NOT REACT TO THE PEOPLE,  
EVENTS OR WORDS THEMSELVES;  
YOU REACT TO WHAT THEY MEAN TO YOU*

There are at least three different meanings you could put to those same words:

- "Something is wrong with you,"
- "Something is wrong with me,"
- "I want to be your friend."

Notice that depending upon the meaning you choose, you create a very different feeling within yourself.

If you are already thinking that something is wrong with you, you would probably feel scared, angry and distrustful. On the other hand, if you choose to think that I want to be your friend, you might feel proud, safe and warm. The meaning you choose to put on the words directly determines what you feel. The dictionary doesn't choose the meanings for you, nor does the person who says the words. *You do.*

I love presenting this idea to teachers. Some teachers believe that you can go to the dictionary and find out what a word *means*. You will never find the *meaning* (intention) of a word in the dictionary. What you will find in the dictionary is the *definition* of the word.

Words have no meanings. People create meanings. "I cannot recommend this person too highly." Is this a positive statement or a negative one? People place their own ideas or thoughts on the words and events that they encounter. The message is in what the listener heard, not necessarily what the speaker intended.

Human beings are the only creation with the power to create words that describe themselves and their environment; (i.e. "this is a chair", "this is a mother"). Once you have named these things, you assign values to each; very good, good, neutral and evil. When you say one thing and do another, we say it is confusing. You then judge your confusion as bad, and in this way, you give yourself the message that you are not OK.

*THE MESSAGE IS IN  
WHAT THE LISTENER HEARS,  
NOT WHAT THE SPEAKER SAYS*

## You Create Words, But In Turn, Those Words Create You

Consciously or unconsciously you choose what things mean to you. Not only do you create the words to name things, but you also create words to evaluate and judge these things, yourself and others. The end result of all this judging is a self concept (self-image) and a world concept that you believe are real. They are your *truth* or your *reality*. However, these are only your beliefs, values and expectations; the meanings to the words you hear and by which you run your life.

Many of your values, beliefs and expectations were programmed or slipped into you without you being aware. Did you notice the first sentence in one of the paragraphs above? "Human beings are the only creation . . ." That's a belief! Did you notice it was being slipped in? Here is another example. "This is a very difficult concept to learn." The expectation is implied that you may not be able to learn it. If you are not aware that it is someone else's conclusion, that it may or may not be true for you, you might not even try to learn the concept and will reject it out of hand. Or, you could assume that the person is talking about their experience with the concept instead of with the concept itself.

At other times, the message may not be so subtle. "You can't do chemistry. It's too hard for you." The less subtle the message, the easier it is to resist. Sometimes, you will be the one who reinforces the negative programming you got from someone else: "I got a bad grade in math. I'm just no good in science." Or, "See? I did it again. What a dumb fool I am."

"There is no God," is just a belief, so is "God loves you." "Human life starts when the baby takes its first breath" is a belief that was held by many churches for hundreds of years. Now, a new belief has come along which states "human life begins when the egg and sperm join."

*YOU CREATE WORDS,  
BUT IN TURN,  
THOSE WORDS CREATE YOU*

In human history, the concept of egg and sperm is a relatively new discovery. You have a belief that "killing children is bad," but in the past some people were told by leaders they trusted that "killing children, so that the volcano doesn't explode and destroy the village, is good."

Whether consciously or unconsciously, whether someone else is doing it to you or you are doing it to yourself; your values, beliefs and expectations become your conclusions and your truths. These truths that you have come to accept and are continuing to accept about yourself and your world become reality—for you. *You create the words that define you.* But then in turn, *the words create you.*

"I'm dumb," "Nothing ever works out for me." These statements could be changed to: "I seem to be a creative, energetic person. I can usually figure out just about any problem that is given to me." Which belief is true for you? Long ago, as the result of some event, incident, or what someone said to you, you started making decisions as to who you are, how you are going to be treated, how you fit into the world, and what kind of a world it is. The sum of all this choosing is labeled as *self-image*, a neutral term. If, however, that *self-image* leans more toward the positive, you call it *self-esteem*. (Note: esteem is positive, as in "my esteemed colleague," "low self-esteem" is an oxymoron.)

Here is something I often hear:

- "I keep gaining weight,"
- "I can't stop gaining weight,"
- "Every time I walk past the kitchen, I gain ten pounds!"

Now, there is a belief that will keep you going back to Weight Watchers! When you use words such as these to define yourself, you come to believe them and once you believe them to be true, you feel powerless to be anything else. However, when you change the words that you use to define yourself, you will find yourself able to change.

- "I keep losing weight."
- "I can't stop losing weight."
- "Any time I get nervous, anxious or bored, I lose my appetite."



When you say these out loud, does your mind sarcastically reply, "yeah, that will be the day?" Often when you try to change your negative or self-limiting thoughts with positive ones, your mind will start arguing with you. The way to get around this is to change just a few words in your new statements.

- "I *seem* to keep losing weight."
- "It *seems* I can't stop losing weight."
- "Any time I get nervous, anxious or bored, I *seem* to lose my appetite."

Using the word "seem" is very important. Something that "seems" to be true is easier for us to accept without there being a lot of evidence. If you find your mind arguing with your affirmation, the conflict within will create even more anxiety and stress. Adding the word "seem" allows your mind to accept the new view of yourself.

*FOR AS A MAN THINKETH IN  
HIS HEART, SO IS HE  
—Proverbs 23:7*

### The Dishes Are In The Sink

Imagine you've been home all day, your mate comes home, looks around the house and says to you, "The dishes are in the sink." Now, what do you hear? "You haven't been doing your job?" "You're lazy?" "Do the dishes?"

Look up those words in the dictionary:

"The" "dishes" "are" "in" "the" "sink"

You will find nothing about doing the dishes or that you are lazy. It doesn't even say that the dishes are dirty; so where did that thought or idea come from? It wasn't stated. The meaning is not in the dictionary.

*The meaning you place on the words is coming from inside your head.*

Couldn't your partner have meant, "Looks like you've had a hard day. Is there something I can do to help? The dishes are in the sink." (Oh, come on now, give him a break. He might have meant that!) Or maybe he was saying, "I bought some new dishes. The dishes are in the sink."

The best-kept secret around is that *you choose what you think*. Once you realize that you are free to choose, you can think anything you choose to think. *It doesn't matter what the person meant*. You still choose what to think and which meaning to choose! This thinking process is something you have been doing since you were born, but you were unaware of it. If you do not understand this critical part of your makeup and how it affects both your emotions and your behaviors, then you will not be able to take control of your life.

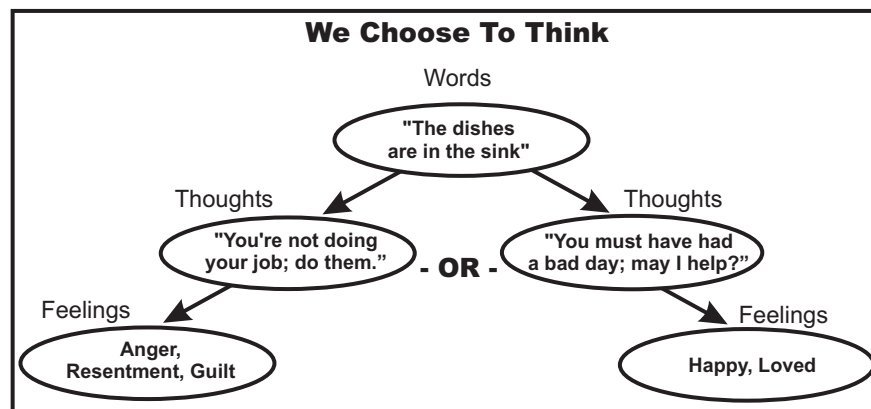


Figure 1.2

Remember earlier in my example, "You need a good counselor?" Your feelings were different depending upon the meaning you chose. Notice that depending on what you choose to think, you create a resulting feeling. Change what you think, and you will change what you feel.

David Burns, in his book *Feeling Good*, illustrates this concept by identifying ten beliefs by which people often live their lives. These beliefs result in feelings such as: depression, powerlessness, guilt, anxiety, fear, low self-image, etc.

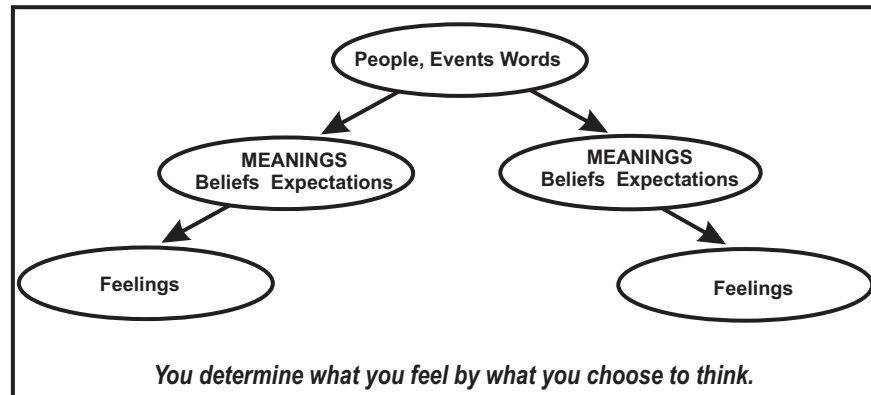


Figure 1.3

### Grandmother's Genuine Pearl Necklace

One of my favorite stories is about a thirteen-year-old girl who was asked by a twelve-year-old neighbor boy to go to a dance, but she didn't want to go. Finally, her mother figured out what the problem was. At thirteen, the girl's chest was as flat as a pancake and she had a belief that the boys would know and she would be embarrassed. She had a belief that it was not OK to be flat chested at thirteen.

However, mothers are wonderful, and they know how to fix things like that. Mom said, "Don't worry! We'll buy you a beautiful pink formal dress and let you wear Grandmother's genuine pearl necklace. Then we'll put cotton in all the right places, and the boys will never know." The girl wasn't sure, but Mother finally managed to talk her into the idea.

The day of the dance came; the girl was dressed in a beautiful pink dress, with the genuine pearls around her neck, and all that cotton stuffed in all the right places. She looked beautiful! The twelve-year-old boy came over to pick her up, and they walked over to the junior high school for the dance.

In less than an hour, the girl came running home in tears, sobbing and crying. "What happened? What happened?" Mom asked anxiously.

"Mother! He asked me, 'Are they real?'"

"Of course they are real," mother responded. "They are Grandmother's *genuine pearls*!"

"Oh!" she exclaimed, and her whole appearance changed!

### D.R.P.D.A., The Universal Experience

I would like you to notice that despite all the choices available in the three illustrations, "You need a good counselor," "The dishes are in the sink," and "Grandmother's genuine pearl necklace," *the person invariably chose the most negative meaning possible*. Isn't that wonderful to know?

*The first reaction or thought you have about something will probably be the most negative thing you can choose to think.*

There's a "scientific" term for that. It's called a D.R.P.D.A. (Dirty Rotten Poo Dee Doo Attitude), which simply means that when you choose to think, 80-90% of the time you will choose to think the most negative thing possible.

If you had a stockbroker who was advising you about your investments, and this guy was wrong 80 to 90% of the time, would you keep the sucker or fire him? Fire him? No way, I'd keep him! Every time he would tell me, "DON'T buy that stock," that's the stock I'd buy, and when he would tell me to buy some other stock, I would ignore his advice. If he's wrong 80 to 90% of the time, all I have to do is the opposite!

You can make your D.R.P.D.A. work for you by recognizing that you will invariably choose the most negative thought possible. This is exciting because now you can choose to think something different. Simply by being aware that your first thought will probably be negative, you can choose to switch it to a more constructive thought. "That person has a problem."

### Thinking→Behavior Connection

Let's go back and look at that girl with the necklace for a moment. Notice that what she chooses to think determines what she feels, but it also determines her *behavior*. When she first chose to think the boy was referring to the cotton in her bra, she felt miserable, rejected, humiliated, and she ran home. However, if she had chosen to think

about Grandmother's genuine pearl necklace when the boy said that to her, she would have felt proud, and validated, and her behavior would have been to choose to stay and enjoy the dance.

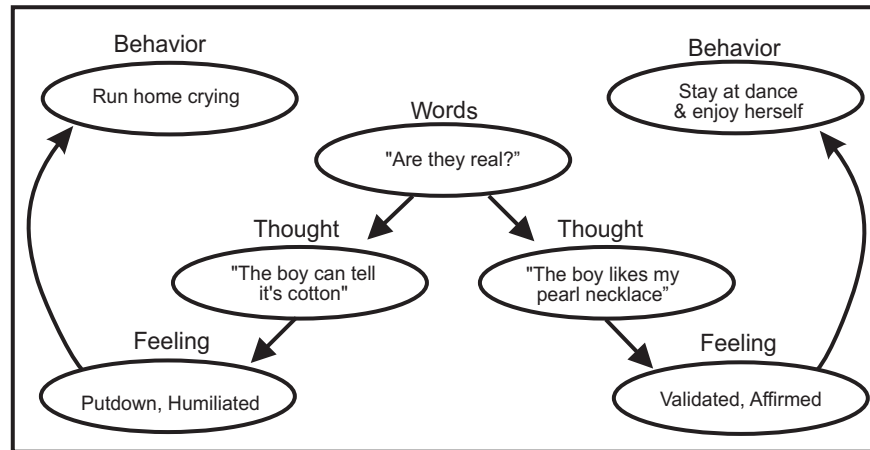


Figure 1.4

I have a belief about that thirteen-year-old girl. I believe that she had made up her mind that the boys could tell that she had stuffed her bra even before she went to the dance. She had a belief, an expectation, that the boys would know and would say something to humiliate her.

Once you decide how something *is*, you will look for evidence to prove that it's true. The girl *knew* that the boys could tell she had cotton stuffed in her bra. She expected to be humiliated, so as soon as she got the opportunity, she found evidence to "prove" that her expectation was correct. In this way, she created her own negative experience. I believe the girl in the above example could have been standing at one end of the cafeteria and someone clear at the other end, standing near an open microphone looking at some flowers, could have said, "Are they real?" And she would have *known* beyond the shadow of a doubt that they were talking about her.

*MEN ARE DISTURBED NOT BY THINGS,  
BUT BY THE VIEW  
THEY TAKE OF THEM  
—Epictetus*

Decisions about how the world is and how you are in that world; weak, powerless, helpless, frightened, dumb, stupid, are made while you are a very young child. You tend to carry them around all of your life unless you somehow learn that you have the freedom to believe what you want to believe. You must be careful about what you choose to believe, because what you believe becomes your *reality*, your *truth*. Having decided what is real, you are not usually willing to change your belief. There is a part of you that needs to be right, *even if it is wrong*. It doesn't have to be this way. Remember D.R.P.D.A.!

There can be many traumatic events in a child's life. A very common one is molestation. In cases of molestation, the feelings the child is left with are conflicting and often overwhelming. Some molestation victims develop an inability to feel close and intimate with other people because they are afraid. Some withdraw from male relationships. Others become promiscuous. Many young victims make the conclusion, "I am a powerless person, and men/women will do things to me against my will. No one will protect me. To survive, I have to let them do whatever they want." Other molest victims may conclude that they have alternate sexual preferences or "It must be something about me that attracts these people to me."

The responses of the molested child are often reflected in their adult decision-making. What may have been true for the child, unfortunately, becomes *truth* for the adult. The resulting victim behaviors are carried into adult life after the beliefs are no longer relevant. The former victim may have a marriage partner who is loving and supportive, but past negative experiences and accompanying beliefs get in the way of her ability to accept positive love.

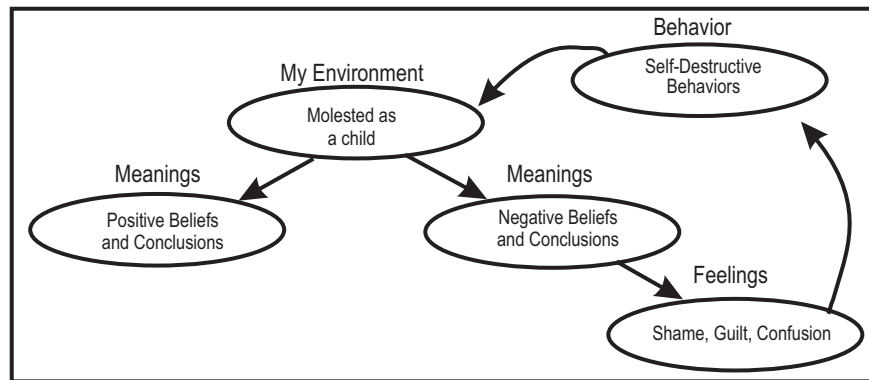


Figure 1.5

Once you make decisions as to how things are, you will actually look for reinforcing evidence to prove that these decisions are true. The beliefs that "I am not smart" or "I am not a capable person" are reinforced long after there is no real evidence to support such a reality. After making a small error, how many times have you heard somebody say, "See, I did it again! See, how dumb I am!" You not only reinforce the negative judgments about yourself; you often reinforce the negative judgments of those around you.

Grandpa use to tell the story of a man who moved to his town. He asked Grandpa, "what kind of people live in this town?"

"What kind of people live in the town you come from?"

The man answered, "They were a nasty lot; selfish, angry and mean people."

"Well," Grandpa responded, "then that's what you will find here."

### See How You Are?

A couple planning to divorce was sitting in my office. The man had been insensitive toward his wife in the past and until now, had not been willing to share his feelings with her. As a result of individual and group therapy, he changed in some major ways. She had trouble believing he now wanted the marriage. She continued to see him as he had been and continued to look for evidence to prove that he had not really changed.

Finally, he tried to tell her how important she was to him and blurted out, "In fifteen years of marriage, I have never seen anyone I would rather be married to than you."

She shot back with, "You mean you have been looking for someone for fifteen years?" She believed that she now had the proof she had been looking for. As you can see, once you have decided how somebody *is*, you will literally bend or twist reality to make it fit what you are expecting. You become blind to all other possibilities.

## Reality Is What You Believe It To Be

This story is about the old lady who complained to all who would listen about her neighbor's wash. "Her sheets are always gray-looking. Look out the window. Her wash is a mess. See how dingy her sheets are." Finally, someone suggested to the old lady that if she were to wash her windows, the neighbor's wash would improve.

You do not react to people, events or words. You react to what things mean to you; to the conclusions (truths) you have made about yourself and your world. You see the world through your windows of meanings, beliefs, values and expectations.

Unfortunately, this concept is not limited to old ladies with dirty windows. You have beliefs, values, and expectations you are not aware of having and you will invariably choose the most negative meanings that you expect.

It is not just what people say that we tend to misinterpret. I can write a sentence and, depending upon your background, your bias and your expectations, you will misread what I have written to fit where you are coming from and what you are expecting. For instance, take the sentence:

Woman without her man is nothing.

What does that sentence say about women? Did you read it as: *a woman is nothing without a man in her life*? If you did, was it your sexist expectations that came out? What the sentence really says is that *a man is nothing unless he has a woman in his life*. Read the sentence again.

Still don't see it? Indeed, your beliefs and expectations are so strong that you will misread what you see, even when it is written in black and white.

*REALITY IS WHAT  
YOU BELIEVE IT TO BE.*



Notice where the extra spaces are:

Woman (space) without her (space) man is nothing.

If you would like to experiment on your friends, ask them what the line "Woman without her man is nothing" says to them. See how many see the obvious. How many will defend their beliefs and expectations by saying you didn't put the punctuation in? You can also write the sentence as:

*Woman  
without  
her  
man  
is  
nothing*

Where do they put the punctuation now?

The concept that you choose what you think can be applied to make you feel either better or worse, to improve your self-image or lower it.

*It doesn't matter what people mean.* You still choose to think and you can choose to think *anything you want*.

For instance, what if the boy in our earlier example actually had pointed to the girl's cotton-filled bra and said, "I know you have cotton in your bra. Yesterday, when we were playing football, you were flat as a board. Today, you look like June, busting out all over." Could she have still chosen to think something positive? Even if there is no doubt about what the person is meaning, can you still choose to think whatever you wish? Why, of course! Depending on how the boy said it, she could have chosen to think, "He is probably wondering why I didn't put cotton in my bra to play football, but I did put cotton in my bra to go to a dance." Or she could have chosen to think, "It's such a pain that we mature thirteen-year-old women have to deal with such immature twelve-year-old boys! Hrumph!" You see, it really doesn't matter what the other person says. You can still choose to think what you wish to think, and therefore feel whatever you wish. Still not convinced? Let me give you one last story.....

## The Way You Look Makes Me Angry

From time to time, I do presentations in high schools. When I get to the part explaining that you can choose to think anything you want, no matter what the other person said, most teenagers just don't believe me. High school kids are convinced that "You make me angry. The way you chew gum makes me angry. The way you look at me makes me angry. My mother makes me angry. Everybody makes me angry!" They believe it is the way you say it, it's the tone of your voice or your body language making them angry. That's when I go into my Anger 101 Routine. I slam the book down. I stomp about yelling, "All right, you guys, I've had it! Every one of you get out a piece of paper and write down every dirty word, every dirty phrase that will make you angry. Do *NOT* write anything on the paper that does not make you angry, or you will flunk this class!" By this time, I am looking and sounding very angry. The tone of my voice and my body language are definitely matching.

The guys love to do this because they get to write down all the dirty words they can only write on bathroom walls. Some of the gals also get into it. (By the way guys, girls write on bathroom walls, too. The only difference is, they tend to spell better!)

After I've given them some time to make their lists of dirty words and phrases, I start with the girls because I know what's going to be the first word on their papers. I grab one of the girl's papers and say in my most stern manner, "Susie, are these the words that make you angry?"

"Yes," she says.

Then I yell, "Susie, you're a bitch!" Believe it or not, the whole room cracks up laughing, including Susie. I continue, "You were supposed to write the words that make you angry and you're laughing. Why aren't you getting angry? You just flunked the class!" I throw her paper down on her desk. Then I go for the guys, and I know what's going to be the first word on their papers. It's the F \_\_\_\_ word.

"Joe, are these the words that make you angry?" I demand.

"Yea, sure."

"Well, f\_\_\_ you, Joe!" I say.

Joe and the rest of the class break into hysterics. I raise my voice louder, "If these words make you angry, then why aren't you getting angry?"

"You didn't mean it," someone usually replies.

"How do you know I didn't mean it? Did I smile? Can you read my mind?"

At this point, I can see the confusion in their eyes. "If these words make you angry, why aren't you getting angry?" I lower my voice, "Class, I have a bet for you. I'll bet you fifty dollars that I can walk onto any high school campus and within a half-hour have some kid who has not been thinking about fighting, into a knockdown, drag-out fistfight with me. Anybody want to bet me fifty bucks that I can't do that?"

At one school, when I made this bet, a tough kid in the back said, "Heck, no! I won't take that bet because I could do that! That's a sucker's bet."

"All right," I continue, "you don't like that bet? I have another bet for you. I'll bet you seventy-five dollars that I won't be able to get *every kid on campus* to fight with me. In fact, most of them will walk on past saying, 'What's that old bald-headed fool doing here, anyway?'"

"If I'm the one who makes you angry, then why can't I make everybody angry? The truth is it's not what I'm saying; it's not even how I say it. It's what you choose to do with it in your head. It's the way you're choosing to think."

I end my session with the high school class by showing them how they can choose to think. This is best illustrated, again, with the F\_\_\_ word, since there are more fights in schools because of the F\_\_\_ word than any other word. I ask the class, "What is F\_\_\_\_? Isn't that sexual intercourse? Can you imagine that under certain circumstances it might be a pleasurable experience?" (Some of them don't have to imagine). "Well then, the next time someone says F\_\_\_ you, you can say, 'Thank you. You have a nice day, too!'"

\* \* \*

*There is nothing that is right or  
wrong, but thinking makes it so.*

—*Macbeth*

\* \* \*

Jean Nelson in her book *Understanding* says it this way:

*You think!* This is the best keep secret of all.

*Understanding* that you think is the key to understanding everything else in life."

"Actually, very few people know that they think. They believe they are the victims of their thoughts rather than the producers of their thoughts...

Thinking is something we do to create our reality, rather than reality being something that is reflected in our thoughts. Thoughts come from the inside out, not from the outside in. . . .

Our emotions are, then, a direct result of what we choose to think. Any form of insecurity, stress, or anxiety is a direct result of believing thoughts are reality rather than products of our thinking ability.

Joe feels inadequate. He believes his inadequacy is real. He doesn't know that it is just a thought. His inadequacy cannot exist unless he thinks it; but because he believes it is real, he bases his behavior on that thought and acts inadequate.

Melissa is depressed. She believes she is depressed because life is overwhelming. Life cannot be overwhelming. Only what she thinks about life makes it feel overwhelming. Taking your negative thoughts seriously simply means you have forgotten that you can think anything you want.

## LESSONS TO LEARN

### LESSON 1:

#### Thoughts On Rejection

Rejection hurts. In fact, we can hurt so much emotionally that we will actually hurt physically.

"It's like someone took a knife and ran it into me. I feel discounted, angry, put down. I feel hurt and mad." Joe sat in my office looking at the floor. His girlfriend had rejected him.

"What kind of things do we reject?" I asked him, "Do we reject valuable, precious, important things, or do we reject garbage?"

"That's easy," he said. "Nobody would reject something that is valuable."

"So, when your girlfriend rejects you, what is she saying about you?"

"That I'm garbage!" he replied.

I thought a few moments. "You know, in one of my previous lives," I said jokingly, "I worked in a fruit shed. There were three kinds of fruit that we processed:

1. the solid fruit just right for packing which would ripen in three or four days,
2. the fruit that was ripe, ready to eat at that moment, but would be rotten in a day or two if we packed it,
3. <or> the kind of fruit which would run through our fingers when we picked it up.

I noticed that the packing shed owner would pay the county disposal unit good money to come by daily, pick up his culls, and haul them to the dump. One day the owner had a bright idea. He drove a couple of miles down the road to a pig farmer. The next day, the pig farmer showed up with his truck and paid the packing shed owner big bucks

for his garbage. You don't reject things that are garbage. *You reject things that you see no value in.* When somebody rejects you, perhaps the problem is that they are too blind to see how *neat* you are; maybe they have an eye problem."

I went on to point out that is not the only reason people reject things; there are others. For thousands of years, people threw away diamonds, seeing them as hard crystals that would shatter if you tried to shape them. Does that mean that diamonds are not valuable? Hardly! Sometimes people reject things because they don't know how to treat them to make them into something beautiful.

Let me suggest two more reasons why people reject things or people. I've noticed that almost every August, one of the large department stores here in town has a big fur coat sale. Outdoors, it's 110 degrees, and there are all those fur coats lined up along the aisles with great prices on them. During one of these sales, I watched women walk right past the fur coats, rejecting every one of them. Does that mean that the fur coats were not valuable? Or was it that the women saw no value in buying a fur coat for themselves in 110 degree weather? If you have a mate who you are really excited about and who is meeting all your needs, you would probably "reject" a second offer. That doesn't mean that the second person is not valuable, it simply means that you don't have a need for two mates.

A young man came to my office who recently learned that he had been adopted as a baby. Up until then, this out-going sixteen-year-old had done well in school and sports. After learning about his adoption his grades began to drop, he was skipping school, and didn't want to participate in sports any more. As we talked, he shared with me that he found out he was adopted right out of the hospital.

"My mother wouldn't even take me home."

The way he saw it, his *real* mother had *rejected* him as a baby. As a result, he now saw himself as having no value.

"Why else would your own mother have rejected you?" he asked.

Instead of answering, I began talking about the Rolls Royce dealership here in town and asked if he had ever been there.

His eyes lit up. "Yea," he said. He was really into classic cars. I

continued, "well, the other day I was there and saw a beautiful silver-colored Rolls Royce. They only wanted about a hundred and twenty thousand dollars for it." We both laughed.

"How about if you and I went out there and looked at it? Would you think that car is valuable?"

"Oh, yes," he answered, "I would love to have a car as valuable as that."

"When it came time to leave the lot," I continued, "would you tell the salesman that you were going to buy the car?"

"Why no!" he responded quickly.

"You wouldn't? You would *reject* it?" I asked, "Isn't the car valuable?"

"Yea, but I can't afford it," he said in dismay.

I thought for a moment. "You know, maybe your mother saw you the same way. Maybe the reason she 'rejected' you wasn't because you weren't valuable, but because you were *so very valuable*, and she believed she couldn't afford you or thought she couldn't give you all the things that you *needed and deserved*." His expression changed. By accepting a different meaning for his 'rejection,' his feelings changed.

Yes, rejection can come in a lot of different forms and can mean a lot of different things, but it never means that what is rejected is valueless or garbage. It could mean:

1. the rejecting person doesn't see the value, they've got an eye problem;
  2. the rejecting person doesn't know what to do with you or how to take care of you;
  3. the rejecting person already has someone and would probably get into trouble if he/she brought home another;
  4. or, maybe you are so valuable that the rejecting person doesn't think that he/she deserves you or could afford you.
- Rejection* can mean a lot of things, but it never says anything about you. It just says something about the

person doing the rejecting.

## LESSON 2:

### Respecting The Reality Of Others

If I were to hold up a rock and ask someone to tell me about rocks, they might tell me that they saw, "a hard, round, gray object." Someone else might describe a time when they were hit by a rock. Yet another might share an experience of rock climbing or collecting rocks as a child. What is the truth about rocks? Are any of these realities wrong? No, just different. Depending upon my life experiences, I see only what is true for me. This is my reality.

I met a fellow in Portland, Oregon who invited me to his home to have supper with him and his wife. As we came in the front door, there was a large round boulder about a foot across. Without saying a word, he bent down and gave the boulder a shove. It went bump, bump, bump across the floor. He saw my questioning look and said, "That's how I tell my wife I love her!" Then he told me this story. On one of their first dates, they had gone to the mountains where he was trying to tell her how much he loved her. "I would move mountains for you," he claimed. She jokingly replied, "How about just moving that rock, instead? I'm not sure what I would do with a whole mountain." He replied, "To prove my love, I will move it every day of my life!"

For one person, the sight of the rock may evoke fear; for another, love; for still another, indifference. This same concept applies to every event that has ever happened to you, whether it is a divorce, a graduation, a car accident, molestation or a marriage. Did you ever wonder why some women cry at weddings? Could it be they are remembering and crying over disappointments in their own marriages?

Clients often tell me some story and end with, "Is it all right to feel \_\_\_\_\_ about it? What is the *right* way to feel? Are my feelings right or wrong?"

*FEELINGS AREN'T RIGHT OR WRONG,  
GOOD OR BAD, THEY JUST ARE*



### LESSON 3:

#### Feelings Need To Be Accepted; Acceptance Doesn't Mean Approval

Each one of us has our own reality, one we have created out of our beliefs, values, expectations and conclusions about ourselves and others. You can choose to judge these differences between realities as interesting rather than wrong. If we all saw rocks in exactly the same way, wouldn't the world be boring? Each one of us has our own reality. My feelings are real for me and only as I feel safe in your acceptance of my feelings, will I become willing to look at my beliefs and possibly be open to changing them.

*CONVINCE A MAN AGAINST HIS WILL,  
HE IS OF THE SAME OPINION STILL*

Everyone has his or her own reality. This must be respected. Trying to change someone else's reality by using logical argument seldom wins anything. Arguments often become a matter of "winner take nothing." They are power struggles over perception and are tied closely to your self-concept. The more powerless you feel, the more you will feel the need to win, and the less open you become to other realities. So it is very important for you to respect other people's reality *as being true* for them and to respect your own reality as being true for you while at the same time keep an open mind for new information, new ideas and new concepts. From an impartial standpoint, when it comes to reality, there are *no absolutes*, and that's absolute!

### LESSON 4:

#### Communicating Through Separate Realities

From time to time you will run into situations where someone's reality is really off, "The way they see it is just wrong." At these times, it is not easy to get someone to see your point of view especially when

their reality is very different from yours. Here is a tip to help you get your point across and open the door for them to see a different point of view. First, validate the other person's reality as true for them. Next, pause, don't respond too quickly or it will sound like a "Yes, but." Then share a little bit of your reality, your belief, but shift quickly back to hearing their reality again. Pause again. Now try sharing a little more of your reality.

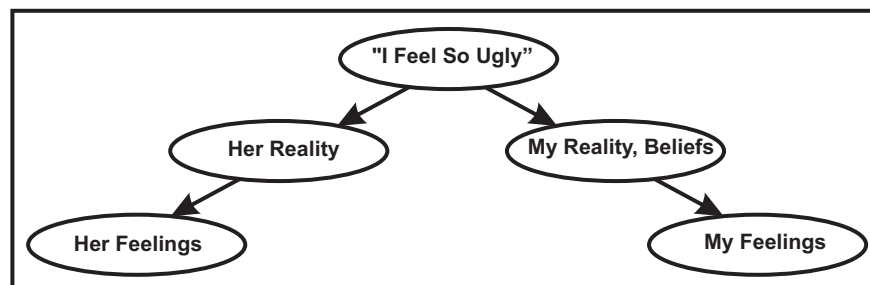
Here is an example: Have you noticed that every thirteen-year-old girl, at some point in her life, comes to her mother and says, "Mother, I am so ugly! I have braces on my teeth, pimples on my face. Nobody will ever date me; nobody will ever take me out as long as I live!" And, most mothers of most thirteen-year-olds know better and will respond by saying, "Oh no, you're beautiful, you're gorgeous, you're going to have lots of boyfriends. Don't worry about it." In this way, the mother denies the girl's reality and tries to convince the girl of what is really true.

The girl feels compelled/forced to defend her reality with, "And besides, Mother, my toes are crooked, my palms sweat, and I have this ugly mole on the back of my ear! I will never, never have boyfriends." The more the mother argues and tries to convince the girl of her good points, the more the girl will look for her ugliness. The girl doesn't feel like her mother is listening to her. In turn, she won't hear her mother's reassurances, because it doesn't fit into her reality. Remember what Grandpa used to say, "Convince a man against his will, and he is of the same opinion still."

Instead of trying to sell your reality, let's apply the technique I described above. First, respond by validating the girl's feelings as real for her. "I see that you don't feel good about yourself, and you're really scared that the pimples will never go away, the braces will never come off and nobody will ever take you out. That's got to be a scary place to be." Pause. Then you share your own picture of reality: "You know I see it differently. I see you as a girl, growing and changing into a beautiful woman." Then, quickly jump back to the girl's reality, "But I know you can't see that right now. It's pretty scary to be where you are." Then pause again (remember, the pauses are so that what you are saying doesn't sound like a "yes, but...") "I suspect that you are going to end up with so many boyfriends that I will have to fight them off with a big stick." You don't want to validate her reality, you do want to validate her feelings.

The girl is then free to see herself differently. She is not made to be wrong. She is just not seeing all the choices available to her. By validating her feelings and perceptions as true for her, while at the same time briefly sharing a different point of view, both people end up winners. It's a win-win situation, one in which the girl doesn't have to look for more ugliness to prove her point, to feel like she's being heard, and the mother gets a chance to offer a more positive reality.

This same technique also works well with bosses and with mates. The beauty of validating the other person's feelings as true for them and then sharing where you are, is that both people come out winning.



*Figure 1.6*

## LESSON 5: Dealing With Stress And Anxiety By Changing Meanings

When I was an undergraduate student and taking my first course in psychology, Frank Westly, the professor, came in on the first day and said "We are in the dark ages of psychology and we do not know what we are doing!" As a young novice, looking forward to entering this exciting field of study, I went into a major depression. "Why am I studying a science that doesn't know what it's doing?" And for the next two weeks, I contemplated dropping out of psychology and possibly dropping out of school. Then I had a brainstorm. It dawned on me that if I was living in the dark ages of psychology and we didn't know what we were doing, then I could possibly be an Isaac Newton of psychology. I could make discoveries, have insights and change people's lives for the better. By changing the way I looked at psychology, it was now OK for me to be in the dark ages of psychology. In

fact, school became exciting and was a time of adventure and discovery.

I have no idea what Dr. Westly meant by what he said. What I do know is that the meaning I chose to put on what he said has profoundly influenced my life.

You have been told that looking at life like a half-empty glass is negative thinking; but consider for a moment a glass that is completely empty. Which would you rather have, an empty glass or a full glass? The pessimist will choose the full glass. The optimist will choose the empty glass. How do you look at life? The optimist looks at the empty glass and gets excited about what he/she can put into it. The pessimist has to take what he/she finds already in it. There is no room for new and different experiences and relationships in his/her glass. The pessimist wants everything to be given to him and becomes depressed if he sees it to be empty.

## EXERCISES TO DO

### EXERCISE 1:

#### Tell Me Exercise

The TELL ME Exercise is designed to create a sense of safety for the speaker, as the listener can only respond with one of the designated responses. The listener benefits by learning to listen without becoming defensive. The listener is also helped to silence the voices in his/her mind that are coming up with defensive responses while the other person is speaking. Too often, when someone is talking, the little voice in your head says, "Well, you're not so perfect either. How about the time you . . .?" or "That's not true. That is not the way it happened." It is very difficult to listen to other people and hear their feelings and perceptions of reality when our own feelings, beliefs, values, expectations and defensiveness keeps interfering. When the inner voices are still, it is easier to focus on what the speaker is saying.

You may want to use this exercise when you and your partner seem unable to hear each other, when you seem to be cutting each other off, when you don't feel listened to, or when someone wants to keep giving you answers instead of listening. This is more than just an exercise. It is a model of an effective means of communication and is designed to teach you how to accept another person's reality without becoming defensive.



In the TELL ME Exercise, one person says to the other, "Tell me something you want to tell me." The talker then responds with anything from a sentence to a paragraph of information. This should be something that is relatively easy to share . . . something that the speaker really wants to share. This could be anything from "I love you very much," to "I'm very angry at you right now!" The listener can only respond with one of three possible responses:

*"I can understand that."* (That makes sense); or,

*"I can accept that."* (My acceptance of what you've said doesn't necessarily mean I approve or that I understand.

## TAKING CONTROL OF YOUR LIFE

Acceptance means that I can accept that this is the way you think, feel or believe; that what you told me is the way you see it. It's your reality. I may or may not agree.); or,

*"I can appreciate that."* (What you have shared with me makes me feel loved or cared about).

Notice that all three responses are variations of acceptance. If you happened to say to me, "When you accidentally kicked me in the shins, it hurt." I would respond with, "I can understand that." If you happened to say that I was a terrible person and had never done anything right in my whole life, my response would be, "I can accept that." That doesn't mean that I agree. I simply accept that it may be true for you, at least for this moment in time. If you said, "I love you," or "You are a wonderful parent." I would respond with, "I can appreciate that."



After the listener has responded with one of the three statements, the listener says, "Tell me something you *don't* want to tell me." This would be something that is hard or difficult to say, something which might be embarrassing, or something which he/she thinks might be difficult for the other to hear. For example: "I feel ugly when I'm with you" or, "When we have sex, I sometimes fantasize about someone else" or, "I feel embarrassed when you come to my office wearing your old jeans." Once the statement has been made, the listener is to respond with one of the three available responses: "I can accept that," "I can understand that," or, "I can appreciate that."



The listener then repeats the first statement. "Tell me something you want to tell me," and again responds with one of the three appropriate statements as the speaker proceeds. The listener alternates the two statements for a predetermined length of time, usually five to eight minutes. At the end of this time, the roles are reversed. The listener becomes the speaker and the speaker assumes the role of the listener. Again, the exercise is continued for another five to eight minutes. If the speaker can think of nothing to say, then just sit quietly until something floats to the top or until the agreed upon time is up.

Upon completion of the exercise, the two participants may discuss

any thoughts or questions that may have arisen during the exercise. A hug may then be in order. This is one way intimacy and closeness are created and maintained.

## EXERCISE 2: Becoming Aware

This exercise is designed to help you become aware of any unconscious pictures you may have which affect the way you respond to yourself and your world.



When you get to the word, "NOW", I want you to close your eyes for 3-5 seconds and see what comes to your mind. Let yourself experience what I tell you to see.

OK. Close your eyes and see ELECTRICITY... NOW!

What did you see? Sparks? A bright flash? A piece of wire? Lightning? A sixty-cycle sign wave? Now think about how you respond to electricity. Are you afraid? Tentative? Do you see electricity as dangerous, as a friend, or as a natural phenomenon? Is it something to benefit you or hurt you? Is it something to enjoy? How do you approach electrical appliances, light sockets, or electrical wiring? The people who saw sparks are the ones who are very careful about plugging in the toaster!

The pictures in your mind, made long ago, affect the way you behave in the here and now. These pictures are stored in the right side of your brain. I will share more about this in chapter 5.



Let's try a different example. Think of a time when you have been very, very angry. . . A time when you felt furious and somewhat out of control. Close your eyes and see the event. . . NOW!

- What conclusions have you drawn about yourself and about other people?
- What do you believe about fighting?
- How does this picture affect your relationships today?

- Is anger a dangerous feeling to be avoided at all costs?
- Do you avoid situations where people are angry?
- How do you express your anger or dissatisfaction, especially with those you care about?

You do not react to People, Events, or Words but what they mean to you.

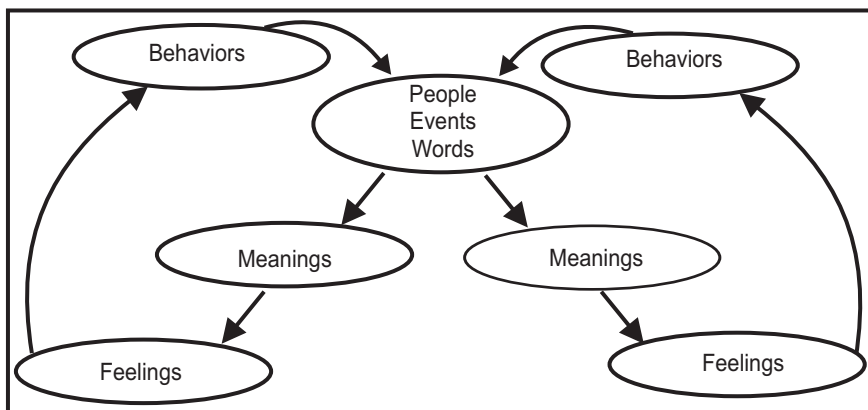


Figure 1.7



Now, let's do a variation on the above. This time think of a time when someone was very angry (maybe unjustly so), and you were afraid that person might hurt you. Close your eyes and see it... NOW!

Now, answer the same set of questions you answered for when you were angry and felt out of control.



Want to try it again? This time, think of a time that you have felt very alone or abandoned. Close your eyes and see it... NOW!

- What decisions have you made about yourself based on your picture of aloneness?
- What decisions have you made about having to be with other people?
- What are your beliefs and expectations *now* of how people will treat you and how you are?



- To what lengths are you willing to go to avoid feeling lonely or isolated?

For each one of the above exercises, look at how you go around daily looking for evidence to prove that the conclusions you have made about electricity, anger, and aloneness reinforce the belief systems you made long ago, even though they may no longer be applicable to present-day reality.

### THINGS TO COME

Have you ever tried to stop thinking about what you are thinking about? Most people find this very difficult, if not impossible. In later chapters, I will give you techniques you can use to do this. First, though, let's look more at how we think, what we think, and how our feelings and thoughts create our behaviors.





# *Chapter Two*

## BEING AWARE

### **The Logic→Feelings Connection**

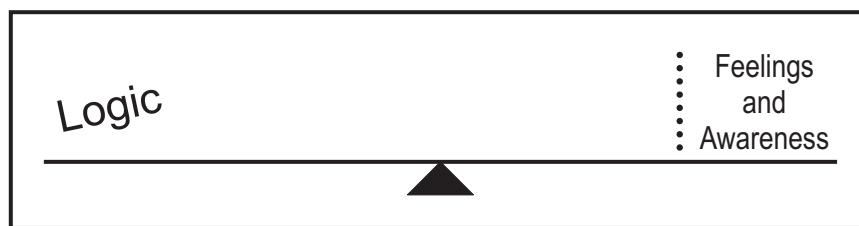
If you are not aware of something, you cannot make a decision about it! If you are not making logical decisions in your life, you will NOT be in control of your life.

