

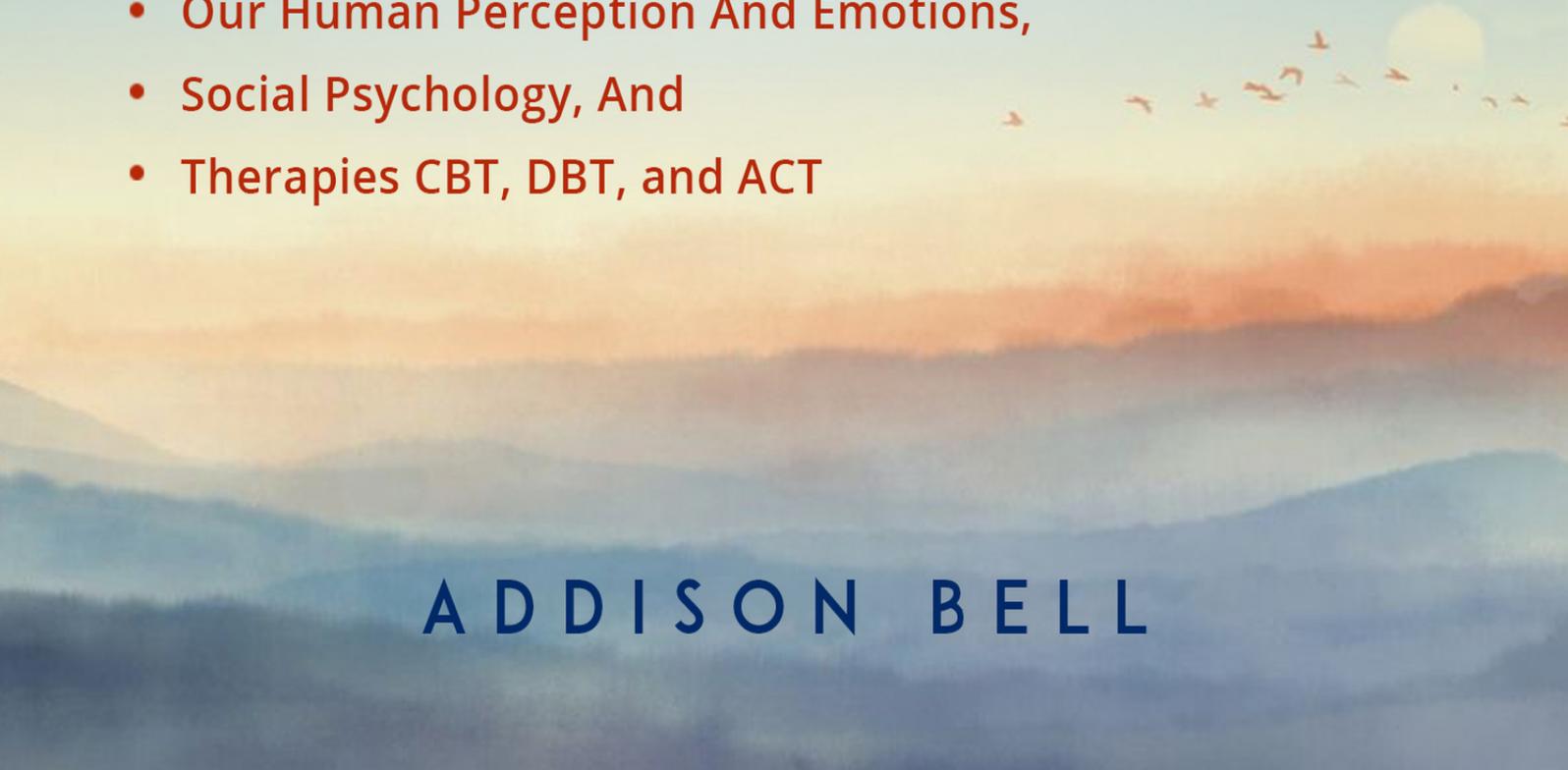


Psychology OF **HUMAN BEHAVIOR**

Why You Are Who You Are

Includes Understanding:

- **Different Human Personality Types,**
- **Our Human Perception And Emotions,**
- **Social Psychology, And**
- **Therapies CBT, DBT, and ACT**



ADDISON BELL

PSYCHOLOGY OF HUMAN BEHAVIOR

Why You Are Who You Are

**By
Addison Bell**

Amazon Kindle Edition

PSYCHOLOGY OF HUMAN BEHAVIOR

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Introduction

When you look in the mirror, what is that you see? Regardless of your physical appearance, what do you really see? The short answer I would give is, “I see me.” That answer, however, is so filled with interpretation, nuance, and adaptation that, in reality, it is far from a short answer.

When you look in the mirror, or when you think of yourself, you think of an impression that you have of yourself. Essentially, your perception of yourself is a concept that you have built up over time. The concept has been colored and impacted by past experiences, biases, and beliefs and, really, it is only as accurate as we perceive it to be. Probably a far more accurate answer to the question of who you are would be the sum of responses from yourself and as many other people as possible, but still, even that sum will need to be tempered with the understanding that perceptions are all relative.

Self identity is considered to be one of the most fluid and malleable concepts that human beings grapple with, but is it really that changeable? How much does self identity really change when faced with conflicting opinions and evidence? Is our self identity so hardwired into each of our brains that even if we are faced with the most astounding of contradictory evidence to efface our beliefs, we still would not really be able to change that core concept?

The question of who we are and how we came to be those people has been one that has fascinated me for most of my life. Being self aware has always been important to me and I firmly believe that self awareness is the key to a successful and happy adult. Becoming self aware can be extremely uncomfortable at times and is likely to have you facing up to a few difficult home truths. It is often easier to believe that we have little control over the cards we are dealt when it comes to personality, background, and resulting behavior. The truth, though, is far more complex and less comfortable than that.

In my quest to determine who I really am as a human being and how I got to be that way, I have delved into many different areas of psychology, some, perhaps, more on the fringes than others. This book is the sum of my research to date and a guide to some of the most helpful resources I have come across in my journey.

In my efforts to deeply define the questions around self identity, I do believe that I have managed to discover who I am, and to a certain extent, how I came to be this person. In writing and sharing this book I hope to take you on a similar journey. This is certainly not intended to be a self-help book. I don't claim to have any of the answers to your trauma or life's difficulties, but what I have gained from my research experience is something that I think will be valuable to you: a deeper understanding of human beings. Since both you and I are human beings, in turn, I hope to give you a better understanding of yourself.

It is not my intention, in this book, to focus on ways in which trauma can be overcome. That would need to be the topic of several books alone. Instead, I will focus on how trauma possibly shapes our personality and behavior and the several forms of psychotherapy available. The most interesting part of this aspect for me is whether these forms of psychotherapy, although beneficial in rectifying the impact of trauma, are capable of changing our personality or our behaviors in the long term.

There are, of course, many ways of defining personality types and I will delve into all of these in this book as well. This will lead us on to the question: How much of who we are is defined by a personality type?

If we consider actions that we have taken throughout our lives, depending on our current level of self-awareness, we may be able to determine why we have behaved in certain ways in specific situations in the past. In many situations, though, particularly in instances of behavior we regret, it is quite difficult for us to identify the root of behaviors. In the chapters that follow, I will delve deeply into the links between human behavior and the concept of self-identity and, there is a good chance, that by the last chapter, you will be closer to understanding your own actions, as well as the behavior of others, far better than ever before.

Chapter 1:

Who Are You?

“The question, ‘Who am I?’ is not really meant to get an answer; the question ‘who am I?’ is meant to dissolve the questioner.”

— Ramana Maharshi

When you ask yourself who you are, what is it that you are trying to determine? For most, it is a question of a sense of identity. Our identity is essentially a system of experiences, memories, relationships, thought, and value that, when combined, provide a definition of who we are as individual human beings. The necessity of identity in defining ourselves is a purely human attribute. Identity is quantifiable to a certain extent. We can break it down into components such as:

- Experiences
- Values
- Relationships

As human beings, when we are able to quantify something, we feel satisfied that it is well defined. Identity as a sum of its components goes a long way to answering our original question.

Human beings have a basic need for identity. The need falls well within Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, arguably within the second level which consists of safety and security needs. These basic needs are not necessarily always involved with physical safety. By having an identity that can be defined, we feel a psychological safety in that we belong somewhere.

Doctor Shahram Heshmat, the author of the book *Science of Choice*, believes that “identity relates to our basic values that dictate the choices we make (e.g., relationships, career). These choices reflect who we are and what we value.” (Dennis, 2020).

Of course, this is not always the case. Sometimes we make decisions that we call “out of character.” A straight-A student with no history of rebellious behavior may suddenly go on all-night bender and crash his father’s car. Does that action speak to his identity? On the other end of the spectrum, if a ruthless killer stops a murderous rampage to save a kitten from a drain, does that say anything about his basic values?

Even though our identity is made up of values, beliefs, and choices that we internalize, it is often impacted by many external factors, some of which we cannot control. Our identities, for the most part, are not self-constructed with any level of awareness. Most often, we will internalize the values that are presented by our parents or the cultures in which we grew up. These values, though, and therefore,

that are part of our identity, do not always line up with our authentic selves, and this is often where a problem arises.

Identity can be divided into organic and inorganic identities.

Our organic identity would better be described as our nature or character, perhaps even, to a certain extent, our personality. It is the part of our identity that remains very much the same no matter where we were born or how we have been raised.

Our inorganic identity is that which is developed and essentially thrust upon us through parentage, circumstances, and experiences.

To further break down the concept of identity, although we have one overriding identity, it is fair to say that we portray different aspects of that identity when we fulfill certain roles. It is only natural, of course, that we will not behave in the same way or display the same characteristics when we are at work as we would when we are with our spouses or families. There may even be parts of our identity that we don't share with anyone, that will only be evident when we are alone.

While this process of adapting identity to specific roles is natural and normal to an extent, when we become convinced that the identity we display in one role is somehow an overriding truth about ourselves, problems can develop. An identity struggle may ensue as we attempt to identify which of these "selves" is the most authentic answer to who we are. The downside of this identity struggle can be quite devastating and it is no surprise that people that describe themselves as happy and content also have a very good idea of their authentic self. They are also living within roles in their lives that allow them to, for the most part, reflect that authentic self or identity.

There can be no question that the search for our authentic selves is a very personal journey. Sadly, some people may never arrive at the final conclusion no matter how long they live while still others are able to identify their authentic selves at a very early age.

So how can we find our true identity and ensure that we are living our lives to match that? Psychologists recommend a five step process which may help with this.

1. **Reflect:** This step is not about making any decisions, it is very simply you sitting with yourself and asking some tough questions. How do you see yourself? How do others see you? Think about comments that people may have made that have really bothered you. That concern is a good indicator that these people are pointing out something within you that you are not ready to admit. What do you like about yourself? What don't you like about yourself?
2. **Figure out who you want to be:** Carefully define the characteristics of the type of person you would like to be. There will always be a gap

between where you are and what you would like to see in yourself. List those characteristics that need improvement during this step.

3. **Make active choices:** The inorganic part of our identity has developed, for the most part, because we allow ourselves to be inactive participants in our own lives. We make choices that maintain the status quo out of fear and because we believe that those choices somehow fit in with the roles we are meant to be playing. When you start to make active choices that close the gap between who you are now and who you want to be, you will get closer to your authentic identity.
4. **Explore your passions:** It is no surprise that people living their most authentic lives are also regularly engaged in activities that they are passionate about. Very often we push these passions down because the environment we live in or the demands of day-to-day life make them difficult to explore. You are passionate about these things for a reason, though, and they form part of your true identity.
5. **Work on the people that you surround yourself with:** Very often we are dragged down by a social circle that doesn't fit with our authentic selves. If you often find yourself feeling alone in a room full of people, it is very likely that those are not the people that you should be surrounding yourself with. By surrounding ourselves with people that align with our true identity and values, we are able to reinforce our authentic selves.

Do Identities Evolve?

Absolutely! The human identity is formed through an ongoing process and continues to evolve as we go through life and have different experiences. A woman that may have identified herself as being meek and timid in her 20s may find that, by the time she is in her 40s, she would never use those words to describe herself. This could be the result of her discovering her true identity or it could be the result of her identity having evolved.

This indicates that identity is fluid and not a snapshot of us at any given time in our lives. So, perhaps, instead of asking ourselves who we are, we should be asking how we would like to be engaging with life in the moment.

The Breaking Down Process

In determining our identities, there will come a time when we are able to distinguish between the characteristics that are true to our authentic selves and those that we have adopted because we thought it was the right thing to do.

Shedding these inauthentic aspects of our identities is extremely difficult and a process in itself, but in order to live a life according to your true identity, it is absolutely necessary.

Often the inauthentic aspects of your identity will be most prominent in the decisions that you make. If you are making decisions that you are truly happy with, it is likely that you are using authentic parts of your identity to make those decisions. When you make choices that you feel unsettled by, those are more than likely directed by the parts of your identity that are inauthentic.

Aspects of Identity

Identity is expressed in different ways in various schools of thought.

Psychology defines identity as relating to our self image, individuality, and self esteem. Psychologist Peter Weinreich defines identity as “the totality of one’s self construal, in which how one construes oneself as one was in the past and how one construes oneself as one aspires to be in the future.” Within this definition of identity is the aspect of ethnic identity which expresses our construal of our past ancestry as well as our aspirations for the future of our ethnicity.

Gender identity is another aspect of human identity that impacts how we see ourselves, and is important to the psychological definition of identity. Our gender identity tends to dictate how we see ourselves in relation to other people, ideas, and nature. Gender identity has, perhaps, one of the biggest impacts on our lives as it affects the roles we feel comfortable playing in society, our intimate relationships, and our sense of belonging. In recent years, we have seen a greater push toward acceptance of a wider range of gender identities and, as a result, many more people feeling comfortable to explore this aspect of their identity.

Other aspects of identity include:

- **Racial identity:** This is the aspect of identity that is, most often, not chosen. Although racial classifications are essentially a political construct, over the centuries of human development, we have come to identify with specific racial groups depending on the color of our skin. Racial identity can be a positive thing in that it may provide a sense of belonging, but it can also be extremely detrimental to those that feel they do not ‘belong’ within any specific racial group.
- **Religious identity:** This is perhaps one of the most fluid aspects of identity as one will likely be born into one religious identity that will remain present for the earlier years of our lives and then, as we grow and mature, we may well choose a different religious identity that is more fitting with our authentic selves. Religious identity is far more important for some groups of people than others and it is not uncommon for this to create an identity struggle within people that are forced by those around them to align with a specific religious identity.
- **Ethnic identity:** This aspect of identity is often closely linked to racial identity, but it can be more fluid throughout our lives than racial

identity. Ethnic identity is essentially how strongly we adhere to a set of attitudes, cultural value, and traditions present within the ethnicity into which we are born. Although we cannot choose the ethnicity or multiple ethnicities into which we are born, adherence to this aspect of identity does become more of a choice as we become adults. Children born into a family made up of multiple ethnicities may often align with the dominant ethnicity and this will form part of their identity at this time. As they grow older, they may feel a stronger pull to another ethnicity within their makeup and failure to embrace the traditions of this ethnicity could result in an identity struggle.

- **Occupational identity:** This is a less important aspect of our greater identity for most but for some, it becomes the overriding basis of their human identity. This is most common in occupations where great commitment and danger is encountered, such as in the police service or within the army. The commitment of self to such occupations is so great that people may identify with the occupation even when they are no longer engaged in it.

We will delve into the role that social psychology plays in identity in greater detail later in this book but, at this point, it is pertinent to mention that **sociology** places great weight on the various roles we play in society. The importance of societal roles in the definition of our personal identity may result in a negotiation of identity wherein a person will negotiate with society regarding the roles they are expected to play in order to define their identity.

While psychologists use the word ‘identity’ to define the idiosyncratic aspects of a person that make them unique, sociologists more often focus on how a collection of memberships to various groups within society can impact our view of who we are. Social psychologists acknowledge that even two people with identical memberships to various groups within society will still not display identical personal descriptions of their identity. This is because each individual interacts with their various roles in society in a different way and therefore judges the importance of each role on a different scale as it relates to their personal identity.

Neuroscientists, in their work, use all of the aforementioned aspects of identity to attempt to understand how human identity is represented in a biological form in the structures of the brain.

Weinrich’s Identity Structure Analysis

British psychologist Peter Weinrich was a forerunner in the field of human identity analysis. His life’s work involved the development of the Identity Structure Analysis (ISA). The ISA is described as a powerful and unique approach to understanding and analyzing the formation and development of human identity. Weinrich developed the system and conceptualized it by developing a software system called

Ipeus to aid in analysis. The ISA uses various disciplines, including psychology, sociology, and social anthropology, to understand how psychological and societal influences help to form the individual human identity as well as how this is impacted by the social milieu in which the individual finds themselves.

The fundamental assumption of the ISA framework is that human beings are social, agentic, and developing beings and that we continually reframe our identity based on ongoing changes and events within our society and personal lives. The Ipeus software provides the opportunity to empirically define the combination of all of these aspects and changes. Although Weinrich passed away in 2016, his work continues in the doctoral work of various psychology students as they continue to use Ipeus and ISA to gain empirical data about the constructs of human identity (Stapleton, 2016).

Online Identity

An aspect of identity that psychology's founding fathers would likely never have considered is relatively new, the online identity. This aspect is the subject of current research and the findings, thus far, are fascinating. If you've ever used a social media platform for any length of time you may well have been surprised by the discoveries you have made about people you may also know in real life. Your cousin, Mary, for instance, a relatively quiet and withdrawn personality in person, can be found commenting with the most arrogant of tones about topics she is passionate about. When these same topics are discussed at family gatherings, she doesn't display near the amount of vigour in defending her position as she does online. Does Mary have multiple personalities? No, she is simply being impacted, like millions of others, by the online disinhibition effect.

This effect is characterized by uninhibited, unwise, and often uncharacteristic behavior on internet platforms which arises as a result of audience gratification and an assumption of anonymity. This behavior can be compared to how an individual may behave when under the influence of alcohol or drugs and, often the behavior is equally regretted the morning after.

The online identity is entirely self-crafted so it is, perhaps, the one place where an individual's ideal identity can be exhibited without constraint, especially if the individual does not use any personally identifying information in their online persona.

While this distinct difference in identities online and offline seems to be unhealthy, in many cases, it can be beneficial. When individuals are able to live out their authentic identity online on a consistent basis, this can sometimes 'leak' over into their offline lives, bringing them closer to living their authentic identity in the "real world" as well. Often this occurs in situations where an individual is unable to live out their authentic identity in their offline lives due to societal pressures, such as in cases of gender identity or sexual orientation variations. When individuals receive

support online while living out their authentic gender or sexual identity, that is often enough to give them the courage to slowly reveal and embrace those identities in their real lives too.

Often this has less to do with the individual sharing their “secret identity” with the world and more to do with understanding that they belong to a large group of people across the globe that identify in the same way they do. Feeling like certain aspects of your identity need to be hidden in your day-to-day life due to fear of reprisals, rejection, or in some cases, violence, can be extremely isolating. Finding a community in which you can be your authentic self helps to limit that feeling of isolation.

Other Thoughts on Defining Identity

In the development of a definition of identity, we may start by considering the core issue addressed by the concept of ‘identity’, regardless of how it could be conceptualized. Most importantly, identity involves people’s implicit or explicit responses to the question: “Who am I?” This may sound rudimentary, but it actually masks a good amount of complex thought.

Firstly, it is important to note that identity can refer to the self-definitions of individuals as well as pairs, small groups, and larger social groups or categories.

Secondly, the question may be posed to oneself introspectively or to other members of a group. as well as in interactions of a social nature between individuals and within groups. In other words, identity is made up of not only who you think or believe yourself to be, whether as an individual or a collective, but also who you act as in intergroup and interpersonal interactions. This also includes the social recognition or rejection that these actions receive from other groups or individuals. In reality, therefore, the concept of identity encompasses a number of diverse but related contents and processes, and these are emphasized in various fields of study and in various theoretical and metatheoretical perspectives. Our definition of identity, despite this scope, does not simply include all possible features that could be used to identify anyone.

The word identity is often used as a catch-all mark for biological characteristics in public and scholarly discourse.

Holding a British passport, however, does not automatically grant a British identity to anyone, nor does having a specific skin colour or being intelligent inherently give someone a racial identity or the identity of a “intellectual.”

Characteristics such as these are only part of identity to the degree that they are perceived and filled with personal and social significance, and that these meanings are used, in other words, to the extent that people use them to identify individuals or groups.

Therefore, even though it focuses on two areas that people can sometimes use to describe themselves, a research that examines sex differences in a mathematical capacity is not inherently a study of identity. In comparison, a study of identity is undoubtedly a study of identity that attempts to clarify such disparities through a process of individuals stereotyping themselves in terms of representations of men and women that prevail in their cultural context.

Usually, current identity approaches concentrate on one or more of three distinct “levels” at which identity could be defined: personal, relational and collective. The distinction between personal, relational, and collective identities can be understood in part as a distinction between different forms of substance of identity, but it is also understood that different types of mechanisms are used to shape and sustain or alter identities over time. Theories that concentrate on individual, relational, or collective identity material are often distinguished by a corresponding emphasis on individual, relational, or collective processes of identity creation and transition, although there is no necessary explanation why this should be the case.

At the level of the individual person, individual or personal identity relates to aspects of self-definition. These can include goals, principles, and beliefs, religious and moral beliefs, behavioral and decision-making criteria, self-esteem and self-assessment, desired, feared, and predicted future selves, and the “life story” of one as a whole. In addition to focusing on individual-level identity material, personal identity theories appear to focus in particular on processes at the individual level, often stressing the individual's agentic role in establishing or finding his or her own identity.

Relational identity refers to one's identity as it relates to other persons, including content of identity such as child, partner, parent, co-worker, boss, client, *etc.* Relational identification applies not only to these positions, but also to how the people who play them perceive and view them. Many approaches hold that identity is established and located within interpersonal space, within families, or in the roles that one plays within a bigger framework in terms of relational identity processes. A common theme in these viewpoints is the belief that identities cannot be formed by individuals on their own— claims to a specific identity need to be accepted by a social audience if they are to be protected.

Collective identity refers to the association of individuals with the groups and social categories to which they belong, the meanings they assign to these social groups and categories, and the emotions, values, and behaviors arising from their identification with them. Collective identity may refer to membership, including race, nationality, religion, and gender, in any type of social group or category, as well as in smaller, face-to-face communities, such as families and work groups.

Perhaps our concept of identity can now begin to seem very broad, expanding to include significant others, social roles, face-to-face groups, and broader social categories beyond the individual self. It is important, however, to expand it even

further. To paraphrase and update a famous quote from William James, not only her mind, body, friends, spouse, ancestors, and descendants, but also her clothing, home, vehicle, and the contents of her bank account can be included in the material of a person's identity. In other words, individuals not only see and treat social bodies outside their individual selves as part of their personalities, but also material objects, as well as important locations. Thus, individuals can also be said to have material identities beyond human, relational, and collective identities.

Taken together, the basis for an integrated organizational concept of identity can be given by these dimensions of identity. Identity, seen through an individual's prism, consists of the confluence of the individual's self-chosen or ascribed commitments, personal attributes, and convictions about herself; roles and positions in relation to important others; and her membership in social groups and categories (including both her group status and the group status in the wider context); as well as her membership in social groups and categories (Schwartz et al., 2012).

The Derisive Properties of Identity

Sometimes issues arise, though, when our identities divide us instead of promoting inclusivity. How do they divide us? Identities become labels used to classify individuals based on arbitrary traits.

Labels serve two purposes: to separate us from the people who are not like us, and to have solidarity with people who we feel are similarly excluded. We seek self-definition by separating ourselves from others.

Here is something worth considering though: If we are constantly viewing ourselves through a lens of exclusion, aren't we all simplifying and judging each other? When, if ever, do the labels identify you not as an identity but as who you are as an individual?

The labels that define our identity do not provide the complexity of what our individuality means, and what it means to be a human being. We use labels to glorify, hide, and victimize ourselves. Too often intersectionality involves quick and often simplistic identification, something like drawing a Venn diagram. There is a long list of labels, everyone uses to identify themselves, it's like checking off boxes on a form. It will include your gender, race, gender, sexual orientation, abilities, class, and whatever else is important to you in terms of identity. Such labels are variations of a more juvenile vocabulary for classification: nerdy, popular, smart, cool, and pretty. It can become a situation of *them* versus *us*. Your intersectional experience is not the same as someone else's, even though they might identify with the same groups as you.

Demographic identities are aspects, not definitions, of who we are, like pieces of a puzzle. They do not help to describe our dreams, favorite books, sense of humor, best friends—the odds and ends of life that make us who we are. Owning your

cultural heritage as part of your story is different from subscribing to a collective identity for the latter and it often excuses us from the harrowing process of trying to understand who we really are. When we see each other in terms of our identities—this can reduce and disrespect others by valuing their affinity with an arbitrary collective rather than the person. When considering identity, it is important to remember that these labels do not make up a person; they often make a stereotype.

Classifying each other not only often erases our individuality, but it also isolates people from one another. Yes, people are fundamentally different; however, we forget that we are also fundamentally very similar. The only label that really means anything is “human being.” As a human being you are endowed with the capacity to understand another human being, regardless of the circumstances of our birth, by the simple fact that we are both human, and thus have certain human experiences in common. Our capacity for shared experience and understanding—for empathy and compassion—is one of the ultimate marks of what it means to be human. The impulse that dares us to care for a stranger, not related to us by blood, marriage, or clan, transcends the limitations that we and our society create. You might think, when the rest of the world chooses to judge us by our identities, why shouldn't we go along with it and do the same? But actively seeking out what we have in common is more powerful than focusing on how we are different. Reducing ourselves to merely our identities wrongs us in two ways: As we subscribe to a collective we ignore individuality, and as we cling to what divides us we forget what we have in common.

In saying this, I am not denouncing the concept of identity. It is important, though, that we would use it to celebrate who we are.

Identity does not mean an arbitrary label I am given by circumstance. That is not identity. Identity should be about who you are intrinsically—and no one gets to decide that for you except yourself. We cannot change most of the labels we are born into. But we can change how we engage with them. What someone needs to know to understand you—the reader— lies in your person, not in the group or demographic you most identify with. There is something more to your identity than the identities you hold.

In this chapter we have identified a number of definitions of identity as explored by various schools of psychological thought. We have a greater understanding of what identity means to human beings, and how it is developed and continues to change over time.

In the chapters that follow, we will explore how personality ties into identity and also seek to understand various personality types.

Chapter 2:

Different Human Personality Types

As we begin to understand the concept of human identity, it is necessary for us to explore the overriding label that we often attach to identity: personality.

How does personality relate to identity? Is our personality fluid in the way that we have identity to be?

Personality Typing

If you have spent any time investigating various types of personalities, you will likely have already discovered that there are various personality tests and each test has its own name for the resulting personality types.

While this can be confusing to the man on the street, when you delve into the various personality tests and resulting types, it becomes clear that many of them have distinct similarities. The main differences are the way in which the tests are focused and the aspects of personality that are zoned in on.

The Development of Personality Typing

In about the year 460 BC, Hippocrates proposed that humans had a 'persona'—a character that consists of four distinct temperaments. He indicated that their 'humor' and thus their distinct personality was dictated by whatever fluid was more dominant in an individual.

In 1879, not only was Wilhelm Wundt the “Father of Psychology”, but he became the first person to make a direct distinction between the theory of the human body and the theory of human personality.

A dramatic shift was seen in the late 1800s with the rise of the psychodynamic approach and the way in which we interpreted personality within groups of people in social settings changed.