In the process of learning to take control of your life, you need to shift from giving your power away to others to pushing your own buttons and pulling your own strings. For so long, you have been a reactor rather than an actor. To help you change this, in Chapter 1 you learned about the interaction between thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Now, let's talk about the connection between logic and feelings, the decision-making process.

### **The Decision-Making Process**

There are two parts to your decision-making process: the logical, analytical part; and the awareness, feeling part. All your conscious decisions are a result of choices you make based upon your awareness and feelings. The less you are aware, the less you are in touch with your feelings, the poorer your decisions will be.

Logical decisions are based upon a choice of what you feel and/or what you are aware of (see Figure 2.1 on next page).



*Figure 2.1*

When you are hungry (a physical feeling), what do you do? (Really, this is not a tough question.) You eat, right? But, what if you are also embarrassed (an emotional feeling) because your stomach is starting to pooch out too far? Now, what do you do? You are faced with two feelings at the same time: one of hunger and one of embarrassment. If you are aware of both, you will choose the one most important to you at that time, the one that you have the strongest feelings about.

When you have an itch, you scratch it. But if you are aware that your itch is in an embarrassing place and you are in front of a group of people, you may jump around a lot, but you will not scratch.

However, as shown in the exercise section of the previous chapter, unconscious pictures can also affect your behavior.

For the sake of convenience, we often talk about there being two sides of the brain. We identify the left side as the logical, rational, analytical part of our being. The left side is where we store our ability to do such things as mathematics and language. The left side helps us figure out what we need to do first, second, third, and so on. Attorneys and medical doctors are seen as operating primarily out of the left side of their brain. The right side of the brain is where we store our memories in the form of pictures and emotions, whether pleasant or unpleasant. Artists and musicians are seen as operating primarily out of the right side of their brain. In Chapter 1, you did the exercise in which you were asked to close your eyes and picture electricity. This picture comes from the right side of your brain.

*Figure 2.2*

Have you ever had somebody bring up a topic, such as the death of a loved one, and you found yourself immediately back at that point in time, and the tears came to your eyes? Post-traumatic stress disorder is the pictures from traumatic events such as war, molestation, rape, car accident, etc., which we didn't have the opportunity to talk through in a logical, rational, left-brained way. When the experiences haven't been adequately talked through, the pictures tend to be stored in the right side of the brain with a lot of energy that can disrupt and/or destroy our daily lives. Since Vietnam, the United States military has learned the importance of deprogramming people who have been through a terrorist attack. They take them to a private place away from the media and allow them to work through, in both emotional and logical ways, what has happened to them, thus reducing and/or eliminating the consequences of their extremely stressful experience.

Pictures in the right side of the brain can create subliminal (unconscious) urges resulting in behaviors that can be very confusing, not only to yourself, but to others as well. For example, it may be perfectly logical for you not to eat right now because you are planning a big meal later tonight. However, if there is a picture (memory) in your brain of yourself as a child not knowing when your next meal will be, you create two feelings: one rational and one irrational. "I am not really hungry right now" versus the unconscious fear of not knowing when or from where your next meal will come. Want to place odds on which of your feelings will win?

Years ago my young son was invited to spend the day with a therapist friend of mine and her three daughters. After driving my son home at about 8:30 PM., she went to a late movie to relax by herself without any kids. The next day, as we were talking, she mentioned that she had enjoyed the day with the kids and going to the movie by herself had been great. However, as she talked, my body tensed, my stomach hurt, I broke out in a cold sweat, and my head started to pound. At first, I thought maybe I was coming down with the flu. As my friend continued to talk about her pleasant experience of going to the movie by herself, my body continued to churn.

I was just about to tell her that I was getting sick and would have to leave, when I finally started paying attention to the flashes of memory that kept trying to push their way into my conscious thoughts. The pictures coming from the right side of my brain were of myself over thirty years ago, feeling terribly lonely, sitting alone, in a theater. My soon-to-be-exwife (at the time) had told me that I had not satisfied her in the entire six years of our marriage, and that I was too dumb to know that she had been having an affair for three months. She also had told me that I should go see *Around the Mulberry Bush*, an English film about a young man with a sexual problem.

Listening to my friend brought back mental pictures I had not seen in over 30 years. I could see the movie theater's brick exterior with the two little diamond-shaped windows. I could see myself sitting in the middle of the center section, six rows from the back, feeling afraid, lonely, confused, a failure.

I was now able to recognize and understand why I had not gone to a movie by myself since then. I had long ago worked through all the more obvious feelings from the divorce, but this one apparently had remained. Later, I shared this insight with others who helped me recognize the unconscious conclusions I had placed upon that long ago event. I was then able to change my meaning to more logical, left brain conclusions. Now, I am willing to look at the behaviors that are causing my problems, find the *pictures* that they are based on, and change the meaning. Now I feel alive.

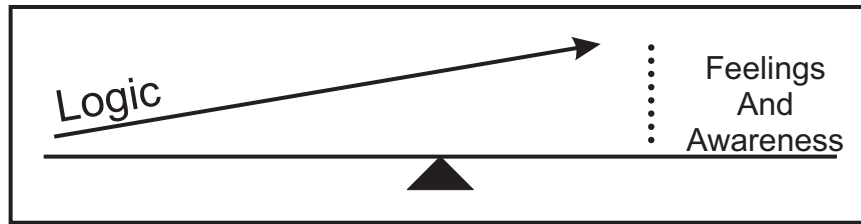


Figure 2.3

*You can only make decisions based upon the feelings you are aware of. (See Figure 2.3 above.)*

This concept is very important. John, a friend of mine, who teaches a graduate course on the brain, says, "Scientific findings indicate that your brain processes over a million pieces of feelings and/or other information every second!" The problem with this is that you cannot possibly be aware of them all at the same time, or you would become confused and unable to decide anything.

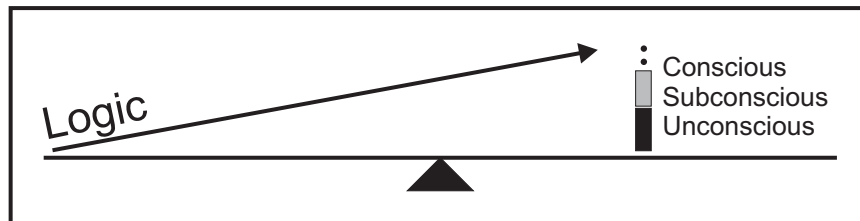


Figure 2.4

To help us better understand psychology, we usually divide these 1,000,000 pieces of information into three categories:

- A person's *conscious* is comprised of values, and expectations as well as your feelings, both physical and emotional.
- A person's *subconscious* is made up of the information you are not aware of, but if your attention is drawn to it, you will become aware of that information.
- A person's *unconscious* consists of information that, even if I told you about it, you simply would not be aware of it. You couldn't see it, nor have any awareness of the event.



*You make logical decisions based upon the feelings/information accessible to your awareness. (See Figure 2.4 on previous page.)*

## Conscious Awareness

Being conscious of your feelings is the first step to increasing your EQ. On the conscious level are the feelings that you are experiencing in the here and now. Based upon these conscious feelings or awarenesses, you are able to make logical decisions. As you read this material, you are aware of the words on the page. From time to time, you may become aware of other things (i.e., a car honking, a door slamming, somebody moving about.) You can only make logical decisions about what is going on around you if you are conscious or aware of them.

Have you ever had the experience of your foot going to sleep, but not being aware of it until you stood up and almost fell over? If you could have become aware of your foot going to sleep before you stood up, then you could decide to straighten it out and you wouldn't have embarrassed yourself.

If a person blocks your light while you are reading, you become aware that you need to make a decision to move, ask the person to move, move the light, or quit your reading. The choice you decide to make will depend on past decisions and conclusions you have made about yourself, your world, *and the feelings of which you are most aware.*

The decisions and conclusions that you have made about yourself and about your world in the past often create feelings you may be unaware of. Only if you are aware of them, are you free to choose between these different feelings.

## Subconscious Awareness

Your subconscious awareness contains information and feelings which, when someone or something draws attention to them, can become conscious. The subconscious is easy to access. Let me illustrate with a series of simple statements. I am going to mention some things you are presently not aware of, but as soon as I mention them, you will become aware of them.

*Be aware of your foot on the floor . . .*

Notice how your attention went to your foot. Your subconscious just became conscious.

*Be aware of your ears, without touching them . . .*

See how easy it is to bring information from the subconscious to the conscious. Now, I am going to mention a subconscious feeling that may take more time for some of you to get in touch with.

*Be aware of your heart beating . . .*

If you're rushing around with a lot of things on your mind, it may be a little more difficult to let that awareness float to your conscious. However, when you're lying in bed, you may find the pounding of your heart very easy to notice. Quiet places permit keener awareness of weaker stimuli because there are fewer stimuli demanding your attention.

## Unconscious Awareness

The third level, the unconscious level, holds information you won't become aware of even if someone points it out. The unconscious is just that . . . unconscious. You are simply not aware of anything in this area. However, from time to time, unconscious information does break through to your consciousness.

Let's look deeper at the third level, and at the process of the unconscious breaking through to consciousness. Have you ever had the experience of talking with someone and after they have walked

away, you suddenly realize, "Ooh! They just put me down!" Something that was totally unconscious at the moment it was happening, took some time to rise to your conscious awareness. Have you ever had a discussion with somebody and that night, about six hours later, thought, "I should have said this when he said that." Clickety-click, clickety-click, clickety-click. Six hours later and suddenly you are aware of the things you could have, or should have said or done; but the situation and opportunity is long past. You can only make decisions about what you are aware of at the time.

Unfortunately, most unconscious feelings are not easy to bring to your awareness. Years ago, when I was in the undergraduate program in psychology at Portland State, I had just gone through a difficult divorce. My ex-wife had told me that I had never done anything right sexually in our whole marriage. Months later, I finally got my life together enough to start taking a few college courses. In Dr. Klopper's class on testing, volunteers were needed to take part in a demonstration of what he called the Consensus Rorschach test. (You know, the inkblot test where you are shown an inkblot on a piece of paper and asked to tell what you see---it's like looking for a picture in the clouds.) Two female students and I volunteered. The task was to pass around the Rorschach cards, and for us to come to a consensus as to what the inkblot *really* looked like. The first card passed around, for me, was obviously a rocket taking off with fire coming out of the bottom. It was passed on to one of the female students, and she said, "No, it isn't. It's a penis." The other woman concluded it looked exactly like the Washington monument. The two women started to argue over whether it was a penis or a monument. I sat quietly and observed.

After the demonstration was over, Dr. Klopper explained what he had learned as a result of the exercise. He turned to me and said, "Did you notice that when the two women started to argue over whether it was a penis or a monument, you crossed your legs and turned sideways?" I shook my head. "No, I wasn't aware of that."

And I really wasn't aware. In fact, it took nearly three weeks before my unconscious feelings floated to my consciousness and I became aware of how sexually threatened I was by women. Once I became aware of my fears, I could begin to work on reversing the process.

The experience I related earlier about going to the movie theater alone was another example of the unconscious level withholding insight from me for over thirty years. Thirty years is a long time to have to wait.

When I am asleep, unconscious and unaware, my body makes decisions for me. This works out OK most of the time; however, there are mornings when I wake up and find that I have been sleeping on my arm wrong or have gotten a kink in my neck. The more I can be aware of what I feel the better decisions I will make. The more I am aware of what I feel about myself, women, men, work, children; the more I will have control in my life and the better choices I will make. I can change what I want to, and keep what works for me or what benefits me, but only if I am aware. On the other hand, the more I am *unaware, unconscious*, the more powerless and confused I will be by my own behaviors.

## *AWARENESS IN ITSELF CAN BE CURATIVE*

The problem is how to get from the unaware to the aware, from the unknown to the known, from the unconscious to the conscious. The more threatening the feelings or the information, the more difficult it may be to become aware and the longer it may take for the mind to process the information, to bring it to the surface. To be able to raise our conscious levels, we must know more about our feelings, and learn to process more of the feelings and awarenesses our body and mind are experiencing.

In Haim Ginnott's book, *Between Parent and Child*, he says:

Feelings are part of our genetic heritage. Birds fly, fish swim, and people feel. While we are not free to choose the emotions that arise in us, we are free to choose when, where, and how to express them, *provided we know what they are.*

[Emphasis supplied]

## *ITS NOT WHAT YOU SAY...*

My grandfather used to tell me that no one ever got kicked out of school for being angry. Nobody ever got fired from a job for being angry. Nobody has ever gotten a divorce for being angry. It's what they did with their anger that got them into trouble. Anger is just a feeling, and it's how they expressed that anger that got them into trouble. Feelings will never get you into trouble; it is what you do with them that cause the problems or create the opportunities.

*The importance of consciously knowing what you feel when you feel it, allows you to choose what, when, and how you are going to express your feelings.*

## *...ITS HOW YOU SAY IT!*

Expressing your anger without guilt trips, threats, or put downs goes a long way toward eliminating hostile reaction in others. In order to understand this concept though, we had better look at the feelings of anger more closely. The first step in doing this is to look at a very important concept: Feelings (including anger) *aren't good or bad. They just ARE.*

## **Taking The Judgment Out**

When you negatively judge your feelings, you tend to push them down into your unconscious where you can't make logical decisions about them. And that can create problems for you. An alternative to judging your feelings is to simply say, *"Isn't what I'm feeling interesting?"*

I once had a bookkeeper who, whenever she made a mistake, called herself by name. "T\_\_\_\_\_, you are so stupid! You'll never learn." It

was as though her parent was sitting right there saying the words to her. In all the years I knew her, her negative judgments about herself never once helped her to change. It just made her more angry and depressed! It's the awareness of your feelings that allows you to make choices, to change. Saying to yourself, "Isn't that interesting?" helps take the judgment out of your thinking, out of your feelings and, out of your behavior. It allows you to stay conscious and make good decisions.

Of course there are behaviors that are wrong. Any minister or policeman will tell you that. But judging yourself as bad or wrong, stupid or dumb will actually make it harder for you to get the changes in yourself that you want. When you take the judgments out of your life, it is much better for all concerned.

Another woman who worked for me must have come from a home that was very right/wrong oriented. She grew up expecting to be blamed for everything. As a result, she tried to be perfect, which resulted in her working very slowly, judging herself harshly, expecting to be blamed for not getting it right, and being defensive. When I would ask her if she knew where a file was, she would say, "I didn't take it. It wasn't me!" I would say, "I don't care whose fault it is or who took it. Just help me find it!"

As an alternative to judging yourself or becoming defensive, try saying, "Isn't what I just did interesting? I don't think I want to do it that way again." To help you accomplish this, you may need to go back to what you learned about yourself in Chapter 1 and ask yourself:

- What am I thinking, believing?
- What pictures am I seeing which create these negative feelings?
- Do I want to think this way anymore?
- Do I choose to change what I think?
- Do I need to be perfect to be lovable and acceptable?
- Do I need to try to manipulate myself with self-inflicted put-downs and judgments?
- Do I need to protect myself from other's anger by trying to be perfect/right all the time?

Sometimes the answers will be "YES," at other times, "NO." In any case, it's important that you don't lay guilt on yourself. Guilt usually doesn't make anyone stop doing what they shouldn't do, or get them to do what they should do, but more about that in a later chapter.

Changing the meanings is easier to do when you remember that the *purpose of failure is to give you an opportunity to learn*. The purpose of judgments is to make you feel bad (punishment) which, more often than not, just reinforces your feelings of incompetence. Anonymous said it this way; "Good judgment comes from experience, and experience, well, that comes from bad judgment."

## The Degrees Of Anger

To help you avoid pushing your angry feelings into your subconscious, let's look further into how anger works.

Anger is like the word *temperature*. If I say, "There is a temperature outside," it doesn't tell you anything. Is it cold, warm, hot? Like a temperature, anger also comes in degrees. Hate, rage and fury are simply varying degrees of anger. If you were to make a thermometer for the degrees of anger, what would you put as the highest? Would it be hate or rage?

About 70% of the population would put rage at the top. For them, this degree of anger is like a raging forest fire, out of control. The other 30% disagree. "No. Hate should be at the top because it is colder and lasts longer." One lady told me, "It's not hate or rage. It's livid. When I hit livid . . . look-out!" It really doesn't matter which one you put at the top. For me, rage, hate, livid, and fury are all varying degrees of intense anger. Less intense degrees of anger are at the other end of the thermometer. Have you ever felt "annoyed?" Have you ever suffered through a day with one annoyance after another? Drip, drip, drip, drip, drip, and drip. Annoyance is anger. Just start adding up one annoyance after another, and soon you could be feeling mad, angry. Teachers tell me more kids go to the principal's office fifth and sixth periods than any other period of the day. It is just one thing after another all day long, both for teachers as well as for students, until . . .

"That's it. I've had it!" Annoyed is anger that can build, and build until . . .

There are many more words you can use to depict various degrees of anger. Let's look at some in Figure 2.5 below.

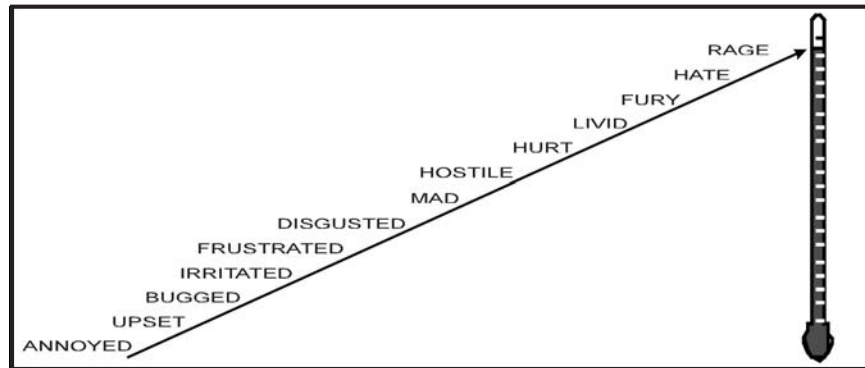


Figure 2.5

Have you ever had one upset after another . . . after another . . . after another? Piece by piece the anger grows and grows. By the end of the day, you are ready to take on anybody, scream at anyone who crosses your path.

"Bugged" . . . I love this word! Have you ever heard kids say, "You're bugging me!" Bugged is anger. Another word for anger is "frustrated." Have you ever been frustrated? Remember that nut and bolt you took apart and now it won't back together? Even "disgusted" is a degree of anger. When you say the word, it even *sounds* angry. "That's disgusting." Keep all these little pieces of anger going long enough, and before long, you have had it; "Now I'm really mad!"

One of the degrees of anger that many people seem to be unaware of is *hurt*, a deep wounding type of anger. Fritz Perls, a famous therapist, pointed out that hurt was really "personalized anger" with a get-even or vindictive hook. It's as if someone has taken a knife, stuck it into you and turned the blade. At this point, you're hurting so much that you usually want the other person to hurt also, "You hurt me, now I hope somebody gets you, you no good so and so! I might not be able



to get you myself, but I hope somebody does." You probably wouldn't say this aloud, but you sure think it. As you can see, you experience a whole range of degrees of anger from very mild to intense.

I'm sure this is just a partial list. You will probably be able to add some of your own. You may want to make your own list and arrange it in a way that seems right to you. It doesn't matter how you order the list. It is all anger; it is just a matter of degrees.

### To Repress A Feeling Is To Give It Unlimited Power

Little irritations, after accumulating, approach the boiling point at which time divorce, child abuse and murder can occur. Have you ever wakened to a bright sunny day, some little thing went wrong and you suddenly flew into a rage? The annoyances and upsets can build up over several days or weeks until the addition of just one more small irritation results in an explosion.

The concept that anger builds up is not new. A Chinese proverb close to three-thousand years old states that, "To repress a feeling is to give it unlimited power." *The more you push the feeling down, the bigger it gets.* William Blake, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, wrote something similar in his poem, *The Angry Tree*;

\* \* \*

I was angry with my friend,  
I told my wrath, my wrath did end.  
I was angry at my foe,  
I told him not, my wrath did grow.

\* \* \*

Notice the last line, "I told him not, my wrath did grow." It's just another way of saying, "To repress a feeling is to give it unlimited power." Grandpa would say, "That's the last straw!" When we heard that, the kids scattered.

The concept of there being consequences to the repression of feelings is recorded throughout human history. Going back almost 2,000 years, the apostle Paul was aware that many people lied about being angry, so he wrote, "Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor..." I suspect he knew that one of the biggest lies people tell is "I'm not angry, I'm just upset!" or, "I'm not angry, I'm just irritated!" Immediately after writing this warning, Paul goes on, "Be angry, and sin not. Don't let the sun go down upon your anger." Then, in the very next verse, he gives another warning that if the anger is not expressed, you are giving the devil an opportunity to work in your life (Ephesians 4). Now, there is a good reason why you should learn to express your feelings early and not let them build up.

### You Can't Express What You Can't Name

A doctorate student at the California School of Professional Psychology made profiles of children in Juvenile Hall who had been arrested at least twice and matched them to profiles of children in public schools who had never been arrested. The major difference he found was that the children in Juvenile Hall had a low vocabulary for expressing their feelings. These children expressed their feelings by acting them out, which got them into trouble with the law.

A few years ago, while teaching a course in parenting, I got a call from a teacher who was taking my class. He said that his three-year-old son had lied to him. Now, I know that children aren't born know-ing how to lie, so I asked for more details. He responded that he had arrived at the nursery school, just as the kids were getting off the bus after a field trip to Fresno State to see the animals. "Johnny looked and acted depressed. He just wasn't my happy, bouncy kid." He said he kept asking him what was wrong, but all he could get was "Nothing." Finally after a long silence, Johnny asked, "What is this?" pointing to a spot of ink on his arm. His father told him, "It looks like someone flicked you with an ink pen." Johnny replied, "Yes, the bus driver was chasing me with his ink pen. All the kids were laughing at me, so I took him out of his seat, threw him on the floor and stomped on him." Dad's conclusion: "My son is lying to me."

I reassured the man that his son was not lying to him. "Your son doesn't know the names of feelings; he doesn't know what words to use to tell you how he feels. What he did was to describe his feelings with behavioral words that he does know." I suggested that he go back to his son and say something like: "If the bus driver was teasing me and all the kids were laughing at me, I would be really angry and I would feel embarrassed and powerless."

The next day at class, the man told me that he had done what I had suggested and his son suddenly went from being depressed to "my happy, bouncy kid again." I can imagine that a boy, at sixteen, one hundred ninety pounds, and *not knowing how to verbally express his feelings* might well take the bus driver out of his seat and stomp on him.

People lie about being angry usually because they believe anger is bad or that it is a sin. If anger is a sin, and I don't believe that it is, then lying about it would be a double sin. In the process of lying about being angry, your feelings are repressed and your problems are compounded.

*AS FEELINGS GO UP,  
LOGIC GOES DOWN*

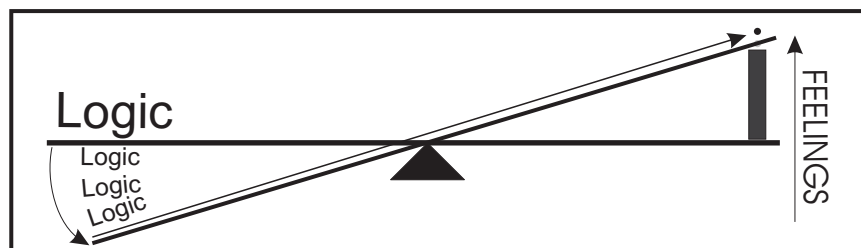


Figure 2.6

As any one particular feeling becomes more intense than any others, your ability to think logically goes down. You become *illogical*. Your feelings go up; your logic goes down just like a teeter totter (see

Figure 2.6 on previous page.) Your awareness of other feelings is lessened so that you become unconscious of what else you may be feeling. *Limited awareness results in limited choices* and you end up saying or doing things that you may be sorry for later.

You cannot make decisions about things you are not aware of. In the seventh grade, after playing an intense game of flag football, I was surprised to find blood running down my leg. Sometime during the game, I must have taken a pretty good hit and didn't even know it until the excitement of the game was over. The same kind of thing can happen on an emotional level.

Have you ever tried to be logical with, or explain something to, somebody who is yelling, screaming and angry? Lots of luck! The FBI says that people who know and/or care about each other commit 80% of all murders. It sounds like it's safer to be with strangers, doesn't it?

A problem often starts with a little annoyance that is ignored, "It's such a little thing, I shouldn't let it bother me." A few years ago, there was a murder on Thanksgiving Day where the uncle shot and killed his nephew. The newspaper said the fight was over who was going to get the dark meat on the turkey! Of course, the fight wasn't over only that. It was just one irritation, one upset and one frustration after another, building up day after day, week after week until finally . . . the "last straw."

Child abuse is often the result of a loving and caring parent who has the belief; "I shouldn't get angry at my baby. I love my baby." This results in him/her repressing feelings while unconsciously these feelings are getting stronger in intensity, until that "last glass of spilt milk."

Of course good mothers, as well as good fathers, *do get angry* with their babies. One of the most violent songs I know is:

Rock-a-bye-baby in the tree top;  
When the wind blows, the cradle will rock;  
*When the bough breaks, the cradle will fall and  
down will come baby, cradle and all.*  
[Emphasis supplied.]

*Being angry is not a problem.* Repressing your feelings and letting them build up until you do something stupid . . . *that's a problem.*

Domestic violence isn't one isolated event. It is a whole series of escalating feelings and events over a period of time until violence occurs. The police are called and the wife says "Throw the \*!#@\* in jail! I'll sign a complaint and do anything just to get him out of my life. I never want to see him again!" The next morning, her feelings have calmed down and she thinks, "Oh, I can't stand to see him in jail. I can't press charges against him. I love him too much. He promised me he'll never do it again!" Police see this cycle happen over and over again.

One word of caution, there is a world of difference between *being emotional* and *expressing feelings*. Men and women are often seen as expressing feelings when they are just being emotional. They may say they are expressing feelings when in reality they are expressing:

*Threats:* "I feel like getting a divorce."

*Judgments:* "I feel that you don't love me."

*Put-downs:* "I see you are wearing your fat dress today."

*Sarcasm:* "Did your mother have any children that lived?"

*Guilt trips:* "If you really loved me, you would know what makes me feel loved."

When I was providing therapy at a women's prison, one of the "lifers" shared her story with me. She, her boyfriend, her girlfriend and her girlfriend's boyfriend all shared a house. The woman and her girlfriend shared clothes, food and the closeness of good friends. Then, one day they got into a fight over some clothes that had been borrowed. Her girlfriend got so mad she went out and broke the window of her car. So, that woman went out and broke her girlfriend's car window. Her girlfriend chased her, so she went inside, got a rifle and went after her girlfriend who tried to escape in her car. The woman pursued her girlfriend until she caught up with her just outside a police station and shot her right in front of eight or nine policemen. She killed her girlfriend. She said after it was all over, that the police laughed at her for being so dumb as to kill someone right in front of a police station.

The concept of feelings going up and logic coming down is not just reserved for angry feelings. Have you ever tried to be logical and rational with someone who is madly, passionately in love? Lots of luck! This can work to your benefit, though, because some people probably wouldn't stay with their spouses if they could look at them in the cold, unfeeling light of reality. Romantic love and acceptance can cover a multitude of sins and annoyances . . . until feelings come down and reality returns.

While it is true that just about all feelings have degrees, it is anger and the degrees of anger, that give the most trouble.

## LESSONS TO LEARN

### Lesson 1:

#### Overview

In this chapter, several important concepts were presented:

1. You can only make logical decisions based upon what you are conscious of. If you are not aware of what you feel when you feel it, you will find yourself getting into a lot of trouble and not getting what you want out of life.
2. It's important that you learn to *accept all your feelings*. Remember, that acceptance does not necessarily mean approval. Acceptance means taking the judgment off. Acceptance means asking yourself, "Is what I'm doing getting me what I want in the long run?" Sometimes I feel or say things I'm not proud of, things I don't like in myself; nevertheless, it is important that I learn to accept myself where I am until I can get to where I would like to be.

If you judge your feelings, you tend to repress them or deny their existence. "I'm not angry, I'm just upset!" You tend to minimize or pretend that you don't actually feel what you feel. You usually have learned this judgement and denial from your parents:

- "Jump up. That didn't hurt."
- "Big boys don't cry."
- "Smile or people won't like you."
- "Nice girls don't get angry."
- "Pretty is as pretty does."
- "It doesn't matter what you feel, just don't embarrass me."
- "You don't hate your sister. You love your sister."
- "What will the neighbors think?"

All of these messages taught us to repress our feelings. Now that your parents are not around to say these things to you, you usually repeat them to yourself consciously or unconsciously. Your parents never affected you as much as this internalized "parent" that you have created in yourself.

3. *Express your feelings early.* Don't let them build up until they reach the final stage, the "last straw." If you do let them build up, the result may be that you blow up over small things and other people may judge and discount you. "He's just being irrational." "She's just being hysterical." The buildup/blowup syndrome can be a deadly deterrent to creating intimate and close relationships. No one can feel safe around you when there are continual "last straws."
4. Don't try to solve problems when you are angry or upset. You may regret your decisions later when your feelings come down and your logic returns. This is why it is best to *separate the expression of feelings from problem solving*. Don't make decisions while you are upset or angry. "Alright, I've had it! I'll solve this problem once and for all." You can already guess what the results of this solution will be. The typical *strike-while-the-iron-is-hot* habit may lead to a position of having to eat humble pie or worse, a lost job, ruined relationship, unwanted divorce or even jail.
5. Don't take what someone has said in the heat of anger as the gospel truth. What is said in anger invariably isn't good news and there is a good chance the person may want to retract what was said once he or she has calmed down. Be the actor, not the reactor. Remember you choose to think. Therefore, if it is the other person's anger, you can choose to let it be that other person's problem. *Don't make someone else's problem your problem.*
6. When you don't express your feelings early, you tend to repress them. When you repress your "bad" feelings, you gradually numb all your feelings. You can't cut off one feeling without cutting off all of your feelings. When you repress your "negative" emotions, you repress your "positive" emotions; e.g., your ability to love.



The ability to love deeply requires the willingness to hurt deeply. While the process of repressing feelings is the same for both men and women, *how the evidence shows up* may be a little different for each. Women who have repressed their angry feelings often find their sexual desire is the first to go. Men, on the other hand, often find that their sexual desire is the last to go. However, after years of keeping feelings tucked away, even men find that they cannot feel passion, joy or excitement. Sex becomes routine, merely a physical release. Anger and love are like two sides of one coin. If you try to do away with the anger, you will do away with the love. You can't have a one-sided coin.

7. *Feelings are the common denominator of all human beings.* Birds fly. Fish swim. People feel. While we may have differing beliefs, values and expectations, we all have the same range of feelings. Our life experiences may be very different, but there is not one feeling which you have experienced, that I have not experienced. By sharing and accepting each other's feelings, you can avoid feeling isolated and alone, something everyone has felt at one time or another even when surrounded by others. The ability to share feelings is what makes a healthy emotional bond, and gives you a sense of truly feeling close to someone. We don't have to be an island unto ourselves.

## Lesson 2:

### Personal Reflections On Being Defensive

I have come to the conclusion that being defensive is a waste of time. If I am wrong, I need to change so there is no reason to be defensive. However, if I am right, right is it's own defense.

When I am being defensive, it raises doubts in myself as to my innocence. Otherwise, why would I have to defend myself? The more I defend myself, the more I raise the suspicion in you that maybe I am wrong.

Defensiveness is based upon beliefs that the opposite of love is hate or anger. "Only if I am perfect will I be lovable, be acceptable. Only then will you think well of me. Only by being perfect can I escape being rejected or abandoned. Therefore, I must defend myself to prove I am right so you will accept me and not be angry, for I equate your anger at me to your rejection of me."

When I defend myself, you don't feel listened to, which causes more fighting, and we both feel less loved. As a result, I try harder to be perfect and prove that I was not wrong by defending myself even more. The need to be right in order to be lovable and not be rejected is based on beliefs that are not true.

The opposite of love is indifference, not hate. It's not caring enough to get angry. I become most angry with the people I love the most. It is not easy to give up my need to be perfect, but once I do, then I can give up the need to defend myself. If, however, I sometimes slip back into my old beliefs and find myself being defensive, that's OK too. I do not have to be perfect . . . even at giving up old beliefs.

*THE OPPOSITE OF LOVE  
IS INDIFFERENCE,  
NOT HATE*

**Lesson 3:**

**All Violence Stems From Feelings Of Powerlessness**

Violence is not a problem. It is a person's *solution* to feelings of powerlessness. Whether it is the child abuser, the spouse abuser, the school bully, the murderer or the rapist, violent people have one thing in common. They all feel powerless. As a community, we often spend our resources on *trying to fix the symptom*, while ignoring the source of the problem.

## TAKING CONTROL OF YOUR LIFE

Feelings of powerlessness are the result of the *conclusions* we drew about our world and ourselves. They are not the result of events that have happened to us. Many people have experienced one or a number of traumatic events in their lives. Yet these people still do not see themselves as powerless, as needing to resort to violence.

Since powerlessness is learned and violence is just our reaction to powerlessness, then there is the possibility of a real solution to violence, because *what is learned can be unlearned*.

We can empower our children and ourselves. As parents, as teachers and as a community, we can help our children change their beliefs about themselves and their world. We can help our children to no longer see themselves as powerless people, living in a world where violence is the only solution.

We can teach them that they are absolutely *powerless to change others, but they are absolutely powerful to change themselves*. And when they change themselves, those around them will change. We can teach them how to express their anger verbally in constructive ways. We can be a part of the constructive solution. However, we may need to deal with our own beliefs about feeling powerless first. Then, like our children, we need to learn how to express our feelings verbally in constructive ways.

***WE ARE ABSOLUTELY POWERLESS  
TO CHANGE OTHERS,  
BUT WE ARE ABSOLUTELY POWERFUL  
TO CHANGE OURSELVES***

#### Lesson 4:

#### Personal Reflections On Being Open And Honest

As a younger man, I found mystery and deception to be an essential part of my relationship with people. I had a belief that my life wasn't all that interesting or important and I often used exaggeration with a twist of humor to make myself more acceptable and exciting to those around me. In the process, I was never totally open in my relationships. I had been taught that it was important to "put your best foot forward" but it had seemed somewhat dishonest because sooner or later I had to drag that other foot in (the less than best one).

The more I protected myself from rejection, the more unacceptable that second foot became. Then I remembered something my grandfather used to say "What you protect, you make weak." What kind of things do I protect? Powerful, strong things, or weak and fragile things? I concluded that if I am having to protect myself by always putting my best foot forward, then something must really be wrong with the other foot. Just like Grandfather had predicted, I found that the more I protected myself, the weaker and more vulnerable I felt. If I am weak and vulnerable, the more I'd better protect myself. I also found reinforcement for this unacceptable part of me in literature. The book Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde graphically depicted that there is something so evil and malevolent inside each one of us that if the Mr. Hyde in us were ever set loose, we would kill the ones we love and ourselves.

#### *WHAT YOU PROTECT, YOU MAKE WEAK*

During my course work in psychology, it was pointed out that a client must be open and honest for therapy to occur. The famous therapist, Carl Rogers stated that people *will not be more open than you are*. He said that you can't run group therapy by saying "We all need to be open and honest. Ok, who wants to go first?" You have to lead by example. Don't expect people to share more than you are willing to share. This left me in a rather difficult position. I was supposed to be open and honest, but what could I do about that "other foot"?

## TAKING CONTROL OF YOUR LIFE

A client once told me that no one can blackmail you unless you first blackmail yourself. By telling the truth and by being open and honest, no one can use that information against me, because I have already shared it. Then, should they try to use this personal information against me, I can simply agree, "Yes, I did that. I am not necessarily proud of it, but that is where I was at the time."

This new concept was truly empowering for me. The people who could accept me for what I was and what I had done, were really my friends. The ones who couldn't were not friends and therefore, what they thought, along with their judgments, were not important to me. I have since found that being open and honest keeps me from having to remember the stories I have told. I no longer have to filter what I say before I say it. I now truly understand that once I know the truth, have accepted the truth, have expressed the truth, I am totally free.

## EXERCISES TO DO

### Exercise 1:

#### **You Are Aware**

This exercise is designed to help you become aware of more of those million pieces of information your mind processes every second. The exercise can be played with two people or you can play alone.



First, imagine a stream of water. As this stream of water falls, a million droplets of water pass a certain point every second. In doing the exercise, it will be like reaching in and randomly taking a sample of one of the droplets. The idea is to take as many samples as possible, in as short a time as possible. Try not to sort, filter, or look for any specific piece of information or awareness.

If you are doing this with someone else, it will be like playing Ping-Pong. You will start out saying, "I am aware of. . . ." State whatever comes to your mind. "I am aware of my hand."



Now it's your partner's turn. The first thing your partner is aware of is said. "I am aware of your voice."

It's your turn again. "I am aware of my shirt." You continue to quickly go back and forth, each beginning your sentence with, "I am aware of. . . ." Do this for a minute and a half to two minutes on the first time through. If you are doing it by yourself, see how fast you can go for one minute. "I am aware..."

Before reading the rest of the exercise do this first part by yourself or find a partner. After doing the exercise, discuss what you were experiencing within your awareness. Did you notice if you were filtering? Did you find yourself looking for things to become aware of? Did you notice if you were aware mostly of those things that were outside of you or inside of you? Things about your partner or things about yourself? "I'm aware of your hand. I'm aware of your shirt. I'm aware of your eyes. I'm aware of the clock. I'm aware of your

movement. I'm aware of your voice." The first time most people try this exercise, they find that they are more aware of external things.

You make decisions based upon the information you are aware of. If you are mainly aware of the things that are outside of you, upon what then, do you base your decisions -- internal or external information? The external! The term given to this is "externally controlled" or "external locus of control." People with a high external locus of control tend to be "other directed." That is, they are reactors rather than actors. They are constantly reacting to the environment and to other people around them without checking to see what they want or what is best for them in the long run.

On the other hand, if you are only aware of what is inside of you and unaware of anything external, you will literally walk into the walls. There will be no "reality check" and you will constantly be misreading those around you. Even though there are two minds in the same room, you will be doing the thinking for both, never checking out your environment.

Most people find this exercise difficult to do the first time. However, with practice, getting back a balance in your awareness is one of the easiest things you can do. If you will practice this exercise daily, you will find that within one week, you will be able to do this exercise very quickly. You will also find that you will not be searching or looking for things to notice.



So, let's try this exercise again. This time you will need a partner. One of you will need to take the lead. Both of you do as you did before, except one of you will be giving instructions. As before, start out with "I am aware of . . ." and fill in whatever comes to mind.

After 30 seconds into the exercise, the leader says, "Close your eyes and continue the exercise." As you do this, notice how your focus of awareness changes.

After about 30 seconds of doing the exercise with eyes closed, the leader should say, "Reach out and hold hands." Continue to do the exercise with your eyes closed and holding hands.

After another 30 seconds, the leader should say, "Drop hands and continue with your eyes closed." Finally, the leader says, "open your eyes and continue the exercise." Do this again for 30 seconds. End the exercise.

Discuss together how your awareness changed as you went through the exercise. How did you feel with your eyes closed? When you dropped hands? Could you get in touch with the isolation? The aloneness? Doing the exercise with your eyes closed helps you refocus on a balance between internal and external awareness.

For one week, twice a day, do the first part of the exercise by yourself. You can certainly do it while you are driving the car (not with your eyes closed, please), riding the subway, eating, milking a cow, walking down the street or even having sex! The more you practice the exercise, the faster you will become, the more you will become aware and the better you will be able to make decisions based upon a balance between your internal and your external awareness.

## Exercise 2: Becoming Aware of Your Anger

For one week, be aware of your degrees of anger. Don't fudge! If you are mad, you are mad. If you're feeling hostile, be there. Make yourself a chart of the degrees of your anger. You may add more than what has been given in this book. Note the time, the day, and the degree of anger you felt in a little journal. On the right side of your journal in a separate column, note the incident that happened just prior to your anger and what you felt just prior to feeling irritated, mad, etc. Keep track of your feelings through each incident. You will find that those you most often ignore are the little annoyances and upsets, but *write these down*. Keep very close track of each and every incident and the degree of anger that you experienced. Become aware of any feelings you might have had just seconds before you experienced your anger. *Save this chart for the next chapter.*



## THINGS TO COME

In the next chapter, we're going to be looking at some interesting things you know, *but don't know you know*, about yourself and anger. You will find that you don't simply feel annoyed, upset or angry without another feeling preceding the anger. We will spend quite a bit of time looking at the process of anger and depression. But *don't read the next chapter until you have completed your journal and the awareness exercises . . .* or you will lose your mental health (well, maybe just a little).

In another chapter, we will learn how to have a yelling, screaming fight that will be over in less than a half-hour and will find you saying, "That was a good fight! Let's do it again sometime." Good fights bring us closer together. They are not right or wrong fights; they are not win or lose fights. Good fights result in understanding what the other is experiencing. Good fights result in feeling understood.



# Chapter Three

## GETTING TO KNOW ME, GETTING TO KNOW MORE ABOUT ME

The science of Psychology doesn't invent or create things about human beings. All psychology can do is to offer insight as to how you already are. Psychology cannot change you. If any changing is to occur, it will be up to you to do the changing. Awareness and insight can help, but the responsibility for change is yours.

Psychology is the study of, or *discovery of*, how people are designed to operate. Since you are a "people" who knows you better than you do? As you read this chapter, you may find that you already have insight into yourself that you are not aware of. In this chapter, everything I will tell you you'll find that you already know. *You just don't know that you know it.*

### Primary Feelings

*You always feel something first, before you feel angry.*

Anger, with all its degrees of intensity, is a secondary feeling. Before you can get irritated or upset, before you feel furious or even hurt, you will feel some other feeling. Seconds or moments before you get angry, you will always feel another emotion.

Think of the last time that you were angry. What did you feel seconds or moments before you got annoyed, irritated or hurt? What did you feel before you got angry or mad? Before you felt anything in the second column, what did you feel in the first column?

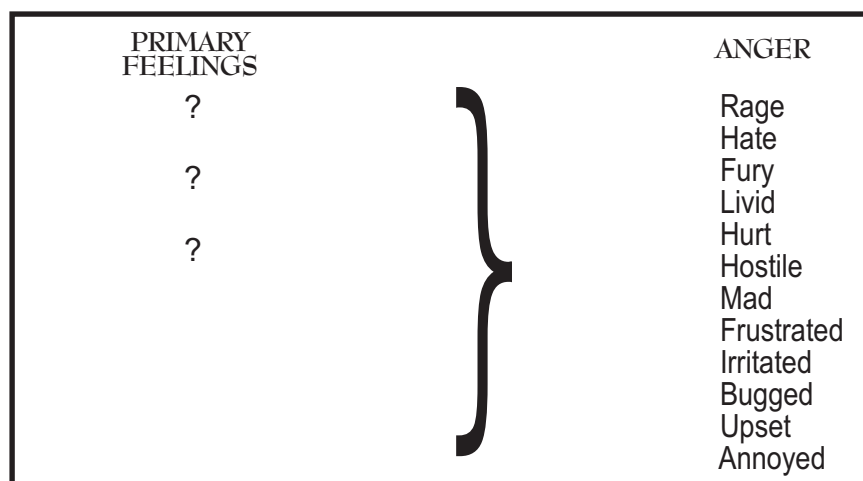


Figure 3.1

## Fear

Have you ever been driving your car down the street and had some nut whip out and almost kill you? You slam on the brakes, swerve and your car ends up halfway in the ditch. Your heart pounds and your body shakes. What do you want to do then? Yell at him? Go bash his car in? Punch him in the nose? What were you feeling? Anger, rage, fury! But what did you feel just seconds *before* you got angry? FEAR! Most *road rage* is the result of being scared first. Fear is one of the things we feel just split seconds before we get angry.

Last year I was watching two men framing a house near where I live. The man up in the rafters was struggling with a two-by-six while the man on the ground was hollering directions. Suddenly, as the man in the rafters lost control of the two-by-six, it shot down and just missed the man on the ground by inches. It didn't touch him, but after the initial fear; the man on the ground was so angry I thought he was going to climb up there and kill the other guy.

## Pain

What else do you feel before you get angry? Have you ever hit your thumb? What did you feel just before you started swearing? PAIN!