Sigmund Freud, who was the founder of this approach, believed that our personality is much more complex than had originally been proposed and that our personality and actions are driven by our underlying needs and drives.

Carl Jung suggested that there are only four preferences for human identity: thought, sensation, feeling and intuition, and that these affect our personality. The 1900s, particularly in the workplace, led to an increased interest in personality testing and typing.

The first modern personality test to be invented was the Woolworth personal data

sheet; it was used by the American Army of the United States to detect which recruits would be vulnerable to shell shock.

Human personality theories, personality evaluations, and tests have skyrocketed since the 1900s. Personality quizzes such as the 16 personalities test, the Myers-Briggs test, the big five and various IQ tests are now very common.

Top Six Personality Tests

1. DiSC

The DiSC personality profile, introduced by Walter Clark in 1940, was designed to measure superiority, power, steadiness, and conscientiousness. The questionnaire was developed specifically for organizational use and can be used for manager and employee growth, management training, sales training, dispute management, team building, customer services, communication and job coaching.

There are 28 questions in the DiSC evaluation, where the individual chooses a word that is most similar to them and a word for each question that is least similar to them. The DiSC review is designed to be quick to use, easy to administer, and easy for everyone to deliver.

DiSC uses four components of personality to profile types:

- **Dominance:** Such people are direct, results-orientated, firm, strong-willed, and forceful.
- **Influence:** Such people are outgoing, enthusiastic, optimistic, high-spirited, and lively.
- **Conscientiousness:** Such people are analytical, reserved, precise, private, and systematic.
- **Steadiness:** Such people are even-tempered, accommodating, patient, humble and tactful.

Clearly no single person will be only one or the other, and the DiSC personality types are a combination of the four above-mentioned aspects.

2. 16 Personality Factor Questionnaire (16PF)

The 16PF was first published by Tatsuoka, Cattle, and Eber, in 1949, but additions have been made since its first publication. The questionnaire is based on the personality traits suggested by Allports 4000, which Cattle narrowed down to 171, and then later to 16, to design the method. The questionnaire is intended to assess common habits and can be used for selection of team members, career guidance, therapy, and marital counselling, it also has some clinical uses.

It measures abstractness, anxiety, comfort, rationality, emotional superiority,

security, liveliness, social audacity, consciousness of law, sensitivity, vigilance, privacy, self-reliance, openness to change, tension and perfectionism.

3. HEXACO Model of Personality Structure

In the year 2000, the HEXACO model was developed to test some of the personality dimensions and theoretical interpretations that were outlined in previous studies. The model tests six main dimensions of personality, namely: humility-honesty, emotionality, extraversion, pleasantness, conscientiousness, openness to experience.

4. Revised NEO Personality Inventory

The Updated NEO Personality Inventory (NEO-PI-R) was developed by Costa and McCrae in the 1970s and later finalized in 2005 to quantify and assess the Big-5 personality traits outlined in the five-factor model: namely, openness to knowledge, conscientiousness, extraversion, compatibility, and neuroticism.

For example, neuroticism is composed of anxiety, aggression, depression, self-consciousness, impulsiveness, and susceptibility to stress. The inventory also has six subcategories for each of the five traits. Whereas the subcategories of warmth, gregariousness, assertiveness, movement, finding stimulation and positive emotion constitute extraversion.

5. Myers-Briggs Type Indicator

Isabel Briggs Myers and her mother Katharine Cook Briggs developed the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) in the 1940s.

The test is based on a hypothesis by Carl Jung which included a theory that four psychological mechanisms are used by humans in order to color their experience of the world. These four mechanisms are intuition, sensation, thought and feeling.

With regard to the processing of information, the Myers-Briggs tests whether a person is introverted or extroverted, whether they have an intuitive preference or a sensory preference, whether they prefer to make decisions by feeling or by thought, and whether they have a preference for perceiving or judging how they do things. The questionnaire findings then position the participant on one of 16 personalities, each with their own weaknesses and strengths.

6. Merrill-Wilson Personality Breakdown

The Merrill-Wilson personality typing method is perhaps one of the simplest and easiest to identify.

Driver, Verbal, Amiable, and Logical are the four personality styles. To classify any personality, there are two variables: are they better at facts & data or relationships?

And they are introverted or extroverted as well.

- Driver-Extrovert Reality Dependent
- Analytical-Introvert based on reality
- Amiable-Introvert partnership
- Expressive-Extrovert partnership

There would, of course, be major and minor forms for most individuals. The key is to identify the major form and speak to that type.

Personality Types Based on the Merrill-Wilson Breakdown

If we use the Merrill-Wilson personality typing breakdown, there are four major personality groups:

Driver

Drivers are very powerful people. They usually have a go-get-it-done or whatever-it-takes character. They can appear very dominant and take action quickly. The bad thing is that they can often come off as arrogant or stubborn. The personality style may often come off as brash, running over others in order to get things done.

Analytical

If you are reading this book, there is a very good chance that you have a high level of Analytical typing in your personality. Analytical styles continuously analyze, weigh the pros and cons, and make lists of things to do. Analytical styles, almost to the point of having too much information, are continually asking questions. With great ideas, others see them as talented. They may, however, suffer from paralysis of analysis, too much overthinking circumstances. You are an Analytical if you have ever made a list of “doing things the right way.”

Expressive

These are “natural” people persons. They enjoy chatting and socializing. They are excellent storytellers and sometimes over commit themselves by seeking to satisfy individuals. They are also excellent at conveying vision, getting people excited about thoughts and problems. However, when it comes to getting things done, they are often unreliable.

Amiable

The quietest of characters, Amiable types are difficult to fire up and sedate. They seem to be constantly unperturbed and value peaceful surroundings above all else. They will often wait to make choices until the last minute or just agree to do what

everyone else does. They are extremely emotional people who seek only peace. They will do their utmost to avoid confrontation or upsetting others.

Personality Types Based on the Myers-Briggs Breakdown

Myers-Briggs personality types are broken down using four specific dichotomies.

The four dichotomies are collections of opposing features that are intended to represent certain facets of a character or personality. There are:

- Introversion vs Extroversion
- Sensing vs Intuition
- Thinking vs Sentiment
- Judging vs. Perception

Introversion vs Extroversion

This dichotomy is about energy management, most resources claim, and they are not necessarily wrong. It is possible, though, to oversimplify and create misleading explanations of how energy is handled.

The following is an example of this oversimplification: “Introverts derive their energy from being alone, and extroverts by interacting with others.”

This doesn't seem to be associated with the chatty Introvert who enjoys being around crowds, nor with the Extrovert who can't seem to quit a crowd quickly enough.

The true distinction between introversion and extroversion actually involves where these people see their “real” world. The inner universe (the world inside itself) is the “real world” of introverts. The external world (the world outside themselves) is the “real world” for extroverts. It is this placement of reality that results in a wide variety of behaviors that we see as extroversion or introversion.

This is why before they talk, Introverts will pause slightly, as if they're making sure their words echo internally first before they bring them out into the world. They will also talk as they think, so hearing it outside of themselves lets them assess the meaning or validity of their own argument. Extroverts are the opposite. They often talk while they are thinking because hearing their thoughts outside of their own heads helps them to assess the meaning or validity of their own argument.

Not everything in the external world will resonate with the introvert's dynamic internal world. Introverts are put in a position to continually analyze data and align it with what they know internally to be valid. After a while, this can become exhausting, and time alone becomes a necessary reprieve.

When an Introvert makes room for another person in their inner universe, though, an exception to this is developed. This happens when they establish an extremely close bond or find a partner. The Introvert enjoys involving the other person in their inner world, and the person is not at odds with the inner world of the Introvert, but rather a part of it.

Extroverts, on the other hand, feel most at home while engaging with their surroundings. They find variety stimulating as a general rule, and the more people they come into contact with it, the more fascinating it is to them. Too much time to themselves makes them lonely and anxious, and in order to recover, they need to connect with their surroundings. This doesn't necessarily have to include connection with other people, though. It may be necessary to simply go for a stroll, get out and about, or research interesting items.

Although we all make space within ourselves for special individuals, for extroverts spending too much time with a single individual will begin to feel like being alone. They intend no disrespect to their loved one, but they can become restless and want to get out into the world, with or without that person accompanying them.

Introverts may become bashful and defensive of their energy, gun-shy from years of having to change themselves to suit the outside world. To seek new energy, extroverts, recognizing that other individuals are full of new information and energy, may become highly social. Each person is different, though, and individuals may exhibit different combinations of extravert and introvert behavior.

Sensing vs Intuition

The next dichotomy in the Myers-Briggs four-letter code, deals with how your universe is viewed. Sensors prefer data reliability, and intuitives prefer pace and depth of insight.

The first distinction is that intuitives learn to trust the identification of patterns to help them quickly interpret information and perceive hidden ties between apparently different items. They are comfortable theorizing and speculating about what could be, here, now, and in the future. Basically, from just a few data points, they extrapolate implications.

Sensors have the same power, of course, but they do not trust it, so they do not hone it. Instead, they rely on trustworthy facts and things that can be checked in the real world. Therefore, they become masters of historical knowledge, as well as other people's own history. When controlling physical objects, sensors often become quickly adept, have faster response times, and appear to live in the moment. When it's right in front of them, they don't understand the need to doubt reality. For Sensors, truth is dependable and speculation is not.

Secondly, over time, sensors and intuitives have distinctly different relationships. If

what sensors want to focus on is actual, accurate, solid information, then the past and present contexts are most relevant. Sensors can't rely on what didn't happen. Therefore, the future is far less important. Intuitives, on the other hand, are fine with seeing what is not there. The past does not hold their attention as anything more than a reference point for future projections.

Thirdly, principles and fundamental desires are altered by the Sensor/Intuitive dichotomy. For sensors, values such as family, tradition, enjoying the moment, being sensitive, and keeping ahead of issues, are all embedded in the informed and knowable, and can therefore be trusted. Intuitives rely mostly on the abstract for values: meaning-making, narratives, creativity, possibilities, perspectives, and questions of “what if?” In conversation, intuitives have little interest in small talk.

In our world, both sensors and intuitives play a significant role. Sensors hold down the fort, maintaining and managing facilities that keep us moving as a group. Generally speaking, intuitives are the pioneers, emerging with new ways of looking at and doing things that end up creating new innovations and paradigms. It makes sense that there is less of a need for intuitives, as if there is too much creativity everything could crash. Yet the world would stagnate without any creativity.

Thinking vs Feeling

In your four-letter Myers-Briggs code, the third dichotomy deals with how you make decisions and assess knowledge. To evaluate the worth of a concept, circumstance, or object, Thinkers use impersonal metrics, while Feelers use human-based, intimate considerations. All the Thinkers, of course, sound and all the Feelers think. Feelers, just as Thinkers do, will use cerebral and logical methods to come to their conclusions. At the same time, when assessing their principles, Thinkers use emotion-based considerations.

In their belief system, the most obvious way to analyze the emotions of a Thinker is to see how annoyed they become when individuals ignore what they believe to be correct. It can be quite emotionally taxing for the Thinker if they feel that their metrics are not being honored. Feelers, on the other hand, may ignore their own feelings in order to retain the status quo. Social considerations are typically important to them, and in an uncomfortable situation, it is not unusual for a Feeler to set aside his feelings to preserve peace.

It makes sense that Thinkers would have data and measurements on their minds much more often, and would thus be more relaxed and professional in careers, partnerships, and other situations where the management of data and resources is necessary. Feelers will, by the same token, have people and human interests on their mind, but would feel more comfortable with displays of emotion and interpersonal dynamics.

Judging vs Perceiving

In the four-letter Myers-Briggs code, the fourth and final dichotomy deals with how you organize your universe. In order to allow outer world liberty, Perceivers organize their inner world, and Judgers organize their outer world to enable inner world liberty.

Judgers tend to roam the garden of their minds as they think. Ideas come to them the same way fish swim around in a pond, and to really concentrate or even see them clearly takes relaxation and quiet. Interrupting a Judger who is deep in thought is like disrupting the waters of the pond, the little ideas swim away, and the Judger may or may not be able to get them back.

This helps the Judger to have a balance of influence over their external world. They must be alert against future disturbances. What begins as a basic need to think, grows into an all-encompassing need in their world to have order. Judgers also report that when their house is organized and they have no visual clutter, they think better. Therefore, much of the time, keeping the house clean is simpler and the same goes for their car, work desk, private rooms, *etc.*

Perceivers are just the opposite of that. Their emotions and thoughts are well structured, and if you were to interrupt a Perceiver in the middle of a thought, their mind normally tags and files it for later. It is simply a matter of finding the correct mental bookmark to remember it by. Some Perceivers, however, are unaware of this phenomenon within themselves. They are unconsciously capable of keeping thoughts and emotions arranged. Judgers, on the other hand, are more mindful of the absence of internal structure, most likely because of the annoyance they feel when disturbed by losing track of their thoughts.

The ability to coordinate and track thoughts makes it possible for Perceivers to participate in their favorite activity: improvisation. For Perceivers, complete freedom to have the right to behave the way they wish in the outside world and to keep all their choices open is vital. If they want to successfully improvise or capitalize on possibilities, though, Perceivers must be able to make decisions quickly.

Although Judgers can be quick-witted, the best improv comedians, for instance, are typically Perceivers. This also suggests, however, that they are typically not all that worried about disruptions, and household organizations can be placed on the back burner. It is a common Perceiver trait to negligently throw clothes around, ending up with a “floordrobe.”

Scheduling is another common trait of Judgers. If the Judger has not taught himself to be okay with improvisation and acting on the fly, when thrown into a scenario they did not foresee, they would usually be very uncomfortable. A Judger will feel more relaxed with even a little bit of warning as to what's coming up next. The more

a Judger is able to prepare, the happier they will feel. Perceivers may also benefit from preparation, but in circumstances that place pressure on them, they will always excel. On tasks and projects, they can unconsciously procrastinate, having learned over time that in the 11th hour they perform best. For a Judger, the same last-minute process rarely comes through as their best work, and often, at best, it's inefficient.

Perceivers can pull a proverbial rabbit out of a hat in last-minute circumstances while Judgers can get confused, their thought processes locking up. That is not how they would identify themselves, though.

There are occasions when Judgers are careless and disorganized and Perceivers are meticulous and planned. A Judger, for example, may have an ordered life but a chaotic bedroom, because no one can see it except themselves, the return on investment in cleaning their bedroom might not be high enough to motivate them. The value of a clean house or car may have been merged by a Perceiver, on the other hand, and they may not allow themselves to have even a single object out of place. These are exceptions, though, and are more tied to the particular cognitive functions that a person uses than their personality type.

The Possible Combinations

According to the Myers-Briggs personality typing, there are 16 possible combinations of the dichotomies discussed in this chapter, they are: ESTJ, ESFJ, ISTJ, ISFJ, ESTP, ESFP, ISTP, ISFP, ENTJ, ENFJ, INTJ, INFJ, ENTP, ENFP, INTP, and INFP (Joel Mark Witt & Dodge, 2018).

Personality Traits

Personality traits reflect people's characteristic patterns of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Personality traits imply consistency and stability. Thus, trait psychology rests on the idea that people differ from one another in terms of where they stand on a set of basic trait dimensions that persist over time and across situations. The most widely used system of traits is called the Five-Factor Model. This system includes five broad traits that can be remembered with the acronym OCEAN: Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism. Each of the major traits from the Big Five can be divided into facets to give a more fine-grained analysis of someone's personality. In addition, some trait theorists argue that there are other traits that cannot be completely captured by the Five-Factor Model. Critics of the trait concept argue that people do not act consistently from one situation to the next and that people are very influenced by situational forces. Thus, one major debate in the field concerns the relative power of people's traits versus the situations in which they find themselves as predictors of their behavior. Although there are many ways to think about the personalities that people have, Gordon Allport and other "personologists" claimed that we can best understand the differences between

individuals by understanding their personality traits. Personality traits reflect basic dimensions on which people differ. According to trait psychologists, there are a limited number of these dimensions (dimensions like Extraversion, Conscientiousness, or Agreeableness), and each individual falls somewhere on each dimension, meaning that they could be low, medium, or high on any specific trait.

There are three criteria that are characterized as personality traits: (1) consistency, (2) stability, and (3) individual differences.

1. To have a personality trait, individuals must be somewhat consistent across situations in their behaviors related to the trait. For example, if they are talkative at home, they tend also to be talkative at work.
2. Individuals with a trait are also somewhat stable over time in behaviors related to the trait. If they are talkative, for example, at age 30, they will also tend to be talkative at age 40.
3. People differ from one another on behaviors related to the trait. Using speech is not a personality trait and neither is walking on two feet—virtually all individuals do these activities, and there are almost no individual differences. But people differ on how frequently they talk and how active they are, and thus personality traits such as Talkativeness and Activity Level do exist.

The Congruence of Personality and Identity

So now that we have a better understanding of identity and also of the various human personality types, how do these two things tie into each other?

We know that identity, to a great extent, is something that we give ourselves. It is the sum of our values, morals, and our physical and legal status. Personality, on the other hand, is the way in which we live out our identities. Aspects of our identity can be seen in our personality traits.

You may recognise aspects of someone's personality, for instance: humorous, appealing, intelligent, funny. Over time, both adapt and change, but your identity changes less frequently. Together, identity and personality are what makes an individual whole.

As human beings, our uniqueness and individuality comes from a merging of both identity and personality. You may have a similar identity to someone else, but your personality will be different, and that makes you an individual.

Chapter 3:

Human Perception and Emotion

Human perception and emotion are usually seen as two completely separate fields of study. The truth is, though, that the two are far more closely linked than we may think. How we perceive the world is often colored by the emotions we are experiencing and vice versa. Thus far in this book, we have discussed the concept of identity and the various personality types into which we can be classified. A study of the psychology of human behavior cannot be complete without the additional “padding” around identity and personality—emotions and perceptions.

In this chapter, we will delve into the psychology of emotions and human perception and discover how these two facets of the human experience tie in to create the behavior that we display.

What is Human Perception?

Perception is the organization, recognition and understanding of sensory data to reflect and comprehend the knowledge or environment at hand.

These impressions contain impulses that move through the nervous system, which in turn result from the sensory system's physical or chemical stimulation. Vision, for example, involves light hitting the eye's retina; smell is mediated by molecules of odor; and hearing involves waves of pressure.

Not only is perception the passive receiving of these signals, but it is also influenced by the learning, memory, anticipation, and attention of the receiver. Sensory feedback is a mechanism that transforms this low-level data to higher-level data. The following process links the concepts and perceptions (or knowledge), restorative and selective mechanisms (such as attention) of an individual that affect perception. Perception relies on complex nervous system processes, but subjectively, since this processing occurs subconsciously, and often effortlessly.

Psychology's interpretation of perception has evolved by the combination of a number of different approaches since the 19th century birth of experimental psychology. The relationships between the physical characteristics of perception and sensory input are quantitatively defined by Psychophysics. The neural pathways that underlie perception are studied by sensory neuroscience. In terms of the information they process, perceptual systems can also be studied in a computational manner. Perceptual problems in philosophy include the degree to which sensory stimuli, such as smell, color, or sound, occur in empirical reality rather than in the mind of the perceiver.

Although the senses have historically been perceived as passive receptors, the study

of ambiguous images and perceptions has shown that the perceptive systems of the brain are pre-consciously and actively attempting to make sense of their input. There is still active debate on the degree to which perception is an active process of hypothesis testing, or whether practical sensory info is detailed enough to make this testing unnecessary.

The brain's perceptual systems enable people to see the environment around them as constant, even though the sensory knowledge is normally incomplete and changes rapidly. The brains of humans and animals are organized modularly, with various areas processing different types of sensory input. Some of these modules take the form of sensory maps, mapping part of the brain's surface to a certain aspect of the environment. These various modules are interconnected and impact one another. Taste, for example, is highly affected by smell.

What is Emotion?

Emotion is a complex perception, behavioral experience and set of body sensations, that represents the personal meaning of a state of affairs, a thing, or an event.

Greek philosopher Aristotle wrote that “emotions “are all those feelings that so change men as to affect their judgments, and that are also attended by pain or pleasure. Such are anger, pity, fear and the like, with their opposites.” Emotion is indeed a heterogeneous area that encompasses a wide variety of significant psychological phenomena. Some feelings are very particular, to the degree that they affect a specific circumstance, person, or object. Others are very general, like sadness or joy. Some sensations, like a sudden flush of shame or a burst of rage, are very brief and you may scarcely be aware of them. Others are protracted, lasting hours, months, or even years (in which case they may become a lasting characteristic of the personality of an individual), such as simmering anger or enduring love. An emotion, like a facial expression, may have pronounced physical accompaniments, or it can be invisible to observers. As when one “wallows” in it, an emotion may require conscious perception and thought, or it may pass virtually unnoticed and unacknowledged by the subject. An emotion may be profound, in the sense that it is necessary for one's physical survival or mental health, or it may be insignificant or unstable. An emotion can be appropriate or inappropriate in a social context. It may also be socially compulsory, for example, to feel guilt after committing a crime or to feel sorrow at a funeral.

There is also a wide variety of feelings, and there is great variance even within the same “emotion families.” For example, panic and fear are often considered to be kindred feelings, but there is a substantial difference between the panic that is expressed in an irrational fear or phobia and an intellectual fear that needs a lot of knowledge and consideration, such as the fear of nuclear war. Two other related feelings, panic and horror, are distinct from fear. There is, for instance, a vast family of anger-like hostile emotions: indignation, rage, hate, resentment, disgust, loathing,

and scorn, just to name a few. In their structure and proper contexts, all of those emotions are oddly different, as are members of the “self-critical family,” which involves shame, humiliation, guilt, remorse, and regret. The great variety and abundance of feelings indicate that the emotion group may not be a single class of psychological phenomena, but a broad family of mental states and processes that are loosely connected.

For the sake of convenience, emotions are often separated into “negative” and “positive” emotions by laypeople and researchers alike. (Scientific researchers term these features of an emotion “affective valence.”) The complexity of emotions, however, makes such oppositions suspect. For example, while love and hate are often conceived as polar opposites, it should be noted that they often coexist not as opposites but as complements. In addition, love is sometimes damaging and painful, and, often, hate can be positive.

But the futility of such a classification is illustrated by an emotion like anger, another so-called negative emotion. Rage is simply a negative emotion (if not a violent one) directed towards another person, but it can be edifying for an angry person, and it can have beneficial effects on a situation or a relationship in the right sense, a context in which one should be angry. Thus, when women understood that they had a right to be angry and a lot to be angry about, the feminist movement took a big step forward. As Aristotle observed, it may be that feelings are accompanied by pleasure or pain, often both, but they are too nuanced and often too subtle to be defined on that basis alone.

The study of feelings has long been the domain of ethics. Emotions were fundamental to the ethics of morality of Aristotle and a part and parcel of the concern of the medieval Scholastics with vices, virtues, and sin. For Aristotle, possessing the right amount of the right emotion in the right situations was the secret to virtuous conduct. The distinction between “higher” and “lower” emotions was made by St. Thomas Aquinas, the former exemplified by faith and devotion, the latter by rage and envy. While emotional extremes and malformations have always been associated with moral thought about emotions, as in psychopathology and madness, such phenomena have never been the primary explanation for emotional interest. Emotions are central to a healthy human life, as Aristotle and the medieval moralists understood very well, and it is for that reason that their malfunction can be so devastating.

The proper growth and functioning of emotions allow individuals to live well and be happy. For example, affection, appreciation, and compassion are the critical emotional ingredients of interpersonal relationships and concerns. Emotions encourage moral (as well as immoral) behavior, and they play an important role in innovation and in scientific curiosity. Emotions are triggered and provoked by beauty in the arts and nature for many people, and without feeling, there is no artistic sensibility.

The fundamental processes of perception and memory shape emotions and physical senses and affect the ways in which people conceive and interpret the world around them (psychologists have long known that what one notices and remembers depends to a great extent on what one cares about). Although some feelings may get out of control and damage one's personal well-being and social interactions, most feelings are functional and adaptive. Nevertheless, the fact that so many individuals suffer from “emotional problems” throughout their lives makes it an enduring societal issue to consider the pathology of emotions.

The Structure of Emotions

In many scientific fields, emotions have been researched, including genetics, psychology, neuroscience, psychiatry, anthropology, and sociology, and even business management, advertisement, and communications. As a consequence, distinctive emotional viewpoints, relevant to the intensity and diversity of the emotions themselves, have arisen. Nevertheless, it is important to take these various viewpoints not as competitive but as complementary, each providing insight into what can be called the different “structures” of feelings.

To say that emotions are merely amorphous feelings with no rationality, logic, or order, is to reject their structured nature. Emotions, on the contrary, are structured in many ways: by the decisions and assessments that fall into them, by their underlying neurology, by the broader social contexts in which they arise, and by the action that communicates or manifests them. Different emotions, depending on the particular emotion, the conditions and its form, can manifest certain structures to different levels and in different ways.

Experiential Structures of Emotions

Michael James, an American psychologist, presented his theory of emotion with an important qualification: “I should say first of all that the only emotions I propose expressly to consider here are those that have a distinct bodily expression.” While there are emotions that have no such expression, James insisted that all emotions have a mental or conscious component. A perception is the initiating source of emotion, according to James. He does not acknowledge awareness as a part of feeling, but he clearly recognizes its meaning. James understood that an emotion must be “about” something. It is not just a physiological disturbance-based sensation. James thus referred to intentionality, the characteristic of certain mental processes that are fundamentally about or oriented towards an object. By incorporating perception, and with it intentionality, as an integral part of emotion, several theorists following James have revised his analysis. Indeed, some philosophers have proposed that an emotion is just a specific kind of experience.

The definition of emotional awareness, accordingly, has been considerably enriched to include not only physical perceptions of what is going on in one's body but also

perceptual impressions of what is going on in the world. Of course, in the study of emotion, the viewpoint is an emotional perspective, “colored” by the different emotions as well as by the subject's specific perspective. Emotional experience does not have justice done to it by the traditional metaphor of “color”.

Emotion is not something that is distinct from and somehow overlays an experience; the experience is part of the structure of the emotion itself.

The experiential structures of emotion include, first and foremost, intentionality and what the emotion is about—a state of affairs, a person, an event, or an act. The intentionality is structured, however, in turn, by the subject's beliefs and evaluative judgments about the event, the state of affairs, or the person in question.

The meaning of belief in emotion has caused many theorists to formulate “cognitive” emotion theories, while focus on assessment has led others to formulate theories of “appraisal.” These ideas are also somewhat similar, primarily differing in their focus on the primary meaning of conviction as opposed to evaluative judgment. The meaning of what is commonly referred to as “feeling” in emotion is not questioned, but the essence of such feelings is far more nuanced and fascinating than in the Jamesian viewpoint.

Emotions include awareness about the universe, values, thoughts, and desires. Feeling must also involve not only body emotions, but the perceptions of learning, interacting, and caring that are cognitively rich. The experience dimension of an emotion encompasses not only physical stimuli, but through the specific insight given by that emotion, the experience of an object and its environment. For example, the experience of being angry at a person consists to a great degree of that person's experience from a certain point of view, such as being rude, hateful, or worthy of punishment. To a large degree, the experience of being in love with someone consists of that person's experience from another viewpoint, such as being lovable, exceptional, or uniquely worthy of treatment.

Rage and love experiences also contain different feelings and memories and the intent to behave in a certain way.

As Aristotle insisted, emotional experience often entails pleasure and pain, but rarely as isolated emotions. More frequently, multiple elements of an emotion are pleasurable or painful, as it can be pleasurable or painful to have thoughts or memories. The feeling as such can be pleasurable or unpleasant (e.g. pride or remorse), and so one can understand the fact that one has a certain feeling (delighted to be in love again, upset with oneself for getting angry or envious). Again, emotional matters are not always that straightforward. It is normal to have “mixed emotions,” when it is hard to settle on a single state of mind with the countercurrents of pleasure and pain.