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Physical pain is another of the things you can feel before you get angry. But it's not just any physical pain. It's *unexpected physical pain*. The dentist can say to you, "This is going to hurt," and you usually don't punch him out. Doctors and nurses learned long ago not to say, "This won't hurt," just before giving a painful injection. It is *unexpected* physical pain that you feel before you become angry, whether you bang your head into the cabinet or someone steps on your sore toe.

## Disappointment

A major source of anger for both adults and children is disappointment. The intensity of the anger depends upon how big the disappointment was. There are three basic types of disappointment that you can experience. All three of them I call "Shoulds".

### The "It Should's"

Remember that nut and bolt that you took apart, and then it won't go back together! How upsetting, irritating, maddening! You buy a brand new battery for the car, walk out the next morning and find that the battery is dead. You get the battery fixed and discover that the tire is flat. Finally, you get to the store to buy that quart of milk, and when you get home, it comes out of the carton in one big glump! "That does it! Now I'm really mad!"

There are things in your life that you figure should work but don't. As the "It Shoulds" build up, the intensity of your feelings build up. Beginning with a little frustration and irritation, they grow till you are so mad and pissed off you're ready to put your fist through the wall or tell someone where to go.

### The "You Should's"

The "You Shoulds" are the ones you have for other people. These are the beliefs you have which say that people should do what you think they should do, not what they do.

- "You should do this. You shouldn't do that."

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- "You should be on time."
- "You should call if you are going to be late."
- "You should not leave your clothes lying all around the house."
- "You should spend more time with me."
- "You shouldn't nag me."

These are the expectations that you have for others. Your list of "You Shoulds" can create a lot of anger in your relationships with others and increase the stresses in your life.

Most of us remember less than 40% of what we hear, so it is my custom to suggest that people I counsel bring a cassette tape to their counseling sessions to have them recorded. This way, they can listen to their session again later at home. One couple I counseled liked the idea of recording the sessions. The wife volunteered to bring a tape with her on their next visit.

She forgot to bring the tape to the second session and again on the third. Each time she said, "Oh, I'll bring it next time." Before long, it was the seventh session and still no tape. Her husband was really mad. "You make me so angry, this is the seventh time and you keep telling me that you will bring the tape, but you never do!"

My response to him was, "And who is the fool who believes her?"

At what point is it your responsibility to change your expectations, your "You Shoulds?" Be careful not to make this into a right or wrong thing. Sure, there are rights and wrongs, ask any policeman or minister. However, just remember that people are going to do what they are going to do, not necessarily what you think they should do or even what they say they will do. Just because someone is not doing what you think they should do, doesn't make them wrong. Who said people should have to live up to your expectations? Since you choose to think, and it is your beliefs and expectations that create your anger, be careful not to blame others for *your feelings*. When you do, you make yourself powerless and a victim.

A broader application of the "You Should and Shouldn'ts" are the "They Shoulds" and "They Shouldn'ts," which result in the same

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feelings of anger and frustration. "The government should/shouldn't . . ." "The schools should . . ." "The police shouldn't . . ." or "People shouldn't. . ."

Remember what we discussed in Chapter 1. You can choose to change your expectations and beliefs, or you can use your anger as the motivating energy to work for change. Remember Susan B. Anthony? Carrie Nation? Martin Luther King and his dream? All these people *used their anger to empower themselves to work for change.*

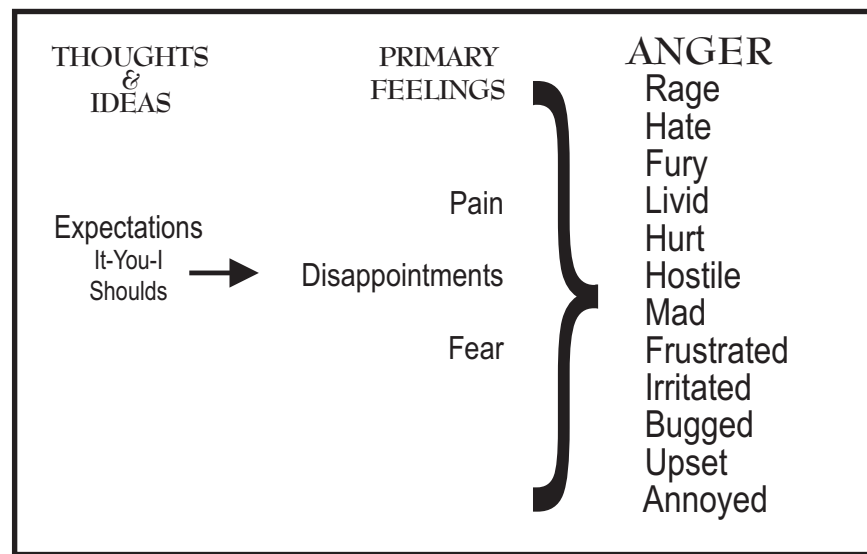


Figure 3.2

### The "I Should's"

Probably the worst of the "Shoulds" are the "I Shoulds".

- "I should have kept my mouth shut."
- "I should have gotten more done."
- "I shouldn't have eaten the whole thing."
- "I should like myself."
- "I should treat others more kindly."

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- "I shouldn't lose my temper."
- "I should lose weight."
- "I should exercise more."
- "I should be more patient."
- "I should love my neighbor."

"I Shouldn't's" are the same as "I Shoulds." "I Shouldn't be late" is the same as "I Should be on time."

Albert Ellis had a classic "I Should" except his term for it was *musterbation*: "I *must* do perfectly and people *must* appreciate me; if it doesn't happen I am no good, I am worthless, I am worse than garbage."

"I Shoulds" create a lot of unresolved anger since most of us have never learned how to be angry with ourselves. We have many role models of how to be angry with others (most of them in destructive ways), but few role models of how to be angry with ourselves (all of them destructive). As a result, we take our "I Shoulds" out on ourselves in some very unhealthy ways. As a reminder not to be so hard on ourselves, we have a bumper sticker in our office that says, "*HAVE I SHOULD ON MYSELF TODAY?*"

Dr. Scott Peck suggests in his book, *The Road Less Traveled*, that if you have a long list of "You Shoulds", you make everybody else miserable. If you have a long list of "I Shoulds", you make yourself miserable.

## Powerlessness

Other feelings that create anger are the many forms of powerlessness. Moments after feeling one of these, you will feel angry.

### *Helpless*

Parents with a seriously sick child often feel angry at the doctors or nurses in charge of their child's care. Parents who bring their children into the emergency room of the hospital, often find themselves yelling at the nurses and doctors because they are afraid and feel so



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helpless. In Kubler-Ross' book, *On Death and Dying*, anger is listed as one stage of the grieving process. You feel angry because you feel helpless to stop what has happened or is happening. As the daughter of a close friend of mine lay dying; both he and his wife felt intense anger. Here he was, a doctor, a pediatrician, but he was totally helpless to do anything to save his own daughter.

*Trapped*

When you feel trapped in a job or in a relationship, you will experience a lot of anger. I can't even begin to count the number of clients who tell me how trapped they have felt in their marriages. Some felt trapped by their partners, others by their finances, still others by their values or religious beliefs. Whatever the circumstances, all had one thing in common; varying degrees of anger, anger that built up until it spilled over into other areas of their lives. As we discussed earlier, your thoughts and beliefs that "I should..." "I must..." "I have to..." and "I can't..." contribute to your feelings of powerlessness and ensure your position of being a victim. It has been said, "There are no victims, only volunteers."

*Controlled*

When you feel controlled, it is like everyone else has power over your life but you. Try this experiment the next time you are riding with someone in his or her car. Do a little back seat driving.

- "Look out for that car!"
- "Slow down."
- "Go faster."
- "Turn here."
- "Look out for that stop sign."

What happens when you try controlling someone that is driving? Don't they begin feeling controlled and then angry? Before you try this, be sure you have your walking shoes on.

*Pressured*

Pressured is another feeling of powerlessness. When you feel pressured by external forces such as your boss, bills, demanding teachers, or your schedule, you will find yourself getting very angry. You can see the results in children who live in do-it-now-type

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families. Tell your two year old child "Take your bath now; it's time to go to bed." What the two year old child hears is "I am bigger and meaner. Do what I say NOW!" He feels pressured and controlled. The result? Instant screaming (anger).

Teachers who feel powerless in the classroom may use control and pressure techniques in an attempt to regain their sense of control over the class. As the children are made to feel pressured, they resist. The teacher applies more control, and their resistance grows as their sense of powerlessness increases. The cycle continues.

People who are forced to live in powerless situations tend to become one or a combination of the following:

- a rebel who acts out against society,
- a person who dominates, controls, and manipulates others, or
- a victim for those who dominate and control.

The behavior or behaviors that the person chooses is what they believe they have to do to survive being powerless.

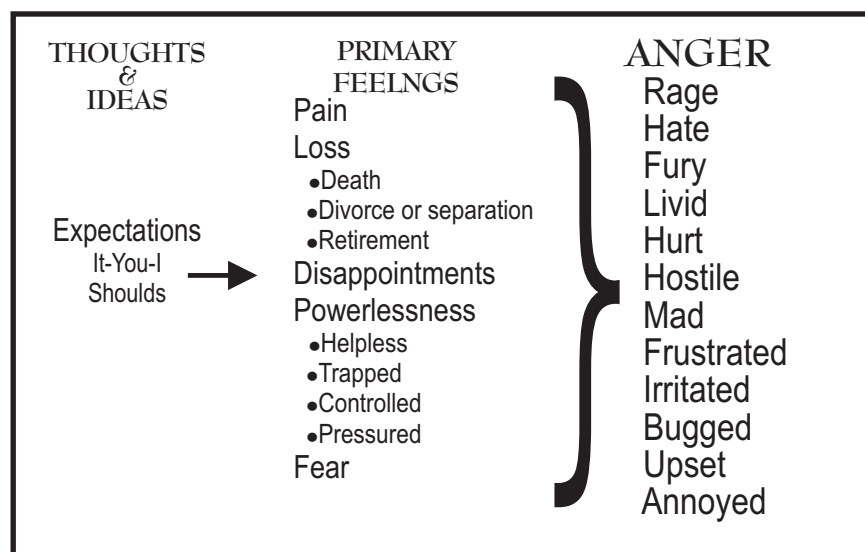


Figure 3.3

## Loss

Still another feeling you will feel moments before you get angry is loss. If somebody steals your garbage, you don't get angry because there is no sense of loss. If somebody steals your garbage cans, you are irritated and upset. If someone breaks into your home and steals the stereo that is neither paid for nor insured, you are up to furious. Should someone kidnap one of your kids, you are raging, seething and ready to kill. The bigger the loss, the greater the anger.

### *Divorce/Separation*

These can be forms of losses. Now, if somebody you didn't care about walks out of your life, "Whew, thank goodness they're gone." If, on the other hand, he or she was the light of your life, somebody you really wanted, that's a real loss.

### *Retirement*

Though long awaited, retirement can be a major loss . . . a loss of significance, power, control, money and prestige. My father retired at 55 to return to college and start a brand new career. At 94 he lives alone and says, "Rocking chairs will kill you!"

### *Death*

Losing a loved one to *death* is probably the ultimate form of loss. It is especially difficult for a person who has lost someone dear to him, to realize that he is intensely angry with the person who died. People often feel confused because of their mistaken belief that the opposite of love is hate, but, as we have seen, hate is simply a degree of anger. Have you ever gotten angry with your kids? Does that mean you don't love them? Of course not! In short, the opposite of love is indifference. The greater the loss, the more intense the feelings of anger and, if you aren't careful, the greater the depression.

*THE OPPOSITE OF LOVE  
IS NOT HATE,  
IT IS INDIFFERENCE*

A 26 year old lady called in to my TV show. She had two small children and had lost her husband in a car accident just three months before. She was feeling confused because she loved him very much, but she also was very angry at him for dying and leaving her with two small kids. "We were supposed to grow old together. This isn't what was supposed to happen! But how can I be angry with him for dying? He didn't want to die." She was experiencing not only the loss of the most important person in her life, but also a lot of missed expectations about how life should have been. Because her feelings of anger were not acceptable to her, she went from feeling a tremendous sense of loss, powerlessness, and helplessness and skipped right over into depression.

Loss is often not recognized as what it is. When I was in the sixth grade, I had Miss Jorgenson, the best teacher in the school. After the second month, she suddenly didn't come back to school. We heard that she had a major health problem and no one knew when or if she would be back. Not knowing how to deal with our loss and anger, the series of substitute teachers who followed were all considered by our class as fair game. Our goal was to see who could reduce the substitute teacher to tears first, and how long it would take to drive them off. As I look back now, it is easy to see that we were very angry, though we were not aware of our anger or the reason for it.

I believe that the substitute teachers were also not aware of our intense feelings, for not one teacher helped us to deal with them. For this lack of awareness, they paid dearly. I remember one teacher's first day well. He came in, looked around and didn't see the teacher's desk. He asked if teachers at our school had desks. (We had hidden his desk in the closet). We told him the other teachers did and that he had better ask about it at the principal's office. When he left to go to the office, we pulled it out of the closet so that it was in its rightful place when he returned with the principal. The principal seemed irritated that the teacher had not seen his desk. When the teacher stepped into the hall to try to explain to the principal, his desk disappeared back into the closet. He lasted three days as our substitute teacher.

We went through nine substitute teachers that school year. If only there had been one teacher who could have understood our anger and

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had taken ten minutes to talk with us about our loss and disappointment things could have been different.

I was speaking at a church in Fresno, California, sharing the Loss→Anger Connection. After I had finished speaking, a lady came up to thank me. "Now I understand why every time my husband goes on one of his three week sales trips we end up fighting just before he leaves. Then I feel guilty all the while he is gone, and when he comes back, I start another fight with him. It's because of the loss. I guess I won't have to do that next time."

## Boredom

Boredom is another feeling you experience before you get angry. In your busy, hectic world, I expect that you don't often experience too much of this. Children, though, do have problems with boredom when it's raining or snowing outside and there is nothing to do. Before long, they begin to act out their anger. Tracey hits David; David hits Darcy; Darcy hits Donnie. Pretty soon, there is a big fight. At least for the duration of the fight, they aren't bored!

In inner cities across the country, from Los Angeles to Washington, D.C., there is often no recreation, no jobs, nothing to do. It's boring and anger builds. What is the all too frequent result? Just about anything from a drive-by shooting to a riot.

In remote mountain communities in the dead of winter when it's impossible to work, people are snowed in for long periods and are cooped-up in a little cabin with nothing to do; the result is a big fight, which sometimes ends in homicide. Some have called this result of cabin fever (extreme boredom) the "Alaskan divorce".

Older people, people who are retired or those who are invalids, often have intense feelings of loneliness, boredom and powerlessness. These people sometimes become very angry, bitter and negative. They then turn their boredom and anger into depression. The suicide rate of the elderly population is the highest of all age categories. We will look at more examples of the Anger→Depression Connection in the next chapter.

## Confusion

Confusion is another feeling you can feel moments before you become angry, whether you confuse yourself or someone else confuses you.

I was going over this information with some employees of the Internal Revenue Service. Their response was, "Oh, yes! We understand! We will pick up the phone and say, 'Good morning, IRS,' and the person on the other end starts swearing at us. What we know is that they have been trying to understand their 'simplified' tax forms and are totally confused!"

Children often exhibit behavioral problems at school after their feelings of confusion have turned into anger. Feeling confused and angry, they start acting out in class. At a local elementary school, the principal told me that during the same week each year she gets more fourth graders in her office than all the rest of the year. "That is the week we start teaching long division." Unfortunately, when a child acts out in school, the teacher will sometimes react with control, which just increases the child's sense of powerlessness and anger. I wonder what would happen if the teacher said something like this: "This week we will be learning some new ways of working with numbers that can be real confusing at first. When you feel confused, I want you to notice that you may feel a little angry or irritated. When you do, tell me and we will talk about it as a class. Let's make an agreement not to take out your anger on each other."

You can confuse yourself by not being aware of what you are feeling and not understanding your own resulting behaviors. If you have no acceptable way to express your confusion and anger, it will usually spill over into other areas of your life in very unhealthy ways.

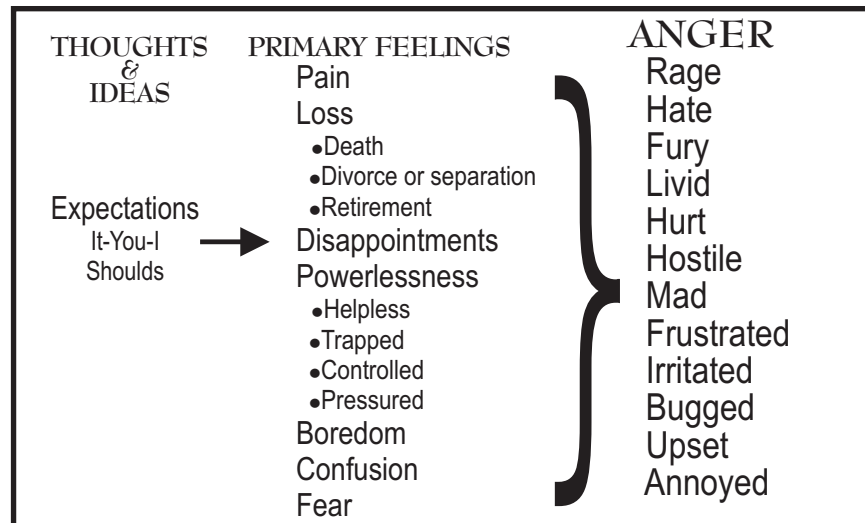


Figure 3.4

### Problem Feelings: Guilt/Guilt Trips, Putdowns and Threats/Discounts

The next three feelings that you feel just moments before you get angry, I have saved for last because they are different from the others on our list of primary feelings. Remember in Chapter Two where I was talking about expressing your anger appropriately and making things better? These next three things, when directed at someone else or when they are directed at you, *do not* make things better. In fact, they tend to *build* anger and resentment. Have you ever have an argument that turned out good? "I was angry at my friend; I told my wrath, my wrath did end." Well these last three were *not* a part of that argument.

#### Guilt

"Guilt" and "Guilt Trips" create anger. Remember when you were a kid and tried laying a guilt trip on your mom? "But Mother, everyone gets to stay up until one o'clock in the morning!" If she felt guilty she would snap back angrily, "I don't care what everybody's doing. You're my kid and you're going to do what I tell you!"

I have noticed that when people go to church, if the preacher lays a guilt trip on them, they don't change. They just get angry and usually

don't go back. People avoid people, situations, or topics that tend to lay on a sense of guilt.

A few years back, in the *Cathy* cartoon, she is shown leaving her home one snowy winter night. As she walks out the door carrying a shopping bag full of packages, she thinks, "The saleswoman spent 45 minutes helping me while I agonized over whether to get this dress...." In the next panel, she is standing by her car thinking, "She complimented me, encouraged me, and cheerfully hung up the 17 other outfits I had to try on before I could make a decision." Then, as she is shown in her car driving, she thinks, "Now I'm driving 30 miles out of my way so I can return it at a different branch of the store so I won't have to see her face." In the last panel, a bleak winding road is shown leading off in the distance with her final thoughts, "There's no limit to how far we'll go to avoid someone who's been good to us."

Some of you have been raised to believe that anger is bad or sinful, so when you feel anger, you immediately feel guilty for feeling angry, "I shouldn't feel this way." And when you feel the guilt, you get angry with yourself for doing something you shouldn't. The resulting Anger→Guilt, Guilt→Anger Cycle can seem impossible to stop.

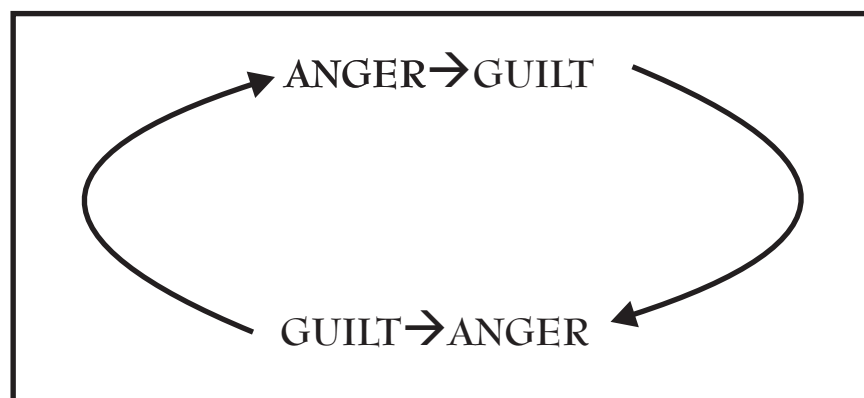


Figure 3.5

### Guilt Trips

"You should call your mother more often. Mrs. Roberts' kids call her at least once a day. Your mother sits home all day just waiting for you to call." But just as insidious are the non-verbal guilt trips: the sad eyes, the tear, the wounded look, the rattling of the medicine bottles



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in the cabinet. Most of us already know what we should and shouldn't do, so when someone lays a guilt trip on us, we will feel even guiltier, "They're right, I Should...." After awhile, it's easier just to avoid the situation or person than it is to deal with our anger at ourselves and/or the other person for making us feel guilty.

Whenever you feel guilty, you will set yourself up to be punished. The first time I really became aware of this principle at work was when a large company referred their Vice-President to me for counseling because he had suddenly become "accident-prone." In the nine months previous to my seeing him, he had wrecked *three* company cars, sustaining various degrees of injury. He had fallen down the stairs at work, breaking his leg. Then, he stumbled and fell in the parking lot and got a minor concussion. As the last straw, he had broken his arm while sitting at his desk. The company was about ready to let him go if something didn't change quickly. They said that in the previous fifteen years, he had been totally accident-free.

*WHENEVER YOU FEEL GUILTY,  
YOU WILL SET YOURSELF UP  
TO BE PUNISHED*

When he came into my office, I asked him if there had been any changes in his life over the past year. He stated that nine months ago his twenty-one year old daughter had left her husband and had returned home with her year old baby. Soon after that, his sixteen year old son started skipping school and running with "bad kids." The boy had even come home drunk one night and broke a window. As I listened to him relate his story, it was very obvious that the man carried a tremendous amount of guilt for his children's behaviors. When I pointed this out to him, he readily acknowledged that he felt guilty for all that had happened and added that he even felt guilty that a division of his company back east had lost money the year before. "I could see it coming, and I didn't tell them what they should have done differently". I could see a connection between his feelings of guilt and his need to be punished.

I asked him how his parents had punished him as a child. He responded, "I was beaten, slapped and kicked. Because of the beatings, my arm was broken on at least two different occasions and one time I ended up in the hospital because my mother hit me on the head with a fry pan." I compared his early childhood experiences with his current situation. "And now, since you feel guilty over your son, your daughter, your wife and your company's losses in New Jersey, you are setting yourself up to be punished in much the same way as you were punished when you were a child."

A few years later, I saw the perfect example of this in the *For Better Or Worse* cartoon strip (see below). John, the dentist, after years of saving, had bought his dream car, a red Jaguar super sports model. He had waited months for delivery and the car arrived the day before he was to attend a dental convention in Montreal, Canada. So, he and a couple of other dentist friends took the older station wagon and went to the conference, leaving the red sports car with Ellie, his wife. On the very first day, she illegally passed a school bus that had its lights blinking, crashed and wrecked the new sports car. Several days later, after John returned from the convention, he and Ellie were sitting in a restaurant:

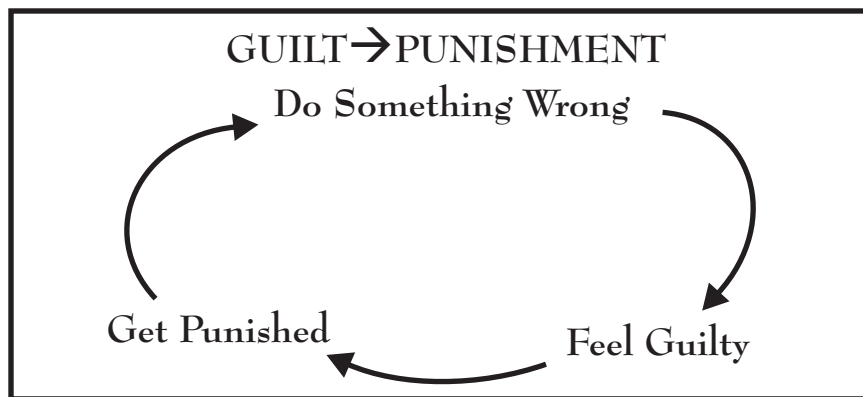


Figure 3.6

The Guilt→Punishment connection is a learned connection. When you were born, you were born without any guilt. At two years old, you would run through the house stark naked nude, everyone would chase you, and you thought it was great! As you became older, you learned what you should and what you should not do. As a result, when you did something wrong, you would feel guilty, then Mom

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and Dad would come home and you were punished. This cycle was reinforced over and over during your years growing up: do something wrong, feel guilty, get punished. Just like Pavlov and his dogs, you were being conditioned that whenever you felt guilty, punishment was soon to follow. You grew up, your parents are gone, but the connection is still present on an unconscious level. Now, as an adult, whenever you do something wrong, you feel guilty, and since you don't automatically get punished, you punish yourself or set it up for someone else to punish you like Ellie did in the cartoon.



*Figure 3.7*

Some people are quite good at getting others to punish them. A few years ago, in the *Cathy* cartoon strip, the first frame showed Cathy returning to work after lunch and her secretary asks, "How was lunch?" to which Cathy responds, "I picked a fight with Irving, blew it into a huge argument and now we aren't speaking." The problem here is that Cathy felt guilty about picking that fight with Irving. So in the next frame, she tells her secretary how she punished herself. "Frustrated by Irving, I stomped into the department store, lashed out with my charge card and spent two hundred dollars I couldn't afford." She punished herself by overspending. Once again, feeling guilty for having spent money she couldn't afford, she punished herself again. In the next frame, she continues, "Disgusted that I ruined my budget over ruining my relationship, I rushed into the croissant shop and ruined my diet. In the last frame she concludes, "I can accomplish more in one lunch hour than most people can do in a month."

A client of mine who had worked for her mother for many years had become alcoholic, but she wanted to change. Now she had not taken a drink in six months and she was feeling good about her sobriety. However, one Monday morning she came in looking and smelling like she had slept in a dumpster. "I had a big fight with my mother, then went out drinking all weekend. I just blew all my sobriety." It was obvious that she was feeling very guilty so my next question was, "and how do you plan to punish yourself?" Without thinking she blurted out, "Go get drunk." Her mouth dropped open as she realized what she had said. She had never before recognized the connection between her guilt and her drinking. Of course, getting drunk will create even more guilt for her, and just like Cathy, she will again need to be punished...and again...and again.

I've gotten to the place in my counseling that whenever I hear someone expressing guilt I will ask, "and how do you plan to punish yourself?" I find the Guilt→Punishment cycle in some unexpected places such as in domestic situations where the wife believes she should make her husband happy, "I'm failing miserably!" I see it in molest situations in which the family has been split up "because I told," or even in date rape cases, "I must have done something wrong."

Guilt is not what motivates us to do things or to change how we are. Did you ever have a letter you should write or a phone call you should make? The more guilt you felt, the more you tended to put it off. It isn't until your feelings of fear, embarrassment or love get great enough that you will make a change. "Oh, my goodness! Grandmother will be here in two weeks; and I haven't thanked her for the present she sent months ago. I will call tonight." It wasn't guilt that got the person to call, it was the embarrassment of seeing Grandmother and having not thanked her that resulted in getting the change. Guilt is never an effective and long lasting tool for motivation. If you want to get change in other people, avoid using guilt on them.

## Putdowns/Discounts

A second, less than helpful, type of feelings are the putdowns. Feeling putdown or discounted creates anger. Now, there are a lot of ways to put people down. Probably the most common type of putdowns are the *judgments*: the "You are..." Messages:

- "You're dumb."
- "You're stupid." "You're lazy."
- "You're irresponsible."
- "You don't help around the house."
- And how could you forget the classic, "You're just a woman, you wouldn't understand."

"You don't love me" is often not recognized as a putdown. How many fights have started when you tell somebody how they are, what they feel, or what they think? "You don't love me" and of course the response "Yes, I do," "No, you don't," and the fight is on. Don't be surprised if the person reacts with anger or withdraws from you because they will invariably feel putdown and discounted. When you tell someone "you don't love me", you are telling them how they feel, and they will react to it with, "Don't tell me how I feel!" if not in words, in their minds and in their behavior.

Domestic violence all too often escalates out of control such as was depicted in the movie *War Of The Roses*. The result in this depiction was that both Mr. and Mrs. Rose died.

Putdowns tend to get putdowns back. Here is where the old rule applies: "You get what you give." The more judgments someone lays on you, the more they will get back, and the fight escalates with each getting more and more angry. "You're frigid just like your mother." "Well, at least I'm not like your alcoholic father." A few more of these and we could have another scene from *Who's Afraid Of Virginia Woolf*.

In some high schools, it is considered the *in* thing to *rank* or put each other down. Ranking is seen by many as just teasing as long as no one takes it personally, or until someone crosses the line: "Your mother . . .!" Then look out, for that's when the fight can turn violent

and guns or knives are often looked to as "solutions" to the conflict.

*Sarcasm* - a type of putdown, can be deadly. "Would you like a compliment? I know that girls like compliments. For a fat girl, you don't sweat much! Ha, Ha! What's the matter with you? Can't you take a joke?" It's hard to get your anger out when sarcasm is used, because their putdowns are often excused with, "I was just joking!" Groucho Marks was a man who made his living by using sarcasm. Unfortunately, he didn't know where to draw the line and carried it over into his relationships. When he died, he had very few friends.

Sarcasm can be a form of child abuse when used by an adult on a child. It is bad enough to use sarcasm with adults, but children do not have the mental experience to recognize it for what it is. They tend to believe the sarcasm and think, "Something is wrong with me." Sarcasm reinforces their belief, "I am not very smart." Whenever you use sarcasm, whether on a child or an adult, what is it you are trying to accomplish? What meanings do you want them draw about themselves? About men? About women? About their world? Are you being honest about your own anger? Sarcasm is a tool of the passive-aggressive person. Sarcasm, shame and humiliation are all putdowns.

*Silent treatment* - is another form of putdown that we often don't recognize. In the silent treatment, the unspoken discount is "You don't exist." This type of putdown evokes either anger or putdowns in response.

## CLIPPING FROM NEWSPAPER:

### Quiet spouse shot by wife

DETROIT (AP) --- A woman shot her husband in the head, critically wounding him, because he wouldn't talk to her, police reported Tuesday.

Mr. V\_\_\_ Sr., 58, was sitting on the couch in his east side home watching television Sunday when his wife told him she wanted to talk to him.

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(continued) He didn't respond, so she clicked off the TV set, other family members told police. He turned it back on several times, but she continued to turn it off. He left the living room and went to the bathroom, where she snatched a washcloth from his hand and asked, "Are you ready to talk to me now?"

Police said Mrs. V\_\_\_ got a gun, fired two shots into the living room ceiling, another into the bathroom ceiling and finally shot him when he still wouldn't talk.

Authorities said Mr. V\_\_\_ was being kept alive with life-support equipment in Detroit Receiving Hospital.

*Embarrassment* - is usually not a putdown, but it can be. It is a put-down only when you embarrass people in a way that demeans, devalues or discounts them, makes them feel humiliated or shamed. Embarrassment, in and of itself, does not create anger. Did you ever walk into the wrong bathroom by accident? What you experienced was probably embarrassment. It is only when shame or humiliation is added to that embarrassment that it becomes a putdown. That is when it creates anger. I have often done things that caused me to be embarrassed and people have laughed. I have laughed, too, because I did not feel putdown, discounted, humiliated, or shamed by what had happened.

*Rejection* - often feels like a putdown. Suppose you came up and started to talk to me, and I stuck my nose in the air, turned around and walked off. Feel rejected? Experience a little anger? Rejection or being stood-up *feels* like a real putdown. Picture a time when he/she dumped you for someone else. Remember how angry you felt? In Chapter One we learned that rejection only feels like a putdown because of the meanings you put to it.



*Lies* - also feel like putdowns. When somebody lies to you, have you noticed that you tend to get angry? That's because being lied to feels like a putdown. It's as if somebody was saying to you, "You're so stupid, I can lie to you and get away with it." For example, you come in and find the lamp shattered on the living room floor. "Who broke this lamp?" Of course, the answer is, "I don't know." You know that the lamp didn't just walk to the edge of the table and jump off. "I am not that stupid." But slow down a minute and ask your child, "Are you saying that I'm so stupid that I couldn't figure out that you broke the lamp?" My guess is that the child will look at you with astonishment and say, "No, I'm not calling you stupid." People lie to you because they are afraid of your emotional reaction. This is their fear; it does not necessarily mean you would hurt them. They are afraid that they cannot handle the consequences of telling the truth. This has nothing to do with putting you down.

## Threats

Threats can blow up in your face because the use of threats tends to get threats back. Remember in high school when one kid would threaten another and there would be an instant fight. When you threaten to knock my teeth out, I'll threaten to punch your lights out.

A few years ago, there was a case where a man was accused of murdering his brother. According to the newspaper, one brother warned the other brother to stay away from his girlfriend and threatened him with consequences. One threat got a return threat, which led to another and the fight quickly escalated until one brother killed the other.

Some of you are sneakier with your threats now than when you were in school. Instead of physical threats, you now use *emotional* threats. "Well, if we can't get along any better than this, maybe we'd just better get a divorce!" "You do, and I'll take you for everything you've got." "I think I'll go get drunk!" "You do, and you're not coming back to this house!" "If you don't give it to me, I know where I can get it!" "Well, so do I."



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Threats, putdowns, and guilt trips usually go together. When you express your feelings through judgments, sarcasm, threats and guilt trips, the other person fires back with judgments, sarcasm, threats and guilt trips. It's like trying to put out a fire with gasoline. It blows up in your face. Feelings go up, logic goes down. The fight continues to escalate until both are so angry that neither is capable of making good decisions. It is at this point that the cops are needed to protect you from yourself as well as from the other person.

CLIPPING FROM FRESNO BEE:

*Brothers fight over stereo volume;  
One stabbed, 2<sup>nd</sup> held*

Fresno police said Darell W\_\_\_, 29, apparently was sleeping when his brother, Alvin, 25, arrived home shortly after 7 am Monday and turned on the stereo in the living room, waking up Darell.

The brothers, police said, then apparently got into an argument over the volume of the stereo.

The argument ended when Darell reportedly went back to his bedroom, grabbed a knife and cut Alvin in the left arm during a scuffle. Alvin was treated at Valley Medical Center for his wound. Darell was taken into custody on suspicion of assault with a deadly weapon.

Confrontation does not always escalate to violence. Sometimes the one being putdown or threatened may shut down. The offended party may simply withdraw in order to avoid any more emotional and/or physical conflict. The aggressor may find himself becoming more isolated and lonely with feelings of rejection and increasing anger.

## LESSONS TO LEARN

### Lesson One:

#### You Always Feel Something Before You Get Angry

As we learned in this chapter, you simply cannot feel angry, upset, irritated or even hurt, unless you feel something first. You always feel something before you become angry. The intensity of your feelings in the Primary Feelings column can be an indicator of the intensity of the feelings in the Anger column. For instance, the greater the loss, the more intense the anger. The greater the disappointment, the more intense the anger.

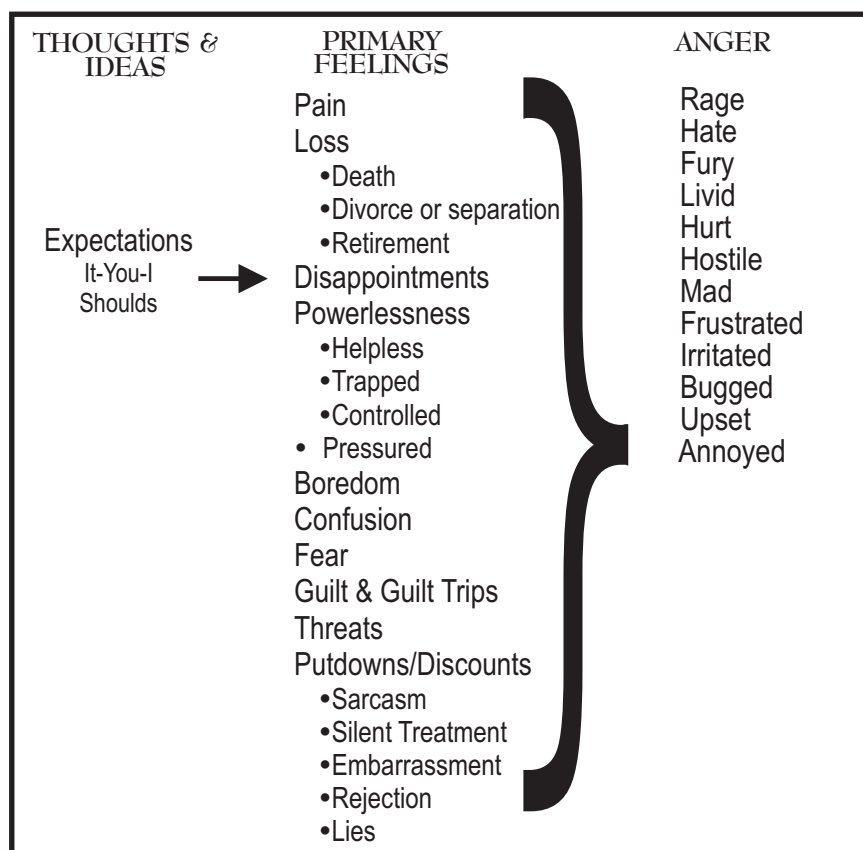


Figure 3.8

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Intense degrees of anger should be a red flag warning you to look at your beliefs and expectations. Do you need to change the person or situation or do you need to change your beliefs and expectations? It is OK to keep your anger and use it to try to change the situation. It is not OK to *Should* on yourself. The bottom line question you need to ask yourself is, "Is what I'm doing getting me what I want in the long run?"

**Lesson Two:**  
**Express Feelings Early**

Looking at our chart, an important lesson to learn is that your feelings need to be expressed early before they build up and you explode at someone. Once you explode, others tend to see you as irrational and become afraid of you. They may initially respond and do what you wanted them to do, but at what price?

A better way is to let people know where you are emotionally and keep them updated as your feelings increase. "Kids your noise is starting to annoy me." You know they are not going to stop so as your feelings increase in intensity... "*All right, I'm getting angry. Stop making so much noise.*" Each time your voice gets louder and becomes stronger. "*That's it, stop it now. If I have to speak to you again you are going to your room.*" Then be sure to follow through. If you don't, you won't be credible and then you will never get the changes you want. The goal in expressing feelings early is not to control others, but to make you a safe and predictable person to be around. Good relationships require the ability to trust other people, which means you need to feel safe with me if you are going to want to be close to me. If you are constantly having to guess where I am emotionally, and you are afraid that I may blow up at any time, you will not feel safe in a relationship with me. Neither will anyone else.

Women who do not feel safe with their man will have a hard time giving themselves to him and enjoying sex. No matter what the man's technique and no matter how much sexual experience he has had, men who are not safe are not seen as good lovers by women. Men and women who do not share their feelings with their partner leave them wondering what is going on with them emotionally and

worrying about what they might do next. Men often don't understand why women demand that they share their feelings with them. Can you imagine living with a Rottweiler, whose body language you couldn't understand and who could turn on you at any moment and kill you?

### Lesson Three:

#### Getting Others To Listen To Your Anger

Loud, noisy words, combined with the threat of physical and/or emotional harm, can not create close relationships because no one is listening and nothing is getting solved. Not only are you not listening to each other, you usually blame others for making you angry. Most of the anger we have seen has been rejecting, threatening, and hurtful because most anger is typically expressed using putdowns, judgments, sarcasm, threats and guilt trips.

- "See how you are. If you hadn't made me so angry I wouldn't have hit you."
- "You kids make me so angry, I'm going to whip the lot of you."
- "If we can't get along any better than this, maybe we'd better get a divorce!"

If you want people to be able to listen to your anger, I strongly recommend expressing your anger in Primary Feeling terms. To do this, you first have to *know what you feel*. To help you to identify your own feelings, the next time you observe someone who is yelling at the clerk in a store or in a TV drama, put yourself in the person's shoes who is doing the yelling. Then ask yourself, "What would I be feeling if I had said that?" It will take practice to learn this skill, but don't give up. Good relationships don't just happen, they take work.

Try changing your words into an expression of your Primary Feelings.

- "I feel powerless and unloved in our relationship. You may love me very much, but I don't *feel* loved."
- "I am feeling really trapped and confused in this marriage. It

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isn't what you're doing or not doing, I'm just getting scared of all the responsibility."

- "I'm feeling disappointed and angry; it is like I'm the servant that everybody expects to do all the work. When I end up doing all the work, I don't feel loved or cared about."
- "Darren, I am confused, I have never talked to you or treated you the way you treat me. Is this the way you think families should treat each other?"
- "Mother, when you tell me all the things you think I am doing wrong, I feel guilty. I find it hard to be around people who try to lay a lot of guilt on me. Nevertheless, if you continue to be so critical of me, I will assume you don't want me to call or come over as much."

## EXERCISES TO DO

### Exercise 1:

#### Four Things To Do With An "I Should"

There are four things that you can do with an "I Should" and you WILL do one or a combination of these four things. You do not have the choice of "none of the above."

Instructions: Make a list of all the "I Shoulds" you have for yourself. Now, don't cheat! Make sure you write every one of the Shoulds that you have for yourself down on a sheet of paper. You may want to give yourself several days to make sure you have them all.

■ Stop here and make your list. *Do not read on until your list is complete.*

*The current record is ninety-six (96) "I Shoulds." The prize for this record accomplishment was a very, very depressed person.*

#### 1. BE SPECIFIC

Now that you have completed your "I Should" list, read it over and make these changes. Do not use the words "more" or "less", "better" or "worse." If you say, "I should lose more weight" you could lose down to fifty pounds and still not be there. Most anorexic/bulimic persons have this "Should" for themselves and have no way of knowing when to stop. "I should exercise more." I could exercise 15 hours a day and still not have arrived. "I should be more patient." I could have moss growing on me and still would not have satisfied my "I Should." "I should do better." No matter how much better I do, I still could have done it better. As a result, I never have a sense of having accomplished my goal. These words make it impossible for you ever to achieve your "Should."

- *These words are a prescription for frustration and failure. Just cross them out of your sentences.*

## 2. CHANGING BEHAVIORS

Do not use abstract words like "patient" "loving" "kind" "gentle" "caring" "good" "bad", etc. Wherever you find one of these abstract words, replace it with concrete, tangible, measurable behaviors. "I should be a loving person." The question is what does a loving person do? And what behaviors would you have to do in order to be this "loving" person? What does a "patient" person do? What does a "gentle" person do? Instead of using these abstract words, define what behaviors you would do when you become a "loving" person or a "patient" person. "I Should not yell at my children." "I Should hug my mate at least once a day." Use concrete measurements that define the behaviors you wish to achieve. Anyone watching you should be able to tell by observing your behavior whether you did it or not.

- *Wherever you find one of these abstract words, replace it with concrete, tangible, measurable behaviors.*

## 3. LET GO OF THE PAST

Review your list for any "Should's" from the past. "I should have finished college." "I shouldn't have gotten drunk." "I shouldn't have yelled at my children." "I shouldn't have put Dad in the rest home." "I shouldn't have had that affair." "I should have seen my mother more before she died." "Shoulds" from the past are setups for sure failure. Once the water has passed under the bridge, there is no way of getting it back. There is not a time machine in which you can go back and undo the past. The purpose of hanging onto the past is your mind's way of helping you insure that you don't make the same mistakes again. Separate these "I Shoulds" from the past into a list of their own. In Exercise Two I'll show you what to do with your "Shoulds" from the past. But for now, concentrate only on your current "I Shoulds."

- *Separate these "I Shoulds" from the past into a list of their own.*

## 4. SETTING TIMELINES

The next thing to be aware of when you are making your "I Should" list is that some of your "Shoulds" require timelines. "I should lose five pounds by Christmas." "I should exercise 15

minutes a day, three times a week." Set specific and concrete timelines.

"Shoulds" that do not have an ending or arrival point, that are abstract, or that do not have a timeline, contribute to our problem rather than solve it. The above three either make it impossible to accomplish the Should or prevent us from giving ourselves credit when it is achieved.