Although Darwin believed that some emotional expressions are due to “the

constitution of the nervous system” and play a role in survival and adaptation, he believed that others serve a different purpose: to transmit emotion to others. Indeed, if it were not for the fact that they convey the feelings of a person to other members of his group or species, the uniformity and ubiquity of facial expressions indicating emotion would be difficult to understand. One shows friendliness and, possibly, a lack of intent to inflict harm by smiling; the opposite is expressed by frowning. Emotional gestures serve as the first form of contact between a mother and her infant at birth and in the early days of infancy when communication is nonverbal. As Darwin observed, “We readily perceive sympathy in others by their expression; our sufferings are thus mitigated. We laugh together and our mutual good humor increases and strengthens our pleasure.” Accordingly, the social component of emotion is most apparent in public displays of emotion, which directly affect other people's actions. Much more than contact is included in this element, though. It also requires the social constitution, or social construction, of feelings with other persons and through them. The social structures of emotion consist of the ways in which the triggers, content, modes of speech, and sense of an emotion are determined by the broader social context. Also fundamental feelings, which are normally believed to have a neurological core, are largely affected by social factors.

In an apparent sense, social context dictates the causes of emotions: different situations in different societies trigger different emotions. For instance, a voodoo curse causes fear in one culture, but only mild amusement or interest in another. In one society, a husband who sees his wife in the company of another man becomes jealous but may be indifferent in another society. All feelings require cognition, and all are affected by moral principles and evaluative ideas, many of which are taught (if not all). In the particular circumstances of each party or community, the principles of right and wrong, suitable and inappropriate and their proper implementation are taught.

In their modes of speech, emotions are subject to social shaping in the sense that most expressions, maybe even those that are more or less hardwired, are subject to local “display rules,” which regulate which emotions and which expressions in which circumstances are acceptable. In most public circumstances in Japan, an outburst of rage is completely unacceptable, but it is rather expected at an urban intersection in the United States. An emotion's cultural significance is often (and obviously) socially defined. Rage is considered particularly dangerous in Tahiti and is even demonized; it is also a symbol of virility in the Mediterranean, implying righteousness. This is not to suggest that their cultural perceptions are confined to external effects on emotions.

The feelings, themselves, are constituted by such interpretations, at least in part. In basic emotions, the socially constituted component of an emotion may be smaller than in cognitively rich emotions, such as moral outrage and romantic love, but history, as well as nature, social differences, as well as individual differences, decide

what emotions are present and where and when to have them.

Emotions and Rationality

The fact that emotions include actions, feelings, and culture poses the question of whether emotions are logical or to what degree. Such a topic was unacceptable from the outset for philosophers such as Plato and David Hume, who thought of emotion and reason as opposing opposites. Actions and thoughts, however, may be logical or irrational, and society imposes its own rational principles. At least to the point, according to those criteria, overt emotional gestures and thoughts can be judged.

People behave and think irrationally when angry. What is less often stressed, though, in the sense that they are strategically effective in articulating or channeling the emotion into positive action, is that frustration can result in actions and thoughts that are very logical. The thoughts that one has in frustration can also be specific and informative, such as recalling past slights and an aggressive conduct pattern. Of course, culture imposes its own requirements for determining which expressions and thoughts are acceptable, as well as which feelings under which situations it is rational to have. It may be perfectly appropriate and, therefore, reasonable to be jealous in certain societies and in certain circumstances. Yet, envy is unacceptable and often irrational in other societies or in other situations.

In two more basic senses, an emotion may also be rational or irrational: first, in the interpretation or comprehension of the situation it entails, it can be more or less precise; and second, in its assessment of the situation, it can be more or less justified. An instance of the first scenario is: Person A is upset with Person B for saying something offensive, whereas Person B actually said no such thing and there is no good reason to believe he did. An example of the second scenario is: Person A is angry with Person B for saying something offensive, but what Person B said was not offensive because it was not deliberate or because it was an accurate and fair critique of Person A, for which Person A should not be offended or angry. The indignation is unreasonable in the first instance because it is founded on a false belief about the situation; it is irrational in the second because it requires an unjust or unfair judgment.

Emotions may be logical in yet another way, insofar as they are functional. In contemporary psychology, it has become something of a platitude that feelings have developed along with human beings and are thus the result of natural selection. It does not follow, however, that any single emotion has been chosen individually for the roles that might have made them important in the past, or that emotions still represent. In prehistoric times, indignation may have been a useful trigger to violence, but in a modern urban setting, it may be deleterious or usually dysfunctional. In addition, emotions (or individual emotions) can well be by-products of other characteristics that have evolved. Nevertheless, as a general rule, feelings play a major role in the personal and social lives of people. Much the same

finding has been drawn by modern neuroscience.

Finally, in the sense that they can be used to fulfill such basic human purposes and goals, emotions can be logical. Getting angry can be a major step in empowering oneself to meet and conquer obstacles. A significant step in improving the ability to form and sustain romantic relationships could be to fall in love. By the same token, it can be thoroughly reasonable to get angry at one's employer, but also irrational insofar as it frustrates one's career goals. In becoming jealous of a fellow monk, a Buddhist monk may be entirely justified, but his envy is also irrational in that it is incompatible with his understanding of himself as a Buddhist.

Emotions have the substance of a good life and its ends in this context. In a similar vein, Jean-Paul Sartre, a French existentialist philosopher, argued that emotions are strategies. People use them to exploit others and, more importantly, to maneuver themselves into ways of thinking and behaving that fit their interests and their picture of themselves. As emotions are not only the product of culture, but also of one's actions and attitudes over time, one is responsible for them to a certain degree. By preparing oneself to respond more or less emotionally, or with more of one kind of emotion and less of another, in some situations, emotions can be deliberately formed or discouraged. This kind of teaching, for Aristotle, is part of the process of developing a good moral character within oneself. As he concluded, having the right feelings in the right quantities and in the right conditions is the essence of morality and the secret to human flourishing (Solomon, 2019).

Scientific Research into the Impact of Emotion on Perception

According to findings published in *Psychological Science*, a journal of the Association for Psychological Science, our emotional condition at a given moment can influence what we see. In two studies, researchers found that when combined with an unseen positive image, respondents saw a neutral face as smiling more (Siegel, 2018).

According to psychological scientist Erika Siegel of the University of California, San Francisco and her coauthors, the study shows that humans are active perceivers.

“We do not passively detect information in the world and then react to it — we construct perceptions of the world as the architects of our own experience. Our affective feelings are a critical determinant of the experience we create,” the researchers explain. “That is, we do not come to know the world through only our external senses — we see the world differently when we feel pleasant or unpleasant.”

In previous research, Siegel and colleagues found that their first perceptions of neutral faces were changed by manipulating the emotional states of people outside of conscious awareness, making faces appear more or less reliable, likeable, and trustworthy. In this study, they wanted to see if altering the emotional states of

people beyond consciousness could potentially alter how neutral faces are seen.

The researchers presented stimuli to participants using a technique called continuous flash suppression, albeit without their knowledge. In one experiment, 43 participants had a series of flickering images shown to their dominant eye that alternated between a pixelated image and a neutral face. At the same time, their nondominant eye was presented with a low-contrast image of a neutral, scowling, or smiling face—usually, this image will be suppressed by the stimuli presented to the dominant eye and it will not be actively perceived by participants. A selection of five faces emerged at the end of each trial and participants chose the one that best matched the face they saw during the trial.

The face that was shown to the dominant eye of the participants was always neutral. If the picture shown outside of their consciousness showed a person who smiled as opposed to neutral or scowling, though, they tended to choose the faces that smiled more as the best match. The researchers used an objective measure of perception in a second experiment, asking respondents to guess the orientation of the suppressed face. In subsequent studies, those who correctly guessed the orientation at better than chance levels were not included. Again, the findings showed that unseen positive faces altered the interpretation of the visible neutral face by participants.

Since studies frequently show negative stimuli as having a greater impact on actions and decision-making, the robust impact of positive faces in this study is fascinating, the researchers note, and an important area for future exploration. Siegel and colleagues add that their results may have large, real-world implications that range from daily social interactions to circumstances with more serious consequences, such as the need for judges or jury members to determine whether a defendant is remorseful.

These studies eventually offer further proof that what we see is not a clear reflection of the universe, but a conceptual depiction of the world infused by our emotional experiences.

Chapter 4:

Social Psychology

It's a complicated task to provide a description of almost any field. Where social psychology is concerned this complexity is enhanced by two variables: the wide reach of the field and its rapid rate of change.

Social psychologists have a broad spectrum of interests. However, despite this fact, most concentrate primarily on the following task: understanding how and why people behave, think, and feel as they do in social settings, including the actual presence or symbolic presence of other people. We therefore describe social psychology as the area of science that seeks to understand in social contexts the existence and causes of individual actions, emotions, and thinking. Another way of saying this is to suggest that social psychology examines the ways in which our feelings, emotions, and behavior are shaped by other people's social environments in which we live or our thoughts about them.

As a discipline, social psychology is profoundly committed to and applies the principles of science in its attempts to understand the essence of social action and social thinking. It makes sense to define it as science in orientation, for this reason. On the other hand, non-scientific fields make statements about the universe and about individuals that are not put to the careful tests and examinations required by the scientific community. In areas such as astrology and aromatherapy, intuition, confidence, and unobservable powers are deemed necessary to draw conclusions, contrary to what is valid in social psychology.

What Social Psychology Says About Self Identity

In his play *As You Like It*, William Shakespeare said, "All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players."

In social psychological terms, this means that we are all faced with the challenge of presenting ourselves to a number of audiences, and we can play various roles in different ways (be different selves and act in different plays). The preference of how to view ourselves is nowhere more apparent than it is on social networking sites like Facebook. We can choose to disclose a lot of who we feel we are, including photographic documentation of our activity on Facebook, or we can restrict who can access that information to some degree (e.g. by setting privacy controls so that our wall posts and photo albums can only be viewed by official "friends"). But how often, on the basis of that knowledge, can we really monitor what others learn about us and the conclusions they draw? In reality, is it possible for others to know more about us than we do ourselves and be better at predicting our behavior?

There are many reasons to conclude that individuals really know themselves better

than everyone else. After all, we all have access to our own internal thoughts, feelings, and other mental states which others do not. It seems intuitively clear, for this reason alone, that it must be the case that we must know ourselves best, but is it true? Indeed, research evidence indicates that one explanation why we are often wrong about ourselves is having access to our intentions, which observers do not have. Consider the example that follows. Shirley, my neighbor, is consistently late for anything. She's always more than half an hour late; when I arrive to pick her up, I really can't count on her to be ready or for her to be on time if we meet anywhere. You're probably already acquainted with someone like this. So, would she describe herself that way? Probably not. You might wonder, though, how couldn't she know for herself about this? Well, it may be precisely because she knows her intentions, that she means to be on time and has access to how much effort she puts into trying to achieve that target, that this knowledge could lead her to believe that she is actually mostly on time! So, in this respect, at least, may I reasonably say that I know her better than she does?

Although she knows herself, in this particular instance, I can probably predict her actions more precisely than she can.

Given such examples, many people firmly assume that they know themselves better than others, while, ironically enough, the same people say that they know some others better than some others know themselves. Part of the challenge for research on this subject has been that individuals have their own perceptions (or understanding) of their actions and determining the accuracy of these perceptions is difficult. Such behavioral self-reports are hardly an objective criterion for assessing accuracy, as I'm sure you can see.

Continuing with our example of Shirley, she would probably say that she might be late, but that she tries hard to always be on time, and might even remember a few occasions when that was true. We may still have reason to be wary of such behavioral self-reports though. A clever way to at least deal with the problem of gathering both self-perceptions and frequencies of activity from the same source has been found in new research.

In developing a more objective manner of gathering data, researchers had respondents wear a digital audio recorder with a microphone that recorded the ambient sounds of people's lives during waking hours. The microphones were active for four days roughly every 12.5 minutes. An index of how a person actually acts on a regular basis was gathered from this data. The sounds captured were later coded by research assistants according to a range of categories which listed interactions with others, so-called negative emotional displays, and various activities.

Before the actual conduct of the participants was evaluated in this way they were asked to present self-ratings on the degree to which each activity (more or less than the average individual) is conducted on a daily basis. Three informants who knew each participant well (e.g. friends, parents, romantic partners) were also recruited by

these researchers to provide the same ratings about the frequency of the participant's involvement in each action, using the same average individual as a reference.

Often the rating of the participant was more closely related to the frequency of their actual actions, but often the participant's ratings by others were more closely related to their actual behavior. So, at times, other people seem to “know” us better than we ourselves do, or at least they are better predictors of our behavior.

Self-Knowledge and Social Psychology

We are now shifting to some of the ways we tend to learn self-knowledge. One simple approach is to try to examine ourselves directly. Another approach is to strive to see ourselves as we imagine that others see us, to take the viewpoint of an observer on oneself. For self-judgment, we consider the ramifications of all of these methods, and then we consider what social psychological evidence says about how we can get to know ourselves better.

One essential technique that people often believe is useful for learning about themselves is to engage in introspection, to think privately about the factors that make us who we are. In a whole host of self-help books that sell millions of copies a year, we are told time and again that looking inward is the only way to get to know ourselves. Indeed, many believe that the more we explore the reasons why we behave as we do, the more likely our achievement of self-understanding.

The several introspection-oriented books of this kind that are on the market tell us that self-inspection is the path to self-knowledge. Is this really the best way to get an accurate view of ourselves?

Significant social psychological research has shown, first of all, that we do not always understand or have conscious access to the reasons for our behavior. Despite this, we may produce what might seem to be rational explanations about why we behaved as we did— after the fact. Since we sometimes really don't know why we feel a particular way, it might lead us to come to false conclusions by creating explanations (which may well be inaccurate). Research has shown how this can happen in a series of experiments on introspection on topics ranging from “why I feel as I do about my romantic partner” to “why I like one type of jam over another.” They found that people changed their attitudes, at least temporarily, to match their specified motives, after introspecting about the reasons for their feelings.

As you might expect, since the original feelings are still there, based solely on other considerations, this may lead to regrettable inferences and choices. So, when our behavior is really motivated by our emotions, asking about motives for our actions can misdirect our search for self-knowledge. When we try to anticipate our future feelings in response to any situation, we may be deceived by our own introspection, trying to imagine how you'd feel living in a new place, getting fired from your job,

or living for several years with another person. We would not be able to reliably predict how we will respond when we are in these hypothetical situations if we are not already in these particular circumstances, and this applies to both positive and negative potential circumstances.

Why do we have so much trouble predicting our future reactions, though? When we think of something terrible happening to us and attempt to anticipate how we will feel a year after the fact, we are likely to concentrate solely on the tragedy of that event and ignore all the other variables that will almost certainly lead to our degree of happiness as the year progresses. As a consequence, people expect that when the future comes, they will feel much worse than they currently do. Similarly, if we concentrate on just one happy future instance, for optimistic events, we will misinterpret our satisfaction as being significantly higher than the real moderate feelings that are likely to be present one year later. In the case of projecting our reactions in the future to such optimistic events, miscalculation will occur because we are unable to recognize the everyday challenges that we are still likely to encounter in the future, and that will most definitely modify how we really feel.

Let's focus on another essential direction in which introspection can lead us astray. Think now about whether it would be easier for you to spend money on a gift for someone else or spend the same amount of money on something for yourself. You are likely to think that buying something cool for yourself will make you happier than using your money to buy something for someone else, if you are like most people. Nevertheless, new research has shown just the opposite: that spending cash on others makes us happier than spending cash on ourselves. Researchers asked respondents in a nationally representative survey of Americans to rate how happy they are and to show how much of their monthly income they spend on expenses and gifts for themselves versus gifts for others and charitable donations. Overall, people spend more on themselves than on others, of course, but the key question is what actually predicts the satisfaction of the respondents?

These researchers have discovered that personal expenditure is unrelated to happiness, but greater happiness can be expected by spending on others. This was irrespective of the annual income level of people, because if you are rich or poor, there seems to be a bonus of satisfaction for giving to others. You might argue, however, that this was an analysis of similarities, so we can't be certain that the outcome means what we think it does. Spending on others has causally driven the satisfaction of respondents.

So, a basic yet telling experiment was conducted by the same researchers. In the morning, they had psychology students rate their satisfaction and then they were given \$5 or \$20 to spend by 5:00 p.m. that same day. Half of the participants were told to spend the money on themselves on a personal bill or gift, and the other half were told to spend the money for someone else on a charitable donation or gift.

Which group, at the end of the day, was happier? Irrespective of the amount of

money they were given to spend, in contrast to those who spent it on themselves, participants who spent their windfall on others showed substantially greater satisfaction. This experiment provides strong proof that how we want to invest our money is more important than how much money we make. Nevertheless, new participants who were asked to estimate which situation would bring them greater satisfaction thought that spending the money on themselves would make them happier. Those that attempted to predict how they would feel indicated that it would bring greater happiness to receive \$20 than to receive \$5. None of these self-predictions proved accurate, though. What this suggests is that we just don't know how events will impact us, and just reading into it won't help us understand how events really affect our feelings and actions.

Self Identity from the Perspective of Others

As we have shown, other individuals are also more often accurate in predicting our actions than we are. So, one way we can try to think about ourselves is by taking a view of our own history from an “observer” standpoint. Since observers vary in their concentration of attention, and are less likely to be affected by understanding our motivations and so on, they may have more insight into when we will behave as we have done in the past. In contrast, we direct our attention outwardly as actors, and attribute more situational causes to our behavior (it was the traffic that made me late, the phone rang just as I was going out, etc.). Observers, however, directly concentrate their attention on the actor, and appear to assign more dispositional reasons to the same actions.

Therefore, if we take the viewpoint of an observer on ourselves, we are likely to describe ourselves in dispositional or characteristic terms. When individuals were asked to identify themselves as they were five years ago or as they are today, this was found to be accurate. In the present, the self was seen as differing from various contexts and was less commonly defined in terms of general arrangements or attributes than was the previous self. This was the case irrespective of the participants' actual age (and therefore the length of their pasts). Both middle-aged and college-age participants saw themselves (as analysts tend to) in terms of consistent attributes when they described themselves in the past relative to when they described their present self.

Does how we see ourselves from the viewpoint of the observer alter the way we describe ourselves and thus give self-insight? As a way to explore how considering ourselves from an observer's viewpoint affects how we characterize ourselves, researchers used various forms of acting techniques. The participants were divided into two groups and, using one of two approaches, were given “acting” instructions. For those in the “method-acting” group, the goal was to “feel like you are this other person.”

In the “standard-acting” group, the goal was to “put on a performance so that you

appear to others as if you are this person.” After using their assigned method to practice different scenes, the participants were then told to act out a family dinner when they were 14 years old.

In this case, everyone played their past self from one of two perspectives:

One group was told to play their past self from the perspective of someone experiencing it, and the other group was told to play their past self as if they were an outside observer. Again, the number of consistent dispositions or traits used to describe their 14-year-old self was the central measure of interest: Did taking an observer stance on the self lead to greater trait consistency perceptions of the self? The answer was a clear yes. Those who performed with the method-actor technique were more actor-like and saw themselves in terms of few consistent traits, whereas those who played themselves from a more “observer-acting” perspective saw themselves in terms of consistent traits. So, in terms of consistent behavioral tendencies, as we try to think about ourselves from another's point of view, we are more likely to see ourselves as observers. So, seeking to see ourselves as others do and considering the likelihood that they are more accurate than we are is one way to achieve self-insight. Is introspection inevitably deceptive? No, it depends on what we're worried about. If the action in question is actually based on a deliberate decision-making process and is not based on implicit emotional considerations, it can well lead to correct self-judgments to think about those motives.

On the other hand, introspection is unlikely to lead to specific self-inferences because we fail to take into account variables that really affect how we feel (for example that giving to others will make us happy). So, though looking inward may be beneficial, in certain conditions, it may lead us astray. People can easily create explanations about why they do what they do when asked, but those reasons may be based on self-theories about the causes of actions and those theories may not be right, as we saw with the effects of spending money on ourselves versus others! We can remain unaware of the real causes, such as emotional factors, that affect our actions by relying on such theories.

It is also the case that most of us do not have very clear ideas of how it can influence us to think about emotional events. Recent studies, for instance, have shown that instead of worrying about positive things that have happened to us, if we think about how the same positive results might not have happened to us at all, we would feel better. So, it is safe to conclude that it can sometimes be tricky to gain insight into one's own feelings, motives, and habits.

Self Identity vs Social Identity

According to the Social Identity Theory, depending on where we are on the personal-versus-social identity spectrum, we will view ourselves differently at any given moment in time. We think of ourselves mainly as individuals at the personal end of this spectrum. At the social end of the spectrum we think of ourselves as

representatives of particular social classes. We do not simultaneously experience all facets of our self-concept and therefore where we position ourselves on this spectrum at any given moment, will affect how we think of ourselves. In terms of how we view ourselves and react to others, this momentary salience, the part of our identity that is the center of our attention, can be significantly impacted.

When our personal identity is popular, we tend to see ourselves as special people. This results in self-descriptions that stress how other people vary from us. For example, when you think about yourself at the level of personal identity, you might characterize yourself as pleasant, to highlight your self-perception as having more of this attribute than other people you use as a reference. Self-description of personal identity may be considered as an intra-group comparison involving similarities with other people who share our membership of the group. For this reason, the content of our self-descriptions may be affected when defining the personal self.

If you have been asked to explain how you are different from others, consider how you would define yourself. If you were, comparing yourself to your parents, you might describe yourself as especially liberal. In comparing yourself to other college students, you might consider yourself rather conservative. The argument is that the material we create to define ourselves, even for personal identity, depends on the comparative sense, and this may result in us thinking about and representing ourselves differently, in this case as either liberal or conservative.

Perceiving ourselves as members of a group at the social identity end of the spectrum means stressing what we share with other members of the group. We're explaining ourselves in terms of the characteristics that distinguish our group from any comparative group. Intergroup comparisons, in essence, are self descriptions at the level of social identification, including distinctions between groups. For example, if your social identification as a member of a fraternity or sorority community is important to you, you might ascribe to yourself characteristics that you share with other members of your group. For example, qualities of agility and self-motivation can distinguish your group from other fraternities or sororities that you see as more studious and scholarly than your group.

For several individuals, their gender is another significant social identity that is collective and can impact self-perceptions when it is salient. So, if you are female and your gender is prevalent, you may interpret the qualities you think you share with other women (for example being warm and caring) and that you perceive as self-descriptive as differentiating women from men. Similarly, if you are male, you can self-stereotype in terms of characteristics that are assumed to define men and that distinguish them from women when gender is significant (for example being independent, strong). What is important to remember here is that the content of your self-description is likely to vary from when you think of yourself as a member of a group that you share with others when you think of yourself as an individual. Of course, most of us are members of a number of different groups (defined, for

example, by gender, profession, age group, sexual orientation, ethnicity, or sports team), as these examples illustrate, but all of these may not be prevalent at the same time and will vary greatly in how important they are to us. When a specific social identity is prominent, individuals are likely to behave in ways that reflect that part of their sense of self. There can thus be a number of situational variables that will affect how we describe ourselves, and the behaviors that result from such self-definitions will vary accordingly. So, we can define ourselves differently at any given time, thereby producing multiple “selves.” Can we assume that one of these is the “true” self, either the personal self or any of the possible social identities of a person? Not exactly. Despite such possible self-definition variability, most of us manage to retain a cohesive picture of ourselves, while acknowledging that in various contexts, we will describe ourselves and act differently. This can occur either because it is considered that the domains in which we see ourselves as contradictory are relatively unimportant, or because they are not salient.

How Self Identity Impacts Behavior

So, according to social psychology, how do identity and personality, as well as the attitudes we develop as a result of them, impact our behavior?

On several occasions, you have probably encountered a difference in your own attitudes and actions, since the social context will directly influence the relationship between attitude and behavior. What would you say, for instance, if one of your friends shows you a new tattoo that he or she is proud of and asks for your opinion? If it was your opinion, will you state that you don't like it? The odds are pretty good that you'd want to avoid hurting the feelings of your friend, so even if your attitude is negative, you might even say you like it. In such situations, our deliberate decision not to act on our “true” attitude is clearly known to us. As this illustration shows, behaviors can be differentially connected to actions depending on the degree to which the action has social implications. In comparison to the inconsistency of your attitude-behavior in reacting to the tattoo of your mate, your attitude can be a very strong indicator of whether you will get a tattoo.

Recent research has focused on the factors that decide when consistency can be expected, as well as the issue of how attitudes affect actions, because of the important role that the social environment plays in deciding when attitudes and behavior will be linked. The degree to which attitudes and actions correlate is determined by many variables, with aspects of the situation affecting the extent to which attitudes decide conduct. Furthermore, characteristics of the attitudes, themselves, are also important, such as how confident you are of your own attitude. Compared to attitudes we feel some doubt about, attitudes that we keep with greater confidence are more strongly linked to actions.

When people are induced to think their attitudes are consistent over time, they tend to feel more certain about those attitudes and are more likely to act on them. The

fact that older people are much more confident of their behaviors than young people is well known. Recent research indicates that this is partially due to older people putting greater emphasis on “standing firm” or being decided in the positions they take, and for this reason, relative to younger people, they appear to exhibit greater continuity of attitude-behavior. Did you ever worry about what others would think of you if you were to show your “true” attitude toward a problem? If so, you'll understand the problem faced by students from Stanford University in a study in which they participated. Such students' private attitudes toward heavy alcohol consumption were relatively negative. However, they assumed that the attitude of other students towards heavy alcohol consumption was more positive than their own (an instance of pluralistic ignorance, where we erroneously believe others have attitudes different than ourselves). When these students were randomly allocated to collect information about the alcohol attitudes of other Stanford students, that they maintained had either more positive or more negative attitudes than their own, the students varied in how comfortable they felt expressing their attitude to another Stanford student about alcohol use and their probability of selecting alcohol policies as a subject for discussion. The students showed greater comfort in talking about campus drinking and chose that subject for discussion more frequently when they assumed that the attitudes of other students were more pro-alcohol than their own, but when they discovered that the attitudes of other students were more negative than their own, they were less likely to do so. For students who identified strongly with their student group, this trend of wanting to convey attitudes in the direction of the perceived campus norm but not when our attitudes go against the norm was particularly intense.

Spontaneous Behavior and Identity-Based Attitudes

Our ability to predict behavior is very strong in cases where people have the time and opportunity to carefully focus on different potential acts they may take. However, people have to respond rapidly in certain cases and their responses are more spontaneous. Suppose another driver cuts in front of you without a signal on the highway. In such situations, behavior tends to be affected in a more straightforward and seemingly automatic way, with motives playing a less important role. The method operates as follows, according to one theoretical interpretation of Fazio's attitude-to-behavior process model.

Any event triggers an attitude; once triggered, the attitude affects the way we view the object of the attitude. Our knowledge of what is acceptable in a given situation (our knowledge of different social norms) is also enabled at the same time. Together, our definition of the event is formed by the mindset and the previously stored knowledge about what is acceptable or predicted. In exchange, this understanding affects our behavior. Let's think of a concrete example. Imagine that when you are driving, someone cuts into your traffic lane. This occurrence causes your attitude towards people who engage in such dangerous and discourteous actions and, at the same time, your perception of how people on expressways are supposed to act.

As a consequence, this conduct is viewed as non-normative, impacting your understanding of and reaction to it. In some cases, you might think, “Who does this individual think he/she is?” “What a nerve!” or, maybe your answer is more situational, “Gee, this individual must be in a great hurry.” Whichever of these event interpretations is given, it will form the actions of the individual. Many studies provide evidence for this viewpoint on how actions can be influenced by attitudes affecting the interpretation provided to the situation. In short, by at least two mechanisms, attitudes influence our actions, and these operate under somewhat opposing conditions.

However, we frequently don't have time for this kind of systematic weighing of alternatives under the hectic conditions of daily life, and often the reactions of people seem to be much quicker than can be accounted for by such deliberate thinking processes. In such situations, our behaviors tend to influence our views of different events naturally and, with very little cognitive processing, thereby form our immediate behavioral reactions. To the degree that a person practices a particular action regularly and a habit is created, the responses of that person become reasonably automatic if the same situation is encountered.

Induced Compliance Behavior

For many reasons, we may participate in attitude-discrepant actions, and some of these are more persuasive than others. When are our behaviors going to shift more: when there are “good” reasons for engaging in such behavior or when there is no excuse for engaging in attitude-discrepant behavior? The theory of cognitive dissonance claims that when we have few explanations for engaging in attitude-discrepant actions, dissonance will be greater. This is so because dissonance can be very severe because we have no reason and, thus, can not justify our acts to ourselves. Participants were first asked to participate in an incredibly repetitive series of duties in the first test of this theory, turning pegs in a board full of holes.

Of these participants, half were told they would be paid \$20 if they told the waiting participant about this fib, and the other half were told they would earn \$1 for doing so. The participants were asked to disclose their own attitudes towards the boring task after doing the “favor” of informing the person waiting for this fib about the experiment (in other words, rating how interesting the task was).

The task was considered less interesting by the participants who were paid \$20 than by the participants who were paid \$1. You may have had a reason for lying when you were paying \$20, but not if you were paid \$1 to say the same lie. Therefore, if given inadequate reason for your actions, a situation that was more valid in the experiment's \$1 (than the \$20) condition, there is a greater need to decrease your dissonance. So, in the \$1 condition, what do individuals do to minimize their greater dissonance? They alter the cognition that causes the issue.

Since you can't change the lie you said in this example (in other words, deny your

behavior), by “making” the boring job more exciting and reporting your mood as being more optimistic in the \$1 situation than in the \$20 condition, you can determine it was not really a lie at all. The theory of cognitive dissonance predicts that modifying the attitudes of individuals would be simpler by giving them only enough to get them to indulge in attitude-discrepant actions. This unexpected prediction is often referred to by social psychologists as the less-leads-to-more effect-less explanations or incentives for a behavior sometimes lead to a greater change in attitude, and it has been verified in several studies.

Indeed, the more money or other benefits that are given to individuals for them to act in an attitude-discrepant way offers a rationale for their behavior and may undermine their actions. Coercion would, therefore, serve to undermine dissonance. Furthermore, small incentives contribute mainly to greater change of attitude when people feel that they were directly responsible for both the course of action chosen and any adverse effects it generated. But when we do not feel responsible for our decisions, we may not encounter dissonance. An example would be if an authority were to direct us to perform a specific activity that is inconsistent with our personal attitudes.

Impacting the Behavior of Others Through Social Psychology

Group Influence

Scenario 1: You are writing an exam and another student’s cell phone starts to ring. What do you do?

Scenario 2: You are driving when you hear an ambulance siren approaching from behind. What do you do?

Scenario 3: You are standing in a supermarket line and the checkout line right next to yours opens up. Who gets to go first in the new checkout line?

In any of these instances, theoretically, the persons involved may act in certain ways. Similar etiquette is involved but you cannot possibly guess what anyone would do with great certainty.

Students with a noisy mobile phone would instantly mute it, and even apologize to other class members seated nearby. You can pull over to the right when you hear an ambulance and maybe stop completely before it passes. A bit trickier is the checkout line. Individuals at the front of the long checkout line will be first in the new line, but this does not happen. Somebody could beat them to it from the back of the long line. In contexts where norms are more apparent, compared to contexts like this where norms are less explicit on which behavior is the “right” one, greater compliance can be anticipated by most individuals. The fact that we can predict the actions of others and ourselves with considerable confidence.

The strong and general results of these and many other conditions are demonstrated

by how conformity pressures us into doing what we are supposed to do in a given situation. In other words, conformity refers to pressure to behave in ways compatible with laws that indicate how we are or should behave. Such laws are referred to as social norms, and they often have powerful effects on our behavior. In the case of the checkout line, the confusion you may encounter stems from the fact that the standards in that situation are not as straightforward as in the others; it's unclear whether people can go first at the front or back of the current line.

Social norms are specified clearly and are very comprehensive in some instances. For example, governments usually work by written constitutions and laws; chess and other games have very precise rules; and signs outline expected actions in great detail (for example, Stop!; No Swimming; No Parking; Stay Off the Grass) in many public places (for example, along highways, in parks, at airports). Consider the rising trend of displaying tips of different sizes on the bill in many restaurants, as another example (for example, 15 percent, 17 percent, 20 percent, etc.). In a way, these numbers create social norms for tipping, and research results actually show that they are effective: tips are higher when they are present than when they are absent. Norms may be unspoken or implied in other contexts and, in fact, may have evolved in a totally informal way. We all know, for example, such unstated guidelines as “Don't make noise during a concert” and “Try to look your best when going to a job interview.” Regardless of whether social expectations, formal or informal, are explicit or implied, one thing is obvious: the majority of people obey them much of the time. Virtually all, for example, regardless of personal political views, stand when their country's national anthem is played at sporting events or other public gatherings. Similarly, few people frequent restaurants without leaving a tip for the waitress. In fact, this social standard is so strong that most individuals leave a tip of about 15 percent regardless of the quality of the service they have received.

At first glance, this strong desire to conform, to go along with the demands of society or a community on how we should act in different circumstances, can seem objectionable. It does, after all, put constraints on personal liberty. However, there is actually a clear basis for so much conformity: without it, we will find ourselves facing social turmoil quickly. Imagine what would happen if people did not comply with the “Form a line and wait your turn” norm outside movie theaters, arenas, or at supermarket checkout counters. And consider the danger to both drivers and pedestrians if traffic laws were not transparent and commonly observed. Conformity, then, plays a very useful role in certain cases.

If you have ever driven in a country where the laws for traffic are commonly ignored or treated as mere suggestions, you will understand when we say that when people do not meet social expectations, their acts are unpredictable, and that can be dangerous sometimes. Another explanation as to why people conform is simply to “look good” to others, to give them a better impression. For instance, at work, many workers accept what are known as conformity facades, the appearance of going

along with their organizations' principles and priorities, even though they actually do not.

For example, they often say things that they don't really believe, suppress personal beliefs that are different from those of the company, and keep such things secret about themselves. They will find it difficult to do so, but important to advance their careers, and are more likely to participate in them when they feel like they have no insight into how things are working (including their own jobs) and decide to leave, ensuring that they receive a good recommendation.

Encouraging Compliance

Some years ago, a well-known social scientist, Robert Cialdini, decided that the best way to find out about compliance was to research what he called compliance practitioners, people whose performance depends on their ability (financial or otherwise) to get others to say yes. Who are such people? Salespeople, advertisers, government consultants, fundraisers, legislators, scam artists, specialist negotiators, and several more belong to this group. The techniques that Cialdini used to learn from these people were simple: he briefly concealed his true identity and took employment in different environments where it is a way of life to achieve compliance.

He served, in other words, in ads, sales, fundraising, and other compliance-focused areas. On the basis of these first-hand experiences, he concluded that while enforcement strategies take several different forms, they all rest on six basic principles to some degree:

- **Friendship/liking:** In general, we are more likely to comply with requests from friends or individuals we know than with requests from strangers or individuals we don't like.
- **Commitment/consistency:** When we have committed ourselves to a position or action, we are more likely to comply with demands for actions that are compatible with this position or action than with requests that are not.
- **Scarcity:** In general, we value results or items that are scarce or decreasing in supply, and attempt to secure them. As a consequence, we are more likely than those who do not respond to this scarcity to comply with requests that concentrate on it.
- **Reciprocity:** We are usually more willing than someone who has not complied with a request from someone who has already provided us with a favor or concession. In other words, for what they have done for us, we feel compelled to pay people back in some way.
- **Social validation:** Usually, we are more prepared to comply with an order for any action if this action is compatible with what we believe people are doing similarly to us (or thinking). We want to be right, and

behaving and thinking like others is one way to do so.

- Authority: Generally speaking, we are more prepared to comply with demands from someone who holds legitimate authority or seems to hold some form of authority.

According to Cialdini, these universal concepts are the basis of many methods used by practitioners to achieve compliance from others.

Can You Be Influenced by Someone Even when They Are Not There?

It's not shocking that other individuals will manipulate us while they are present; they have several strategies at their disposal to get us to say, think, or do what they want. Growing research shows that even though they are not present and are not attempting to alter our actions or feelings, others may affect us. While the evidence is new, the fundamental idea is not; in fact, writing in what was perhaps the first social psychology textbook, Floyd Allport described influence as: "the ways in which people's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are affected by others' real, perceived, or implied presence."

Ultimately, of course, other entities do not generate outcomes like this: we do. Our mental interpretations of others—what they want or prefer, our relationships with them, how we feel they will judge us or our current actions—can have powerful impacts on us, even though we are not actively aware of them. For instance, in one well-known study which initially sparked interest in this subject, researchers found that after being subliminally exposed to the face of their scowling department chair, graduate students evaluated their own research ideas more negatively. In other words, the face of the chair was seen for such a brief amount of time that it was not consciously seen by the graduate students. Nevertheless, his pessimistic facial expression had a major effect on their judgments of their own work. How do our actions and perceptions affect the psychological existence of others in our mental images of them? Two systems appear to be involved, and both can include goals that we want to accomplish. First, to the degree that other individuals are present in our minds (and even though we are not conscious that they are), this can cause relational schemes, mental representations of individuals with whom we have relationships and of these relationships, themselves.

In turn, when these relational schemes are enabled, objectives specific to them may also be activated. For example, the goal of being supportive may be activated if we think of a friend; if we think of our mother or father, the goal of making them proud of us may be triggered. In turn, these priorities will influence our actions, our thoughts about ourselves, and our assessments of others. For example, if it triggers the intention of helping others, then we will become more helpful. When the objective of being physically attractive is enabled, when it is offered, we may refuse the delicious dessert.

Second, other people's psychological presence may cause us to link that person with certain goals that they may want us to accomplish. This, in turn, will, among other things, influence our success on different tasks and our dedication to achieving these objectives. For example, if we have thoughts about our dad, and we know that he wants us to do well in college, our dedication to this goal can be increased and we can work harder to achieve it, particularly if we feel really close to him. In other words, to the degree that others are psychologically present in our minds, it is possible to stimulate the essence of our relationships with them, the goals we pursue in these relationships, or the goals that these individuals themselves want us to achieve, and these ideas and information systems will, in turn, have a significant impact on our actions.

Several different studies have recently recorded such impacts. In one such study, individuals were approached at an airport and asked to think about either a good friend or a coworker. They were then asked to write down the initials of the person they were thinking about and to answer a series of questions about that individual (describe his or her appearance, how long they had known this person, his or her age, etc.). Lastly, participants were asked whether they would be able to support the researcher by answering a longer series of questions. Those who thought about a friend were predicted to be more likely to assist because thinking about a friend will trigger the purpose of assisting which would be something we would ordinarily do for friends. This is exactly what happened: more people were able to help if they thought of a friend than a coworker. Notice that they were not asked to support their friend; but rather, a stranger, the researcher and still, the thought of the friend influenced their actions.

As you can see, social psychology indicates significant links between identity, personality and human behavior. While all schools of thought have varying points of view on the development and evolution of identity and personality, as human beings are really social mammals, it makes absolute sense that the development of our "self" would be intrinsically tied to our interactions with others (Baron & Branscombe, 2014).

Chapter 5:

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

Now that we have a good idea of how our identity develops and continues to evolve, what the different personality types are and how we can identify ours, and also how social psychology believes our identity and personality to impact our behavior, we can head into the arena of solving problems. As we have seen the development and evolution of identity and personality can come across all sorts of road blocks along the way. Some of these may be trauma-based, but often we may simply want to work on various aspects of our behavior in order to get closer to living the life that we envision.

There are various therapies available today that help us to mold our behavior to closely resemble the life we want. One such therapy is Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT).

What is Cognitive Behavioral Therapy?

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is an evidence-based approach to identifying and addressing psychological disorders. As not all CBT practitioners are doctors, those that engage in the therapy are referred to as clients.

CBT is a formal, active style of therapy in which the aims of the client are set out through counseling. CBT is built on four core principles:

1. How individuals perceive the environment, or how their thinking affects how they feel, their physical responses, and how they behave. This implies that the concerns of clients should be interpreted in terms of how their feelings, desires, physical responses, and behavior communicate and sustain their issues.
2. CBT clients can learn to understand their emotions, and be supported by CBT interventions in order to change their ideas.
3. When clients change how they think, they can also change their emotions, physical responses, and behaviors.
4. As thoughts, emotions, physical reactions, and behaviors are interrelated, this will also affect their thoughts, emotions, and physical behaviors as clients alter their thinking.

As a therapy for depression, CBT was first formulated in the 1970s. At that point, Rogerian, Gestalt, and Psychodynamic were the dominant therapeutic orientations. CBT was a totally novel and very exciting approach with its focused framework combined with active discussion of thoughts.

Hundreds of hours of research have explored both the basic hypothesis as well as

the usefulness of CBT for children and adults of all ages in the past fifty years. CBT can assist with a variety of daily issues, such as learning to cope with stressful circumstances or coping with anxiety over a certain problem. In order to benefit from CBT, you don't need a medical diagnosis.

It may also help with:

- Learning to handle intense feelings such as frustration, fear or sadness
- Tackling sorrow
- Managing symptoms or avoiding relapses of mental illness
- Coping with problems with physical wellbeing
- Resolving disputes
- Strengthening communication skills
- Training for assertiveness

CBT may be effective, for a number of conditions, either alone or in conjunction with other therapies or medications. This includes:

- anxiety disorders
- addictions
- chronic pain
- bipolar disorders
- eating disorders
- depression
- obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD)
- post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- phobias
- sexual disorders
- schizophrenia
- tinnitus
- sleep disorders

A CBT Session

The first step in any CBT session is a check in and review in which the client and practitioner look at where they are in their goal strategy at that point and which areas need more work.

The second step in a CBT session is to set an agenda for the session and specify the topic that will be addressed.

The third step is to work through the agenda and address the problems or concerns that are being experienced by the client.

The Building Blocks of CBT

The building blocks of CBT include feelings, thoughts, physical reactions, and behavior.

Our reactions can feel overwhelming when we are upset. What makes us angry can be difficult to pinpoint and we often blame the situation. Imagine a CBT client, named Rose. She is twenty-five years old and has been living at home for years, and has just finished college. She is trying to find a job and has applied for a variety of positions. Rose got another letter of rejection yesterday. She was alone in her room all night, feeling really sad, surfing the internet and crying. Rose tells her CBT practitioner the next day that she's depressed because she didn't get the job. It is normal that Rose is upset and, of course, and she would feel differently if she had gotten the job. You can imagine Rose's reaction to the letter of rejection as a big jumble of feelings, emotions, physical responses, and behaviors, all bundled into a large backpack she's lugging around. The CBT practitioner will need to help her unpack the bag.

She is going to open the backpack and separately sort out her feelings, emotions, physical responses, and actions. This is called the four-factor model. The four-factor model offers a framework that you and your CBT practitioner can use to grasp the variables that keep your issues going. When people have a context to explain their responses, they also tend to feel less overwhelmed and think progress is more feasible. The backpack is lighter when unpacked. Rose will start to think about what she wants to keep for the journey, what she wants to change, and what she no longer needs to drag around by seeing her physical responses, attitudes, and thoughts on the floor in tidy piles.

When Rose's backpack is unloaded, her reaction can be sorted using the four factor model.

Situation: The receipt of yet another rejection letter.

Rose's Thoughts: I will never get a job, I am such a failure.

Rose's Feelings: Hopeless and depressed.

Rose's Physical Reactions: Stomach pain and exhaustion.

Rose's Behavior: She remained in her bedroom, cried and surfed the Internet. She also skipped her gym class the next day because she overslept. She didn't apply for a job that was advertised, the next day, in the paper.

As the backpack of thoughts, feelings, physical reactions, and behaviors is unpacked, Rose will start to feel like there is less of an overwhelming jumble inside her.

The four-factor model distinguishes the situation from emotions, feelings, physical responses, and behavior. The situation is what really happened or, without any

interpretation, the objective truth. For instance, a forthcoming test is a situation; a “hard” forthcoming test is a scenario and an interpretation is that the test will be difficult. Let's take another instance of a situation: a client tells a CBT practitioner that he was confronted in the hallway by a kid at school who said, “You're ugly.” If the person adds, “That kid is mean and trying to show off,” this is the interpretation of the situation by the person. The interpretation does not impact the reality of the situation, but it does impact how the person sees the situation and how they feel about it.

The Difference Between Thoughts and Feelings

You want to isolate emotions from thoughts in the four-factor model. This seems like a fairly simple job, but we appear to confuse thoughts and emotions in our daily language. We say, for instance, “I feel like he doesn't like me,” when what we really mean is, “I don't think he likes me.”

Differentiating between our thoughts and emotions is one of the toughest skills to master in CBT, as human beings have a propensity to confuse the two. Feelings are usually one word, for starters, such as sad, crazy, happy, concerned, ashamed, anxious, and excited. Thoughts usually come in the form of phrases or sentences. In CBT, we refer to the feelings we have as automatic thoughts in particular circumstances. Our automatic thoughts arise very rapidly and are only below the level of conscious awareness. Thoughts are based on what, or our perception of what, a situation means to us. A man approaches you on the street, for instance, and asks for directions. If your automatic thought is that he is probably trying to mug you, then you may think that he is dangerous and start trying to find ways to get away.

On the other hand, if your initial thought is that he must be a lost tourist, you will think about all the ways that you can help him and present a friendly face for your area.

Automatic thoughts are words or pictures that move through our minds. Many of our automatic thoughts are about things that are really common, like, *I wonder if it's going to rain today?* Or, *Do I have my shopping list?* when you leave the house. We don't have powerful emotional responses to these kinds of thoughts, and we don't usually pay a lot of attention to them in CBT. In CBT, as well as those that are judgments about ourselves, others, or the future, we are more interested in thoughts that are related to strong negative feelings. For instance, I may be ignorant about a thought about myself, while a thought about others might be *My mother is inconsiderate* and a thought about the future might be *Everyone will laugh at me*. Normally these thoughts are just below your consciousness level, but if you ask yourself, what did I think? Normally, you will be able to recognize them.

Automatic thoughts are easy and spontaneous; we have a lot of them, and they come

and go so fast that we don't notice them much. When we note our thoughts, however, we will begin to analyze them, and begin to alter them in the process. Our behaviors and feelings also change once we change our thoughts.

The Difference Between Feelings, Physical Reactions and Behavior

Changes in the body are physical reactions (e.g., sweating, tingling, or tension). Physical responses are followed by intense emotions, and it is often difficult to distinguish an emotion from how the body is responding to the emotion. For example, your body can become nervous when you feel anxious, your heart may beat more rapidly, and you may sweat. Individuals may have the same emotions but different physical reactions. In the strength of their physical responses, individuals often vary. Asking about the particular physical reactions of the CBT client and their strength can be very helpful. Some individuals are conscious of their physical reactions, but are unaware of how they feel. Identifying physical emotions can be a good place for these clients to start understanding their feelings.

People may have feelings about their physical responses as well. If you blush, for instance, does this just mean that your cheeks are flushed or does blushing mean you're making a fool of yourself and that you're going to be made fun of by others?

What we do is behavior (e.g., sit, talk to a child, give a presentation). Identifying behavior as a separate factor is beneficial, so you can begin to analyze how the other three factors impact your behavior and look at the implications of your behavior. We will maintain the symptoms of our physical responses, thoughts and emotions if we do not alter our behaviour, and vice versa.

Can Thoughts Maintain Problems?

Our feelings or our understanding of the scenario relate to our emotions, physical responses, and actions. When Rose got the rejection letter, for instance, she thought, *I'm never going to get a job, I'm such a disappointment*. It makes sense that she feels sad and helpless if these are her thoughts. If she had thought, *I will try again, and something else will come along*, she would have felt neutral or slightly positive. Different thoughts contribute to very distinct emotions, physical responses, and behavior. We start with a particular situation; our immediate perception of the situation contributes to our feelings, which contribute to our emotions, physical responses, and actions. We're going to place emotions and physical responses in the same box for the moment, since they are so closely connected.

Let's start by looking at an example of how thoughts in daily life affect emotions, physical responses, and behavior. I've got a really nice little black dog named Shady. He barks furiously every time I come home, despite my best efforts. I don't pay a lot

of attention to his barking; I think, *In a minute, he'll stop. He's so adorable.* I am glad to see him, even though he is barking, and give him a pat. Alicia, a good friend of mine, meanwhile, comes over for a morning stroll. Alicia's going to ring a bell, Shady's going to bark, and Alicia's going to think, *He's going to jump on me, get me dirty. Dogs are unpredictable.* Alicia feels a little nervous, a little stressed mentally, and not very pleased to see Shady. She tends, as a result, to avoid the dog.

How Behavior Maintains Problems

You want to learn how your behavior impacts your emotions, feelings, and physical responses and understand how your behavior maintains your problems. Start by looking at the implications of your actions. Let's first explore how the thoughts can be reinforced by the consequences of an action, and secondly, how the consequences of a behavior can impact the situation in order to reinforce the original ideas or perception.

Consider Alfred, a seventeen-year-old boy who is doing a math test, as an example. Here is a description using the four-factor model of Alfred's reaction. Alfred thinks, *The exam is too hard for me and I'm going to fail anyway.* He's feeling anxious, he develops a headache. His behavior consists of going home and playing video games.

How do his thoughts and the situation strengthen the implications of Alfred's behavior? Alfred did not study, but he did not pass the exam. He thinks, *The test was really too hard for me because I failed, and I was going to fail anyway.* Failing the test becomes proof that the test was “too difficult.” Hence, his original thoughts are validated by the consequences of the actions. Furthermore, Alfred never gets a chance to test his prediction of *I'm going to fail anyway.* Perhaps he would have passed if he had studied, but he will never know. He is going to take his defeat as confirmation that he will “fail anyway.”

Now, let's look at how the situation is influenced by the effects of Alfred's actions. Since Alfred failed the examination, the content is possibly not understood. Since math concepts build on each other, this makes it more likely that he will fail on the next test too, or perform poorly. His actions, therefore, shifts the real circumstances in his life to make his negative thoughts more likely to be true. This is what CBT practitioners call a symptom maintenance cycle.

Do Core Beliefs Influence Thoughts?

Stable, firmly held beliefs are fundamental beliefs that cut through contexts and affect automatic thoughts. (The term schema is used by some CBT books; core beliefs and schemas are basically identical.) There are typically three types of core beliefs:

Clear Life Rules. There are guidelines for how life should be lived or how the

world works. Typically, they affect your emotional wellbeing very little. Examples may be:

- Be respectful to strangers.
- Get a decent education in order to succeed in life.
- Always wear your life jacket on a ship.

Intermediary assumptions and convictions. These are laws for living that sometimes take the form of statements if...then, or unless...I. In deciding feelings and actions, these laws play an important role. Examples may be:

- I will fail unless I am perfect.
- If I shout, then I'll be listened to by people.
- If the real me is seen by people, then they'll condemn me.

Core beliefs. These are strongly held beliefs about oneself, others, or the environment that influence how individuals in many different contexts feel and act. They are absolute and general statements that can be captured in a few terms and are felt at a very profound level. Core beliefs can be adaptive or maladaptive, and they can be difficult to recognize and alter, unlike automatic thoughts. Examples may be:

- **Self-focused core beliefs:** I am clever, I am lovable, I am greedy, I am incompetent, I am unlovable.
- **Core beliefs about others:** others are kind, others are going to take care of me, others are mean, others are going to take advantage of me.
- **Core beliefs about the world:** the world is just, the world is secure, the world is perilous, the world is unfair.

Although the core beliefs of an individual are affected by his inherent disposition, they appear to be shaped primarily by early life experiences and are changed by the later life experiences of the individual.

Understanding Your Strengths through CBT

Seeing your own strengths can be challenging. Remembering that good things do not happen by magic is one way to consider your strengths. Suppose someone said their son “was lucky” because, after his internship, he was asked back for a full-time job. Ask yourself, what needs to happen for a young man to be called back for a full-time job after an internship? Will a fairy godmother ever come and say, “Here is a job for you”? No, the woman’s son had to get to work on time, work hard, do a good job, and probably have a pleasant disposition. These features are all indicative of the strengths of her son. Now, he may have been fortunate as well, but luck is rarely enough.

Here are some questions that can help you think about and pinpoint your strengths:

- Are there any aspects of your life that are going well, or any areas where, in the face of challenges or hardship, you have persevered? I don't only mean overcoming uncommon obstacles, but being able to keep a routine as well. Do you, for instance, get up every day on time, get your kids dressed, get to work, and have dinner ready for your family? This takes thought, care, organization, and perseverance; it doesn't happen magically. It is important to consider the strengths involved in the execution of daily activities. Examining techniques that you use to persevere in daily tasks may also be helpful.
- Have you been able to carry out developmental duties? Have you been able to pass school grades, build friendships, take part in sports teams, or have a steady career, for example? These achievements show that you have been able to sustain commitments, gain new knowledge, and have good relationships with other individuals.
- Do you have either a human or an animal in a responsible and loving relationship? Caring relationships require loyalty and setting one's own desires aside.
- Are you behaving in line with your principles or objectives? It can be daunting to behave according to principles and values and it sometimes means setting aside what you want to do immediately in favor of long-term objectives.
- In a particular area, are you particularly accomplished or competent? People have pockets of successes and talents. It doesn't have to be a big accomplishment to be knowledgeable in a specific area; it may be that you are the person who often makes birthday cakes, or the person your friends turn to for computer support. The coping strategies built by individuals to thrive in these areas can also be applied to other areas of their lives.

Identifying Negative Spirals of Behavior

A significant part of the CBT process is understanding how we arrive at the behaviors that we want to change and what our triggers are. Everyone has different kinds of conditions that set in motion their automatic negative path; these are the triggers. You need to know which circumstances are challenging for you and cause your negative behavior in order to resolve your problems.

Although some individuals are aware of their causes, others have difficulty finding their particular triggers.

For instance, someone might tell you that he is “always” depressed, or “always drinks too much”, and their particular trigger can't be identified. Identifying the causes helps us to begin to see trends and then realize what to work on in therapy. A helpful first step is to track your feelings or habits that are troublesome and see whether there are certain instances where these emotions are greater or the conduct

is more severe. For instance, if you feel like you are “always angry,” it would be helpful to track the situations in which this feeling is at its strongest. In tracking your feelings, you may discover that your anger is at its greatest when your teenage son doesn’t do his homework or breaks his curfew. That anger spills over into the rest of your life. The key is to get rid of the overriding label and replace it with an acknowledgement of specific situations in which the problem is at its worst.

The more precise and specific your explanation of the situation, the more you can explain the situation. Be emotionally involved with the situation, this will help make your emotions and feelings more open to you. Think about someone with whom you're a little irritated. Now, think of a particular situation when you were upset with this person. Try to recall the situation in detail. Chances are that you became more irritated and your emotions and thoughts became more immediate when you thought about a particular situation. When you think of other circumstances that you are trying to understand, the same thing will happen. The situation could be a long, complicated story sometimes. Enable yourself to repeat the whole story in this situation, and then ask what the worst or most frustrating part for you was. Identifying a situation lasting from a few seconds to thirty minutes is beneficial; any longer and there will undoubtedly be a wide range of emotions and feelings, and it will be difficult to concentrate on the key emotions.