- *Set specific and concrete timelines.*

### Living Free of "I Shoulds"

- *Rewrite your list to meet all these requirements. After you have edited your list and rewritten it, then go back and reread it.*

As you read your list, please notice that not one of your "I should's" are yours. They are someone else's "I should" for you. Is there any place in your list where you have, *I Should brush my teeth* or *I Should take a bath*? Don't you think you should brush your teeth or take baths? You say you didn't include those "Shoulds" because you already do them. But, brushing your teeth wasn't always your "Should," it was your mother's. When something is truly your "Should," you do it, and it is no longer an "I Should," but an "I Do."

*WHEN SOMETHING IS TRULY  
YOUR "SHOULD," YOU DO IT,  
AND IT IS NO LONGER AN  
"I SHOULD," BUT AN "I DO"*

There are only four things that you can do with an "I Should."

1. You can *do it*.
2. You can *change or modify* your "Should" in some way.  
If you don't do number one or number two, you will automatically do number three.



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3. You will *become depressed, feel guilty, inadequate, be angry* at yourself and feel like a failure.  
After staying with number three for awhile, people often will then choose to go to number four.
4. *Cut off your feelings.* When you cut off your feelings the result is a kind of "numbing out" where you never feel happy, never get sad, never feel any strong emotions. Some people use drugs or alcohol as a way to stay numb. The feelings of depression, guilt, inadequacy and anger can be so painful and/or frightening that being numb can become a way of life; a state of being that is preferable to feeling.

### Getting Rid Of The "Shoulds"

Look at your list again. One by one, make a decision as to what you want to do with each of your "I Shoulds."

"I Should exercise one hour a day, five times a week." Ask yourself:

1. do you want to do it,
2. change or modify it, or
3. be depressed and feel like a failure?

If you do not make a conscious decision over what you want to do with your "Should", your body will make the choice for you, which for most people is choice number three; be depressed. Sooner or later it will rollover into number four. Numbers three and four are where you "Should on yourself" as our bumper sticker states "Have I Should On Myself Today?"

As you go through your "I Should" list, if you decide that you are going to do it, then it will no longer be a "Should". The "Should" will change from "I Should exercise..." to "I exercise..." If you choose to change or to modify it, your "Should" disappears. "I exercise twenty minutes a day, three days a week." If you do not choose number one or number two, then rewrite your sentence to say, "I choose to be depressed, feel like a failure and be angry with myself. And, I will continue to be depressed, feel like a failure and be angry

with myself until I choose to change my *Shoulds* for myself." In any case, please notice that you have done away with every "I Should" that you have.

**WARNING**

If you find that you are not doing what you said you want to do, you are not being honest with yourself. Be sure that what you say and what you do match up or you will be creating problems for yourself. You will learn more about this in a later chapter.

## Exercise 2: Learning From Our Past

Do you ever lie in bed late at night when you are all alone and go over and over all the "Would have... Could have... Should have's in your life?" Do you mentally beat yourself up over and over till you fall asleep feeling alone and miserable? Ruminations like this are not productive and are very depressing. They are a way of punishing yourself for your misdeeds of the past.

- If you would like to train yourself not to do this, take a piece of paper and make three vertical columns. Take all the your past "I Should's" from your I Should list, plus all your negative late night ruminations, and write them in the first column.
  - "I should have gone to see Mother before she died."
  - "I should have risked taking that job in a new city."
  - "I shouldn't have gotten drunk and made a fool of myself at the boss's party."
  - "I should have spent more time with my children; gone to their games."
- Across from each of these, write what you learned from each one of these experiences. Remember, nothing is a mistake if you learn from it. In the third column write down how you would do it differently the next time something similar happens. Any time you find yourself ruminating, go through

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this same process being sure to write down all the negative thoughts that are keeping you awake.

Exercise 2 Sample			
	WOULD HAVE SHOULD HAVE COULD HAVE	WHAT I LEARNED FROM THE EXPERIENCE	HOW I WILL DO IT DIFFERENTLY NEXT TIME
○	-I should have gone to see Mother before she died.	- The life of those I love is precious and I miss them when they are gone.	-I will create opportunities to be with the ones I love.
○	-I should have risked taking that job in a new city.	-Without risk there is no gain and I can do things even if they scare me to death.	-I will not let my fear control me or use it for an excuse not to do something.
	-I shouldn't have gotten drunk and made a fool of myself at the boss's party.	-I don't have to use alcohol to deal with my anxiety and fear of not being liked. Being alcoholic is an option.	-I can drink, but I choose not to drink, because it doesn't get me what I want in the long run.
○	-I should have spent more time with my children; gone to their games.	-My approval and attention is important to the self-image of my children.	-I will spend at least one hour per week in one-on-one time with each of my children.

After you have completed the exercise, the next time you are lying in bed and these punishing thoughts come into your mind, you now can stop them. The purpose of punishment is the same for you as it was for your children, to learn. When your child did something wrong, you would punish him/her so he/she would remember not to do that again. Once they learned and no longer were doing that behavior, did you keep lecturing and punishing them just in case? I hope not.

## TAKING CONTROL OF YOUR LIFE

When you were very young did you ever have a dog that you taught to do tricks? Once you taught your dog to sit up, did you then take a newspaper and spank it when it was doing its trick? Of course not, that would be cruel and inhumane. Once you have learned your lesson and are no longer doing the behavior, all you need to do is to remind yourself: 1) of what you have learned and 2) how you will do it differently next time. Then your mind will allow you to sleep. Be as kind to yourself as you would be to your dog or to your children.

### Exercise Three: Listening To What Is Not Being Said

*Reactors* listen to what is said. "I hate you!"

*Actors* listen to what is *not* said, to where the anger is coming from. "I feel powerless with you and not very loved."

Since you cannot feel any of the degrees of anger until you have felt something in the Primary Feelings Column, the *actor* emotionally steps back and listens to where the other person's anger is coming from. How good are you at being an *actor*?

Before beginning, see the next page to review the Feelings List. You may find this list helpful in identifying your feelings.

# Feelings List

Happy	Angry	Hurt	Sad	Afraid	Worried	Loving	Depressed	Eager	Interested
festive	irritated	(personalized anger)	sorrowful	fearful	doubtful	affectionate	gloomy	determined	concerned
content	disgusted	injured	mournful	timid	skeptical	soft	somber	zealous	fascinated
satisfied	hate	offended	weepy	shaky	suspicious	close	dismal	ardent	engrossed
peaceful	upset	distressed	heartbroken	fidgety	dubious	sexy	dreadful	keen	intrigued
ecstatic	resentful	pained	dismayed	panicked	uncertain	tender	dreary	motivated	absorbed
inspired	enraged	suffering	humble	alarmed	wavering	warm	blah	powered up	curious
glad	furious	afflicted	woeful	paralyzed	hesitant	open	dull	anticipation	inquisitive
joyful	annoyed	aching		horrified	perplexed	appealing	moody	excited	inquiring
grateful	provoked	crushed		insecure	indecisive	passionate	lonely	hopeful	creative
cheerful	offended	cold		nervous	distrustful	seductive	isolated	encouraged	sincere
excited	irate	wounded	<b>Confused</b>	anxious	questioning	motherly	useless	cooperative	involved
buoyant	wrathful	tortured	awkward	terrified	pessimistic	forgiving	worthless	breathless	compassionate
carefree	cross	pathetic	bewildered	evasive	cautious	sympathetic	melancholy	alive	alert
optimistic	cruel	pierced	spacey	surprised	anxious	empathetic	heavy-hearted	dynamic	
spirited	bitter	torn	lost	startled	jealous		in the dumps	earnest	
bubbly	frustrated	shamed	mixed-up	awed	burdened		out of sorts	avid	
merry	grumpy		wishy-washy	scared	preoccupied		discontented		
hilarious	boiling			threatened	tense		discouraged		
jolly	fuming			appalled	taut		disappointed		
playful	belligerent			petrified	upright		hollow		
elated	contempt		<b>Powerless</b>	gutless			empty		
jubilant	pissed off		hopeless	frightened			complacent		
thrilled	indignant		helpless	hysterical			defeated		
silly	brooding		controlled	desperate					
giddy	inflamed		pressured						
light-hearted									
enthusiastic									

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## TAKING CONTROL OF YOUR LIFE



ANGER STATEMENT: "You're an inconsiderate, selfish slob. You came in four hours after you said you would be home, you could have at least called."

PRIMARY FEELINGS:

*Fear of... disappointment from... confusion with... powerlessness from...*

ANGER STATEMENT: "You never spend time with me. You are always going out with your friends."

PRIMARY FEELINGS:

---

ANGER STATEMENT: "Why are you always calling your mother? She doesn't need to know every detail of our marriage."

PRIMARY FEELINGS:

---

ANGER STATEMENT: "You're the slowest employee I've got. I don't know if you are lazy or just don't care. If you don't change your attitude I'm going to have to let you go."

PRIMARY FEELINGS:

---

ANGER STATEMENT: "How could you have done that? You know what your father did to me. Don't you care about my feelings either? How could you hurt your mother that way?"

PRIMARY FEELINGS:

---

As you can see, it isn't always easy to figure out where the person's anger is coming from. Of course, knowing the context is helpful, but sometimes people are angry at us because of what they have been told or believe that they heard us say. The closer and more intimate someone is to you, the harder it is to listen to his or her anger without being defensive or reacting. It will take practice to learn to listen to Primary Feelings, but reminding yourself that these feelings come before the *anger*, *hate* and *rage* will help.

## THINGS TO COME

Learn Chapter 3 lessons well, because if you don't, you will be excited to know that it will get worse in Chapter 4.

If you don't go away, you will be able to learn that:  
It is possible to get your feelings out, be heard, and make the relationship better.

It is possible to "be angry and sin not," and not feel guilty.

It is possible to learn ways of expressing intense anger in a way that will bring people closer to you. "I was angry at my friend, I told my wrath, my wrath did end."

Most people would rather succeed than fail. The problem with being successful is that it offers no opportunity to learn. A failure is never a failure if you learn from it.

"Good judgment comes from experience,  
And experience, well, that comes  
from making bad judgments."  
--Anonymous--

Treat yourself, embrace failure without judgement and learn.

## *Chapter Four*

### RESENTMENT COMES FROM THE REPRESSION OF FEELINGS, NOT THE EXPRESSION OF FEELINGS

#### Level 3 Feelings

After experiencing first level feelings, you will experience some degree of anger. And if that isn't enough, there is also a Level 3 of feelings. To reach third level feelings, you must experience at least one of the primary emotions, then skip quickly to the Level 3. Level 3 feelings include depression, anxiety, resentment; and if you keep working at it long enough, even bitterness. (See Figure 4.1 on next page)



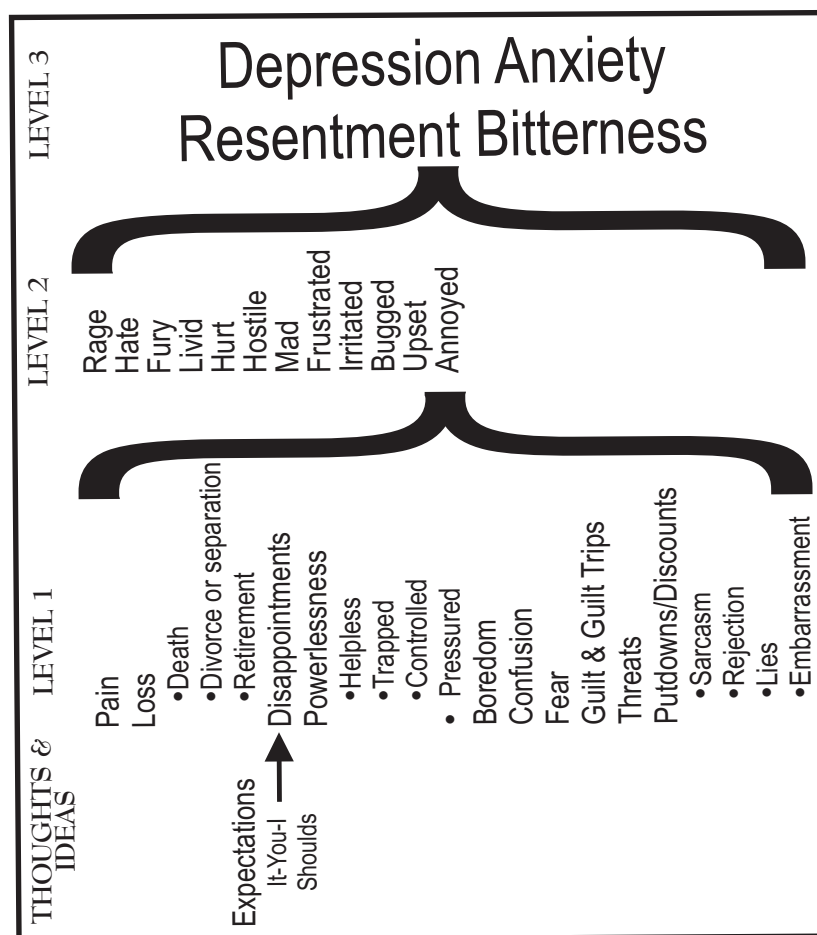


Figure 4.1

## Getting to Level Three Feelings

Look at the following process:

You have an expectation or belief about how things "should be" or what somebody "should do." As a result, you experience disappointment, then some degree of anger. However, past experience tells you that if you express your anger to the person, they're liable to get angry and yell back at you. Then you would end up getting in a real big fight, which would make things worse. Wanting to avoid all that, you learn to keep your mouth shut and you jump right over anger into feeling depression and resentment.

RESENTMENT COMES FROM THE REPRESSION OF FEELINGS  
NOT THE EXPRESSION OF FEELINGS

You may become so skilled in this process of jumping over Level 2 feelings to Level 3, that you won't even feel the anger. It will *seem* as if you go directly from disappointment to depression and resentment.

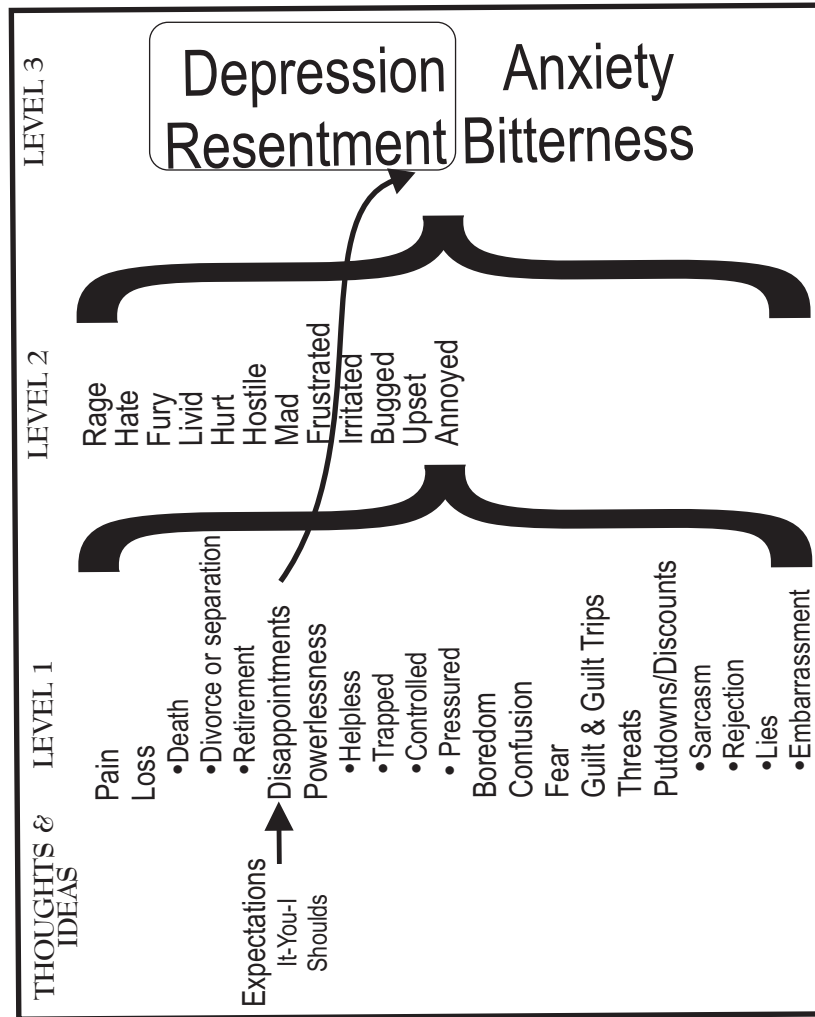


Figure 4.2

I want you to notice that you CHOOSE to be depressed and you CHOOSE to be resentful because you're choosing NOT to feel angry. Unless there is some kind of brain damage, *it is physiologically impossible to be yelling screaming angry and depressed at the same time.*

## The Depression Cycle

Now that you are depressed, do you feel powerful or powerless? *Powerless*. So when you feel powerless, are you going to say anything or keep your mouth shut? Keep it shut, and you get to go back to being depressed. The more you feel depressed, the more you stuff your feelings, the more you keep your mouth shut.

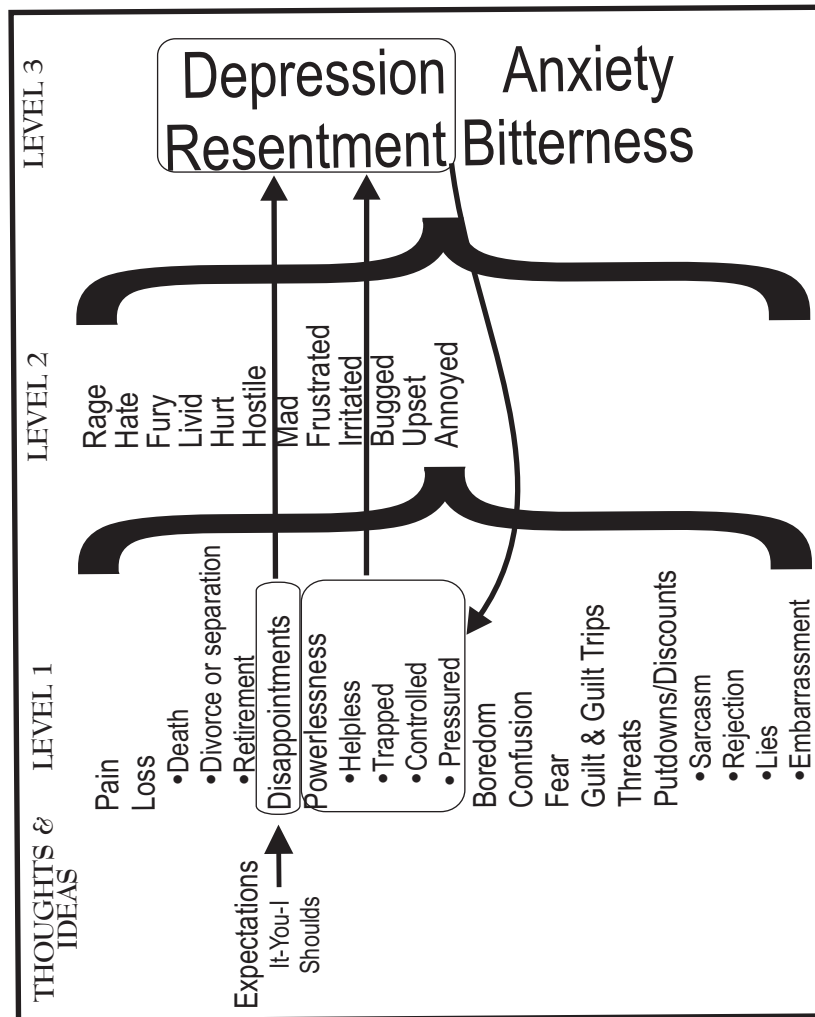


Figure 4.3

RESENTMENT COMES FROM THE REPRESSION OF FEELINGS  
NOT THE EXPRESSION OF FEELINGS

Why in the world would anyone in their right mind want to go to level three's depression, anxiety, resentment, and bitterness? For many people, expressing anger doesn't seem *normal*, for others it seems *dangerous, threatening* and *scary*. Still for others, it seems *immature*. (Is being depressed somehow less *immature*?) *The bottom line is that most people won't express their anger because they don't know how to do it without making things worse.* I would like to use this chapter to explore some of the beliefs, expectations, Should's and values that make level three such an acceptable choice for millions of people.

## What is Learned Can Be Un-learned

Many children are taught, either directly or indirectly, that anger is bad and will cause problems.

- "Nice girls don't get angry."
- "Pretty is as pretty does."
- "Smile, you want your face to freeze that way?"

America is not the only country where children are taught that anger is bad. There is an old Oriental proverb, "He who raises his voice first, loses." The American equivalent of this is, "In this house, we don't need to raise our voices," (unless we are the parents). As a child, when you were told, "Don't sass me," and sent to your room, you were angry at your parents. Get angry, get punished, get isolated, and you lose the love of the ones your life depends upon. As parents, we teach our children how NOT to express anger, but we do not teach them acceptable ways TO express anger.

For many children, the picture of parents yelling and screaming brought the fear of, and sometimes the reality of, physical and emotional catastrophe. As they grow up, children either model after their parents by becoming yellers, or they withdraw and shut down.

On the other hand, children who are raised in an "emotional vacuum" where they never see their parents fight, grow up assuming that married people don't fight; and that little differences, if ignored long enough, disappear. For these people, strong emotions are frightening. When these people get married, being yelled at means that the

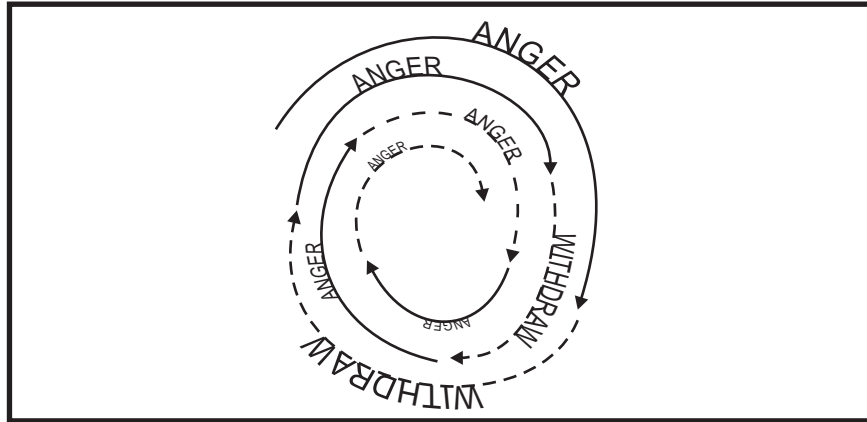
marriage is over and that they are not loved. To handle their fear, they will often withdraw, not realizing how angry they really are at feeling threatened and rejected. These people see themselves as *nice guys*, however they are often just passive-aggressive. They see the other person as the one having the problem. "What is the matter with you? You're the one with the problem. I never get angry." The bumper sticker these people wear through life is, "I don't get angry, I get even."

George Bock wrote a number of books on constructive fighting including *Creative Aggression*. He says, "Nice guys wreck lives; their own and other's, too." "Nice guys" do not know how to express their anger in constructive ways. They tend to shut down and become passive. These men and women still become angry, though they are not aware of feeling angry. The only recourse for their unrecognized anger is to get even. Since their anger is unrecognized, their getting-even behaviors are also not recognized by these passive-aggressive, "nice guy" types. They get even in creative, self-deceiving ways. Here are just a few passive-aggressive, get-even behaviors:

- Doing what the other person wants the next day, rather than the day of the request.
- Taking the garbage out, but leaving a trail of trash through the house.
- Preparing a meal with onions when your mate hates onions.
- Forgetting to fill the gas tank the night before your mate's important, early morning meeting.

The *nice guy's* response to the other person's anger will be, "You're the one who always gets angry, I was just trying to . . ." (There's nothing wrong with me. I never get angry, so there must be something wrong with you.) A deadly cycle develops. The more a person verbally expresses anger, the more passive-aggressive the other person becomes. This makes the person expressing their anger even angrier, resulting in the *nice guy* becoming more shut down and passive-aggressive, which makes . . . (you get the picture- see Figure 4.4 on next page).

RESENTMENT COMES FROM THE REPRESSION OF FEELINGS  
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*Figure 4.4*

Poor communication skills, not having acceptable ways of expressing anger, combined with being emotionally shut down leads to a passive-aggressive cycle.

Both men and women can be passive-aggressive persons. Joe was angry with his girlfriend, but nice guys don't get angry. So, on a beautiful Sunday afternoon as they paddled their canoe, Joe would paddle as hard as he could on his side. There was no way his girlfriend could keep up with him, so their canoe went round and round in the same place. Joe's girlfriend went ballistic. Joe's response was, "What's the matter dear, I'm padding as fast as I can." Passive-aggressive people go through life driving those around them crazy. Most passive-aggressive people are so shut down that they are truly not consciously aware that they are angry. And because they are not aware of their anger they are often perceived by onlookers as being better people (proper Christians, upstanding Catholics, dedicated Mormons ) than others (who get angry).

John was one of the nicest guys I had ever met. At the time, I was working for the Fresno County Probation Department and was running their Diversionary Treatment Program for adults. He had been referred to us by the District Attorney's office and came in the same day, carrying his raincoat over his arm, with a large pulpit Bible on top of the raincoat. John had been arrested for exposing himself to women. John felt shame, guilt and confusion

about his behavior. He could offer no explanation as to "why I would do such a terrible thing."

John was the youngest of twelve children and had never had a chance to meet his father. "My father planted the seed and moved on." John was raised by his four older sisters, "They ran my life from morning to night." He described his mother as a very verbal and controlling woman that he never really knew. As a survival technique, he learned never to express his anger. As a result, John didn't learn to communicate or socialize well.

As an adult he fell in love with a woman much like his sisters. He admitted to feeling powerless, but he said he never got angry. He was a nice guy who loved his wife. He told me that they never fought, "because I don't get angry."

John's unconscious need to feel some sense of power in his life led him to expose himself to women. They would invariably scream and run off, and, for a short time he would feel like he had some power. When my observations were pointed out to him, he acknowledged that it was probably true, "It makes sense but I don't feel angry." I knew that unless John learned to recognize his feelings of anger and was able to express his anger in constructive verbal ways, he would be back in trouble with the legal system. And he was.

### **It's Not What You Say, It's How You Say It**

The truth is, being angry has never caused a problem. Nobody has ever been fired for being angry. Nobody has even gotten a divorce or been thrown out of school for being angry. *It is what you do with your anger that can create problems.*

**Verbal Rule:** *Feelings expressed verbally reduce in intensity and are free to change.*

People who use the Verbal Rule are not score-keepers. They can't go back fifteen years to the day before they got married and tell their spouse what they did wrong, because they express it at the time.

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Once their anger is released, it is over. They are in control. They feel better, and their feelings are more positive and are less intense.

However, most verbally expressive people do not have acceptable ways of expressing their anger. The ways they use to express their anger just makes the people around them feel miserable. They attack and destroy with their anger, using putdowns, sarcasm, threats and guilt trips. Some feel guilty afterwards, while others just wonder what is the matter with everybody else, "I feel fine now."

Not all of the verbally expressive people get away scott-free. Have you ever known people who become angry, blow up, and then become *depressed*? Nice guys don't want to hurt others, so when they are angry, they repress their anger, ignore it and then push their feelings down. This just makes their feelings become bigger and more intense. With each annoyance, each irritation, each frustration, their anger builds until finally the person is FURIOUS. Then, they "dump" and usually say things they shouldn't have said. Remember, when your feelings go up, your logic goes down. They get their anger out, *but in a destructive way*. As a result, they end up feeling guilty (more anger); and they tell themselves, "Boy, I sure made a fool of myself again." What do they do? They keep their mouths shut and become more and more depressed, with their feelings continuing to build up until they explode (see the Logic→Feelings Connection from Chapter 2). This is the *build-up, blow-up, guilt, and depression cycle*.

### Depression: Physical or Psychological?

You will often hear people say, "But I don't feel angry, I feel depressed." Depression has been called America's number two symptom, with headaches being number one. David Burn, MD, in his book *Feeling Good*, calls depression an illness, then he describes it as a symptom of the way people think.

"All your moods are created by your cognition, or thoughts. A cognition refers to the way you look at things—your perceptions, mental attitudes, and beliefs. It includes the way you interpret things." Dr. Burns continues, "You feel the way you do right now because of the thoughts you are thinking at this moment."



Is the way we think an illness or a symptom? A headache is a symptom, not an illness. Calling a symptom an illness will delay or confuse the treatment.

David Burns is a medical doctor describing depression as a symptom of thinking, not as a chemical imbalance! Other doctors remain adamant that depression is a chemical imbalance. So which is it, the result of what we think, which we can control, or a chemical imbalance, which we are powerless over? The answer of course is, "Yes, to both."

Your body communicates with itself through electrical and chemical changes. All feelings—joy, anger, fear and depression, are the result of chemical "imbalances". The question then is, what came first, the thought or the chemical imbalance? Scientists have known for years that even the chemical make-up of tears changes, depending upon the emotions that you experience at the time. Most depression simply starts by the way we think. By thinking, we create our anger; by thinking anger is bad and not expressing it, we create our depression. Therefore, when we keep our angry feelings inside and repress them, we literally turn them into depression. Even Freud said, "Depression is anger turned inward." The mind is not created separately from the body. What affects the mind, affects the body and what affects the body, affects the mind.

However, not *all* depression is a result of the way you think. Depression can be started physically, and at times can be a combination of both. For about five years, I taught a portion of a birthing class for a couple of Fresno OB/GYN physicians. From time to time, this question of postpartum depression or "baby blues" came up: "Isn't postpartum depression the result of hormonal (chemical) changes in the body?"

Postpartum depression occurs in less than 40% of the women who have babies, while 100% of them have hormonal changes. This type of depression can't be blamed solely on the chemical changes, otherwise all women would experience post-partum depression. The hormones act as a magnifying glass for *whatever depression might already be there*. If there is no depression to start with, there will be none when the hormones change. If there is even the slightest bit of

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depression, it will be magnified.

You can learn a process that might suggest whether the depression you are experiencing has been created by your thinking or whether it is being created mostly from chemical imbalance. Let me suggest a simple step-by-step approach.

Most depression is found to originate from one or a combination of two major classifications of feelings; those of *disappointment* and those of *powerlessness*.

First of all, look at the Level One feelings of *disappointment*, especially the *I Should's* (see Chapter 3). The longer the list of *I Should's* you have for yourself, the more depressed you will be. Change your *I Shoulds* to *I Dos* like you did in Exercise One of Chapter Three.

Next, look at your *you shoulds* and feelings of Powerlessness: helpless, trapped, controlled and pressured. Take back the power in your life by changing yourself, by taking responsibility for your feelings, and forgetting about trying to change others. Make this prayer a real part of your life.

**Serenity Prayer**

*God, grant me the Serenity  
to accept the things I cannot change;  
the Courage to change the things I can;  
And the Wisdom to know the difference.*

What I have just suggested is much easier said than done. You may need to see a therapist to help you achieve these goals. After doing this homework, my guess is that in many cases, you may no longer be depressed. However, if you still are, it is likely that your depression may be one of chemical origin and you should consult with a medical doctor.

**The Verbal Rule**

The next step is based upon my Verbal Rule (also known as the 15-

Minute Rule) that we looked at above. *Feelings expressed verbally reduce in intensity, and are then free to change.* It's impossible to be angry and yelling for more than fifteen minutes, *unless* you're doing something to block your feelings from changing. We will look at the blocks to the Verbal Rule later.

The Verbal Rule is a natural physiological rule. It is part of the way we are designed to operate. Have you ever seen two or three-year-old children express their feelings to one of their little friends? "I hate you, and I will never speak to you in a hundred-million years!" You know that within five minutes they will be back playing together. In fact, if you go out and try to fix it after they have started to play again, you will probably hear, "Leave us alone. We're playing."

Kids don't hold on to their anger or resentments. There are too many fun things in their lives they would miss out on if anger were allowed to turn into resentment or depression. You can see the Verbal Rule work in children at an early age, but somehow, as they get older, things start to go very wrong. The problem is not the anger itself, it is the way they say their anger. "Daddy, I hate you," pushes the Dad's buttons, so he responds with "Don't sass me! Go to your room right now." The child quickly learns how *not* to say his feelings, but Dad never teaches the child acceptable ways of expressing his/her anger. The child does learn, however, to stuff his/her feelings and turn them into depression, to which Dad then labels "You're just lazy."

Want more evidence that the Verbal Rule works? Have you ever had a song running over and over in your head until it's driving you nuts? Do you want to know how to get rid of it? If you get in your car, roll up the windows (so you don't embarrass yourself), and sing it out loud with all your heart, the song will disappear. However, if you hum or mumble the tune, you'll keep it going all day. Remember, the Verbal Rule says, *"Feelings expressed verbally* (the key word is *expressed* not hummed or mumbled), *reduce in intensity, and are then free to change."*

Another way to test the Verbal Rule is the next time you're lying awake in bed because you keep going over what you should have said, try waking up your mate and *expressing* everything that keeps going around and around in your head. (If your mate won't listen,

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express your feelings into a tape recorder.) Expressing your feelings, thoughts and ideas will probably allow you to fall asleep.

## What Do You Do When The Verbal Rule Doesn't Work?

In many ways, the Verbal Rule is like the law of gravity. If I let go of my pen, it falls to the floor; but if I tie a helium balloon to it, it floats up into the air. Does that mean that the law of gravity stopped working? No. It simply means that I have found a temporary way to block or circumvent the law of gravity. In a similar way, the limiting effect of the Verbal Rule can be circumvented. For example, if I "tie" my feelings to your behavior, and try to manipulate you by using my anger to get you to do what I want; then I will stay angry until you either change and do what I want, or until I decide to change my expectations for you.

I remember when my son was small. I'd yell, "I've had it with you. Get down to your room this minute, young man, and clean your room!" And I would feel better until I went back in fifteen minutes to check on Darren and his room was in a worse mess. Then I would get even angrier. And I would stay angry until the room was cleaned. I had "tied" my feelings (expectations) to his behavior. This went on for many years until he was fifteen or sixteen, then I changed my expectations. "All right, just keep your door shut! I'll let your wife worry about you when you get married." It just wasn't worth staying angry. It was easier to change myself, by changing my expectations for Darren, than it was to change him.

Sometimes the Verbal Rule won't work because the person needs his/her anger for protection. I see this most often with couples who are getting a divorce. One of them may keep the anger going for protection from feeling their love for the other. They love the other person, but there may be a real fear that he/she will be sucked back into the same destructive relationship. Their continuous anger is their unconscious protection from feeling their feelings of love again.

Teenagers, who are in controlling or smothering homes, may use their anger as a way to establish their independence and to push themselves

out of the home. Staying at home may be too much of a threat to the child's need for independence. Anger makes it emotionally easier for both the child and the parents to let go. In these last two cases, no matter how much the person expresses the anger, the self-limiting aspect of the Verbal Rule will be blocked.

Another example of situations that can block the Verbal Rule is the intellectual expression of feelings; a non-emotional recitation of the anger you feel without there being any *feeling* behind it. In counseling, this can be a problem. A man was angry with his wife. Since several days had elapsed between the time of their argument and their counseling appointment, he had lost touch with most of that anger and had only an intellectual remembering of how it had been. The more he talked *about* his anger, the more rigid his body became and the tighter he clenched his fists, until he had a bad headache and stomachache, but he felt no anger. *Talking about* anger will not allow it to be released from the body, it just changes form and shows itself as depression and/or physical symptoms. Expressing feelings verbally to the degree we feel them allows them to change and not come out as emotional or physical symptoms.

Remember guilt can also create anger. So, if a client feels guilty for expressing anger or even just feeling it, the resulting guilt will create more anger and the client can become caught up in an Anger→Guilt, Guilt→Anger Cycle (see Chapter 3). This type of cycle frequently ends up in depression and a feeling of being out of control which can result in severe emotional problems. An example is Lady Macbeth whose guilt resulted in her obsessive-compulsive behavior of hand washing, "Out, out, damn spot."

A few years ago, an attorney in town sent an 18-year-old man to me. The young man had been arrested for manslaughter. He and his young male cousin had gone to the top of nine-thousand-foot Kaiser Pass, had gotten drunk, and had sex. Being drunk and full of guilt, he drove down the mountain, rolled the car, and killed his cousin.

When he came in, he stated that since the accident he had been having "behavioral problems" that were really upsetting him. He went on to describe two examples of obsessive-compulsive behaviors. He would be walking across a street and in the middle of the intersection

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would suddenly stop, step back, then step forward, then back, then forward, finally the light would change and he would be stuck in the middle of the street going forward and backwards. The cars would start honking, "but I couldn't get out of the intersection." He reported this behavior could happen just about anytime and anyplace.

The other behavior he described was reaching for the salt, drawing his hand back, then reaching again, then drawing his hand back, then reaching for it again, and again, and again. He said this could continue for forty or fifty times "lasting several minutes before I can stop the pictures."

He was finally able, in therapy, to accept and see his guilt "pictures of what we had done." When the "pictures" would come up for him, he would stop whatever he was doing and try to change the "pictures" by reversing his behaviors so that they would go away. The obsessive-compulsive behaviors were his unconscious way of trying to cope with his guilt. He was finally able to stop these behaviors through a Cognitive-Affective-Behavioral therapy approach (see Preface page ii).

As you can see, guilt can be an unhealthy emotion. In fact, guilt can be deadly. Remember the "Son of Sam" serial killer who felt so much guilt for killing that he would write in the victim's blood, "For God's sake stop me from killing before I kill again." The more guilt he felt, the more he killed, the more he killed, the more guilt he felt, the more out of control he felt and the more he killed. Guilt never stopped him from doing what he shouldn't be doing . . . nor did it get him to do what he should do.

In both of these examples, remorse would have been a more constructive emotion. People who feel remorse are not likely to punish themselves or feel out of control (which leads to the repeating of destructive behaviors).

Not all guilt is rational or deserved. Rational or irrational, all feelings just are, and they feel as if they are true.

Women who have been raped often experience guilt even though they didn't know the guy and it wasn't their fault. This kind of guilt is

based on faulty or kinky thinking such as "I should never have sex with someone I don't love. (And I just had sex with someone I don't love, much less even knew)." The result of this kind of thinking, with no qualifier or parameters, is illogical guilt, which is often compounded by more faulty thinking; "If you feel guilty you must have done something wrong." Thereby, heaping guilt, upon guilt, upon more irrational guilt.

The cumulative effect of all this guilt and anger is to become overwhelmed, depressed and shut down emotionally. The person starts to filter and re-filter his/her feelings before saying anything. The more you filter, the more you push down your anger, the more delayed your awareness becomes and the poorer your decision-making becomes (see the Logic→Feelings Connection from Chapter 2).

Some women, because they see themselves as being weak, may look for someone to take care of them. They see the strong, silent, "Rambo-type" of man as their answer. The problem with this is that most of these "Rambo-types" are not good communicators and tend to settle their conflicts with physical violence. They may seem safer to be around *as long as they are not angry*.

Joan sat in my office looking confused and depressed. She said, "I told myself that if any man ever hit me, I'd walk right out of the relationship so fast it would make his head swim. You know, it isn't that simple." Joan and Dave had been married for five years, and during that time, their relationship had steadily deteriorated. At times, there seemed to be a lot of love, but the anger and sense of powerlessness both felt in the marriage seemed to be swallowing them into a black nothingness. Joan recited the events that led up to the beating. They had been having frequent arguments and fights, until late one Saturday night when it all seemed to explode.

Joan said she had been yelling and screaming at Dave, trying to get his attention, until he finally exploded and hit her "a couple of good ones". Dave felt a tremendous amount of guilt, shame and confusion over his actions, and Joan said that she also felt guilty. She believed that somehow, because of her screaming, she had been responsible, at least in part, for Dave's hitting her.



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In dealing with domestic violence cases over the years, I have noted that women tend to stay in abusive relationships, and the longer they stay, the more difficult it becomes to leave. These women spend a lot of time asking themselves the same questions over and over, "Why do I stay?" "Why don't I just get out?" The answer is not a simple one. However, if the question is changed to, "What are my beliefs and feelings that keep me in this relationship?" they can begin to see why.

Women who stay in abusive relationships have a number of kinky (or faulty) beliefs. The first belief is that "It is my responsibility to make my husband happy. A good wife should be able to make her husband happy. If I can't make him happy, then something must be wrong with me. Somehow, I've failed him as a wife and as a mate."

Let's look a little closer at the belief "I should make my husband happy." This belief automatically assumes that when the man is unhappy, it is the wife's responsibility to do extra (groveling) things in order to make him happy. As a result, the man learns very quickly that whenever he feels unhappy, his wife will do wonderful things for him; so he remains unhappy. He is afraid, usually on an unconscious level, that if he becomes happy, his wife will stop doing all these (groveling) things for him. So, the harder she tries to make him happy, the more unhappy he will become. She usually assumes there must be something wrong with her, *not with her belief system*.

The second belief, which many battered wives have, is that "If I stay and take this abuse over a long enough period of time, he will see how much I love him. I will have proved my love for him and he will then give to me the way I have been giving to him." Her expectation is that her mate will start loving and responding to her in the same way she has been loving and responding to him.

The problem with this is that the longer she stays and takes the abuse, the more insecure he feels. He knows he wouldn't allow anyone to treat him the way he has been treating her, so either she likes the abuse or this is the way men have to treat women to keep them. He assumes that she would not take this kind of abuse unless it was what made her stay with him. He becomes more insecure because he is not sure whether she is there because he is keeping her there by his abusive



behavior, or because she loves him. Talk about "kinky" thinking on both sides!

Other beliefs that hold couples in destructive relationships are:

- "This is as good as it gets."
- "If I get out of this one, I'll probably get another one that is just as bad or worse."
- "I can't make it on my own."
- "What will my family say?"
- "What will my church, God say?"
- "I can't fail again."
- "She's *my* wife, (my possession). She belongs to me, no one else will ever have her."

In working with abusive relationships, it is important for both the man and woman to look at the values, beliefs, misconceptions and conclusions they hold about themselves, their partners, and the world they live in. Without looking at and changing their beliefs, couples will find that their irrational guilts and fears will continue to result in irrational and destructive behaviors. Almost all of their beliefs that keep them stuck have a strong element of powerlessness running through them. The result, of not looking at and then changing that belief system, is to continue ending up in divorce courts and/or prison.

## Two Problems With Communicating Effectively

The first problem that blocks effective communication is that many of us don't have the skills to express ourselves without the use of *putdowns, sarcasm, threats* and *guilt trips*. Our parents didn't have the skills, nor did our grandparents. We use the language we heard from our parents on our children and spouses, so the pain and dysfunction continues.

The second problem is that we sometimes hold contradictory beliefs that we are unaware of. Contradictory beliefs create contradictory feelings which results in contradictory behaviors and eventually

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those make us feel crazy.

Let's check your beliefs. Do you believe that you should never hurt anyone, especially when you are in a close relationship with a person? Do you believe you want open, honest relationships? Those two beliefs are absolute contradictions. You can't hold both with equal conviction. Because values are always stacked vertically (on top of one another) with one value taking precedence over another, you will invariably have to choose one over the other (see below).

- Do you believe that you should never hurt anyone, especially when you are in a close relationship with a person?
- Do you believe you want open, honest relationships?

OR

- Do you believe you want open, honest relationships?
- Do you believe that you should never hurt anyone, especially when you are in a close relationship with a person?

Which belief takes precedence over the other?

In his book, *Why Am I Afraid To Tell You Who I Am*, John Powell said it this way. "Most of us feel that others will not tolerate such emotional honesty in communications. We would rather defend our dishonesty on the grounds that it might hurt others. And having rationalized our phoniness into nobility, we settle for superficial relationships." OUCH! Does that sound like somebody you know?

Most people say they want open, honest relationships, but are really more concerned with approval and fear rejection from relationships. You may say you don't want to hurt someone's feelings, but if you were more honest with yourself, you might find the truth is that you want to *protect yourself from feeling guilty* for hurting someone's feelings or you *don't want to risk* the other person becoming angry with you and rejecting you. In either case, it is more important to you not to hurt others than it is to have an honest relationship. You tell yourself you are protecting others. Are you so weak that you have to settle for dishonest, superficial relationships? Is the person you are supposedly protecting really so weak that they can't handle an emotionally open and honest relationship? You just might be surprised if you ask your partner if he/she needs to be protected. I suspect

that he/she would prefer you to be honest, even if it hurt sometimes. So again, it's not he/she whom you are protecting, *it is yourself*.