Identify Your Feelings

The ability to identify feelings is part of controlling or handling one's emotions in a healthy manner. When you ask yourself, “What was it that I felt?” You are telling yourself to pause and think. This interrupts the negative spiral. Labeling emotions allows you to remember your reactions. A CBT session can also be driven by your feelings. Depending on the dominant emotions, you may want to try distinct approaches. For starters, it's difficult to know where to start if you say you feel “bad,” but if you say you feel “anxious,” you will begin to explore the fear behind the anxiety.

Identify Your Physical Reactions

Physical responses are also guides to our emotions. You may confuse your physical symptoms, leading to emotional distress or habits that are dysfunctional. For instance, someone might believe that he is having a heart attack if his heart is racing or it is dangerous for his health. He becomes very worried and begins to avoid situations where his heart pounds. His pounding heart, in fact, is due to too much coffee or another problem and is not harmful. You can't discuss what these physical reactions mean to you until you are able to recognize them. Although certain individuals are very conscious of their physical responses, others are unaware. The best way to understand your physical responses is to simply ask yourself, “How did my body respond?” or, “What did I feel in my body?”

It may be helpful to start recognizing your physical responses and then move on to identifying emotions if you have trouble identifying your feelings. Specific physical responses also go along with specific emotions. You might discover, for instance, that you are hot when you feel frustrated, you are shaky when you feel nervous, and you have a lump in your throat when you feel sad. It becomes easier to recognize your emotions when you learn to link your physical symptoms to your feelings. It promotes self-reflection when you recognise your physical reactions and helps you hit the pause button and avoid zooming down the direction of your automatic negative reaction.

Identifying Behavior

Next, you want your behavior to be understood. You should ask yourself, “What did I do?” You are looking for habits that suggest that you avoid, act impulsively, or behave in a situation in a way which is likely to aggravate the situation. For certain individuals, it is a first step in recognizing their problematic conduct and taking responsibility for their acts as they slow down and attempt to specify what they did. Maybe you have trouble managing your rage, for example, and you are trying to reduce your angry outbursts. You can initially describe your actions as “letting off some steam” when you describe how upset you were at a friend for not repaying a small debt. When you recall, though, what you have actually done: you kicked a door so hard that you broke the glass insert, you may still attempt to blame your friend for not paying the debt and making you so angry that you kicked the door. When you recognize that this behavior was not caused by your friend’s actions, you are able to also understand that you are minimizing it by describing it as “letting off steam”.

You want a summary of your actions that is specific and concrete to better explain your behavior. This way, the implications of the actions and the appropriateness of the reaction may be investigated. Initially, people sometimes use a vague descriptor, such as “I just gave up” or “I freaked out.” It is important to ask yourself what you really did (Josefowitz, 2020).

How to Impact Behavior with CBT

The underlying theory behind CBT is that your patterns of thinking influence your feelings which, in turn, can affect your actions.

CBT, for example, illustrates how negative thinking can contribute to negative emotions and behavior. It can lead to more optimistic emotions and supportive habits if you reframe your thoughts in a more positive way. Your practitioner will show you how to make improvements you can enforce for the rest of your life. There are many ways to approach CBT, depending on the problem that you are dealing with and your objectives. You may need help:

- Identifying particular issues or problems in your everyday life
- Becoming aware of unproductive patterns of thought and how they can influence your life
- Identifying and reshaping toxic thinking in a way that alters how you feel
- Learning and putting new habits into effect

After a consultation, your CBT practitioner will help you to decide on the best strategies to use to attain your goals. In the sections that follow, we will discuss nine different CBT techniques that you can use to change behavior.

1. Cognitive Reframing or Restructuring

This includes taking a hard look at negative patterns of thought. Perhaps you tend to over-generalize, presume that the worst will happen, or assign small information way too much significance. Thinking this way will impact what you do and it can even become a prophecy of self-fulfillment. In some cases, the CBT practitioner will inquire about your thinking process so that you can recognise negative patterns. You can learn how to reframe those feelings once you're aware of them, so they're more constructive and beneficial. For instance, "I blew the report because I'm completely useless" can become "That report wasn't my best job, but I'm a valuable worker and I contribute in many ways."

2. Guided Discovery

The CBT practitioner can acquaint themselves with your point of view through guided discovery. They will then ask questions that are designed to challenge your assumptions and expand your thought. You may be asked to provide evidence that supports your assumptions, as well as evidence that doesn't. In the process, you will learn to see things from other perspectives, particularly those that you might not have considered before. This will help you select a direction that is more beneficial.

3. Exposure Therapy

To confront anxiety and phobias, exposure therapy may be used. Slowly, the practitioner can introduce you to situations that cause fear or anxiety, while giving advice on how to deal with them at the moment. In tiny increments, this can be achieved. Exposure will gradually make you feel less insecure and more secure in your coping skills.

4. Journaling and Thought Records

Writing is a time-honored way to get your own feelings in touch. Your CBT practitioner might ask you between sessions to list negative thoughts that have

occurred to you, as well as positive thoughts that you can choose instead. Another writing activity is to keep track of the fresh concepts and new habits you have been putting into practice since the last session. This can help you to see how far you've come by putting it on paper.

5. Activity Scheduling and Behavior Activation

If there's an activity you like to put off or postpone out of fear or anxiety, it may help to get it on your calendar. You could be more likely to follow through until the burden of option is gone. The scheduling of events will help to develop healthy habits and provide enough opportunities to put into practice what you have learned.

6. Behavioral Experiments

For anxiety disorders that cause catastrophic thinking, behavioral experiments are usually used. You'll be asked to predict what will happen before embarking on a mission that usually makes you nervous. Later on, you can assess whether the prediction has come true. You will begin to see over time that the expected disaster is simply not very likely to happen. Start with lower anxiety tasks and build up from there.

7. Relaxation and Stress Reduction Techniques

Some progressive relaxation methods can be taught to you in CBT, such as:

- Exercises of deep breathing
- Relaxation of muscles
- Imaging

You'll learn practical skills to help alleviate tension and improve your sense of control. In coping with phobias, social anxieties, and other stressors, this can be beneficial.

8. Role Playing

Role playing will help you work through potentially stressful situations using various behaviors. Acting out future scenarios can minimize anxiety and can be used for:

- Improving skills for problem solving
- In some circumstances, gaining familiarity and trust
- Social skills exercise
- Training for assertiveness
- Strengthening communication skills

9. Successive Approximation

This includes taking tasks that appear daunting and splitting them into smaller measures that are more achievable. Each successive move builds on the previous steps, so you gain trust, little by little, as you go.

What is Catastrophic Thinking?

Catastrophic thinking can be a major behavioral issue, especially for people living with depression and anxiety.

Catastrophizing is when someone supposes that the worst is going to happen. Sometimes, it means thinking that the problems you face are worse than they actually are or that you are exaggerating them. Someone may worry, for instance, that they'll fail an exam. From there, they will conclude that failing an examination implies that they are a bad student and are bound to never pass, graduate or find a job. They may assume that this indicates that they would never be financially secure. Many successful individuals have failed tests, and failing an examination is not evidence that you would not be able to find a job. A catastrophic thinking person would find that difficult to understand.

Catastrophizing as over-exaggeration is easy to dismiss, but it's often not deliberate or that obvious. People who do it sometimes do not recognize why they do it. They may believe they have no control over their worries, and their health may also be affected. Thankfully, there are helpful psychotherapies to assist.

It's unknown what induces catastrophism exactly. It may be a coping mechanism acquired in a person's life from relatives or other significant individuals. It could be the result of an experience, or it could be due to chemistry in the brain.

Research concerning individuals that are catastrophic thinkers and who also have chronic pain suggests that they may have increased activity in the hypothalamus and pituitary responses, the areas of the brain that record pain-related emotions.

Cognitive behavioral therapy is helpful in aiding the transition of behavior where it is warranted. As with any individual journey, though, a one size fits all approach does not always work, and there are other therapies available to aid in behavior alteration.

Chapter 6:

Dialectical Behavioral Therapy

In 1980, in the United States, Marsha Linehan, a psychologist, collaborated with her team to find more successful ways to handle suicidal behaviour, a concentration that she later narrowed to borderline personality disorder (BPD). BPD, a disorder marked by emotion-regulating problems, also triggers impulsivity, including suicide attempts and other actions that are self-harming. In the treatment of BPD, conventional cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) did not seem very effective, and since the symptoms of the disorder can be so severe, Dr. Linehan and her team began to focus on finding new methods to support people with BPD. Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) was the result.

Although DBT was initially intended to treat BPD, it has been found to be beneficial for all kinds of other disorders since then. In fact, we now know that, even if the cause is not linked to a mental disorder, it is very beneficial for those with difficulties controlling emotions. DBT has become a widely sought after therapy because of its effectiveness in helping individuals learn to control their emotions more efficiently.

What is DBT?

DBT is a form of CBT. It has also been referred to as “A strange hybrid” of a variety of various treatments and methods. Many people ask how DBT is different from CBT. I usually conclude that DBT is just just CBT using a different language in terms of abilities, with the addition of mindfulness and acceptance strategies. DBT takes CBT's decision such that the way people think is not “wrong,” “erroneous,” or “distorted,” with the aim of altering their way of thinking. Instead, DBT understands that the way people think is an issue, so the therapist first allows the client to consider this, rather than judge it, and then helps them look at how they can make adjustments so that their thought is more balanced.

However, rather than just the skills, looking at the whole DBT model shows that this treatment is very different from CBT. The key difference is that DBT is a therapy guided by theory, whereas CBT appears to be a therapy based on protocols. In CBT, the therapist follows particular protocols; for example, a certain set of guidelines or procedures are followed to handle the panic when a client presents with panic attacks, such as delivering psychoeducation, teaching abdominal breathing, and so on.

In DBT, instead, the therapist is driven by values, making it possible for the therapist to be more versatile. This is important for the treatment of people who have difficulty controlling their emotions as it is hard for such people to concentrate

on only one issue. When a person experiences a number of problems, it is difficult to try to follow a highly structured treatment plan that addresses only one of these problems and will certainly be interpreted by the client as invalidating.

A second big difference between DBT and CBT is in how care is delivered. DBT consists of four distinct types of therapy: individual therapy, skills group, telephone consultation, and the therapy team.

Like CBT, DBT requires self-monitoring; with the use of Behavior Tracking Sheets, however, it is taken to a different level in DBT. In a hierarchy defined by the intensity and threat of target behaviors, DBT also differs from CBT in the way individual sessions are organized, addressing behaviors and stages of treatment. DBT is also characterized by the use of a suicide risk and evaluation protocol.

The usage of the therapeutic relationship in DBT is based on learning theory and very different from the CBT method above and beyond the delivery of treatment. The therapist considers BPD as a pattern of acquired habits. The DBT model stresses the importance of understanding the causes for unhealthy behaviors and the contingencies that sustain these behaviors to help clients to unlearn these destructive behaviors.

The DBT therapist takes every effort to build a strong and sincere therapeutic alliance with the client to promote this, which can then be used in a range of ways to help clients make the required improvements. In CBT, clients learn many approaches to help change skewed thinking; in DBT, clients are taught to embrace themselves as they are, and then learn strategies to help them modify habits that are in any way dysfunctional or problematic. The therapeutic partnership (including self-disclosure of the therapist) becomes another instrument used by the therapist to assist clients make these difficult adjustments.

It is extremely important to have a relationship with a healthy, encouraging figure for clients who have trouble controlling their emotions, as you can see soon when we look at BPD's biosocial theory. However, we must first describe emotion dysregulation itself before we discuss the theory of how emotion dysregulation evolves.

What is Emotional Dysregulation?

A combination of high emotional sensitivity or weakness and an inability to control or modulate one's emotions results in emotional dysregulation. Emotional vulnerability relates to a biological predisposition or temperament in which a person is born more emotionally sensitive than other individuals. Such people tend to respond emotionally to things to which others would not normally react. Typically their emotional response means that it takes them longer than the average person to recover from the reaction and to return to their emotional baseline, and the reaction is more extreme than justified by the situation. This definition of emotional

vulnerability is equivalent to the concept of a highly sensitive individual. Some researchers suggest it is a relatively normal neural characteristic to have a sensitive nervous system, suggesting that this high degree of sensitivity is encountered by approximately 15 to 20 percent of the population.

The Theory of DBT

In developing this treatment model, Linehan was greatly impacted by the theory of dialectics, which is a complex scientific and philosophical concept with three core principles:

- Everything is interrelated or interconnected. This concept aids us in understanding the relevance of taking an entire-systems approach to managing and identifying change. It also forces us to keep in mind that the actions and responses of a person seeking treatment will impact the practitioner and vice versa.
- Reality is not stationary, but is in a system of ongoing flux.
- The constantly-evolving truth can be discovered by synthesizing or integrating various viewpoints. This is, of course, completely opposed to the polar thinking of people living with dysregulation of their emotions.

So what, exactly, does this mean for the type of therapy at hand here? The dialectical nature of DBT means that it is necessary to look at both perspectives in a scenario and then work toward bringing these together. In DBT, both clients and practitioners need to make efforts to understand the concept that two polar opposite things can coexist in the same system. In thinking dialectically, the client and the practitioner must keep in mind that reality is not stationary or fixed, but is fluid and filled with apparent contradictions. An example of this could be the idea that clients are giving their best efforts in therapy, but simultaneously they must do more to achieve their goals. Another example, especially for a person with emotional dysregulation difficulties, is the idea that it is possible to experience two opposite emotions simultaneously. In this situation, it would be the practitioner's job to help the client learn that it is entirely possible to have anger toward a person and love them at the same time.

The Four Models of DBT

As opposed to the more protocol-based methods of CBT delivery, DBT is administered through four different methods of therapy. Not all four would be necessary in the same case, but often a combination is helpful.

The Skills Training Group

The skills training group is a structured, psychoeducational group format designed to enhance and develop client capabilities. The group takes place once weekly and is

divided into four learning spheres: interpersonal effectiveness skills, core mindfulness skills, distress tolerance skills and emotion regulation skills.

Interpersonal effectiveness skills. These skills aim to help lessen the interpersonal chaos that is sometimes present in our lives and also enables assertiveness. In this module, you are taught to think about what you want to get out of an interaction the most (a specific goal, perhaps keeping or improving a relationship, or keeping or improving their self-respect) and then you are taught skills that will make it easier for you to attain this goal.

Core mindfulness skills. Mindfulness is broken down into smaller parts to make it easier for clients to comprehend and assimilate into their daily lives. The aim of using mindfulness in treating BPD or other emotional dysregulation is to reduce confusion about the self. Mindfulness is also helpful in other ways, though. By increasing self-awareness, clients become aware of their emotions, thoughts, and urges, and slowly learn how to manage them more efficiently. Through mindfulness, clients also learn to accept the emotions, thoughts, and urges that they can't do anything about, revealing that internal experiences don't have to be acted upon, but can simply be accepted, and that eventually these experiences will dissipate.

Distress tolerance skills. This is also known as crisis survival skills, and the end-goal is simply to help people survive crisis events without worsening the situations by engaging in problem-creating behaviors, such as self-harm, suicide attempts, substance abuse, and such. These skills help people to distract and soothe themselves around the problem, rather than obsessing over it and possibly acting on urges that accompany the difficult emotions.

Emotion regulation skills. The goal of this area of learning is to lesson mood lability. Clients are taught general knowledge about emotions, such as why we need them and why we don't want to get rid of them even though they can be quite difficult to deal with at times. Clients learn about the interactions between their feelings, thoughts, and behaviors, and that by changing one of these they can have an impact on the others. Self-validation is highlighted in this area of learning, along with other skills to help clients manage their emotions more effectively.

Teaching these skills in a group format rather than in individual therapy is done for a number of reasons: First, clients with emotion dysregulation are often moving between crises, and it's very difficult to teach skills individually when the client understandably wants help with the current situation. Another important aspect of the group setting is validation, when each client has the benefit of being in a group with others who have similar issues. Another plus to using groups is that the learning process can be much deeper as each client learns from fellow group members. Finally, because interpersonal issues often arise in groups, this can be an excellent example for practicing the skills being offered and also allows participants to receive coaching from the group practitioner about how to effectively use the skills learned.

Individual Therapy

Clients usually attend individual sessions with a DBT therapist once a week. The intent of individual sessions is to assist clients in using the skills learned in the group to help lessen the occurrence of certain behaviors, such as self-harm, suicidality, substance abuse, and the like. As with group sessions, individual sessions have a very clear format and structure.

Telephone Consultation

Telephone consultations are used to assist clients in using skills. Telephone consultation is intended to be a short interaction to help clients understand what skills might be most useful in the crisis or situation they are dealing with, and to help them deal with any obstacles to using these skills and acting effectively.

Consultation Team

According to practitioners of DBT, the team is integral to DBT. The formation of the DBT consultation team will change depending on the environment of the therapist. Usually, the team consists of all the DBT therapists in a clinic: psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, and any others working in skills training groups and individual therapy with DBT clients. For therapists operating in clinic settings, this is fairly straightforward. For those working in private practice, however, it can be a bit more difficult. As the team is vital in keeping therapists on track in their practice, private therapists will usually develop a team consisting of other private DBT therapists online or in their area, as long as confidentiality is maintained. Whatever it consists of in your case, the team is used in two ways: first, to give support to therapists and help them to continue developing their skillset in working with clients using DBT; and second, for group discussion of cases among professionals. During case discussion, the team helps the therapist to ensure that they adhere to DBT techniques and strategies. The team also addresses any feelings of ineffectiveness and burnout. In consultation meetings, the team uses DBT techniques, such as being nonjudgmental and taking a dialectical stance to avoid team members getting caught up in power struggles and other dynamics that can disrupt the process and the team.

Various Applications of DBT

Further research is being done on using DBT to treat a variety of illnesses. Due to the large amount of research, we will only provide a few examples here. Several studies have found DBT to be highly effective in reducing behaviors associated with bulimia, substance use, depression, binge-eating disorder, and anxiety. DBT has also been found to be useful in the following contexts:

- Patients with treatment-resistant depression.
- Treatment of bipolar disorder in adolescents and in adults.

- DBT skills training was determined to be promising and feasible in improving the behavior of adolescents with oppositional defiant disorder.
- DBT habit-reversal treatment was found to be a promising treatment for trichotillomania.
- Intensive treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) regarding childhood sexual abuse.
- Treatment of children who were engaging in nonsuicidal self-harming behaviors; this helped to increase adaptive coping skills and significant reduction in depression and suicidal thoughts.
- DBT-based skills training for family members of people who had attempted suicide improved emotional health, reduced caregiver burden, and increased satisfaction in regard to the relationship with the patient.

Behaviors that DBT Can Help Change

DBT theory breaks down the types of behaviors that it can help to alter into three categories:

1. Behaviors interfering with life
2. Behaviors interfering with therapy
3. Behaviors interfering with quality of life

Behaviors Interfering with Life

In individual sessions, the first items to be addressed are behaviors that interfere with life, in the following order:

1. Suicidal behaviors
2. Self-harming but nonsuicidal behaviors (cutting or burning)
3. Intrusive homicidal or suicidal communications or urges
4. Ideations of suicide

When these kinds of behaviors occur outside of session, they become a priority for discussion in the next individual session. The tool most commonly used to address these kinds of behaviors, In DBT, is the behavior analysis (BA). The BA helps the practitioner and client take an in-depth look at the various aspects that lead to a specific behavior and cause the client to continue engaging in the problematic behavior. Experts note that suicidal thoughts that are constantly or regularly present like background noise are not always directly addressed in the individual session, as this could prevent work on other problem behaviors. The DBT assumption is that this type of suicidal thinking is more related to the low quality of life that results from emotion dysregulation, so the focus on enhancing quality of life will address this issue.

Behavior Interfering with Therapy

The second topic to be addressed is behaviors that directly interfere with the possibility of successful therapy in some way, in order from most destructive to least destructive. These behaviors could present in various ways. Examples include either the client or therapist arriving late or canceling appointments, taking phone calls during sessions, not being properly prepared for sessions, and the like. These behaviors can also be more subtle, such as the therapist pushing the client too hard, invalidating the client, or reinforcing unhealthy behaviors in the client, or either the client or the therapist avoiding addressing difficult topics in session. Behaviors that interfere with therapy can also become more destructive such as overstepping limits or threatening behavior from the client.

Behaviors Interfering with Quality of Life

The final item on the agenda for individual sessions is addressing behaviors that interfere with quality of life. This could include anxiety, comorbid mood, or substance abuse; financial difficulties or inappropriate housing; or lack of social support. As emotion dysregulated people usually have many of these additional problems in their lives, it's important to decide which is the most important area to work on. Experts advise that problems should be solved in the following order: first, solve immediate problems, such as getting into a rehabilitation program or housing; second, address problems that are more solvable and tackle the harder stuff later; and third, prioritize behaviors that are related to the two higher-order targets.

Behavioral Theory

Behavior Reinforcement

Reinforcing a behavior makes it more likely that the behavior will occur again. There are various ways to do this: primarily through positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement, and intermittent reinforcement.

Positive Reinforcement

With positive reinforcement, something the person sees as positive happens after he engages in a certain behavior. While rewards are an obvious and intuitive form of positive reinforcement, the dynamic can be much more complex and subtle. For example, if a therapy client has recently asked their therapist to see them for therapy sessions more often and the therapist declined as they don't have time in their schedule, but then the client then attempts suicide and is hospitalized for two weeks, and while in the hospital they contact the therapist again and repeat their request. If the therapist agrees they provide positive reinforcement for the suicide attempt by rewarding the client with what they wanted, and they may see this as a direct result of their suicidal behavior.

Negative Reinforcement

Negative reinforcement is not about punishment. It's still reinforcement, but in this case it occurs by taking away something that the person doesn't like. In other words, negatively reinforcing a behavior means that something the person finds unpleasant is removed after a certain behavior occurs, making it more likely that the person will engage in that same behavior in the future in order to have the unpleasant experience removed once again. Consider a person that becomes ashamed and anxious when discussing this self-harming behavior. When he and his therapist try to analyze why he self-harmed the previous week, he starts to shout at the therapist and threatens to leave. If the therapist relents and agrees to change the subject, they have just negatively reinforced the person by taking away the aversive experience of having to discuss his self-harming behavior.

Intermittent Reinforcement

In intermittent reinforcement, the positive or negative reinforcement occurs only every now and then, rather than each time the behavior takes place. This is actually one of the most successful ways of reinforcing a behavior, since the person never knows when he'll be reinforced. The most powerful example is in gambling. The slot machine intermittently reinforces the person for putting coins in the slot and pulling the handle, and occasionally the card player is dealt a winning hand. Consider someone that has recently broken up with his partner. Having difficulties accepting this, he may call her on a daily basis. Most often, she doesn't answer, but occasionally she gives in and speaks with him, even though she is only reiterating that the relationship is over. This intermittent reinforcement of answering his calls now and then keeps him calling her often in the hopes that she'll answer again.

There are a few important points to keep in mind regarding reinforcement. Firstly, reinforcement criteria are different for everyone. What one person finds rewarding or aversive may have different outcomes for the next person. For example, while one client may enjoy talking about his self-harm outside of sessions because he knows this triggers emotions in others, such as disgust, surprise, or interest, another person may be ashamed and go to extremes to hide any evidence of self-harm. It's important, therefore, to understand what is reinforcing and what is aversive for particular people. The second point to remember is that just because you recognize you may be reinforcing a behavior you don't want, that doesn't mean you shouldn't act as you would like to. It just provides you with more information to consider, and it may lead you to set greater limits before acting. For instance, in the example of the person who attempted suicide after being refused extra sessions, their therapist may agree that the client needs some extra support after all, and they may decide to be more flexible about schedule for a short time. It's perfectly okay to do this, but it's important to explicitly tell the person that the therapist changed their mind not because of the suicide attempt, but because they hadn't realized how distressed he was. It is also important to establish new limits, such as being clear about how

long the therapist is willing to see him more often and establishing whether there will be consequences of some sort (e.g., returning to once-weekly meetings) if there is another suicide attempt.

Consequences

The term consequence refers to the result, effect, or outcome of something that has occurred at an earlier point in time. When looking at the consequences of a person's behavior, we're asking what happened after the person acted. There are two primary types of consequences: positive consequences and negative consequences.

Positive Consequences

If you keep in mind that a consequence is simply the result or outcome of something that happened at an earlier point in time, it's easier to accept that consequences don't have to be negative, although it's a common association to have with them. Consequences can also be positive. For example, a person who goes off his medication no longer has to put up with the side effects of feeling fatigued all the time and weight gain. The person who attempted suicide receives the support and care they didn't have access to before. Although DBT practitioners are usually quite good at helping clients see the negative consequences of their behaviors, there's a tendency to forget that there are also positive consequences that work to maintain the problem behavior. Of course, functional behavior also has consequences, and it's helpful if clients experience this, receiving positive reinforcement for acting in healthy ways. An example would be a person who tells his mother that he's feeling out of control with his emotions and, as a result, receives positive emotional support from his mother.

Negative Consequences

Usually, we think of consequences in terms of negative outcomes: A person goes off his medication and then begins experiencing suicidal thoughts, mood instability and behaves recklessly, including drinking and driving. A single mother attempts suicide and is put in the hospital against her will, and her children are taken into protective custody. While it's certainly important to look at the negative consequences of a person's behavior, it's just as important to keep in mind that there are often also positive consequences.

Shaping

By reinforcing behaviors that are close to the desired behavior, you can shape an individual's behavior. For instance, a young man was on probation for assaulting his ex-girlfriend. He was living back at home with his parents and was struggling with anger, punching holes in the walls and yelling at his parents. If he was going to carry

on living with his parents, he needed to redirect his anger. He agreed that, as soon as he started to feel angry, he would leave the room and go to his bedroom in the basement, where he could scream and yell to his heart's content. His parents agreed not to disturb him. He set up a punching bag in the basement so he could take his anger out on it, and there was a concrete wall in the basement that he could throw pillows and other unbreakable items at to help alleviate his anger. When he reported that he was no longer taking his anger out on his parents, his therapist provided reinforcement in the form of positive feedback. They then set up a system in which the young man would reward himself if he went a whole day without taking his anger out on his parents, and gradually extended the time period to a whole week. In this way, the young man and his therapist helped shape his behavior so it was closer to what they wanted. From there, the therapist helped the young man to lessen his need for these new avenues of expressing his anger and find healthier ways of expressing the emotion.

Modeling

Modeling is essentially demonstrating a behavior for someone else in order for them to imitate. In DBT, it's important for therapists to model the use of skills with their clients. For example, when a client is sitting with a therapist and speaking in an angry tone, loudly, and gesticulating, the therapist needs to model by speaking softly and being still and calm. This works just as well in normal day to day life as well. When in a high-tension situation with someone that you are trying to de-escalate, the best way to do that is not to tell someone to "calm down". Rather emulate the type of energy that you would like to see from the other person by responding in a calm tone.

Contingency Management

The word "contingency" refers to a relationship between two events in that if one event takes place, the other is more likely to also occur. As an example, if a therapist has learned from previous experiences that if he cancels an appointment with a client, that client is likely to engage in some kind of self-destructive behavior, and experience emotional distress, this is an exhibit of contingency. In DBT, contingency procedures are based on the assumption that the consequences of a behavior will affect the possibility of the person choosing to engage in that behavior again. Contingency management, then, is about utilizing therapeutic contingency measures to benefit the client. In other words, therapists must be aware of how their behavior is likely to affect specific clients so they don't inadvertently reinforce unwanted behaviors or punish or neglect to reinforce desired behaviors. So if the aforementioned therapist knows his client is likely to act in a self-destructive way because he has to cancel their appointment, he can attempt to manage this contingency by establishing a limit that if the client engages in self-harm, he won't take extra telephone calls from the client for a set period of time (as doing so would

provide positive reinforcement for the self-harming behavior). If extra telephone contact is positively reinforcing, the client would be less likely to engage in self-harming behavior. Of course, there are other things the therapist can do ahead of time to help the client not to engage in self-harming behavior, such as giving the client an appointment for the next day, coaching the client in using distress tolerance skills, and providing lots of validation by telling the client that he understands how difficult this is.

This technique can be used in our own lives as well, especially when we consider the behavior of children or employees.

Some experts in DBT note that sometimes people question the ethical value of deliberately attempting to influence the behavior of a person through these kinds of measures. They also point out, however, that a therapists' mere presence in the room with clients affects consequences, and that if they were to try to step outside of this context so that they don't influence clients, they would simply be creating alternative circumstances, which would still influence clients. In other words, since the therapist's very presence is inevitably going to influence clients, why not use this to their advantage by actively behaving in ways that increase the probability of a positive outcome? This is similar to the concept we discussed in a previous section where the presence or absence of a person (regardless of the person's stature) can have a psychological influence on a person.

Here's an example: Jennifer, a stay-at-home mom, was having difficulties functioning on a day-to-day basis and had started going back to bed after sending her daughter off to school in the morning. She would sleep until noon and then became very anxious about getting the house tidied and dinner made before her family got home. To reduce this anxiety and help Jennifer feel more effective, her therapist set a goal for her to not go back to bed after sending her daughter off to school. Jennifer values her relationship with her therapist and finds it positively reinforcing when she validates her, so the contingency here is that if the therapist validates her, she'll be more likely to engage in the behavior she's validating again in the future. Therefore, when she goes to her next therapy session and tells her therapist that she accomplished this goal three out of five days, she is validated by the therapist telling her that she recognizes how difficult this must have been for her, given the extent of the depression she's currently experiencing, and congratulates her for her partial success. Then they turn to problem solving to see what else they can do to increase her success rate over the coming week. However, if the therapist knows that Jennifer finds validation aversive (as some people do), she won't provide validation to the same extent. It's important that the therapist still validates her somewhat, since she needs to learn to accept validation and provide it for herself in the long run. But if the therapist overdoes it, her validation will become a negative consequence that might actually prevent her from acting effectively in the future. So the therapist needs to know how her behavior will influence her behavior and then manage the contingency by validating a little or a lot, depending on her preference.

In this way, she can enhance the likelihood that Jennifer will engage in the desired behavior again in the future.

Again this therapy technique can be used in our day-to-day life as well with others whose behavior we are attempting to influence or with ourselves. Think back on the moments in your life when you have been validated for a behavior and attempt to understand whether you, as an individual, respond positively or negatively to validation.

Behavioral Problem Solving Strategies

The goal of therapy is to eliminate certain problematic or target behavior. By completing a thorough analysis of a target behavior, you will take the first step to problem solving or stopping a target behavior. Before you can take steps toward getting rid of the problem behavior, you must first fully understand it. In analyzing your behavior or that of another: What factors make you vulnerable to engaging in the behavior? What was the trigger, or event that prompted that behavior? What were the events, even seemingly insignificant ones, that took place between the point of the trigger and when you actually engaged in the behavior? What were the positive or negative consequences of engaging in the behavior? When looking at the consequences, keep in mind that you should extend your focus to positive consequences, as well. Most people know the negative outcomes of their behavior, but they find it difficult to use this understanding to help them to stop engaging in that behavior. Looking at the positive consequences—what you are getting out of the behavior—can help you to develop more awareness and insight into why you continue to engage in the behavior in spite of the problems it causes.

You can then look at possible ways to prevent the behavior from happening again in the future: What could you do to make yourself less vulnerable to experiencing the urge to engage in the behavior? Are there things you can do to avoid the trigger? Where would you be able to intervene in the future by using skills you have learned instead, so that the end result is something other than the problem behavior? And are there things you need to do now to correct any harm that was done? You might tend to engage in a verbal analysis when a problem behavior has occurred, asking questions like “What triggered the urge?” “Did I do anything to try to stop it?” and “What happened between when I felt triggered and when I actually acted on the urge?” Anytime a new problem behavior emerges, you should analyze your behavior to ensure that all factors are considered. The goal is for you to learn how to accurately analyze your behavior when a problem occurs, until you have a good understanding of why and how these behaviors are occurring.

Experts note that most therapeutic errors are based on faulty assessment, which leads to an inaccurate understanding of the behavior and why it’s happening. Therefore, if you find that you struggle to understand and analyze your behavior, you may want to learn these skills from a qualified therapist or practitioner first and

then start to apply them to your daily life.

Using Mindfulness in DBT

There are various ways of defining mindfulness, and it's important to find the definition that works best for you. My favorite is this: doing a single thing at a time, in the present moment, with your full attention, and with acceptance. I then further break this down into two parts. The first is awareness: focusing on the present moment, concentrating on whatever you are doing in that moment—driving, walking, playing with a pet, having a conversation, and the like.

The second part—and the part that many people tend to overlook—is acceptance: simply being aware of your current experience without judging it. So, if you notice that you're feeling anxious, just accept it. If you notice that you're bored or you're thinking, *This exercise is pointless*, just acknowledge it. If you have pain in your body, just allow yourself to sense it, rather than judging your experience. Mindfulness is about experiencing things as they are without trying to alter them. When you are focusing on mindfulness to start off with, don't think about concepts like meditation. Although mindfulness is a form of meditation, many people have stereotypical ideas about what meditation is (for example, sitting in the lotus position on the floor and chanting “Om”) this can cloud your understanding of mindfulness and perhaps make you less likely to practice. And while mindfulness certainly does have its roots in Zen Buddhism, there is no need to focus on this because mindfulness is not a religious practice. This can be a distracting factor so it is better not to worry yourself with it until you have a good understanding of mindfulness and are practicing it regularly.

Most people will easily acknowledge that they spend too much time in the past, reliving negative things that have happened, or in the future, worrying, asking “what if”, and catastrophizing. Ask yourself if you do one or the other or both. Next, ask yourself what emotions come up when you're living in the past (sadness, depression, regret, anger, shame, and the like) or in the future (worry, anxiety, sadness, and the like). Typically, you will be able to readily identify which emotions you experience. Then, present yourself with the alternative of living in the present moment more often. Of course, the present moment is often not completely devoid of pain either, but when you are living in the present moment and it's painful, at least you're only dealing with the pain of the present, rather than the pain of the present, the past, and the future simultaneously. In other words, when you're being mindful, you only have pain multiplied by one, rather than pain multiplied by three. When you start to practice mindfulness, keep in mind that previously your mind has been controlling you, taking you wherever it wants to go. Mindfulness is about taking that control back, so that when you see your mind going to the past or the future, you have a choice whether you want to go there. It's also important to mention that, like any skill, mindfulness takes regular practice and can be improved through training, and that research indicates that strengthening this ability can

reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression, including rumination.

The second part of mindfulness is acceptance. We humans tend to fight the things that cause us pain and, unfortunately, this tendency actually causes more pain. If you can work on accepting whatever you find in the present moment, you'll actually experience less pain in life. Some things in life can't be changed, but you can change your relationship to them.

As living in the present moment, through mindfulness, reduces the amount of emotional pain you experience, it makes emotions easier to manage. Think of your emotions as being contained in a bucket inside of you. If you're walking around with your bucket full to the brim with emotions—in part, due to living in the past and the future—it only takes one small event to overload the bucket. This results in problem behaviors such as substance use, lashing out, and self-harming behaviors.

If you are practicing mindfulness, the level of emotions in the bucket is automatically reduced because you aren't generating extra pain by living in the past or the future. And again, the less emotional pain you have, the easier it will be to manage. In addition, when we live more in the present moment, we're more aware of what's happening within ourselves: physical sensations, emotions and thoughts. This increased awareness helps us to tune in to any emotions that might be present more quickly, giving us an opportunity to choose how to act, rather than just allowing emotions to control us and reacting.

Think about it this way: instead of being swept up and caught up by an emotion or thought, mindfulness steadily observes those emotions and thoughts as they come and go. By looking at mindfulness in this way, it's understandable to expect that, in the long run, it will be helpful with problems, such as anxiety and mood disorders, eating disorders, anger problems, and substance abuse issues, as well as just generally helping people live healthier, happier lives.

It is common to hear people talking about their behavior as though they have no control over it: "I didn't even think about it; I just did it" or "I just couldn't help myself." Although people might often feel as though they have no control over their behavior, it's important to emphasize that this isn't the case. Again, the key to not acting on urges and to increasing control over our actions is awareness. Mindfulness helps us to become more aware of what we are feeling and thinking so that when an unwanted urge does arise, we become aware of it more quickly and can take action to help prevent engaging in the behavior.

By increasing the time between when the urge to act arises and when we act on it we gradually help to break the habit of engaging in that behavior. Systematic practice gradually breaks down patterns of habitual response. Developing self-control is similar to building muscle: We have to exercise it to improve our control over ourselves. Mindfulness is one way of developing this self-control muscle. It also helps to improve our understanding of why we respond in particular ways, which

helps us stop habitual or reactive behaviors. If you think of your mind as being similar to a muscle, you can understand that it needs to be exercised. Mindfulness is an exercise that helps strengthen the mind in many ways, including enhancing the ability to concentrate. As a key aspect of mindfulness is noticing when your attention wanders and intentionally bringing it back to whatever you're doing in the present. Over time this improves your ability to concentrate.

This has another benefit, as well: When you're focusing on the present and whatever you're doing in that moment, your memory of it later will be better. How many times have you driven home from work and suddenly realized you have no recollection of the last ten minutes of the drive or washed your hair twice in the shower? When you're not fully engaged in the present moment, you'll have little or no memory of it later on.

Take, as an example, a woman that realized she had little memory of her three-year-old son's life because an anxiety disorder kept her constantly living in the future. She was so focused on thinking and worrying about what might happen that she was hardly ever fully in the present moment and therefore had little memory of daily life with her son. When you're in the present moment more often, you're more able to engage in life. This not only means that you'll remember things better, but that you'll also really be there to enjoy any positive emotions and experiences. Quite often, people miss out on positive events, especially the smaller ones, because they're so busy thinking about something else. When you're in the present moment, you're just more there in your life, whatever may be happening.

While it's important to emphasize that mindfulness isn't intended as a relaxation technique, it should be pointed out that relaxation is often a beneficial side effect. When you do only one thing at a time and focus your full attention on that one thing, life becomes less chaotic and overwhelming, which helps you feel more relaxed. In addition, many of the activities people choose to do mindfully are inherently relaxing: sitting outside and watching the wildlife, taking a hot bath, listening to music, and the like. When you actually pay attention to these activities, rather than doing them while thinking about the past or the future, you'll feel more relaxed.

Once you are able to buy into mindfulness and can see how it will be helpful for you, you can then begin to teach yourself how to practice mindfulness. It is easiest to break mindfulness down into four steps:

1. **Select an activity.** Although you can practice mindfulness in an infinite number of ways, it's important to personalize this for yourself. Think about how you can practice mindfulness based on what you know about yourself. For example, if you have children or pets, think about spending time with them mindfully. If you play a sport or have a hobby, think about how you can mindfully engage in that.

2. **Focus on the activity.** The second step to practicing mindfulness is to start to focus on being in the present moment with whatever activity has been chosen.
3. **Notice when your attention wanders.** Remind yourself that it's natural for your attention to wander. Our brains generate thousands of thoughts daily, so it's inevitable that this will happen; the important thing is to notice it when it happens. So the third step is just being aware that attention has wandered from the present moment.
4. **Gently bring your attention back.** The final step is accepting that attention has wandered—being gentle rather than judging oneself—and bringing attention back to the present moment. In other words, we just notice that we're no longer focusing on the activity and bring our attention back to it without judging ourselves for wandering, and without judging anything about our experience.

The trick is to continue to do steps 3 and 4 over and over again: noticing that attention has wandered and bringing it back to the present moment. Keep in mind that you might have to bring your attention back continuously when you first start practicing mindfulness, and that this is okay—that it is, in fact, what mindfulness is all about. Mindfulness isn't so much about staying in the present moment; it's about noticing when your attention has wandered and returning to the present. Of course, it's important to find the dialectical balance between ensuring that you understand that mindfulness is difficult and helping yourself to believe that they will be able to do it.

The next thing that is important to understand in DBT is the difference between formal and informal practices of mindfulness: Informal mindfulness is simply bringing mindfulness to whatever you happen to be doing: having a conversation, reading these pages, riding a bike, and the like. Formal mindfulness is when you actually set aside time to do a practice, such as a breathing exercise or observing emotions or thoughts.

Keep in mind that mindfulness is about doing one thing at a time. So if you're practicing mindfulness, you can't do a breathing exercise while driving, because that's two things. You either drive mindfully (an informal exercise, bringing mindfulness to something you're doing anyway), or you set aside five minutes to do a breathing exercise (a formal exercise, where you set aside time to do a mindfulness practice). Often starting with informal mindfulness exercises makes it more likely that you will practice. You can then introduce formal exercises into your life, starting off with short, simple exercises (for example counting breaths for one minute) and working up to the practices that people tend to find more difficult (for example observing emotions or thoughts). You can also gradually increase the amount of time that you use for the formal practice.

Of course, everyone learns and practices at a different pace. Some people latch right

on to mindfulness, quickly grasping the concepts and becoming adept at incorporating it into their lives. If you are one of these individuals, you will be able to practice formal exercises on your own very quickly. Others struggle with the concept and have trouble remembering to practice or don't see the point of practicing. If you are one of these people, you might need to repeatedly review the purpose of mindfulness and why you are trying to do these exercises. In addition, the pacing will be slower, focusing on informal exercises for longer before progressing to formal practices. Either way, validate yourself and continue pushing for change.

Mental Noting

To assist people when they first start practicing mindfulness, it's helpful to break the skill into smaller steps, mentally noting events as they occur. Mental noting, also known as witnessing, is a DBT skill called observing and describing. The idea behind this skill is to first look at your experience, moment by moment, in a nonjudgmental way, simply sensing or noticing what's happening, and then describe the experience, putting a nonjudgmental label on it.

For example, instead of saying to yourself, *The weather is lousy today*, you mentally note it: *It's gray and rainy today and it has me feeling blah*. Or instead of getting caught up in the emotion of sadness and saying to yourself, *I'm depressed and hopeless. Things are never going to get better, and I don't know how I'm going to manage*, you mentally note your experience: *I'm feeling extremely depressed and hopeless right now. I feel like I want to cry and scream. My thoughts keep going to the future, and I'm having a hard time not acting on the urge to carry out negative behaviors*.

Mentally noting emotions can help you to avoid getting caught up in them. A good example of this is anxiety, which escalates easily because the very feeling of anxiety is often scary, making people feel more anxious, perhaps saying to themselves, *Oh no! Here comes that feeling again. What if I have a panic attack and do something that makes me look stupid in front of all of these people? Is this never going to end? I feel like I'm losing my mind. What if I go crazy?* Quite often, the thoughts people have about their anxiety make them more anxious. Mentally noting the anxiety can prevent or at least reduce this; for example, *I'm starting to feel anxious. There's a knot in my stomach and I'm starting to have worrisome thoughts. My heart is starting to race, and I'm worrying about having a panic attack*. You can probably see why this skill is also referred to as witnessing, since it basically involves narrating whatever your experience is in the moment. When you learn this skill, remind yourself to let go of judgments; when you are mentally noting, you are an objective observer, just describing events as you experience them. Things aren't good or bad, or right or wrong; they just are.

There are two types of events that we can bring awareness to: Internal events take

place inside ourselves and include images, memories, and thoughts that enter the mind causing urges, emotions, and physical sensations. External events, on the other hand, occur outside the body.

While mental noting can be applied to any experience, it's important to recognize that some people have more of an internal focus, already being very aware of their internal experience—sometimes so much so that they can be oblivious to what's happening externally. Conversely, some people have more of an external focus, being very aware of what's happening in their environment but not having much awareness of what's happening internally. For people who have difficulties regulating their emotions, this focus can go either way. A person may be so in tune with her internal experience that it's difficult for her to be aware of anything else, which amplifies her emotional experience and makes it more difficult to tolerate. Or she may be so in tune with her environment that she's completely unaware of what's going on inside of her. For both types of people—those who are overly aware of emotional pain and those who ignore or avoid it—it's more difficult to manage their emotions and the behavior that results from their emotional pain.

When you're first learning how to mentally note, it's important to assess whether you fall more into one category or the other. If you do, try to focus on the opposite: If you are very in tune with your internal experience try to focus on mentally noting external experiences, and vice versa. Practice in mentally noting the experiences that you aren't as in touch with will help you become more balanced, increasing your awareness of both internal and external experiences. This will enhance your ability to manage your emotions.

Removing Judgments

If you're trying to learn the skill of being nonjudgmental, you probably already have a good idea that it will be a useful skill for you to learn. Introduce this skill to yourself by asking yourself to consider your judgments: Do you think you have a tendency to judge others, yourself, or both? Almost all people will do one or the other, but very rarely some people do not judge at all. That said, people are often unaware of their judgments, so it's important to help yourself to carefully consider any tendency to judge and what role this plays in your life.

Like mindfulness, being nonjudgmental is a skill that people tend to resist not because it doesn't make sense, but because it's hard. Understanding the following information can help to make nonjudgmental skills less intimidating.

The word “judgment” refers to the act of assessing or evaluating something or someone as either negative or positive in some way. For example, if your daughter comes home with an A on a test, she's a “good” girl, or if the neighbors next door keep to themselves, they're “weird.” When you stop and notice, you'll see that you're probably judging regularly: Your friend's boyfriend is a “loser” for treating

her that way, or the steak you had for dinner was “great.” In fact, if you try not to judge, you’ll probably find that it’s quite difficult to just experience something without labeling it in some way.

One reason it’s so difficult not to judge is because judgments abound in our society. Most of us hear them from the time we can understand language, so it only makes sense that we grow up to be judgmental. As we form this habit at such a young age, our brains become judgment machines. For many of us, judgments are so automatic that we often don’t even recognize them. For instance, when you are learning this skill you may even think to yourself, “Yeah, I’m really bad for judging.” Here we are, talking about judgments, and they have no awareness that we’re judging themselves in that moment!

Because judging is such an automatic behavior, it’s usually quite a challenge to change it. Before you can start helping yourself with this, you need to be convinced that it’s important to work on reducing this behavior. So let’s take a look at what’s so “bad” about judging.

As mentioned, judgments can be negative or positive. We typically don’t concern ourselves with positive judgments, since they usually don’t trigger emotional pain. However, positive judgments aren’t ideal either, since they create assumptions about or a context for negative judgments; for example, if you think of a friend as “good,” she can do something that will make her “bad.” For the most part, I think it’s important for us to be aware of both negative and positive judgments so we can choose whether or not to judge, but the focus here will be on reducing negative judgments because of the emotional pain they cause.

More often than not, negative judgments come from painful emotions: People feel anger, hurt, disgust, or another painful emotion, and this emotion causes them to judge. One effect of that judgment is to increase emotions, which causes more judgment, which triggers more emotional pain, and so forth. In other words, judging usually increases the intensity of emotions, trapping people in a vicious cycle.

Some people disagree with this, saying that they vent, and this helps them feel better. If you are one of these people, closely consider whether you really do feel better. Research indicates that venting anger (which involves judging) actually increases feelings of anger and aggression, most likely by adding fuel to the fire and increasing angry thoughts and urges, leading to more angry emotions and behaviors. If you find it difficult to buy into this, mentally note your experience with this.

Of course, negative judgments don’t always trigger more emotions. For example, imagine you go to the fridge to grab some cheese and see that your cheddar is a terrific shade of green. You might say, “Oh no! The cheese is bad.” Yes, “bad” is a judgment, but this judgment probably hasn’t triggered any emotional pain for you, because it wasn’t emotional pain that caused you to judge in the first place. In this instance, “bad” is just a shorthand way of saying that the cheese is moldy and won’t

taste good.

Other than triggering more pain, judgments are also unhelpful because they don't provide useful information. Most of us probably understand what is meant by "The cheese is bad," but if you tell a friend you think her boyfriend is a loser, she might not know exactly what you mean. You might mean that you don't like the way he treats her, that you don't appreciate him flirting with you, that you don't approve of the fact that he doesn't have a job, and the list goes on. Judgments are a shorthand way of saying something—a quick label we stick on things instead of saying what we really mean.

Regardless of what is meant by the judgment, one thing is certain: negative judgments are hurtful. This is true whether people direct judgments at someone else or at themselves. When this is first suggested to you, you may not believe it. Often, the most powerful way to understand this is by comparing it to verbal abuse, as in the following dialogue. This is dialogue between a therapist and a client who forgot to send her son's lunch to school with him:

Therapist: Think about a person in a verbally abusive situation. Her partner regularly tells her that she's stupid, worthless, and unlovable, that she'll never find anyone else to put up with her, and so on. You've probably heard that when you're constantly being told these kinds of things, over time you come to believe them. When you judge yourself, you're essentially verbally abusing yourself. For example, was this the first time you called yourself a bad mother?

Client: No. It's kind of a theme for me when I feel I haven't done something right with my son.

Therapist: Exactly. And the more often you tell yourself you're a bad mother, the more you actually come to believe it.

It's important to point out that most people are hard on themselves; as the saying goes, we're our own worst critic. Self-judgments tend to be especially problematic for emotionally dysregulated people, in part because an invalidating environment has taught them to respond harshly to any perceived failure. When a person is regularly given the message that she's wrong in some way—for example that her feelings, thoughts, or beliefs are incorrect, ridiculous, invalid, stupid, crazy, silly, and so forth she may begin to automatically assume that this is true and starts judging herself in the same way. This is learned behavior and it's understandable that she's judging herself, but it's also not helpful and something that she needs to work on.

Negative judgments are also hurtful to others. It's important to note that sometimes we judge without words. Judgments can come in the form of facial expression or tone of voice. For example, imagine yourself having a telephone conversation with your boss. You might be saying, "Of course I understand the importance of this,"

while simultaneously rolling your eyes. Although you aren't judging your boss out loud, rolling your eyes would let any observer know that you're being judgmental at that moment. Likewise, your tone of voice can also give you away. To continue with the previous example, let's say you hang up the phone and summarize the conversation for your coworker: "Heather says she wants me to drop the packages off at the courier instead of having them pick the packages up. That makes sense." While tone of voice is difficult to convey in writing, you can imagine the last sentence, "That makes sense," being stated nonjudgmentally—simply a factual statement, probably indicating that you agree with the decision and it makes sense to you. However, given a different tone of voice or emphasis (for example, "That makes sense"), it could be a judgment, indicating that you actually think the decision is stupid or does not make sense at all.

There's one last piece of information you need to learn before you start learning how to be nonjudgmental: that the skill of being nonjudgmental isn't about eradicating judgments. As in the earlier example, it's okay to say the cheese is bad. Throughout life, there are times when we need to judge. Doing performance evaluations at work, grading assignments at school, evaluating whether or not a situation is safe, assessing your actions in order to learn from your mistakes—these are all examples of judgments, and you can see how they are necessary. Keep in mind that the judgments to let go of are those that increase their emotional pain. Given that you may have difficulty managing your emotions, anything you can do to reduce the amount of pain you experience will help you to improve your ability to regulate your emotions.

The expectation isn't that you be nonjudgmental 100 percent of the time. Rather, the times to let go of judgments are when you notice that you are feeling pain that seems disproportionate to the situation you are in or if you suddenly experience a painful emotion, especially anger or some variation of anger.

Paying attention to a behavior often has the effect of changing that behavior in some way, so the first thing to do is increase your awareness of your judgments. Several techniques are useful here: tracking your judgments in a journal; practicing mindfulness exercises that help you observe your thoughts so that you will notice your judgmental thoughts more often; or simply counting your judgments throughout the day (or if you judge a lot, for a certain period of time during the day). Once you become aware of your judgments, the next step is to change them to nonjudgmental or neutral statements, which we'll look at next. When you find yourself saying something judgmental, draw your attention to this and invite yourself to change it to a neutral statement.

Once you are able to identify a judgment, the next step is to change it to a nonjudgmental statement: a neutral statement that addresses the same situation in a nonjudgmental way. In other words, this means saying the same thing—expressing opinions and emotions about something—but without judgment. Being

nonjudgmental isn't about being passive; rather, it's about being assertive. It's about saying what you really mean and talking about your emotions, rather than just slapping shorthand, judgmental labels on things.

Experience has taught me that this is a difficult skill for people to grasp because judgments come so easily to most of us. I've found that the most effective way of learning how to turn judgments into neutral statements is through examples. Think of times when you judged. Most of us tend to be hard on certain people in our lives (including ourselves) or to have disagreements with certain people regularly enough that we can think of times we've judged them.

Judgment: She shouldn't be treating me this way. She's such a witch.

Non Judgment: My coworker said something unkind to me, and I'm feeling hurt and angry with her.

Judgment: What's wrong with her? She's unbelievable. She's an awful team leader.

Non Judgment: I did some extra work, and now my team leader tells me I was wrong for doing this. I feel hurt, shocked, and angered by her reaction. I don't understand her reaction, and I don't think she handled the situation very effectively.

Judgment: She's thoughtless. She should be putting more effort into our friendship.

Non Judgment: We hardly ever speak anymore unless I make the effort to call her. It doesn't seem like our friendship matters to her anymore, and I'm feeling hurt and resentful toward her.

Similarly, we can usually think of situations we deal with regularly, such as rush-hour traffic, that elicit judgments. Given these suggestions, most people can think of examples of judgments if they put their mind to it.

Once you have an example, use this formula for turning a judgment into a non judgment: first, describe the facts of the situation; and second, express your emotions about the situation: What are the feelings that caused you to make the judgment? Here are some examples:

Judgment: This guy doesn't know how to drive. What an idiot.

Non Judgment: The guy in front of me is driving twenty miles per hour under the limit, and I'm feeling really frustrated with him.

Thinking Styles

DBT theory outlines three states of mind, or ways we have of thinking about things: the reasoning self, the emotional self, and the wise self. It is usually most effective to learn about these styles of thinking right after you have learned mindfulness

skills, as this furthers the process of increasing your self-awareness.

The Reasoning Self

When learning about the three styles of thinking, it is best to first describe the reasoning self: the part of ourselves that we use when we're thinking logically or reasoning something out. When we use this part of ourselves, there are few or no emotions involved. If there are emotions present, they don't significantly influence how we behave. Rather, the focus is on thinking logically about something: organizing your day at work, leaving instructions for the babysitter, deciding whether you should drive or take the subway to work, taking minutes at a meeting, and so on. Try to think up some examples and then think of some occasions when you acted from your reasoning self. This may take a while and you may need to try several times, but people can usually come up with at least one example.

The Emotional Self

Most people don't have difficulties coming up with examples of times when they've acted from their emotional self—the part that often gets us into trouble, as our behaviors are controlled by the emotion we're feeling in the moment. Try to come up with some general examples, such as feeling angry and lashing out at someone, feeling anxious and avoiding whatever is causing the anxiety, or feeling depressed and withdrawing and isolating. It may be easier to use examples that apply to other people at first. Then apply this to yourself: When have you acted from your emotional self? Usually people can relate to this thinking style and examples will come to you easily. If you struggle with this, put your pride aside and allow a friend, family member, or your therapist to give you examples.