Whether you are protecting yourself or someone else, *what you protect, you make weak*. What kinds of things do you protect, strong things or weak things? If you have to *protect yourself* by not being honest, what kind of person must you be, strong or weak? If you are a weak person, then you had better protect yourself even more. The more you protect yourself, the weaker you feel; the weaker you feel, the more you protect yourself! Another destructive cycle.

### *WHAT YOU PROTECT, YOU MAKE WEAK*

A starting phrase that can help others to listen to your honesty is, "I would be less than honest with you if I don't share this with you." This allows the other person to know the positive intent of your honesty. When you feel setup by another person asking you questions and then getting mad at you when you give honest answers, it is OK to say, "Please don't ask me questions you don't want to hear the truthful answer to. I will be honest because that is the kind of relationship I want to have with you."

Some of you may have problems with the concept of open, honest relationships because there are those who use honesty as a club. These people use negative judgments and/or put-downs, not *honest statements* of their feelings. When you object, they reply, "I was just being honest. That really is the ugliest outfit you have ever worn; you have lousy taste. I'm just being honest with you for your own good." Honesty is not brutal or insensitive; honesty is an internal report of what you feel and/or what you think. Honesty, to be real honesty, means you accept ownership of your thoughts and feelings. Ownership is saying what you believe is true for *you*. *It may or may not be true for anybody else*. As you may be starting to see, there are two different issues here; one is what I think and the other is what I feel.

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Think of judgments as *debatable* statements made about things outside of you, based upon your point of view, beliefs and values. If you are going to be judgmental, own the judgment as *your* belief, value or experience. "My experience has been . . ." "My belief is that abortion is . . ." "I wouldn't have chosen that outfit for myself." If your values, beliefs and expectations are different than mine, and you state them as *fact*, that is when the debate begins. My grandfather used to say, "Convince a man against his will and he is of the same opinion still." Debates involve "sides" and ultimately, a winner and a loser. But, the rule in close relationships is that *when you win, you lose*.

*JUDGMENTS ARE DEBATABLE,  
FEELINGS ARE NOT*

People often try to slip in their judgments as feelings. Calling a judgment a feeling doesn't make it a feeling. "I feel *that* you never help around the house." "I feel *that* you are too busy to spend time with me." Feeling statements never begin with "I feel *that* . . ." Once you add the word "that" to your statement, what follows will invariably be a judgement.

Feeling statements have two parts: the feeling, and then the description of the behavior that is connected to that feeling. "*I feel overwhelmed* with all the housework." "*I feel lonely* because I haven't seen you for several days." Or you could reverse the order, "When you are gone for several days, *I feel lonely*."

The following is a judgment-feeling statement: "You're driving too close to those trucks and *I feel tense*." The likely response would be: "I am *not* driving too close, you're just too uptight." The first part of the sentence is a judgment about the other person, while the second is simply a statement about how you feel. The person making the statement never had his feelings heard because the judgment diverted the attention of his partner. Now compare that one with the following, "When you drive as close to those trucks as you are (no

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judgment), I feel tense and have a hard time relaxing and enjoying the trip." Which would you rather hear?

Feeling statements are internal reports of what *you are* experiencing. If you are to be honest, you must be careful not to confuse your judgments with your feelings. To make it easier, just remember that *judgments are debatable, feelings are not*. When sharing your feelings, if you find yourself in a debate, you have not been sharing your feelings, but rather your judgments.

Are you clear about the difference between judgements and feelings? If you have a problem coming up with a feeling word, check the partial list of feelings on next page.

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## Feelings Word List

Happy	Angry	Hurt	Sad	Afraid	Worried	Loving	Depressed	Eager	Interested
festive	irritated	(personalized anger)	sorrowful	fearful	doubtful	affectionate	gloomy	determined	concerned
content	disgusted	injured	mournful	timid	skeptical	soft	somber	zealous	fascinated
satisfied	hate	offended	weepy	shaky	suspicious	close	dismal	ardent	engrossed
peaceful	upset	distressed	heartbroken	fidgety	dubious	sexy	dreadful	keen	intrigued
ecstatic	resentful	pained	dismayed	panicked	uncertain	tender	dreary	motivated	absorbed
inspired	enraged	suffering	humble	alarmed	wavering	warm	blah	powered up	curious
glad	furious	afflicted	woeful	paralyzed	hesitant	open	dull	anticipation	inquisitive
joyful	annoyed	aching		horrified	perplexed	appealing	moody	excited	inquiring
grateful	provoked	crushed		insecure	indecisive	passionate	lonely	hopeful	creative
cheerful	offended	cold		nervous	distrustful	seductive	isolated	encouraged	sincere
excited	irate	wounded	<b>Confused</b>	anxious	questioning	motherly	useless	cooperative	involved
buoyant	wrathful	tortured	awkward	terrified	pessimistic	forgiving	worthless	breathless	compassionate
carefree	cross	pathetic	bewildered	evasive	cautious	sympathetic	melancholy	alive	alert
optimistic	cruel	pierced	spacey	surprised	anxious	empathetic	heavy-hearted	dynamic	
spirited	bitter	torn	lost	startled	jealous		in the dumps	earnest	
bubbly	frustrated	shamed	mixed-up	awed	burdened		out of sorts	avid	
merry	grumpy		wishy-washy	scared	preoccupied		discontented		
hilarious	boiling			threatened	tense		discouraged		
jolly	fuming			appalled	taut		disappointed		
playful	belligerent			petrified	uptight		hollow		
elated	contempt		<b>Powerless</b>	gutless			empty		
jubilant	pissed off		hopeless	frightened			complacent		
thrilled	indignant		helpless	hysterical			defeated		
silly	brooding		controlled	desperate					
giddy	inflamed		pressured						
light-hearted									
enthusiastic									

Let's review the Anger→Depression chart and add one more aspect to it. After you have been in the third level feelings of depression, anxiety, resentment and bitterness for awhile, you begin looking at either getting even, getting sick, or getting out.

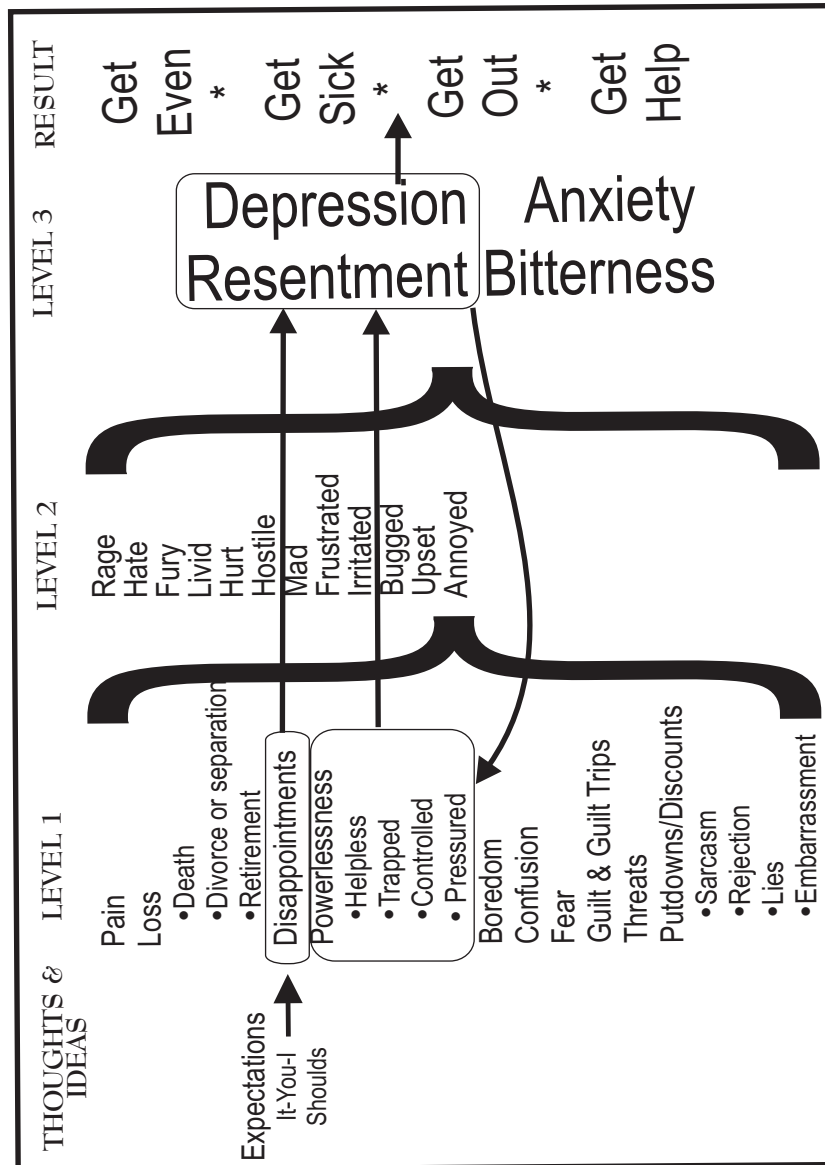


Figure 4.5

## RESENTMENT COMES FROM THE REPRESSION OF FEELINGS NOT THE EXPRESSION OF FEELINGS

People who allow themselves to end up at level three, will eventually end up in this last column. Earlier you saw that level three is a choice, sometimes conscious, sometimes unconscious, of not dealing with your anger. Depression, anxiety, resentment and bitterness are not natural states of the human organism. Your physical body fights against these unnatural states. If the situation doesn't change soon, your body starts to break down and you experience physical symptoms.

### Get Even

As I stated earlier, there are many ways to get even. Some of them are more direct . . . "No, I will not give you what you want until you give me what I want;" while others are more passive-aggressive, such as the ex-mate who plays games with visitation. "Oh, I'm so sorry, honey. The kids have something special to do today. Yes, I know it's your visitation day, but Grandma is going to be there and you wouldn't want to disappoint the kids or Grandma." Then there are the games played with the child support payments. Some "get evens" are conscious; putting jelly in someone slippers, putting sugar in someone gas tank. Others are unconscious; where anger / resentment turns into passive-aggressive behaviors.

### Get Sick

A few years ago, the American Academy of Family Physicians suggested that two-thirds of office visits to family doctors are prompted by stress-related symptoms. It is a sorry sign of the times when the best selling types of drugs are anti-depressants and tranquilizers. Feelings in column three set up stress and depression which brings about physical problems. Depression is not simply an emotional feeling. When you are depressed, your whole body is depressed. Emotional depression means your body's different defense systems, white blood cells, red blood cells, lymphatic system, etc., are also depressed. When you are depressed, you tend to get more colds and stay sick longer. A few years ago, there was some research conducted at a Fresno hospital which indicated that most cancers occur after a person has been depressed for a period of six to



eighteen months. This research validated research done at other hospitals.

## Get Out

The ultimate way of handling third level feelings is to get out. Depending on the situation, there are a lot to ways of getting out such as; quitting your job, running away from home, getting a divorce, committing suicide. Look at the full chart. Study it carefully. Have you ever know anyone who started at level one and worked their way across the page till they ended up getting even, getting sick, and/or getting out?

There is another alternative, but it might be too radical for some of us *macho* men..

## Get Help

Since you are reading this book, I suspect that you may be looking for help for that special person in your life who "if they would only get their life together," your life would be happier. When you find that you can't change the other person, then you might want to look at what you might do to change yourself.

How do you get someone else to change when the only person you can change is yourself? Consider the see-saw:

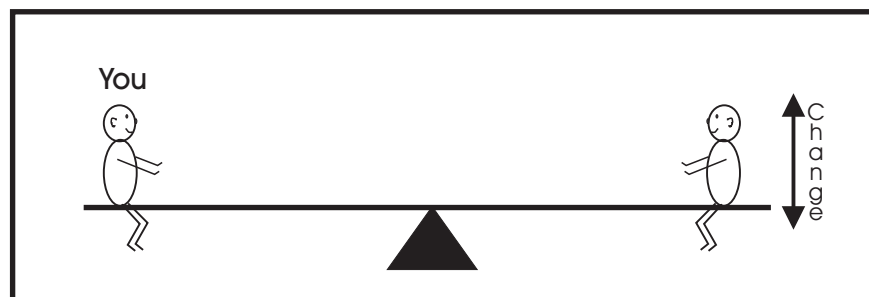
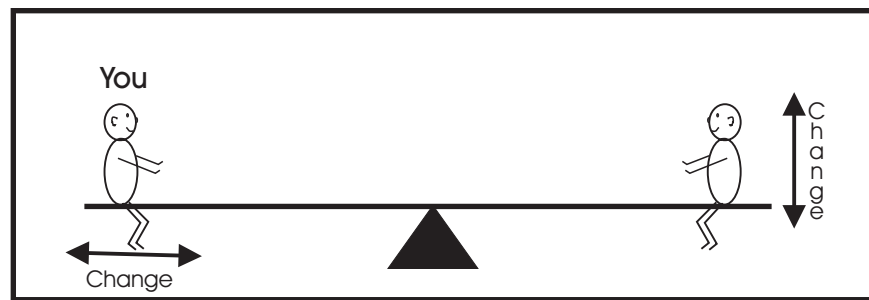


Figure 4.6

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If you are seated at one end of the see-saw and the person who needs to change is sitting at the other end, how do you get that other person to move? You can yell, you can threaten, you can use sarcasm. I doubt that would do any good. So, how can you force that other person to change? I guess you could jump off and get out, but then the relationship would be over.

So, the two options would be to let things stay as they are, or to leave. There has to be something in the middle, maybe some radical, new approach you haven't tried yet such as changing yourself. What happens when you move either forward or back on the see-saw? The other person will move!



*Figure 4.7*

## LESSONS TO LEARN

I would like to suggest that it is OK to try to change someone and that there are ways to encourage change in another person. Since there isn't just one way that works all the time, I have come up with eight ways that we will look at in the next exercise.

### Lesson One:

#### Eight Ways To Get Change In Someone

1. Ask
2. Use I am...messages
3. Bring the person into the problem-solving process
4. The concrete and tangible effect law
5. Questions
6. Paraphrase
7. Rewards
8. Raise their anxiety

The first is the simplest, but most often overlooked.

1. *Ask.* "Would you be willing to take out the garbage every Tuesday evening by nine o'clock?" Compare that with "You never take out the garbage." You have a much better chance of getting what you want by asking. The worst you might get in response is a "no." At least then you will know what you can expect. Be careful you do not ask, "*Can* you take out the garbage?" With *can* you are likely to get, "Sure I can." Now are they going to do it or not? Be sure that you get one of three answers when you ask. What you need to hear is either a "Yes, I will," a "No, I will not," or a "Yes, I will under these conditions." Sometimes, when you ask a direct question, the other person will take you all over the place. "You never do the things I ever want, and when I try to, you bring up issues of my mother, and the kids, etc." When this happens, simply stop the process and reassert "Is that a 'Yes, I will' or a 'No, I will not'?" Do not leave the question until you get one of the three

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acceptable answers. A "No" is as good as a "Yes." At least you know what your options are.

There are two kinds of power: *position power* (you do it because I am bigger, meaner or more evil than you) and *personal power* (I respond to you because I care about you and your feelings). The next way to get change in people is to use your personal power.

**WARNING**

Do not try using this method with people who do not care about you or about your feelings.

2. *Use I Am...messages.* An *I Am...* message is a statement about how *I am* feeling. It is not about my judgments, beliefs, threats or Shoulds. "I feel like a servant in this house when I end up picking up after everybody and then having to take out the garbage to boot." Then you can go to the first method of trying to change somebody, "Would you be willing to...?" People who care about people care about how they feel and don't want to use or hurt them.

After you have asked the person and he/she has said "yes, I will," but then doesn't do what they said they would do, then try:

3. *Bringing the person into the problem solving process.* "How do you want me to respond to you when you don't take out the garbage like you said you would?" Now, what you are going to get is one of three answers and they are probably in this order: "Don't do anything. I'll do it next time." Now, that's not an acceptable answer because you have already given them one opportunity to do what they said they would do. So, you respond with "That's not acceptable. What other way could I respond that would help you to remember?" They often go from one extreme to the other "Just chop off my hands!". Again your response should be, "That is not acceptable. What else could I do?" Their third response at this point will probably be to shrug their shoulders and say, "I don't know." Then you respond with, "If you don't make a decision, then I accept that you want me to make the decision for you, and it may not be the one you want."

If the person is really stuck, you might offer some options. However, don't give options or choices that you are not willing to follow through on. Usually, by this point, the person is willing to take back the power in their life and give you an acceptable response that you can do if they don't do what they say they are going to do.

Sometimes people do not change or want to change because they don't see that something is a problem. For instance, "I don't see my dirty room as a problem; I like it this way." In cases like this, you will want to use:

4. *The concrete and tangible effect law.* This law is used when the other person has the belief that "if it's not a problem for me, it's not a problem at all." Your job, if you choose to accept it, will be to show them how their behavior WILL or DOES have a concrete and tangible effect upon them. This approach works only where you can demonstrate that their behavior is a problem for them.

A few years ago, I acted as consultant to a fruit processing and packing corporation. The problem they presented to me was that many of their male workers wore their shirt-tails out, their hair long, and refused to wear hair nets. When this was presented to the unions and to the employees as being a problem, their response was that it was not a problem, but that it was an attempt to restrict their personal freedom. I suggested to management that they present the problem as, "When you wear your hair long and your shirt-tail out, there is more of a chance to get caught in the machinery. Getting hair caught in the machinery has, in the past, resulted in one man being partially scalped. Our insurance rates went up, and the salary increases we had budgeted for that year had to be foregone. Suddenly, both union representatives and the employees recognized the problem as a problem.

Bob & Darlys had two pre-school aged boys who loved to wear cowboy shirts, pants, boots, and play cowboy games on long summer days. When it came time to go to bed, they didn't think it made any sense to have to take off their cowboy shirts, pants and boots, because to them it just meant that in the morning they would have to get dressed all over again.

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A power-struggle ensued night after night. Some nights the parents won, on other nights the boys slept in their cowboy attire. The parents saw this as a problem, however the boys did not.

I suggested that the parents try to demonstrate to the boys that their behavior was a problem that affected what happened to them. "Boys come look at the sheets on your bed." They were pretty dirty. "Sleeping in your dirty boots and jeans will do that. That means I have to wash them more often. That takes more money for the hot water and laundry soap. The sheets and blankets wear out more often, then I have to spend even more money to buy new sheets and blankets. That means I won't have money to buy toys for you when we go to the store."

Suddenly, what was not a problem to the boys before, was now a clear problem for both the boys and the parents. The result, no more power-struggle and the boys slept in their pajamas.

Insight approaches, such as the one above, and the next approach don't work where there has been emotional trauma in the person's life. However in cases where there are not a lot of emotional issues, these approaches can help people to discover the answers that can affect lives.

5. *Questions.* Getting people to look at their behaviors in different ways can sometimes be done with questions. One of my favorite approaches in dealing with young children and teenagers is to start the session by ignoring the parent and turning to the child with the question, "How did you get your mother to drag you down here?"

Of course the answer will be something like, "I didn't, she made me come." Turning to Mom, I say, "Would you have come down here if you didn't have a daughter?" "No I wouldn't," Mom responds. Turning again to the child, I say "That is amazing! You are so important that you can make your mother bring you down to see me. You are really powerful! So what did you do to get your Mother to bring you down here?"

At some time during one of the sessions I'll say, "Now that you know how to get your mother to bring you here, what do you need to do to *keep her* from bringing you here? Any time you want to come and see me, you know how to get her to bring you down here."

I once had a mother complain to me that the boys at her fourteen year old daughter's school were verbally and sexually harassing her daughter. At one point, the girl had received a death threat on her answering machine. She told me that her daughter was "boy crazy" but was not dating. Other girls in her school were not having the same problem with harassment, "they have singled out my daughter." When I suggested to the mother that she ask her daughter, "How do you get the boys to harass you?" Mother thought I was being sort of sexist. However, when the mother came to the next session, she brought her daughter. Mom was mad. She had called her daughter's phone in her bedroom and had heard a very sexual message on the answering machine. The girl said she just wanted the boys to pay attention to her.

I call these my Columbo questions. On the TV program, Detective Columbo's technique was to start to leave a room, then turn as if he had just thought of something. Like him, I ask these questions in a very off-handed way. "How is it that out of a room full of men (women) you can find the one that will use and abuse you?" "How are you able, out of a whole office of people, to get the boss to choose you to yell at?" or, "This is the third friend you have gotten to yell at you in one month. That is amazing. How did you do that?"

Questions lead people where you want them to go. They can be used to get resistant people to recognize (and take responsibility for) their behaviors. They can help people change and at the same time give them a sense of power in their lives.

Listening (or a form of paraphrasing) is a very different tool from questioning. Listening and reflecting what we are hearing is usually not considered a way of getting change. But, under certain circumstances it can be a powerful tool for change.

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6. *Paraphrase.* A good paraphrase takes you where the other person wants to go, (not necessarily where you want to go). A paraphrase is not asking, "Are you saying...?" That is questioning. A good paraphrase is guessing at what is not said, as well as reflecting back on what *is* said. Paraphrasing is not just word swapping.

For example, "John should never have become a teacher." "I hear you saying teaching is the wrong job for John." That is a word swap, not a paraphrase. "What is it about John that makes you believe he should have never become a teacher?" A good paraphrase makes guesses. "Does he come to work drunk? Is he so good, he should be the superintendent? Does he like to live high on the hog and he can never do that being a teacher?"

When you paraphrase, you are guessing at the meaning or inferences behind the words. What does it mean to the person making the statement? What might he/she be feeling?

Sometimes, the person may not recognize the subtle messages they may be giving themselves or others, much less what they are feeling about the situation. *The Nine-Mile Walk* is a great short story by Harry Kemelman in which he illustrates all the inferences that can be made from the eleven-word statement, "A nine mile walk is no joke, especially in the rain." Some of the implications that can be drawn from that sentence are:

...that the rain was unexpected,  
...that the person was upset,  
...That the person was not an athlete,  
...that it was late at night or very early in the morning when the walk occurred,  
...that the person was nine miles out in the country,  
...was walking towards town,  
...the person had an appointment that he needed to be at,  
...Etc.

Are you able to hear what is *not* said?



Paraphrasing clarifies what is said for both the listener as well as for the speaker. Don't be surprised when you are paraphrasing and the listener says, "Well, yes that is what I said, but that is not what I meant. What I really meant was..."

In the story, after going through all the different meanings and inferences, the characters are able to solve a murder that they didn't know had happened when they began. A word swap doesn't begin to identify what the person may be saying.

By helping a person become aware, you give them the opportunity to change. "Yes it was my third warning, but it wasn't my fault; the boss doesn't like me, that is why he fired me." A paraphrase might be, "What I am hearing is that you feel surprised and confused when you get into a power struggle with your boss and lose."

"I hate my wife right now. She can make friends so easily and now she wants to get a job. She needs to stay home and take care of the house." Remember, paraphrasing is a *guess* at both what the person is feeling and what it means to him (the inferences). "What I'm hearing you tell me is that you love your wife very much and are afraid of her finding someone else. From what you're telling me, it sounds like you are not feeling good about yourself right now and are having trouble believing that she loves you as much as you love her."

You can paraphrase behavior in the same way as you would paraphrase someone's words. "When I come home from work and your clothes and dishes are all over the house, what your behavior says to me is that you see me as nothing but a servant, here to take care of your needs." Then, you might add to the paraphrase an I Am message, "Even though you may love me very much, I don't feel loved or cared about."

Here are some more things that *paraphrasing* does that *questioning* does not do:

- Shortens angry discussions,
- Imparts a sense of caring, interest and love,
- Increases the speaker's feeling of self-worth,
- Makes others more willing to listen to us.

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All in all, paraphrasing is a very powerful tool in communicating and encouraging change in others. Not so these next two, in fact, they have the greatest possibility for being misused.

7. *Rewards, tangible and/or emotional.* There are two types of rewards. The first one is the old "M&M method". Years ago, teachers in grade school would reward children with M&M's for good behavior or performance. The idea was to reward appropriate behavior. Good concept, but how it was applied made a major difference in whether it was being misused or not.

Some parents took this idea, expanded upon it, and would pay their children for getting good grades. Fifty cents for an A, twenty-five cents for a B and so on. The problem with this was that parents were, at the same time, teaching their children a "What's in it for me?" attitude, which developed into "I won't do my chores unless you pay me." As the child got older, the cost for his cooperation also went up, "If you'll stay in school, I'll buy you a new car."

In the business world, every list I have ever seen on employee satisfaction has put money no higher than number three on the list. Most employees say they want the rewards of recognition, a chance for advancement, and a challenging job as higher on their list. Money can be (and is) a motivator. However, money without emotional reward usually results in a high rate of turnover and employee dissatisfaction.

Teachers and employers are finding that praise and little stickers work much better than the M&M's and doesn't rot the teeth. Time and your undivided attention spent with a child is the most important thing in a child's life. You are the most important person in the world to your child. And in your child's mind, "If the most important person in the world spends time with me, I must be very special and important."

Emotional rewards work for couples. I don't know how many times I've heard a woman complain bitterly, "I didn't marry you to have you work 12 to 14 hours a day!" Men get confused with this kind of statement and respond with, "I'm doing it for you and the

kids." (These men just don't get it.) Some women will eventually settle for the things they can buy after they have given up hope of ever having the emotional reward of time spent with their spouse. Others get divorced.

Using emotional and physical rewards to get change can and does work in some instances, just be careful how you use them.

Of the eight ways of getting change, I saved this one for last because there are so many possibilities for misuse. However, it is an important one and when none of the above are working, it may be time to consider it as an option.

8. *Raise their anxiety.* Using threats to raise someone's anxiety in order to get them to change can work if you have the power, but there may be a price to pay in the end. Parents who threaten children to clean their rooms may get the room cleaned, but have you ever noticed how *long it takes* and how *tired you are* after you have gotten them to do it? Teachers who use just position power to get control of their classrooms have the most disruptive pupils.

A number of years ago, I was called in as a consultant to an upscale restaurant along Interstate 5 in California. One of several complaints that management had was that there was a very high rate of breakage of the restaurant's special gold crest plates. At seventy-five dollars a piece, these place settings were for show only and would sit at each place before the order was taken. After taking the order, and the food was ready, the waitress would remove the gold crest plate, replacing it with the regular restaurant plate with the food on it. These plates required special care and were not sent through the commercial dishwasher. In management's opinion, "We shouldn't be losing so many of them." After interviewing several of the employees, I discovered that management had a little saying, "If you grow out of your uniform, you grow out of your job." The women were angry and resentful over this "motivational saying" and were afraid to express their anger for fear of losing their jobs. The restaurant paid dearly for that little anxiety-raising motivation.

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Threats can work only when the person can be made to see that changing is in their best interest, but if they could see that, then the threats probably wouldn't be necessary in the first place. A situation in which you can get away with using threats as a way of raising someone's anxiety to get them to change is only when you have power, guns or jails and can enforce compliance. Just don't turn your back.

Raising someone's anxiety to get change is best accomplished by using the concrete and tangible effect approach described above, using natural consequences as much as possible. "If I have to spend all day cleaning the house, I won't have time to take you to the beach." "When you show up thirty minutes late, I'm not sure if you are coming, and I will call someone else in to cover your shift for that day." The more raising someone's anxiety sounds like a threat to him, the more likely you are to find yourself wondering what went wrong and why nothing seems to ever change.

## EXERCISES TO DO

### Exercise One:

#### The Yelling Exercise

As we saw earlier, if anger is not expressed verbally we will slide over into the depression column. But who wants to be angry? When we saw anger in our families it was usually frightening, not helpful and, at times, down right dangerous. Now, I want you to imagine something you have never seen or heard before. Imagine a FIGHT where there is yelling, screaming and maybe even some cussing. When it is over you feel loved and validated. A fight where, when it is over you say, "That was a good fight! Let's do it again sometime." A fight where the next day you can't remember what it was about, but that it was just a good fight.

The content of a good fight is very quickly forgotten. Good fights bring us closer together. They are not right or wrong fights; they are not win or lose fights. Good fights result in understanding what the other is experiencing. Good fights result in a feeling of closeness. For a good fight to happen requires that both of you know, accept, and follow the rules. If you are not experiencing these results then you are probably not following the rules.

- In a good fight, only one person is talking at a time.
- In a good fight, there are no putdowns, judgements, sarcasm, threats, or guilt-trips.
- In a good fight, feelings are expressed in *I AM* statements.
- In a good fight, anger is expressed from the top part of the Level I feelings column, (See page 122).

Feelings are not like smoke. Feelings don't just go away if ignored. If they are not expressed verbally, they will come out in physical symptoms, emotional symptoms, or acting out behaviors. The Verbal Rule states that *feelings expressed verbally take place, reduce in intensity, and are free to change*. It also states that *feelings must be expressed as intensely as they are felt* in order for the Verbal Rule to work. Just talking about your feelings may make them worse. There are three purposes for this exercise:

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- 1) To teach constructive ways of expressing anger so that the person being yelled at doesn't feel put down or threatened and the person doing the yelling doesn't feel guilty or embarrassed,
- 2) To teach the person being yelled at not to be afraid of the expression of anger and shut down or run away, and
- 3.) To give people, who are angry, a way of venting that will strengthen their relationships, "being angry and not sinning."

**WARNING**

This is just a practice exercise. Do not use this exercise to express real anger until you have mastered the technique.

**DIRECTIONS:** After explaining the exercise and the reason for it to your partner, agree to practice the yelling exercise at least once a day. Do this by yelling unexpectedly at your partner at the top of your voice. (The one who gets the other person to jump the highest, wins!)

I am angry at you because I love you and care about you, and if you weren't so (damn) important I wouldn't get so upset!

And, I need to yell at you so I can get this anger out, so I can feel close and warm and loving towards you again.

I need to be angry at you so that you will remember not... (to put alligators in the bathtub.)

or

(to put leprechauns in the lunch box.)

or

(make up your own silly statement)

Children love to do this exercise. It's the only game in which they can sneak up on their parents and yell at them without being scolded. Teenagers will pretend that they think it's silly and childish, but if you can get them involved, the whole family will benefit!

## Exercise Two:

## Five Things To Do With A “You Should”

If you find yourself angry with all the things that people Should do, but are not doing, (your boss should..., your mate should..., your kids should...) this exercise is for you. You will notice that there are some similarities between I Shoulds and You Shoulds.

### INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Make a list of all the You Shoulds you have. You might want to break them up into categories; your mate, your boss, your children. Use a separate page for each category. Remember that You Shoulds and You Shouldn'ts are basically the same thing. Give yourself several days to make sure you have them all. Stop here and make your list. *Do not read on until your list is complete.*
2. As you did previously with the I Shoulds, after you have completed your You Should list, read it over and make these changes. Do not use the words "more" or "less", "better" or "worse". Just cross these words out. If you say, "My husband should earn more money," he could increase his earnings to one million dollars a year and still not be there. "You should spend more time with me." She could be underfoot all day long and still not have arrived. "You shouldn't spend so many hours at work." "The government should take better care of the poor." These words make it impossible for anyone to ever live up to your expectations. These words are always a prescription for frustration and failure: cross them out.
3. Remove any abstract words like "patient" "loving" "kind" "gentle" "caring" "good" "bad", etc. Wherever you find one of these abstract words, replace it with concrete, tangible, measurable behaviors. "You should be a loving person." becomes "You should give me a hug at least two times a day." "You should change your attitude." How would he behave differently if his attitude was to change? He should smile when he comes in the door? He shouldn't yell at the kids? Use concrete and measurable terms. If an impartial person could not identify the behavior, you need to rewrite your You Should until it could be identified.
4. Some of your You Shoulds may require time lines. "You

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should mow the lawn weekly." Conflicts often start when time lines are not clear. Your time line may be weekly, his time line may be monthly. Your You Should must be written in such a way that there can be no argument over what was meant.

As you did with the I Shoulds, rewrite your You Shoulds being careful to make all the necessary corrections as stated above.

5. Here are the five things which you can do with a You Should:
  - i. You can *try* to get them to do the You Should.
  - ii You can change or modify your Should for that person.

If you are not able to do number one or are not willing to do number two, you will automatically do number three.

- iii. Become angry, feel powerless, resentful, experience a lot of stress and finally get depressed and become a negative person. After staying with number three for awhile, some people move on to number four.
- iv. Cut off your feelings. As we discussed in the I Should exercise in the previous chapter, you can cut off your feelings in a number of ways. Of course, no can really cut off his feelings. What actually happens is that you repress or numb out your feelings till you are no longer aware of what it is that you are feeling.

The choice that you have with You Shoulds that you didn't have with the I Shoulds is to:

- v. *Get out.* Get a divorce, quit the job, run away from home, join the Navy, get married, etc. These can all be variations of getting out.

Before you make the decision about which one of the five things you want to do with each of your You Shoulds, you should consider whether it is OK in your belief system for you to try to change another person. If you a person from the sixties, then you may have bought into the GESTALT PRAYER (see next page):

I do my thing, and you do your thing.



## TAKING CONTROL OF YOUR LIFE

I am not in this world to live up to your expectations  
And you are not in this world to live up to mine.  
You are you and I am I,  
And if by chance we find each other, it's beautiful.  
If not, it can't be helped.

--Fritz Perls

I covered the *Eight Ways to Get Change In Someone* earlier in this chapter. However, your belief system may not allow you to try to change another person. And, that is OK. You are just left with fewer options from which to choose. For me, as a husband, father of five children, and the boss to many people over the years, I've come to the conclusion that it is OK to *try* to change others. It just depends on how I do it.

Now, get your "You Should" list and check it over one more time, making any last minute changes or additions. Look at the list of the *Five Things You Can Do With a You Should*. As you did with your "I Should's", make a decision about what you want to do with each "You Should". If you chose number one, write #1 in front of your Should, then decide how you will try to change the other person. Some of your "You Shoulds" may contain several numbers, "I'll start by sharing how I am feeling, (#2) then I will ask if they would be willing to... ." (#1).

Then, go to the next "Should": Do I want to try to change them, change my "Should" for them, or be angry, feel powerless, have stress, be depressed, cut off my feelings or get out? Continue in this same manner until you have made a decision about each of your "You Shoulds". After a week, it will be important to check your progress. Are you following through with what you said you would do? Be careful! For, if what you say and what you do don't match up, you may end up with an "I Should" all over again.

## THINGS TO COME

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Would you be interested if I could show you how you can choose to never be angry again? I'm not sure you will want to when you learn more, but it will be an option that you have. You will also get a chance to look at your victim, powerless stuff. The fact is, that you can not, not be powerful. You can only create the illusion of being powerless. In addition, in the next chapter, you will be looking at how to apply the information that you have learned so far.

# *Chapter Five*

## FROM POWERLESS TO POWERFUL

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This chapter is about empowerment. It is about you taking back your personal power. It is about the concept that you can not, not be powerful, you can only create an illusion of powerlessness. How you create this illusion of powerlessness is at the heart of going from being a reactor to becoming an actor.

You already know that the only person you can change is yourself. The importance of that concept, for most people, is that when you change, usually the people around you will also change.

One of the most common areas of our life around which we feel powerless is anger. Many of us men have had experiences where we have surprised and scared ourselves with our anger. When that event happened, we were usually in our teens or early twenties. This is an area about which most men don't talk. It is an area of our lives of which we are not proud.

Mine happened when I was in my early teens. I was madly in love with Alice and she had given me her sterling silver charm bracelet. I was so proud of that bracelet that I was showing it off to my best buddy, Vince. Suddenly, he grabbed it and started running, saying that he was going to throw it down the sewer drain. As I ran after Vince I could "see" myself catching him, throwing him face first to the asphalt, grabbing his ears and smashing his face over and over into the street as blood went everywhere. Finally, I visualized rolling him over and seeing his bloody face, like raw hamburger.

All this was happening in my mind, but it scared me so much that I stopped chasing Vince. I never did catch him. I just stood there trembling, shocked at the amount of violence I now believed I was capable of. It was at that moment that I starting cutting off my feelings. I had no idea what to do with these dangerous and

destructive feelings. No one had ever prepared me for what I felt and there wasn't anyone I dared tell about what I had "almost done."

Since that time, I have talked to many men who have had similar experiences. For some, they actually did commit violence. For others it was just a thought, but for all, it came as a fearful surprise and a turning point in their lives.

By now, you are probably thinking that you know more about your anger than you ever thought you wanted to know. Hopefully, by now, you know when you are angry, and you can accept the responsibility for your anger without blaming others. But the question remains, what do you do with your anger?

There are two constructive ways you can deal with your anger. The one you choose will depend upon the situation you find yourself in. The first way is by using the information you learned in the Anger → Depression Connection. You have already learned that you can use your anger to help identify what you feel and how to express your feelings *early, appropriately* and *with positive intent*. Hopefully, that was helpful, but sometimes wouldn't it be great not to get angry in the first place? *How would you like to never get angry again?*

In order to look at the second way of dealing with your anger, you will need to add two new columns in front of the Level 1 column of the Anger → Depression Connection. Notice the addition of a column for People, Events, and Words (see Figure 5.1 on next page). Then, to the right of this new column, another column for Meanings has been added. Meanings are your thoughts and ideas; your Values, Beliefs, and Expectations. Under Expectations, you have the It Shoulds, the You Shoulds, and the I Shoulds we discussed in Chapter One.

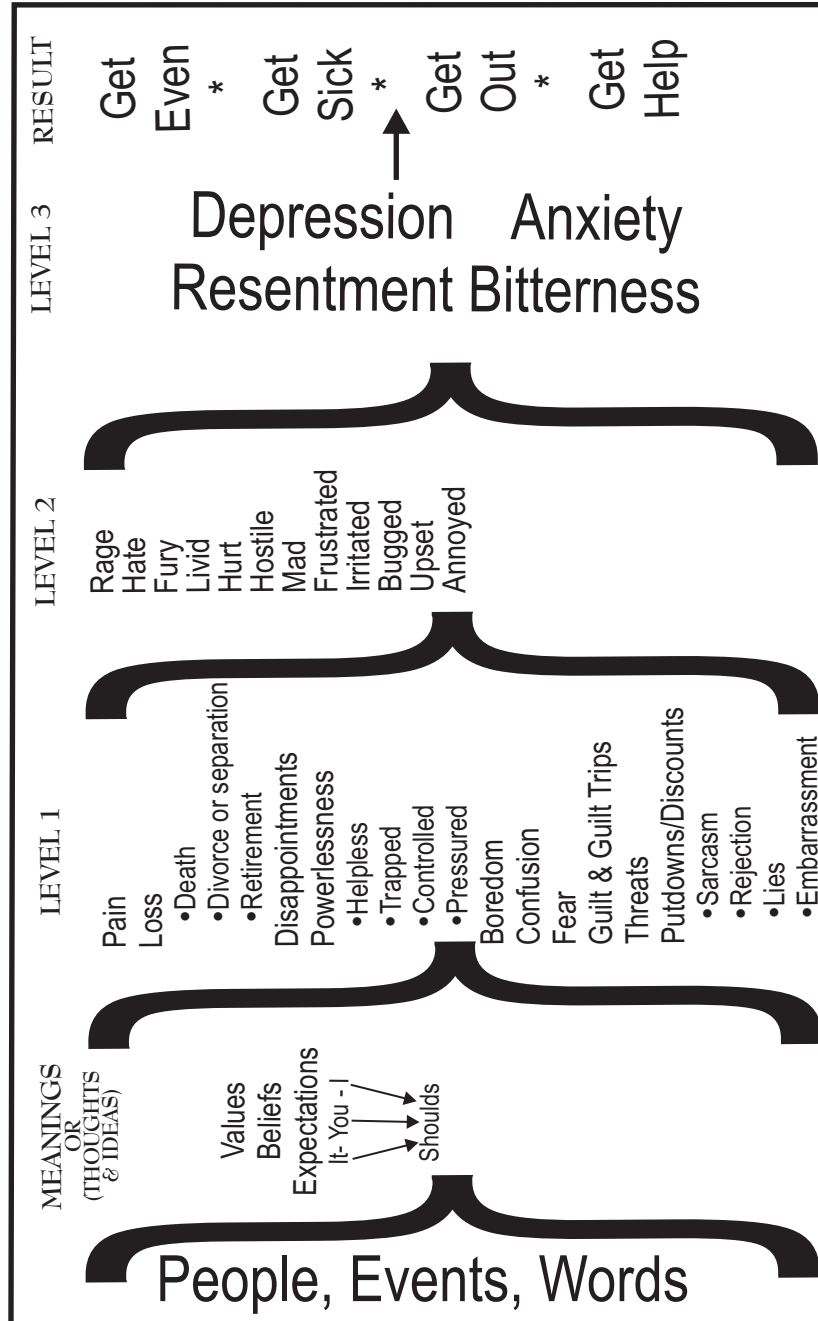


Figure 5.1

## Choosing Never To Be Angry Again

From the study of General Semantics, it is learned that words, in and of themselves, do not have meanings, only people have meanings. We find the *definition* of words in the dictionary, but not the *meaning* of words. It is by changing our Beliefs, Expectations, and *Meanings*, that we can put a sense of power in our lives. For example, if I change my Should for you (refer to the Shoulds section from Chapter 3), which is the heart of my Expectation, it changes how I feel. When my disappointment is gone, my anger (that was a result of that disappointment) is gone. See how powerful we can be.

If, by changing the items in the Meanings column, we can change how we feel, it is then theoretically possible for us to change *every* Expectation, *every* Should, *every* Belief we have, to meet the world's realities. People are going to do what they are going to do, not what you expect them to do. Cars are going to do what cars do. Signal lights are going to do what signal lights do. Kids are going to do what kids do. All of our Expectations and Beliefs about the way things "are" or "should be" were learned after we were born. Doesn't it make sense that what was *learned* can be *unlearned* (or changed)? By changing all of our Expectations, we could choose never to become angry again.

Now, would never getting angry again be a wise choice? That would depend upon what *your* Beliefs are. If you never want to get angry again, here are some Beliefs you may want to adopt as your own:

- "People are going to hurt me, steal from me and cheat me and that's okay."
- "People are going to hurt my family, strangers will abuse my children, someone will molest my child and that will be okay."
- "My boss is going to short me a day on my next pay check and it's okay."

It is *possible* to change our Meanings so that in every situation we do not experience anger, but from the Beliefs listed above, this is not a healthy goal.

Consider some effects that have occurred from choosing either to keep or to change Beliefs:

1. There once was a lady who had a belief that women should have the right to vote. This was during a time in our history when most men and women did not believe that women should have the same rights as men. In spite of strong opposition, Susan B. Anthony held on to her belief, and this belief resulted in her becoming very angry. She went about the country making fiery speeches and upsetting the establishment. For this, she even had to spend some time in jail. Nevertheless, as a result of her determination to hold on to her belief, stay angry, and use that energy to create change, she was instrumental in helping women in the United States gain the right to vote.
2. There was another lady who would rather fight than change. Her name was Carrie Nation. She was over six feet tall, carried a hatchet, and would go into saloons and chop them up. She had a belief that the drinking done in saloons was destroying families. Sure, she could have changed her belief system; she wasn't born believing people shouldn't drink. But she preferred to hold on to her belief, stay angry and help bring about the era of Prohibition.
3. In Alabama, a lady by the name of Rosa Parks believed that it was okay for blacks to have to sit in the back of buses. Then, one day after she had been working all day and was very tired, she got on the bus to ride home. There were plenty of seats in the front section of the bus that were reserved for white people, but no seats were available in the back of the bus. At that point, she decided to change her belief. "It is NOT OK to have to sit in the back of the bus," and she sat herself down in the front of the bus. Because Rosa Parks decided to change her belief on that fateful day, the accepted practices of discrimination in Alabama and the rest of the United States were shaken to their roots. Rosa Parks' new belief created anger over intolerable practices. Her resulting actions, even though they initially brought her greater discomfort, were preferred over her past acceptance and lack of power over "the system." Her anger was the impetus of change.