The Wise Self

There is often difficulty in getting people to see that they have a wise self, which is the combination of the reasoning self, the emotional self, and intuition. In other words, we feel our emotions and are still able to think straight, and we weigh the consequences of our actions and choose to act in a way that's in our best interests in the long run, even if that means behaving in a way that's quite difficult. Again, here are some examples: You're having an argument with your partner, and instead of saying something hurtful that comes to mind, you bite your tongue because you know you'll regret it later. You have an urge to drink, but part of you recognizes this as an ineffective way of coping, so you call your mother or go to an AA meeting instead.

It's also important to point out that acting from your wise self doesn't necessarily entail a humongous achievement. Here are some smaller examples as well. You wake up in the morning and feel down; it's cold, it's still dark outside, and your first impulse is to call in sick. But instead you roll over, turn off the alarm, and get out of

bed. This is your wise self. Or say it's 5:00 p.m., your partner's going to be home from work soon, and you promised you would cook dinner, but you're exhausted and don't feel like it. Yet you do it anyway. This is your wise self.

Sometimes people say something like, "But I have to go to work because I have to pay the bills; that's not acting wisely." But the truth is, no one has to go to work, we choose to go to work. We could choose to not go and the bills wouldn't get paid. When you make a choice to get out of bed and go to work, that choice comes from your wise self. You weighed the consequences and decided what would be more effective in the long run, even though it wasn't necessarily the easy thing to do.

Often, just having an awareness of the different ways we think about things can help us access our wise self more often. There are also skills you can learn to help expedite this process, described in the following sections.

Using the mindfulness skill mental noting with emotions can help us to access our wise self. I find the following analogy helpful in explaining this concept and illustrating how it can help us to access our wise self:

Think of your emotions as a tornado. Because of your difficulties in regulating your emotions, right now when you experience an emotion you tend to get sucked up into it. The emotion takes over and sends you out of control, just like a tornado does with anything in its path. Mentally noting your experience of the emotion helps you put a little distance between you and the emotion so you can watch the tornado from a safe distance, rather than getting sucked up into it. You're still in touch with the emotion, still experiencing how it feels, but not at its mercy—just like if you were standing at a safe distance from a tornado, you'd still be able to feel the rain and wind and observe the thunder and lightning, but without getting caught up in the whirlwind.

Another way you can help yourself access your wise self is through your self-talk. We often judge ourselves, put ourselves down, and just generally be quite hard on ourselves. The more you beat up on yourself this way, the more you will be hijacked by your emotional self, and the harder it will be for you to access your wise self. Work on changing this using the skill of being nonjudgmental toward yourself. Remind yourself that how you talk to yourself influences how you think and feel about things. Encourage yourself to think of someone you really care about and to speak to yourselves the way you would to that person. This will help you be kinder to yourself, which will help you access your wise self.

In The Moment

A third DBT skill that will help you access your wise self is focusing on the present moment and whatever you happen to find in the moment. By practicing mindfulness with whatever activity you are doing in the moment, you can distract yourself from painful emotions. Once again, help yourself with this skill by personalizing it for

your own life. Here's an example using the person from the previous section, who thinks of herself as a bad mother:

Next time something happens that brings up those old self-defeating messages of what a bad mother you are, mindfully focus on what you need to do instead. If you notice your son's lunch sitting on the counter, say to yourself, I'm picking up the lunch bag off the counter. I'm getting my coat and car keys. I'm putting on my shoes and taking my purse out of the closet. I'm walking down the walkway to the car... and so on. By focusing on just the present moment, clients can remain in the moment more often, rather than thinking about some mistake they've made and judging themselves for it, dwelling on hurtful comments others made in the past, and so on. Instead, they can take things one step at a time and focus on what they need to do in the moment.

While focusing on just this moment is mindfulness, it's only one part of mindfulness. As discussed, the other part is non judgment, or acceptance. Whatever you notice while focusing on just this moment, you should also work on accepting, because nonacceptance is judging, and judging increases emotional pain. When emotions are intense, it's much more difficult to access the wise self, so by practicing the skill of focusing on just this moment, you will develop a greater ability to access your wise self. Encourage yourself to work on this skill whenever you notice painful emotions arising, mindfully focusing on whatever you happen to be doing in that moment. If you are doing the dishes, you should focus on just that: cleaning each dish, the sensation of the soap on your hands, the warmth of the water, and so on. If you are at work, you should be focusing on just work-related tasks: doing your job, checking emails, returning phone calls, meeting with clients, speaking with your boss, and so forth.

At the same time, you should work on accepting whatever happens to come into your awareness as best as you can, whether it's an emotion, a thought, a physical sensation, or whatever. As with mindfulness, the focus is on direct experience in the moment, and when attention wanders from just this moment, you should gently bring your attention back, without judgment.

Identifying Problem Behaviors

As always, the first step in using skills is to help you increase your awareness. What behaviors do you engage in that are unhealthy or even self-destructive? The long list of possibilities includes drinking or using drugs, gambling, self-harming behaviors, threatening or attempting suicide, lashing out at people who care about you, shoplifting, driving dangerously, under- or overeating, or sleeping to avoid or escape life. Of course, your idea of what qualifies as an unhealthy behavior might differ from someone else's. If someone else believes that you are using unhealthy behavior to cope in times of crisis and you disagree, it may be helpful to consider what the cost of that behavior is as opposed to the benefit. This is often a good way to

understand whether a behavior really is unhealthy or not.

The DBT skill of looking at the pros and cons is used when people are ambivalent about giving up a behavior and need help seeing that the behavior has costs or negative consequences. Doing a cost-benefit analysis helps you come to terms with this so you can make a more conscious decision to either engage in the behavior or choose to act in another way. In the event that you choose to continue with the problem behavior, the analysis has at least had the effect of helping you to recognize that you are making a choice, rather than just reverting back to a habit.

What are the benefits and costs of not engaging in the behavior? What happens when you don't resort to engaging in the behavior?

Once you have identified some costs and benefits in each area, rate each on a scale from 1 (very little importance) to 5 (high importance). The idea is to have you assign a numerical value to each cost and benefit, so that rather than just looking at how many items you have in each column, as in a traditional pros and cons chart, you can assign a numerical value to each category of benefits and costs. This provides a better assessment of whether the behavior is truly helpful or harmful.

Managing Urges

Often, even once you have decided on your goals, you can still have a hard time not acting on problematic urges when they arise. It's often best to create a plan for what you will do when you begin to experience an urge.

Coping Ahead

The final distress tolerance skill we will look at is the DBT skill called coping ahead. When you know that an upcoming situation will be emotionally difficult, it can be very helpful for you to rehearse your plan ahead of time so you are prepared to cope in a more skillful way. The following dialogue provides an example of how you could prepare this with your therapist:

Client: So Christmas is coming, and my sister is having it at her house again this year. Nothing's changed with her. She still doesn't like my boyfriend, and because it's at her house, I know she's going to tell me again that I can't bring Michael.

Therapist: Well Melanie, I know we've talked a lot about trying not to go into the future. But sometimes we can predict how someone is going to behave based on their previous behavior. And when we're pretty sure we know we'll be facing a difficult situation, it can really help to plan ahead for it. Have you thought about what you'll do if your sister invites you for Christmas dinner but tells you Michael can't come?

Client: No, I don't know what I'll do. I get so triggered by her, and nothing ever

changes.

Therapist: Maybe now is a good time for us to plan ahead what you can do to help you feel more effective with your sister. Do you want to go to her house for dinner without Michael? Is it worth it to you to make that sacrifice to see your family?

Client: I think I've sacrificed enough over the years. For so long, I've done everything they've asked me to. But I'm sick of being the only one to give, give, give. I want my sister to start respecting me more.

Therapist: Okay, so you aren't willing to go to Christmas dinner without Michael. If your sister tells you he can't come, what do you want to say to her?

Client: I want to tell her that she can't keep excluding him—that he's part of my life and she has to accept that as my decision. I want to tell her that if he can't come for dinner, then I won't be coming either.

Therapist: Okay. That's a good start, Melanie. Are you willing to not see your family on Christmas, though?

Client: Well, that would be disappointing, especially because my parents are getting older and I don't know how much longer they'll be around.

Therapist: That's understandable. So is there a compromise? Remember, it doesn't have to be all or nothing. You could tell her you'll come for an hour before dinner if you have to come alone, or you could refuse to go to her house without Michael and instead spend time with your parents on Christmas Eve.

Client: Yeah, that's a good idea. I'd like to see everyone, and I'd have to bring the presents over for my sister's kids anyway, so I could go for a little while before dinner, without Michael. Then Michael and I could have Christmas dinner together at my house.

Therapist: Okay, great. So let's talk about how you'll express this decision to your sister if you need to. Think about your assertiveness skills, and talk to me like I'm Anna.

Client: Okay. Anna, I know you don't like that I've chosen to be with Michael. You've made that clear in the way you continue to exclude him from family gatherings. But excluding him from the family is disrespectful to Michael and to me. I would like for you to start working on accepting that he's part of my life, and if you want me to be a part of your life, you have to accept Michael as well. If you insist that he can't come with me to Christmas dinner, then I'll come to your house earlier on Christmas day, but I won't be staying for dinner. He's my partner, and I want to spend Christmas with him as well.

Therapist: Great job, Melanie! Now I want you to picture in your mind how you

want this conversation to go with Anna. Imagine it in as much detail as you can. Maybe you're feeling anxious and hurt, but you're expressing yourself confidently; your voice is firm, but you're not yelling; and you're treating your sister with the same respect you want from her.

In this way, you can cope ahead, preparing yourself for upcoming situations so that you can deal with those situations more effectively and skillfully. You can easily incorporate this into your daily life as well and ensure that you are prepared for difficult situations ahead of time. By coping ahead, you will also be able to reduce anxiety and increase mindfulness.

Emotions According to DBT

People often think it is a good idea to get rid of emotions altogether. Your goals may be to stop feeling anxious or get rid of anger. It's important to understand right off the bat that this isn't a realistic goal—that all of our emotions are necessary and serve important functions. Even though they can be incredibly painful at times, they play specific roles and are there for a reason, such as providing motivation or information and aiding communication. Helping to understand a bit more about why we need emotions and don't want to just toss them out the window brings you one step closer to learning the skills to help you manage your emotions.

Sometimes the role of an emotion is to prompt us to act. Anger and fear are prime examples here: We feel angry when something happens that we don't like, motivating us to act to change the situation. Fear motivates us to flee, fight, freeze, or faint in order to survive when we're being threatened. In these situations, emotions not only motivate us, they also prepare us to act by causing physiological changes in the body; for example, the adrenaline rush of fear causes blood pressure to increase and muscles to tense up, readying the body to flee the situation or to stay and fight.

It can be helpful to emphasize to ourselves that, although anxiety, for example, is uncomfortable, it's an emotion that has helped our species survive. What would have happened if our ancestors never felt fear? They wouldn't have fled even when a saber-toothed tiger was approaching—a quality that surely would have led to the extinction of the human race. Even in modern times, fear serves a purpose. For example, when you're walking alone in an unfamiliar area, anxiety causes you to be more alert and aware of what's happening around you so you can move more quickly if a threat arises.

Emotions can also provide information about situations that we want to change in some way to make them better suit our needs. For example, you might feel angry because you think there's something unjust about a situation. Another example is guilt, which arises to let you know you've done something that goes against your morals and values. It's important to think of your emotions as a sense, providing important information, just like vision, hearing, touch, taste, and smell. Sometimes

emotions arise to provide us with information before the brain has time to process the information it's receiving from the other senses. For example, if you're walking in the woods and you see something that looks like a snake, your brain automatically activates fear, starting the fight-or-flight response and getting you to move away from the danger before your eyes have time to process that what they're actually seeing lying in the path ahead of you is a piece of coiled rope. Of course, sometimes this emotional process kicks into overdrive. An example would be someone with PTSD who is more sensitive to certain stimuli and responds to them more often than warranted, in which case the response can become problematic. Overall, though, providing information is an important role of emotions, and one that has helped our species survive.

Emotions help people communicate more effectively, particularly because, as mentioned, some emotions are hardwired into us and evoke universal facial expressions and body language. Therefore, we are able to instinctively recognize these emotions in others. For example, if you're crying, others would be able to guess that you're probably feeling sad, or if you're frowning, others would be able to guess that you're probably feeling angry. When we recognize how others feel, we can empathize with them and act in an emotionally appropriate way, such as consoling them when they're sad. Simply having our emotions recognized is often helpful in and of itself, as we feel understood and "felt" by another.

Because emotions, thoughts, and behaviors are so intimately connected, it can be easy to confuse them. For example, when you try to explain how you feel about something, you often give your thoughts about it. Some people find it extremely difficult to move beyond that thinking part to get to what they're actually feeling. Another example of this confusion is people referring to anger as a bad emotion; generally, this evaluation applies not to the emotion itself, but to the behaviors that result from feeling angry.

It's especially easy to get confused about what we think versus what we feel, in part because emotions and thoughts happen so quickly and automatically that we usually don't stop to think about them before we act. However, separating emotions, thoughts, and behaviors is an important step in managing emotions more effectively, so make sure clients understand the difference between them.

When you are trying to determine how you feel about something, begin by thinking about the six main emotions: anger, fear, sadness, shame or guilt, love, and happiness. If the emotion doesn't seem to be described by one of these words, then consider thinking in degrees; for example, you might not be afraid, but perhaps you feel anxious, worried, or nervous.

Behavior, of course, is simply how we act—not what we think about doing or what we feel like doing, but how we actually behave in the situation. Thoughts are what we think about the situation—but of course it's not quite that simple. Make sure that you understand that you usually aren't having an emotional response to the situation

that's occurring, but to your interpretation of that event. Sometimes emotions happen in direct response to an event. The previous example of the coiled rope that you mistook for a snake is an example of a situation in which the emotional response is immediate, requiring no interpretation.

For the most part, though, the emotions we experience arise in response to our interpretations. When an event takes place, the mind forms an interpretation of that event, and an emotion arises in response to that interpretation.

The good news is that practicing skills will help you to become more aware of your emotional responses and the interpretations that trigger them. Then you can decide whether those interpretations are valid.

For each of the six main emotions, note how your body responds physically: Does your heart rate increase? Do you start to tremble or shake? Do you tense up? What about your body language? Do you clench her fists? What is the expression on your face? Next, focus on the thoughts that accompany that emotion; for example, do you tend to get judgmental or to recall other times you have felt that emotion? Then ask yourself to think about what urges come up when you are experiencing this emotion: whether you want to lash out, isolate yourself, hurt yourself or someone else in some way, and so on. Next, describe your behavior—what do you actually do. For example, do you lash out, physically or verbally hurting yourself or others? Finally, look at the consequences of the behavior; this can further help you to distinguish between just having the emotion and what you do about it, so it's important that you consider the consequences of the way you acted.

Be sure to understand that you may not be able to fully analyze all of these emotions at first; you might need to experience these emotions again while being mindful of your experience to develop a well-rounded understanding of your experience. That this is fine. There is no rush; the goal is to get to know your emotions and how you tend to experience them, and this usually takes some time and practice.

Another concept that's relevant here, and one that can also help people to see why they might have a hard time differentiating between thoughts and emotions, is the concept of automatic thoughts. CBT theorist Aaron Beck noted that we have a constant dialogue running through our minds about whatever we're experiencing: what our senses are telling us, how we feel physically and emotionally, and so on. According to Beck, these automatic thoughts largely determine how we feel about a situation, and both the thoughts and the feelings they evoke influence how we behave.

The biggest problem with automatic thoughts is that they happen so automatically that they are almost unconscious; often we aren't even aware that they're occurring. Because they arise so quickly and almost reflexively, and yet are so realistic and believable, we usually don't stop to question them and instead act as though they're facts.

However, if we are to manage our emotions more effectively, we must understand that thoughts, and the emotions they evoke, are not facts; rather, they're just a reflection of a person's experience of a situation. Just because someone thinks something doesn't mean it's a fact; for example, just because you think it's impossible to change a behavior doesn't mean it really is impossible.

Likewise, just because something feels a certain way doesn't mean it's the truth. For example, just because someone feels hopeless doesn't mean the situation is hopeless.

Chapter 7:

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, or ACT (“ACT” is spoken as a single word, not as separate initials) is a new, scientifically based psychotherapeutic modality that is part of what is being called the “third wave” in cognitive and behavioral therapy. ACT is based on Relational Frame Theory (RFT): a basic research program on how the human mind works. This research suggests that many of the tools we use to solve issues lead us into the situations that create suffering. To put it bluntly, human beings are playing a rigged game in which the human mind itself, a wonderful tool for mastering the environment, has been turned on its host.

Maybe you’ve noticed that some of your greatest difficulties have somehow become even more entrenched and unmanageable, even as you’ve tried implementing ideas about how to solve them. This is not your imagination. This happens when your own logical mind is asked to do what it was not designed to do. Suffering is one thing that results.

This may seem like a very strange claim, particularly if you are trying to help yourself overcome some of your psychological problems. As a rule, people turn to books and other resources for tools to solve specific issues: anxiety, depression, substance abuse, stress, trauma, burnout, smoking, or chronic pain, to name just a few. For the average person, overcoming these problems implies not just a final end but also an end reached by specific tools.

For example, dealing with stress seemingly must first involve getting rid of stressful feelings; quitting smoking seemingly must first involve getting rid of desires to smoke; overcoming anxiety disorders seemingly must mean learning how to relax instead, or to dispute and amend overblown and worrisome thoughts; and so on. In this book, means and ends are carefully distinguished, and you will learn that many of these common sense routes to a better life are now thought to be both unnecessary and risky in current psychological theory.

If you are suffering with a psychological problem, you should know that research suggests that ACT helps with many common psychological issues, and its underlying model has received considerable support from the academic community.

ACT challenges some of the most culturally ingrained forms of conventional thinking about human problems. Research indicates that ACT’s methods and ideas are generally sound, which provides reassurance that these concepts and procedures are effective. That doesn’t mean they are easy to get your mind around though. Then again, if these ideas and methods were already well-known to you, reading about them would probably not be useful.

Here's a sample of some of the unconventional concepts ACT asks you to consider:

- Psychological pain is normal, it is important, and everyone experiences it.
- You cannot deliberately rid yourself of your psychological pain, but you can take steps to avoid increasing it artificially.
- Pain and suffering are two different states of being.
- You don't have to identify with your suffering.
- Accepting your pain is a step toward ridding yourself of your suffering.
- You can live a life you value, beginning right now, but to do that you will have to learn how to get out of your mind and into your life.

Ultimately, what ACT asks of you is a fundamental change in perspective: a shift in the way you deal with your personal experience. We can't promise that this will quickly change what your anger, depression, anxiety, low self-esteem or stress looks like, at least, not anytime soon. We can, however, say that significant research has demonstrated that the role of these problems as barriers to living can be altered, and sometimes changed quite quickly. ACT methods provide new tools to approach difficult psychological issues. These new methods can change the actual substance of your psychological problems and the impact they have on your life.

Metaphorically, the difference between the form a psychological disorder takes in one's life and its function can be compared to someone standing in a battlefield fighting a war. The war is going badly. The person is fighting harder and harder and losing is a frightening option; but unless the war is won, the person fighting it thinks that living a happy life will not be possible. So the war rages on.

Unbeknownst to that person, however, is the fact that he or she can quit the battlefield at any time, and begin to live their life right at that moment. The war may still continue, and they may still see the battlefield. The terrain will still look the same as it did while the war was active, but the end result of the war will no longer be very important at all and the seemingly essential sequence of having to win the battle before beginning to really live has been tossed aside.

Such a metaphor is intended to demonstrate the distinction between the appearance of psychological problems and their real nature. In this scenario, the war sounds and looks the same whether you are simply watching it or fighting it. Its nature stays the same, but its results—its actual nature—is completely different. Living your life is not the same as fighting for your life.

Interestingly, our research suggests that when the substance changes, the appearance may change as well. When fighters leave the battlefield and let the war take care of itself, it may even subside. As the old slogan from the 1960s put it: "What if they fought a war and nobody came?"

Compare this metaphor with your own emotional life. ACT focuses on the

substance, not the appearance, of problems. Learning to approach your distress in a fundamentally different way can quickly change the impact it has on your life. Even if the appearance of distressing feelings or thoughts does not change (and who knows, it might), if you follow the methods described in ACT, it is far likelier that the substance of your psychological distress, that is, its impact, will change.

The Psychological Quicksand of Suffering

This counterintuitive idea of abandoning the battlefield rather than winning the war may sound strange, and implementing it will require a lot of new learning, but it is not crazy. You know about other circumstances like this. They are unusual, but not completely unknown.

Suppose you came across someone standing in the middle of a pool of quicksand. No tree branches or ropes are available to help reach the person. The only way you can help is by talking to him or her. The person is yelling, “Help, get me out of here,” and is beginning to do what people usually do when they are stuck in something they fear: struggle to get out. When people step into something they want to get out of, be it a mud puddle or a briar patch, 99.9 percent of the time the effective action to take is to run, walk, step, hop, or jump out of the situation.

This doesn’t work with quicksand. To step out of something it is necessary to lift one foot and move the other foot forward. When dealing with quicksand, that’s a very bad idea. Once one foot is lifted, all of the trapped person’s weight rests on only half of the surface area it formerly occupied. This means the downward pressure immediately doubles. In addition, the suction of the quicksand around the foot being lifted provides more downward pressure on the other foot. Only one result can take place: the person sinks deeper down into the quicksand.

As you watch the person stuck in the quicksand, you see this process begin to happen. Is there anything you can say to them that will help? If you understood how quicksand works, you would yell at the person to stop moving and to lie flat, spread-eagled, to maximize contact with the surface of the pool. In that position, the person probably wouldn’t sink and might be able to log roll to safety.

Since the person is trying to get out of the quicksand, it is extremely counterintuitive to maximize body contact with it. Someone struggling to get out of the mud may never realize that the wiser and safer action to take would be to get with the mud.

Our own lives can be very much like this, except the quicksand we find ourselves in, often is, in one sense, endless. Exactly when will the quicksand of a traumatic memory completely vanish? At what moment will the painful quicksand of past criticism from parents or peers disappear? Right now think of a psychological aspect of yourself that you like the least. Take a moment to consider this question. Now ask yourself, “Was this an issue for me last month? Six months ago? A year ago? Five years ago? Exactly how old is this problem?”

Most people find that their deepest worries are not about recent events. Their deepest problems have been lurking in the background for years, often many years. That fact suggests that normal problem-solving methods are unlikely to be successful. If they worked, why haven't they worked after all these years of trying? Indeed, the very longevity of most psychological issues suggests that normal problem-solving methods may themselves be part of the problem, just as struggling to get free is a huge problem for someone stuck in quicksand.

You are delving into the science of human behavior for a reason. Our guess is that you find yourself in some sort of psychological quicksand and you think you need help freeing yourself. You've tried various "solutions" without success. You've been struggling. You've been sinking. And you've been suffering.

Your pain will be an informative ally on the road that lies ahead if you decide that ACT is the therapy for you. You have an opportunity that someone who hasn't experienced psychological pain doesn't have, because it is only when common sense solutions fail us, that we become open to the counterintuitive solutions to psychological pain that modern psychological science can provide. As you become more aware of how the human mind works (particularly your mind), you will perhaps be ready to take the path less traveled. Haven't we all suffered enough?

Ubiquitous Human Suffering

It's amazing how many problems human beings have that nonhumans can literally not imagine. Consider the data on self harm and suicide. It occurs in every human population across the world, and serious struggles with suicide are shockingly commonplace. Throughout your lifetime, you have about a fifty-fifty chance of struggling with self-harm and suicidal thoughts at a severe to moderate level for at least two weeks. Almost 100 percent of all the people on the planet will at some point in their life contemplate killing themselves with some level of seriousness.

Preverbal children do not make suicide attempts as they cannot yet comprehend the idea, but even very young, newly verbal children occasionally do. Yet we have little reason to believe that any nonhuman animals deliberately kill themselves. That basic pattern repeats itself in problem area after problem area: Most human beings struggle, even in the midst of what appear to be happy, successful lives. Ask yourself this question: How many people do you know really well who don't experience periods in which they struggle with serious social or psychological problems, problems at work, relationship issues, depression, anxiety, anger, self-control issues, sexual problems, fear of death, and the like? For most people, a list of such completely contented acquaintances will be very short indeed, perhaps even non-existent.

The scientific data on human issues confirms this impression. Let's just mention a few random facts. About 30 percent of all adults have a major psychiatric disorder at any given point in time, about 50 percent will have such a disorder at some point in

their lives, and nearly 80 percent of these will have more than one serious psychological problem. Americans spend huge sums of money in their efforts to alleviate their psychological pain and suffering.

For example, antidepressants are a multi-billion dollar industry, even though their average impact on depression is only 20 percent better than a placebo, too small to be clinically significant. In fact, our antidepressant consumption is so high that our rivers and streams have become polluted with them, contaminating the fish we eat. But these statistics, sad though they are, grossly underestimate the extent of the problem. When people are given open access to mental health care, only about half of those who seek help are diagnosed with a serious mental-health disorder. The other half are having in their marriages, problems at work, or with their children, or they suffer from the lack of purpose in their lives, what the philosophers call “existential dread,” or from “angst,” which is a strong ever-present feeling of anxiety and apprehension.

Marriages, for example, are probably the most important voluntary adult relationship most humans enter into, yet about 50 percent of all marriages end in divorce and remarriages are no better. The dismal statistics on abuse, fidelity, and marital happiness show that many intact marriages are based on unhealthy relationships. This litany could go on and on easily. By the time all of the major behavioral problems human beings face are added together, in effect, it is “abnormal” not to experience significant psychological struggles.

How can this be? We could understand it if we were discussing people without resources in third world societies. If a Sudanese child must hide from the violence of a rebel militia, we can easily appreciate her misery. If a grieving mother in Indonesia loses everything to a tsunami, her suffering is completely understandable and, given her horrific circumstances, it is to be expected. This is mostly not true for the people who are reading this book, as most of us realize when we compare our lives to the lives of those suffering from horrendous natural disasters or war. Yet in many problem areas, people who are successful and intelligent are not necessarily happier than their less fortunate counterparts in other parts of the world. People who live in countries with very successful economies do not have fewer social or interpersonal problems (for example, suicide) than their counterparts in more difficult economic circumstances. Why is this?

Apply this question to your own life. Isn't it true that the things you are struggling with and trying to change tend to persist, even though you are competent and able in so many other areas of your life?

Isn't it true that you've tried to solve these problems, but so far have failed to find a real solution?

Mindfulness, Acceptance, and Values

ACT is not a set of wise sayings or idiomatic phrases that will lead you toward a personal revelation. Although some ACT principles have their roots in ancient knowledge, there is one major component of the therapy that is new. ACT is based on a new model of human cognition. These techniques fall into three broad categories: mindfulness, acceptance, and values-based living.

Mindfulness, which we discussed in a previous section, is a way of observing your experience that has been practiced in the East through various forms of meditation for centuries. Recent research in Western psychology has proven that practicing mindfulness can have notable psychological benefits. In fact, mindfulness is currently being adopted as a means of enhancing treatment in a number of different psychological traditions in the West. A large part of the ACT approach has to do with mindfulness. What ACT adds to this ancient set of practices is a model of the key components of mindfulness and a set of new tools to change these methods. Weeks, months, or years of meditation, helpful as they can be, are not the only practices that can increase mindfulness, and in today's busy world, new means are needed to add to those that evolved in another, different and slower millennium.

Using ACT models will help you learn to see your thoughts in a new way. Thoughts are like lenses through which we see the world. We all have a tendency to cling to our particular lens and allow it to dictate how we interpret our experiences, even to the point of dictating who we think we are. If you are currently stuck in the lens of your psychological pain, you may say things to yourself like, "I'm depressed."