Let me make this a little more personal. Your boss knows you have been reading this book. He has seen that it has had a positive effect on your life and on the work you do for him. In fact, he is so impressed that, unbeknownst to you, he is sending *me* your next pay check. He is even thinking of sending your next *three* paychecks to me! There are two ways you can deal with this:

1. you can change your meanings and say that bosses are going to do what bosses do and it's fine to work without being paid for three months,
2. or you can keep your old belief, get angry, and insist on being paid for all the work you have done.

When you are feeling fulfilled, disappointed, powerful or powerless; it is a result of the way you choose to believe. Since disappointment and powerlessness lead to anger and depression, your anger and depression are also the result of your choice of beliefs.

*Cognitions don't cause depression:  
Cognitions are depression.  
—David Beck MD*

## Creating the Illusion of Powerlessness: Do vs. Say

How we create undesirable feelings, such as powerlessness, frustration and depression, is not always obvious. We often feel like a victim with no control and no power. We could feel powerful and in control, if we only understood how.

*You are absolutely powerful.* Now, I'm not talking about jumping over tall buildings in a single bound or moving faster than a speeding bullet. But, you are absolutely and entirely powerful over how you think, how you feel and how you behave. You are absolutely and entirely *powerless* when it comes to controlling other people's thoughts, feelings and behaviors.

Let's start by looking at the belief system that created this sense of powerlessness in yourself. The illusion of powerlessness is based on what we discussed earlier. *It is not the People, Events or Words that*



*get you into trouble; it's the Meanings you put on those People, Events or Words. It's the Meanings that create the feelings and the feelings that create your behavior. For example, If you are feeling powerless, a meaning that you are putting on some event or someone's words is creating those feelings of powerlessness.*

*IT'S NOT THE PEOPLE, EVENTS  
OR WORDS THAT CAUSE TROUBLE;  
IT'S THE MEANINGS YOU PUT ON THOSE  
PEOPLE, EVENTS OR WORDS*

A common way many people create feelings of powerlessness is by saying one thing and doing something else. Grandpa used to say: "What you do speaks so loud I can't hear what you say." Or maybe you heard it as "Deeds speak louder than words." Therefore, let me suggest that *whenever what you do and what you say don't match up, you are lying*. Whenever there is a contradiction between what we are doing and what we are saying, what we are doing is the *truth* and what we are saying is a *lie*. Some therapists call them *untruths* or *white lies*. I am not as nice; I call them lies.

*WHENEVER WHAT YOU DO  
AND WHAT YOU SAY  
DON'T MATCH UP,  
YOU ARE LYING*

By saying one thing and doing another, we confuse ourselves (and those around us) and as a result end up feeling powerless, frustrated and depressed. Let's say you come to my house and I am eating ice cream. I tell you, "Boy, I don't want to eat this ice cream. I can't stand this ice cream. I really don't want to eat it." And, I keep eating the ice cream. Look at what I am doing and look at what I am saying. If what I do and what I say don't match up, I am *lying*. Because you want to believe what I am saying, you have to struggle to reconcile the

obvious contradiction between what I am saying and what I am doing. Your natural reaction is to ask me, "Why are you eating that ice cream if you don't want to eat it?" But when you ask me a "why" question, you set me up to lie a second time because I feel pressured to make sense out of my behavior.

"Why" questions nearly always result in lies in an effort to rationalize or excuse a confusing behavior. The second lie usually starts with a "but" or "because." So let's try the question, "Why are you eating that ice cream if you don't want to eat it?" (Here comes the second lie) "*Because* I don't want it to go to waste." Isn't that just an excuse to avoid accepting the responsibility for what I am doing? The more you ask me why questions, the more lies I will tell. I even believe my lies to be true. Finally you ask, "Why in the world did you buy it in the first place?" And I respond with, "I had to *because* it was on sale," (see it wasn't my fault, the store made me do it). With each "why" question, I get further and further away from the truth, further away from being responsible for my behavior, and I have created the illusion of being powerless and out of control. The more I am not aware of my lies, the more what I say and what I do don't match up, the more I feel powerless, confused and out of control.

Here is another example. Have you ever said, "I don't want to clean the house" and then got up and cleaned it? Well, look at what you did and look at what you said. *Why* did you clean the house if you didn't want to clean it? "*Because* the house needed cleaning." Well, I'll have you know I had a survey done of 10,000 houses, and not one house *cared* if it was ever cleaned. Houses don't *need* cleaning because they don't *care*! So, why did you clean the house if you didn't want to clean it? "I had to *because* the house was a mess and someone might drop by and I would be embarrassed." Oh, so you *did* want to clean the house so you wouldn't feel embarrassed. And, how do you keep from feeling embarrassed? By cleaning it. Then what you did, by cleaning the house, was what you wanted to do and what you said was the lie.

If what you are doing and what you are saying doesn't match up, you are lying to yourself and you create an illusion of powerlessness in yourself. Still not convinced? Have you ever said to yourself "I don't want to go to work" and then you got up and went to work? *Why*

did you go to work if you didn't want to go to work? "Because I needed the money." Well, how do you get the money? "By going to work!" So, you *want* to go to work so that you can get that paycheck.

We resist taking responsibility for our lives. We would rather feel powerless and blame others. We can't see ourselves as having created our own powerlessness. People often struggle with me over this concept because, from their perspective, if they *feel* powerless, they determine that they *are* powerless.

It is usually easier to see how others lie to themselves than it is to notice how you are lying to yourself. Case in point:

A thirteen-year-old girl came into my office. She told me that she was having sex with her boyfriend. "Are you using any protection?" I asked.

She answered, "No."

"Is your boyfriend using any protection?" I asked.

Again she said, "No."

"Oh, then you want to get pregnant." I replied.

"Oh, no!" she said.

"You're lying to me." I said calmly.

"No, I'm not!"

Thinking that at thirteen she might have missed something, I asked, "How do you get pregnant?"

She answered, "By having sex."

She had that part right. "With or without protection?" I asked.

"Without protection, but I don't want to get pregnant!" she insisted.

I said, "You're lying," and tried to help her understand. "If you have sex without protection, then sooner or later you *will become pregnant*. Look at what you're saying and look at what you're doing. When what you say and what you do don't match up, you are lying. You may not recognize it, but you are lying to yourself."

She was still not getting it, so I asked her, "If there was a guy sitting over there on the couch with a revolver pointed at his head with one bullet in the cylinder saying 'I don't want to kill myself.' (click) 'I don't want to kill myself.' (click), would I believe him?" "No?" "Well, I don't believe you either." She didn't like it, but she finally understood my point, and it was the start of her taking responsibility for her choices (and their consequences).

The lies we tell ourselves not only create our feelings of powerlessness, but they also make it more difficult for us to change our behaviors.

Here is another example I often encounter:

"Do you smoke?"

"Yea, but I want to quit."

"If you want to quit smoking, *why* are you smoking?" (Remember, the *why* question gets the lie.)

"Well, I smoke because it tastes good."

"Does every cigarette you smoke taste good?"

"No."

"Do you still smoke it?"

"Yes."

"Then it's a lie, isn't it? It's a lie, because if you were smoking because it tastes good, then, when the cigarette didn't taste good, you would have put it out. I'm going to ask you again. This time tell me the truth."

Why do you smoke?"

"Well, I smoke because I like it."

"Do you like every cigarette you smoke?"

"No."

"Do you still smoke?"

"Yea."

"You are still lying to me. Now, why do you really smoke?"

"Because it is a habit."

"Do you not have any power over your habits?"

.....and on and on....

*Why* questions give you rationalizations, excuses for the behavior. And *when you give something a reason to exist, it will persist.*

If you want to know "why" someone did what they did, ask a "what" question. Asking "what" questions will give a clearer indication of what is behind a person's behavior.

- What were you feeling when you did that?
- What did you believe would happen?
- What is the purpose of sex?

The answer may be illogical or even irrational, but in the persons mind it may seem completely logical. There is a story about a man who, every morning, was seen spreading purple powder around his house. One day his neighbor couldn't stand it any more and asked him what was the purpose of spreading the purple powder. "Oh, I do this because it keeps the lions away. And, I know it works because there hasn't been a lion around here in twenty years."

## TAKING CONTROL OF YOUR LIFE

Knowing what a person is feeling and/or thinking gives better insight as to "why" a person did what they did.

By asking *what* questions we can get information that is truthful and helpful. Let's try applying the *what* question to the smoking example, "What does smoking do for you?"

Most people will first respond with, "It does nothing for me."  
But I would disagree and reply with, "Doesn't smoking burn holes in your clothes? Isn't that what it does for you?"

"Well, yes, but..."

"It burns holes in your clothes, costs you money you can't afford, and is unhealthy for you and those around you. It makes you smell like an ashtray and shortens your life. I'd say smoking does a lot for you."

Can you see how differently this dialogue went when the *what* questions was asked instead of the *why* question?

### *GIVE SOMETHING A REASON TO EXIST AND IT WILL PERSIST*

By taking responsibility for our behavior (in other words telling the truth), we now have the power to make the necessary changes. It is really important to understand and accept this concept in order to cause change. *Once we become responsible for our irresponsibility, we can change it.* As long as we continue to lie about something to ourselves and to others, no one (including a counselor, minister, or friend) can help us to change it. We have to see and accept the problem as being of our own creation before we can change it.

*ONCE WE BECOME RESPONSIBLE  
FOR OUR IRRESPONSIBILITY,  
WE CAN CHANGE IT*

Another piece of this same Do vs. Say concept is that everything we do is exactly what we want to do. I contend that *you have never done anything in your life you did not want to do.*

Have you ever changed a dirty diaper on a baby? YUCK! Did you want to change that dirty diaper? You are probably thinking to yourself, "No, of course not." Did you change it anyway? Of course you did. Now, look at what you said, "I don't want to change the dirty diaper," and look at what you did, you changed it. *Why* did you change that dirty diaper, if you did not want to? Was it because the child would get diaper rash, you didn't want the smell to worsen, or because you didn't want the child's mother to be upset with you and think you were not trustworthy with her baby? Okay, how do you keep the child from smelling? How do you keep the kid from getting diaper rash? And how do you keep from being embarrassed when the parents come home? By changing it, right? So, you *did* want to change it. You didn't want to have to deal with the consequences of not changing the diaper. You were doing what *you wanted to do.*

*YOU HAVE NEVER DONE  
ANYTHING IN YOUR LIFE  
THAT YOU DID NOT  
WANT TO DO*

When my daughter (Tracey) was ten days old, my wife left her with me for the first time while she went shopping. She hadn't been gone for more than ten minutes when Tracey did this horrendous thing in her diaper. When her mother came home, Tracey's diaper was in the toilet and my throw-up was on top of it, but Tracey was clean. I had to hold her under the kitchen faucet to get her clean, but when her mom

got home, she was clean. Did I want to change that diaper? Of course I did. Did I enjoy changing that diaper? NO WAY!

Still not convinced? I have gone through years of schooling, and I hate school. I have always hated school and yet I jumped through every one of their hoops so I could do what I am doing now. Just as I changed the dirty diaper so I could get the end result - a clean baby; I went to school so I could get that piece of paper, my degree. I also cleaned the house to enjoy the end result, a clean house. I go to work so I can get the check at the end of the pay period. I don't necessarily enjoy the process, but if I want the end result, I will do what I *want* to do to reach that end result.

Now, I will share my personal lie with you: for seven years, I went around telling people "I want to lose weight". Do you know how much weight I lost in seven years? None! I *gained twenty-five pounds* instead. Now, was I telling the truth or was I lying? I was lying and I used the following excuses to rationalize the contradiction between what I said and what I did:

- You see, I can't lose weight *because* my mother made me eat everything on my plate. Now when I sit down to eat, I eat everything on my plate and your plate too! You believe that one? No? Well you're right, my mother has been dead for over 20 years. I guess it can't really be her fault.
- The reason I can't lose weight is because of my nerves. This giant nerve grabs my hand and makes me put food in my mouth. It's my nerves doing it to me.
- I must have a serious mental or physical problem. If I truly want to lose weight and I am gaining it, something must be wrong with me.

Any time I blamed my behavior on something or someone else (my mother, my nerves etc.), I would feel powerless, helpless, trapped and confused. This would eventually result in me doubting my sense of self-worth. For some people, this leads to feelings of guilt and following close behind the guilt is the punishment, and now you're into a Guilt→Punishment cycle again (see Chapter 3).



There was nothing wrong with me at all, emotionally or physically. In order to take back the power in my life, I had to change what I was saying from a *lie* to the *truth* and take responsibility for my behavior.

The *truth* for me is, "I'd rather be fat than go through the pain and anxiety of losing weight and I will continue to be fat until I want to change it." What I did with this statement was take responsibility for my irresponsibility and put myself in a position of power by adding, "and I will continue to be fat *until I want to change it*." No longer were my nerves or my deceased mother determining my weight. I was doing it to myself. So, I now have the power to change *me* when I choose.

Is it becoming easier for you to recognize your own lies now? As a reminder, copy the following sentences and put them on your refrigerator:

When what I do doesn't match with what I say,  
what I say is a lie and what I do is the truth.

Supporting lies always begin with a "but" or  
"because".

Out of the concept of *Do vs. Say* has come a powerful tool for getting change. When I hear a client telling me one thing and doing another, "I have wanted to get a divorce for the last seven years." I will first work with them to help them clarify what their truth is. "I want to stay in this dysfunctional relationship and I will stay in it until I choose to get out." If he/she is a member of one of my therapy groups, I may have the person stand up and go around the room telling five people his/her truth. Then, each of their homework assignment for the next week is to tell their truth to three trusted people each day. One of the three people has to be my secretary who reports to me when they call in.

The goal of this exercise is for the person to experience embarrassment (not shame or guilt) until the embarrassment is high enough that changing will seem easier than resisting change. My clients report

that this homework assignment really works. I am careful to make very sure that their experience is one of embarrassment, not shame, humiliation or guilt. These last three are deadly for the therapeutic process, as you'll see later in this chapter.

## Rape Prevention Therapy

This is not therapy to prevent someone from being raped, but advice to prevent someone from needing therapy if they are raped.

The concept that you choose to think can empower you in some unexpected ways, as well as save you a lot of time and money. Consider the following:

After someone has been raped, a good therapist can help them change their feelings of being dirty, powerless, and guilty by first helping them vent their anger. Then, the next step is to help them to change their Meanings and Beliefs about what has happened to them. This whole process can take weeks, even months. Since this is true, doesn't it also make sense that it is possible to change your Beliefs *before something happens* and thereby reduce the trauma that a rape can cause? This process can drastically reduce the amount of time a victim has to spend with a therapist to vent their anger.

For instance, Lois, my first secretary, suggested this approach to me back in the early 1970's. She suggested that I start by asking women who had not been raped, "How would you feel if you were raped?" When I asked this question in workshops attended by women, I usually got the same answers: "I would feel dirty." One lady said that after she was raped, she went home and took a shower for two hours. "I scrubbed myself until I was raw and still couldn't feel clean." Other answers I was given were, "Guilt," "Shame," "Powerless," "Confused," and "Violated."

I could understand and accept the feelings of all the women, but then, I thought, maybe "understanding" is part of the problem. For years, therapists have accepted these feelings without question. As one lady in a workshop told me, "I guess that is just what you feel when you get raped." That statement is a classic example of something I call *victim thinking*. It was as if she has no control over what she

would feel or that her feelings were somehow predetermined, preprogrammed. If this lady were ever raped, her expectations guarantee she will have serious emotional problems.

I asked the same group of women, "Ladies, if you left this building today and a strange man ran up and hit you in the head from behind with a two-by-four, then ran off without doing any thing else, how would you feel?" The women all agreed that they would feel angry, mad, violated. "I would want to get that sucker."

I asked the group why they didn't use the words "dirty" or "guilty." Getting hit in the head with a two-by-four is a physical assault, isn't it? In this case, the weapon is a two-by-four. Other than the weapon used what is the *difference* between an assault to the head, and a sexual assault? In the instance of rape, police reports show the *weapon used* as the "penis." Men, who have been raped, usually do not have the same resulting feelings as women do. One woman told me, "It's not fair! Men should feel dirty, guilty, and ashamed. They should have the same feelings as we do." I guess she would like us all to feel like victims.

Feelings are not just arbitrary things that you have no control over. Our feelings are a direct result of our cognition or our Thoughts (Meanings). Being victimized and being a victim are not the same thing. To be victimized is what *happens to you*, being a victim is what *you* do with *it*. There is a huge difference in being raped and being the victim of a rape who feels dirty, guilty, shame and acts *powerless*.

We choose to think, so if we don't like the way we feel, we must *change the way we think*.

As I have pointed out before, the concept that *everything we do is what we want to do* gives us power over your lives. Below is an application of the idea that can be empowering. Some people may find this example of empowerment more difficult to accept than others. Carefully consider the following.

A few years ago, a woman named Cathy was taking a class from me. The topic of the night's session was how the feeling of powerlessness

is largely self-created. When I got to the part about rape being a choice, Cathy protested "Oh, no it's not!" And then we got into a discussion about rape and powerlessness. We ran out of time and I said that we would pick up the discussion where we had left off at the next class session. At the next session, before I could say anything, Cathy said, "You were right. Rape is a choice." Then she told me what had happened to her a few days before.

"This last week I was working downtown at City Hall. It was late, around 6:00 PM, and getting dark. I had my six-year-old daughter with me. The two of us were walking from City Hall to my car several blocks away. Suddenly, a man stepped out of the shadows of an old building with a sawed off shotgun. He said, 'Get in here!' It was very clear to me that he planned to rape me. At that moment, I made the decision that I would not be raped in front of my six-year-old daughter. So, I started to talk real loud, 'Oh, don't do that, don't do that!' And then he struck me across the face with the gun." The mark on her face was still bright red. We all could see it.

She continued, "I just kept talking loud, because I had made a decision that I would not, under any circumstances, be raped in front of my daughter. Finally, he panicked and ran off." She paused for a few moments, then said, "If my six-year-old daughter had not been with me, I would have chosen to be raped rather than take the chance that he might shoot me." She then got very emotional and went on to say, "I know I could have been killed, but I was in control of my life and I was making the decision, he wasn't. If I had decided to let him rape me, it still would have been my decision, not his." She then added, "Now I know that no man can ever take my power from me."

It should be obvious here that this is not a choice that any of us want to be faced with. However, making the choice to be raped rather than killed may be the best choice you can make under the circumstances. When someone chooses rape over the possibility of being killed, it doesn't make the act less illegal or less an act of violence. There is no virtue either in being killed or in feeling guilty if you are raped.

## The Power of Choices

The concept of *choice* is very important to your sense of self-worth, yet many women and men have problems with it in many areas of

their lives. After being raped, many women feel all sorts of self-destructive feelings such as powerlessness, guilt, depression, shame and confusion. Seeing herself as having choices gives her the opportunity to see how powerful, in control and smart she was. While a woman may not have chosen the violent circumstances she finds herself in, she can make a choice as to how she will respond, provided she is aware of her power to choose. Whatever action she takes to survive the attack will be the right action for her in that situation.

Any second-guessing will be a waste of time. If she had chosen to fight back, she might be dead now, and the rapist would never have been arrested. On the other hand, being assertive could also have resulted in her being killed. The best any of us can do is to try to make the best choice we can from the options we are aware of at the time.

To have a choice does not make what the other person did less wrong; let's change the circumstance to one in which a man approaches your car with a gun. He sticks the gun in your face, says, "Give me your car and wallet!" and pulls open your car door. You give him your wallet and the keys. You find a phone, call the police, and he is later arrested. You go to court, and the car-jacker says, "But Judge, he had a *choice*. He did not have to give me his wallet and car." The judge would ask the car-jacker, "Did you have a gun pointing at him?" "Well, yes, but he had a *choice*." The judge would just laugh at him and sentence him to the max.

I want to make sure you are really clear on this. Yes, with the car you chose to let him take something that was valuable to you, but that doesn't change the fact that what he did was a crime. *It is the same thing in the case of rape.* "But Judge, she had a *choice*." The judge would ask, "Did you have a gun pointing at her?" Choosing to be raped rather than killed doesn't make the offense less illegal or less of a crime.

I don't like a lot of the choices I'm faced with in my life. But I would rather be raped than shot or stabbed. I would rather give the a car-jacker my wallet and my keys than be killed. I would also rather go to counseling to work through the trauma of a rape than be dead.

We may not have control over the circumstances that we are faced with, but we do have control over how we respond to them. Choices make us powerful people!

### *CHOICES MAKE US POWERFUL PEOPLE*

Here is one last example, Joe's parents brought him and his twin sister to see me for therapy. They were both seniors in high school. His sister was a cheerleader, a straight A student and the class president. His parents would constantly say to him, "Joe, why can't you be more like your sister?"

Unconsciously, Joe made a decision that he could not possibly compete with his sister. So, he would get attention by being the class screw-up. Through much therapy, he was finally able to recognize that the decision he had made (about not being able to compete with his sister) was out of fear. Once he made that connection, he was free to make other decisions. He chose to shine in his farming skills that his sister could not do.

To get my clients to look at how they create problems in their lives and in their families, I tell my clients that when they come back next week, I will tell them "Bring me up to date." If they respond with, "I had a good week." I will then ask them, "And how did you do that." If on the other hand, if they say "I had a bad week," I will still ask, "And how did you do that." Knowing that our choices determine our feelings and behaviors gives us power.

We do not always have a choice about what happens to us (or about a circumstance we are put in), but *we do have a choice as to how we will deal with what happens to us*. For instance, did Rosa Parks have a choice about the back of the bus being full? Of course not, but she did have a choice about what she did with that situation.

What I have tried to show here is how the feeling of being powerless is, to a large extent, self-created. If you are creating feelings of powerlessness, you can uncreate them. It is only by taking responsibility for how you feel and how you behave that you can change. It is

the only way that you can *take control of your life*.

Here is a story that didn't turn out as well as the previous one. This time the lady was not able to resist, she just wasn't strong enough. Judy had come in to see me about six weeks after the rape. She was very depressed, she wasn't eating, she had lost her job and her marriage was unstable. The psychiatrist who had referred her to me said that if I couldn't do something with her, he would have to admit Judy to a hospital. It was his opinion that she was "self-destructing."

Judy relayed the following story to me:

It was a hot Saturday afternoon. She had been working in the yard all morning when her husband asked her to run an errand which required driving to Sanger, a small town about fifteen miles away. That morning, Judy was wearing her husband's dirty jeans, a baggy turtleneck. Since it was to be a quick trip, she didn't bother to clean up or put make-up on. On the way over, when she stopped at a stop sign, two guys ran out, pulled her out of the car, overpowered her and raped her. "There was just no way I could stop them. Now, here it is six weeks later and my life is over."

As Judy talked, I could hear how guilty she felt and how she had been punishing herself by self-destructing. She said she felt no anger, therefore helping her vent wouldn't work, "I don't know what I did wrong. I didn't look or even smell good and I had never seen the guys before." If I was to help her stop her self-destructive behaviors, her guilt seemed to be the logical place to begin. We started looking at all her beliefs that could make her feel so guilty. We spent nearly the entire hour trying to figure out what belief or beliefs she had that were producing her feelings of guilt.

Finally, she and I uncovered the two beliefs that were causing her self-destructive problems.

1. "You should never have sex with someone you don't love, and I had sex with someone I didn't love, much less even knew!"
2. "If you feel guilty, young lady, you must have done something wrong!"

Somewhere, in her upbringing she had missed a loophole, "...unless your life is in danger, or you can't stop them."

We do not have to like all the choices or circumstances that life presents to us. While we are powerless over many of these things, we are powerful when it comes to the Meanings that we attach to these Events (see Figure 1.2 in Chapter 1). And, depending on the Meanings we put to these Events, we will see ourselves as victims.

*It is our beliefs about the system, rather than the system itself, that maintains it.*

As we have seen, many of our Beliefs, Conclusions or Meanings are in the unconscious part of our mind and may not be immediately available for us to examine and change. Looking at our Behaviors and working backward to our Meanings is one technique we can use to bring these Meanings to a conscious level. Another way is to understand how we learned our Beliefs, Values and Expectations. So, let me share with you something I call *The Learning Cycle*.

## The Learning Cycle

Everyone recognizes that when we were born, we were born with all the *physical feelings* (such as feeling cold, hunger, pain, etc.) However, John B. Watson, an acknowledged pioneer in the study of children, did research in 1914 and identified that babies are born with only two *emotional feelings*, the fear of falling and the fear of loud noise. (See Footnote below)

**Footnote:** Now, let me become defensive for a moment. Some researchers call the child's reaction to loud noise and to falling a "startle response." These researchers state that one cannot really tell if the child's response is a result of fear or from something else and they say that those of us who call it "fear" are just projecting our own feelings onto the baby. That may be true. However, I know that a loud unexpected noise or the sensation of falling elicits fear in me, so I figure that if it is true for me, and most children are from the same genetic pool of humans, it is probably true for them. My grandfather used to say that if it walks like a duck and quacks like a duck, it is probably a duck. Therefore, I'm willing to go out on a limb and reiterate that children are born with only two emotional feelings, the fear of loud noises and



the fear of falling.

Whether Watson's early research is accurate or not, the question remains, how did we learn all these Meanings, Expectations, Beliefs, Values and Conclusions about ourselves and our world (which now seem to rule and control our lives)? Again, assuming that we were born with only the two *emotional feelings*, then I believe there wasn't enough time at birth to create much in the way of Meanings, Beliefs, Conclusions, about yourself and your world. When we were born, we did not have an expectation that our rooms should be a certain color, or that our mothers should love us. We did, however, react when we were experiencing hunger or pain.

Babies don't have an Expectation that someone should pick them up and "goo" at them, but they will not grow or thrive, and will even die if somebody doesn't pick them up and "goo" at them on a regular basis. This phenomenon is called *merasmus* and was observed in orphans after WWII. Today, it is recognized as a form of child abuse and is identified as "failure to thrive." The need for a person to feel significant or important is as imperative as food, and without it the end is just as certain.

In the Learning Cycle, babies start with two *emotional feelings* and all the *physical feelings*. The baby feels something, such as hunger. At that point, the baby does some "sponse" (behavior) such as shaking its legs and arms or crying. The parent then responds. (If there are responses, doesn't it seem reasonable that there are

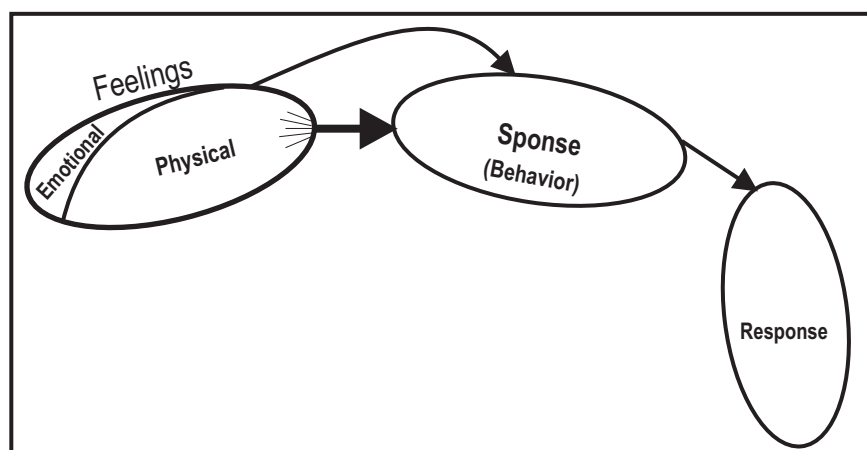


Figure 5.2

"sponses"?)

After making the same "sponse" several times, (okay, okay, the same Behavior) and getting the same response each time, that is when *learning* starts to occur for the baby. "Every time I cry, someone picks me up." The baby then begins to develop an Expectation, "If I cry, someone is going to pick me up." Once the baby has an Expectation of what will happen, the baby's *self-image* begins to develop. "When I cry, I get a pleasant response from someone. I must be a powerful person. I must be important."

Notice that when it comes to developing Expectations, *no response is also a response*. If, when the baby cries, no one picks up the baby, the baby still develops Expectations and a very different kind of *self-image*. "I'm powerless. No matter what I do, nothing ever changes."

Almost as quick as you start developing your self-image, you start developing a view of your world. The baby that is picked up begins to believe that, "The world is a warm, loving, and safe place. Big people are at my beck and call. Big people like me, because I am loveable." While the child who is not picked up begins to believe that, "The world is a cold, uncaring place that is indifferent to me. Big people don't like me, so I am not loveable." As you grow up, the way adults respond to you will determine what meanings you choose to reinforce your view of yourself and of your world.

Note: This type of direct learning was named *Stimulus Response Learning* by Skinner (father of behavioral therapy).

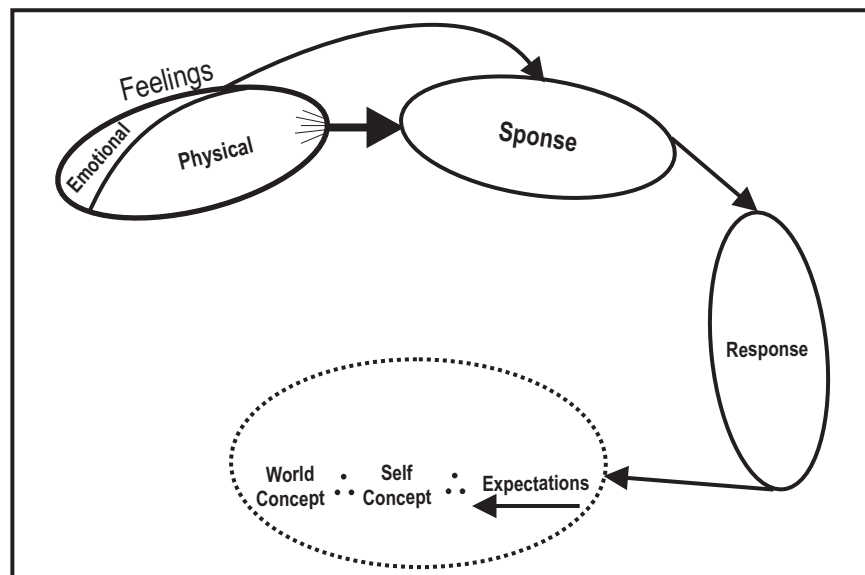
Children are not born being afraid of snakes, mice or bugs. Children are taught to be afraid by witnessing the reactions adults have to different stimuli. Our reaction can be verbal "Don't touch that! It's dirty!" or non-verbal, such as holding the baby tighter when confronted with a mouse or spider.

The way you are raised does have a major influence on how you behave as an adult. However, it **is not** what your parents did to you that made you the way you are. As children you learned how to "survive" your family.

No matter what kind of family you came from, you learned what you needed to do to get attention. You learned about the world around

you, whether it was safe, dangerous, or scary. You learned to trust or not trust yourself and others. You learned what you could and couldn't do. You learned how to manipulate your parents or how powerless you were. What you learned became your survival book on how to relate to your world.

If your survival book does not fit well with the real world, life becomes very difficult and when it becomes too difficult, some people may start believing that their only way out is to kill themselves. Another possibility, when the emotional pain becomes too great, is to unconsciously separate from the painful reality. When



this happens it is called schizophrenia.

*Figure 5.3*

When therapists talk about someone being *crazy*, they are usually referring to some form of schizophrenia. Schizophrenia comes from two Greek words, *schizo* meaning separated and *phrenia* meaning reality. What causes a person to separate from reality has long been debated. In the 1960's - 1970's, many therapists found evidence that it was caused by *crazy making* environments that the person found themselves in. Medical doctors insisted there was an organic (physical) cause.

Over the years, this debate has gone back and forth with no clear cut answer. As with so many things, I believe the truth lies somewhere in the middle. Since there is nothing I can prescribe for any organic problem you might be having, let me suggest there are some things you can do in the way of parenting and /or re-parenting yourself to make your life better. The Learning Cycle gave you a way of looking at your environment and some of the *crazy making* messages you might have learned. I call this next section the *Seven Deadly Sins Against Children and Other People*.

### Seven Deadly Sins Against Children & Other People

A good self-image is one that is balanced and in order. Having a good self-image means having few contradictory beliefs, such as "If you can't do a job right, don't do it at all" vs. "If at first you don't succeed, try, try again." A person with a good self-image believes "I am capable and I can make a difference." This person trusts him/ herself to handle whatever comes into his/her life. This person also is not afraid of the future or the ending of a relationship.

From time to time, all of us have received negative or rejecting messages from our parents, from our teachers, from our social surroundings, and from others close to us. All of these negative messages have contributed to our negative and/or disordered self-image. These negative messages have allowed us to put limits on ourselves and to feel guilty and powerless. We experience them as "truths" for our life. For example, we believe "That is just the way I am." In order for us to change our self-images, we must look at what was said and done to us that caused us to draw our beliefs. What we believe is not who we are, it is what we have learned to be.

If you want to know who you really are, look at a two-year-old child (hopefully before they have been damaged too much). That is the real you. The two-year-old child is full of joy and the excitement of life. They feel powerful and confident, ready to take on the world. They don't hold on to anger or resentments; they are certainly not passive-aggressive. They are honest, sometimes embarrassingly so

(until we teach them to lie). Is this the way you are today?

*WHAT YOU BELIEVE  
IS NOT WHO YOU ARE,  
IT IS WHAT YOU  
LEARNED TO BE*

We were all created to be just like that two-year-old; happy, carefree and honest. Even Jesus said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, for such is the kingdom of God." A little later He says, "Unless you become as one of these (little children) you shall not enter into the kingdom of God." And besides, God doesn't make junk. From time to time I will hear someone ask, "If there is a God why does he allow people do such terrible things?" May I suggest that it wasn't God who did it, but some person who has become disordered. So how do people become disordered? I've heard it said that somewhere between 70 to 75% of your self-image is learned in the first six years of your life. We need to take a look at what you learned in your first six years of life and how you learned.

To help you look at where you might have learned some of your disordered messages, I have put together what I call the *Seven Deadly Sins Against Children and Other People*:

1. The Double Bind
2. What You Feel Is Not What You Feel
3. Putdowns
4. You Are Not Important
5. You Are Powerless
6. Love Is Conditional
7. Don't Check This Out

## 1. The Double Bind

The first of the *Seven Deadly Sins Against Children and Other People* is the Double Bind. Double Binds make us confused and unable to determine what we are feeling (see Chapter 2). This makes it impossible to make choices about our behaviors based on our (unidentified) feelings. What happens when there are fewer and fewer identifiable feelings from which to choose? The more confusing our feelings become to us, the more confusing our

behaviors become.

There are two kinds of Double Binds:

1. Double Bind Messages
2. Double Bind Situations

The Double Bind Message is when we are presented with two opposite possible meanings. For example: the parent who smiles while he tells his child how angry he is. Which do you respond to, the smile or the anger? Or, the mother who spansks the child and says with an angry tone of voice, "Mother loves you." Which do you respond to, the spanking and angry voice or the words? A common children's lullaby is a good example of a Double Bind Message we give without even knowing it:

"Rock-a-bye Baby in the treetop,  
When the wind blows, the cradle will rock,  
When the bough breaks, the cradle will fall,  
And down will come Baby, cradle and all."

Other examples of Double Bind Messages are:

- "Go out and have a good time. My bad heart is giving me a lot of trouble right now, but I'll be fine."
- "Laugh and the world laughs with you; cry and you cry alone."
- "If you can't do a job right, don't do it at all."
- "That's a dumb way to feel."
- "You shouldn't feel that way."
- "Big boys don't cry."
- "Nice girls don't get angry."

The Double Bind Situation is when a person is put into a position where any choice made will be unacceptable. Divorced parents who compete for their children's loyalty and affection, is a prime example of a Double Bind Situation. Here is another all too common example, "Stop crying or I'll give you something to cry about!"

Not all Double Bind Situations happen to us as children. Here is an example of an adult Double Bind Situation: A woman's new husband and her son were constantly fighting. The only choices that she felt she had were to kick out her son or to kick out her new husband. Both

choices were unacceptable to her, so the woman experienced a period of time in which she separated from reality, had a brief psychotic break-down and had to be hospitalized.

## 2. What You Feel is Not What You Feel

The second of the Seven Deadly Sins Against Children and Other People is when we were told that what we feel is not what we feel. We are not born knowing the names of what we feel. As children, we knew only that there was something inside of us, some kind of sensation prodding us. In the same way that we have to be taught the names of objects in his world (such as a chair, table desk, etc.) we also must be taught appropriate names for what we feel. However, instead of being taught these appropriate names, we are taught that *we don't feel what we feel*. Look at these for instance:

- "Jump up, that didn't hurt."
- "You're not mad at Mother, you love Mother."
- "You don't hate your brother, you love him."

How can you choose what you feel if you don't even know what it is that you are feeling? As you can see, this can become very confusing.

Another way we teach people of all ages to deny what they feel is by teaching them that anger is a sin, that sexual feelings are evil, and so on. This also results in turning everyday life experiences into Double Bind Situations. Everyone, at sometime in their lives, will experience anger or sexual feelings. These feelings are a naturally occurring part of each of us. Feelings aren't right or wrong, feelings just ARE! While you have no choice over what you feel, it's what you do with them that is either good or bad.

## 3. Putdowns

The third of the Seven Deadly Sins Against Children and Other People is the use of Putdowns. Putdowns are any word (or series of words / behaviors) whose purpose is to humiliate, shame or discount another person's feelings of self-worth. We put people down in many ways. We call them names; "You're dumb!" "You're stupid!" "You're a little witch!" "You're a bad boy!" Some of the most emotionally violent programs on TV and radio have used "putdown humor" like Groucho Marx in his later programs, Don Rickles, and Howard Stern.

Sarcasm, a form of Putdown, is commonly passed off as humor. All of us have some doubts as to our abilities, talents and looks; and when we are the victims of Putdowns, especially from significant people in our lives, our self-concept can be compromised and we feel powerless and may even start to question ourselves.

Putdowns can come in many forms. When you come up to talk to someone and they turn away or ignore you completely, you just got a very strong message of how little respect they have for you. Another type of Putdown is when someone discounts your feelings by belittling them in some way:

- "You think that was bad! Why, when I was your age I had to walk through the snow barefooted!"
- "It's just puppy love. You'll get over it. It's no big deal."
- "That wasn't a hard spanking; why, when I was your age, I used to get it with a razor strap."
- "You think you've got it bad, wait till you grow up! Then you'll know what real trouble is all about."

#### **4. You Are Not Important**

The fourth of the Seven Deadly Sins Against Children and Other People is that others are always more important than you are. Once you have been trapped in a Double Bind and have become confused about what you feel, your disordered or crazy feelings can then be reinforced. This is done by becoming convinced that you are not important and are powerless to change anything in your life.

A few years ago, in the emergency room of a local hospital, a young boy with a broken leg was crying softly to himself. His father approached him and said, "Now, now, you mustn't cry. You're upsetting your mother." In other words, everyone else's feelings are more important than yours. How many of us have heard "You'll do it because I told you to do it!" Here, again with no explanation, the reinforcement is that parents are more important. The child is being treated as a second-class citizen with no power to control or to change anything in his/her life.

#### **5. You Are Powerless**



The fifth of the Seven Deadly Sins Against Children and Other People continues to reinforce powerlessness. This is quite often done in a very subtle way by parents rescuing us and by making all of our decisions for us. When children are rescued, it teaches them that there are no consequences to behavior and that they are powerless to control or to shape anything in their environment.

Not too long ago, I had a young mother in my office with a little girl of about 2½ years of age. The little girl was afraid of just about everything in her world, including her own shadow. It was not a natural reaction for a small child, for children are not born feeling so fearful and powerless. As I observed the mother and the little girl, a smaller child of less than a year old crawled up to the little girl who immediately began screaming, "Baby is going to get me! Baby is going to get me!" The mother walked over, picked up the little girl and said, "Now, now, don't cry. The baby isn't going to hurt you. The baby loves you." The mother took her little girl a short distance away and placed her back on the floor. The baby again crawled over to the little girl. The girl screamed, and the mother picked her up saying, "the baby is not going to hurt you."

Remember, when I said "What you do speaks so loud I can't hear what you say" from earlier in this chapter. The message that the little girl was receiving from her mother was that, "mother picks me up each time the baby comes near me, so she must be protecting me from the baby." Although the mother's intentions were good, she should have showed the little girl that the baby was harmless and perhaps just wanted to play. This behavior would have matched the message that the mother intended to send to the little girl; "the baby is not going to hurt you."

As each of us were growing up, our feelings of powerlessness were probably reinforced by our parents. Think about it for a moment, our parents did not allow us to pick out which clothes to wear each day. We were forced to eat when we were not necessarily hungry. By our parents making all the decisions for us and by them constantly rescuing and protecting us, we learned to believe that we were incapable, weak, and ultimately powerless. As a result, we have become afraid of change, afraid of growth, and afraid of taking control of our lives.

## 6. Love Is Conditional

The sixth, and most destructive, of the Seven Deadly Sins Against Children and Other People is the Double Bind of Conditional Love. The use of Conditional Love guarantees that we are obedient to our parents. However, this obedience is the result of the fear of abandonment, not of love. The message that our parents sent to us was, "If you don't mind me, I won't love you." This message was acted out when our parents withheld expressions of love from us until we obeyed them. Ignoring and rejecting were also used as methods of punishment for our disobedience. Victims of this type of manipulation tend to become very afraid that their parents might leave them. As a result, the fear of being left alone by their parents, even for short periods, becomes traumatic and they will find themselves going to extreme lengths to "guarantee" that they will not be rejected by their parents. What I have seen in these children is that they become extremely well mannered and reserved, with very few friends. They are content to play by themselves for unusually long periods of time. Research indicates that these children tend to run a very high risk of suicide and/or homicidal behaviors in later years.

## 7. Don't Check Things Out

The Seventh Deadly Sin Against Children and Other People is to guarantee that we *will* develop emotional problems and *will not* seek help. Once we have been confused and convinced that we are unimportant and powerless (Deadly Sins 4 and 5), the next and final sin is to be too afraid to double check with others to determine whether the world is really different from what we have been taught. We feel so powerless and unimportant at this point that we automatically think things like:

- "I can't trust anyone."
- "A real man/woman solves his/her own problems."
- "No shrink is going to tell me what to do or tell me what is wrong with me."

Can you see how, as children, we were taught that the world is a dangerous, unsafe, threatening place to be, that the people in the world are unsafe and dangerous and finally that we must protect ourselves from everything and everybody? Do any of the following statements sound familiar:

- "Women are all gold diggers who are out to use you."
- "Everybody lies. There are no honest people."
- "Men only want one thing."
- "A real man holds his own counsel."
- "If you don't do it perfectly, people will leave you."
- "I will never let anyone get close to me again, because I can never stand to hurt this way again."
- "The world is a cold and dangerous place."
- "You shouldn't feel that way, (what is the matter with you)."
- "See, I told you people will hurt you."

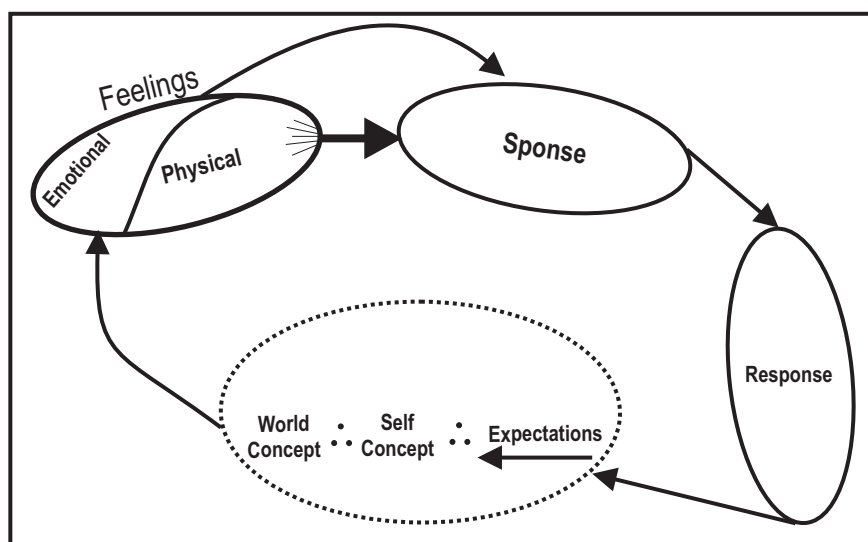
If these negative messages are used over and over for an extended period of time, the Seventh Deadly Sin establishes in our minds that the only safe response is withdrawal from all people, from the world, and from society. This makes true emotional intimacy impossible. There will be no change in our perception of our surroundings because we have not received any new information to raise doubts about the first six Deadly Sins.