As you free yourself from the illusions of language, you will learn to become more aware of the many verbal lenses that emerge every day, and yet not be defined by any one of them. You will learn how to undermine your attachment to a particular cognitive lens in favor of a more holistic model of self-awareness. Using specific techniques, you will learn to look at your pain, rather than seeing the world from the vantage point of your pain. When you do that, you will find there are many other things to do with the present moment besides trying to regulate its psychological content.

ACT draws a clear distinction between suffering and pain. Due to the nature of human language, when we encounter a problem, our general reaction is to figure out how to fix it. We try to get out of the quicksand. In the outside world this is very effective 99.9 percent of the time. Being able to figure out how to rid ourselves of undesirable events, such as predation, cold, pests, or flooding, was essential in establishing the human race as the dominant species on our planet.

It is an unfortunate consequence of the way our minds work, however, that we try to use this same "fix-it" mentality when it comes to understanding our internal experiences. When we encounter painful content within ourselves, we want to do what we always do: fix it up and sort it out so that we can get rid of it. The truth of the matter (as you have likely experienced) is that our internal lives are not at all like external events. For one thing, humans live in history, and time moves in only

one direction, not two. Psychological pain has a history and, at least in that aspect, it is not a matter of getting rid of it. It is more a matter of how we deal with it and move forward.

The “acceptance” in Acceptance and Commitment Therapy is based on the notion that, as a rule, trying to get rid of your pain only makes it worse, entangles you further within it, and makes it into something traumatic. Meanwhile, living your life is pushed to the side. The alternative we will teach in this book is a bit dangerous to say out loud because right now it is likely to be misunderstood, but the alternative is to accept it. Acceptance, in the sense it is used here, is not a sad sense of self-defeat; neither does it mean tolerating and putting up with your suffering. It is completely different than that. Those sad, heavy, dark forms of “acceptance” are almost the exact opposite of the vital, active embrace of the moment that we mean.

Most of us have had little or no training in active forms of acceptance so we suggest that you thank your mind for whatever it says this term might mean, but don’t try to do anything with it right now. This is hard to describe, and learning to be willing to have and live your own experience is something that takes eem deep delving into ACT. In the meantime, we ask for your patience and openness—and a bit of skepticism about what your mind might right now be guessing the therapy modules mean.

Are you living the life you want to live right now? Is your life focused on what is most meaningful to you? Is the way you live your life characterized by vitality and engagement, or is it characterized by the weight of your issues?

When we are caught in a struggle with psychological issues we often put life on hold, believing that our pain needs to decrease before we can really start to live again. What if you could have your life be about what you want it to be about right now, starting this very moment? Getting in touch with the life you want to live and learning how to bring your dreams to life in the present isn’t easy because your mind, like the minds of all humans, will spring trap after trap, and produce barrier after barrier.

The Nature of Human Language and How it Leads to Suffering

ACT is formed from Relational Frame Theory. The basic idea behind RFT is that human behavior is formed largely through networks of mutual connections called relational frames. These relations form the core of human cognition and language, and let us learn without requiring head-on experience. For example, a cat won’t be burned by a hot stove twice, but it needs to touch it at least once to form an understanding because the cat is nonverbal. A human child doesn’t need to ever touch a hot surface to be taught verbally that it can be burned by it. In the external world, this learning ability is a tool without comparison. In terms of our inner lives,

though, verbal rules can restrict our lives in quite fundamental ways.

ACT founders set out twenty years ago to try to discover the core features of human thinking. Today, they think that they've isolated some of the key components. Perhaps it's risky to say it so boldly, but they believe that they have found what is at the core of the human mind itself. Humans think relationally; nonhumans apparently do not. Exactly what this means will become evident in this chapter but, in broad terms, humans are able to randomly relate to objects in our environment, feelings, thoughts, behavioral predispositions, actions (pretty much anything) to other objects in our thoughts, environment, feelings (basically anything else) in practically any possible way for example better than, same as, similar to, opposite of, part of, cause of, and so forth).

This characteristic is vital to the way the human mind functions because it is our ultimate evolutionary asset and has permitted the human species a ruling role in the animal kingdom. The ability to think in relation to other things allows us to consciously develop tools, analyze our environment, create art, build fires, make computers, and even do our taxes. Ironically, this same ability creates suffering.

Often, the words about language were once metaphors, and their etymology focuses on that relational core. The word "symbol," has its roots in ancient Greek, "bol," means "to throw." and when put together with "sym" (meaning "the same"), a symbol literally means "thrown as the same." When our minds throw words at us, those words appear to be much the same as the things to which they "refer." The etymology of "refer" completes the picture. "Fer" in suffering means "to carry" (hence the word "ferry"), and "re" means "again." So, "to refer" to something involves carrying something again.

This early common sense understanding corresponds to ACT research findings about the nature of human thinking. When we think, we arbitrarily relate events to one another. Symbols "carry back" events and objects because they are seen in relation to these events as being "the same." These symbols form part of a vast relational network that our mind expands on and continues to generate over the course of our entire lives. What follows is a brief list of relational frames. This is not at all comprehensive. Such a list could fill many pages and isn't vital to understand the parts of RFT that are necessary for the work that ACT does.

Experiential Avoidance

In part, language creates suffering because it leads to something called experiential avoidance. Experiential avoidance is the idea of attempting to avoid your own experiences (feelings, thoughts, bodily sensations, memories, behavioral predispositions) even when such avoidance causes long-term behavioral issues (like not going to a fun event because you are socially phobic, or not taking a walk because you feel too depressed to get off the couch). Of all the psychological

systems known to science, experiential avoidance is one of the most damaging.

Experiential avoidance tends to artificially increase the “pain of presence”, and it is one of the biggest creators of the “pain of absence,” since it is avoidance that most undermines positive actions. Unfortunately, this strategy is built into human language for two reasons: language naturally targets our reactions, not just our situations, and it makes it impossible to control pain by controlling situations, since any situation can be arbitrarily related to pain and thus cause it.

Outside of the body, the general rule may be, “If it doesn’t make you happy, figure out how to dispose of it, and then proceed to dispose of it.” Inside the body, though, the rule is very different. It is more like, “If you don’t want to have it, you will have it.” In real terms, this means, for example, that if you don’t want to feel anxiety as a feeling, you will likely feel far more anxiety, and you will begin to live a more constricted and narrower life. Now, consider the possibility that this happens because all of the coping strategies you’ve attempted to develop are actually ways to avoid your experiences. You create a certain means by which you try to avoid feeling the feelings you are experiencing or thinking the thoughts that are running through your head. You try to avoid the painful experience of so-called negative thoughts or feelings by burying yourself in a mass of mindless activities, fighting your thoughts with rationalizations, or trying to mask your emotions through the use of drugs or alcohol. If you are suffering, you have likely spent a lot of time carrying out these distracting coping mechanisms and all the while your life is not being lived.

Acceptance and Willingness

“Accept” has its roots in Latin word “capere” meaning “take.” Acceptance is the act of “taking what is offered” or receiving. In English, sometimes, “accept” means “to resign yourself or tolerate” (as in, “Aw, gee, I guess I have to accept that”), and that is exactly the antithesis of what is meant here. By “accept,” we mean something more like “taking completely, in the moment, without defense.” We use the word “willing” as a synonym for “accepting” to stay true to that meaning of accept. “Willing” is one of the oldest words in the English language. It comes from an ancient root word meaning “to choose.” Therefore “willingness” and “acceptance” can be understood as an answer to this question: “Will you take me as I am?” Willingness and acceptance are the opposite of effortful control.

In the ACT modules, the words “acceptance” and “willingness” mean to actively respond to your feelings by feeling them, literally, in as much as you might stretch your hand out and feel the texture of a sweater. These words mean to respond actively to your thoughts by thinking about them, in as much as you might an actor might practice lines to get a feel for the playwright’s intent or read poetry just to get the flow of the words.

To be accepting and willing means to actively respond to memories by remembering them, in as much as you might take a friend to the cinema to see a movie you've already seen. The words mean to actively respond to bodily sensations by sensing them, in as much as you might take an all-over stretch in the morning just to feel your body all over. Acceptance and willingness mean adopting a loving, gentle attitude toward yourself, your history, and your programming so that it becomes more likely for you simply to be aware of your own experience, in as much as you would hold a fragile object in your hand and contemplate it dispassionately but closely.

The goal of willingness is not to feel better. The goal is to expand yourself to the life fervor of the moment, and to move more directly toward what you value. Said another way, the goal of willingness is to feel all of the feelings that are within you more completely, including especially—the so-called bad feelings, so that you can live your life more holistically. In summary, instead of trying to feel better, willingness involves learning how to feel in a better way.

To be accepting and willing is to softly push your fingers into the gap in order to make more room in which you can live, rather than blindly struggling against your experience by trying to pull your fingers out of it. To be accepting and willing means giving yourself sufficient room to breathe. By assuming the stance of acceptance and willingness you can open all the windows and blinds in your house and allow life to flow through it; you let fresh light and air enter into what was previously dark and closed. To be accepting and willing means to be able to walk through the swampy grounds of your difficult past when the swampy ground is directly on the path that goes in a direction you care about.

To be accepting and willing means understanding that you are not the clouds but the sky; not the waves but the ocean. It means accepting that you are large enough to contain all of your experiences, just as the sky contains all the clouds and the ocean all the waves. If you find your mind either resisting or agreeing, simply thank your mind for the thought. It is welcome to come along for the ride, but acceptance and willingness are states of being that minds can never learn how to achieve. Fortunately, there is more to you than just your catalogue of symbolizing and relating. Even if your mind can't learn how to be accepting and willing, you can learn.

The Importance of Willingness

One reason willingness is worth trying is that it is remarkable how consistently the scientific literature reveals its value and the danger of its flip side—experiential avoidance. One reason this book is not about anger, depression, anxiety, substance abuse, chronic pain (or any of the other disturbances and disorders that thrive in modern life) is that we are trying to teach a set of skills that has extremely broad applicability, and that should empower your therapy work or self-directed efforts to

change your life.

We first reviewed the literature on experiential avoidance about a decade ago and since then it has exploded. We'll discuss just a few areas to show how broadly applicable this process can be for psychological suffering.

Physical pain. In virtually every area of chronic pain, physical pathology (the objectively assessed physical damage) bears almost no relation to the amount of pain, reduced functioning, and disability. The relationship between the amount of pain and degree of functioning is also weak. What predicts functioning is (a) your willingness to experience pain, and (b) your ability to act in a valued direction while experiencing it. These are precisely the processes targeted in this book. Training people how to accept their pain and how to watch it or “defuse from” their thoughts about it greatly increases their tolerance of pain and decreases the amount of disability and sick leave downtime caused by their pain.

Physical trauma, disease, and disability. In head injury, spinal injury, heart attack, and other areas of physical illness or injury, the degree of physical pathology is a very poor predictor of rehabilitation success and long-term disability. What is predictive is the patient's acceptance of the condition and the willingness to take responsibility for her or his predicament.

In chronic diseases like diabetes, your acceptance of the difficult thoughts and feelings the disease gives rise to, and your willingness to act in the presence of these thoughts and feelings predict good self-management of the disease. Other health-care problems, such as smoking, show the same results. ACT promotes better health management as a result of changes in your willingness to accept discomfort, unhook from your thoughts, and move toward what is most personally meaningful to you.

Anxiety. Unwillingness to have anxiety predicts having anxiety in many different forms. For example, when exposed to the same levels of physiological arousal, experiential avoiders are more likely to feel panic than those who willingly accept their anxiety. This is particularly true if experiential avoiders are actively trying to control their anxiety sensations. Among people who habitually pull out their own hair, experiential avoidance predicts more frequent and intense urges to pull, less ability to control urges, and more hair pulling–related distress than among people who are not experientially avoidant.

People with generalized anxiety disorder are more likely to have high levels of emotional avoidance, and both the amount of worry and degree of impairment they suffer correlates with experiential avoidance. Even a very small amount of training in acceptance can be helpful, however. For example, just ten minutes of acceptance training made panic-disordered persons more able to face anxiety; training in distraction and suppression was not helpful. Similarly, for anxious people, teaching them a simple ACT acceptance metaphor, the Chinese finger trap, reduced avoidance, anxiety symptoms, and anxious thoughts more successfully than did

breathing retraining.

Who Am I, If Not My Thoughts?

The kinds of thoughts that tend to be most entangling when they are in the wrong context are evaluations and self-conceptualizations. You will remember that evaluations and self-conceptualizations are two particularly fused ways of thinking. Evaluations are subjective judgments you make about internal or external events. They are particularly troublesome because they lead so readily to useless forms of avoidance.

Thus, achieving the goal of acceptance is not possible when cognitive fusion dominates your thinking processes. You will recall that cognitive fusion refers to the tendency to look from your thoughts rather than at your thoughts. When you engage in cognitive fusion, you take your mind's statements as literal truths, but without even being aware of these statements as the products of an ongoing cognitive process.

Self-conceptualizations are statements that your mind makes about you as a person that you implicitly take as literal truths. Self-conceptualizations are troublesome for a slightly different reason. Self-conceptualizations enhance psychological rigidity. Consider one of your negative responses. Focus on it. Now, suppose a miracle could happen and, without requiring any change in your history or circumstances, this problem would simply disappear while you go about living your life. For example, suppose you wrote the words "is an agoraphobic" in response to "I'm a person who ...". If that agoraphobia suddenly disappeared, without needing you to have a different history, be a different person, or have a different set of current circumstances, ask yourself this question: Who would be made wrong by that disappearance?

If the question doesn't make sense to you, sit with it for a few minutes. Then repeat the question and ask yourself to answer it again. Who would be shown to be incorrect?

Can you see that you are invested in your labels and stories and reasons? Even if you hate the label (e.g., you may hate the idea that you are an agoraphobic), if you apply it to yourself or your behavior in a fused way, you have made an investment in the label. If the evidence supports its use, at least you are right. Perversely, this also means that your mind gives you a secret investment in things remaining rigidly the same, even if you are suffering terribly right now.

The problem with latching on to any particular aspect of who you are is that once you become too familiar with that particular aspect of your identity, you set yourself up to amend the world so that you can maintain that image of yourself. This is as true of negative aspects of yourself as positive aspects. For example, suppose you said, "that I'm kind" in response to "My favorite part about myself is ...". That's

fine, but are you always kind? Everywhere? To everyone? ... Liar!

Human beings are extremely complex. Whenever you say, "I am *this*," there is no way that you can be telling the whole truth. Surely there are times you aren't *this*. Regardless of whether *this* is negative or positive. If you said "I am a person who is depressed," surely you can think of at least time in your life when you weren't depressed?

Notice, though, how it feels when you accept that *this* is not 100 percent true all of the time. For the majority of us, such realizations come with a sense of uneasiness. That uneasiness doesn't come just from possibly being "wrong." It also comes from our desperate desire to know who we are. Consider one of the negative self-conceptualizations that you wrote above once again. Focus on it. Now, distance yourself thoroughly from the content of this negative self-conceptualization. That is, defuse from your thought and look at it in a mindful posture. Observe it without judging it.

To do this, you can use any of the techniques that you like. For example, suppose you wrote the words "is depressed" in response to "I'm a person who ..." and suppose you do well with stating your thoughts as thoughts, acknowledging them, and allowing them to float on by. In that case, use these methods with the thought, for example, "I'm having the thought that I'm a person who is depressed. Thanks for the input, mind!" and then allow it to float down the stream like a leaf.

If you can do this, follow through with some of its implications and you may become able to see where another form of rigidity and attachment emerges. Suppose you were diffused from all categorical self-conceptualizations? Suppose each and every one of the self-conceptualizations above (and the myriad other varieties that can be evoked by other questions) were, to some significant degree, simply ongoing thoughts. No more and no less. If that were so, then there is something else that needs to be faced.

I once worked with an anxious client who was defusing from self-conceptualization after self-conceptualization. Most of his self-conceptualizations were very negative, and as we went through this work, initially, the mood in the room lightened up as the client began letting go of attachment to one feared self-evaluation after another. After some time, however, as real progress began to be made, the mood changed. The client began to tear up. Finally, he asked, with a real sense of fear in his voice, "If I am not my thoughts, then who am I?" It was as if he were dying. And, in a sense, he was.

Three Senses of Self

According to the language theory that underpins ACT, there are at least three senses of self that come from our verbal abilities: the conceptualized self, the self as an ongoing process of self-awareness, and the observing self.

The Conceptualized Self

The conceptualized self is you as the object of a summary of verbal evaluations and categorizations. It is the verbal “I am” self, as in: I am anxious; I am old; I am mean; I am kind; I am sweet; I am unlovable; I am beautiful; and so forth. The conceptualized self is packed full of content; this content is the story about you and your life that you’ve been telling yourself probably for as long as you can remember. It consists of all the feelings, thoughts, behavioral predispositions, bodily sensations and memories that you’ve allowed yourself to buy into and eventually integrated into a stable verbal image of yourself. This is the self you are probably very familiar with because it is the product of standard applications of language to you and your life.

In terms of maintaining you in your state of suffering, the conceptualized self is the most dangerous. That is because the conceptualized self blends seamlessly into a story that provides purported reasons for your actions and it is a self that provides a coherent explanation for your experiences. It is a kind of comfortable yet suffocating coherence that leads relentlessly toward “more of the same.” Have you ever noticed that if someone thinks he is unimportant, most events in his life appear to confirm that view? Or have you ever observed that if someone sees herself as a victim, somehow she keeps ending up (in her mind or in actuality) being victimized?

If you are suffering with anxiety, depression, or stress, your identification with these disorders is almost certainly part of your conceptualized self. Your emotional problems have become part of the story that you’ve been telling yourself about your life. This is not meant to suggest that the facts as you know them aren’t real. Most of your facts are probably roughly correct. But the story of your anxiety or depression doesn’t tell the whole story of your life and, furthermore, it tells more than you can possibly know. The exciting part about seeing your own conceptualized self as something you hold on to arbitrarily is that truly new narratives may be possible that are, right now, outside of the story currently being told.

But it can be frightening to open up to possibilities that go beyond your conceptualized self. If you are not your thoughts, then who are you?

When you let go of an attachment to your conceptualized self, you are like a child, open to whatever is possible and willing to find out what is. But first, you must let go of your attachment to your conceptualized self. Only the bravest among us would do this without first figuring out a place to land psychologically. For that reason, we will return to the problem of the conceptualized self later in this chapter, after we’ve identified a critical ally within ourselves.

The Self as a Process of Ongoing Self-Awareness

Ongoing self-awareness is your malleable, continuous knowledge of your own

experiences in the present moment. It is similar to the conceptualized self, in that you are applying verbal boxes to the self, but it is also unlike the conceptualized self because instead of being evaluative, summary categories, the categories are descriptive, non evaluative, flexible and present: “Now I am seeing that.” “Now I am feeling this.” “Now I am thinking that.” “Now I am remembering this.”

There is a lot of evidence that this sense of self is important for healthy psychological functioning. For example, people who can’t identify what they experience emotionally are said to have “alexithymia.”

This clinical deficit correlates with a wide range of psychological problems. And, you will not be surprised to learn, it correlates highly with experiential avoidance. A person unable to observe and describe her own present experience is someone who is deaf and blind to what is going on in the moment.

We’ve been taught to speak of our personal histories and current predispositions by locating and identifying what we are feeling. For example, a child will be asked, “Are you hungry?” by way of asking, “Will you eat food if I give you some?” Very young children sometimes have a hard time answering this question accurately because their sense of self is still developing, and they haven’t yet learned what their emotions and feelings mean. As a result, they may say they are not hungry, and then ask for food minutes later; or they may say they are hungry and then pick at the food they are given because, in fact, they are not. (Every parent knows about this type of “disconnect” with young children.)

Making contact with the present moment and the experiences it produces is more likely when fusion and avoidance are undermined. Chronic emotional avoiders do not know what they are feeling because not knowing is itself a powerful form of avoidance.

This more fluid sense of self as an ongoing process of awareness is also diminished when attachment to the conceptualized self dominates; noticing reactions that do not accord with the dominant story becomes threatening to the conceptualized self. For example, a person who is supposedly “always helpful and sweet” will have a hard time admitting to feelings or thoughts that are angry, jealous, or resentful as they emerge in the present moment. Defusion and acceptance naturally support the development of the self as an ongoing process of awareness.

The Observing Self

It’s likely that the observing self is the sense of self you are the least familiar with verbally, despite it being the most important aspect of selfhood, and one that’s been with you for a very long time. There are many names for it: self as context, the transcendent self, the spiritual sense, the nothing self, and the observing self are just a few. We use the latter term in this book.

Unlike the conceptualized self or the self as an ongoing process of self-awareness, the observing self is not an object of verbal relations. That is why we “know” less about it. The observing self is not a content-based sense of self that can be described directly. Nevertheless, the theory that underlies ACT suggests that the observing self emerges as a result of language use and is critical to psychological health.

When you were very young and still acquiring language, you learned to describe events from a consistent perspective. When you described what you ate, or saw, or did, you learned that you had to report relative to that consistent perspective.

Consider this question: Where is “here?” Very young children have a hard time with this idea.

“Here” is not a specific site like an address or a corner of the room; rather, it is the place from which observations are made. Any other place is “there.” Consider this question: When is “now”? Very young children have a hard time with this notion, as well. “Now” is not a specific time like Monday or 6 PM, rather it is the time from which observations are currently being made. Any other time is “then.”

In the same way, consider this question: Where is “I”? Very young children also have a hard time with this final idea. “I” is also a place from which observations are currently made. Observations made from another perspective are “you,” not “I.”

These verbal relations are deictic, which means to point out or to show. Deictic relations can be learned only by demonstration because they are not material things. They are relative to an observational perspective.

The sense of a place from which conscious observations are made is a strange sense because, for the person experiencing it, it has no known boundaries. You can never consciously know the limits, because all verbal knowing is with reference to you as a knower. Go back in your memory to your early childhood.

Think of a memory. It can be either a fond memory or a painful one. Relive this memory for a few moments. See if you can connect with a sense of looking out at the world from behind your eyes as they were then. Now answer this question and see if you can get to it experientially (not just logically): Who was it who saw those events as they were unfolding?

Now answer another question: Who was it who ate your breakfast this morning? Picture breakfast and once again see if you can connect with a sense of looking out at the world from behind your eyes.

Now notice who is reading this book. Again see if you can connect with a sense of looking out at the world from behind your eyes. Notice that you are here at this moment reading, and notice too that the person behind these reading eyes was there when you ate breakfast this morning and was there when you were a child. You’ve

been you your whole life, though there have been many changes in your thoughts, your feelings, your roles, and your body. At the very moment that you gaze at these lines of ink on paper, notice who is gazing.

Hello.

You have been this same you ever since you “met yourself in early childhood as a newly conscious human, and when your infantile amnesia fell away (about the same time that these deictic frames of here/there; I/you; and now/then appeared in your understanding). This “I” is what some call the observing self. It is a sense that transcends both space and time, not literally but experientially since this sense is with you everywhere you go. No matter what happens to you, it is this “I” that will be a component of your verbal understanding of that experience.

This “I” is boundless in that you cannot experience anything that you know about (or to be very precise, that you know you know about) without “you-as-perspective” being in it. Why? Because without this sense of locus there is no continuity of consciousness itself; there is no psychological perspective from which to view what is known.

If this sense of self is experientially boundless (that is, as experienced by the person experiencing), it is also not experienced fully as a thing. That is unique. Almost every event we can describe is experienced as a thing: as an event with known boundaries. Yet here, right in the middle of verbal knowledge itself, is a “nothing” self. We may believe this sense of perspective has boundaries (e.g., we believe we are sometimes unconscious), but we cannot directly experience them (e.g., we are not conscious of those times). Here, right in the middle of verbal knowledge itself, is an event without distinction. Events without distinction include nothing (or as our language community came to write it later “nothing”) and they include “everything.” That’s it. That is why Eastern philosophies call this sense of self “everything/ nothing” and point to it with odd sayings like “Wherever you go, there you are.”

If you carry out ACT defusion exercises, you may have started feeling some contact with your observing self. You may have been able to watch your thoughts float down the stream of your mind without becoming attached to them, but who is the watcher who observes you thinking your thoughts? Don’t try to answer this by turning this sense of self into a thing. That is precisely what it is not. You know about this sense of self indirectly, for example, by a sense of calm transcendence, or peacefulness. For some, this sense can feel frightening because it may feel as though they are falling into nothingness, and in a non pejorative sense, that is quite true.

It is this observing self that we hope to bring you in closer contact with in this part of the book because it is the place from which it is fully possible to be accepting, defused, present in the moment, and valuing. It is immutable and solid, not because it is a thing that does not change, but precisely because it is nothing at all (Hayes &

Spencer Xavier Smith, 2005).

Conclusion

Human behavior is probably one of the most widely studied fields in psychology. The things that human beings do and why they do them have mystified us for centuries. At the root of this quest for knowledge is another question: If I want to know why I do what I do, then perhaps I should first ask who I am and how I came to be that person?

Identity is another significantly researched field of human psychology and one to which the answer seems to be constantly evolving, as we have learned our identities are. In this book, we have delved down into how the various schools of thoughts define human identity and what factors play into the development of our identities. While there is certainly no definitive guide to defining one's identity, we have made great strides here in combining various views into one way to address this human question.

There is no doubt that if we consider how we would have described ourselves 20 years ago, it would be significantly different from how we would describe ourselves today. If there is no difference, then you have made no progress in the last two decades and even if you have made no effort, that is not possible. This is because shifts in our identity are not always self determined, just as much of our identity itself is not self determined. We take parts of our surroundings, our culture, our loved ones, our experiences and assimilate parts of them into how we identify ourselves.

The development of our personalities is closely linked to that of our identities because as we have learned, our personalities are expressions of the elements of our identities. It therefore stands to reason that as our identities change and evolve, so do our personalities. I find this concept of a fluid identity and personality as quite freeing. No matter what cards life has dealt us, we really do have a good amount of control in where our identity and personality ends up.

After our foray into identity and personality, we delved into the concepts of human perception and emotion and discovered the surprising connection between the two. It seems fair to say that the experience of emotion is impacted by our perception of the world and vice versa. It is also clear that our perceptions and attitudes toward the world are built, at least in part, by our identities and personalities. This is likely why it is so difficult to describe an emotion in words—because we all have different experiences of the same emotions based on our perceptions, personalities, and identities. The idea that the experience of emotion is individual and unique is not a new one, and this is likely the reason that so many different forms of therapies and counseling formats have developed over the years. Each serves a different identity and perception of emotion.

With this view, we looked at various approaches to the determination of self as well

as the understanding and adaptation of human behavior. First up, we looked at how social psychology considers our environments, cultures, and society at large to be deeply impactful in the development of our identities and also how these associations craft much of our behavior patterns.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is probably one of the most popular behavior correction therapies we have discussed in this book. Through various methods CBT can help to correct problem behaviors, deal with traumas, and improve quality of life by snapping yourself out of negative behavior cycles.

Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT) is hot on the heels of CBT in terms of popularity but rather than focusing on general behavioral issues, DBT has been found to be effective for more severe personality disorders. Some of the tenets of DBT, though, can be applied to behavior correction in day-to-day life as well. One of the aspects of DBT, mindfulness, plays a role in the final form of behavior correction therapy we discussed, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT).

ACT presents a very interesting view of the self and also of how our own thoughts do not necessarily need to define us, unless we allow them to.

One of the common threads that runs through all of the aspects of human behavior is that there is always a degree of self-determination. Although our pasts, traumas, and childhoods can play a major role in defining our identity and eventual behavior, we always have ultimate control.

By choosing not to allow the difficult parts of our identities to negatively impact our lives, we take back control, and we can build a different self. The tools we have discussed here are just a starting point, but they are certainly powerful in helping to answer that enduring question, “Who Am I?”

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