All of us have had some of these Seven Deadly Sins used against us at some time or other. These Sins are like lead poison that builds up in our systems. A little is not noticeable. A little more and those around us begin to see changes in us, but we can't see it in ourselves. However, over a long period of time, these destructive responses add up. The combined effects turn deadly and interfere with our learning, our relationships, and ultimately affect all our interactions.

Thankfully, not all the responses that we received growing up were "deadly". Every time someone reacted to us or didn't react to us, we developed more expectations that either reinforced or changed our self concept and our world concept (see Figure 5.4). As this learning took place within our belief systems, the emotional part of our physical brain grew larger and became more developed. As our emotional being developed, we were faced with more opportunities to feel disappointment, fear, putdowns, loss and powerlessness. On a positive note, we also had more opportunities to feel love, joy, excitement, happiness and contentment.

As a baby, most of our Sponse (behaviors) came from our physical feelings. As we grow older, we develop our Expectations, draw

conclusions about ourselves and our world, and the emotional feelings become more dominate in determining our behaviors. The older we get, the more we expect, and the more we become



disappointed when things don't fulfill our expectations. *Figure 5.4*

Many of our Beliefs, Values and Expectations were planted in experiences that were learned before we could talk or understand what was going on around us. These meanings were then reinforced as we grew older and *reality* became what we expected it to be. Before long, we began looking for evidence to prove our reality. "See, I did it again. I am so stupid! The world is a dangerous place where people get hurt."

We learn more in our first years of life than we do in any other years. By the time we reach high school, we learn / develop 90% of our self-image. From then on, we simply reinforce the perceptions that we made about ourselves and about our world.

As children, our physical feelings dominated our behaviors. When we needed to urinate, we did so without a thought about what others might think or say. Today, when there is a conflict between what we feel physically and what we feel emotionally, the emotional feeling usually wins out. When there is difference between our values/

beliefs and what we feel, what we feel will usually win out.

Freud's concept of development seemed to blame the parents when he asked, "and what did you mother do to you to make you this way?" I want you to see that the Learning Cycle model is different. It is different in that it is not based on what happened to us or what others did to us. Rather it is based on the Meanings, Beliefs and Conclusions that WE choose to think. We *choose* to think and we can think *anything* we want to think.

Let's say that I came to your house when you were three-years-old. You're sitting on your mother's lap. She reaches over, gets a cigar out of the cigar box, puts it in your mouth, lights it for you and you start smoking. At three-years-old, do I blame you or do I blame your mother? Your mother, of course! And I would probably report her to Child Protective Services. However, if I came over to your house today and see you walking around smoking a big cigar, saying "Oh, but my mother started me smoking when I was three-years-old." Will I blame your mother? No way!

Sure, we all may have received a lot of bad parenting when we were growing up, but *that is no excuse* to hold on to those negative Beliefs, Expectations, Feelings or Behaviors. Even as a child, our parents and teachers were not our only sources of learning. As children, we also learned by watching our siblings. "Sissy sure got into a lot of trouble when she wrote on the wall. I don't think I want to do that." This type of learning is called *Indirect* or *Vicarious Learning*. Just like Direct Learning, Indirect Learning can occur in many different ways, such as observing others, reading, listening to stories, or by watching TV. (See Figure 5.5 on next page)

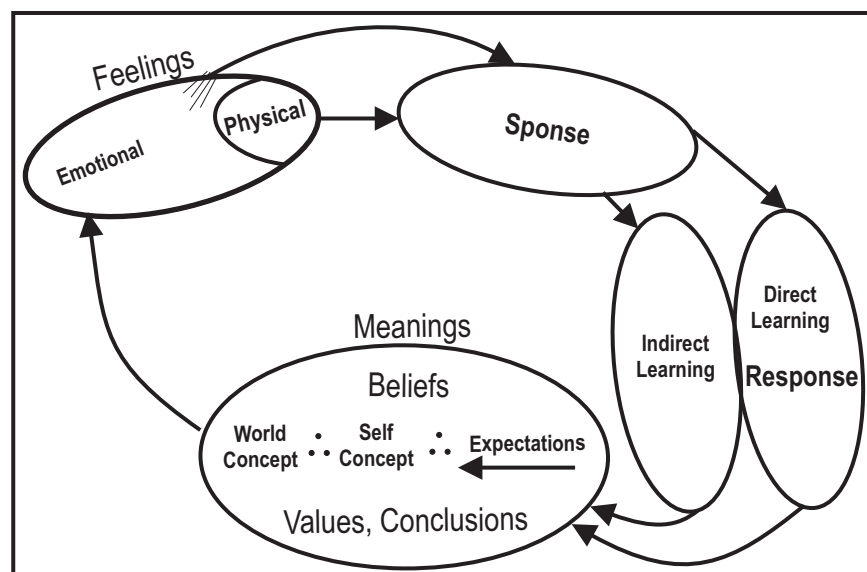


Figure 5.5

As with all learning situations, Direct or Indirect, childhood Conclusions and Meanings were a means of survival for us. Here are some examples:

- "It is OK to allow myself to be molested because then he won't hurt little sister." (As an adult, it is OK to allow abuse because the other family members are safe.)
- "When the molester comes, if I lay real still, it won't be so bad." (As an adult, being passive is the way to respond.)
- "If I don't tell, then Daddy won't have to leave." (As an adult, it is important to take abuse to keep the family together.)
- "When things get too bad at home, I run away, or I get hurt." (The way to handle problems is to run away.)
- "The harder I work, and get good grades, the more attention I get." (Being a work-alcoholic is the way to get ahead.)
- "Keeping quiet is the way to keep from getting spanked." (People who speak-up get in trouble.)

It is these survival beliefs, learned as a child that help to shape

adult behaviors for better or worse.

In the Seven Deadly Sins Against Children and Other People we have seen some very harmful parenting techniques. In Lessons to Learn I will suggest some ways to re-parent yourself.

## LESSONS TO LEARN

### Lesson One:

#### One Way To Change

As adults, change requires a re-evaluation of how well your life is working for you. This re-evaluation starts with you becoming aware of your destructive behaviors. You might start by asking yourself, "Is what I'm doing getting me what I want in the long run?" Next, you must stop blaming others. Even if you believe that "they" are doing it to you, you must assume responsibility and look for your hand in the problem. "God, whatever I am supposed to be learning, would I hurry up and learn it so that I can quit hurting?" Then, take the judgment off your behaviors. "Isn't it *interesting* that I'm still doing behaviors that keep getting me into trouble? I wonder how long I need to keep doing them?" After that, set an appointment with yourself, a time when you will stop that behavior; one day, a week, a month? "In two days, I will have punished myself enough and I will stop my destructive behavior." Finally, tell three friends your "truth" every day until you stop that destructive behavior. "I will continue to do (describe your destructive behavior) until I want to stop."

Change will occur only as you accept responsibility for your behavior and feel the embarrassment (motivation) to change. Remember, Hemingway said, "Everything is your fault . . . if you are lucky." If you are doing it to yourself, you can change it. If someone or something is doing it to you, you are truly unlucky, because there is nothing you can do to change it.

Note: Not all change will come easy for you. If the suggestions in this book don't work for you, find a therapist you can trust, one who will help you achieve the changes in yourself that you are looking for. If, within a month, you don't experience change, don't be afraid to keep looking until you find a therapist who will confront you and you find yourself starting to change.

### Lesson Two:

#### Comparing Universal Processes



The Events→Meanings→Feeling Connection, from Chapter One, follows the same process as the Anger→Depression Connection, which is also the same as the Learning Cycle.

Look back at the Anger→Depression Connection diagram in the first part of this chapter. Compare it with the Events→Meanings→Feeling diagram in Chapter One. Do you see any similarities between the diagram in Chapter One and the Anger→Depression Connection? Did you notice in the Anger→Depression Connection that there is a whole section on feelings? First, second and third level feelings. All three columns are just feelings; feelings having to do with anger, but still, feelings none the less. And finally, notice the last column, Getting Even, Getting Sick or Getting Out, are the behaviors. The Anger→Depression Connection is an expansion of the Event→Meaning→Feeling diagram.

Now look at the Learning Cycle again, do you see the connection? In the Learning Cycle, I started with *Feelings* (physical & emotional) *Behaviors* (the baby's sponse) *People, Events, Words* (the parents' responses) *Meanings* (expectations, self-concept, and world concept). Now, isn't that interesting? (Compare Figure 5.5 & Figure 5.6)

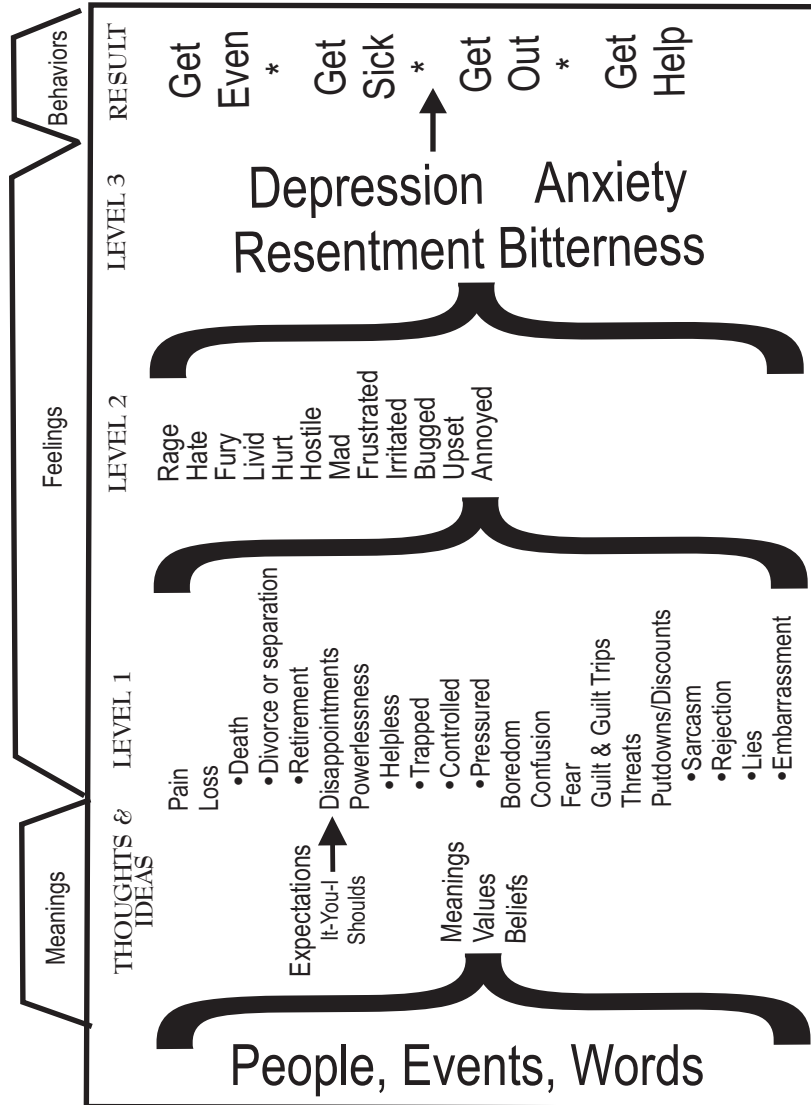


Figure 5.6

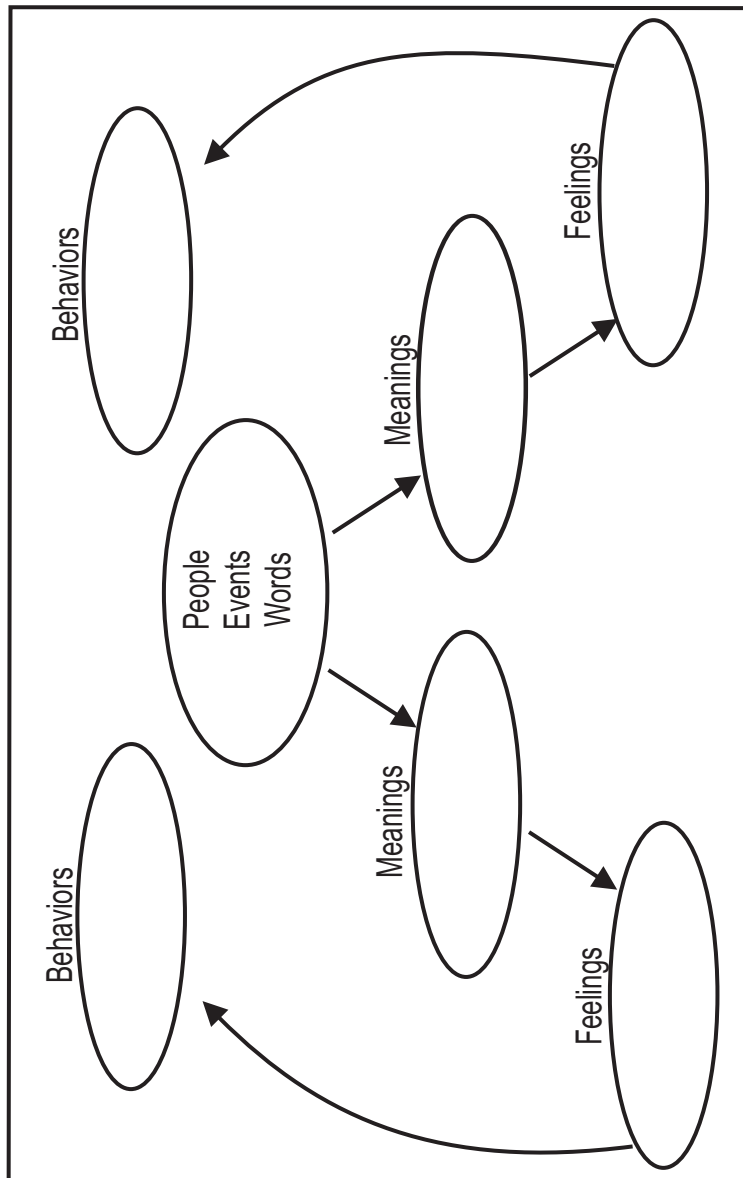


Figure 5.7

### Lesson Three:

#### Putting the Event→Meaning→Feeling

#### Connection To Work For You

There are three ways to use the Event→Meaning→Feeling Connection to help you get the changes you want in your life. Which one or combination of the three that is right for you will depend upon the nature of your problem.

In Chapter One, we looked at the Event→Meaning→Feeling Connection in terms of two people who saw the same Events (or Words), but put *different* Meanings on the Event or Words. Many conflicts occur because people see and hear things differently. For example, a couple described a "big fight" they had over the weekend. It was late one Saturday night and they were headed home after visiting some friends, when she says, "Oh look, Baskin-Robbins is open." He glances over and says, "Isn't that interesting, it sure is." And drove right on past. She felt hurt and rejected; finally when they got home she *hit the ceiling*. "Why didn't you stop at Baskin-Robbins when I asked you to?" He was dumb-founded, "I had no idea you wanted me to stop. I thought you were just noting how late it was for them to be open."

Now, I would like to suggest some other ways to use the Event→Meaning→Feeling Connection to help us get changes in ourselves. These next two ways are important to help us understand and change behaviors in ourselves that don't make sense. Having problems with making sense of our behaviors is not new. Over two thousand years ago the apostle Paul wrote, "I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do, I do not do, but what I hate, I do." Perhaps we have had similar problems in our own lives.

## EXERCISES TO DO

### Exercise One: The Illusion of Powerlessness

Let us see if I can put these concepts together and we can discover more about ourselves. Take the concept of powerlessness. Throughout our lives, how have we been creating the feelings of powerlessness? What Beliefs, Values or Expectations, what thoughts have we been thinking in order to create a sense of powerlessness?

Since powerlessness is a feeling, we have to be thinking something to create it. By thinking, we either create the perception of powerlessness or powerfulness in our life. We can experience the power that we really do have or maintain the illusion of powerlessness. It is up to each of us.

Yes, we are totally powerless when it comes to changing somebody else. However, we each have absolute power to change ourselves. In fact, we cannot, not be powerful. Only the way we think can create the illusion of powerlessness in our life.

In the booklet *The Anatomy of A Victim* I have an inventory of Beliefs and Feelings that rob us of being able to feel powerful, and enables us to be the victim. Try the exercise on the next page.

## TAKING CONTROL OF YOUR LIFE

Take this personal inventory and see where you score on the victim scale. Make a copy of this exercise and put a check mark next to each statement that is mostly true for you.

- ☐ I find myself afraid of the strong emotions in others.
- ☐ I usually put others' needs before mine.
- ☐ It is very important for me to please others.
- ☐ I find it difficult to say no.
- ☐ I am afraid of making others angry.
- ☐ If people would do what they are supposed to do, my life would be happier.
- ☐ It is very important for me to do things right the first time.
- ☐ If I have to tell someone what makes me feel loved, then it doesn't mean anything if they do what I ask.
- ☐ I find it difficult to ask for what I want.
- ☐ I would change a lot of things in my life, but I am afraid.
- ☐ I would rather take abuse than say anything or fight back.
- ☐ I would rather leave a situation than "rock the boat" to get changes.
- ☐ I strongly believe "If you can't say something nice, don't say anything at all."
- ☐ I always strive to be right and/or perfect.
- ☐ I carefully rehearse what I'm going to say before I decide to say it.
- ☐ I always obey people in authority, such as bosses, even if I believe they are wrong.
- ☐ I sometimes resort to whining, screaming, or manipulating to get my way.
- ☐ It is OK to manipulate with guilt or bully people to get my way.
- ☐ Giving in and pleasing people is the best way to get what I want.

FROM POWERLESS TO POWERFUL

- ☐ "Peace at any price" is a good motto to live by.
- ☐ There is something wrong with me if I have to yell.
- ☐ I tend to shut down (go numb) when I am being yelled at.
- ☐ I tend to be a rescuer.
- ☐ I will take a lot of mistreatment before I really blow up.
- ☐ I do not speak up in a restaurant if my food is not cooked right.
- ☐ I am afraid of being alone or abandoned.
- ☐ I am easily put down and hurt by what others do and say.
- ☐ Feelings of powerlessness and fear seem to rule my life.
- ☐ There are many areas of life in which I do not feel capable.
- ☐ Bad things just seem to happen to me for no reason at all.
- ☐ I really don't make much of a difference in the world or in people's lives.
- ☐ What happens to me is more a result of events and people outside of me, than of what I create.
- ☐ I believe people won't like you if you are good at what you do.
- ☐ I should never toot my own horn.
- ☐ All good things come to those who wait.
- ☐ I feel guilty much of the time.

This is just a partial list of some of the victim beliefs I have heard over the years. The more questions you marked as true for you, the more you will find yourself feeling and acting the role of the victim. You cannot be a victim unless you *believe* certain things about yourself, about men, about women and about your world. Knowing your victim beliefs is the first step to changing them. However, if you feel that you are stuck and unable to get out of your role as a victim by yourself, you may want to find a counselor who knows how to work in the areas of changing beliefs and cognitive dissonance.

*The mind of the man is the man himself.*  
*Cicero, 50 BC*

## Things To Come

Psychology has come through many stages in the last one hundred years. These stages were lead by many well known therapists such as: Freud, Skinner, Pearls, Ellis, and Rodgers, just to name a few. Each therapist developed his own theory based on successful experiences with their clients. Each one vigorously defended his approach, often discounting the approaches of the other therapists. (Eg. "It took us a long time to debunk the whole Freudian crap..." ...Fritz Perls.)

As an undergraduate student working on my BS in psychology, I would go from class to class and listen to the different professors' tout their theoretical approach as *the correct* approach. This drove me crazy. I reasoned that unless Freud was working on a different species of human being than say, Fritz Pearls, then each had to be correct, at least to some degree.

To resolve this problem, I looked at the area/areas of human experience in which each worked. I discovered three areas of commonality:

- Cognitive, thinking, logical
- Affective, feelings (physical and emotional)
- Behavioral

All therapy works in one or a combination of these three areas. I went back to my list of therapists and drew lines from their names to the areas in which they concentrated their therapy.

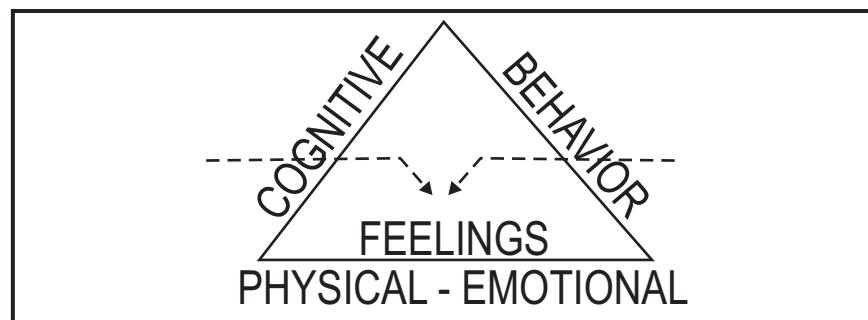


Figure 5.8



It seemed logical to me that there needed to be an approach which gave equal weight to each area. For me, that became Process Therapy, a Cognitive-Affective-Behavioral approach to change.

In this next chapter I will focus on just two, the Cognitive and Affective ways of creating change in ourselves. It is important to understand in more detail the two ways in which you think. You think Cognitively, in words and symbols, but you also think in pictures and memories.

When doing therapy, sometimes a straight cognitive approach will work great, at other time it is a dead end. For some types of problems that are coming from pictures or memories, an affective approach is all that will get the change. At other times, combinations of all three areas need to be used to achieve change.

# Chapter Six

## FIXING BOTH SIDES OF THE BRAIN

### Emotional Quotient

Emotional Quotient is the measure of your use of emotional ability to make decisions. Whereas, Intellectual Quotient is the measure of your use of intellectual ability to make decisions. Conscious awareness of your emotional abilities is essential to developing and increasing your Emotional Quotient. This makes use of both sides of your brain. Refer to Chapter Two - *Being Aware* where we discuss (in depth) the three types of awareness, the decision-making processes, and the right/left brain functions.

Now that we have completed the first five chapters we are left to discuss Right & Left Brain Therapy, the contradictory beliefs we are faced with and some suggested therapeutic measures that can help.

### Left-Brain Therapy

In the past, psychologists separated emotional problems into two categories:

1. *Neurotic Behaviors* were thought of as left hemisphere dysfunctions.
2. *Psychotic Behaviors* were thought of as right hemisphere dysfunctions.

We now know that emotional problems are more complicated than those rigid distinctions suggested. Nevertheless, there are some emotional problems that do come from the left hemisphere of the brain, the logical, rational side. Fritz Perls, M.D., Ph.D. back in the 1960's called neurosis a "*growth disorder*." He said, "So, in other words, the whole neurosis question shifts more and more from the medical to the educational field."

In earlier chapters, we saw that depression is seen by David Burns, M.D. and Albert Ellis, M.D. as a symptom of what we think (i.e., a thinking disorder) which is more of an educational problem than a chemical or medical problem. At the same time, other doctors believe depression to be an organic or chemical disorder. I personally believe depression can be a disorder of either one, or a combination of both, depending upon where it starts.

In Left-Brain therapy, we deal with the emotional conflicts and problems that arise out of our disordered, "kinky" thinking. In Chapter One, we saw how to put meanings on our life experiences, (People, Events and Words) primarily in the area of relationships with other people. Now, we will explore how the left side of our brain can become disordered as a result of not having received a logical message.

Most of us have not looked at what we believe in order to double check that our beliefs are logical and rational. As children, we accepted what the adults in our lives told us as true whether it made sense or not. These were probably the same people who told us:

- "If you can't do a job right the first time, don't do it at all."
- "If at first you don't succeed, try, try again."

We believed both statements without qualification or question. The first belief went into one place in the Left-Brain and the second went into a different place in the Left-Brain. We never stopped to consider that they were contradictory. The result of these contradictory beliefs is that as adults, when we approach a new situation, we go back and forth between the two beliefs.

- "I have to do this perfectly or I shouldn't do it."
- "Do I try to do it or don't I?"
- "If I'm not sure I can do it right the first time, do I not even attempt it or do I try over and over again in spite of repeated failures?"
- "It's OK to learn by trial and error. No it isn't, I must do this right the first time."

This confusion results in feelings of being stuck, trapped, powerless, depressed and guilty, no matter what we choose to do.

Some of the messages we received from people in our lives were contradictory, while others were just plain false. Here is a short list of possible contradictory beliefs that you might recognize. I'm sure you can come up with a lot more too.

- When you marry, you marry for life. *versus* It is OK to get a divorce if you can get an annulment or if there is abuse.
- If you are a guy and have a problem with another guy you should duke it out. *versus* You shouldn't hit people, especially girls.
- You shouldn't stay in a bad relationship. *versus* You should stay for the sake of the children.
- He who never wants, is never disappointed. *Versus* He who never wants, never gets.
- You should turn the other cheek. *versus* You should defend yourself.
- You should always be honest. *versus* It is OK to tell white lies, if the truth might hurt.
- Absence makes the heart grow fonder. *versus* Out of sight, out of mind.
- You shouldn't hurt people you love. *versus* You should have open and honest relationships with people you love.
- Be spontaneous. *versus* Think before you speak.
- Anyone can make it if they work hard. *versus* You don't have what it takes to make it without special help.
- Patience is a virtue. *versus* He who hesitates is lost.
- Sex is dirty. *versus* Save it for the one you love.
- Strike while the iron is hot. *versus* All good things come to those who wait.
- You should obey the law. *versus* Laws are made to be broken.

Here are some examples of beliefs that are false:

- All women are. . . . *or* All men are. . . .
- Parents are always right.
- Rats, bugs, spiders are bad and/or dangerous.
- The boogy man will get you if you go outside.

## TAKING CONTROL OF YOUR LIFE

- Girls are made of sugar and spice, (all fluff and no substance).
- You are lazy.
- And they got married and lived happily ever after.
- You can't do anything right.
- Emotional pain is bad and could be terminal.
- If you loved me, you would know what makes me feel loved.
- Love is a guarantee that our relationship will last.
- If you loved me, you wouldn't hurt my feelings.
- If you feel guilty, you must have done something wrong.
- Big boys don't cry. Nice girls don't get angry.
- All adults can be trusted and should be obeyed.

We can see from the examples listed, not all the messages we received were verbal messages. Some messages were visual, meaning we received them by watching people's behaviors.

Being in this type of contradictory state can result in symptoms of emotional and physical exhaustion and a sense of confusion, powerlessness and depression. My daughter, Tracey says these symptoms are a result of the Mental Isometrics required to balance the two opposites, similar to isometric exercises where you use one set of muscles to push against another. A good isometric exercise can leave you only physically exhausted; mental isometrics can have a greater physical and emotional effect.

If this is happening to you, stop for a moment and look at belief-feelings as if it were someone else who had that feeling. What must that person believe in order to have that feeling? If you still can't figure it out, ask a friend, "I know this person who says he feels angry when his wife doesn't keep the house clean but he says he really believes it is OK that she doesn't. What do you think that person must be expecting from, and/or believing about, his wife?" If your friend isn't able to help you with this, find a therapist who does more than just listen. One of the roles of a good therapist is to help you know what you feel when you feel it, and help you see more clearly the connection between Meanings→Feelings→Behaviors.

## Right-Brain Affective Therapy

Sometimes, there can be Right-Brain dysfunction that Left-Brain therapy can not remedy. Basically, *the right brain can not tell the difference between what was/is real and what is imagined*. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a Right-Brain dysfunction that is the result of a traumatic environmental incident, such as was seen in many veterans after the Vietnam War. PTSD can also be the result of a rape, molest, holdup, a fiery car wreck, and even a very traumatic divorce. Some symptoms of PTSD may include: flashbacks, recurring dreams of the event, efforts to avoid thoughts/feelings associated with the trauma, inability to recall aspects of the trauma, depression, difficulty falling asleep, outbursts of anger, and difficulty concentrating.

Panic Disorder can also be a symptom of PTSD. With Panic Disorder, a person's body can react so strongly that they think they are having a heart attack and/or are going crazy. People with Panic Disorder have often, as small children, been the victims of an event or a series of events where the child has come to the conclusion that, "Something terrible could or will happen to me at any time, therefore, I must be in control at all times." This is not a conscious conclusion. It is more in the form of a picture stored in the right side of the brain. This unconscious conclusion is based on a picture or a series of pictures of a real event or events. But, a child's picture is distorted because as children, we see people and things larger and more powerful than we do as adults. When I was a kid, my father seemed like a huge, frightening person, all knowing and sometimes a frightening man. . When I look at him today with my adult eyes, I see him as a somewhat smaller man than myself, not all knowing and not frightening at all. Since there is no language in the right side of the brain to argue with the conclusions that are there, the pictures and the conclusions becomes "stuck" and they become what we perceive to be our "truth".

It is in the right hemisphere of our brain where "flashbacks" are stored. These traumatic Right-Brain pictures may be so repressed that we are not even aware of them, but they can still hold a powerful charge.

Years ago, before it was made illegal, movies theaters used to insert one frame of a coke or popcorn into their featured movie. As we watched the movie, we wouldn't consciously see that one frame, but our minds did. Because of the subliminal message, the next thing we knew, we were back at the concession stand ordering a coke and popcorn. Repressed pictures in the right side of our brains can act in the same way that the one frame of popcorn acted in the movie. This is exactly what happened to me when I was talking to Darle (my friend) about going to a movie by herself in Chapter 2. In that incident, what I had was a flashback resulting from the emotional trauma. Of course, this type of flashback was nothing compared to what a rape victim or Vietnam war veteran might experience. But it was still bothersome none the less.

There are several ways of doing Right-Brain therapy and what works best for each person will depend on each individual situation. In this next section, I will explore some of the ways of doing Right-Brain therapy and suggest which method might work best in certain situations.

To understand how Right-Brain Affective Therapy works, it is important to know that: *The Right-Brain cannot tell the difference between what was/is real and what is imagined.* This principal is the reason Visualization and Relaxation techniques work so well. If I have you close your eyes and visualize being in the mountains by a bubbling stream, seeing soft white clouds floating by, smelling the scent of pine in the air, feeling your body sinking into the soft grassy meadow, the next thing you know, you will be totally relaxed. It will be as if you are really there, even though you are not. However, your mind accepted the picture that my words created for you as reality, and your body responded by relaxing. This concept is very important in doing Right-Brain Therapy.

Let me suggest three different ways of doing *Affective Therapy* that utilize mainly the right brain (all three will increase your Emotional Quotient).

### I. Visualization

- A. Relaxation
- B. Regression
- C. Re-enacting
- D. Finishing Up
- E. Dream Therapy

### II. Role Playing

- A. Empty Chair
- B. Playing the Part
- C. Reversing the Role
- D. Psychodrama

### III. Story Telling

- I. *Visualization* requires creating and recreating pictures in the right side of our minds. Exercise One in Chapter Two is an example of visualization.

- A. *Relaxation* is used most often in situations where stress management training is needed. It is also important to use with people with Anxiety and Panic Disorder to help them reverse their tendency to tense more when they feel tense.

In a relaxation sequence, you are usually instructed to: "Close your eyes and become aware of your body. . . . Be aware of any tense or tight areas of your body. As if you could stand outside of your body, look at these areas . . . . Looks at the muscles. . . . What color are they? Are they hard or soft? As you look at these muscles, breath in through the nose, hold it, hold, now exhale through the mouth letting your shoulders drop down, down, down." I usually go through the breathing sequence three times, then I say, "If you want to go into a deeper state of relaxation, become aware of your feet. Let your feet become very, very relaxed, as if the muscles around your



toes and the arch of your feet were like limp warm spaghetti. The muscles in your calves, let them become very heavy and relaxed."

I will go through your whole body in this same manner, ending with, "Let the muscles around your jaw become very relaxed. You may even find your mouth opening just a little. Let the muscles around your eyes become very relaxed and very soft. Now, if you want to go into a deeper state of relaxation see yourself floating in a beautiful blue sky, on soft white clouds, you are so light as if the soft air currents could pass right through your body. As you are floating, you find yourself drifting." This is where I will take you to your favorite place in the mountains, ocean, or desert. "As if you were an eagle, allow yourself to drift downwards towards a beautiful mountain meadow. As you look down, at one end of the valley you see a waterfall forming a pool from which a little stream runs down the valley past a little log cabin with smoke coming from the chimney."

Once I have you in your relaxing place, I will have you start exploring the different parts of your valley, always leaving it open for you to come back another day and explore more. I will then end visualization with, "Become aware of your body, notice how relaxed it is. Now take your right hand and rub the back of your left hand. As you rub your hand again be aware of how relaxed your body is. Any time you want your body to return to this natural state of relaxation, all you have to do is to rub the back of your left hand with your right hand and you will return to a state of relaxation." This last part is stimulus-response conditioning to help your body to be able to return to a state of relaxation. The more often this part is reinforced the better it will work.

- B. *Regression* takes you back to a time when you were little and did not feel safe, such as when your parents were getting a divorce or when you were being abused or molested. The goal of regression is to strengthen your inner child, that scared little part of you that comes out

when you are in situations that remind your unconscious of a time when you were too young to protect yourself.

I will start this therapeutic process with a mini relaxation sequence, then continue with, "See yourself high on a mountain plateau, as you look over the hills before you, feel your power as the physically strong adult you are. Remember the times you have been successful. The times you have been strong and taken care of yourself. Now turn around and look behind you, and you will see a very large, wooden door in the mountain, one you might have found on a old castle, with a large, old ring to pull it open with. Pull the door open. See the path going down, down into the mountain. This path will take you back through your life to a time when you were very small and could not protect yourself. There is a scared, little child back there who needs you to protect him/her."

"Start down the path. As you go down the path it will take you past your old high school. You see some of your teachers, some you liked, some you didn't. As you watch, you can see yourself walking from one class to another. Continue down the path, back to a place where you could see your grade school. Continue past the school to the house you used to live in. Stand outside your house, look at the yard you used to play in, look at the front door. As you look at the door, you know that in this house there is a scared little child who needs you to protect him/her. As the big adult that you are, go into the house and look for that child. Tell me where that little child is. Is he/she in the front room, bedroom, kitchen?" Here I wait for an answer.

"What is happening?" Again, wait for an answer. "Pick up your little child and tell him/her you are there to protect him/her, you will never let any one ever hurt him/her again. Tell your little child how precious he/she is and how much you love him/her. If you need to, tell the big people in the house that they will never hurt your child again because you will protect him/her. Now turn around with the child in you arms and go out the door to the

sidewalk. Turn and look at the house once more, wave goodbye if you want to. Holding the child tight, walk down the street to the corner, again turn and look at the house one last time. Look at how small the house looks. How small the people look. Turn the block and head up your path, past your grade schools, past your high school to the large wooden door. Walk out into the sunshine with your child in your arms. Shut the large wooden door, and show your little child the big beautiful world. Again, tell your child that you will always be there for him/her and you will never let any one hurt him/her again."

- C. *Re-enacting* is where you are given the opportunity to "change" the pictures of your past by re-enacting an event that was emotionally damaging to you. Remember, the right side of your brain does not know the difference between what is real and what is imagined. In re-enacting, you are able to change the past by creating a new scenario with a different ending. In this new scenario, you will stand up for yourself and you will take control of the situation. In the past, you were not able to do this for whatever reason. It doesn't matter what your mother, father, or the system did to you; today you get to collect new information that says you are strong.

Let me suggest three different types of situations where re-enacting has proven very helpful.

The first type of situation is *saying goodbye* to loved ones. People die at the most inconvenient times. They die when we are not ready for them to die and before we have had a chance to finish saying what we needed to say to them.

As parents, we have this belief that our children will out live us, therefore, the death of a baby or any child never comes at the right time. The loss of a child can cause pain that lasts for years and affects the way you relate to your mate and to your other children. If you find this has happened to you and is causing you problems, have a very trusted friend try the following visualization with you.

Close your eyes and picture that little one in your arms. (Allow a minute to two minutes after each statement.) Look down at that sweet face and tell your baby how much he was loved for the short time he was with you. Tell your child how much you are going to miss him. Tell him you are going to turn him over to Someone greater than you to care for him. Tell him that he will be happy and safe where he is going. Hold your baby tight one last time. Hold your baby out and let him float away from you toward a beautiful light. Call after him that you love him and will miss him. Let him go to a better place.

After the exercise, you will need time to process what happened. Be sure to allow plenty of time to talk to your friend about what you saw and experienced.

- D. *Finishing up.* When a loved one dies we may have unfinished business with that person that we are not aware of. The following visualization is one way to check out if *you* have unfinished business.

Again, start with a mini relaxation sequence, then continue with, "Close your eyes and see yourself sitting in a comfortable recliner. In front of you is an old fashioned wardrobe closet, but this one rolls up from the bottom. Notice the wood grain, the color. Inside the wardrobe is someone you need to talk to. You do not know who it is, but it is someone with whom you have some unfinished business. Keeping your eyes closed, look down at the arms of your recliner and you will notice that there is a toggle switch by your right hand. Pull gently back on the toggle switch. As you do, you will see that the sliding panel on the wardrobe is starting to raise very slowly. All you can see is the person's feet, you cannot tell if it is a man or a woman. As the panel moves up you can see the person's legs, but you still can't tell if it is a man or a woman. Continue to pull back on the switch till you can see the person's waist. Now, the person's chest, you now know whether it is a man or a woman. Let the panel slide all the way up so you can see the person inside.

Tell that person what you need to tell them. Ask them any questions that you might have for them. Listen to their answer. Make any final statements. Now push the toggle switch forward and let the closet door slide down. Any time you want to return to your closet, you can. Each time you return, you may find someone else that you have unfinished business with."

Sometimes, your encounter will be very emotional and stressful; other times, it will be sweet and reaffirming. When you no longer find someone in your closet, you will know that you have cleaned up your unfinished business.

The second type of situation where re-enacting proves helpful is in *molest and/or rape violence* situations, which can leave you feeling powerless, guilty and often confused. All your could of 's and should's suddenly combine with your feelings of powerlessness and fear to set you up to be immobile when confronted with strong, controlling or authority figures in your life. Because the victim has stronger evidence that they are *not* powerful, therapy that just tells them that they are powerful and not at fault is not very effective. For the victim, pictures of the event are much too powerful to be rationalized away with reassuring words.

Some people have suggested the use of affirmations as a way to talk your mind into believing a new truth. If the pictures aren't charged with too much emotional content, then affirmations can be helpful as a piece of your therapeutic process. However, if you are going to use affirmations, be careful how you word them. Affirmations that your mind argues with will increase the feelings of powerlessness, not decrease it, because it sets a fight between the two beliefs, a kind of mental isometric conflict. "*Every day, in every way, I am getting better and better.* Ha! No way, remember yesterday? You are just the same as you have ever been."

As an alternative, I suggest experiential exercises where both your mind and body become involved. I have been in

workshops where, with the emotional support and encouragement from the group, a 120 pound woman, being held down on the floor by four grown men, literally threw them off when she got in touch with her personal power and strength. There was no way they could hold her down when she took back her power.

In my Huge Group Therapy, when someone wants to take back their power, I suggest that they might start by confronting their *abuser*, *molester* or *rapist*. This is where I will use a surrogate, someone who stands in for the abuser.

I start by finding out as much as I can about the abuse and the abuser. "What did the abuser say to you? What did he/she do to you?" I am looking for the trigger words that will bring up the persons fears and feelings of powerlessness. "Now, choose someone from the group who reminds you of your abuser." (The person who is chosen always has the option of refusing without explaining.) Once someone is chosen, the two people will go to the center of the circle. Members of the group will then put a Posey belt, (a wide cloth belt-like the type that is used in hospitals), very loosely around the victim's waist. Then two or three people will hold on to the back of the belt acting as an anchor that can be dragged across the room. Now other members of the group who have had or are having the same type of issues are invited to join the *victim* in the center to support and encourage. Others will stand with the surrogate abuser to help push the victims buttons.

The purpose of the Posey belt is to allow the "victim" to be able to get totally into their anger without hurting themselves or anyone else. The *abuser* then starts to use the words and hand movements the real abuser had used. "Ah, come on dear, you know you like it," as he reaches for her. Or "I'll teach you to not mind me," as he raises his hand. The *abuser* is very careful not to actually ever touch the victim. All this time, the *victim's* supporters are yelling encouragement, "Don't let him do that to you.

Stop him with your voice. Take the fear out of you voice. Tell him again, this time without the tears. Back him up with your voice. Look him in his eyes and tell him, 'you will never, ever touch me again.' Feel yourself getting stronger and bigger." As the *victim* is finding her voice, the abuser is keeping up his threatening and abusive language. This goes on until the *victim* has dragged the people holding the Posey belt across the floor and backed up the *abuser* with her voice. Now she knows, not just intellectually, but on a gut level, that she will never, ever let anyone hurt her again.

My experience has been that the ex-victim ends up feeling so empowered that she/he ends up hugging everyone that has helped her, including the surrogate *abuser*.

The third, and final, situation to use re-enacting is with war veterans. The noise, the smells, and the fear of violence, death and injury have been imprinted in the Right-Brain of thousands and thousands of veterans. Over the years, it has gone under many names, but it wasn't until the Vietnam war that the full impact of what we now call Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) was recognized and studied. We are now aware that PTSD can result from any traumatic event that has happened to us as an adult and/or as a child.

No matter what the trauma: molest, a fiery auto crash in which your children are trapped in the backseat, rape, being trapped in a hurricane and having your clothes ripped off your body, seeing someone shot or having a tree fall on you, pinning you for hours, they all can result in PTSD if you don't get help. In right brain therapy, it is important to return to those traumatic events and relive them, but with different endings.

There are several rules of thumb in all cases of trauma:

- 1) The longer the traumatic event or events lasted, the greater the problems that will result.

- 2) The longer you wait to get help, the harder it will be to get you back to where you were before the trauma occurred.
- 3) The more you are willing to relive the event (with a qualified therapist), the quicker you will get through the flashbacks and regain control of your life.

Re-living the traumatic event is often the hardest and scariest part of the therapy for both the client and the therapist. I have had clients hiding behind a chair "blasting away at the Vietcong." I have cried with and been angry along with the parents who come in with bandaged hands, arms and face from trying to rescue their children after a fiery car crash. I have "fought" the rapist and the molester with my clients. Re-living the trauma is a part of the therapeutic process which clients and even some therapists often resist.

Fritz Perls, MD, talks about the need for the client to go through their impasse. He defines *impasse* as "the point where you just cannot believe that you might be able to survive, then the whirl starts. You get desperate, confused. Suddenly, you don't understand anything any more. . ." It is not easy to reach the point where you are willing to confront what may be, for you, death itself. However, Fritz Perls goes on to say, once you have confronted the fear you "come to the surprising discovery that this impasse is mostly merely a matter of fantasy. It doesn't exist in reality. . . ."

Some people prevent themselves from gaining from the therapy by conjuring up catastrophic expectations. "I might look foolish or say something foolish. What will people think?" "If I would do this, I wouldn't be loved any more, I would die." "My problems are so big that I will die or go crazy if they come out." Again Fritz Perls, "We have these catastrophic fantasies by which we prevent ourselves from living, from being. We'd rather maintain the status quo; rather keep mediocre aliveness, than to go through the impasse."



Therapists, who are willing to go with you through your impasse, have to be willing to risk and not be afraid of anger, their own or yours. I have had other therapists in my office get angry with me because my clients and I were disturbing their sessions, but the risks were worth the results.

- E. *Dream Therapy*, that I have seen work for my clients and myself, is based on Fritz Perls work in this area. Dreams that are nightmarish or repetitive are seen as the result of feelings that have been unacceptable to us and we have repressed them to the point that we are no longer aware of them. I have found that our dreams are a good way to access the right side of our brains and bring healing to our whole beings.

Our feelings just don't go up in the air and disappear, they will come out in some way. One way they come out is as nightmares. Picture your feelings as what you see looking through a kaleidoscope, all the shapes and colors fitting together to form a beautiful pattern. Now, imagine that each piece of the picture is a different one of your feelings. Start taking away one piece of the picture at a time, "I don't like the color red." So remove all the red pieces. "Yellow isn't such a hot color," so remove all of the yellows. It won't take long before that beautiful pattern is destroyed. As you remove each piece, you are creating a tension in that original design because it is no longer complete. Like the kaleidoscope pattern, part of you wants to be complete. At the same time, there are feelings that are hard to accept or that you think are impossible to accept. So, you repress the unacceptable feelings and the tension in your body increases. For some people, the final results are the nightmares.

In this scenario, your unacceptable and repressed feelings are fragmented from your conscious mind. Each fragmented piece wants to be accepted back as part of the whole. When it can't, it becomes a piece of your nightmares. You are you in the nightmare, you are also

the monster. You are the staircase, you are the knife, the bullet, as well as the door that is shut and will not open. Be sure to notice what is missing in your dream that should be there, but isn't. That is also you, the invisible part.

Unlike other types of *Dream Therapy*, in *Gestalt Dream Therapy* the person whose dream is being analyzed determines what each fragment means. What a snake in your dream means to you may be very different for someone else in their dream. Only by you playing each part of your dream, can you ever know what feelings you have fragmented out of your consciousness. Once you have accepted all of your feelings, even the "bad" ones, then and only then can you make intelligent decisions in your life. Remember Chapter Two, "You can only make decisions on what you are aware of." Dream Therapy not only helps you to know what you feel, but it also helps you to accept your feelings.

If you are really interested in Dream Therapy, you might want to read Fritz Perls book, *Gestalt Therapy Verbatim*. The last two-thirds of the book is transcripts of Dr. Perls doing dream therapy on therapists who want to learn how to do it. So, he is careful to explain what he is doing as he does it. I have found that the more you know about what the therapist is doing "to you" in therapy, the more you will be open to letting down your defenses and the more you are able to change.

In fact, this whole book has been written to take the mystery out of therapy. If you are busy worrying about getting your head shrunk, you will be too busy to look at the scary things inside of you. My goal is to make therapy safe for you.

II. *Role Playing* is a form of therapy that not many people hear much about any more, but it can be very effective in certain situations and for certain problems.

A. *Empty Chair* technique is very useful when you are at war with yourself. Part of you is saying one thing, while at the

same time, there is this little voice in the back of your head saying just the opposite. Set a chair in front of you and put the "other part of you" in the chair and began the conversation, "You are a strong person and you can make it on your own. You don't have to put up with all the abuse." Now, change chairs and face the chair you were just in. Give voice to the other part, "You are weak, and nobody wants you. If you leave this relationship you will just get into another one that is just as bad or worse." Again, switch chairs and talk back to yourself with a lot more feeling. "I'm tired of you putting me down and telling me I can't make it. I have learned from my mistakes and *will not* make the same mistakes again." Keep going back and forth until the embarrassment of your negative self becomes obvious. This technique works because "Feelings expressed verbally take place, reduce in intensity and are free to change," and because "You can only make decisions on what you are aware of."

- B. *Playing the Part* is a very common technique used to help a person become comfortable with new situations, or new ways of communicating. Employment counselors use it to help people do a successful job interview. Some counselors may even video tape the mock interview to give feedback on how you come across. Therapists, getting ready to take their oral board examination for licensing also use it. Here, the therapist will get two or three colleagues to act as the panel, who will then ask questions that might be on the test.

I use this method in therapy to help my client practice "verbal aikido". When a client comes in complaining about his wife being angry with him and telling him, "You never spend any time with me. All you do is work, work, work. If I had known you would never spend time with me, I would never have gotten married." I first remind him of what he has learned in therapy: the *To Me Rule*, *Three Levels of Communications*, *Three Basic Communication Rules* and the *Eight Ways of Responding*.

Knowing the information and applying the information are

two different things. So, the question is, "How are you going to respond to her?" I suggest that he role play how he is going to respond to her. "Wow honey, it sounds like you really love and miss me and that our relationship is really important to you. It sounds like you don't see me wanting the marriage as much as you do. I can understand that when I work as much as I do, you get very lonely and doubt our marriage. I wonder how *we* can change the situation so we get our bills paid and still have more time for each other."

Practice is the key to establishing new and constructive ways of communicating. Earlier, I gave you the *Yelling Exercise* (See Chapter 4). Without practice, you will forget what you have learned. The more pressure you are under, the more likely you are to fall back into old communication patterns. This is another example of playing the role until it becomes an automatic response.

- C. *Reversing the Role* is a good way to help you understand what someone else might be feeling or thinking. Often, I will do this with parents and teenagers. Frequently, people are clueless as to what the other person is feeling or thinking and they need to be helped. "What do you think you would feel if you had a daughter?" "You become your daughter and act and talk like she does to you. And, you become your mother and tell your *daughter* what you are feeling and thinking about her behavior."

Husbands and wives often have the same problem of not understanding each other. Communication will never be successful unless there is some kind of understanding and appreciation of what the other person is experiencing. Men, who are raised without sisters, and women, who are raised without brothers, often have reduced insight into the workings of the opposite sex. For these people, being understanding and accepting are harder. I had one man tell me that the biggest shock of his life came after he was married and found out that women passed gas also.

- D. *Psychodrama* is another term we don't hear much about

anymore, but it can be a powerful tool in helping to achieve change. The Right-Brain needs to be exercised as much as the Left-Brain does. Some families believe strong emotion is bad, uncivilized, or even sinful. As a result, "emotional displays" of any kind are punished. These children are not given acceptable ways of expressing their feelings. As a result, the awareness of feelings is lost. It has been known for hundreds of years that not dealing with feelings is unhealthy. Even the apostle Paul, two thousand years ago, wrote about people who are "past feeling" pointing out that they can commit all sorts of "impurity"—Ephesians 4:19. Today, this would be a good definition of someone who feels no remorse for having hurt or killed another person.

One way of doing Psychodrama is to take a short story or a fairy tale and assign each person a part to play. One fairy tale that can create a lot of emotion, especially if some of the members have abuse or abandonment issues, is *Hansel and Gretel*. Here is a story of a family with an unloving step-mother and a weak, passive father who would rather leave his kids out in the woods (world) to die than to lose his wife. The little girl doesn't take care of herself, but trusts her brother (men) to take care of her instead. The little boy has all the pressure to figure out how to survive a dysfunctional family. Then the witch, an opportunist, doesn't care for anyone but herself. Last, I like to add a character, the therapist. Now, I set the scene. Child Protective Services has ordered everyone into counseling including the witch. "Therapist, where do you want to begin?"

The hardest role is probably that of the therapist. The therapist has to control the group, make sure everyone gets a chance to talk and see that the children are protected. Be sure that after the Psychodrama ends, there is time for each person to express what they experienced and felt about the role they played. This could be played several times, allowing different people a chance to play different roles.

Psychodrama can be used in a group setting or with a

family. In a family, give each family member different or even opposite roles to play. For instance, have the parents play the children and the children play the parents. Some other stories that I have found useful in psychodrama are: *Cinderella*, *The Ugly Duckling*, *Chicken Little*, and *The Wizard of Oz*. In each of these four stories there are characters who need a lot of therapy to change their self images. The Bible, of course, is also full of great stories such as: *the woman at the well*, *the woman caught committing adultery*, and *the story of Hosea*.

Other sources for psychodrama can be found in real life stories taken from the newspaper or even the six o'clock news. For some of the stories, you may want to add the therapist. For other stories, it may not be necessary. Be sure to always leave time for everyone to talk about their experiences.

III. *Story Telling* is one of my favorite ways of doing therapy with pre-adolescent children. Children usually don't learn from being lectured. The younger the child, the harder it is for the child to understand abstract lessons, even simple ones, such as *not talking to strangers*.

Story Telling is an excellent way to teach values to children. Story Telling uses both the right and left sides of the brain by first having the child imagine a situation (Right-Brain), and then by having them figure out feasible solutions (Left-Brain). When doing this type of therapy with a child, I always have the parents watch, so they can learn how to do it themselves at home. To help the child get the most from the stories, I always audio tape the story and send it home with the families to use as an example. When the children listen to the stories over and over until they can recite it back, then they have learned the values that the parents have intended to teach them.

Maybe you can remember some of the stories you heard or read as a child that have stuck with you to this day. In my third grade reading book there was such a story. Sheik Abdul was an important leader of an oasis in the middle of the desert. The

Sheik wanted to hire a boy to assist him. He knew of two boys that he thought might work well for him, but he couldn't make up his mind which would be the best.

One day the Sheik saw the dust of a caravan coming towards his oasis. He wanted to know where they were from, what they were carrying, and where they were going. So, he sent out the first boy, who was proud to represent the powerful Sheik. The boy got on the Sheik's biggest and most impressive horse and rode at full gallop straight for the lead camel. The fast approaching horse kicked up lots of dust, scaring the lead camel. Soon, all the camels were bolting from one side to the other and the men were struggling to regain control. The Sheik's boy, in a loud and threatening voice said, "My Sheik demands to know who is the leader of this caravan? Where are you going? Where did you come from? What are you carrying?" The response from the caravan's leader was to threaten the boy and the Sheik and to tell him nothing. The boy came back to the Sheik and told him that the men in the caravan were disagreeable people who would not tell him anything.

So, the Sheik sent the second boy out. The second boy took a small pony from the Sheik's stables and rode around back, coming up slowly on the caravan from behind. "Oh, what a magnificent caravan you have. You must have come from a long ways away." One of the camel drivers responded, "Yes, we have come from Atus, a large town on the coast." The boy asked, "What wonderful things would you bring from Atus and who are the lucky people who will be able to enjoy these things?" As you can guess, the second boy got all the information that the Sheik wanted and more, as well as getting the job. This story taught me at a very young age that, "It's not what you say, but how you say it."

Mutual Story Telling is a variation of Story Telling. It is always better to have the child involved in the story. That way, the child has a vested interest in the story and has a chance to use both the left and right brain. Mutual Story Telling also allows the story to be tailored or altered to better meet the concerns that the child might be facing in his or her own life.



Let's say a boy and his sister are facing the problem of their parents divorcing. I would start with, "Do you like stories? I sure do. Tell you what, if you will help me, I will tell you a story. Give me the name of a type of animal; now give me the name of another animal; give me the name of a super hero." Add as many other animals as there are outside people that are important to him in his life, such as neighbors, grandparents, involved friends of the parents, etc. Here is where you want to remember to start the tape recorder, making sure that it picks up both yours and the child's voice. It is well worth investing in a good tape recorder with an external microphone.

"Once upon a time, there was a family of foxes. There was a mother fox, a father fox, a little boy fox, and baby sister fox. The mother fox and the father fox loved their little foxes and they all had lots of fun. But one day, the little boy fox started to get scared because he saw that the two big foxes were..."  
"What do you think that little fox saw that scared him? How do you think he was feeling?" Using real life events and situations, but in story form, will help the child not to feel so crazy or alone in a world, that for him, is turning upside down.

"Do you know what happened next? That little fox was mad at the mother and father fox because they were fighting all the time. But, he was so little and they were so big. What he wanted to do was to send them to their room or spank them until they could learn to play nice. But he was small and they were big, so he couldn't do that, could he?"

"The little fox would get more and more scared and more and more angry at the big foxes, but because he couldn't make them stop their fighting, and he couldn't hit them, he would hit his little sister and make her cry. Then, he would feel guilty and mother fox would yell at him. One day, little fox was so angry at the big foxes and so scared that he went to school and hit and kicked one of the little rabbits that attended his school. What do you think happened then? That is why he had to go to the principal's office and see Spiderman. And, what did Spiderman do? He called mother and father fox."

"Do you think the little fox was a bad fox because he got into



trouble? No, he wasn't. But Spiderman did tell the mother and father foxes that they should go to see the wise old owl who could help them learn how to get along without fighting so much. What do you think that little fox could do the next time he gets mad at mother and father fox? And, if that doesn't work, what else could he do? What do you think would happen if the little fox said, 'I want to see the wise old owl?' "

Mutual Story Telling, as you can see, can be used to instruct, reassure, comfort and direct the child, without you losing their attention or without you sounding preachy. Don't be afraid to let your child choose solutions that are not good. All you have to do is to play out the story, letting the "little fox" get into a real pickle. Then, stop the story and say, "I guess that wasn't a real good choice for the little fox. What else could he have done?" With the new solution, start the story again and this time it has a better ending.

Many of you may think you don't have a good imagination and aren't any good at making up stories. Don't worry, your children will think you're wonderful. You don't have to be clever, what you need to be is honest and willing to spend time with your children. The only way you can fail is by not trying.


I have not even begun to cover all the things you can do with Story Telling. Therefore, if this subject is of interest to you and you would like more information, check the psychology section of your library. You should be able to find some books on the subject.

## EXERCISES TO DO:

### Exercise One:

#### Attacking Contradictory Beliefs

One way to attack the problem of confusing and contradictory beliefs is to take an inventory of your beliefs. The way I have my clients do this is to:

 Make a list of all your contradictory and/or confusing behaviors on a sheet of paper. Do this by dividing your paper into three equal columns and fill them out like so:

- Column 1: List your approach-avoidance behaviors, contradictory behaviors and procrastinating behaviors.
- Column 2: List your contradictory feelings for each of the behaviors in Column 1.
- Column 3: List the contradictory beliefs for each of the feelings & behaviors in Columns 1 & 2.

Doing this exercise will start to give you insight into all your behaviors and how to change them.

See the next page for an example.

<p><b><u>Look at any approach-avoidance behaviors:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•"I want to go to college, but every fall, I find a hundred reasons why I can't do it this semester."</li> <li>•"I will make appointments for job interviews, but then not show up."</li> <li>•"I want a good physical relationship, but when it comes time, I end up thinking about being somewhere else and wishing it was over."</li> <li>•"Every time I start to get emotionally close to someone, I start finding fault with them."</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Look at Feelings:</u></b></p> <p><b>Fears...</b>of feeling stupid, getting bad grades, getting an education, not getting a good job.</p> <p><b>Fears...</b>of being rejected, being poor.</p> <p><b>Fears...</b>of being hurt, not being in control, being alone.</p> <p><b>Fears...</b>of commitment, losing my identity, not making good choices.</p>	<p><b><u>Look at Contradictory Beliefs:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•"I'm not very smart."</li> <li>•"Everybody in our family goes to college."</li> <li>•"I got fired from my last job."</li> <li>•"I must stay in control or I will get used."</li> <li>•"Sex is a way of making a relationship stronger."</li> <li>•"If I get close to someone, they will have power over me, use me, hurt me."</li> <li>•"Closeness means loss of autonomy."</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Look at any contradictory behaviors:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•"Sometimes, I allow people to abuse me. At other times, I am very assertive."</li> <li>•"I know I shouldn't yell at my kids, but sometimes I do."</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Look at procrastinating behaviors:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•"I should lose some weight, but I stay the same or I gain."</li> <li>•"I should not wait till the last minute to start my term paper, but I wait till the last minute."</li> </ul>	<p>Now you try!</p> <p>Using a separate sheet of paper, fill in these Feelings according to the Contradictory &amp; Procrastinating Behaviors in the first column.</p>	<p>Now you try!</p> <p>Using a separate sheet of paper, fill in these Contradictory Beliefs according to the Contradictory &amp; Procrastinating Behaviors in the first and second column.</p>

*Figure 6.1*

Finally, it is time to look at what you must *believe* to create your contradicting feelings. Make a copy of the Events→Meaning→Feeling Connection diagram leaving the Meaning, Feeling and Behavior circles empty. (See Figure 6.1 on next page)

Choose one contradictory behavior and write one of the behaviors in one of the circles and the other in the other circle. Work your way backward from the behavior to the feeling, then to the meaning. If this is what you are feeling, what must be your beliefs? You can not have contradictory and confusing behaviors without having contradictory and/or confusing beliefs.

Once you have all the circles filled, look at your behaviors. Remember, it is your behaviors that are your truth, not what you keep telling yourself that you should believe. Once you are clear what your two contradictory beliefs are, choose which belief is the one you wish to believe. Remember, you choose to think. If you are still in conflict, go back to the *Telling Yourself The Truth* exercise and start doing it.

Be sure to work with only one set of confusing or contradictory behaviors at a time. When you have completed all three parts (avoidance, contradiction and procrastination) do the next one.

NOTE: If you are more aware of your contradictory feelings than you are aware of your beliefs and/or behaviors, write your contradictory feelings in the circles, and work in both directions, forward and backward. What must I be thinking, believing, expecting, to create this feeling?

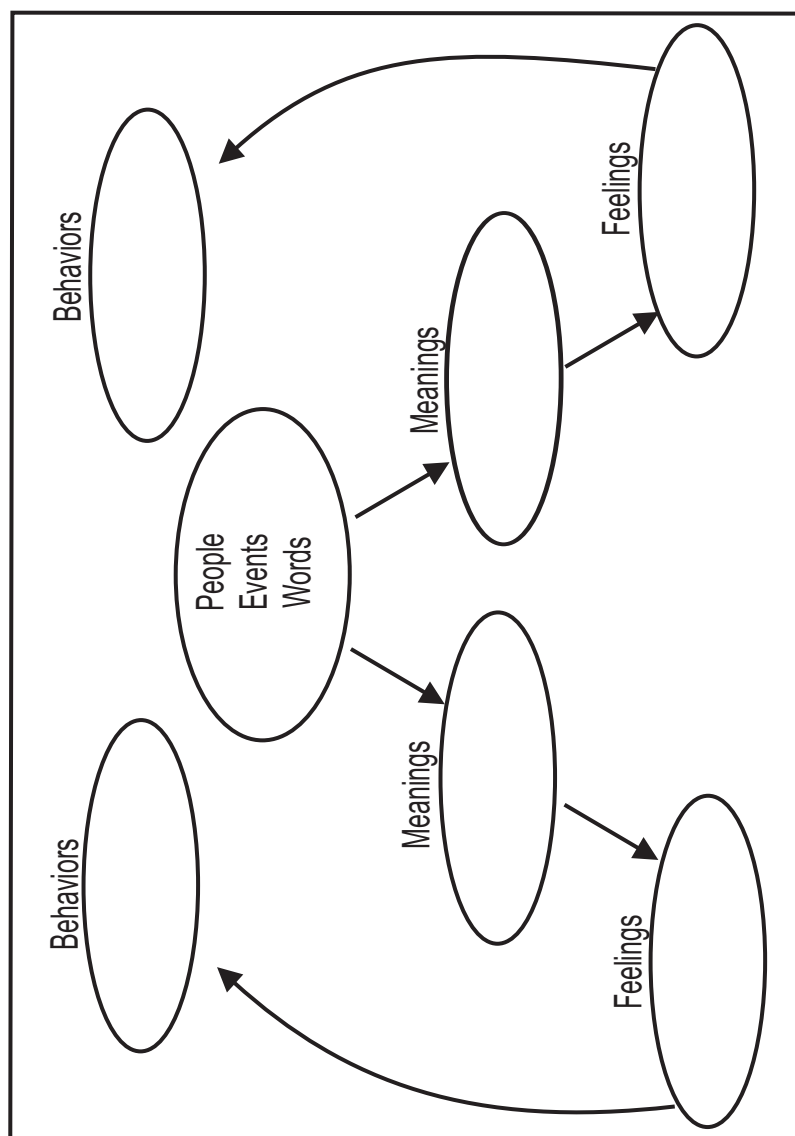


Figure 6.2

For some who try to do the above exercise, it may seem as though you believe one thing, but feel something that doesn't seem to match what you believe. This, of course, is not possible. You cannot feel an emotional feeling without there being a belief that supports it. You *always* have a left brain belief or a picture in your right brain supporting your feeling. However, you may not be aware of the belief or the picture at first.

## Exercise 2: Dream Therapy

When I do dream therapy, I have a four-step process that I use, much like a director of a play would use, except for my last step.

- Step 1: I have you tell me your dream in as much detail as you can remember (like reading the script).
- Step 2: Block out the dream as if you were on stage. Stand up and show me where the door is, where the staircase is, where you are when the dream starts, where the monster is, where you run to, where the other people are, what is missing, etc. I use this second step to start getting you emotionally re-involved in your dream so that it is no longer just a historical report.
- Step 3: At this point, I'll have them specifically take me through their dream. I'll begin with, "Go to the place 'on stage' where you are when the dream begins. Close your eyes and be back in your dream. What are you seeing? What are you feeling? What does the *monster* (or whatever you fear) do? What do you do now? What are you feeling now? Very good, now open your eyes. The feelings you were having in your dream, are they the feelings that you are experiencing in your life?" The feelings you most identify with and that you are most aware of will be the ones that your character in the dream is having. You will invariably find that you have feelings in the nightmare are also feelings you are having in your waking life.
- Step 4: Next, I will take another piece of your dream and have you become that piece or person, always saving the scariest one or ones for last. "Close your eyes again and become the door. What are you feeling as the door? What are you feeling towards the girl? What are you feeling towards the *monster*? Open your eyes, the feelings you were having as the door, have you ever felt that way before? Are you feeling that way in your life now? Close your eyes, this time become the balcony railing that isn't there. How are you feeling that you can't be seen? The *monster*? etc." I will usually go through each piece of your dream from what

appears the least threatening and ending with the most threatening until I come to the *monster*. It is not always possible to tell what is the most threatening for the client. Many times, both the client and I have been surprised.

### Exercise 3:

#### Forming A Growth Group

I'm not going to do all your work for you. If, after reading this book, you discover that you have some important issues that you need to deal with, you will probably want to check with a therapist who is familiar with the Cognitive-Affective-Behavioral approach.

If, on the other hand, you just want to work on your own personal growth, check with some of your friends or with a special friend, who has also read this book, and set up a discussion group. For most people I would suggest mixed groups with both sexes and a wide range of ages. However, for some of you, you may want the group to be all the same sex. If that is what would make you feel safe, then that is a good place to begin.

The most important element of a therapeutic or growth group is the agreement that, "What is said here, stays here. The things we share with each other are not to be shared with anyone else. You can share anything you say about yourself, or what someone in the group has given you as feedback, with anyone you want, for that is your stuff, but do not share other stories with anybody else." All members must agree to complete confidentiality.

#### Running A Group

It is said that an inconsiderate person is one who wants to talk when I want to talk. In your group, don't let any one person dominate the conversation. Make sure that everybody gets a chance to talk. At the same time, keep the balance in the group. Running a group, so that no one person dominates, is one of the hardest skills that you will need to learn to make the group successful. A rule of thumb for a group, depending on the size, is not to focus on one person's problems for more than 15 to 20 minutes. Have a number of transitional phrases

that the group agrees to, such as "What is it you want from us as a group?" "Maybe this is one we all need to think about and come back to next week." "You have heard the group. Now, what do you think you are going to do about your situation?" "Are we ready to shift gears?"

Another equally important point for the group is how you listen. Listening is not just saying, "I hear you," or, starting off on your own, similar story. To help keep the group focused on the skill of listening, read the following poem at the beginning of each session. Some groups have recited it together as a way of reminding themselves of what listening is, as well as what listening isn't.

## LISTEN

When I ask you to listen to me,  
And you start giving me advice,  
You have not done what I asked.

When I ask that you listen to me,  
And you begin to tell me why I shouldn't feel that way,  
You are trampling on my feelings.

When I ask you to listen to me,  
And you feel you have to do something to solve my problem,  
You have failed me, strange as that may seem.

Listen: All that I ask is that you listen,  
Not talk or do anything, just hear me.  
When you do something for me  
That I need to do for myself,  
You contribute to my fear and feelings of inadequacy.

But, when you accept as a simple fact  
That I do feel what I feel, no matter how irrational,  
Then I can quit trying to convince you  
And go about the business  
Of understanding what's behind my feelings.

So, please listen and just hear me  
And, if you want to talk,  
Wait a minute for your turn and I'll listen to you.

*-Anonymous*



## TAKING CONTROL OF YOUR LIFE

Be sure to use the communication rules and aids that I have covered in earlier chapters.

- We do not react to people, events or words; instead we react to what they mean to us.
- We always feel something before we get angry.
- What I say about you says NOTHING about you, it only says something about myself.
- To listen doesn't mean I agree.
- Acceptance doesn't mean approval.
- Difference doesn't make wrong, it makes interesting.

In a new group, it is sometimes easier if you have a topic to start the group off with. Choose one question or topic each time. You may use those listed below or you may create your own. Don't try to answer all the questions in one group session.

Set a time for the group to start. Be sure that you start at that time. Resistant members often show up late, and in that way, they can sabotage the group. Set a time for the group to end. Be sure you end on time. People who are not used to taking responsibility for their lives will want to start with their "little problem" when there is only five minutes left. The most loving thing you can do if this happens is to say, "Oh, it is almost time to quit and there just isn't enough time to be fair to you. I wish you had asked for time earlier. Next week, we will make sure you get to be the first one to talk." Next week, they often will not show up or will come in late. Then, just point out the person's behavior, "Isn't it interesting that you chose to come late today after we had saved the first slot for you?" No judgments, but if you want to push it, you could add, "I wonder what coming late means to you."

The best way to move the group to a deeper level of sharing is to lead by example. Remember, the group will not go deeper than the leaders are willing to go.

Below are some sample topics/questions your group might want to try:

**Getting Started:**

- What do I need from the group for me to allow myself to trust you?
- If I were to be open and honest with this group, what is the worst that could happen? If the worst happened, could I live through it?
- What is the best thing that could happen to me if I were honest with this group? If the best happened, could I survive it? (Some times people are more afraid of the best; "There would be a lot of pressure for me to change.")

**Relationships:**

- Do I really want an open and honest relationship, or is it more important not to hurt others?
- I wasn't open in my last relationship about. . .
- What scares me the most about being alone?
- What I am most afraid to ask for in a relationship is...

**Communication:**

- What is the purpose of my defensiveness?
- Give me some examples of when you saw me being defensive.
- How do I want you to respond to me if I am being defensive?
- What do I see myself doing that doesn't match with what I say?
- What have you seen me doing that didn't match with what I said.
- How do you want me to respond to you when what you say and what you do, don't match up?
- How do I want you to respond to me if what I say and what I do don't match up?

**Rape:**

- What different meanings do men and women place on this event?
- What meaning are you going to place on rape if it should happen to you?
- What do I really *believe* about someone who has been raped?
- How do I really feel about someone who has been raped that I read about in the paper? Is it different from someone I know

who has been raped?

- If I had been raped, would I feel safe enough to share it with this group?

### Going Deeper:

- Describe a traumatic event from your past. Share what meanings, conclusions, and expectations you have drawn from that event. For each event, finish the following statements:

Men are . . .

Women are . . .

The world is . . .

I am . . .

- If that same event happened to you now, what meanings, conclusions and expectations would you draw?
- If that same event happened to someone else, what meaning, conclusions and expectations would you suggest that they could put on it.

### Exploring Anger:

- How do you respond to anger?
- What pictures from your past do you have of anger...in others ...in yourself?
- Have you ever lost your temper so that you hurt someone physically or were afraid you could hurt someone?
- What meanings, conclusions do you put on anger? Your own? Others?
- How would you like to respond to anger?
- What meanings would you have to put on anger in order to respond the way you would like? (you might want to carry this topic over into two or three sessions.)

When you or any member of the group has shared on a deep level, it is important to call that person, *at least* once during the week, to give reassurance and support. There is nothing worse than spilling your guts and have no one say anything. Look out for your D.R.P.D.A. (from Chapter One).

*My wish for all of you is that you  
Take Control Of Your Life from this day on.*

## APPENDIX 1

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Exclusive Preview: Taking Control of Your Relationships

Exclusive preview of

## *Taking Control of Your Relationships*

*This exclusive preview is only available in this  
First Edition of Taking Control of Your Life.*

Now that you have learned all about *Taking Control of Your Life*, keep your eyes peeled for Doc Downing's next book *Taking Control of Your Relationships*. This book will explore how to develop and maintain healthy, successful relationships with

- ▶ your partner,
- ▶ your children and
- ▶ your co-workers.

Here is an exclusive preview of what is to come in *Taking Control of Your Relationships*.

### *Love Process*

We talk about falling in love as if it were an accident, like slipping on a banana peel. The problem with falling in love is that you can just as well fall out of love. Love is not an accident. It is not animal magnetism. It is not cupid's arrow that hits you. Love is a step by step process that you created with another person.

Creating the feelings of love is something you've been doing ever since you had your first romantic love. Ever since then you have been going through the same process each time you have "fallen" in love. And, you will continue to go through this process each time you "fall" in love in the future.

Everybody wants to feel the *feelings of love*. Knowing about this process gives you the power over it. Knowing how you create the feeling of love allows you to feel safe and in control. Let me tell a story to illustrate the process.

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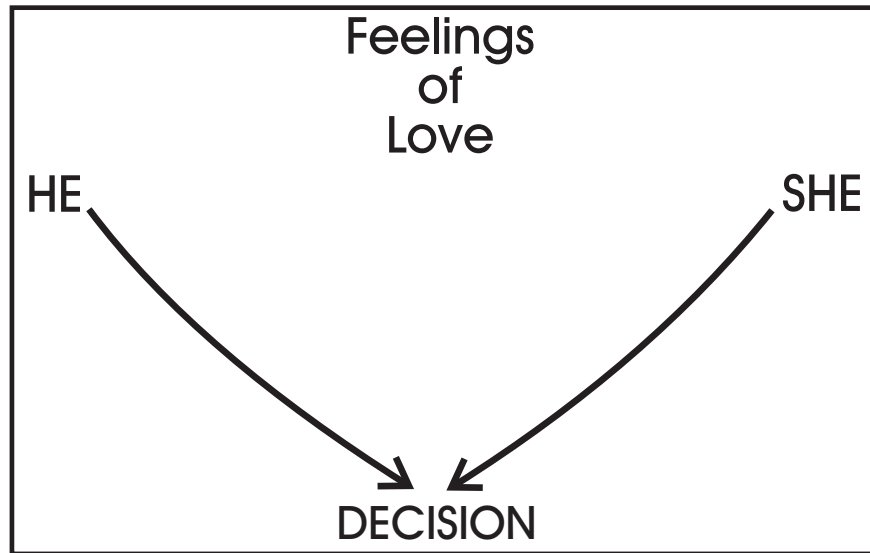
Once upon a time, just outside the land of Love there lived a He. In this same land there also lived a She. Now the He did not know the She existed nor did the She know that the He existed. Every day the He would go around doing what He's do and the She went around doing what She's do.



One day the She looked up and saw the He. "Now," She thought to herself, "there is a fine looking Hunk!" So, the She decided to drop her handkerchief. Now, she's have lots of ways of dropping their handkerchiefs, but first the She had to decide that this was a he She would want to drop her handkerchief for. In the past, the She had seen a lot of hes that She wouldn't drop her handkerchief for on a bet.

Once the She dropped her handkerchief the He had to make the decision to pick it up. In the He's past, there have been a lot of shes who had dropped their handkerchiefs for him that the He did not pick up, but this time, the He decides to pick it up.

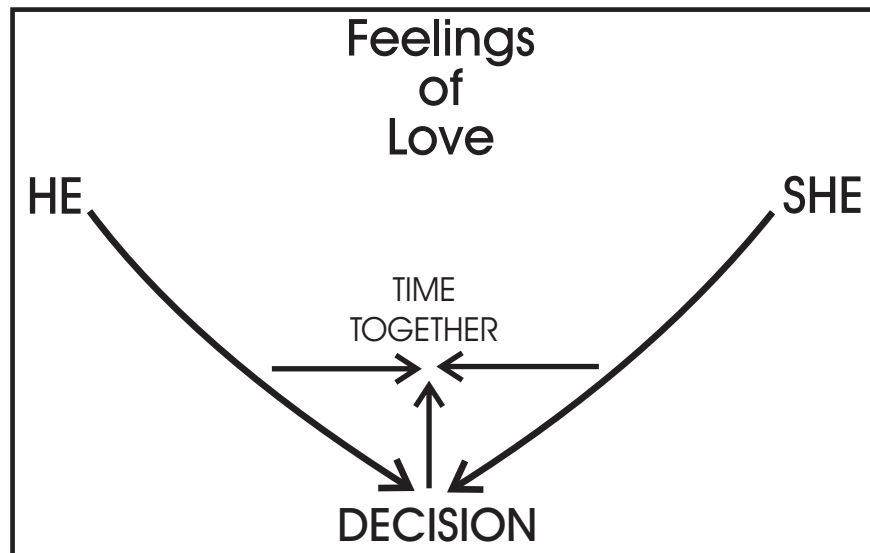
Now just because the She decided to drop her handkerchief and the He decided to pick it up does not mean that they are in Love - in lust maybe, but not in Love. However, they were headed toward the *feelings of love*.  
[Note: it is possible to do loving things without being in love.]



#### TIME TOGETHER

The first step towards reaching the *Feelings of Love* is to spend time together. "Together" does not mean sitting in the same room, on the same couch, watching the same TV program that is not spending time together. There is an old joke that you can walk into any restaurant and you can tell who is married and who isn't. All you have to do is look around. The couple, who are looking intensely at each other, talking and sharing, hardly even noticing their food. . . they're not married. The couple sitting quietly and eating, staring out the window and paying little attention to each other. . . they're the married ones.

*Time together* requires both people participating and interacting with each other in an open and honest way. It is not just the being together that creates the feelings. It is the open, honesty that starts to creates the intense feelings that occur as a result of being there with each other.



### HONESTY

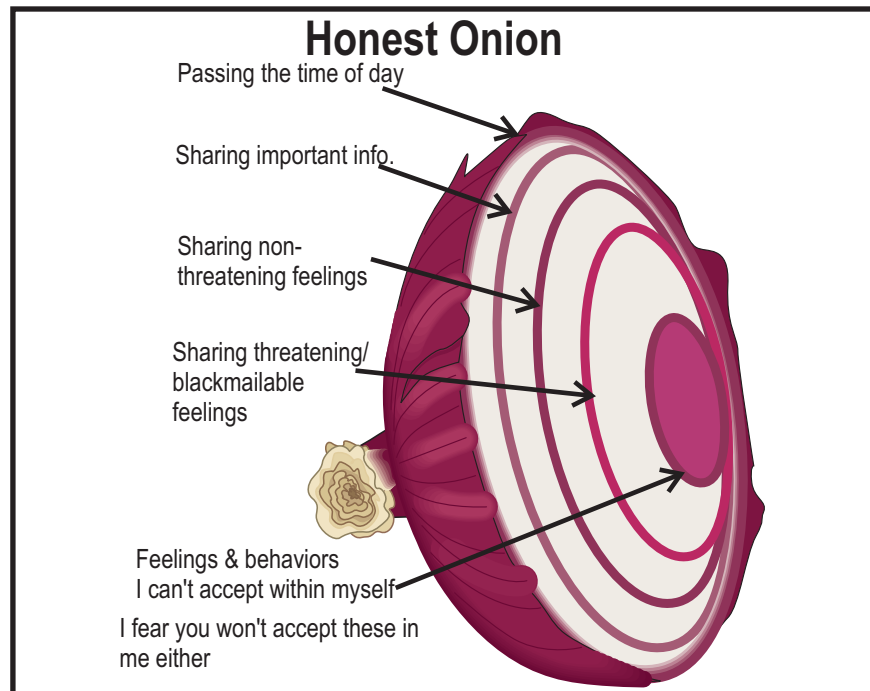
There is more to honesty than being honest or dishonest. There are degrees of honesty. Think of honesty as an onion. There are layers to an onion. The further you go out the thinner the layers become until you reach the outside layer which you can peel off in your hand. The deeper you go into the onion the stronger, more intense it becomes and so it is with communications.

On the outside layer, you might say to me "Good morning. Nice day isn't it? How are you?" I might be upset and depressed and respond with "Fine, thank you." Was this a dishonest exchange or was it just superficial chit chat? Sharing at this level is something you would do with just about anybody, whether you know them or not.

Chit chat is honest, it just isn't very honest, but it is a starting place. The next level is more honest, but you will share it with fewer people. At this level you will share what I call the past-present. It is a historical recitation of what happened the day, week, year before "and she told John that he was a liar and he shot back with 'you no good bitch.' And that is when the cops came, etc." Anytime you go to a cafeteria or lunchroom, you will probably hear someone recounting the history of the fight from the night before, or whatever took place the past-present. What these people are sharing is true; it is just not going on right now.

The next level of our *onion* is where we share non-threatening feelings; things that are more private, but not blackmailable. At this level when someone asks, "How you're doing?" You respond with "I feel scared and depressed, my relationships at work are not going so well. I think I'm blowing it." You risk more sharing at this level and for most people, this is where the sharing usually stops.

Going to the next level is scary. To share your inner core is a frightening thing to do. For most couples, before they get to this level, they will have put up their walls and substituted sexual intimacy for emotional intimacy and their centers or core remains hidden. Because of the fear of emotional pain, many couples believe it is safer to become sexually involved with a person than it is to become more emotionally vulnerable.



However, for those who do continue on to this level and start to talk about things that are very threatening, the rewards can be fantastic. It is at this level where you share feelings that could be used against you in the heat of an argument. This is the level where you fear that the other person could blackmail you. "I don't always feel like a very loving

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person." Or "Would you kiss me this other way when we make love?" The fear is that the other person will come back with, "And where did you learn to do that?"

This last level is your center or core and it consists of:

- 1) What is going on for you right now, (which is constantly changing). "Yes, I told you that I hated you, but now that I got my anger out I don't feel that way any more." This can be very confusing to yourself and to others. As a result, you will often judge yourself as "bad."
- 2) The beliefs you have about yourself that are so unacceptable to you that you are sure that if others knew the "truth" they could not accept you either. It is the stuff inside of me that is so ugly that if I shared those things with you, I believe you would not love me anymore. It is the stuff I am most afraid to tell you so I stuff these horrid thoughts which convinces me all the more that if they weren't terrible I would have talked to you about them. One of these areas for men is about molest. The problem of repressing feelings, (pictures in our memory) is that "to repress a feeling is to give it unlimited power" and what you resist will persist.

The book Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde is based on the fear that there is something so evil and malevolent inside each of us that if we let it out it will kill the ones we love. The result of letting this evil out was that he started killing strangers, then his fiancée and finally it also resulted in his death.

This fear is a fallacy. There is nothing more evil and malevolent inside of you than there is in me or anyone else. In fact, when brought out into the light it usually is not all that threatening. "Wow, you thought that way too? Will I guess we're not that different after all." The problem is that I judge myself and "know" that others will have this same judgment of me. Some may, others may not. How important are other people's judgments of me? If someone can not accept me, warts and all, is this someone I want to live my life with?

Honesty, is essential to creating the feelings of love. To be honest with someone else requires that I first must be honest with myself, then share that honesty with the other person. The Love Process is not a unilateral process, the honesty needs to go both ways. Both the He and the She need to be honest with each other.

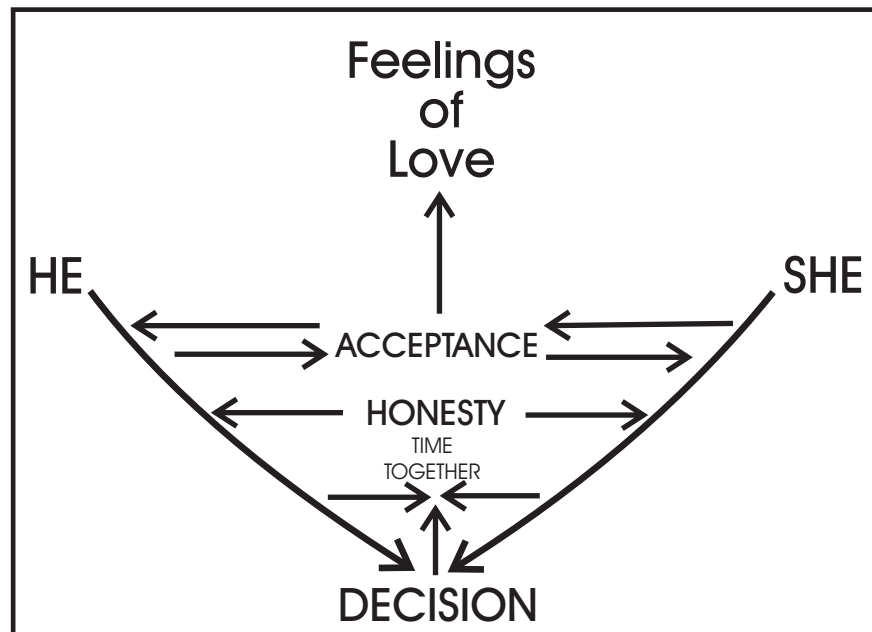
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### ACCEPTANCE

Once you have shared to your very center that is still not enough to get you to the *feelings of love*. However, what happens next is out of your control. That is why there is so much fear. Once you have shared, it is up to the other person. They can accept you, your feelings, your past history, or they can reject you. For example, the She might say, "I've been married three times and I have two kids." Or "I've had a drug problem." Or "I sometimes don't feel very close to you."

Once you have been honest, then it is in the other persons hands. If the other person says it is no big deal, then it is up to you to let that acceptance in. Or, you can say to yourself "They were just saying that, they really didn't mean it."

Once you let the *acceptance* in, you will experience the feelings of love. You created the *feelings of love* by going through this step by step process. You didn't "fall" in love.

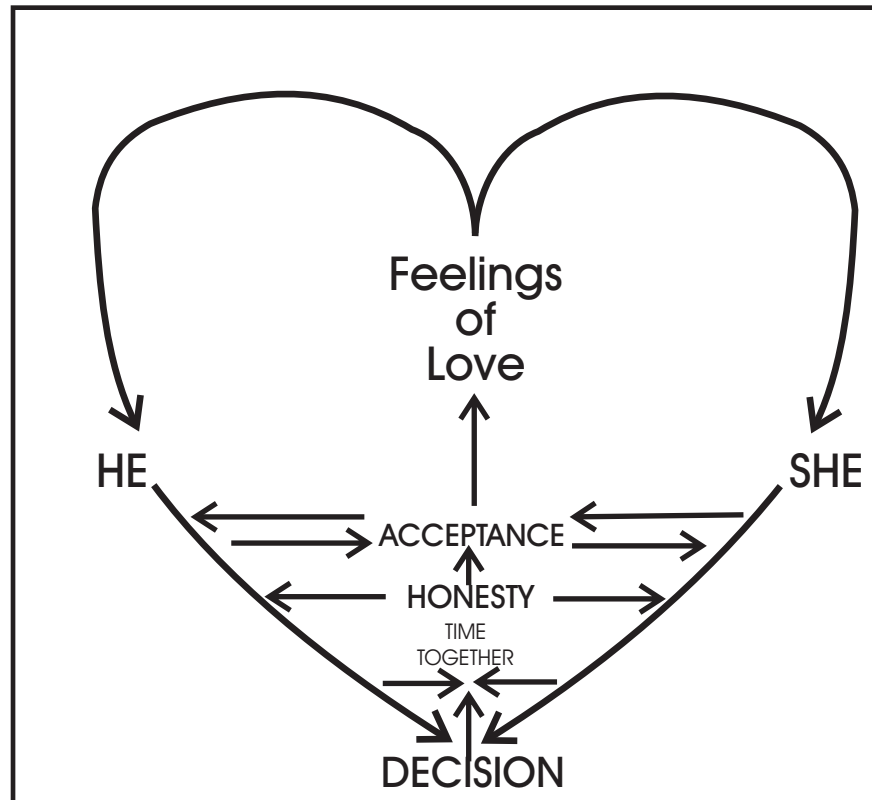




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A lot of young people take the *feelings of love* as a guarantee that the relationship will last. "Since we are in love we should get married. Our love will last forever. No matter what happens, love will find a way." The feelings of love are a guarantee of absolutely nothing. Being in love is never a reason to get married. On the other hand, being out of love is no reason to get a divorce.

I can give you a guarantee that your feelings of love will last. Since you created the *feelings of love* in the first place then you can recreate them, if both of you are willing. Here is what you will need to do in order to guarantee that you don't "grow apart," "fall out of love," etc. After you have *spent time together*, been *honest*, and *given and received acceptance*, start all over and do it again. That is the only guarantee that



the feelings of love will last.

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Notice that the LOVE PROCESS has nothing to do with sex or gender. You can have sex and not be in love or you can be in love with someone and choose never to have sex.

There is a lot more I could write about the Love Process, but it would make this book too long so, I will save it for the next time.